

Author's Note: This story takes place in Morpheus' Twisted Universe. While stories in that universe are commonly TG stories, this story does not have any TG elements. Still, it is a story of fantastic transformation. Enjoy.

I loved the mall. I loved everything about it: the stores, the noise, and most of all the people. People window shopping; people looking to make one specific purchase and get out of there; people just spending time with other people; people-watching other people. I was one of the latter ones. Watching people hurrying by or strolling by, laughing, looking serious. There was story in every one of them and I found guessing what those stories might be an enjoyable way to spend my time. I had an advantage over other people-watchers. I watched from within one of the shops, behind the glass display case, elevated slightly above the crowds. From my exalted loft, I could look down on the masses and yet I was also completely anonymous. People treated me as part of the scenery if I was doing my job right.

My name is Allison Blanc. I was a senior at Stuyvesant High School. On weekends I worked as a living mannequin in a shop called Bede's Boutique at the mall. Bede's features upscale clothing with a thrift store feel. I got paid to model clothing in the front windows of the store most of the day Saturday and Sunday.

From my window, I could people-watch all day and get paid to do it. Most people ignored display mannequins. Sometimes they would stop in front of me because I looked too natural, which was the point of hiring a living mannequin: to get people to stop in front of the store. Hopefully from there they would walk in and perhaps buy something.

Little kids acknowledged that I was different from other mannequins more often than adults did. When they tugged on their mommy's clothes and said things like, "Why is that lady standing in the window?" it always made me want to smile. A little girl was passing by just now and I gave her a little wave to make her day just a little more magical.

It was Friday night, almost closing time, when I saw Ms Bede entering the store through the mall entrance. She did not usually work Friday night if I remembered her schedule correctly. She paused as she saw me shaking her head. I did not normally work on Fridays either.

Most Friday nights I would visit a friend Robert's house to do some studying and hang but my friends were busy. Dad had not been around this morning before I left for school and was not around when I got home. This usually meant he would be out drinking all day and I did not want to be around when he stumbled home, so I came to work to do an extra shift. Julie, Ms Bede's assistant manager, had given me a hard time but eventually gave me something to wear and sent me out to the window. I had been here since four in the afternoon.

I was almost startled when I heard Ms Bede standing behind me. She said, "Finish up and meet me in back." I guessed she had not wanted me to come in for an additional shift. I waited a few minutes until no one was observing me directly in front of the window. And then I put my arms down at my side, turned on the ball of my foot and strode through the store in evenly measured steps.

Ms Bede was not in the setup room so I went into the changing area where I kept my street clothes. I took off the dress I had been modeling and started putting on my own clothes. Ms Bede entered as I was buttoning my blouse. "Allison," she began. The tone of her voice had me on edge.

"I know it's not my normal work time but I had nothing else to do so..." I said faster than I intended.

"Allison, that's not the problem," she continued. "Allison, you are hard working, punctual, and

determined. But you are not a good living mannequin.”

My heart broke. She continued talking about my flaws: I fidgeted too much, I waved at little kids, I moved my head too much as if following people around the mall. I had heard this list before so I did not really hear it this time. I hoped she had not added a flaw. “I’m going to have to let you go,” she finished.

I said nothing for a moment. Then in another rush, I blurted out, “No, please give me a chance. I can do better. I can be the perfect mannequin. You’ll see.”

She rolled her eyes and stepped toward me angrily, “Perfect mannequin? You? Look, Allison, I’ll write you a glowing letter of recommendation for any job under the sun but modeling. You will never be a perfect mannequin. I doubt you even know what that means.”

“I-”

“No, let me explain,” she steamrolled over me. “A perfect mannequin would be fully customizable without the need for shelves full of parts in the back room. On the display floor, a perfect mannequin would not move unless it was told otherwise. In fact, a perfect mannequin could be programmed to provide details about the clothes it was wearing or to perform complex repetitive natural-looking motions. It would practically be a human-shaped robot. And as such I would not have to tell it a dozen times to stop waving at little girls. Anything I told the mannequin once would become permanently part of its makeup.”

Her voice softened and she continued sympathetically, “You cannot possibly live up to that standard. Nor can you live up to the lesser standard I have been applying to you. You’ve used up your second chances. Finish getting dressed, clean out your locker and come to my office for your final check. I’ll even pay you for today.”

I was about to beg again but she shook her head sadly and my voice caught in my throat. There was a knock and the door to the employee’s room opened. Julie was there and she said, “We have a problem with the register.” Ms Bede left and as Julie closed the door to the employee’s room she smiled and waved to me like I usually waved to little kids in the window. I just stood there unable to move, ironically. After a moment, my shoulders slumped in defeat. I turned around and stared daggers at two naked Model XG3 mannequins standing in the corner. Look at those facile poses, I thought. Legs in a fake mid-stride position. One arm down at her thigh, the other aloft in front of the mannequin so her head tilted slightly upward as her eyes gazed past her hand. Anyone can do that, I thought. “Anyone,” I said aloud.

I stood in front of one of the mannequins and then turned around to stand in the same direction they were. I assumed the same pose, mocking them, “See, you’re not perfect either. Anyone can do this pose. You’re a one trick pony. But I can be the perfect living mannequin. Perfect. I’ll show Ms Bede what she wants to see. Tell me what to do and I’ll do it. Tell me where to stand and I’ll root myself to the spot. Perfect.” My voice faded as I continued muttering phrases like this. I did not notice at the time but my body felt charged. Energy seemed to dance about, there was a smell of ozone, and suddenly I passed out.

* * *

It seemed like I was out for only a moment. But the room was pitch black. I could not move. I could not even tell where I was. Last I remembered I was in the back room at Bede’s when I kind of went a little crazy. Was I still there? Had I been taken away?

Time passed. I think. I could not tell. But after what I think was a few hours lights came on, overhead fluorescent lights like those in the shop. I was still in the back room where I had passed out. But from what I could see I was still standing up. A mannequin's hand, pale and stiff was in the lower part of my vision. It looked like the finger positions found on a XG3 series mannequin but I could not tell where the mannequin would be for the hand to be in front of me.

It occurred to me that I should be panicked but I could not get myself excited or anything. A fleeting thought to leave the back room and see if anyone was outside occurred to me but I dismissed the thought as silly. I could not move a muscle, could not really feel myself, could not shift my eyes back and forth. I could not even tell if I was breathing. And yet I was completely calm. Like this was natural. The idea that it was natural to feel stiff was pleasing for some reason.

