

Sarah and the City.

Sarah was fortunate enough to have had the first transformation undertaken by Ophelia, which was special as at the time the business was not officially ready. The experience was such that before the transformation had finished I had decided that I would come back again. Just over two months later, I was walking back up the stairs for my second transformation by Ophelia, and importantly with her first coffee for the day (it was 8.00am after all)! She had been busy making sure that the apartment was ready for Sarah, and I was amazed by how she had changed the look of the apartment and improved the functionality. The important thing though was that we were both ready to begin the transformation process.

My bag contained a set of breast forms, a black bra, short black skirt (my legs aren't too bad) and the beautiful pair of black boots Ophelia found for me on Sarah's first outing. Ophelia provided a shape-wear full slip (I'm a convert to shape-wear now), some black stay-up stockings and a beautiful violet satin blouse. Once dressed, I lay down at the make-up station and enjoyed being pampered as Ophelia commenced her work. We talked as two girlfriends would while she walked me through how she was applying my make-up. Soon, she passed me a mirror so I could see the work. Once again, Ophelia had outdone herself with the achieved look – the eyes particularly were stunning. We then selected a chestnut brown wig for the day, and put on adhesive French polish nails. This was the first time I had ever tried artificial nails, and it was the oddest experience attempting to pick up anything with the talons attached. Regardless, Sarah had arrived.

Ophelia and I had discussed over the last few weeks our plan for the day – head out to the QVB for high tea with our friend Imogen (incognito), then walk on over to David Jones for some shopping. However a girl should always be flexible and open to a change of plans. Ophelia had only recently bought a new wig (the one I was wearing) from *The Individual Wig*, and we decided to head on over for a consultation before moving on to the QVB. Jill was in the area (again incognito) and would meet us at the store. So with the look complete, Sarah headed confidently out the door to wait in the sun while Ophelia quickly answered a phone call and grabbed a few last minute things.

It was a quick drive to Oxford Street and after parking the car we walked down the road to the shop. I've purchased a few wigs before, but never as Sarah, so the experience was exquisite. The girls at the store were very knowledgeable and quickly brought a range of wigs which were best suited to my face and build. With input from both Ophelia and Jill, it was decided that my style was a 'Brittany' wig in a chocolate colour to match my natural hair. The girl looking back at me in the mirror was so different to the regular face I see, but so much the woman who I knew I could be. You remember how I said a girl should always be flexible – well 'Brittany' was paid for and walked out the door with Sarah, Ophelia and Jill!

As Imogen was held up at work, the three of us went to a nearby café where Ophelia and I had first met, to have a coffee and a chat. With a beautiful sunny day and a quiet little corner, Ophelia and I decided that maybe high tea at the QVB could wait for another day. We contacted an understanding Imogen, and shortly afterwards we had a happy table of two

women and two men enjoying an afternoon catch up. I spent a lot of the time just listening and enjoying the company – the experience of being able to relax in public as a woman with friends has been but a long cherished ambition until only recently.

Unfortunately, Jill had to get back to work but Imogen still had some free time and Ophelia had spotted some beautiful shoes in the local St Vincent's store – music to Imogen's ears! So the three of us headed in and started to browse. In no time we had secured the shoes in the window, a pair of Nine West heels, a polka dot skirt and a few other items. Imogen later told me that I looked completely comfortable fossicking through the clothes racks looking for that elusive bargain whilst she and Ophelia were looking at the shoes. We also got a tip from another shopper to check out the Salvation Army store back towards the city. So after a stop off at *The House of Priscilla*, we again were checking out the treasures of the second hand world until it was time for Imogen to head back home.

There was still time for some more shopping, and as the original plan called for a visit to David Jones, Ophelia and I decided to head over to the Bondi Junction store. A change of shoes in the car on the way (off with my beloved black boots and into the Nine West heels) and we hit the shops running! After a quick toilet break (and an impromptu photo opportunity) we browsed for bargains in the high fashion sale racks and the lingerie department and then headed out to look at some other stores. It was then that it happened – my first 'wardrobe malfunction'. Ophelia and I had just stepped out from David Jones when a woman approached me and let me know that one of my stockings had a very large ladder! I demurely thanked her (amazingly, she didn't seem taken back with my voice) and Ophelia took charge, taking me to one side to quickly adjust the offending leg then leading us straight back to the disabled toilet to swap the stay-up stockings for her emergency pair of black pantyhose - feminine foresight! Surprisingly, I could laugh about it and it didn't interrupt our tour through Target (another pair of patent flats for me and who doesn't love looking at the Dita von Teese lingerie line?) and Myer where Ophelia sniffed out yet more great bargains – this time on shape wear: long leg high waisted (retro style) panties.

It was getting late when we headed back to Ophelia's apartment and unlike the first outing I had a curfew to meet. We did however have enough time for a few photos with a corset. With a bit of sage assistance from Ophelia, I soon had a beautiful wasp waist perfect for some fun photos before the make-up and clothes had to come off. As I was getting back into my male clothes, Ophelia asked me how was the day. It was probably the only time throughout the entire day where I was lost for words. How do you adequately describe the sensation of feeling like a princess for a day; to walk confidently around busy shops without raising an eyebrow; to sit in cafes with friends and talk as freely and comfortably as if I was any other woman? It is something that I think most women take for granted, but us girls (and some very special women such as Ophelia) recognise it as being so very precious and treasured. Whilst I knew saying goodbye to Ophelia and heading back home that Sarah would be taking a backseat in my life again for a while; those treasured memories of enjoying a hot chocolate, trying on wigs, hunting for bargains or walking the streets as Sarah will remain with me for some time to come.

As I have been writing this article (and reviewing my first transformation with Ophelia), I have been contemplating how far Sarah has come recently. Three months ago, Sarah had not ventured out once in public – her existence has been limited to fleeting opportunities at home or trips away where she could live in the seclusion of a hotel room with maybe a short excursion to the balcony. Ophelia has helped me to gain confidence with Sarah and realise that the outside world is not that scary. I could never have pictured myself running across a major road, complete in heeled boots, yet I've done that without even pausing to worry if people were staring at me. I've even lived through a 'wardrobe malfunction' without any embarrassment or causing a scene. I now know that Sarah can confidently go out whether for shopping, a drink with friends or even just to enjoy a beautiful day as a treat. I will always be grateful to Ophelia for showing me that Sarah's boundaries are only those which I have myself imposed.

Sarah C.