

Deleted Scene: *Bethany's transformation*

She went directly up to the bathroom and washed off her streaked makeup. Her bare face looked strange, too pink, her eyes pale without the mascara to darken her blond eyelashes. Her black hair seemed a stark contrast, too edgy.

In her bedroom she discarded her black pleather pants and pulled off her lacy black shirt and the black tank top under it. She even took off her black underwear and bra. Digging through her drawers, she found a new pink print underwear and bra set, and over that she donned a very old, stretched-out, faded, and torn gray sweatshirt that conformed to her body as though she'd worn it every day for the past year and a half. A search through several bags of clothing Mrs. Caleb had bought for her at the beginning of the school year revealed a new pair of fleece sweatpants, so comfortable Bethany felt like curling up on her bed right then and falling to sleep. Before she did, she moved her tree sculpture out of the middle of the room.

Her eyes had barely closed when her mother called her for dinner. Bethany struggled up out of her cocoon of blankets. Her digital clock glowed red in the dark room: 6:45. Had she really slept for almost three hours? She put on her fuzzy leopard print slippers and scuffed her way down to the dining room.

Mrs. Caleb nearly dropped two huge cartons of pork-fried rice when she saw Bethany. "Are you feeling sick?" she asked.

"I'm okay," said Bethany. Mr. Caleb was gnawing on a teriyaki stick and didn't notice anything different about his daughter. Bethany thought he looked ridiculous eating Chinese food in a suit and tie, almost as ridiculous as she'd looked walking five miles in pleather pants and boots with four-inch heels.

The next morning Bethany slept for an extra half-hour. She dressed in a pair of old jeans and a gray flannel shirt. As she brushed her teeth she stared at her hair in the mirror, finally deciding to put it in a ponytail. Her face still looked strange to her, more like Darlene's than her own. But she took her

book bag and her lavender down coat (another Christmas present she'd never worn) and went outside to wait for the bus.

During the short ride to school, Bethany wondered what James would think about how she looked. She didn't want to think she had changed because of James. Her feelings were really what had caused her to change. But she wondered what he would think just the same. He had never seen her look like this. He hadn't met her until after she'd tried to look opposite of who she was, at the beginning of high school.

The hallways were much less intimidating now that Beth blended. She remembered her mother saying dark colors made you inconspicuous, but Bethany was wearing a bright lavender jacket, and she fit right in. She was dressed normal, not like a freak. She felt the gazes of other students slide right past her. No more stares as if she were the mistress of death walking the halls.

Bethany almost escaped notice. But Shannon noticed of course. "Just because you dress normal doesn't mean you're not still a freak," she said, passing Bethany at the beginning of English. Bethany, as usual, couldn't say anything.