After a time, Steve entered. Steve was the only guy who worked at Bede's. He did the heavy lifting, maintenance and janitorial stuff. He looked around and seemed to be sniffing the air. He looked around and uttered, "What is that? Soot?" He was shaking his head as he left and returned with a broom. He was standing just at the edge of my field of vision sweeping something where my feet probably were.

I tried shouting. I tried humming. I tried to make myself fall over. I tried to see if I could project my thoughts into his mind. But none of the attempts were successful.

As he was finishing up, Ms Bede entered. "What's that smell?" she asked.

"I wondering about it myself," Steve replied, finishing his sweeping. "Kinda like ozone and there was some ash here like something burned. But nothing seems damaged."

"When you're finished cleaning up the ash, grab the two mannequins and move them into the prep area."

"No problem," he replied as they exited together. He returned in a minute and walked straight to me. He picked me up like I weighed nothing. My vision shifted wildly and I think he carried me under one arm, horizontally into the next room. In just as disorienting a fashion, he swung me back up onto my feet. He brushed his hands against the top of my head, my ears, and my shoulders. He looked at his hand afterward I saw that there was black on his hand. "More soot," he muttered as he walked away.

There was a full wall mirror in the prep area but I was not facing it directly so I could not see myself. I caught a glimpse of Steve as I was teeter-tottering into the room. But I could not see what I looked like. He entered my field of vision in the mirror heading back into the employee room. As he returned Ms Bede entered as well. "Just put it down there," she said.

"Where do you want the third one?" Steve asked.

"What third one?" Ms Bede asked in surprise.

"There were three mannequins in there."

"No, we only have two mannequins in this style," she said less emphatically as she entered my field of vision, heading for the employee room. A moment later they both left the employee room. Ms Bede seemed confused while Steve seemed triumphant. "I'll have to discuss this with Julie when I see her again." She sent Steve off on another chore and turned her attention to the mannequin standing next to me.

I watched as she pulled off its arms, put a dress over its head and arranged some shoes and necklace on the mannequin before reattaching the arms. She started removing my arms when Steve entered. "Put that one in the front and come back and put this one by the register."

“No problem,” Steve replied, carrying the other mannequin out to the store.

As my arms detached I felt no pain or anxiety. I thought I should have felt shock or fear or panic. But again I felt calm like this was totally natural. As she dressed me and reassembled me I was turned to face the mirror. Reflected back at me was a standard Model XG3 mannequin. No wonder Ms Bede did not know it was me. I looked exactly like a XG3 mannequin. She was straightening a shoulder length black wig when I noticed I was also bald like a stock XG3 mannequin. Where was my hair?

How could this have happened? I had read stories online about magical beings who enjoy mischievous and ironic transformations. Had some fairy decided I would make a good mannequin? Or maybe I had rubbed a genie's bottle without noticing and had made an errant wish? Ha, ha, Imp. You can turn me back to normal now, I thought as loudly as I could.

No imps seemed to hear me or perhaps existed. I did not hear any impish laughter. Ms Bede apparently had not heard me either. She walked away once she was done with me. Usually she would give me words of encouragement. Or remind me not to mess up. Or something. She had said nothing to me the whole time she was working on me. I was a thing to her.

Steve arrived at that moment and carried me out the display room and placed me near the register.

I was a thing to him too. A trifle. Insignificant. A glorified clothes hanger.

My hand was still the primary thing in my line of sight. My head was tilted upward and I could only see the heads of people standing within five to ten feet of me. Beyond that I was looking over their heads. So unless someone was standing at the register, I could not really see anyone. For a people-watcher like me, this was just added torture. I must have died Friday night. This was my hell. What did I do to deserve this?

Time skipped. It seemed when I got bored time would just skip. How long had I been standing here? I had no idea. Was it Saturday? Ms Bede was talking to someone about going home. A little later I heard Julie arrive and she started talking to Sasha, one of the saleswomen. They never stopped talking except when a customer was right there. And when the customer left they found some way to mock them.

“Can you believe that woman thinks that will look good on her?” “She had a good figure, but I wouldn't leave the house with that face.” “Short people should learn that short does not mean young.” “Grandma needs to dress her age.”

They were like gossip magpies. Did Ms Bede know this? I did not think she did. I tried to ignore them and must have succeeded because suddenly a young teenager was looking at me and telling someone that I was wearing the perfect dress for her. When I saw her and her mother buying a copy of my dress a little later a wellspring of pride flowed through me. I guessed making a sale has an effect on a mannequin.

My mood was a little lighter after that and I tried again to figure out how I might have been turned into a mannequin. But nothing came to mind. Neither could I figure out how I might stop being a mannequin.

As I contemplated my lack of choices, the lights went out and I could hear someone, presumably Julie, locking up in the distance. I was about to spend my first night as a mannequin on display. For years, I had dreamed of doing such a thing. Never had I considered how helpless I would feel. Along with a lack of anxiety and a lack of fear there were also no tears for my sadness. A lot of a person's emotional state I guess is tied to their body chemistry. Lacking a heart to race really reduced the effect of dread on the mind.

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I woke up. No, it was not really sleep. I became aware again as sunlight poured into the store from the mall skylights. I remember periods of time crawling by last night as well as becoming aware again after blank periods.

I presumed it was Sunday. Once again the fantasy and the reality of a situation, in this case spending the whole weekend as a mannequin, were not even close to being similar. The store did not open until eleven on Sundays. The light of the sun played across my field of vision. Occasionally the light would reflect off something metallic straight into my eyes. I could not close them but it did not seem to matter as my vision was not affected by sunlight shining right in my eyes. As I had nothing better to do I just enjoyed the slow moving light show for what it was.

Eventually I heard movement in the store. Julie and Sasha were nattering on about some television show they both enjoyed. Over the course of the day, my name never came up at all. Did anyone miss me? I wondered again if Dad had even been home at all to notice I was missing. Not that he would spend a huge effort to find me. He would probably find it easier to wait a few days then raid my room for anything he could sell.

While trying to ignore Julie and Sasha I heard a customer say something about a twisted individual who was sneaking into stores at night. The police were unsure how the individual was getting into the stores or bypassing security cameras but they assumed it had something to do with his trick.

