

DRESS FOR SUCCESS
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He had classmates at Fun Junction. Classmates riding rollercoasters, eating churros, and getting drenched on the log flume. Another group was at the zoo, taking dumb pictures of each other standing on one leg in front of the flamingos.

And Sage? Sage was touring McCutcheon Insurance.

It wasn't a punishment, it just felt like one. Luck of the draw. Some classes got fun teachers who organized fun shit, and Sage got boring Mrs. Palmett, who wanted her students to experience the thrill of a corporate office.

"Why's an insurance company need security like this?" Sage whispered to his friend Julia, as they lined up to go through metal detectors.

"I guess maybe the people they turn down could try to do crazy stuff...what's that word? The thing people file when their house burns down-

"Claims."

"Yeah. People mad about their claims being turned down. That's my guess."

"Makes sense," Sage agreed. "This is gonna suck."

"Yeah," Julia said, then she reconsidered. "Or no! Maybe it'll be interesting. At least we get lunch."

"I'm never even hungry," Sage sighed, pulling the drawstring of his sweatpants tighter around the bones jutting from his hips. Saggy pants were definitely not an issue for the security guard overseeing the metal detectors, a big old jacked guy with a belly like a strongman competitor. His skin was wrinkly and red, though when Sage got closer in line, he realized a lot of the wrinkles were just big veins. Veins on the man's forearms, his temples, even across the exposed part of his chest.

Sage plopped his keys, wallet, and phone on the conveyor belt and walked through the metal detector. It beeped, and he backed up with a sigh as more of his peers walked through while he took off his belt and sent it through the belt too. But once again, the metal detector went off.

"I don't have any more metal on me..." Sage said, looking down at his sneakers as he felt in his pockets for loose change.

"Might be this," the guard said, pointing a thick finger at the metal zipper of Sage's hoodie.

"You want me to send it through?"

"Ain't goin' inside otherwise," the guard said.

Sage turned around and was confronted by an empty floor on the other side of the metal detector. All the students had now been cleared except for him, and were milling on the side talking to each other and playing on their phones as they waited for the last straggler. With reddening cheeks, Sage dumped his hoodie on the conveyor belt and walked through the metal detector.

No beep.

He exhaled in relief and waited for his hoodie to roll through so he could join the group. He slid his belt back on and shoved his items back into his pockets, but after thirty seconds, the hoodie was nowhere to be seen. Then the belt stopped moving altogether.

“Come on, Sage,” Mrs. Palmett said in her husky drone.

“Scuse me, uh, do you have my sweatshirt?” Sage asked the guard.

The guard’s brow furrowed and he looked at the screen. “Sweatshirt? There’s nothin’ more in there. Empty.” He swiveled the monitor so Sage could see.

“But I just put it through...like...just now,” Sage said.

“That it?” The guard pointed to a pile of pink fabric at the end of the conveyor belt, the only item left.

“No. It was black.”

“You sure? I remember you taking this off.” The guard picked up the fabric and unfolded it across his barrel chest so Sage could see what it was: a business shirt the color of cotton candy, with white buttons.

“That’s definitely not mine.”

“Your initials S.I.D.?”

“Whoa, yeah. How’d you-”

The guard held out a cuff of the shirt - it was a weird kind of cuff, Sage hadn’t seen it before - but embroidered near the edge was ‘SID’ in blue thread. Sage Indiana Daniels.

“Weird coincidence if it’s not yours!” the guard chuckled.

“SAGE,” Mrs. Palmett said louder.

Harried and embarrassed, Sage grabbed the dress shirt from the guard, slung it over his arm, and shuffled over to the group. "Sorry," he mumbled to his teacher, and Julia gave him a sympathetic look as the students gathered at the elevator.

"Now," Mrs. Palmett said to everyone, with her typical severity, "remember that this is a place of work, not an amusement park."

"How could we forget," Sage whispered under his breath.

"Do not bother any of the workers, or cause a ruckus," Mrs. Palmett continued, her finger raised. "You are to be respectful, courteous young men and women, listening to our tour guides and asking questions only when it's polite. We are guests, this is not our home, so do not behave like it is." She pressed the elevator button, and the doors opened.

It was immediately clear to Sage that the whole group would not fit on the elevator. Mrs. Palmett strode on first and motioned for the students to collect around her like a mother hen, but after seven bodies got on it became clear that two trips were required.

"I will see you up on the tenth floor," she said to the remaining group, which included Sage. "Come RIGHT upstairs and we will be waiting. Remember, the ten-

The doors shut on her mid-sentence.

Sage chortled. "Why's she acting like we're gonna run around in here like chimpanzees? We're not twelve."

"The only running I'm tempted to do is out the front door," another kid agreed, and the remaining group laughed.

"What is this?" Julia asked, touching the dress shirt hanging from Sage's arm.

"The guard made me take it. He lost my hoodie and gave me this."

"It feels really expensive," Julia said, taking a pinch of the fabric between her fingers. "The fabric is nice, we studied stuff like this in Sewing. What's the brand?"

Sage looked inside the collar at the tag. "Bespoke?" He showed Julia the small strip of silk sewn inside the shirt that only said, "Made Bespoke for S.I.D."

"I guess it doesn't say," Julia said, combing a lock of hair behind her ear. "Bespoke means it was made for you. Those are your initials, right? I forgot your middle name was-

“Don’t say it out loud,” Sage hissed. Stupid hippie parents giving ‘Indiana’ to him for a middle name. WHY would they do that? Just cause his mom was born there was not a good enough reason. Before anyone around them could ask what it was, he changed the subject. “I’m cold.”

“Put your shirt on, then,” Julia shrugged, putting her hands in the pocket of her own hoodie.

“It’s not my shirt! *This* is my shirt,” Sage said, plucking at his gray tee. “This one must belong to some guy who works here.”

“You can still put it on, you’re literally shivering,” Julia observed. “They really are pumping the a/c in here.”

Sage did not want to put the shirt on. He was worried his classmates would think he was trying to dress up for the office visit, which was the exact reason he’d worn sweats. Jarick Ryerson wore a polo tucked into his khakis and everyone roasted him for it on the bus over, and Sage was not about to be that guy. But the frigid blast of the air conditioner was getting to him, so he slid the dress shirt on and left it unbuttoned over his t-shirt, like a jacket. It was baggy.

“I feel stupid,” he grumbled. “What are these, Miss Fashion?” He held up his wrists toward Julia, displaying the ends of his shirt sleeves.

“Cuffs?”

“But they’re *weird*.”

“Oh, they’re French cuffs, I think that’s what they’re called. My uncle wears them because he works in finance, and I guess it’s a finance thing, or just fancy. And these are cufflinks.” She tapped her fingernail against the silver piece of jewelry stuck through the folds of fabric, and Sage inspected the accessory. It was a silver square with a bold blue stripe down the center, and the other side had this little...rod-type thing that held the fabric together. It was way dressier than just a simple button.

“Great. That’s what I want to look like, your uncle.”

“My *rich* uncle,” Julia teased, as the elevator finally arrived. “Maybe you can sell the shirt and the cufflinks online? They look really nice.”

Sage hadn’t thought of that. He certainly had no use for cufflinks - did *anyone*? - and they did look valuable. Maybe this wasn’t such a bad day after all, he thought as he folded his arms across his chest and leaned against the elevator wall. The students stood in awkward silence as the lift ascended, all unwilling to talk when forced into such close proximity, so Sage just hung his head and looked at his French cuffs and the cufflinks that were going to make him some money. ‘*SID*.’ What were the odds, someone in this office had the same initials as him? Sage just hoped he didn’t run into the guy...or the girl. Sage tensed up. This wasn’t a woman’s shirt,

was it...no, it couldn't be, the buttons were on the right side, and the waist didn't curve inward like girl's shirts always did. He relaxed as the elevator doors opened to reveal the rest of the group waiting for them.

"Finally, all together," Mrs. Palmett said. "Everyone, this is Miss Ingalls, she's the office coordinator and will be giving us a tour today."

The young woman on Mrs. Palmett's right waved and told everyone to make a name tag for themselves. The group walked to a table strewn with markers and sheets of white square stickers. Sage waited until a marker freed up, then bent down to scrawl his name. He felt the dress shirt squeeze against him, and straightened up when he noticed the shirt somehow was buttoned over his chest. When did that happen? Must've been in the elevator...he undid the two buttons so the shirt hung open over his t-shirt again, then wrote 'SAGE' in big red letters and slapped the name tag onto his tee.

Miss Ingalls began with a short history of McCutcheon, how they were one of the biggest employers in town, what they specialized in, blah blah. Sage couldn't think of a topic more boring than insurance. He distracted himself by playing with his cufflink, inspecting how it worked. The connecting part swiveled so that you could slide it through the buttonholes in the cuff, then flip it back down to fasten everything together. It was actually kind of cool. Sage had never seen a cufflink before, but he could imagine they were good conversation starters.

"Sage," Julia said, and Sage noticed the group was on the move. He hustled to catch up and once again felt the shirt squeeze against him, but he couldn't look down until he stopped at the room where the group was standing. Miss Ingalls was talking about something significant for the town that happened in that meeting room, some contract that was signed, but Sage was looking down at his shirt. The two buttons over his chest were connected again. Someone had to be messing with him, but how? He once again opened the buttons, admiring the sparkle of his cufflink as he did so, and this time he moved to take the dress shirt back off. He felt too self-conscious wearing it. But his t-shirt seemed to be stuck to it...he started freeing one arm from the sleeve and felt himself pulling off his tee, too. Unable to do much more without disrupting the group - and risking Mrs. Palmett's wrath - he left the shirt on.

An office worker walked by in a white shirt, and Sage idly watched the guy pass instead of listening to Miss Ingalls. The worker's shirt didn't have French cuffs, so apparently they weren't required here. But he'd look better with them, Sage thought. Cufflinks certainly dressed up an outfit. The guy felt Sage's gaze, so he looked over and nodded politely, and Sage nodded back.

The guy walked on, leaving Sage looking at his own blurry reflection in an opaque glass wall. If it weren't for the glass being warped, Sage would've thought his shirt was moving on its own. But then he *felt* it moving, and he looked down with a jump to see the dress shirt now fully buttoned over his torso.

