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### Beauty Is Sometimes Painful

Joan feels she is the perfect girl in an imperfect body. She thinks her pores are too big, her body is too large, and her curves aren't feminine enough. In order to make herself feel attractive, she puts herself through an extensive and painful process of getting ready to go out into the public view. I met Joan when I was in a bar down on University. She walked by, and she had the most attractive, sweet cushion to sit on. The sway of her body was perfect as it flowed back and forth and back and forth when she passed by me in the bar. Joan was wearing a skin-tight black skirt that exposed her long, smooth legs. When I first saw Joan it was from the back; her waist looked amazingly curvy. Joan turned around to order a drink from the bartender, revealing the front half of her body to me. She had a muscular stomach and nice perky breasts. Her breasts looked like a B-cup, and she wasn't scared to show off a lot of cleavage. I would describe her face but, like most guys, I didn't look that high until I went over to talk to her. I went over and started up a conversation by introducing myself. By the end of the conversation I knew all about her, including how she gets ready every morning.

Her routine sounds more like a ritual of pain and punishment, from a male perspective, but she wants to look good. Because I'm not a woman, I can't fully understand the process women commit to to make themselves feel attractive. I'm happy if I don't smell bad; women go to great lengths to make themselves smell delicious and spend a great deal of money to have an assortment of perfumes. Joan's favorite perfume is Éclat, which can be purchased from Nordstrom's for ninety-five dollars for a 3.3 ounce bottle. That lasts her about a month. The amount she spends on her one bottle of Éclat is more than I spend on all my bathroom products in a month.

First thing in the morning, Joan wakes up and wanders over to the bathroom to urinate. After she finishes, she puts down the toilet seat and hops into the shower. Her shower is pretty much a typical routine. It parallels my showers except for the variety of products she uses. I use a bar of soap to wash everything but my hair; she uses a body wash that moisturizes while her bath sponge exfoliates her skin. I tried one of those specialized sponges, and it felt like I was scraping the top layer of my skin off. Joan systematically removes all unwanted body hair by getting waxed at least once a month. If she has somewhere to be and wants to look attractive, she will shave in the shower, but it messes up her waxing cycle because she has to let the hair grow out a little to get it waxed again. Waxing apparently is extremely uncomfortable the first couple times, but if you keep up on it, the pain becomes just a slight irritation. She compared getting waxed for the first time to having the top layer of her skin ripped off. Her skin was the color of irritated red, and she felt extremely sore afterwards. In the shower she also washes her face. To wash her face and neck she uses an expensive facial cleanser called Philosophy. Her shower is only the beginning of her daily ritual.

My new friend and I discussed the whole line of accessories that make her feel more like a beautiful woman. She likes men and sex, so when she goes out, she wants to attract men. The number-one crowd pleaser for men is nice breasts. Joan, like most women, is unhappy with her breast size and wears a special bra to help uplift her dissatisfaction. She loves her Diva Cleavage bra that she bought online because it grips and lifts her chest to give her the fullest cleavage possible. Since she is so unhappy with her breast size and shape, she also feels the need to use a little breast-shaped cushion in her bra, called a "breast form," which can be purchased online from the Breast Form Store. If her chest is as flat as she said it was, this bra, combined with the breast form, does wonders because her breasts and cleavage looked amazing.

The next part of her ritual is depressing to me because I do so little to alter my appearance and she does so much. I thought that her self-esteem must be low. She correct-

ed me and said that her self-esteem wasn't low but that when she goes out she just wants to feel more feminine. To aid in her aggressive feminine assault upon herself, she wears panties, tight binding panties that will not be seen through the tightest outfits. It also lifts her apple-shaped bottom for a more perfect figure. Now she is almost ready to go out. She is starting to feel like the perfect girl in the perfect body.

By this time she is prancing around her house in her bra and her tight binding panties, a sight that some men would enjoy thoroughly. Joan still isn't ready because she has to get dressed and put on her makeup. She gets dressed first so that she won't smudge her makeup or smear it on her clothes. Her choice is Mac makeup; its price runs a little higher than average, but it gives her skin a flawless finish. Mac uses four different types of waxes in its ingredients while other companies don't use any or very little. The benefit to using Mac is you get a studio-finished look with a huge selection of colors to match any flamboyant outfit. The drawback is that too much wax clogs your pores and can cause blackheads and other facial blemishes. But Joan loves the line because she thinks her face is covered with large pores and Mac coats it with a Barbie doll finish. Joan is ready to go.

She now feels that she has done her best to make herself the perfect girl in the perfect body. She, like all women, will find flaws and want remedies, which may never change. What she is still looking for is a way to hide her large protruding Adams apple without going on hormones or having surgery because, once she can hide that, no one will ever know she is a drag-queen. There are a few steps that she herself doesn't do but some of her cross-dressing friends do. For example, some wear slimming girdles that slim their hips to make it appear that they have nice female hips with a tiny waist. Some queens even use duct tape to reduce their waistline. Joan highly discourages this because it bruises and can cut right into your skin. I asked her why they do it, and she simply replied, "beauty is sometimes painful." A less painful way to alter your male curves into a set of female curves is to wear four-padded underwear. This piece is equipped with four pads:

two in the butt and two on your upper thighs near your waist to form a more full figure.

Becoming a queen wasn't easy for Jonathan. It took him along time to come to grips with the fact that he is gay and that he thinks of himself as a woman. Just learning how to walk with the subtle sexy sway that he does so well took him a long time. If you ever need help on becoming a cross-dresser he recommends a set of four books that will help with every aspect from your hair and wig selection to behaving like a woman. One whole book is even dedicated solely to make up tricks to look feminine. This set of books is entitled *The Art & Illusion: A Guide to Cross-dressing*.

Jonathan is often referred to as a transvestite, but this is incorrect. A transvestite cross-dresses for sexual arousal. Jonathan is a transsexual because his gender identity is opposite to his biological sex. He enjoys dressing in women's clothing because it gives him a sense of physical completeness. He is a homosexual who enjoys dressing up as a woman to attract men. Jonathan isn't trying to fool straight men to convert them. He is a genuinely nice person who wants only to be accepted for who he is. He and doesn't want people to think of him as a man with a disorder.