If I could have smacked myself in the forehead, I would have. I must have twisted Friday night. It explained what happened to me. The twisted are people whose ancestors survived a horrific disease called the Antarctic Flu about fifty or sixty years ago. It killed over two million people before the cure was found. But the descendants of those who survived the virus had a peculiar problem. At some point in their lives, usually their early to mid teenage years, most of them would go through a twist. Part of their DNA or something was linked to a quantum thing that messed them up. It could modify, transform or even rewrite their entire minds or bodies or both. In a flash, a future football pro could become a frail, brilliant scientist. A shy bookworm could become a future glad-handing politician. A petite ballerina could end up with the physique of a bodybuilder. Those blessed or cursed with a twist also tended to have odd compulsions that could be impossible to resist. Compulsions could be as benign as never cursing to as horrifying as the overwhelming urge to lick everything they see. Most twisted also ended up with some kind of superpower, called a trick.

But the important thing to know about twisted was that their twist usually happened while doing something new or during a time of stress and the nature of their changes, their tricks and their compulsions were usually directly related to the activities they were doing just before the twist.

I certainly had not been doing anything new Friday night. But my level of stress was probably through the roof as I was imitating the pose of those Model XG3 mannequins. I have heard of some twisted ending up with radically different forms but those forms were always biological. Mannequins are not alive, not even perfect mannequins.

The horror of what I had done to myself would have been too much to bear if I could have acted on it. I had not simply been imitating those mannequins. I was trying to show them I could be better than them. I was striving to become a perfect mannequin and I guess I had succeeded.

I wondered if my being able to think without a brain was my trick. I thought again about the list of characteristics Ms Bede had laid out for what made for a perfect mannequin. High on the list was the ability to obey orders. If I could not move, how could I follow orders?

I had to believe that somehow I was able to turn back into a normal person. As an inert object I could never be the perfect mannequin. I wondered if I would have the face of a XG3 if... I mean... when I returned to flesh. It was not an ugly face but it was not exactly a human face either. It had that weird uncanny valley look to it. And that would not make for the perfect living mannequin. The whole point of hiring a living mannequin was that we did not cause the uncanny valley effect.

What of the other characteristics? Well, I had the “not waving at children” part covered since I cannot wave at anybody. There was something about being fully customizable. I was not sure how I could test that. Maybe that was why I looked like a XG3 instead of my normal self.

Then I remembered the big one. A perfect mannequin would never move while on the display floor. That had to be why I was completely stuck. I was standing in the spot where I was not allowed to move at all. Until Ms Bede decided to change my outfit, I probably could not turn back to normal.

My depression deepened and the day both seem to drag on forever and to go by in the non-blink of a painted-on eye. I heard Julie locking up relatively soon after figuring out I had twisted. Sunday was always a short day at the mall.

This night the time dragged. I never slipped into an unconscious state. I experienced every second of standing in complete stillness. In my youth, I had once tried meditation and decided to give that a try here. Even though I failed with the part where you exhale, meditating worked rather well. I suppose not being able to move made meditating a bit simpler as that was one less source of distraction.

Eventually light returned to the store and Ms Bede was opening up the store. It was Monday morning and I supposed I was not going to school today. With my arm stuck in this semi-raised position, I would have gotten called on to answer every question in all my classes I joked. A small silent laugh filled my head with the first bit of mirth I had felt since that girl bought my dress the other day.

The school would call Dad and tell him I was not in school. I doubt he would actually get mad about that but he would still use it as an excuse to yell at me. At this point having him yelling at me would be better than being stuck as a mannequin for the rest of my life.

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I was having trouble keeping track of the time of day beyond "morning" or "evening". But it must have been afternoon when I heard a familiar voice say, "Hi, Julie, is Allison around?"

It was my best friend Robert. Someone finally noticed I was missing.

"Robert," Julie said sadly. "Didn't she tell you? Mrs. Bede fired her Friday."

"No," he replied. "She didn't come to school today. No one has seen her all weekend."

"I haven't seen her either. Let me go in back and tell Mrs. Bede."

Robert came into view. He was looking right at me. Surely he could tell it was me standing here. I should have told him how much I loved looking at his eyes. They were such a beautiful blue.

Ms Bede must have came out because I heard her say, "She left here Friday night without her school tablet so she must have been very upset. I hope nothing happened to her."

Ms Bede and Robert moved away from the register and I could no longer hear what they were saying.

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Time passed. It was Wednesday afternoon when I heard Julie speaking to Ms Bede. "Doesn't that one creep you out a little? It's too close to the register."

“What? No, it's fine.” Ms Bede replied. “Oh, Julie, that reminds me. Where did we acquire the third XG3?”

“We only ordered two,” Julie replied.

Ms Bede led Julie away from the register and I could not hear their continued exchange. Julie returned a little while later poking around at my dress. After a moment she said, “This mannequin has no serial number.”

“Bring it into the prep room,” Ms Bede said.

Julie picked me up and carried me to the break room. The third Model XG3 was already there, undressed. Ms Bede arrived a moment later with the other mannequin that had been on the display floor. Julie pointed to a clipboard, “See, these two serial numbers are on the inventory list. But this one has no number.”

As soon as I left the display floor I tried to make myself change to flesh. But nothing happened no matter how much I thought about it or thought Abracadabra or thought happy thoughts or imagined clicking my heels together.

Ms Bede said something about her office and she and Julie left the prep room. Once they were out of sight, the next attempt to return to normal worked. In the full length mirror I saw my normal face with black, shoulder length hair. My hair should have been light brown in a short pixie cut. I pulled at the wig but it was not a wig. It felt like I was pulling actual hair and it hurt.

That was strange but I needed to talk to Ms Bede. I left the prep room and knocked on her office door. When she called out, “Yes.” I entered.

“Allison, where have you been?” she asked cautiously, observing what I was wearing.

“Can I speak to you in private?” I asked.

“We'll continue this later,” she told Julie, dismissing her with a wave of her hand.

Once Julie left, I closed the door. “Sit down,” I suggested. “I have a story to tell you.”

She looked at my hair curiously and sat down.

I sat down opposite her and began, “You don't have three XG3 mannequins. I was the third mannequin.”

“How is that possible?” she scowled.

I hesitated a moment before saying, “I think I twisted on Friday night into an XG3 mannequin.” I hesitated because I was not sure how Ms Bede felt about the twisted. Like any group who were different from what was considered normal the twisted were hated by some people. It did not help that some twisted, no more so than the normal population, would use their tricks for evil. It seemed if a twisted person did something it was because they were evil and being twisted was their punishment.

“I didn't think you father was twisted,” was her level response.