Sage's heart raced. A ghost? Was that it? Some ghost insisting his buttons be buttoned? He yanked at the buttons over his chest and pulled them open, exposing bare skin instead of the t-shirt he'd expected to see. The gray tee he'd had on was gone, absorbed into the pink formal shirt he now had no choice but to wear. He felt insane. It was such a noticeable, random change that it made him feel like his life was spiraling out of control, while at the same time making him wonder why he was so panicked. He knew it was just a shirt, and that it didn't really matter in the scheme of things, but something wasn't right. He didn't know how to bring it up to his friends or to his teacher without sounding unhinged, either. So he stood in silence, rubbing his thumb on the surface of his cufflink to keep himself calm, wondering when he could change out of this stupid dress shirt. Maybe there was a gift shop where he could buy a t-shirt? No, dumbass, insurance offices don't have gift shops...

He looked at his bony fingers resting on the buttons of his shirt. His hands looked so small and insignificant when flanked by such giant cuffs. French cuffs were so in-your-face. Aggressive, just like the oversized cufflinks. They were worn to attract attention, which was the exact thing Sage wanted to avoid.

Needing reassurance, he moved next to Julia and whispered: "Do I look dumb?"

She gave him a weird look and glanced up and down. "No!"

"You promise?"

"Literally fine, you look like a little businessman. Shh!"

"I don't wanna look like a businessman," Sage grumbled, but because Miss Ingalls was still talking, he left it at that. He knew Julia was being honest though, which made him feel a little bit better. So he stood and listened to the tour, gently rubbing the dress shirt's silken weave with his palm.

And for ten minutes, everything was fine. Sage even found part of what was being said to be mildly interesting. The tour guide had a whole section about the craziest claims they'd gotten, like from a bride whose beach wedding went wrong when cinders from a nearby torch blew onto her dress and set it on fire, and the groom carried her into the ocean to douse the flames. She was fine, the dress was not.

But then Sage put his hands on his hips to stretch, and he felt something odd: his shirt was tucked into his sweatpants, and he couldn't untuck it. There was something holding it down. A quick prodding with his fingers across his thigh identified the likely culprit, some sort of strip of elastic around his leg and metal clips holding onto his shirttail. It held his shirt so tightly tucked that there wasn't a single wrinkle on it. And he couldn't very well reach into his pants in the middle of this office to unbuckle this weird device, so he was once again stuck wearing something that he hadn't put on.

Sage spent the next ten minutes formulating plans of how he could escape the clothes he was inexplicably imprisoned in. Maybe one of the other guys had a t-shirt in their backpack and he could change in the bathroom. That was the easiest solution, if he was lucky. Otherwise he'd have to ask Mrs. Palmett if he could leave and find a store so he could change out of the dress shirt. That would take some real sweet-talking, and there needed to be a store close enough. At the very least, he needed to sneak to the bathroom, take off the clips keeping his shirt tucked, and make his outfit look more casual somehow. He just felt so *contained*. He was used to wearing soft, formless clothes - loose t-shirts and cotton sweats. To have a tailored dress shirt tucked in so tightly he couldn't take a deep breath, and big cuffs weighing down his wrists, and a tall collar rubbing against his neck...he didn't enjoy it. It made him feel stiff.

"All right," Miss Ingalls said, clapping her manicured hands together. Sage's mood brightened. This had to be lunch! "You're going to be dividing up into groups to meet individual McCutcheon employees, hear about their roles and responsibilities, and ask them questions."

Sage held back his groan, but only barely.

"You'll be in groups of three, which I have PRE-SET," Mrs. Palmett said, hitting the 't' in 'set' like she was mad at it. She began reading the names aloud, sending the corresponding students to the waiting employee down the hall.

"Brittney Childers, Whitney Childers, Sage Daniels - you'll be with Mr. Englund."

Sage once again had to fight back audible despair. Not the Childers twins! The girls who never shut up. On the plus side, that meant he wouldn't have to talk much. He followed the two blond girls down the hall to where Mr. Englund, the McCutcheon employee, had waved them over. They stepped into a small meeting room with four chairs.

"I should've dressed up more!" was the first thing Mr. Englund said, and he was looking straight at Sage when he said it. He was wearing a blue Oxford shirt tucked into jeans. "I'm John Englund," he said, extending his hand to Sage.

"Sage Daniels, pleased to meet you," Sage said with a crack in his voice. The twins next to him giggled as his cheeks turned red, but Mr. Englund didn't mention it.

"Beautiful shirt, Sage. Takes a confident man to wear cufflinks! Where'd you get it?"

"The shirt? Oh, uh..." What was the word Julia explained to him? "Bespoke. It's bespoke." He was sure he was pronouncing it wrong.

"Even more impressive! The pants are great too. Brooks Brothers, right? I have a pair just like them."

“No, they’re...” Sage was going to say Target, where he’d bought his sweatpants. But he wasn’t wearing sweatpants. He was wearing tan wool trousers with razor-sharp creases down the front of each pant leg. A brown leather belt with a gold buckle held them up around his waist and affirmed the unyielding tuck of his dress shirt. “They’re...th-they’re...” he stammered, voice cracking more from his confusion and nerves. “Sure, yeah - Brooks Brothers-”

“Cufflinks and Brooks Brothers! You’re a real old-school businessman, Mr. Daniels,” John teased, turning his attention to the Childers twins to introduce himself to them. Sage didn’t listen to them because his head was swimming. He nearly collapsed into the office chair, his shirt pulling tight against his back thanks to its tuck. His legs bobbed nervously, the elegant wool of his trousers rubbing back and forth. He didn’t want to be dressed like this - in fact, he HATED being dressed like this, and there was nothing he could do about it without seeming like a crackhead. He didn’t wear or own business clothes, and if he did, he wouldn’t wear these kinds. He’d be in jeans, like John Englund, not these uncool slacks that made him look like an old man.

“I’m a Business-to-Business Marketing Strategist, at the VP level,” John said. “I focus on designing and executing McCutcheon’s strategic approach to small businesses - basically, I try to make us appealing as an insurance provider to other businesses, instead of individual customers.”

The twins were smiling and nodding as if they had a clue what any of this shit meant. Sage didn’t even know, and he knew he was smarter than the Childers girls. But John talked in long sentences and used a *lot* of big words. Sage thought it was cool that the guy wasn’t just some low-level insurance salesman, but there was only so much John could do to make his job seem like it wasn’t boring or corporate. Maybe his job wasn’t *entirely* boring - though it was definitely *pretty* boring - but it was corporate as hell. He literally had “Corporate Vice President” as his job title.

John rambled for fifteen minutes about his role, telling a few stories about trade shows or marketing campaigns, while Sage drifted in and out as he worried about his formal clothes. But after the twins asked a couple questions, Sage realized the room was silent, and that he seemed to be expected to say something.

He leaned forward, scraping his cufflink on the meeting table. “Do you like your job?”

John raised his eyebrows. “Good question! I do! People don’t usually ask so directly. But I do like it.”

“What’s the best part of it?” Sage asked.

“The people, which is a cliché answer but it’s true. Work sucks if you don’t like your coworkers, I know from experience. McCutcheon hires nice, collaborative people, and they’ve let me grow in the areas I’m most passionate about. And honestly, the pay is pretty good. I’m happy here.” Mr.

Englund looked through the glass window of the meeting room, where Miss Ingalls was motioning to him to wrap up. “Oh, looks like we need to get going. Any other questions?”

Sage and the twins both shook their heads. All four stood and headed toward the door, Mr. Englund stopping to shake the twins’ hands before making his way to Sage. “Gucci!” he said to Sage.

“Uh, yeah, everything’s Gucci,” Sage said awkwardly. People didn’t really say that anymore but he didn’t want the guy to feel-

Mr. Englund laughed. “No, your loafers. Gucci!”

Sage’s heart sank. He looked down at his sneakers, and sure enough, they weren’t sneakers. They were brown loafers with gleaming gold horsebits across the top. Sage had no idea if they were Gucci - Gucci was really expensive, right? - but if Mr. Englund said they were, he was probably right.

“I love your style, man. So old-school. You’ll have to give me tips someday!” Mr. Englund pumped Sage’s hand in an aggressive handshake. “You have a good one, Mr. Daniels.”

“You too,” Sage said weakly, walking strangely thanks to his sudden awareness of the dress socks and expensive shoes on his feet. The horsebit loafers *clacked*. Sage was mortified. It was like having a bullhorn announcing his arrival as he walked down the hall. He tried to think about how he could make some money selling the cufflinks and Gucci shoes online after this was all over, but the bizarre circumstances surrounding his acquisition of them dulled his excitement. When he joined the group of reconvening students, he could feel judgmental eyes on his outfit. He didn’t blame them, he would’ve done the same if someone else turned up in French cuffs and dress trousers. He wanted to explain it wasn’t his fault, but there was no way to, so he kept quiet and waited for his chance to break away.

His stomach, however, did not keep quiet. It let out a low, long gurgle that turned several heads his way, heads that then saw his formal business outfit too. Sage put his hands in his pockets and looked at the floor as his stomach continued to growl. He’d been so distracted by his clothing that he hadn’t noticed his growing hunger. And now he, the boy who was never hungry, was starving.

“I think we’re all ready for lunch,” Miss Ingalls said to the group, talking a bit louder to cover the sound of Sage’s stomach. “If you’ll all follow me, we’ve had catering set up in the common area.”

Sage caught up to Julia as the group began to walk. “Look at this crap!” he said, pulling on his pant legs. He walked on his toes so his loafers didn’t clack against the floor.

“Oh my god, I told you, you look *fine*,” Julia said. “Palmett will probably give you extra credit for dressing up like an executive.”

“I never dress like this!” Sage insisted. “Why am I dressed like this?! I look like an old man.”

“You do not, calm down. Whoa, are those Gucci?”

“I don’t know, they just *appeared*,” Sage said, thrusting out his foot to look at his designer shoe. “Do you think they’re like... *Gucci Gucci*? Like I could probably sell them?”

“I’m not an expert on if they’re real or not, they just look really nice. Did you buy them from Gucci?” Julia nearly walked into a wall as she continued looking down at Sage’s feet.

“I didn’t buy them!” Sage was exasperated. “They just appeared!”

“Well, whatever, they look nice. Just own it, what else can you do?”

“I wanna change clothes. I look like a nerd.”

“Nerds don’t dress like that! You look classy.” They turned the corner to see a spread of sandwiches and salads beneath a sign taped to the wall that read, ‘DON’T TOUCH - FOR SCHOOL TOUR!’ The group was already lining up, paper plates in hand. Sage grabbed one and waited his turn, eyeing a particularly large turkey club that he hoped no one else took before him.

Sage heard someone say “Excuse me sir?”, but didn’t realize he was the ‘sir’ being addressed until he felt two taps on his shoulder. There was a slender guy in a shirt and tie standing next to him. “You don’t need to wait in line, we have your meal for you.”

“For me?”

