The Mannequins

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Mike sneaks into a department store after hours, up to no good. He did not count on just what goes on in a department store late at night. Have you ever felt like the mannequins are watching you?

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Chapter 1

The Mannequins

Mike had planned for everything. He had snuck in the secret backdoor, crossed the storage room and just had to slip through that door to get out to the store itself. All that was left after that was to make his way over to the video games and he'd get his hands on it: Viridian Chasm. Finally!

The door to the store floor came out in the girls' department, which meant he had to walk past racks of girl clothes as well as tons of photos of smiling girls in dresses, swimsuits, school uniforms. He felt more and more out of the place by the moment. He tried to hurry, but also knew how easy it would be to lose his bearings in the dark store.

"This place is freaking huge." He muttered to himself a few minutes later, baffled by the fact that he still had not found his way out of the girls' department. It had all seemed so simple when he had been planning this, but he had never really thought about the fact that the backdoor let him in through a part of the store he did not know all that well. Still, he had time, right? It was barely even ten.

He shuddered as he saw a few mannequins up ahead. They were creepy enough in the daytime, so the shadows over their faces only made it worse. Why did they have so many details anyway? Other stores, the mannequins didn't even have heads. Here, they might as well... he didn't even finish the thought. That was way too creepy.

Mike made a face at them as he walked past a pair in dresses.

The sign said sundresses, but he did not really know the difference. They were less frilly than the dresses up ahead, he thought.

"I gotta hurry up." He muttered to himself. Why was he even thinking about things like this? He looked ahead and saw the end of the rows upon rows upon rows of girl clothes. He was nearly free. He just had to get past...He froze by the girls in the over-the-top frilly dresses. He could have sworn he just heard a cough. Shit, what if he got caught? He knew it was possible, but his youthful confidence always denied it. Now that he was in here, trying to sneak over to the video games, he almost felt like he could get caught. He chuckled a moment later, brashly certain that whatever danger was imaginary and had already passed. His gaze fell on the mannequins in front of him.

He could not fight the urge that suddenly possessed him to lift up the dress of one of the mannequins, though his hand shook with fear as he reached out. What if she grabbed him, he thought nervously. Peeking up, his curiosity was overwhelmed by a masculine revulsion to anything frilly. He backed away, but could have sworn he heard a soft, offended gasp. No, it was just the vent high overhead coming on. A blast of cold air powerful enough to ruffle the dresses of the mannequins came down and he realized he was running out of time.Turning from the mannequins, he heard footsteps and his heart began to race. His mind raced just as quickly, thinking up everything from vengeful ghosts to zombies. He heard what could only be a cough and realized it must be some sort of night watchman. Shit! He had to start thinking,

and quick! He practically dove behind a display as he saw the beam of a flashlight drawing near. He curled up into a ball, trying to make himself as small as possible, certain his pounding heart would give him away. He heard an adult voice drawing near, singing softly under his breath. He dared a peek out and saw the night watchman, white earbuds visible even in the perpetual twilight, singing along to his music. Just a few seconds more. "Whew." He whispered as the watchman left his sight."Alright," an unfamiliar voice said, almost sounding just as relieved as the boy. "He probably won't come back for a few hours.""Good!" Another voice said. "I want to meet our new friend." He slowly got to his feet. Where were those voices coming from? It took him a moment to realize that the two mannequins he had been hiding behind were looking right down at him.

"Hello!" The blonde said with a friendly smile across her plastic face."Ugh. What is she wearing?" The brunette mannequin said, eyeing him."Be nice! She can't help it." The blonde looked back at him, stepping down onto the floor. "I really don't know why the factory is always pushing the whole tomboy thing, but we'll get you all prettied up in a jiffy.""Is that the new girl?" A third mannequin came over. She was wearing a sundress and had yellow ribbons holding her dark hair in pigtails. "Yeah! Can you believe what she's wearing? Almost as bad as that sweater and skirt you arrived in.""Yeah, total tomboy, but we can fix that.""What?" He stammered, suddenly finding his voice. This couldn't be real! "I'm not a tomboy! I am a boy! Like a human boy.""A boy?" The trio all laughed. "Why would they put a boy mannequin