“He isn't but my mom died when I was young so I don't know if she was twisted. Dad doesn't talk about her at all.”

“I'm sorry to hear that,” Ms Bede said. “So you twisted into a mannequin? I've never heard of such a twist.”

“Neither had I. But I just spent five days on your showroom floor as a mannequin.”

“So why aren't you a mannequin now?”

“I don't know. I spent my whole time out there trying to change back. But once Julie brought me to the prep room, I was finally able to turn back to a person.” I explained. “I think it has something to do with your telling me what a perfect mannequin is like. You said it would not...”

“...move at all on the display floor,” she finished the sentence for me. “Are you saying you twisted into whatever I said was a perfect mannequin?”

“Maybe. I definitely was indistinguishable from a real mannequin for these last few days.”

“Can you turn back into a mannequin?”

“I don't know,” I said reluctantly.

“Try it. Turn into a mannequin.”

As soon as she said the words, I felt my body get lighter and totally immobile.

“That was sudden. You don't look like a XG3 any more. You look like you as a mannequin. Can you change back?” She asked. She waited a few moments before theorizing, “You didn't change back in the prep room until Julie and I left. I'll be right back.” She got up and left the office.

I changed back with a simple thought when she was out of the room. With a sudden idea, I grabbed a pen and paper and wrote Ms Bede a note before transforming again.

Ms Bede entered and found me seated in her chair as a mannequin. “Now you look like a XG3? Is that a note?” She read the note and nodded before saying, “Stop being a mannequin.”

I switched back to my normal body. “See? I think you can command me to turn into a mannequin and back but I can only do it myself if no one is watching.”

“Why would that be?” she asked, sitting down across from me.

“Well,” I admitted. “You aren't the only person with ideas about what it means to be a perfect mannequin. So some of the rules for being a good mannequin that I have seem to have been incorporated into my twist. A living mannequin actor should not break character while someone is watching them.”

“I'm more worried about my own control of you,” Ms Bede pointed out. “It seems I can transform you just by telling you to do so.” A thoughtful look passed across her face and she picked up a catalog on her desk and opened it to a marked page. “Turn into that mannequin,” she commanded, pointing at a picture of a stylized ebony colored mannequin with only the hint of facial features. “Stay like that for five minutes then you can do what you want.”

I transformed immediately. I could not really see as the mannequin form did not have eyes, just depressions where eye sockets would be. The mannequin also had appeared somewhat flat which made me wonder if I were just as flat. If I was, where did the mass go? I tried to turn back to normal but I found it almost impossible to even think about the concept. After what I thought might be five minutes, the idea formed easily and I was once again human sitting in Ms Bede's chair.

Ms Bede was still sitting across from me. “It seems the idea that you have to be alone to turn back to normal is just in your head since you were able to do it with me sitting here just now.” She passed her cell phone to me and showed me pictures of the flat ebony mannequin I had just been.

“So I am customizable without a shelf full of extra parts, too.”

"That you are," Ms Bede agreed. "I suppose I should rehire you since you did what I said you could not do."

"That sounds like it's worthy of getting a raise," I suggested.

"I'll think about it," Ms Bede said with a chuckle. "But first, you should go home. You need to find out more about being twisted from a specialist."

"Oh, what time is it?" I wondered as I stood up.

"It's almost seven at night," she said looking at her phone. She opened the door and walked toward the employee room.

"That's too late to call the school. And I don't know who can take me to a specialist."

"Well, go home. I'll call your principal, she's a good friend of mine. She'll understand your missing school due to twisting."

When we reached my locker there was nothing inside but my school tablet. "Um, can I borrow some clothes? Mine seem to be missing. And what I'm wearing seems a bit formal."

"Sure," she replied, exiting.

I took off the dress and hung it on a nearby clothing rack. They were in every room of the store but the bathrooms. I took my school tablet out of the locker and checked my messages. There were homework assignments from my teachers and a couple messages from Robert asking me to check in with him. Robert was my good friend for over ten years. He was like the big brother I never had even though I was a few months older than him.

Ms Bede returned with a pair of shoes, a bra, a blouse, and a skirt from the discount rack along with a package of underwear. She left quickly as I was not wearing anything.

I put on all the clothes and tossed the extra pairs of underwear into my locker. The shoes were a bit taller than I liked but beggars cannot be choosers.

She returned as I was locking my locker. She said, "You should get home and catch up on your homework. In fact, I don't want you to come back to work until you've made up the work you missed this week."

"Okay," I promised. "You called the principal?"

"Yes, she wants to see you in the morning before classes."

"Can't wait," I feigned delight.

"Get out of here already," Ms Bede admonished. "No one should spend five days in the store."

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I did some of my reading homework on the bus ride home. Walking the four blocks from the bus stop to the apartment building in heels hurt a little. I was not sure how I was going to replace my shoes. I had to check my hidden stash of money at home.

Dad's old junker of a car was not in our designated parking spot. I climbed the steps to our second floor apartment and let myself in. I went to my room and immediately removed the heels. I was a bit hungry I found some bread that did not seem to have any mold on it and a jar of peanut butter. I made a sandwich and ate it quickly before returning to my room to finish my homework.

Around 10 pm, I decided to shower while Dad was still out. It was in the shower that I noticed my hair was still black like it had been after the wig had been put on my head. My old auburn hair was gone. Even my eyebrows were darker. The new hair washed and dried like my natural hair.

By 11 pm, I was exhausted and realized I had forgotten to call Robert. I sent a brief text saying I was ill the past few days and I would talk to him about it in school tomorrow. I turned out the lights and went to bed.

The next thing I was aware of was someone moving around my room, trying to be quiet about it, but too drunk to notice he was failing. That's my Dad. I felt stiff and could not turn to see him. I must have transformed in my sleep. It sounded like he was near my obvious money stash. This was nothing new. My real stash was not as easily found as the one he was raiding. I think I had left about thirty-two dollars in that stash.

He mumbled, "Damn, bitch. Don't know shit about saving the money I give her." He pulled some of it out and left some of it behind. Then he stumbled back out of my room.

He never cleaned me out. But I doubt there was more than ten dollars left in that stash.

A moment later the light flipped on and he demanded, "Why ain't you snor-- what the fuck is that?" He rushed over to the bed and dragged my body out of bed. "When I get my hands on that bitch... probably out giving some loser head." He dropped me and I bounced off the bed onto the floor. I was staring right up at him. He stared down at me. "You know where she's at? I know she been skippin' school, they called this mornin'." He kicked me in the side and I rolled under my bed.