“Yes, it was requested in advance. We have it set up in the private area where it’s less noisy.” The man took the paper plate from Sage’s hands and set it down, then guided the young student out of the common area and around the corner to a small room that required a keycard to access. The room had two red leather booths like a restaurant, with windows and blond hardwood floors. At one of the booths was a silver platter with a dome on it, which the man quickly removed to reveal a huge, juicy steak the size of the entire china plate on which it sat. Next to it on the tray was a caesar salad with croutons, and two Diet Cokes in glass bottles with the caps already removed. “Bon appetit!”

“Dude, I think you have the wrong guy, I don’t think this is for me-”

“Your initials are S.I.D. right?” The man looked at the embroidered monogram on Sage’s cuff, then pointed to the small place card on the tray that said “FOR S.I.D.”

“Well...yeah...but-”

“Then enjoy your steak, sir. I’ll leave you to it.” The man smiled and left, shutting the door behind him.

Sage stared at the shut door for a few moments, confused and nervous that the real S.I.D. would walk in and ask why his - or her - steak was being eaten. But when a minute passed and no one burst in, Sage sat down on the seat and looked at the food. It smelled incredible. The plate said “The Palm” on the rim, which was a really fancy hotel and restaurant nearby - had they brought this in from there? They must’ve. Wild. Sage wondered if he’d ever eaten nicer food.

There were three white linen napkins folded on the tray. Sage put one across his lap, then realized it would probably be good to protect the dress shirt since it wasn’t his, so he tucked another napkin into his collar. That *really* made him feel like an old man, but at least no one was here to see it. He’d still have to eat carefully to make sure nothing got on his beautiful cuffs, so he cut the meat gingerly, the serrated steak knife sliding right through and revealing a hefty strip of pink inside. Sage took a piece on his silver fork, dipped it in the provided red wine sauce, then placed it in his mouth.

“Mmmmm...” he groaned aloud, this time a happy groan. The steak practically melted on his tongue. The sauce was perfect. Suddenly, the day was good again. He took a bite of salad, a swig of soda, tastes all swirling together in his mouth. Everything was delicious, but the steak was the obvious highlight. He cut a bigger bite and savored it before gulping it down, feeling the hefty piece move down his gullet. He was glad he was alone, liberated from the worries about his clothes, or from trying to force conversation with his classmates. Some of the guys definitely would’ve tried to steal some steak, too, and he was not about to share something this incredible. This was all for him. Sure, it was a massive slab of beef, but Sage was decently confident he could eat it all. He hunched over his tray, sticking his neck out to minimize the risk of staining his clothes as he shoveled steak into his mouth. His bites got progressively larger as he focused solely on eating, allowing himself to smack his lips together and, if the bite was too large, even chew with his mouth open. He probably looked like a cow chewing its cud, he thought, which was ironic since he was *eating* a cow.

The salad was good too, especially the croutons. Sage never gave much thought to salad in general, but the lettuce was crisp and the dressing wasn’t overly fishy. Even the Diet Cokes were ice cold. This was a really good lunch. So good that when he noticed how much of the steak was gone, he felt a twinge of disappointment. The more plate that became visible, the slower and more methodically Sage ate. He wasn’t going to waste a moment with this divine meal.

After taking the final bite, Sage polished off his second Diet Coke and leaned back in his seat thoroughly satisfied. He raised his arms above his head and stretched, though the tuck of his

shirt limited the movement, and then he unleashed the loudest belch he'd ever heard himself make. It caused him to burst into amused laughter at himself as he removed the napkin from his collar. He noticed that at some point his shirt's second button had come undone, exposing more of his chest, so he closed it back up and surveyed his tray. He'd eaten everything. There wasn't a drop of soda left in the bottles. The plate and sauce dish were so cleaned, they almost looked like they'd gone through the dishwasher. The only evidence of his salad was a single shred of parmesan, which he picked up between two fingers and popped into his mouth.

"*Goddamn*, that was good," he said out loud, drumming his hands on the table. Then he realized he should clear his place, so he stood up to do so, feeling a slight wave of dizziness from getting up too quickly. He picked up the tray and looked around, but couldn't see anywhere in the room to deposit it, so he set it back down and opened the door. Thankfully, he didn't see any of his classmates before he locked eyes with the same guy who'd set him up in the room. The skinny guy had to be some kind of assistant, because he hurried right over when he saw Sage looking around.

"Are you all finished, sir?" he asked, and Sage looked down at him in confusion. Hadn't they been the same height...Sage looked at the sole of one of his loafers and saw they had a slight heel. Maybe that was why.

"Yes, all done," Sage said. "I didn't know where to take the dishes."

"Don't worry about that, sir, I'll handle them," the man smiled. "I hope you enjoyed it?"

"Dude, it was literally the best lunch I've ever had," Sage said. "It was so good. Thank you."

"You're very welcome, sir. Would you like your cigar now?"

Sage blinked. He thought he'd misheard. "My what?"

"Your cigar."

"Oh, uhm, I...well, uh..." Sage stammered. He didn't know what to say. "Smoking is allowed in here?"

The man chuckled. "No, those rules haven't changed! You would need to go outside."

Outside! This was his shot to sneak away and get new clothes! Sage couldn't believe his luck. "I'd love to have my cigar now," he nodded, having no intention of smoking one. He'd never smoked a cigar. If there was a special method, he didn't know it. But if it got him outside without having to ask his teacher for permission, he'd happily pretend to be a cigar smoker until he was left alone and could slink off to a t-shirt store. "As long as it doesn't get me in trouble," Sage added.

“In trouble? No, I don’t think anyone minds. Is this the right one?” The assistant produced a long, thick cigar out of his jacket pocket and thrust it under Sage’s nose.

Sage recoiled, but not before he inhaled and smelled...livestock? A barnyard? The thing smelled like a farm. Was that how cigars smelled? Sage didn’t know why he’d felt a stir in his crotch when he smelled the cigar, but he knew he wasn’t going to smoke it, so he lied. “Smells great!” he choked, turning to follow the assistant down the hall to the elevator bank, which mercifully meant he didn’t have to go past his tour group.

Sage expected the man to walk away once the elevator button was pressed, but upon the car’s arrival they both got on, and Sage wondered how long he’d be chaperoned. “You’d like me to cut it for you, yes?” the assistant asked, producing a small metal device from his jacket pocket.

“Cut it? Um...sure?” Sage had no idea what that meant, so he watched with curiosity as the man guillotined the tip. Then his eyes drifted to his reflection in the plexiglass coverings on the elevator car’s walls. The second button on his dress shirt was open again, and when he reached up to close it, his hands brushed against his stomach. It was bloated from his big meal, and when he turned to the side he could see it arching outward over his belt buckle. It was only an inch of projection, barely noticeable, but it was the first time Sage had seen his stomach have any dimension to it. He placed his palm on his stomach and wondered if it could jiggle, but it was hard to the touch. Honestly, it was probably just gas, Sage thought to himself as the elevator arrived at the ground floor.

As they walked out of the elevator, Sage could see the main doors of the building leading outside to his freedom. But instead of heading toward them, the assistant turned to the left and walked around the elevator bank, heading to the back of the building. Sage hustled to catch up. “Are we not going out front?” he asked innocently.

“Don’t forget the building rules!” the assistant said. “No smoking in the front. They told everyone to do it in the courtyard.”

“The courtyard?”

On cue, the assistant hit the crash bar on a large, windowless door, which opened out into a leafy area. Sage followed and felt his shoulders slump immediately: the courtyard was in the center of the building, fully internal, with doors leading back inside on all four sides. It offered a nice view of the sky, but no direct exit to the outside world.

“Confirming you’d like me to light it for you?” the assistant asked. At Sage’s forlorn nod, he put the cigar in his mouth, took out a lighter, and toasted the stogie on all sides before lighting it. Once it was solidly smoldering, he handed it to Sage with a friendly smile. “I’ll leave you to it,” he said, and with that he finally went inside and left Sage alone.

Sage looked at his hand clutching the cigar - probably incorrectly, he thought - and the chunky French cuff under it. That was kind of a cool image, he thought. His cuff was so rigid, so stiff, but surrounded by the freeform white smoke curling off of the cigar's tip. He noticed the end of the cigar was the same size as his cufflink, both larger than he expected them to be, not that he was an expert. Slowly, uncertainly, he raised the cigar to his mouth and placed it between his lips. Was he supposed to put it between his teeth? He wasn't sure, so he didn't. He remembered reading something that said not to inhale when smoking a cigar, so he sucked in his cheeks, let the taste roll around his mouth, then blew out a stream of pretty white smoke. He felt cool until he coughed from the strong flavors: spice, leather, maybe chocolate?

There were windows inside the building looking down into the courtyard, and Sage wondered if any of his classmates would walk by and see him smoking. If it was going to make them jealous, he hoped they saw. Even though everyone knew smoking was bad, it did look cool. And Sage felt cool doing it, even if he was wearing dorky clothes. He put his hands in his pockets, twisting his wrists so his cufflinks stuck out, and looked at his reflection in one of the ground-floor atrium windows. With the cigar in his mouth and a plume of white smoke covering his face, his reflection looked like that of a slender, elegant businessman. It chubbed him up, and the hardening of his member made him think about how phallic a cigar really was. He took it out of his mouth and looked at it, smoke floating around his French cuff. "So dope," he grinned. He wondered if the clothes that he resented were actually the reason for all this special treatment; that the building employees had seen the kid in the beautiful dress shirt and gorgeous designer shoes and thought he was somebody important. *He* knew he wasn't important, but in this moment - alone, smoking a cigar, dressed like a bigshot - he let himself pretend he was.

The courtyard had a stone bench, but there was dirt on it, so Sage didn't sit. Instead, he put one foot on it and leaned on his thigh, trying to teach himself how to smoke a cigar. He thought he was doing a good job with it. It felt natural. And he enjoyed identifying all the different tastes he encountered the longer he smoked - within the leathery spiciness, notes of grape and cream also popped up. He reached between his legs and pulled on his inseam, which was bunching up...his pants actually felt kind of tight across his butt, which was funny since he had no butt to speak of. And with his leg elevated, his post-lunch bloat had enough heft to fold slightly over his belt buckle. But since Sage was alone, he felt less embarrassed about these things. Once he went back inside, he'd check them out. For the time being, he could enjoy the plumes of smoke pouring from his mouth and curling into his vision. He really liked cigars, it turned out!

One drawback was how long they took to smoke. Sage checked his watch and realized he'd already been outside for fifteen minutes, and the cigar was barely a third gone. He'd thought this would be a quick break, then he'd be back in...side...

