

SERIALS

MAGAZINE

“AMERICAN BOY IN ENGLAND”

LIMITED EDITION—FOUR BOOK SERIES



BOOK TWO OF FOUR

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TV FICTION SERIALS

MAGAZINE

VOLUME TWO OF FOUR
**AN AMERICAN BOY
IN ENGLAND**

By C.V.

Editors:

SANDY THOMAS, Renee ,
Special thanks to Alice Trail

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PART TWO OF FOUR

BOOK TWO

The ballet lessons at Mrs. Thornsby's became progressively longer as well as harder. She was a very strict task mistress. They usually spent an hour on ballet lessons, often joined by Ellen. Aunt

Julia had bought him a girl's leotard with a red sash around the waist that fit him very tightly. Then, he spent another half hour practicing his posture and movement. She had him walk with a book on his head and a glass of water on top of that. He tried diligently to walk correctly as the cold water spilling over his body was certainly no fun. He had to walk from the hips in a feminine manner and sit and stand elegantly until it all became a habit with him.

Another half hour was spent on ballroom dancing. Mrs. Thornsby, in pants, would lead him, wearing a swinging skirt over his leotards along with high heels. She showed him how to sway his skirt attractively and how to show his legs to advantage, making sure he kept a girlish posture the whole time. After the first week, his muscles did not hurt as much, and his body grew accustomed to the strenuous activity.

The corsets also had a marked effect as his waist seemed to get smaller each day. He knew he had lost quite a bit of weight. The dance exercises at Mrs. Thornsby's no doubt contributed to that as well. Aunt Julia bought him new tinier corsets that compressed his trim waist even smaller. All of these factors combined to make him ever more docile and submissive. Doing these things every day of the week, and practicing constantly, really improved him very rapidly. After the second week, Mrs. Thornsby even complimented him, though in her usual sour way. Nevertheless, he received a blush of satisfaction. As a result of these lessons, and without realizing it himself, he walked a little more gracefully and daintily after each session.

That Sunday, Aunt Julia took him to church with her again. He was dressed in an attractive short sleeved light blue silk dress, white gloves and shoes with three inch heels, hat, and purse.

In the afternoon, they played tennis again at the Armstrongs. Jack played a single set with Hank, the middle boy and won easily. Jack noticed how small in statue and how lithe his opponent appeared. Although Hank was two years older than Peter, they were about the same size. Jack was amazed at how he was watching his opponent rather than being self-conscious about his own appearance. He felt completely natural already in his tennis dress.

And so, Jack lived from day to day as if in a trance. He was kept busy all day with one feminine activity after another, always dressed prettily and having no time to himself for reflection or even to think about his strange predicament.

He only saw Paul at mealtime now, as Paul had his own masculine activities with his friends so Jack found himself more and more in the company of Terry, who now treated him completely as her younger sister. They helped each other with their hair, discussed clothes, did their nails together, and were of mutual help with beauty aids and such things.

It was small wonder that this boy, constantly bombarded from all sides by subtle feminine pressures every minute of every day, gradually lost his boyhood and completely felt like a girl. . . a real girl. He hardly ever thought about sports. . . football or baseball. . . or his old friends from school. That all seemed ages in the past, a strange dream.

Terry and he became very close, and she told him not to curtsy for her anymore. "After all, we are the same age," she had said with a smile.

Jack was so hen pecked that this little gesture of "equality" caused him to feel grateful and warm toward Terry. Another thing that brought the teenage girls closer together was the fact that Aunt Julia now treated them exactly alike. She had become much more strict with Terry, constantly setting Jack as an example for sweet and modest behavior. She made Terry curtsy also to her elders and guests, and to Terry's chagrin, forced her to do more feminine chores.

In the beginning, Terry was very disturbed when she was given a needlepoint project and found herself along side Jack in an identical pinafore doing embroidery every free moment. On Sarah's day off, the girls, as they were now referred, were put to work together.

Paul was becoming a very happy boy as he was allowed his freedom. Aunt Julia let him assert his masculinity more and more as a growing young man. His contentment always showed at breakfast by his smiling face. For then, the girls were given their tasks for the day, while he would go scott free to plan his own activities and play.

From pure force of habit, Jack now acted so completely feminine in his dresses and skirts that Paul obviously forgot that this niece was really a nephew and treated him exactly like his sister. Was it small wonder that this defenceless young boy, far away from home in a

strange land, constantly and without interruption exposed to feminine influences, girlish dress, activities, and conversation, that he too, accepted this new relationship to Paul. He felt completely different than Paul, so much so that he no longer envied him his trousers and other manly clothing. He had now reached the point that he walked and moved like he had always been a girl and worn skirts, exposing his smooth legs to everyone.

Still, there were also moments when he felt terribly embarrassed, out of place, and shamed to tears by his circumstance. For instance, there was the time when Paul brought home some friends unexpectedly. They found Jack in his cute pinafore working on his ever present tablecloth. Only the fact that Terry was with him, in the same predicament, made him feel a bit better. He saw her blush with shame as she curtsied nicely to them, a thing she had never done in the past.

Later, when Jack heard the boys run and shout outside, that horrible feeling, of being denied his God given masculinity by being forbidden to join them and play rough games in trousers, returned in full force. He mentioned it to Terry. "I really should be out there with them in pants."

She agreed. "You know. . . it is just not fair to make us girls work and do chores all the time and sit here, shut up in a room, while the boys are allowed to have fun all day."

Obviously, Terry had missed his point, but he decided to let it slide and remained silent.

Terry added philosophically, "Well. . . after all. . . we have some special kinds of fun. . . like wearing soft pretty clothes, and we never have to worry about a career or fighting or getting hit in a football game. If only Mother stopped being so strict with us and making us wear these silly aprons all the time. She sure has changed since you arrived. Look at the way she lets Paul run around loose and makes us stay inside and do housework. My Grandmother was a very strict, strong willed person who bossed everyone around her. She treated Mother the same way we are treated now. Mother was never let out of the house without a chaperone. I guess she inherited Grandmother's strong will and strength of character."

"Well, we seem to be in the same boat as she was in the old days," Jack sighed.

"You know, that's right," Terry said, "and I think we should do something. Let's go talk to Mom about it."

"You go ahead," Jack said, sounding scared. "I've been caned too many times already."

"Scaredy cat!" Terry called over her shoulder, indignantly leaving the room.

Before long, Jack heard loud noises from the sun room. A moment of silence was followed by anguished cries. "Please Mother. . . please.

..ouch..ouch..please stop.” As the screams continued, Jack cringed in sympathy.

It was a subdued girl who returned with a tear streaked face, straightening her skirts and sitting very gently, without a word.

Jack was diplomatic enough not to ask what happened as it was all too obvious anyway. That evening, at dinner, Jack heard more about the confrontation. Aunt Julia kept admonishing Terry, as she was apparently very angry with her.

“You should be an example to Jackie,” she stated harshly, “and actually, it is the other way around. You should be ashamed of yourself! She behaves so nicely and politely, and you are willful, disobedient, and entirely too independent for a young girl. As punishment, and to teach you to respect the authority of your elders, you will continue your domestic training, along with Jackie, for the remainder of the summer. In addition, you will undergo strict figure training. I will personally lace your corset as tight as I can get it. If your attitude doesn’t improve immediately, I can easily think of some more stringent punishments. Also, I understand Mrs. Thornsby knows quite a few ways to make girl behave as she should.”