in the girl department?""What!? I'm not any kind of mannequin!""Oh, she's probably still a little confused. Coming in on the truck gets you all jostled and rattled." The sundress mannequin walked over and took his hand. The plastic was cold as she took a firm grip on his hand. "Come on! We've only got a few hours, let's get you dressed for your grand debut!" He tried to tug free of her hand, but it was no use."I think she's too factory fresh to walk." The brunette said. "Let's carry her.""No! Stop, let... let me go!" The mannequins seemed to have super strength, easily lifting him off of the floor and carrying him along, seemingly not even noticing his efforts to escape their clutches."How are we gonna dress her?""Isn't it obvious? She was in the party section, so she must have to wear a party dress, right?""I am not a girl!" He yelled."Shh, do you want the guard to hear you?""Maybe we should tape her mouth shut." "No, don't!""Then do you promise to be quiet?""No way! You... you...""Alright," the sundress mannequin said in resignation. "Let's tape her mouth shut.""It's only for a little bit." The blonde explained as they pulled tape over his lips. His eyes bulged out of his head as it sunk in just how trapped he was."Now, let's get you dressed. On the plus side, this pretty much totally counts as a tour of the department.""First stop, panties!" The eager mannequins carried the struggling, mumbling boy under a sign that even in the dark store seemed to glow with its bright pastel 'panties' label."Let's get her undressed." He tried to kick, to punch, to do anything, even bellowing against the tape on his lower face, but there was no use as the girls effectively removed his hoodie, t-shirt,

and jeans. They stopped and stared at what they found underneath."Is... is she wearing boy underwear/""Don't be silly." The dark-haired sundress mannequin said. "Boys wear boxers. Those are... tomboy panties.""Oh, like you know!""Well," the blonde said. "Whatever they are, they're not right if she's going to join us in the party dress display." She smiled kindly at their captive. "Bloomers or panties?""Oh, please! Put me in pretty, pretty panties!" One of the mannequins said in an over-the-top high pitched voice, gripping his hair on the back of his head and moving it back and forth. The mannequins all giggled."I've got just the pair and a training bra to match.""Training bra!?" He could not say why that particular phrase came through the tape clearly."Yeah, I know. it says girl department, but we're really more like young ladies." They all smiled at him proudly."Well, I'm not wearing one.""It wouldn't work with your sundress." The other two reassured her. I'm dreaming. He thought. I have to be. There was no way he was standing in the middle of a department store in nothing but his underwear and socks as mannequins threatened to dress him up like a girl. There was no way!

"Where are you going?" Almost before he had even taken two steps, the brunette grabbed his wrist. "You can't run around in just your socks and whatever those are." She pulled him back. "Alright, girls, let's quit dilly-dallying and get our new friend all set for her grand debut!"He kicked, punched, and screamed against the tape over his mouth, but it mattered very little to the mannequins as they replaced his underwear with panties and a training bra. They were less frilly than

what he had peeked at under the blonde mannequin's dress, but certainly nothing he wanted to wear!"We'd better add tights." The dark-haired sundress mannequin said as she appraised their work. "Poor dear's got boyish legs.""She really doesn't mean anything by it, dear." The blonde replied, patting his arm reassuringly. "The factory made you the way it did and that's that."

"And she's right, tights will be perfect for you." A moment later, he found himself being carried roughly out of the panties section, now the less than proud wearer of a pair of white tights in addition to his new underwear."We got a late start, so we'll have to do a fashion show tomorrow night." The brunette explained as they carried him back to the party dresses where they had found him. "Clyde, that's that night watchman, is the worst. He's so slow!""But I know just the dress for you!" The mannequins moved so fast, he barely even got to see what they had before his entire world became soft pink material as the dress cascaded down over his head."Oh! So lovely!" The trio exclaimed as they looked him over. Why was he the only one in pink? He wondered glumly.