He nearly dropped the cigar as he flipped his left wrist back up to his face. His *watch?! Why was he wearing a watch?* He didn't even own a watch! And he'd never heard of this brand...Breitling? He'd google it later. The watch was really nice. And heavy. Brown leather strap with a silver face. It looked fucking cool nestled under the French cuff, matching the silver cufflink and the drifting white smoke...

Sage took another long drag off his cigar and accidentally made a smoke ring as he exhaled, a phenomenon he tried and failed to replicate. He gave that up and instead made a game out of keeping the ash from falling off the tip of his cigar, lifting it carefully to and from his mouth. His hands looked good today, which he knew was an odd thing to think. But they looked strong - not a word he ever used to describe himself. He took long looks at them as they drifted in and out of his vision with each draft off his cigar. His fingers weren't spindly like he remembered, they were thick and stout - just like the cigar they were gripping - with broad knuckles and clean fingernails. Veins bulged across their backs, twisting like vines up to his fingers and down into his sleeve. He had man hands. Strong, forceful mitts perfect for handshakes and back slaps.

He didn't want to question it, but he knew his hands hadn't looked that adult earlier. He remembered how goofy his soft little hands looked when compared to the aggressive masculinity of his cufflinks. They didn't look like that anymore. His big, muscular cuffs were matched by big, muscular hands. Muscular hands that clutched his cigar like it was a cock, spewing forth manly essence in the form of smoke.

His erection annoyed him. He was worried about all the odd happenings of the day, and here he was pitching a tent in his trousers. Stupid teenage adrenaline and hormones. That would need to calm down before he went back inside. If he was facing his peers dressed like he was, he was not going to be sporting a chubby at the same time. He hoped the guys would be jealous of his cigar, at least. And that he didn't get in trouble with Mrs. Palmett for smelling like one. It wasn't a *bad* smell, but smoke was smoke.

Speaking of getting in trouble, though Sage liked the cigar and wanted to smoke all of it, he'd been away from the group a long time. Turned out cigars took *forever* to smoke. Maybe if he was with a buddy it'd be different, but alone, the time passed slowly. Unsure of how to proceed, he walked over to the door, listening to the *click-click-click* of his leather soles on the concrete, and opened it.

Somehow he knew the assistant would be there waiting. The guy was leaning against the wall on his phone, but straightened up as soon as he saw Sage. "Am I supposed to smoke-" Sage stopped and coughed, his throat gunky from the cigar, but nothing dislodged. His words were like a frog's croak. "Am I supposed to smoke all of it?"

The assistant looked surprised by the question. "No! Or yes! Whatever you want, really. Feeling finished?"

"Yeah, I'm - *ahem!* - feeling like I should get back upstAIRs..." Sage forced out another cough. "...and get some water."

"Sure thing. Want me to get rid of that?" The man extended his hand for the cigar.

“Just a moment.” Sage walked back outside and took one last loving drag off the cigar, blasting out a cloud of white smoke that he relished walking through as he inhaled it into his nostrils and mouth. With his back to the man, he pawed at his boner to hide it as best as he could, surprised by the rough strength of his hands. Then, he turned back and gave the cigar away. “Okay,” he said.

Sage looked at the front doors of the building as they walked back to the elevator. So close, yet so far. He had to admit he liked some of the beautiful clothes - especially the cufflinks and the watch - but he didn't like standing out among his classmates. Plus, even if he did buy a tee to replace his dress shirt, he'd still have the formal trousers and loafers to deal with, and he didn't have the budget to buy a new pair of shoes. So he followed the man onto the elevator and watched the doors close, cutting off his escape.

It was a silent ride back to the tenth floor, except for the thoughts roaring in Sage's head. The plexiglass in the elevator didn't offer a mirror-perfect reflection, but he could make things out: like how the second button of his shirt was open *again*. The extra space made his collar points look even longer. The business shirts his dad wore had bashful, skinny little collars...this collar was brawny and bold, demanding attention like his cuffs, and like the shirt's rich pink color. But the pink wasn't enough to hide his nipples, which were the next thing he noticed. Usually his nipples were small and flat, but today they were poking out against the rosy fabric. In fact, they'd gotten puffy, like small cones built specifically to elevate the front of his shirt. Sage discreetly looked to check if he could see the nipples of the guy with him. He couldn't, and he felt stupid for trying. But when turned to the side, he noticed his belly bloat hadn't abated - in fact, it looked to have gotten worse. By his estimate, his stomach protruded out three or four inches now, the underside of it hugged delicately by his belt buckle.

Sage put his palm on his belly and looked down nervously, noticing the round shape in his shirt just as the elevator dinged and the doors opened. He looked back up and slouched forward, feeling so strange and self-conscious, and followed the assistant to a small bathroom right by the private dining area where he'd eaten earlier. The man first ducked into the kitchen quickly, grabbing a bottle of water for Sage. “I know you always brush your teeth after a cigar,” the assistant said.

Sage didn't say anything at first, twisting off the bottle cap and chugging half the water in one gulp. He hadn't realized how thirsty he was. “I don't have a toothbrush with me...” he said after a swallow, and his eyes went wide. His voice still sounded bizarre - no longer like a frog's croak, but no less deep. In fact, it sounded even deeper now to his ears. “Is that...” he gulped. “Is my voice really deep?” he asked.

“You're asking me?”

Sage took another drink of water and tried to shake it off. “Yes, how deep would you say my voice is?” he said, horrified to hear his voice sounding even *lower*, every word emerging solemn and imperious.

“Well, it’s rather hard to describe, sir. I’d simply say you have the deepest voice I’ve ever heard.”

Sage’s erection bobbed in his pants. His cheeks turned as pink as his shirt. “I do?” he asked, two short words that still reverberated within his chest like a train in a cave.

“Yes! Surely you know you have a deep voice?” the assistant smiled. He had a completely normal voice for an adult man, but it sounded like a bird chirping when compared to Sage’s. “Also, there’s a toothbrush and toothpaste in there for you. The group is meeting at that door directly at the end of the hall, so you can go in whenever you’d like to join them.”

“Thanks,” Sage said, barely able to hear the guy over the panicked thoughts in his head.

“Anything else you need from me?”

“No.” Sage shook his head. He wanted to say more to the guy, but he hated hearing his voice, so he kept it brief and met the man’s handshake, then let him go. He was happy to once again be alone, this time in the locked bathroom, but the mirror’s reflection was daunting. When had his nipples gotten so pointy...and his belly! He poked a finger into the spherical protrusion over his belt and wondered why he didn’t feel bloated. Using the bathroom would probably get rid of it, but he didn’t need to go. Even so, he unzipped his fly - jeez *louise* was it long, stupid old man pants - and reached into his pants, when he was immediately reminded of that strange contraption that kept his shirt tucked in. But he was already worried about being away from the group for so long, especially since they were already in the next session, so he made the difficult call to not try to remove it. Instead he pulled his penis out of his underwear, aimed it at the toilet bowl...and then gasped.

That wasn’t his dick, was it? It was like he was looking at it for the first time. He knew they kind of changed sizes based on room temperature and stuff, so it didn’t surprise him that his shaft was shorter in this cold room. What was shocking was the thickness. The couple of inches of length he’d lost were more than made up for by the girthy brick he was looking at. And it draped over the biggest balls he’d ever seen. Like golf balls. Maybe bigger, actually. And so hairy. He nervously prodded around inside his fly, fingers touching bush everywhere they went. It was like he was wearing briefs made of pubes.

He forced out a pathetic dribble of pee, shook himself clean and tucked away the foreign cock. But he couldn’t make it sit right now. No matter how he tried to adjust it, his gigantic nuts made his bulge look ridiculous. What was the man’s version of camel toe? It was an animal too - moose knuckle. That was it. He had a big moose knuckle. Great.

“Least my balls are big...” he grumbled, squeezing some toothpaste onto the small disposable toothbrush. It looked so small in his broad, brutal hand - maybe this whole thing was an allergic reaction to something, and that’s why his hands were swollen too. Except if they were swollen, would his veins look so large and noticeable? He pondered this as he bent over to make sure

no toothpaste dribbled onto his shirt, then backed up when he felt his stomach push against the sink. He made sure he covered every area of his mouth, in case the cigar was smellier than he realized, then spat and rinsed.

No sooner had he leaned forward to check his workmanship in the mirror than he leaned back with a startled cry. His thick fingers flew up to his mouth and pulled on his teeth, thinking he was wearing false ones somehow, like those sets you could buy at Halloween stores. But nothing in his mouth moved, and after a moment of composing himself, he inspected his mouth again. In between his lips were two rows of the most perfect teeth he'd ever seen: pure white, completely aligned, and sparkling like a disco ball. They looked fake, and they made his mouth move differently. He was sure they were porcelain veneers - his neighbor had gotten some years ago, and they looked exactly like this. But WHY were they in his mouth?!

"This is insane..." he squeaked under his breath, backing up to check himself in the mirror before he left. He looked good, he just didn't look like himself. Those stupid nipples poking out...they looked even larger now. He shut his eyes when he turned around because he didn't want to see how far his belly stuck out.

Think about the good things, he told himself. The windfall that would be coming his way once he sold the watch, shoes, and cufflinks...that freaking amazing steak he'd eaten...discovering that he liked cigars...heck, those big balls in his underwear too. Maybe even the scary bass that had taken up residence in his throat for the time being, if he could get used to it.

He took a deep breath before he walked out, then grimaced when he felt his belt buckle dig into his stomach. He had to walk leaning slightly back to balance out the bloat up front, and when he took another steadying breath before walking into the room, his belly pressed up against the door. Sage shut his eyes and walked in.

As expected, the room went quiet when he walked in. Students were strewn around the meeting room with papers and pens, working in groups as Mrs. Palmett and Miss Ingalls watched over them. Heads turned toward the door when they heard it open.

"I'm sorry," Sage said.

His teacher wasn't as angry as he expected. She looked irritated, but that was also kind of just her face. "Choose a group to work with," was all she said. Sage lumbered over to Julia's group and grabbed a rolling office chair from nearby, but as he squatted down, his hips crashed into the armrests and blocked him from sitting. He managed to pop back up to his feet instead of falling on the floor, but he heard suppressed snickers behind him as he turned around and analyzed the chair. Was it a small chair? Like for a child? It looked to be the same size as the ones all the other students were sitting in...

"I'll stand," he grumbled, looming over the seated group. "What are you guys working on?"