Terry had tears in her eyes as she pleaded with her mother, but no tears or pleas would alter her decision.

At breakfast the next morning, Jack actually felt sorry for Terry, his former tormentress. She, like himself, was obviously tightly laced into her corset and was very uncomfortable. He tried to be nice to Terry, cheering her up and offering to do most of the chores, but she was silent.

At lunch, Aunt Julia announced that the Knowland boys and their Aunt would be coming for a visit. “I understand the boys have been given some special training since their last visit.”

At the Thornsby’s that afternoon, Jack continued his dance and comportment lessons. He had become very attentive and seemed anxious to show progress during these sessions. He had become quite used to being led and making his steps opposite from those a boy would normally take.

Aunt Julia had ordered him to wear a short matching skirt with his playsuit for his trips to and from the Thornsby’s when she saw how tightly his pants fit over his bottom. “It is not decent for a young girl to go out into the streets dressed like that,” she had said.

When he arrived home, he had another surprise coming to him. The three Knowland boys were there, dressed prettily as girls in light summer frocks, drinking tea. They were tightly corseted, their hair was done in attractive pageboys, and they wore light makeup with pink lipstick. William and John were very much ashamed and tried to avoid Jack’s eyes, as they sat neatly upright in their chairs with their knees and ankles modestly together. Apparently, they had

undergone quite a bit of training already because they behaved properly like girls, and they were the very models of feminine decorum with their white gloves and high heels.

Jack was amazed at how authentic they were as girls, forgetting completely that he himself looked even more so.

Little Edward wore a pinafore over his dress and was serving tea to the others. He did not appear too unhappy.

Terry sat in her pinafore with a grim expression working on her embroidery.

After greeting everyone, Jack was sent, by Aunt Julia, to his room to bathe and change into a fresh dress. When he returned, wearing a crisp lavender linen dress with white piping around the neckline, short sleeves, and skirt hem, the Knowlands had already departed.

That evening, the Armstrongs called. Donna took the call and holding her hand over the mouth piece explained to Aunt Julia that Terry and Jackie were invited out to dinner and dancing at the Armstrong home on Saturday night.

Jack could not help feeling good that at least he would be allowed to get out of the house and away from his aunt for a while.

"We must decide what you will wear, Jackie," Aunt Julia said during dinner.

Donna solved the problem. "Remember that white lace dress with the elastic shirring that I wore to my first dance? That ought to fit her just right."

Aunt Julia smiled happily. "That's a good idea. You had better check it tomorrow to see if it still looks perfect, and let Sarah press it."

As Jack left them for the night, he curtsied politely and went to his room. Removing his blouse, skirt, and shoes, and putting on his nightgown, he gently slipped under the bed covers and soon fell asleep.

The next morning, Donna woke him and told him to take a hot bath. The hot water made him feel really alive. Since no one was there to help him, he had to dress himself again. He chose a light green sweater and skirt set, a color he found becoming to him, as the shop girl where he purchased them had said. The sweater had a girlish square neck, and he added a necklace to offset the bareness. After fixing his hair and makeup, he tripped into the dining room for breakfast. When he had finished eating, he was sent to the living room where he was promptly put to work on his tablecloth. He sat beside Terry, and like her, wore a freshly starched, frilly apron. He was becoming quite proud of his handiwork as he was making good progress. He was almost a third done.

Terry began to lament about the dinner at the Armstrong's. "Robert looks so handsome in his navy haircut. I really like him. He's

so manly.”

“How about Peter and Hank,” Jack asked.

“Peter is alright,” she said, “but boys our age are so immature, just like a kid. I guess I feel much older than him although he is our own age. Hank is a soft egg, and he’s shorter than I am. I don’t care what Peter and Hank think, but that Robert is something else. I like boys who are tall, strong, and handsome that I can look up to.”

Jack was blushing deeply with the realization that as a boy he certainly did not meet her standards. In addition, he was aware that he was sitting with her discussing boys. . . just like a real girl. Still. . . her statement about Hank was true. He seemed more gentle, and there was a certain indefinable sense of empathy between him and Hank. Jack knew that Hank admired him and would not have led him around so possessively, or boss him like Peter had while taking his picture. Peter had acted as if he owned Jack, while Hank was polite, soft, and less aggressive.

“I don’t like that silly long hair on Peter and Hank either, Terry mused. It’s almost down to Hank’s shoulders. I don’t know why his mother puts up with it.”

Jack touched his own hair, which was now at least as long, but he remained silent, thinking about what Terry had said.

Terry wiggled on her chair. “This darn corset. . .,” she replied when Jack asked what was the matter. “I don’t see how you can stand it all day.”

“And night,” Jack reminded her. “I guess I just got used to it, and my waist has gotten quite a bit smaller.”

“Yes, and it looks nice on you,” Terry replied, “but, I just can’t stand it.”

Friday night, Donna washed his hair for him. After an hour under the dryer, she brushed it until it was soft and shiny. Then she had him put it up in large curlers for the night. “Tomorrow, I want you to look real grown up and perfect,” she said, “and nice hair is so important for a girl. The boys really go for it.”

Jack nodded. He knew this was true because he had always admired the lovely curly locks of some of his girlfriends. Donna did Terry’s hair as well, and Jack felt very much among the girls, as they gabbed about many feminine subjects.

On Saturday, Aunt Julia ordered both Jack and Terry to take a “beauty nap”. “You’ll look so much prettier at the party when you are well rested. Also, you may be up late if there is dancing.”

Terry started to object, but Jack knew better. He obediently went to his room, undressed down to his slip, and crawled under the covers. He wondered, for a while, why he had not felt like arguing with Aunt Julia, while Terry had objected rather strongly. Was he really more docile than Terry, more inclined to do as he was told? Then, he

enjoyed the thought that, at least for the weekend, he did not have to go to Mrs. Thornsby's. With that happy thought, he dozed off.

Later, Donna woke him and sent him to the bathroom for a long soak. He now enjoyed using the scented bath salts, and the hot water relaxed him. Without knocking, she entered the bathroom, ending his lazy, dreamy quarter hour. She lifted his arms and, seeing some hair, took a razor and removed every trace. She did the same for his arms, legs, and chest. She acted so completely natural about it, that Jack let her have her way. He never even considered for a moment that he, a boy, should not be handled in the nude by this girl only a few years his elder. She even powdered him everywhere, and not until she was ready to powder below his waist, did he turn away.

"Now stand still, you silly girl. I sure don't enjoy playing nanny to you. . .so be cooperative. . .you're a girl now, remember?"

The usual modesty patch was put on, followed by beautiful lacy white panties, matching bra, and soft nylon slip were next. For the first time, he wore a strapless bra, and his slip had elastic at the top in lieu of straps.

Donna checked his bra carefully before putting in the liquid inserts. After the inserts were in place, she tightened the bra still more, making it really tight. Jack felt strangely harnessed and knew he would be aware of this feminine garment all evening. A short white satin corset was then laced extra tight, making his waist really small and eye catching.