It did not actually hurt but I was scared to death he would damage my mannequin body. When I heard him storm out of the room, I could not figure out what to do.

He returned a moment later and started moving stuff around, ranting, "Should have kicked her to the curb when she was little and made a clean break."

I returned to normal and turned to see what he was doing. He was shoving my stuff into bags. "Dad," I called out as I crawled out from under the bed.

"Where the fuck were you?" he demanded slamming down the bags he was holding.

"Can we tal--" I began.

"And where the fuck is your hair?"

I reached up to touch my head and it was totally bald. The wig must have fallen off. "That's not important. Can we talk in the morning when you've settled down?"

"No, we can talk right now," he growled. "In the kitchen, now." And he pushed me toward the door.

I sat down in my kitchen chair. He sat down opposite me and lit a cigarette.

"Where you been sneaking out to?"

"I wasn't sneaking out. I've been here since around seven o'clock."

He raised his arm and held it aloft for a moment, "Don't you lie to me. You left that decoy dummy in your bed and sneaked in while I was in your room." He lowered his arm to take a drag.

"That's not what happened. I... I..."

"You, you what?"

"I'm twisted."

"No kidding. You're twisted, and I'm mental. What are-- FUCK!" He stood up suddenly and smashed his fist into the wall. I had never seen him so genuinely upset. He took a long drag of the cigarette and snuffed it out in an ashtray.

"It happened Friday night while I was at work."

"I wonder if that make you eligible for workman's comp?" he fantasized. "So that don't explain tonight. Where'd you get that dummy you had in your bed pretending it was you."

"That was no dummy in my bed. It was me. That was my twist."

"You were the dummy?"

I nodded. "I can turn into a mannequin."

"Show me."

"I can't."

"You just said you can turn into a mannequin."

"I can, but turning back to normal doesn't work if other people are around. So if you want to see me transform, you have to promise to leave or else I can't answer any more of your questions."

"Fine. Show me."

He was lying. I pulled out a chair to sit down.

He pointed at the wall and said, "No, stand over there pretty, like a mannequin then show me."

"Was Mom twisted?"

"Show me your trick, damn it."

I felt a rush in my head like I just had to turn into a mannequin. I felt myself move to the indicated place, turn around and transform. Had he just commanded me to transform and I had obeyed? Perhaps being a mannequin permanently would have been better than having him yell at me.

"Fuck," he said. Then he picked up the bottle of bourbon and poured himself half a glass. For at least half an hour, he just stared at me, drank, and smoked, until the bourbon ran out.

He started mumbling something I could not make out. Then he chucked the bottle in the sink with a crash. He got up suddenly and grabbed me. He half carried, half dragged me to my room. "Fuckin' twisted bitch," he muttered.

With me standing there unable to intervene, he went through my stuff sticking some of it in a plastic garbage bag and chucking the rest on the floor. "Ain't got no daughter no more." I had never had much stuff. He was at least putting clothes in the bag. "Just a fuckin' block o' wood." I had a bunch of books he just dumped unceremoniously on the floor. "Wood don't read." He got to the drawer of underwear and fingered a pair of panties. He came over to me and opened my robe. "Ain't even got a cunt, don't need panties. And wooden tits don't sag." He dumped my panties and bras on the floor.

After spending at least another twenty minutes cursing my whoring ways and trashing my room, he deflated a little and dropped the plastic bag on the floor, spilling its contents on the floor. "Fuck it," he muttered. He turned and grabbed me by the neck, pulling my face straight into his face. Thankfully I did not have to inhale his smokey, alcoholic breath. "And fuck you," he shouted shoving me away. "I

gotta go take a nap. You don't move from that spot until I say so.” He staggered out of the room and down the hall toward his bedroom.

There were no tears but for a long time I just cried inside. I guessed I was going to miss school yet again. Time passed slowly at first as I was too tired to do anything about it. I could not turn back to normal. It was probably around noon when I heard him stumble into the bathroom. Next thing I knew he was standing at the door to my room looking at me with bloodshot eyes. With a dismissive grunt he closed the door to my room.

For three days, he would open the door whenever he got up and then close it again after seeing I was still in my place. The third day, he was wearing his good clothes. That was not good. He only wore them when he was going to pull a con. “Let's see how obedient you are. Walk over here.”

My body betrayed me as it obeyed his command. I silently cursed the gods, fate, and my stupid twist while he gave me several commands each more complex than the last one. Next he told me to become taller, skinnier, and paler. It was weird feeling my body grow. “Make your facial features less distinct. Same with the ears.” My face changed a bit until he said, “That's good.”

I had no idea what happened next because I think he told me to forget a bunch of stuff. I suppose I did. The next thing I knew I was laying down awkwardly in the back seat of his car. He drove the car somewhere and got out. After he got out, he picked me up and set me down beside him. He was holding a remote control for some reason. He leaned toward me and said, “Just follow me in and do as your are told.”

At that point I realized I was standing naked on the street with him. As he stepped into a small clothing store I followed after him. I wanted to look around but I could not move. Dad introduced himself to the store owner using one of his many aliases and pointed at me saying, “Here's the robot we talked about on the phone.”

“So, you said it was better than a mannequin but all I see is a mannequin.”

“Do you have something you'd like it to wear?”

“Yes,” the owner said, heading into the back. We followed him and he pointed to an outfit on a rack.

“How about this outfit?”

“Robot,” Dad said. “Put on the blue dress. And those shoes.”

Of course, I obeyed.

“Can I touch it?”

“Go ahead.”

The owner tentatively touched my arm. “What's it made of?”

“I'm not at liberty to say,” Dad lied. “Robot, let Mr. Deacon pose you.”

The store owner started moved my limbs around. Then he grabbed my body to adjust my legs. He even felt my breasts on purpose just because he could. I could tell Dad noticed and just smiled at that.

“Now you want it in the front window like that?”

“I guess so. Let me go make some room.”

They walked out leaving me to stand around. I still could not return to normal and I just wanted to scream.

Eventually they returned and Dad said, “Robot, go out to the front window and pose just like you are now.”

Again I obeyed. While frustrated, at least I was in a window now. That always made me happy in the past. Right now it just made me less angry. I heard the sound of a cash register. Did he sell me to this shop?