Everyone answered at once, but Sage made out that they were building marketing proposals for McCutcheon's Christmas campaign. The team was mid-discussion, so Sage tuned in as they talked about things they could do: TV ads, billboards, TikToks. He folded his arms across his chest as he listened, but when he found his forearms resting on top of his belly, he quickly moved his hands to his pant pockets instead. He hung his head to angle his ear toward the group, but it also allowed him to look at his stomach. It rounded out in a perfect sphere, the pearl buttons of his shirt straining. He couldn't see his loafers! That made him horribly self-conscious, though he felt slightly better when he noticed one of the boys in his group looking at his cufflinks. Probably wondering what they were, he thought.

"We could do something that's like...encouraging people to do something nice for other people," a girl in the group said. "You know, like, it's Christmas...and aren't there a lot of robberies around then too? So you could have something where you can buy gifts for kids who need them, and it gets you a discount on your insurance, because you want insurance in case your gifts get stolen. What's that called, when it's like, charity-"

"Philanthropic marketing," Sage interjected. He saw every person in the group react to the sound of his voice, so he did his best to soften his tone, though the pitch remained deep as ever. "I think that's what you mean?"

"That sounds right," the girl said, staring up in awe.

"It's a good idea," Sage said.

"Sorry, off topic, but Sage, dude, have you been working out? Your arms look crazy," one of the boys in the group said.

"They do?" Sage glanced at his right arm and saw the shape of a developed bicep against the pink fabric. "I think it's just my shirt." That had to be it. The way his shirt fit. He was scrawny, he knew.

"Well, whatever it is, you look jacked. Sorry, anyway, back to the topic..." The group started working in earnest on the philanthropic marketing idea, but Sage remained focused on his arms. He clenched his fist and was surprised to see motion ripple through his blousy sleeve. His upper arms felt swollen and water-logged, and now he was conscious of their weight resting against his torso. Discreetly, he tensed his tricep and it moved - he'd never felt that before! When he tried a second time, he felt something wobble in his chest...a pleasant surprise, since he'd never given any consideration to having muscle there. Of course he knew he *did*, it was just invisible since it wasn't developed. None of his muscles were. But when he tried flexing different ones - butt, thigh, bicep again - it was fun to feel his clothes stir from the motion.

Unfortunately, it also seemed to trigger an unpleasant soreness throughout Sage's body. His hips ached, and rocking back and forth on his feet did nothing to alleviate the throbbing throughout his joints. He wasn't tired, but felt like he would if he'd spent the last week working

every muscle every day. Stiff from top to bottom. Tight. Not only his muscles, but his clothes. The fabric was stretched taut over his back, his ass, his stomach...it made him feel even more uncomfortable than he already did, and the growing worry that he was going to rip his beautiful clothes drowned out the voices of his group.

"Mm-" his throat made a spontaneous noise as twinges of discomfort racked his limbs. He didn't realize it was audible until he saw other students in the group looking up at him.

"You okay?" Julia asked.

"I need some aspirin, I think," he rumbled, finding a handkerchief in his pocket which he used to dab his forehead.

"Ask them if you can go get some!"

"Do you think they have any here?" Sage's voice was like the purr of a mighty lion, velvety yet powerful. Even when he was feeling so uncertain, he sounded like he had complete command over the situation.

"They must. Or maybe Palmett has some in her purse."

Sage nodded and moved his handkerchief to the back of his neck, mopping up beads of sweat before they touched his collar. "Dude, look at his *arm*," he heard someone say, but he ignored it as he thumped over to Mrs. Palmett and Miss Ingalls.

They looked up at him - he was taller than them both, it suddenly dawned on him - with unreadable expressions. Surprise? Respect? Sage couldn't tell. "Sorry, ma'am," he said politely. "I was wondering if there was any aspirin around here. I have a..." He didn't know how to explain that he was experiencing full body aches, so he fibbed, "...a very bad headache."

"There's a first aid kit that has aspirin in it by the stairwell, you'll see it mounted on the wall," Miss Ingalls said sympathetically, "and there's a kitchen right by there where you can get a glass of water."

"I can get it for him," Mrs. Palmett said. "You can keep work--"

"No, I will get it myself," Sage said firmly, surprising himself with his own directness. "You need to watch the students."

He waited for his teacher to tear into him for his disrespect. Instead, she nodded and said, "That's fine."

Sage didn't wait for her to change her mind. He hustled toward the door, though it felt like a slow waddle - he wasn't able to move remotely fast, not even his normal walking pace. That was

strange. But he stopped thinking about it as soon as he left the room, turned toward the stairwell, and saw something small and white fly like a bullet down the hall.

Sage's head snapped downward just in time to see a second button pop off his shirt, baring his bellybutton - and revealing some dark curls on his formerly hairless stomach. "Nooo..." he said, unsure of what to be most horrified by: his buttons bursting, or his belly's size, or its hairiness. As he took a couple more steps, he put his hand on the front of his globose stomach to cover it, but his fingers brushed against...buttons. He stopped and looked down, confused to see his ball belly smartly contained by his dress shirt, the buttons taut and firm.

"Oh, thank good-"

POP! POP!

Though his legs didn't move, Sage's belly seemed to take a step forward, bursting once again out of his shirt to reveal its new mass. Sage groaned in confusion, then swore he heard his belt unbuckle and rebuckle itself - but that couldn't be - and he had no way of checking, because he couldn't see his belt buckle.

He took off down the hall, noticing once more that his shirt buttons were healed - and this time just waiting for them to explode. And explode they did, three now instead of just two, nearly pulling Sage to his knees as his belly surged out two feet in front of him. He had to straighten his arms fully to touch the front of it. Once again the buttons were mended, tight as drumheads.

"I'm going crazy," he whimpered, finally arriving at the first aid kit. As he rummaged around for the pre-packaged aspirin, his belly mashed into the wall - it felt like concrete on concrete, two immovable objects. His ball gut was solid as stone, the ridges of his abdomen stretched to gigantic size over the spherical curve, like a series of tortoise shells stacked together.

Aspirin procured, he set off for the kitchen ten feet away, listening to the stomps of his feet and his heavy breathing. He felt like he was stuck inside a suit of armor, or one of the sumo suits he'd seen at parties - a comparison that became all the more apt when he rounded the corner and a small young man in a shirt and tie bounced off his belly.

"Oh, I'm so sorry sir!" the guy said.

"Sorry," Sage rasped, trying to not get distracted. There was a water dispenser on the kitchen counter, and he staggered over to it, set off-balance by the collision.

"I've never seen you around the office before," the guy said from behind Sage. "I should get workout tips from you."

POP! POP! Buttons clattered across the counter, and Sage looked down expecting his ball gut to have grown. But this time, it was the upper buttons of his shirt, the ones over his chest. He'd

broadened. “Oh no,” he whimpered, reddening further when he realized he couldn’t reach the water dispenser. His belly pushed into the counter and kept him too far away.

“Would you mind filling up a glass of water for me?” Sage asked the guy, who reacted to the depth of his bass like everyone else did.

“Sure thing, sir.”

“You don’t have to call me sir,” Sage said, checking to make sure his chest was covered up. Sure enough, the buttons were back, but there was something happening under them - it felt like his nipples were moving, and he could see them shifting further apart through his shirt fabric. His buttons began to gap, revealing developing cleavage in the center of his chest. Sweat beaded on Sage’s forehead. He didn’t want to breathe. Didn’t want to burst any more buttons in front of this guy. But it was going to happen, he had a sinking feeling, and there was no way to leave before it did. He couldn’t move fast enough. The only thing that moved fast was his muscles, apparently, the way they were swelling under his skin...he could see his chest reshaping the front of his shirt, the muscles growing rounder, firmer, and bigger.

A whole lot bigger. He had tits...why did he have tits, he didn’t want tits! And they were unmissable. There was no way to hide them...

“There you go,” the young man said, offering the cup of water to Sage. “Way easier than going out to get coffee for everyone, which is what I usually do.”

“Oh, you’re the intern,” Sage realized. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to make you do bitch work. I just really couldn’t reach.” He popped the aspirin in his mouth and tipped the water cup back, his shirt bursting open up top as his new man-tits ballooned. A droplet of water trickled out of the cup and off Sage’s chin, disappearing into the crevice between the two brand new mountains. His pecs looked even bigger when they smashed together as he felt his shirt re-button itself over their new glorious mass, skintight even with the top two buttons open.

“It’s no problem. I’m Sacha, by the way.” The young man extended his hand, which vanished into Sage’s huge mitt as they shook. “If you don’t mind me asking...where do you get your clothes?”

Sage knew the buttons were going to go this time, and he felt it happen with a depressed acceptance, his pecs swelling to the size of his skull as they pumped out with such force that they sagged from all the muscle packed into them. When his dress shirt fixed itself once more, pushing his massive rack up to his chin, he reached up and popped open his third button, hoping the extra space would keep his shirt from popping apart again. “Um, they’re bespoke,” Sage said, running his fingers up and down between the undone buttons of his shirt, embarrassed by the flesh on display. He felt like a girl showing off her boobs, but it was a different look, his gentlemanly shirt providing a peek at the beastly mass he was carrying on his chest.

“Wow, that’s so cool,” Sacha said. “I can’t even gain a pound.”

Despite neither of them having moved, Sage’s ball belly gently pushed against Sacha, who took a step back politely.

“It’s not cool,” Sage sighed. “I don’t think I fit in normal clothes...I actually don’t even know how big I am.”

“There’s a scale in the locker room by the yoga studio, I saw!”

“A scale?” Sage’s veneers flashed in a quick smile that segued back into nervousness. “I should probably know how big I am...I keep thinking I’m going to go back to normal. I’ll go back to normal, right?”

Sacha’s eyebrows raised. He clearly had no idea what to say.

“Where’s the yoga studio?” Sage asked as a distraction from the question he knew sounded nonsensical.

“One floor down!”

“I don’t have a badge,” Sage sighed.

“You don’t need one if you do the stairs on the other side of this floor! They connect to the ninth floor without you going through any doors.”

“No shit?” Sage said, and he saw Sacha react with surprise at the profanity. “Cool, thanks man. I’ll go weigh myself. Anything’s better than doing my school project.” Sage sidestepped Sacha and stomped out of the room, leaving the confused young intern behind.

Sage turned down the hall and immediately smashed his shoulder into the wall, unaccustomed to his breadth. He looked side to side and realized he was barely clearing the hallway, the loops on his pants brushing the walls. His chest was gargantuan, and a curious prodding of his man-boobs revealed they weren’t soft at all, but solid like his gut. It was like he’d been pumped full of wet cement that then hardened him into a sculpture. His pants felt as tight as his shirt - moose knuckle bulging, ass straining the seat - and he was suddenly aware of the pressure of his calves against the inside of his pant legs. When he got to the top of the stairs, he gripped the railing tight enough to turn his knuckles white - if he was as big as he felt, a fall could perhaps *actually* kill him.