She then directed him to his vanity bench and started her makeup session with a vengeance. She spent almost twenty minutes just plucking his eyebrows into a thin graceful line. He inhaled Donna's perfume as she bent close to him, and her nearness excited him. He hoped she would not notice. Seeing Donna's thin, arched brows, he realized that his would soon be looking just as neat. So brainwashed he had been into feeling like a girl, that he never even thought to complain that he would look silly as a boy with such thin curved eyebrows.

She put on his makeup, cream, and powder to give his face a healthy young glow. His lips were sensuously outlined with a light pink, almost natural, lipstick, and over it, a liquid gloss to give them that inviting, fresh, wet appearance. She brushed his hair into an attractive casual style, hanging loosely from his face but still showing that he kept it well groomed and cared for.

"You know. . .you have such nice thick hair. . .much more beautiful than either mine or Terry's," Donna said with honest admiration. "It's really lovely." She checked his nails, which were nice and long. "I'm glad you have learned to take care of your hands," she commented as she spread 'Mother of Pearl' polish on them. "This color will go better with your dress than red,"

Finally, she carefully lifted the dress over his head and zipped up the back. As it slid into place, Jack saw that it was made of a beautiful soft, thin synthetic material, with a white band of elastic shirring around the waist and form fitting neck. It fit like it was made for him.

Donna, who had expected to see a pleased look, was surprised to see instead consternation and worry. "Now, what's the matter, Jackie?" she asked, in an annoyed tone.

"I . . . it . . . it doesn't have any sleeves. . . look, my shoulders are all naked. . . I can't wear this dress to that party. . . with boys. . ."

Donna smiled in a teasing way. "Yes, isn't it nice? That's what makes this dress so intriguing to men. The designer was very clever the way he accentuated the contrast between the high demure neck and the girlish nude shoulder. Every boy will want to touch you. Why, I remember well when I wore it for the first time. . . well. . . you'll see!"

Jack blushed with shame. "But, I feel so undressed. . . so naked, and this dress is so terribly thin."

"Yes, it is," Donna agreed, "but, it's really captivating. . . you'll soon find out. . . and you really look darling in it. STUNNING is actually a better word. I know it sounds impossible, but you look innocently vulnerable, and at the same time, you have a touch of sophistication, of maturity, in this dress."

Jack put on his high gloss black patent leather pumps with three inch heels.

"You will carry a handbag to match your shoes. The contrast of black and white is very stylish. . . very much in. You know, I believe you look better in that dress than I ever did. I'm almost jealous." As a final touch, she put a wide gold slave band on his right wrist. "No more jewelry," she said. "It would only detract from the simple lines of your dress and the nice curves of your body."

As Jack walked to his full length mirror, he blushed deeply at all her praise. What he saw made him speechless. He could only stand there dreamy eyed taking it all in, from his elegant shoes to his glowing hair. Everything Donna had said was true. The softly gathered skirt hung beautifully to his knees. He looked at Donna, too touched emotionally by this new girl, this new Jackie, to speak a word. This was a girl he had not known existed, but really did exist sharing his own body.

By the happy glint in his eyes, Donna knew that her efforts had not been wasted. Obviously, he could hardly believe that this beautiful girl was really him. . . a manly boy only a few weeks ago. He had never felt so girlish before in his life.

Donna kissed him gently on his hair so as not to mess up his makeup. He felt himself tilting his head toward her lips, like a kitten invites a caress from her mistress by arching her back. As if he

wanted. . .invited. . .further contact. Donna let him spray on his own perfume and took great delight when she noted that he already knew exactly all the strategic spots.

Downstairs, he found Aunt Julia and Paul in the living room. As he approached them, he put his right hand around his left elbow behind his back. Coquettishly, he tilted his head a little to the right, making his hair hang loosely over his bare shoulder. In a soft voice, he asked, "How do I look, Aunt Julia?"

Both Paul and Aunt Julia were at a loss for words. They both rose, and Paul was unable to remove his eyes from Jack's bare shoulders. Aunt Julia embraced him tightly, being careful not to wrinkle his dress or muss his hair and makeup. With that same warm glint in his eyes, Jack voluntarily kissed her and found himself pressing his body against his aunt. When she released him, Jack, as if in a trance, also kissed Paul lightly on the cheek, before he realized what he was doing.

Paul smiled at first, but quickly changed his expression when he realized he had been kissed by a boy. Jack, seeing the look of disgust on his cousin's face, started wiping Paul's face with his hand. Jack became horribly ashamed when he realized what he had done and turned quickly to avoid revealing the tears that had welled up in his eyes.

Desperately, he tried to control himself, then turned to face them again. "I. . .I'm sorry Paul. . .I don't know what came over me," he whispered.

Paul stared at Jack as if he were a strange beast, and Aunt Julia tried to smooth things over by saying, "It's alright Paul, for a girl to kiss a friend or a cousin. Remember, Jack is really a girl now, and he is beginning to feel like one. He already looks like a pretty young girl. Don't you agree?"

"He sure does," Paul admitted, his anger subsiding.

Jack sank into a chair, the terrible shame of it all twisting his insides, searing his very soul. What was this dress doing to him, making his body long for physical contact? He resolved one thing in his mind. Never in his life would he touch a boy again.

Terry entered the room, and seeing how pretty Jack looked, she compared her pretty dress with his.

Donna came in wearing a green taffeta dress that left little to the imagination. Her luscious curves were only partly covered by the low decollete. Jack had not realized that Donna was going too, but it made sense when he realized that three Armstrong boys would need to invite three girls. It was only logical. Was he now regarding himself as a girl?

They were received by Mrs. Armstrong with a cordial welcome, but only Jack was embraced tightly and kissed. "Oh Jackie, you look just gorgeous in that dress. . .good enough to eat. I wish I had a

daughter like you. I would be in seventh heaven.”

Terry flippantly said, “Well. . .why don’t you train one of your sons to be a daughter. It happens. . .all the time, you know.”

For a moment, as Jack took off his gloves, he thought Terry was going to reveal his secret. She could be so nasty sometimes! But still smiling, Terry just squeezed his arm in a friendly gesture as they followed Mrs. Armstrong into the large, beautifully furnished living room.

The boys were all smiles as they greeted the girls. Pete and Hank did not know where to look first. At the beautiful Jackie in her bare shouldered dress, or at Terry in her pretty party dress. Robert, of course, only had eyes for the ravishing Donna.

Mr. Armstrong served a fine old Portuguese sherry, and after checking with Donna, served Jack and Terry as well.

When everyone had settled down and were engaged in general conversation, Mrs. Armstrong announced that she had to go to the kitchen to check on the food preparations.

Jack immediately asked if he could help, and Terry belatedly also offered her assistance.

“No, . . .” Mrs. Armstrong said. “I told Hank and Peter that since they had insisted inviting you girls over on Anne’s night off that tonight the ladies were to be served and that the roles would be reversed. So, come on boys. . .Peter, you set the table, and Hank, you come to the kitchen with me.”

Terry promptly jumped up. “Oh. . .this will be a lot of fun. If Hank is to work in the kitchen, he will need an apron to prevent soiling his nice suit.”