“Robot, you will obey Mr. Deacon only so that he can change your clothes, your pose, or your location in this store. You will only obey him for one week, seven days counting today unless I tell you otherwise.” Dad commanded. Then he apparently turned to Mr. Deacon and said, “See you next Saturday.”

From my perch, I watched Dad walk to his car and drive away. The day passed creepily as Mr. Deacon would touch my ass or my leg every time he walked by. He always adjusted my pose slightly as he did it. But the ass is not the location you touch when you want to raise or lower a mannequin's arm.

After closing he had me walk to the back and try on several outfits in a private fashion show. He even had me walk back and forth as if on a runway. Thankfully he never told me to look at him as I think he was masturbating.

Eventually he sent me back to the front window and left. The street I was watching was fairly busy. The shop seemed to be located in a downtown area where people preferred the small local shops. While I was in the window I was calm. I watched the people walking about and would try to guess where they were going. Every now and then I would think about how I should not be here but that thought would not take root. It was fleeting. I would feel a warmth of pleasure when people noticed me in the window. I never had the urge to wave at the little ones.

The street bustled with activity up until around midnight and then the streets were basically empty until sunrise.

Sunday were a repeat of creepy Saturday except that creepy Mr. Deacon left early on Sunday and his assistant closed the shop, no after hours fashion show this night. Overnight, the bustle died down a little earlier and soon I was alone with no one to watch.

Without warning, my body started moving. It was an hour or two after midnight and I found myself walking to the register. I opened it up and stacked up the money inside. I raised my dress up and opened a compartment in my stomach. I watched in shock as I placed the money in the compartment and closed it, the compartment disappeared, the door was not even a dimple on my skin any more. I closed the register and straightened my dress. I returned to the window and resumed the pose I had been in before my little excursion.

So this was Dad's angle. Shop owners pay to rent me and I steal from them. Great. And who knew I could add a door to my torso and store stuff inside. This must have been what he told me to forget.

Monday was not exactly like the first few days. Mr. Deacon called the police. They interviewed all the employees. I think the guy who closed the shop Sunday night was fired. The police asked about surveillance cameras but Mr. Deacon admitted he did not have any. I guessed Dad spent some time looking for places without cameras when he picked this place.

Thankfully, Mr. Deacon was too busy interviewing for a new assistant manager to spend much time groping me. Saturday arrived and Dad showed up around noon. Mr. Deacon said he could not afford to keep me there, probably because he had been robbed Monday morning, so Dad ordered me out of the clothes I was wearing and ordered me into the back seat of the car. A few minutes later he finished with

Mr. Deacon, got in the car, and drove away.

He pulled into a parking lot several blocks away and had me open by stomach compartment. He took the money out and had me seal myself back up. He also had me change my look, darkening my skin tone, rounding my face a bit, changing my eye color, and removing my wig and showed me a picture of a mannequin with a solid plastic hairstyle that would require a lot of hairspray with real hair. He had me duplicate the solid hair in a brown color.

He drove to the other side of town and took me into another clothing boutique. An hour after escaping Mr. Deacon I found myself the possession of Mrs. Wilson, standing in her window modeling a pantsuit.

Mrs. Wilson did not grope me. But she would pose me in overtly sexual poses. One time I was bent forward with my hands on my knees and my lips puckered up for a kiss, my right hand suggestively poised to slap my own ass. Another time I was wearing a loose blouse and she had my right arm pulled back, hand on hip in such a way that my right breast was poking out of the neck line. The posing antics stopped Tuesday morning when I robbed her cash register early that morning after midnight. She got into an argument with her assistant manager about the lost money and the assistant manager quit.

I figured out that Dad had me wait until the owner was not around during closing to do the robbery. That way whoever closed that night before would be blamed.

Mrs. Wilson did not pose me again until Friday morning when she had me pose in a more traditional way. Dad arrived around noon again. That was only the second time in all the time I have known him that he was punctual. The first time, of course, being last week at Mr. Deacon's store. Soon Dad had taken me back to the apartment and emptied my torso of the stolen money. He commanded me to go stand in my room and not move at all.

My room was still a mess from when he had wrecked the place. But what caught my attention was the two other mannequins in the room. Why had Dad acquired other mannequins?

Shortly after sending me to my room, Dad left the apartment. Nothing happened Saturday and before I knew it, it was Sunday afternoon. There was a tapping on the window of my room. The window opened and a teenage boy with dark hair and a rumpled overcoat stepped into my room. It was Robert, my best friend from school.

"Allison," he called out in a whisper. He eyed the three mannequins in the room and looked at them thoughtfully. He called my name several more times before searching the rest of the apartment.

I wished there was some way to tell him to tell me to turn back to flesh. Or some way to tell him I was standing right in front of him. But then I remembered I did not look like me. I was just one of three random mannequins in my room.

He came back and poked through some of my clothes on the floor. "If she ran away, why didn't she take any of this stuff?" He asked no one, shaking his head from side to side. His face showed that he had similar questions about why some things were in plastic bags and some things were strewn about the room. After a few minutes his shoulders slumped in dejection and he left the apartment the same way he arrived.

"Nooo!!!!" I screamed over and over in my head. I silently vented my frustration at the world, my father, the fucking Antarctic Flu, and everything else that had ever wronged me. When I reached my mother's death I stopped and felt the anger drain out of me, replaced by an overwhelming guilt and sorrow. "I'm sorry, Mom. I know it wasn't your fault."

Four or five days later, maybe it was six, I did not care, Dad delivered me to a store out the suburbs. It

was a couple of hours in a car staring at the faded ceiling of the car. He said something about not wanting the police to notice a pattern but I was not sure if he was actually telling me his plan or just talking to break the monotony of the hundred fifty mile car ride.

He said some other stuff and then told me to forget it. It made me wonder what I might be stealing this time. When we arrived he left me in the back seat as I presumed he went into the store to negotiate a deal. Eventually he came out to the car and told me something and had me forget it immediately. Then he had me follow him into the store where he presented me to my new rental owner. Before Dad left he told me to obey Mr. Vaughn for thirty days, but only regarding movement, poses, and getting dressed.

That was when I went from depressed to livid. I knew he hated me but to leave me as someone's fucking puppet for a month just blew my mind. I had not moved on my own or eaten or done anything human aside from put on and take off clothing for a month already and now I had another month of the same to look forward to.

Mr. Vaughn was oblivious to my emotional outburst as he picked out an outfit for me to wear. Eventually he gave me some commands and sent me out into his showroom to stand in his front window.