"You look so pretty already!" The brunette exclaimed, excitedly hugging him. The cold plastic felt especially weird against his skin as he blushed all over. He looked -- and felt -- every bit like a boy in a dress. He batted at the tape over his lips, hoping that there was some way, any way!, to get them to hear reason. Great, he thought. I'll just plead with a bunch of living mannequins to see reason. "Give us a twirl!" The black-haired sundress mannequin said. He shook his head. The trio laughed."Aw, she's bashful!""Well, we've got to get

her ready still. We need shoes and to do her hair." The blonde giggled. "Just imagine how confused they'll be tomorrow when they come in to find their new 'active girl' mannequin all pretty in pink!"

"Confused? They'll be delighted!" The brunette exclaimed. "Especially when they see how drop-dead gorgeous we make you!""We're running out of time though." The sundress mannequin said."That's fine." The blonde said, taking charge. "You go grab her shoes. Some nice Mary Janes, of course. We'll take her to do her hair." She looked at him and he realized just how empty the mannequins' eyes were. Creepy! "Since it's just the two of us now, we're not carrying you." She said firmly.

"So, how about we run there?" The brunette suggested."That does sound fun!" Before he knew what had happened, each mannequin had taken a hand and began to run, dragging him between them, all three of their dresses bouncing and fluttering as two pairs of shoes clip-clopped along the linoleum floor. As the girls giggled, he felt almost overwhelmed by the sheer girlyness of the situation he found himself in; wearing a bra and panties, tights, and a dress! How was he going to get out of this? A moment of clarity presented the answer: he would wait until morning. Surely the mannequins would stop moving then and then, he would escape. What was he even worried about? "Haircare!" The brunette declared as they slid to a stop in front of a display of ribbons. He felt his stomach clench, but he almost laughed at himself. He had just gotten his hair buzzed for summer. It was barely an inch long. What could they do with that? His

stomach clenched again as he realized they had not mentioned a thing about it, even with how much they had been talking about him being a girl. "Sit down, sweetie." The blonde said. "You've been bald for so long, but your new sisters will have you sorted out real quick!" Bald? That could not be good. He had to act fast! Rather than sit, he turned and made a break for it, his feet in their tights sliding across the floor and impeding his progress, his dress rustling as it swished around his thighs as he tried to run. Where was he going to go? He would decide that later, he figured. Right now, he just had to get free.Remembering how a girl ran in some movie, he grabbed the skirt and lifted it up, delighting in spite of himself as it made him move faster. Whatever it took, he thought as he heard the mannequins giving chase. Inspiration struck as he spied the familiar sight of the boys' department ahead of him. He charged forward, nearly falling flat on his face as he finally reached it."Hey!" He almost cried in happiness as a pair of boy mannequins emerged from the racks. "No girls!""I'm" he realized he still had the tape over his mouth. He ripped it off, the boys sneering as he yelped. "I'm not a girl! I'm a boy, like you."

"You came from the girls' department." He nudged his partner, who wore a dinosaur hoodie and looked a few years younger. He walked forward."Dress, tights. Blech.""They dressed me like this!""Hmm." The older mannequin said. He wore shorts and a basketball jersey. "Why would they put a boy mannequin in the girls' department?""I'm not even a mannequin! I'm human. Hey!" He spun around as the boy in the dinosaur hoodie lifted the back of his dress. "She's

wearing girl underwear." He reported. "One hundred percent girl.""I am not!""You can check for yourself.""Naw, it's fine. Look, I don't know what games you girls are playing, but you really gotta keep it down so Clyde doesn't come out. He's on lunch right now, I think, so we gotta be careful.""She's probably new.""Yeah, you don't even have your hair yet." He grinned. "Oh, that's it, isn't it? Send the new girl over and see if you can..." he sauntered over, looking him over. "Your mouth was taped. so they probably figured, we'll send her over and fool the boys into thinking she's one of them. Then you can, what? Steal a kiss?""What are you even talking about?""Come on, let's escort her back to the girls." The pair grabbed his arms and began to drag him back the way he had come. His feet slid effortlessly across the floor, even as he tried to kick and scream."No wonder they taped her mouth shut." The smaller mannequin observed.The girls were waiting for them at the edge of the girls' department, looking almost relieved as they saw the boys' captive. "Home sweet home." The bigger boy said, still holding Mike's arm. "Oh, but we don't want you to lose your game, right?" He smiled and slipped a hand behind Mike's head. The girls all giggled and Mike squirmed desperately as the mannequin kissed him square on the lips. "She's all yours." He said to the girls, stepping away."Oh, you poor dear!" The blonde said, rushing over."He kissed me." Mike said in disbelief."Yes, but look how rumpled your dress is!" Mike was still frozen as his self-appointed caretakers took his arms and twirled him so that his dress righted itself. The boys standing a short distance away scoffed."They really thought she'd pass for a boy?""Here,