Mrs. Armstrong presented her son with one of Anne’s pinafore styled aprons, and Terry helped him put it on. It fit him perfectly, although he looked and felt terribly silly in this exquisitely feminine garment. His face turned carmine as he stood speechless with his mouth open at this unexpected development.

Mrs. Armstrong beamed. “That’s fine. . .come along Hennie,” she said, using a feminization of his given name, Henry. “We have work to do.”

Peter had gone into the dining room where Jack could watch him. He looked helplessly around, not knowing where to start, and Jack could not suppress a smile of superiority. He minced over to Peter saying, “I’ll teach you how to do it,” impishly adding, “too bad we don’t have a little apron for you as well.” Expertly, he helped Peter spread the beautiful white batiste tablecloth and showed him where and how to place the China, silver, and glasses.

In the kitchen, Hank showed some surprising aptitude for his new activity. Somehow, he was pleased at being chosen to help his mother in the kitchen. Being the middle of three children, he had always felt

a bit underprivileged and short changed in his mother's affection. As is often the case with parents, they adore their first born as the apple of their eye, whose position in the family always remains special. On the other hand, Peter, the youngest, had always been the baby. As such, he had been spoiled and caressed and had taken most of the parental attention away from the second child. With all the fuss made over the new baby, Hank felt that love had been stolen from him.

Typically, that had made Hank act very pliable, polite, and thoughtful. He was always trying to please his parents, especially his mother, hoping that in this way he could attract her attention and love. And usually for this reason, in a family of three children, the middle child is the best behaved. Even though feeling silly in his pinafore, he basked in the idea that now he had his mother for himself alone, and he went out of his way to please her.

Mrs. Armstrong was pleased to have his help. She watched him, smiled, and said, "What have I missed all these years? I didn't know you were so handy in the kitchen."

"I didn't either, Mom. . .but I don't mind helping you out. . .honestly."

"If you don't watch out, I'll make you help me all the time," she beamed, and pressed a tender kiss on his cheek. Suddenly, she felt a stronger affection for her second born, more intense that she had ever experienced before.

When dinner was served, Hank brought in the food, the ruffles of his pinafore fluttering with each step. Peter also helped carry the food.

Both Terry and Donna were happily fascinated by Hank's appearance and actions. Was this another candidate for them to humiliate in girl's clothes, to dominate, boss around, and feminize?

Hank gravely announced, "Ladies and gentlemen, dinner is served."

His mother, watching him with pride, smiled broadly.

As everyone walked to the dining room, Hank picked up his jacket and loosened the straps of his pinafore, but Donna refused to allow him to remove it, saying, "Why don't you leave it on, Dear? It becomes you so, and later, it will prevent you from soiling your suit when you remove the dirty dishes."

His mother nodded, saying, "It's alright, Darling."

Surprisingly, Hank did not seem to mind too much as he had



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finally found a way to really ingratiate himself with his mother, and he intended to make the most of it. When the soup was finished, he automatically started to collect the plates, while Peter and Robert did not lift a finger.

“Thank you, Dear,” Mrs. Armstrong said to him. “But, remember, you must take the plates away from the right, while you serve from the left of a guest.”

Hank nodded, blushing a little at this admonishment.

Mr. Armstrong watched his son disappear into the kitchen with a stack of dirty dishes and shook his head in surprise. Still, he thought, it was nice that Mary had such willing help and that Hank did it so willingly without complaining.

During the second course, Donna planted a nasty suggestion in Mrs. Armstrong’s head. “Hennie is such a good helper. . .you should dress him as a girl.”

Mrs. Armstrong beamed. “Yes. . .not a bad idea. He has such a slight figure, and I’ve always wanted a daughter, you know. That never occurred to me before.”

Hank, hearing this, blushed deeply and lowered his head in shame.

Robert and Peter laughed aloud, and Peter teasingly said, “Yes. . .Hennie. . .it would be nice to have a sister to sew on buttons and such things.”

“Gosh no. . .please. . .,” Hank said softly. “Everyone would laugh and make fun of me.” He blushed deeper than ever before in his life when he realized that this did not exactly sound like a negative reply. It was almost as if he was saying that he would not mind, except for what others might say or think.

Mr. Armstrong closed the discussion by saying, “Well, nobody is going to make a sissy out of my sons, I’ll see to that.”

Mrs. Armstrong, unwilling to let the subject die completely, said in a hurt voice, “Well, it does no harm for a boy to help his mother around the house occasionally when there’s no girl to do it.” Looking accusingly at her husband, she added, “You men don’t ever think of all the work that goes into running a household. I’ll bet you don’t even notice all the things I do for you, serving a man and three sons all the time.

All this time, Jack sat silently in his chair with his hands folded on his skirt, turning alternatively white and red, while this most embarrassing subject, for him, was discussed. He was never sure whether Terry would give him away, or if Donna would drop such a broad hint that anyone might guess his true gender.

He would be so ashamed if Mrs. Armstrong or the boys found out. It could not be worse because he knew that he completely looked like an authentic girl in his bare shouldered delicate dress and with

his curvy figure. What would they think of him if they knew the truth??? Mr. Armstrong would surely be disgusted, Jack was sure. He would probably think he was a freak or something. Jack liked and respected Mr. Armstrong, and the thought of losing his regard made his stomach turn.

Jack experienced a monumental sense of relief when the subject was finally dropped, even though his hostess kept drawing him and his cousins into feminine conversations. She kept on raving about his appearance, consequently embarrassing him. He fervently wished she would stop.

All during dinner, Hank was the one who voluntarily got up from the table to take away the plates and serve the coffee. It was remarkable how his brothers, and the guests for that matter, accepted his actions without comment as if these things were now expected of him. His mother constantly encouraged him saying how much she appreciated his help and how nicely he did everything.

After dinner, Hank was allowed to remove his apron. Music was put on, and the dancing started. Jack, who now had two solid weeks of intense practice behind him under the stern and exacting tutelage of Mrs. Thornsby, danced beautifully. He was light on his feet and moved graciously, as he had been taught. His skirt swung gaily about him and on occasion, cleverly and innocently flashed an expanse of nylon covered thigh. Now that he felt at home on the dance floor in his skirt and heels and knew what to do, he actually enjoyed moving in rhythm to the music in the arms of the boys or their father. He had no problem following their lead and dancing backward as he smiled radiantly at his partner. He did not even mind being held close to them or firmly in their arms, at least he never thought of it.

Terry danced mostly with Peter and Hank. She wanted to dance with Robert, and indeed he did dance with her, but only once.

Mrs. Armstrong often followed Jack in his beautiful dress with her eyes, frequently smiling warmly at him when their eyes met. The pleasant evening ended early when Mr. Armstrong announced that he was not feeling well.

“Don’t forget tennis tomorrow girls,” Peter shouted to Terry and Jack as they walked toward the car.

Robert drove the girls home in the Armstrong family car. Once they were in the car, Donna admonished Terry. “You should not have teased Hank that way about wearing dresses! He is not your brother, you know.”

“Well, he he didn’t seem to mind wearing that pinafore this evening,” she defended herself. “Anyway, his hair is sure long enough. It’s almost like a girl’s.”