Over the course of the next couple weeks, a routine developed where I would stand in the window for two or three days between clothing changes. There was not as much hustle or bustle on the street this store was on. Mr. Vaughn closed around 7 p.m. and did not open until 11 a.m. so I spent a lot of time alone in the store. On weekends, he would pose me with other mannequins. The first weekend I spent hugging another mannequin from the side. That was a striking display I guessed since a lot of people were intrigued by the sight of a mannequin hugging another mannequin. It was something one did not normally see.

Mr. Vaughn also had a tendency to talk to me. He would greet me in the morning, "Good morning, Amy." I did not know where he got the idea I might be named Amy. He would mention innocuous things like the weather or something that had happened in town the night before. I wondered if he were lonely since he ran the store by himself most days. Begrudgingly, I came to respect Mr. Vaughn. He was a nice person and very artistic. That made me dread the coming theft that I assumed was going to happen. I was somewhat surprised it had not happened already.

In the third week -- it might have been a Thursday; I had lost track of the day -- my nocturnal theft commenced. It made me nauseous, or at least as nauseous as a mannequin could get. I hated having done that to this guy. And it was his wife who had locked up last night. So I felt twice as bad that what I was doing might affect their marriage.

I walked from the window in the early morning hours to the register and opened it. It was empty. I was surprised but apparently dear old Dad had thought of this as I left the show room and went to the back office. I opened the bottom desk drawer and found a key. In another part of the office was a lock box. I unlocked it and found an envelope with money in it. I put it in my torso as usual and put everything back where I found it, including me in the window. Dad must have seen Mr. Vaughn take money from this lock box and told me about it before bringing me in.

The next few days were uneventful. I guess they had not noticed the envelope was missing. Realizing that they did not even know they had been robbed made me feel even worse about it. My depression returned and I lost track of the days after that.

One afternoon, Mr. Vaughn commanded me to walk to the back and my body did not respond. "C'mon, Amy, let's head to the back room." He tried several times, wording the command slightly differently

each time before saying, "I guess that thirty day rental did expire." As he walked away he muttered about a missed pick up appointment.

The thirty days were over? I mused. Dad missed the appointment to pick me up. Typical. And since I could no longer obey Mr. Vaughn, I was not even going to get the pleasure of being undressed and redressed again until Dad showed up.

A few more days passed and Dad had still not picked me up. But what made me really want to cry was when Mr. Vaughn gave me a friendly greeting this morning and mentioned the date. It was the day after my birthday. Not only had I missed celebrating my birthday, I had not even known it was my birthday.

That afternoon, Mr. Vaughn carried me into the back room and struggled with getting my dress off. I was in an evening gown standing like a rich society snob considering a piece of artwork. My legs were shoulder width apart, my hip shifted to the right. My right hand was on my chin with my head tilted to one side. My other hand was pointing at the imaginary artwork, indicating some part of it that I was considering. In the window display I had actually been pointing at a small cottage in a painting of a grassy plain with several plots of land dotted with cottages.

Since he could not take me apart, my arms were posed horribly for getting the dress off. It would only have been worse if they were straight out the sides. Mr. Vaughn persisted and eventually the dress was sliding off my pointing arm. He had to reattach my wig to my head afterward.

The shop bell rang and he left me here naked to take care of the customer. Out of habit I tried to return to normal and succeeded. I heard something hit the floor. The air smelled of citrus with an undertone of mothballs. That was the first breath I had taken in over two months. It was sweet and delicious and I squealed with delight. I looked down and saw the envelope of money. The distant conversation in the show room stopped and I realized what I had done. My heart raced. I kicked the envelope under a table and posed myself again. With a sigh I turned back into a mannequin just in time to see Mr. Vaughn enter the back room. He looked around for a moment and even asked me if I had heard anything. Then he returned to the waiting customer out in front.

My thoughts were a jumble. I could move but I was still trapped in the store. I could not really tell Mr. Vaughn I was sent in here to rob him by my evil father. I could not just sneak out the door with no money or clothes. I could not risk being here when Dad returned. I could not understand why changing back had worked this time. How long had it been since I had tried to change back? I thought I had tried a few days ago. But I wondered now whether I had.

As I debated my options, the shop door bell jingled and shortly after that Mr. Vaughn returned. He was carrying a bikini which he put on me. With the ties tied he stepped back and shook his head, "As I suspected, that pose looks ridiculous in a bikini." He went to the stock area and came back with a plush shark and held it up in the direction I was pointing. "Oh dear," he said in a mock posh voice, "there's a shark. Jeeves, take care of it." In a British accent, he flatly intoned, "Right away, ma'am."

I would have laughed so hard I would have cried, if I could. It was not really that funny but stuck in a store window as I have been I was not exposed to much humor. He added a white wrap as a shawl and returned me to the window display, including the shark. When he walked away, I wondered if I could move or not. I was on display so I did not try as I did not want to explain what I was doing in Mr. Vaughn's window. I would have to wait until tonight and hopefully tonight I would find a way out of the store.

The display was a big hit. People who noticed at a minimum smirked at the funny mannequin fearfully backing away from the plush shark. For the first time in months I was enjoying my time in the window,

probably because I knew it would end when I wanted it to end. And then the thought of leaving made me melancholy. Where would I go? How would I get there?

That night confirmed I was stuck again. I had figured I would not be changing back again until I was alone in the back room so I was not disappointed confirming this. Well, a few more days in a window would not kill me, I guessed. I spent the time trying to understand what was going on. Why was I able to move again in direct disobedience of Dad's prior commands? I did not discover the answer until the next day when Mr. Vaughn said hello and mentioned the date. The date. It was after my birthday. I was eighteen years old now. I was an adult so I no longer had to do what Dad wanted. I was a free person, or mannequin as the case may be. That also meant it was late-May and I was not going to finish school this year.

A couple days later, Mr. Vaughn approached me muttering, "It can't hurt to try." When he got closer to me he said, "Amy, walk to the back room."

I did not feel compelled to obey him. But I suddenly realized that did not mean I had to disobey him. I was walking to the back room as soon as I had that thought. I could choose. Mr. Vaughn was ecstatic that I was doing what he said. So I had to make sure he understood I decided when to obey. The first pose he said to assume, I did not do. When he chose a different one I obeyed. By the time I was redressed and back in the window he was not issuing commands so much as asking me if would not mind doing things. For the first time in months I actually felt human.

But as fun as that was, I still obeyed him when he had me go back out to the window since I still had no idea what I would do if I left the store.