He took the stairs one foot at a time, moving methodically. His thighs kept knocking into each other, forcing him to swing his left around the right. When he accidentally caught a glimpse of it, it looked to him like there was a Thanksgiving turkey in his pant leg.

Sage was breathing heavily when he reached the bottom of the stairs. The physical and mental exertion of the day was getting to him. He stood and caught his breath, calmed by the soothing pink of his shirt and glittering luxury of his cufflinks and watch. He wondered how long he could be away from the group without Mrs. Palmett yelling at him, though she seemed to be in a permissive mood today.

A couple of people walked by as he was standing there, and they both looked shell-shocked by his mere presence. Sage wondered what exactly it was about him that prompted such a reaction. As he walked down the hall toward the office's yoga studio, a young woman gawked as she passed, and had to flatten herself against the wall just to squeeze by. His "sorry" to her, intended as a murmur, came out thunderous.

The door to the yoga area was closed, with a crinkled sign posted that read "Enter quietly - class might be in session!" Sage cracked the door as softly as he could, and saw that the lights were off. He opened the door further, confirming that the room was not in use, and walked in. Or attempted to, first, before he bashed his arm and shoulder into the doorframe. It took some angling to get himself through, like when he'd helped his friend move a sofa into an apartment.

It was dark as Sage looked for the locker room area, but his noisy clomps across the wood floor woke up the lights' motion sensor. It hadn't dawned on Sage until just then that yoga studio walls were covered in mirrors. He tried to turn away from the reflection before he saw it - but just looked into the mirror behind him instead.

"Wh-WHAT-"

That was suddenly the only word he knew how to form. 'What.' He said it over and over, loudly, softly, every possible variation as he stared in confused, aroused horror at himself. He was hallucinating, or dreaming, or something...nothing could explain what he saw, which was his head on the biggest body he'd ever seen. He was the size of a parade balloon. He wasn't exceptionally tall - six feet, or around there - but the width and density more than made up for it. Just...mass...pure, terrifying muscle mass, stuffed inside formal clothes that should have been preposterously huge, but were instead too snug. He didn't know how many X's were in front of the 'L' for his shirt size, but it looked like a shower curtain buttoned around him. The shirt elevated his muscle gut like a first-place pedestal and squeezed tightly against the perimeter of his chest, outlining every square inch of the basketball-sized tits. A belt as long as a bullwhip held up his elegant trousers, pushed to a downward angle by his belly, which was the size of the yoga balls piled in the corner of the studio.

"What...*what*..."

The mirrors behind him reflected his back, which resembled a pair of dragon wings folded under his shirt, the pink fabric mottling across the muscles like a cumulus cloud. His arms stuck out at angles from his body, unable to rest against his hypertrophied frame. He raised one and flexed

his bicep, teenage boy curiosity getting the better of him. A volleyball-sized peak swelled inside his shirt sleeve, and he felt his French cuff strain around his wrist. He flexed his other arm - a strain shot through his torso, followed by a surge of warmth in his chest -

“OH!” Sage’s head snapped back as a mat of brown curls exploded out of his pecs, his new chest hair pouring forth with macho arrogance as he grew a pelt worthy of Hercules. He whimpered as he prodded his new fur with his fingers, watching as they disappeared into the divide of his pectorals, proudly framed by the unbuttoned collar of his shirt. His hand ran down over his belly, rubbing it - it was prodigiously hairy too, he could tell - and perversely admiring how muscular it was, like his body had run out of space to put all his muscle and stored the extra on his stomach.

“I gotta...I gotta wake up...” he groaned, spotting the locker room area in his peripheral vision and stumbling away from his reflection. His brain was trying to think up explanations for why he looked like that - like a gorilla transformed into a human businessman - but he was too in shock to muster any.

Why he was so set on weighing himself, he didn’t quite know, aside from the hope that the scale would read his normal number - 130 - proving that he’d mentally snapped and was seeing himself differently from the world. He knew the number would be slightly elevated because had his shoes on, but that couldn’t be helped.

His first attempt at stepping on the scale was met by his belly bouncing off the wall. With his foot, he dragged the scale three feet closer to the center of the room, then stepped on and looked down. Belly - that was all he saw. Just his gigantic basketball man-boobs and yoga ball belly, contained by the hardest working dress shirt on earth. No amount of stretching and craning was getting him closer to seeing the number, until he realized, of course, he should stand sideways and look down. Even so, it was difficult thanks to his giant waistline-

372 pounds, no way, that wasn’t right. He stepped off and allowed the scale to reset, then stepped back on. This time it said 374. And as he stood still, not even breathing, the number would increase every few seconds - 375, 376, 377 - as if he was still packing on mass despite not moving a muscle.

It didn’t make sense for him to be nearly 380 pounds, so Sage rejected the notion and kicked the scale away. He had no idea what to do if it was true. He didn’t know how to lose weight, he’d always been skinny. And this felt like mostly muscle - did you have to do anything to lose muscle? Did it just fall off when you didn’t use it?

He needed to get back to the group, anyway. He’d been gone too long. So he headed for the door and walked back through the yoga studio, confronted by his reflection on all sides. It was astonishing how *thick* he was from front to back. His ass was as showstopping as his belly. He loved the shimmer of his shirt as it worked to cover his frame, highlighting the cuts of his

muscles and angles of his mass. There was something cool about the contrast of his virile chest hair peeking through the undone buttons of his pretty pink shirt...

"It's *not* cool," he scolded himself, slamming the yoga studio door behind him and heading back up the stairs. One at a time, one at a time. Don't fall. He focused on his huge hand gripping the banister. Now *that* was a man's hand. Vascular and hairy with the texture of leather. "Phwoooo," he exhaled, patting the side of his belly as he caught his breath at the top of the stairs. He turned to head back to the meeting room, but before he could worry about remembering the way, he spotted his classmates gathered down the hall. Apparently, the group project was done. He'd missed it. Sage didn't know if that was a good or bad thing.

He thought he was quietly approaching the group, until he saw half of the heads turn his way - with his breathing and his footsteps, he made quite the entrance. No one said anything since Mrs. Palmett was talking, but he did hear a soft "hey!" and realized he'd knocked a student with his belly.

"I'm so sorry, young lady-" he started to explain, until she turned around. "Julia!"

"You ditched us!" she whispered.

"Did not. I got lost."

"Where? It's one hallway."

They stood quietly, listening to Palmett ramble about god knows what. But Sage was too anxious to stay quiet. "Do you think my parents are gonna get mad at me for being so big?"

"Oh, please," Julia answered with an eyeroll.

"I'm serious! I'm 380 pounds!" He squeezed his monstrous muscle gut. "Look at this!"

"But you're strong, not a big fat guy."

"Mostly, I guess. There's definitely some fat." Sage looked at the hulking arm primed to explode through his sleeve. Julia was right, he did look really strong. Like lift-up-a-car, pull-an-airplane strong.

"And you dress it up well," she teased. "Mr. Fancypants Businessman."

"Stoppsss," he grumbled. But she was right, he knew, his pants were literally fancy. And his shirt. And his shoes. His cufflinks, watch, handkerchief...all of it. Then he looked with disgust at the cloud of brown chest hair protruding from between his open buttons. He couldn't wait to shave it off. "I wanna go home."

"I think we're almost done," Julia said sympathetically.

Mrs. Palmett had apparently told them to follow her somewhere, because the students began walking as a group behind her. Sage trudged along in the back, keeping plenty of distance in case he misjudged the size of his belly again. His clothes made him walk regally: garters pulling his shirt so tight in the back that he was forced to stand up straight, with his stiff collar holding his neck up like a brace.

The group gathered in a large boardroom. As students chose their seats, Sage hung back cautiously, remembering his last incident with an office chair. When Miss Ingalls motioned for him to sit, he shook his head and patted his iron belly. Sage left his palm there and rubbed the silky fabric, his stubby fingers prodding his buttons. The feeling soothed him.

"There aren't enough packets to go around, so please share," Mrs. Palmett said, holding up a stack of paper. "This is a list of departments at McCutcheon. I'd like each of you to choose which one interests you the most, and write a postcard to an employee in that department. Put your name, contact info, and explain why it aligns with your passions. Miss Ingalls has kindly agreed to distribute them across the company, and I hope for some of you, it will create a new professional relationship. Perhaps you'll even work here someday!"

Sage held back a derisive snort. That was never gonna happen. He leaned back to rest against the wall, and his scalp scraped against a pipe he hadn't noticed jutting from the low exposed ceiling. It didn't hurt, but it did surprise him - as did the feeling of something falling off his head, like he'd been wearing a hat he'd forgotten about. Sage stepped forward and looked around his feet as best as he could, but saw nothing on the ground.

Well, whatever. It was probably nothing, he thought, casually reaching up to scratch an itch on his forehead-

Sage froze. His throat tied itself into a knot.

There was no hair on his forehead.

He moved his hand further back, bending down so his arm could clear his chest. No hair...no hair...*no hair*...his palm was directly on his crown now, his deltoid smashing into the side of his face. It felt like he was touching a pane of glass. "Oh no..."

Sage could feel the color draining from his face. When he moved his hand to the back of his neck, he finally felt some hair. But it was thin and short, not thick like it was supposed to be.

He wasn't...*bald*, was he? He could barely bring himself to think the word. No one had mentioned him being bald. His classmates would've made fun of that, for sure. Then again, no one said anything about his chest hair, and he could clearly see he had plenty of that. And

plenty of chest, too. But no, there was no way he was bald...he was just feeling something weird on his head...or he'd hit his head harder than he realized and was confused...

"Sage? Would you like to participate in the project?" Mrs. Palmett asked from across the room.

"No thank you," Sage responded without thinking, as if it was a genuine question. But Mrs. Palmett accepted his answer with no argument. So Sage stood in the back and waited for his classmates to finish up, wearily fidgeting with his collar and cuffs and planning out the rest of his day. He'd get out of the business clothes, shave his chest, look up how much a Breitling sells for...find a place in his bedroom to stash his cufflinks, he liked them and didn't want them to get lost...

Crap. He had to pee.

Instead of asking, Sage just left. He knew he wasn't going to be quick about it, so if Palmett wanted him to stay, she could say something when she saw him lumbering to the door. But she didn't, so out into the hall he went, as he tried to recall where that small bathroom was.

He could see his belly peripherally as he walked, and seeing it floating at the bottom of his vision made him feel like he was playing a first-person shooter game. Those buttons had to be reinforced with steel, it was a damn miracle they weren't bursting off.

"Excuse me, where's the restroom?" he asked a passing employee.