Robert said reflectively, “I wonder what came over Hank tonight. I didn’t know he was so handy in the kitchen. He never did those

things before.”

Terry, trying to keep an even face, dug her elbow into Jack's side and said, “I think some boys have a natural knack for these things. It's probably inborn.”

Just then, they reached home, and fortunately for Jack, there were no further comments on that subject.

Jack did wonder; however, what it was with these women. Why did they enjoyed putting a pinafore on a boy and making him do feminine tasks. Was it because they were jealous of the males? Was that why they made him dress and act as a girl? Some day, he should tell them that being a boy is not always a bed of roses. The problem kept his mind busy while he undressed, performed his nightly beauty ritual, and long after he went to bed. He finally fell asleep with the secret thought that he no longer minded so much having to wear skirts. . . especially not as long as he looked like he had that evening and none of his friends knew.

Sunday morning, Jack was again taken to church. This time Terry had to come also. Terry was a bit jealous when she saw how attractive Jack looked in his demure navy blue dress and stylish high heeled shoes. His dress had a peasant braid trim on the high neckline, around the waist, hemline, and pert short sleeves, showing his smooth nonmuscular arms.

Donna had put his long hair piece on, parting it in the middle, and letting the locks flow freely over his shoulders, giving his face a young, soft effect. She had given him a gold snake bracelet to put high up on his left forearm, with small buttons in his ears. His face, had now attained a soft rounded look, because of the nightly creaming and massaging. With his thin eyebrows and fresh red lipstick, there was not a trace of boy left in his face.

When they neared the church, Aunt Julia discovered that both of the girls had forgotten their gloves and handbags, and Jack had no hat. “Will you girls never grow up?” she chided them. Terry just shrugged her shoulders, but Jack blushed over his forgetfulness. Aunt Julia's constant lessons, that a girl is not properly dressed outside unless she wore gloves. . .and a hat to church caused him to feel undressed now. Fortunately, Aunt Julia had a light blue scarf in her bag, and she tied it under Jack's chin, babushka style.

Now that Jack had sort of begun to accept himself as a girl, his facial expressions were smoother and less tense. He was almost happy as he entered the church, greeting the people he had met the week before with a gentle girlish smile. He was fully aware that he looked very attractive in this simple dress, and his proud, natural posture showed confidence and contentment.

His ballet training showed in the way he walked, the way he held his head, and the way he carried himself. The many compliments he

received, pleased not only Aunt Julia but himself as well. He tried his best to hide his feelings from her, but she was much too clever for him. He thought about that while he quietly listened to the sermon with his hands passively in his lap.

Was Terry feeling the same things, he wondered. Did she like it when boys looked admiringly at her? He guessed that every girl liked to be attractive, and felt horrible when she saw complete disinterest in the eyes of a person of the opposite sex. He cringed at the thought that he was now a member of the "opposite sex" who was cleverly displaying her feminine beauty, her charms, and her best points to attract the males. That thought made him feel warm all over. What the dickens was happening to him?

As they left the church, he noticed many admiring stares from the young fellows. His blush only served to make him more attractive as he demurely lowered his eyes each time.

He saw that Terry acted entirely differently. She would smile flirtatiously as if to say, "Come here young fellow. I can handle you any time."

When Jack approached a group of boys his own age, he found himself removing his scarf so the boys could admire his long flowing hair. Why had he done that. . . instead of ignoring them? That question bothered him for a long time.

During lunch, they had a call from the Armstrongs. Mr. Armstrong had fallen ill and was being taken to the hospital. There would be no tennis that afternoon.

"Why don't you take Jackie for a nice walk instead, Paul?" Aunt Julia suggested.

Paul was not too happy about his mother's suggestion, but a glance from her made him change his mind. "Alright Jackie, we can go to Ashland Woods. The park there is nice and cool in the summer."

No one asked whether or not Jack wanted to go, and he knew enough to keep his mouth shut. He knew that if Aunt Julia wanted him to take a stroll, then that is what he would end up doing anyway. He had grown very afraid to displease her, fearing the punishment that would result. She might even change her mind and decide to tell his friends and his mother and sister about his adventures as a girl. That was too horrible to contemplate! Anyway, it would be nice to be out of the house in this gorgeous weather.

So, at two o'clock, Jack found himself sauntering beside Paul. He still wore the dress and shoes he had worn to church but without his handbag or gloves. Aunt Julia had said that it was alright to go without them on a walk in the woods. Before he left, he made sure that he looked alright, brushing his long tresses and repairing his lipstick. He saw in Paul's eyes that he really looked the part of a pretty girl, and that it wasn't too much of a chore to spend a couple of hours with her.

Jack was actually glad to be out in the fresh air. It was much better than being forced to sit quietly indoors working on his tablecloth. The weather was unusual for England. A bright warm sun shone from a blue sky with an occasional puffy cloud floating over head. Most of the people they met passed admiring glances at this attractive young couple.

Paul looked very neat in his slacks and tweed sports jacket. His mother had made him put on a tie as well, saying, "You must look neat when your lady escort is dressed so nicely." He looked older than his years.

Jack had not been out of doors many times except for his daily walks to and from the Thornsby house, and he loved exploring the surrounding area. At first, they walked in silence. Jack felt a bit guilty when Paul remained silent for so long. He knew his aunt had practically forced Paul to take him for a walk.

He wondered how Paul felt. . .having to walk with a boy dressed as a girl? Jack finally could no longer bear that almost accusing silence, and said, "Do you mind having to take me for a walk while I'm dressed this way, Paul?"

"No, not really. . .," Paul replied, sounding a bit hesitant. "It was not that I objected to your company, it's just that I had planned to play cricket with my friends this afternoon."

Jack nodded his understanding. "I could not refuse. . .you know that Paul. . .so, it's not really my fault."

"No. . .I know you are right. . .and I really don't mind," Paul said bravely. "But do you mind if we walk in the direction of the playing field, so at least, I could watch for a little while?"

"Will I have to meet your friends there?" Jack asked with some concern.

Paul nodded, watching his companion for some time. "The way you look. . .you shouldn't worry. You look alright. . .pretty even. . .," he added, hesitating to say it.

Jack blushed deeply. The under handed compliment pleased him. It shouldn't have, but it did just the same. Unconsciously, he straightened his figure and held his head high, making his bosom more prominent.

"Are you sorry you came here. . .the way my mother and sisters treat you?" Paul asked in a sympathetic voice.

"Yes. . .at first especially. I still am sometimes," Jack replied honestly. "In the beginning, it was just too awful. I wanted to run away. . .but I had no where to go. . .and no money. . .and, you were treated the same way. Then. . .Terry threatened to send those photos of me in kilts to my friends. I was really scared because boys in America don't wear kilts. Everyone would think I was wearing a skirt, and I would have been branded a sissy. I was so scared that I just had

to do whatever they said. I couldn't. . . I just couldn't let them send those horrible photographs away."

"Your arrival sure made things better for me," Paul said with a grateful look. "There were times when I thought I would be in skirts forever. At least your friends are far away. Mine live close by and could have dropped in at any time. It was so nerve wracking. I would have died with shame if any of them had seen me wearing Terry's dresses."