A few days later, Mr. Vaughn brought me to the back room near closing time. After he had me undress, his phone rang and when he hung up he said, "Sorry, Amy, no time to get you back in the window tonight. First thing in the morning." He then locked up and left.

I stood there for an hour or two thinking about my escape. This was my chance. I returned to normal and sneaked into the show room to find something to wear. There were a few casual choices to choose from and I picked out a long skirt and a blouse. I grabbed some hosiery. But shoes were the real problem. Vaughn's did not sell shoes. There was some pairs of flip flops near the bikinis and that would have to do. I had no id and no money. I looked at the lockbox. I opened the drawer where the key was and under the key was an envelope addressed simply to Amy. I took out the envelope and opened it. Inside was a letter and two hundred dollars.

Dear Amy,

I'm not entirely sure what your involvement is but I believe you are innocent. A man was arrested a few weeks ago for renting a robot mannequin to a store and having the robot steal money from the store overnight when no one was around. He did this to two different stores and I suspect I was his third victim. But you didn't rob me. Maybe it was because you glitched for that period of time while you did not obey me. I don't know. But I suspect one day I will come in to the store and you won't be there.

I have no ill will for you. My wife keeps a pair of shoes in the left side draw of this desk. Take them since we don't sell shoes. Take something to wear. And take the two hundred dollars in this envelope. There's a street map with the local bus and train stations circled under this envelope in the main draw. I hope we meet again someday as equals.

Signed, Julian Vaughn.

I opened the desk draw and saw a pair of flats. They even fit me. I pocketed the envelope. The map was

also necessary as I had no idea where I was. I moved to the rear door. It would automatically lock behind me so I opened it and checked that it was locked when I was outside. And with that I made my way to the bus depot.

Waiting for a bus to depart to my hometown was not easy. I had not slept in months. And I was getting hungry. Around five in the morning a coffee place opened and I had a cup and about three bagels. Within a few hours I was back in town but I had no idea where to go. The bus actually stopped at the mall and I departed. Bede's Boutique was open and I walked in.

"Well, look what the cat dragged in," Julie said. "You and your pop are a piece of work."

"I didn't do anything."

"Sure, you aren't a robot. You're a mannequin."

"That's enough," Mrs. Bede said as she entered the showroom. "Let's talk in my office."

I followed her to the office and told her my sad tale.

"When you didn't show up for school I was worried about you. Then you disappeared for months. As soon as I heard why your father was arrested I figured out what happened to you, you poor girl. Let me call my lawyer and make sure you don't end up a victim to your father's antics again."

With her help, Ms Bede and her lawyer accompanied me to the police station to explain my part in my father's crime. We were worried I might be named an accessory. But the district attorney decided I was a victim and did not charge me with any crime. In fact, they asked if I wanted to press charges for kidnapping against my father but I could not do that. I did not want to see him ever again and pressing charges would have meant seeing him at a trial. I guessed he would be too stubborn to take a plea deal.

Unfortunately, the super of our building had already cleared out the apartment and rented it to someone else. Thankfully, my friend Robert had sneaked in and gathered my stuff before the apartment was cleaned out.

Robert's mother offered me a temporary place to stay and I am working on making up all the school work I missed. There will be a few summer classes required so I will miss June graduation. But I should graduate by the end of the summer.

As summer began, I was able to start working for Ms Bede again. I had not turned myself into mannequin on purpose at all in the interim time. Though, I would automatically turn into a mannequin when I slept. As I earned enough money, I would send money to the stores I robbed with an anonymous apology note.

When I was done, I was ready to send my final two hundred dollar repayment to Mr. Vaughn. But I did not think I could do it anonymously. I saved up for a bus trip and told Robert and Ms Bede I was taking a week off. When I got to the shop it took me twenty minutes to get up the nerve to go in. Before I entered I noticed there was an empty space in the window where I use to stand.

The door bell chimed and a familiar voice from the back called out, "Be out in a minute."

I looked around the store. Some of the displays were different but otherwise it was just as it had been when I left. Hearing his voice, I lost my nerve. I put the envelope on the counter and headed for the door.

As it opened he called from behind, "Amy, wait?"

I stopped in the doorway and turned slowly to look at him.

He was holding the envelope. "I know you're not actually named Amy. But... but I'm glad to see you got your life back."

"I did."

"I heard about the man who used his own twisted daughter as a tool for robbery. I did not know what to do with you since you had stopped responding to my commands. And then when you did respond it seemed like you were in charge of yourself again so I figured you could leave whenever you wanted to. So I played along at being your manager."

"I was kind of confused those last few weeks."

There was an awkward pause.

"Well, thanks for returning the money. You didn't have to. In fact, here, take it back. Consider it payment for those weeks you were confused."

"No, I don't want to owe you anything."

"I said it was a payment." When I shook my head he said, "How about a gift?" Then he said, "How about a down payment?"

"Hm?"

"I'd love to have you in my window again. Even if just for a day. The money could be payment for that."

"That's worth at least three days."

"Sold," he said. "If you want."

"You have to promise to put me in back and leave the back room when the time is up."

"I promise."

"How do you want me to look?"

"Like you do now." He gathered some clothes from a couple racks and said, "Here, put these on and come back so we can figure out a pose."

It felt unusual to dress myself. I had been a mannequin for Mr. Vaughn for over two months and yet this was the first time I was dressing myself as a human. When I was ready, I came out and he made a pose that I should assume. When I looked how he wanted me to, I turned into a mannequin. "Perfect," he said.

He spent the day chatting at me and said goodnight at least three times before closing the shop. I was feeling happy spending the night in his shop. The next two days went by rather quickly and soon he was closing the shop. Afterward, he took me in back and left the room without a word. I shifted back to normal and called out, "I'm changing back into my normal clothes."

"Okay."

When I was changed I stepped back out into the showroom. "That was rather pleasant, Mr. Vaughn."

"I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did." He handed me the envelope I had arrived with a few days ago.

"It was. If I didn't have school to finish, a steady job, and friends a few hours away I'd ask if you were hiring."

He pulled out a business card and handed to me. "You are always welcome here, um, Amy?"

"I might make that my mannequin name." I said with a laugh.

He smiled.

"But you can call me Allison. I'll give you my phone and email if you like."

"Maybe I can convince you to fend off a shark again in the future."

"Maybe," I said and walked toward the door. "Good day, Mr. Vaughn."

"Good night, Allison."