The young man looked at Sage in utter reverence. "Yours is right down there, sir, on the other side of the executive boardroom!"

"Thank you," Sage smiled, suddenly recalling how dazzling his teeth were. He flashed the veneers at other employees who moved out of the way to let him pass. That was considerate of them.

He assumed he was passing by the executive boardroom, because it was twice as big as the other meeting rooms and it looked like a spaceship. So much white, and with microphones hanging from the ceiling. Definitely the room for the most important meetings. And true to what the guy said, right next to it was a white door with a gold plate mounted on it: EXECUTIVE WASHROOM.

Sage decided they didn't have to know he wasn't an executive. He walked inside.

"Whoa," his deep voice echoed back at him off the marbled walls. The bathroom was opulent. He hoped he didn't get in trouble being in there. But he did have to go, and he'd asked for directions...

He forgot to avert his eyes when he walked past the sinks, and was attacked by his reflection. He was as big as a house, and his clothes were so tight they became more revealing than being

naked, enhancing every angle of his mass. There was no missing the cuts in his muscles, or his protruding nipples, or his chest hair-

-or his baldness. Sage groaned aloud as he looked at his smooth head. He sported the Hippocratic wreath of a truly bald man, the outer rim of his scalp hugged by the last vestiges of his once lush hair. The bald dome was painfully shiny, like there was a big spotlight right on it demanding everyone's attention. Sage grabbed a washcloth - there were no disposable towels in here, they were all fluffy washcloths, which was how he knew it was fancy - and rubbed it over his head, hoping it would wipe off some sweat. He wiped his face too. Maybe there was something in his eyes making him think he'd gone bald.

But nope, still bald. He sighed, enormous shoulders slumping, tits heaving so dramatically they almost burst another button. Even worse, now his face looked dirty, like he'd wiped off his clean skin...but only on the lower half...Sage leaned into the mirror and cautiously prodded his cheeks. He had stubble. And it was so dark...was it getting darker? Heavier? His five o'clock shadow was so aggressive it nearly counted as a beard. He could see the whole shape of one clear as day on his face, like black ink tattooed from his cheeks down to his neck. It boned him up. It was so manly.

Sage tore himself away and stomped to the big stall. He knew he couldn't use urinals - belly was too big - so he went straight to the big toilet and lowered his pants, undoing the contraption that kept his shirt tucked in. As he sat, he unbuttoned more of his shirt and fondled his big muscle jugs, enjoying the sensitivity of his nipples and all the itchy fur around them...he stroked his stubbled jaw, big mitt rubbing back and forth across his sandpapered cheek...no one had to see how much he turned himself on. This gigantic grizzly bear of a man. He'd miss that feeling when he went back to normal, but he needed to go back to normal, he knew.

Once finished, he pulled himself up using the bar mounted on the wall, and carefully rebuckled his shirt garters before pulling his pants up. The motion pushed his belly higher, which in turn hoisted his giant tits nearly up to his chin. Sage carefully checked his buttons, zipped his fly, and fixed his collar and cuffs. He made sure his buckle was centered before he walked out of the stall, shoes clacking on the tile.

He washed his hands, noticing how blunt and thick his fingers were. The soap in this bathroom was exfoliating and smelled like orange peels, unlike the cheap stuff in the other bathroom he'd used earlier. Once he'd dried off, he reached up out of habit to check his hair, and remembered he was bald. He looked glumly at his shiny head, then furrowed his brow. His ears were a little bigger than he'd realized - probably because his hair covered them all this time. It wasn't that they stuck out badly, but they were longer than he'd thought, especially the earlobes. His nose actually was kind of big too...not small and straight as he imagined, but broad with a swollen tip that pushed his nostrils sideways. He turned his head to the side and gasped at how far his nose projected - he'd never noticed...

Actually, was his whole *head* bigger? Sage stared in shock at himself. He looked so much balder, and he swore it was because his skull had swelled. But that was impossible. His features just looked wider - or bigger, or both - and now he had thick bushy eyebrows that hung slightly over his eyes, pushed there by a dominant brow that made his face look so...commanding. He snickered at the idea of ever being seen as someone imposing, and that was when he noticed his jaw was the widest part of his head, a square packed with so much sinew that when his mouth relaxed, a pair of muscular jowls bulged into view. That made him look even more imperious, his whole visage a dark, craggy tribute to all things male. Sage couldn't remember ever looking like this. In fact, he was sure he hadn't. He didn't look like himself. Or anyone in his family, for that matter. And the longer he analyzed his features - thin lips, weathered skin, jutting forehead - he realized that unfamiliar face didn't look like a boy's, nor a young man's. It was a face firmly in adulthood, so authoritative in its virility that Sage felt unworthy looking at it, even though it was allegedly his own.

He reached up and poked at his chin, an unfamiliar brick of muscle and bone, covered in gritty stubble. "What happened to me," he grunted, prodding his cheeks. "That's not...me..." He looked like a bulldog. No...he looked like a *bull*. A towering, barrel-chested, fearsome bull of a man.

A man.

It was so weird to think of himself as a man. And yet, if he'd asked an artist to draw a depiction of every manly facial feature, whatever they composed *still* wouldn't be as masculine as the face looking back at him. It was a great face. It just wasn't *his* face, and it was too old. A middle-aged man's face, not a teenager's. There was even gray in what was left of his hair. He looked older than his dad. And more powerful, too - much more powerful. Actually, older and more powerful than any dad he knew.

Sage left the bathroom with a chubby in his pants, emphasizing the round fatness of his bull balls. The points of his collar bounced as he strutted back to his classmates, wondering if they'd even recognize him anymore. It was so strange to consider. He just wanted the day to end.

He got to the room, but it was empty save for a custodian already straightening the chairs and cleaning the whiteboard. "They seemed to be leaving," the lady said.

"Shit!" Sage walked as fast as he could down the hall, collar bouncing more, shoes slamming into the ground. He could hear the elevator dings. He almost yelled something, but didn't want to disrupt the peace of the office.

To his great relief, there was still a group of ten students waiting when he got to the elevators. Of course, he remembered, they'd had to do two trips coming up. He stood and wordlessly waited with his group, and when the next car finally came, he walked on first.

No one followed.

Sage realized with him in the elevator, there was barely space for anyone else. "I think we can fit...one or two..." he grumbled, embarrassed, and two of the smallest girls in his class squeezed on before the doors shut. "Sorry," he apologized to them. "I forgot I take up so much room now."

Both girls just blushed and smiled, and it dawned on him there was no good response to a statement like he'd just made. Anything they said would sound like a crack about his size, so wisely, the girls stayed silent and looked as polite as they could. They scurried back to the group wordlessly upon arrival on the ground floor, while Sage's footsteps clacked boisterously through the lobby, turning heads all the way to the bus.

Sage patiently waited to board the bus, twirling his cufflinks in their holes as he stood. But when he got to the front, letting all the other students board first, it was embarrassingly clear that he was not going to fit through the door. His shoulders, belly and waistline all wedged up to block his way.

He looked up at Mrs. Palmett, who stood onboard the bus next to the driver. She hadn't noticed his attempt to enter. "Thank you for walking us down!" she said.

"I want to go back to school," Sage thundered impatiently, using the depth of his voice to its full effect.

"Oh, I know that feeling. But we all have to grow up eventually!" She waved as the door closed. "You have a nice day."

The bus doors shut and the bus, already running, pulled away from the curb. "Hey!" Sage yelled. "HEY!" But his shouts went unanswered, and the bus drove away.

Stupefied, Sage watched it vanish into the distance. It took a few moments for the situation to fully sink in. Once it did, he felt his jaw lock and his stomach flip. They'd...*left* him. He couldn't believe it.

His first instinct was to reach for his phone, which he realized he didn't have. Maybe it was in his sweatpants, but were those still around? Or if they'd changed, why wasn't his phone in his trousers...this was all so confusing. But regardless, his phone had to be back in the office, so it was - in a weird way - a good thing that he'd been left. Sage turned and walked back to the building, feeling stares of shock aimed his way. A small boy walking by went "whooooaaaaa."

Worry set in when he realized he was going to be asked to scan in with a badge he didn't have, but before he could be troubled with that, he noticed security was being worked by the same guard as before - that ruddy old ball of muscle who didn't seem nearly as big anymore.

"Glad you found your shirt!" he said to Sage.

“My shirt?” Sage rubbed his palm over the silky pink fabric stretched across his mass.

“I saw it this morning - you’d left it on the conveyor. Some kid took it.”

“No, that was...” Sage started to say, but he trailed off, as his hand moved up to itch the chest hair between his undone buttons. “I wish I was a kid,” he mumbled.

“But then that shirt wouldn’t fit you, and it’s the nicest shirt I’ve ever seen,” the guard chuckled.

“That’s true,” Sage replied, noticing how much deeper his voice was than the guard’s. “Do you ever miss being young, man?”

The guard thought for a minute. “Not really. Maybe that sense of having the world at your feet, I miss. But I’m the biggest I’ve ever been, I got money and a good family and I can do whatever I want. Not to say I wouldn’t mind a do-over, but really, I wouldn’t change much. I’m sure you wouldn’t either! Every guy in this building wants to be like you.”

Sage blushed under his five o’clock shadow. “Really?”

“No need to be modest. It isn’t your strong suit anyway,” the guard teased, motioning to Sage’s cleavage. Then he swung a side gate open and motioned for Sage to go through. “I’m taking up your time, so you have a good day, sir.”

“Thanks,” Sage said, taking a step. “Appreciate the, er, special treatment.”

“Well, you don’t fit through the metal detector anyway,” the guard laughed. “Not with those shoulders.”

“Ah, right,” Sage chuckled, unsure if he should be proud or embarrassed. He’d never imagined that a grown version of himself would be so massive he would require concessions just to get around. It sure would make school different if he never shrank back down. Or went back to his normal age. Nothing made sense anymore, he thought as he got back on the elevator, but at least he looked incredible. His chest looked even bigger now. The button at the base of his pecs was wedged between them and his blimp belly. He had the perfect amount of chest hair. His clothes were gorgeous - now that he was away from his schoolmates, he could admit to himself that he loved dressing like this.

The best part was that he was handsome, brutishly so. His features were an exaggerated caricature of masculinity - the kind of features that made being bald look good. The kind of features that made him like being a man.

“Fuck,” he grunted.

Sage knew something was wrong. He knew something very strange was happening. But he was having trouble forcing himself to care. He could feel manly power radiating from his body, blasting off him in an invisible cloud, ready to intoxicate anyone he encountered. The gentle pink hue of his shirt and dandy nature of his formalwear did nothing to subdue his manliness.