Jack nodded. "Yes. . . I know. . . that would have been the end of you in school."

"I don't know why my mother and sisters are that way," Paul continued. "None of my friends have to wear skirts as punishment, at least none that I know of."

Jack interrupted, "Hey. . . what about me. . . take a look at me!"

"Yes. . . but. . . but you should have been a girl, I guess," Paul replied more honestly than diplomatically. "You look terrific in dresses. . . like you always wore them."

Jack blushed in shame. Sure. . . Aunt Julia and the girls had said that several times, but now, Paul. . . a boy his own age. . . his own cousin said it. "You should have been a girl." The phrase hammered in his head. If even Paul thought that, could it really be true? Was that why he had become accustomed to skirts so quickly. . . why he had been able to arrange the flowers so nicely. . . why he had a knack for ironing and sewing? The barrage of doubts was nearly too much for him. How could this be???

He had always been all boy. At least, he thought he had always felt and acted like a boy, identical to all of his friends. And now. . . in such a short time. . . everyone thought he was a girl, and he even felt like one sometimes. What was the matter with him?

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Not a word was spoken between them for a long time, as each was busy with his own thoughts. After a while, Paul broke the silence, proving that his mind had been this strange business as well. "Still. . . maybe some of my friends are punished this way too. But, of course, everyone hides it. . . just like we are doing. Come to think of it, there's this fellow. . . Leslie. . . He has eyebrows almost as prettily shaped as yours. Do you suppose I could come right out and ask him?" Paul wondered aloud.

"He is not going to admit anything. . . unless you tell him first that you've been forced to wear gymfrocks," Jack said with conviction.

"I sure won't tell him anything of the sort," Paul replied grimly.

"See what I mean? No one will tell," Jack said. "And, then there's the Knowland boys. They were put into dresses, and William and John weren't too happy about it either, I can assure you. There are more of us than we know, I suspect, and no one will tell. Everyone is too ashamed."

As they walked on, the enjoyment of the gentle exercise, and the conversation about his weird problem, made Jack feel at peace, somehow. A calmness. . . almost acceptance. . . came over him, knowing that with Paul he did not have to pretend. He really enjoyed being dressed so lightly with his bare arms exposed to the warm sun, while Paul was uncomfortable in his heavy jacket and tie. Jack was now used to the feeling of soft skirts whirling around his knees, his long hair brushing his face, and his smooth nylon covered legs being exposed. Yes, as long as no one who knew him was around, he really did not mind being a girl for the moment. Not the way he looked and felt!

As they reached the cricket field, they could see many people watching along the sidelines. With relief, Jack noticed many girls in the crowd.

As they came closer, Paul nudged him. "There's Leslie. . . the boy I was telling you about," he whispered.

Jack looked in the direction Paul indicated and saw a small statured boy, standing between two girls. As far as Jack could see, he was the only boy on the field wearing a kilt. "If you introduce me, I'll talk to him and see what I can learn," Jack said softly.

Paul guided him to that group saying, "Hello Leslie, this is my cousin from America, Jacqueline."

A blush appeared on Leslie's face as he greeted Paul and offered his hand to Jack with a "How do you do, Jacqueline?"

The two girls beside him watched with annoyance until he remembered to introduce them. "These are my sisters, Leona and Judith Campbell," he said.

Did Jack imagine it, or did Leslie look like he was scared silly of them?

Leona was the older of the two, and not exactly a beauty. Judith was about nineteen, and though not pretty, at least had a friendly smile when she said, "How do you do, Jacqueline. . .what a pretty dress you are wearing."

Both girls wore slacks, Jack noticed when Leona extended her hand finally. Her eyes were like ice cycles as she seemed to look right through Jack's head. "You're dressed for a tea party," she remarked nastily. "Do American girls dress up like that for sporting events?"

While the words were not too bad. . .the way she said it made Jack blush. "Paul took me for a walk, and I didn't we were going to watch cricket. . .or I would have changed into sport clothes," he said defensively.

Leona did not deem to reply and turned to watch the game, as did Judith.

"You look nice in your kilt, Leslie. . .but isn't there something missing?" Jack said smiling.

Leslie grimaced. "I guess you think I'm wearing a skirt, but it's a kilt. . .honest. . .only I. . .I forgot to put on my sporrán."

"Oh," Jack said, for once having fun at someone else's expense. But, when he saw how unhappy and depressed Leslie was, he quickly added, "Paul wears a kilt too, on occasion. I think they are really nice. While an American boy would never wear one, they must be lighter in summer than slacks."

Leslie's face cleared up. "Yes. . .they are much cooler when it's hot."

As Jack studied Leslie's face from the side, he detected the remains of powder and a bit of mascara. His eyebrows were obviously shaped, just as Paul had said. A strong feeling of sympathy came over Jack as he considered the possibility that here was another victim of petticoating, and he felt sorry for him. Leslie's older sisters were no doubt making life hard for him, Jack could well imagine, as they looked and acted like Cinderella's cruel step sisters.

Leslie politely explained the game to Jack. As they conversed, Leslie became more at ease and seemed to take a liking to Jack.

"Does your father wear kilts too," Jack asked.

Leslie's face grew sad. "My father died three years ago. . .and my mother when I was very small. I live with my sisters now."

When the game was ended, Judith turned to her brother, saying, "Come along dear, we have to go home. . .you still have some things to do, remember?"

She grabbed the hand of her crimsoned faced brother, leaving him little time to say, "Goodbye Jacqueline. . .so long Paul."

Sagging with shame, the humiliated boy, in his kilt, was led away by the hand like a small child between his sisters, who were wearing slacks.

Paul stayed a while to chat with his friends, and he introduced all of them to his cousin in skirts. What a difference Jack felt compared to his first meeting with Paul's friends in the garden that day. Now, he was able to talk and smile freely, letting his girlish personality shine through while secretly enjoying the admiring glances, the flattering comments, and the vying for his attention.

As they walked home, Paul remarked, "I was watching you with the boys. . .and you know. . .you really ARE a girl now. I only wish Terry was as nice as you. She is always bossy with my friends and teases them. . .like she was years older and wiser."

"I sure don't feel bossy," Jack replied. "As a matter of fact, I feel really strange lately. Like I'm changing into a different person. . .you know. . .different from you and those other boys. It really worries me a lot. . .but I just can't help myself."

Paul did not reply. What could he say?? He too had noticed the gradual changes in Jack, and he knew there was nothing he could do to help him. If he tried to interfere with the scheme of his mother and sisters, there was no telling what might happen to him. They might even make him BE a girl, like Jackie. He could never risk that! However, he silently promised himself to try and make up for it by being nice to his cousin. . .as pleasant as he could. . .maybe make it easier for her. . .er. . .him, he corrected himself. He felt uneasy as he realized that he already thought of Jack as a girl most of the time.

When they arrived home, they were told sad news. Robert had phoned saying that his father had suffered a heart attack and died about an hour ago in the hospital. His mother had gone into shock and had been put to bed.

Donna said, "The boy's must feel terrible. . .I remember how I felt when Dad died ten years ago."