let's get her shoes on." The dark-haired sundress mannequin said. Mike found himself hoisted into the air again as a pair of shiny patent leather Mary Janes slipped onto his feet. "You really have lovely legs." The brunette said to Mike. "Next time they do a ballet display, I bet you'll be picked!""I don't want to be picked! I am a boy! A human boy! I'm not a mannequin and I'm definitely not a girl!" The mannequins just shook their heads. "You'll feel more like yourself in a minute here, dear." The brunette said. "Now that you've got your shoes on, all that's left is your hair." He looked around nervously as he realized that there were now far more mannequins around him. Girls in dresses were in the majority, but there were a few in swimsuits, a few sporting pajamas and nightgowns, even a pair in school uniforms."Our new sister had a bit of a scare in the boys' department." The blonde announced to the gathered crowd."But she got a kiss!" The brunette declared. A litany of giggles washed over Mike.
"So, who wants to help hold her still while we get her hair on?""You make it sound so scary. We're just keeping you company, sweetie." "What... what's happening?" Mike asked as he felt something warm getting slathered on his head. It smelled like a chemical."It's just a little glue." The dark-haired sundress mannequin said. "To keep your pretty new hair on. Oh, you'll just love it!""Glue!? No, stop! Don't!" He could take the clothes off once morning came. He hoped he could, at least, but a glued on wig? That would be a problem. He tried to yank his hands free, but it was no use. The mannequins were stronger and there were almost a dozen of them and only one of him.He sat there numbly as they

stepped away and he saw himself. Long blonde curls cascading down the shoulders of his pink dress, his white tights-clad legs emerging from under the voluminous skirt before ending in shiny leather Mary Janes. His own parents would hardly recognize him!"Oh, you are just precious!" The blonde exclaimed. "You were probably dreading arriving and getting stuck playing soccer or skateboarding or whatever that outfit was, but you must feel so much better now, huh?""I... I don't... I" Mike could not even speak."There's no need to thank us, sweetheart! We love doing it!" This led to a long line of mannequins hugging him and welcoming him. How did none of them notice he was warm when they were all cold plastic? Could... could they not feel? That made sense, not that any of this really did."Shoot, it's almost morning." The brunette said by the time they had all finished welcoming Mike. "We better get back!""You're finally gonna let me go?" The blonde and brunette who had first found him laughed.

"Come on! We'll show you where to go!" Once again, Mike found himself being led by the hands back to where he had first met them. This time, however, they kept hold of his hands."We'll pose like we're dancing.""Five!" A few voices called."Quick. Like this!" They posed, holding Mike's hands.

"Four!""Three!""It's almost time!" Sure is, Mike thought. His plan was in place. As soon as the mannequins froze -- that's what they had to be counting down to, right? -- he would grab his clothes, flee to the storage room, and figure out what to do about his hair.

"You'll be fine." The brunette said, seeing Mike's nervous

face. "We're really just falling asleep.""And tomorrow night, we can try on lots of pretty things. Won't that be fun?""Two!""One!""Sweet dreams, everyone!" Mike watched as the mannequins' faces glossed over as they returned to... nonlife? Sleep? What had even happened? Mike tried to pull his hands free. The mannequins weren't even holding them that tightly anymore. He tugged, but his hands would not move. He could not even move his fingers! What... what's going on? He thought. His vision seemed to blur and he felt as if he was drifting off to sleep.