Maybe he wouldn't try to change back just yet. Maybe he'd stay a man for a few more days, just to enjoy it. He didn't know *how* to revert himself yet anyway, it might take a while just to figure that out...

Getting off the elevator reminded him of his mission. Phone, that was what he needed to find, because he'd been left by his stupid school-

"You got flowers!" a passing woman said to Sage. She turned and walked backwards down the hall as she kept speaking. "A delivery guy was just here - I told him to put them in your office."

"Flowers?" Sage said, poking his finger between his pecs. "For me?"

"Probably for your anniversary!" She walked off.

"My office?" Sage mumbled to himself, eyes tracing the halls. He didn't have an office, but the person she thought he was did. Maybe his doppelganger was nearby, and they could figure the confusion out - exchange their shirts, if that was the problem...

He lumbered around the perimeter of the office, trying to look like he knew where he was going. If anyone asked him why he was there, he wasn't going to have an answer, so he avoided eye contact - which was hard, because he had to move to allow anyone to pass him. He walked past the meeting rooms his schoolmates did their projects in, including the executive boardroom. Right next to it, he encountered a guy in a black polo shirt and black jeans who looked as lost as Sage felt. Sage tried to ignore him, but the man spoke up. "Are you Mr. Dufort?"

Sage had no idea what to say, because he didn't want to give away his identity as a non-employee, so he just stammered. "I...er, uh-"

"I just have a delivery for him, for his anniversary."

"Oh!" Sage remembered what the woman in the hall said as she walked away. "Yes, I think it's for my anniversary..."

The guy took off his insulated backpack and produced a bottle of champagne from it. "Then this is for you!"

Sage grinned. "What a nice surprise," he said, signing an illegible scribble on the delivery form. "Oh, there's a note on it." He looked at the printed sticker placed over the label: "To S.D.,

Congratulations on your 25 years. You are an inspiration. Best wishes, your friends at Kellerman & Sons."

The delivery man walked away as Sage inspected the note. 25 years? Did people think it was his 25th birthday? Then why would they be calling it an anniversary...

Yards away, an office door was propped open, and Sage saw a massive bouquet on the desk inside. Maybe those were the flowers the lady was talking about. He walked over and, once he made sure the office was empty, across the carpet. He set the champagne on the desk and looked at the card set in the bouquet. "*SID - 25 years! Incredible!*" was all it said. Next to the flowers was a stack of four newspapers, all from today, the top one folded back to a circled black-and-white paragraph in the business section.

Sidney I. Dufort, 58, renewed his contract as Chief Operating Officer at McCutcheon Insurance, celebrating his 25th year with the company.

Chief Operating Officer? He was being confused with a 58-year-old man who'd worked at this boring-ass company for a quarter of a century. But curiosity got the better of him, and he sat down in the office's chair, which he noticed was blessedly wide enough for his bulk. The desk's keyboard was on a shelf that folded up over Sage's belly like a TV tray, and he fired up Google to type in: "Sidney Dufort McCutcheon salary."

The third result mentioned money specifically, so Sage clicked on it, and there it was - the list of all the McCutcheon executives and their salaries as reported to...the government, or whoever you had to report that stuff to. The second line listed Sidney Irwin Dufort, Chief Operating Officer, and a compensation package of 1.7 million dollars per year, plus bonuses.

"My god," Sage chuckled, his shaking belly making the keyboard jump. "He's rich." He looked at his fingers resting on the keys, flanked by the French cuffs as broad as his hands. The monogram on his cuffs was clear as day: *S.I.D.* Sidney Irwin Dufort, but also Sage Indiana Daniels. What a strange, cool coincidence. No wonder he was fooling everyone today. "Sidney," Sage said, feeling the name roll around his mouth like a candy. "What a dorky name." He had to admit there was a dignity to it, a weight that 'Sage' didn't have. It fit the new body, the physique of the 58-year-old beast in the 58-sized trousers.

That new body breathed loudly - hard, ragged blasts, like a rhinoceros - and Sage realized how bad it would look if someone walked by and saw him hiding in this office, reading Sidney's computer with an erection in his trousers. He pushed himself out of his chair and rolled to his feet, nearly toppling from his center of gravity. He was so horny, and his nuts bouncing as he walked didn't help matters. He shut the office door and leaned against it, grinning when he noticed the damp stripes underlining his chest - sweat stains from where his shirt got tucked under his huge tits. So, to prevent their spread, he opened his next two buttons, unleashing his monstrous pecs and the top of his hairy belly. His nipples popped free of his shirt, giant and throbbing and pink.

He made a noise looking at them that he'd never heard himself make before, a low growl of pure arousal. It sounded like a lion about to devour its prey. He'd never considered that any other part of his body could bring him pleasure other than his dick, which like any teenaged boy he was always pounding away at. But this body was an orgy of self-gratification. Anything about it could make him cum. His hairy chest, his jaw, his shoulders, his belly, his ass, his back about to tear through his shirt...and his nipples, which drew a long shudder of ecstasy out of him as he thumbed their sensitive heads. Being a man was intoxicating, and being *this* man was an addiction. Why had he been resisting it, he wondered...boys were meant to become men, and he'd become the most glorious man of all.

Staying this way felt as impossible as changing back did. He didn't know how to live Sidney Dufort's life. He wasn't smart enough to be an insurance executive. But Sidney Dufort's body...he knew what to do with that. Worship it. Celebrate it. Fondle the pecs and rub the belly. No one from school had to know how much he turned himself on. Every movement, every choice was a celebration of his own male beauty and power. Sage moaned happily, stumbling over to the fortified desk and smashing his muscle gut on top of it, furiously humping his crotch against the edge. He threw his head back and felt another button pull open over his stomach, which made him groan louder-

"I don't wanna change back!" he heard himself say, and it came as a shock, but it was correct - he didn't want to. After an entire day of protestations, it turned out he longed to be a businessman after all. He wanted to have money, wear beautiful clothes, and throw his astonishing weight around. He wanted to smoke cigars, eat steak, and drive luxury cars. "I don't want to be a kid anymore," he grunted, crushing his pelvis harder against the desk. "I want to be a man!"

He re-angled himself to look at his gargantuan body in the office mirror, pecs heaving and belly shaking as the desk rocked under his mass. "I am becoming Sidney Dufort!" he announced to his reflection with a broad grin. "I'm going to be...*hrrrgghh*...an executive!"

Fuck going to school. Fuck being told what to do. The unlimited possibilities overwhelmed Sage. He'd have his own house! He could drink, he could fuck - he could do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted, because he was the boss. Precum soaked his underwear as the new scent of his daily cologne bloomed out from his chest, musky and manly. He saw himself as he'd be at the end of a long day of running a business: dress shirt unbuttoned, five o'clock shadow in full bloom, drink in hand, cigar at the ready... "Daddy's home..."

It felt funny to think of himself as a Daddy, but he was one, no question. He wasn't young anymore, he was firmly middle-aged and approaching retirement. "Daddy's home," he grunted again, more committed. "Daddy is becoming Sidney Dufort..."

Insurance - he'd have to develop an interest in insurance if he was going to be an insurance executive. But for 1.7 million dollars a year, he'd figure it out. And as a 58-year-old man, he only

needed to work a few more years anyway. Sage felt confident he could swing it. In fact, the more he thought about it, the smarter he felt. Smart and mature...a seasoned executive... "Sidney is the boss...I'm the boss!" He humped faster, raising his hands into the air to stare at his cufflinks. His fists clenched in triumph. He grit his teeth. "I am no longer Sage Daniels...Sage has become Sidney...I'm...*hrrrnh*...I'M...Sidney...IRWIN...*DUFORT!*"

The executive bull unleashed a triumphant roar as he exploded - white cum flowed out of his underwear and down his thighs, though the lining of his trousers kept it from showing through. The exhaustion was just as instant, and he used his belly to prop him up on his desk for a few moments as he caught his breath. The cool stickiness of his spunk was a balm against his legs, and made him grin devilishly.

He heaved himself toward the mirror and used the reflection to tidy himself up: a precise shirt tuck, an adjustment of his belt, a fixing of his cuffs. He buttoned half his shirt and made sure the amount of chest on view was to his liking. Then he stood back and admired the view, the telltale flush in his cheeks the only sign of his recent orgasm.

"Sidney Dufort," he said aloud, thrusting his hand forward as if greeting a business partner. His cufflink caught the sunlight and cast a gleam across his office. After practicing his professional smile, he put his hands in his pockets and stood tall, straining the buttons over his belly.

"What a strange day," he said as he ambled back to his desk. He was glad it was over. Despite his passion for his job, it was also tiring and stressful. He worked long hours and held himself responsible for the welfare of hundreds of people. But there was something else in the back of his mind too, something aside from the daily stresses. While he remembered coming into this office every day for decades, his physical size growing in harmony with his title and salary...he also knew, somehow, that it was new to him. That he had been younger far more recently than any other 58-year-old man. He recalled that young face in the mirror, staring wide-eyed as it grew and hardened into *his* face.

That displacement was a bizarre sensation, and yet it comforted Sidney. He chose this path, and it was where he was meant to be. Being a skilled, savvy executive was his calling. He wasn't meant to be that timid sprout he recalled through the haze of his memory. But he celebrated that young man all the same, as he was the reason for all of Sidney's success, the foundation on which the spectacular man was built.

"I need a cigar," he chuckled to himself, shutting his computer down for the day. A cigar, a steak, and a good orgasm. Those always made him feel like himself again.

As he stomped down the hall to leave, he stopped in the kitchen for a quick glass of water. A small young man in a shirt and tie was in there, savoring his coffee. He straightened up, eyes widening as Sidney walked in.

“At ease, soldier,” Sidney smirked, leaning sideways against the counter so his belly didn’t block him from getting water. “We’ve met before, I think?”

“Yes sir. My name’s Sacha, I’m an intern. We met earlier.”

“I’m Sidney Dufort,” Sidney said.

“I know, sir.” Sacha’s wiry energy made Sidney smile. He remembered when he’d been that...caffeinated. “I’d be a bad intern if I didn’t ask...any secrets of your success you can share?”

Sidney took a sip of water and thought for a second. “Work hard, be friendly, and wear a dress shirt every day.”

“Like this one?” Sacha raised his arm to bring attention to his Oxford shirt.

“No, that is a button-down. And they’re called button-downs because the collar buttons down. Feel this.” Sidney held out his arm, and the intern fingered a small square of the fabric. “This is a dress shirt.”

“Wow,” Sacha said. “It feels expensive.”

“It was. You’ll get there.” Sidney tossed his cup away and smiled. “Put on a dress shirt, kid. It’ll change your life.”