Aunt Julia nodded. "Yes. . .and don't forget poor Mrs. Armstrong. The poor dear is all alone. . .with three children. . .in a strange country. I'll call her tomorrow and see if there is anything we can do. I'll also give her the name of our solicitor. She'll need his help and advice." Then she added, "We will be expected to attend the funeral, so we must go shopping for a black dress for Jackie."

Jack nodded, not even thinking to question her statement that he would need a new dress. His thoughts instead were that shopping for new clothes would not be enjoyable under these circumstances. He did wonder; however, whether a black dress would make him look older.

Meanwhile at the Armstrong house, everyone was stunned, and a deep sense of loss made them move mechanically. Even Anne, the maid, was greatly distressed although she had only been with the family for a short time.

Robert was making an effort to become the man of the house as

he knew that his mother, who was walking around in a daze, was in no condition to do anything. He tried to make the necessary arrangements, and sent cables to family and business relations of his father. He knew it was unlikely that any family or friends would fly over for the funeral, so everything was up to him. One of his father's English friends did come over to help, and together they made all of the necessary plans and set the schedules.

Mrs. Armstrong, completely overcome by grief, went to her bedroom unable to speak with anyone without breaking down in a flood of tears.

The maid Anne, a friendly greyish woman born in Ireland, had several times brought food to Mary Armstrong's room, but it remained untouched.

The next two days were trying for the boys as well. Robert grew into a man overnight as he shouldered his new responsibilities.

The one most affected, of the boys, was Hank. As a very sensitive boy, he deeply felt the terrible grief of his mother, and coupled with his own sorrow at the loss of his beloved father, he had difficulty controlling his tears. But, he tried like a man, while wracking his brain to figure out what he could do for his mother.

When Anne served dinner to the boys, she expressed her worries that their mother had not eaten now for thirty six hours. Together, the boys tried to find a way to get their mother out of her state of lethargy.

"She seemed so happy. . .unusually happy. . .only last Saturday night at the party," Peter said absently.

"I think that was because I helped her in the kitchen and wore that pinafore like the daughter she always wanted," Hank observed.

Anne, who was taking away the plates, overheard and asked what had happened.

Peter explained, "Since it was your night off, and Mother didn't want the girl guests to do anything, she made Hank and me help her. One of the girls gave Hank your frilly pinafore to wear, and Mom sure liked him in it."

"I also washed the dishes and cleaned up afterward. She was so happy that she hummed a tune in the kitchen while we were working," Hank told them. "I've never known her to do that before. . .she must have really been in good spirits."

Anne said, "We just have to do something to bring her back to reality. Maybe Hank should take her some food while wearing that same pinafore. It might jolt her back to her senses. I just ironed it yesterday.

Hank blushed. "No. . .that would be silly."

Robert agreed with Anne, "That's a good idea. At least it's worth trying. It won't hurt you a bit Hank, and we must try everything possible."

"Alright. . . I'll do it, but you and Pete better not make fun of me."

Returning to the room, Anne helped Hank into the pinafore. After studying him a moment, she said, "Take off your pants. That will make you appear to be wearing a skirt. Remove your tie as well and open your collar like so. . ."

Blushing uncomfortably, Hank complied.

"Now, let's put a ribbon in your hair," Anne said, firmly pulling his long hair into a ponytail and tying it with the large bow. "There, you're beginning to look like a dedicated daughter already."

"This is crazy," said Peter.

"Crazy or not, we're going to try it," Robert said decisively.

It did make quite a change. Hank always wore light colored short ankle socks of the kind no English boy would touch. In his sneakers and with his small boned figure, he made somewhat of an effeminate impression.

Pete could not help grinning a little, but Robert frowned at him. "Yes. . . that's fine. . . let's hope it works. . . do your best because everything depends on you, Hank."

Hank nodded. His face was very red as he followed Anne to the kitchen where she fixed a tray of food. Carefully, he carried it up to his mother's bedroom and knocked at the door. Not receiving a reply after several tries, he entered the room and found her sitting, with unseeing eyes, her hair unkempt, her dress wrinkled and untidy. . . like she had not been out of her clothes for days.

Hank had never seen his mother this way, being used to her always well groomed attractive appearance. It really shook him up. "Mom. . . Mom," he urged. "I brought you something to eat." Receiving no response, he tried again, "Mom. . . please. . . please eat something. It will make you feel better."

Finally, she stirred and faced her son, staring at him as if seeing him for the first time. "Hennie? . . . Hennie?" she whispered. "Hennie, my beautiful Hennie. . . you've come back."

She held up her arms, and Hank flew into them, throwing his own arms around her neck. She cried violently as she hugged the pinafored boy as if he were a small child. Hank could not contain his own tears any longer as he sensed how unhappy and deeply hurt his mother really was.

They stayed motionless for quite a while, before Hank slowly and gently disengaged himself from her grasp. "Your dinner is getting cold, Mom. Please eat something.

She nodded, drying her tears, "Alright Dear."

Hank stayed with her until she finished her plate. As he neatly put everything back on the tray, he said, "I'll get your dessert, Mom."

Downstairs, his brothers and the maid eagerly awaited him.

"It worked!" he said with a happy smile. "She talked to me, cried,

and then ate her dinner. I have to get her dessert now.

“Good,” Robert said. “Maybe we have found the key to reaching her.”

Anne took Hank to the kitchen and prepared the dessert plate. When he took it into his mother’s room, he found her standing before her mirror combing her hair. She came over and hugged him tightly, saying, “Oh Hennie Dear. . .I feel so much better with my daughter around.”

Hank was perturbed at the way she said it, like she really thought he was a daughter. “Eat your dessert, Mom. It’s really good.”

She nodded and sat down and ate, while Hank waited, watching her eat it all.

“Won’t you come downstairs Mom? We really have missed you.”

Tears filled her eyes again as she replied, “Yes. . .I’ve selfishly neglected you and the boys. Let me change my dress.”

Right before him, she started removing her wrinkled dress. This embarrassed him terribly, but he was glad she was thinking of her appearance again.

As he turned to leave, she called, “Wait Hennie. . .I want to fix your hair a little better.”

Hank was thoroughly embarrassed at seeing his mother in her underwear, and he wondered how much his father’s death had affected her mind. She had never undressed before him or his brothers before. He was at a loss for what to do, so he remained, watching silently as she put on a black dress.

She asked him, “Do you have a good black dress for the funeral, Dear?”

“No. . .No Mom. . .I’ve never had a black dress.”

“Well, we must buy some for you tomorrow,” she said firmly.

“But. . .Mom. . .” Hank stopped. Maybe it was better not to argue with her as it might upset her again. She just came out of her state of shock.

Mrs. Armstrong repaired her makeup, then called Hank to the vanity table. “You have such lovely hair, Hennie. . .there’s lots of things we can do with it.” She pushed him onto the bench and removed his hair ribbon. She brushed and combed his hair with a part in the middle and a fringe in front. Before he realized what she was doing, she took her scissors and cut the front even. Then, she took two long white ribbons from a drawer and braided his long hair into two pigtails.

He became panicky and restlessly asked, “Mom, what are you doing?” although he knew perfectly well what she was up to.

“Shush Dear. . .I have always loved girls with pigtails. . .they look so cute.”

"But Mom. . ." He gave up and fell silent again. What could he say? He could not risk upsetting her. . .not now just as she was feeling better and was becoming aware of her surroundings again. When she started plucking his eyebrows he wanted to protest, but declined.

"Why have you let your brows grow out so much, dear?" she asked in a concerned voice.

He fervently wished Robert were present. He would know what to do. This was getting out of hand. When she took out her lipstick, he could no longer hold his piece. "Mom. . .please, not that. . .please." Tears were welling up.

"Now Dear, . . . just let me help you. I don't know why I have neglected your appearance so in the past. A little color does so much for a girl's face, and you are certainly old enough to wear makeup."

When he pulled away trying to prevent her, he saw her face cloud over suddenly, and she listlessly sank into a nearby chair. Her eyes became vacant and unseeing again, and she stared straight ahead. Hank became worried. Was it his fault that she became so strange again? He smiled, put his arms around her neck, and kissed her on the cheek saying, "Mom. . .Mom. . .it's alright. . .I'll wear the lipstick if you want. . .really. . .go ahead and put it on me."

The sparkle immediately returned to her eyes, and she hugged him. "Oh Darling. . .I'm so glad to have you. Come on, let's join the boys downstairs." Taking his hand in hers, she said, "Oh yes. . .some lipstick. . .I almost forgot." She pulled him back to the vanity, and this time, he let her have her way. . .even when she powdered his face and clipped small earrings to his lobes.

Just as they were ready to leave the room, Robert came in, and seeing his feminized brother, he froze. Hank, standing slightly behind his mother held up his hands in a gesture of helplessness, pointing with his head in an effort to tell Robert that she had done this to him.

"Oh Robert," she said, embracing her oldest son tightly. "I'm so sorry that I've been so selfish. I know you two boys miss your father just as much as Hennie and I."

Robert caught his breath as the meaning of her words became crystal clear to him. He received an inkling of what was going on in her mind. She was making an effort to compensate for the loss of her husband and lover for many years, upon whom she had depended and leaned on for so long. In that effort, her mind had gotten confused, and she now thought that at least she now had the daughter she had always wanted, as the one thing she could hang on to.

"I'm so glad to have you. . .a strong man. . .to help me," she said with her voice breaking.

"Yes Mom. . .you just rely on me. . .I'll handle everything. Come on, let's go downstairs and have some coffee."

Mrs. Armstrong turned around looking for Hank, and with an arm

around each child, she walked down the stairs. In the living room, they found Peter and Anne waiting.

Hank blushed sharply as both of them looked at him as if they saw a mirage. He had not had a chance to look at himself in the mirror and; therefore, did not realise how his makeup and pigtailed added to the skirted pinafore to make him appear to be much more girl than boy.

Anne approached Mrs. Armstrong consoling her, "Oh Mrs. Armstrong, I hope you are feeling better today."

"Yes. . .yes, thanks to Hennie," Mrs. Armstrong replied. "She made me realize that I still have an awful lot to live for in my children."

She kissed Peter gently, "My baby. . .I'm so sorry that I have let you down for a while. It's just. . .with John gone," tears started to flow as she put her hands over her face, groping for a chair to hold on to.

Robert took hold of her. "Mother please. . .I'll take care of you. . .you'll see. . .we all love you. . .everything will be alright. . .you'll see"

Peter, in the meantime, could not take his eyes off Hank. The way his girlish appearance was accentuated by the makeup, the pigtailed, and the pinafore was unbelievable.

Before Peter could say anything, Hank whispered to him, "Quiet. . .please. . .she thinks I am Hennie, your sister. When I tried to protest and set her straight, she became all funny and strange again, like she was in a trance."

Robert, who had led his mother to the sofa, joined them saying, "We will just have to go along with this for now. . .so watch your step."

Anne served a glass of wine to Mrs. Armstrong. As she sipped from her glass, she called out, "Hennie. . .come dear. . .sit with me for a while."

Hank blushed sharply, as she used the feminine name in front of everyone. He walked over, and she took his hand, stroked it gently, and smiled at him. "I'm so glad to have you for company. . .and the boys too, of course. We four will just have to make the best of it. . .I think we should stay in England for a while. I couldn't leave just now," she started crying again. Hank tried to comfort her the best he knew how.

Anne said, "A good cry will do her good. Just let her get it out of her system."

In his great concern for his mother and sharing her deep grief, Hank forgot about his own troubles, his effeminate dress, hair style, and makeup.

While he was occupied, Anne motioned Robert and Peter out of

the room. In the kitchen, they discussed this strange situation.

"Mom really thinks Hank is a girl," Peter said in amazement. "That's terrible!"

Robert nodded, and looking at Anne asked, "What can we do?" He was hoping against hope that this more experienced woman would have a solution to this strange problem.

"It would be cruel to tell her the truth now," Anne said. "We can't, at least we shouldn't. It seems to mean so much to her. . .to have a daughter. We just cannot take this away from her. . .not for a while."

"But Hank's not a girl! He can't wear dresses!" Peter said with conviction. "That would be horrible for him!"

"It wouldn't be too bad. . .not for a few days. . .until Mother feels better," Robert replied.

"Won't we have to call a doctor. . .if Mom's mind. . .is. . .uh. . .confused?" Peter asked.

Anne replied for Robert, "It should go away soon enough. . .it's just the terrible shock that has affected her this way. It will all be gone in a few days, I think. There is really no need to call a doctor."

"You mean Hank will have to make believe he is our sister in the meantime. . .till Mom is herself again?" Peter asked.

Anne nodded, "Yes. . .that would seem best, and we will have to get him some decent clothes. He can't go around in that pinafore all the time."

"Maybe Mrs. Kerr could help by letting us borrow some clothes from Terry and Jacqueline. They're both about Hank's size," Peter said.

"Good idea," Robert said. "I'll call her now and see if she will help. If so, we can sneak Hank out of the house tomorrow morning and drive over there. Make sure Mom doesn't hear me talking on the phone."

"Poor Hank," Peter said with feeling. He knew that he would certainly hate to be in Hank's shoes now. "Imagine having to dress and act like a silly girl. . .for heaven knows how long."

"It won't be for long," Robert said convincingly. "You'll see."

Little did any of them know that what they were doing would change Hank's life for a long, long time to come.

The boys went back into the living room, where they found their brother with a red face. He was trying to handle some knitting needles while their mother patiently instructed him. Robert and Peter looked at each other in shock when they heard their mother say, "Most girls your age are already very good at this. I don't understand why I didn't start you on this before now."

Hank looked helplessly at his brothers, hoping that they wouldn't make fun of him. They both acted as if nothing were out of the

ordinary to see their brother, in a pinafore with makeup and pigtails, knitting away.

Peter took a book and started reading, while Robert sat beside his mother on the couch and carefully briefed her on the arrangements he had made and what was yet to be done. He told her that he had sent cables to notify the family and business associates. They agreed that it would be best for him to be buried in England, rather than go to the trouble and expense to transport his body.

"I'm sure John would have agreed," she said as she buried her face in her hankie and cried again. This made the boys feel uncomfortable and unhappy as none of them knew how to handle this situation.

Hank, the most sensitive of the three, took his mother's arm. "Mom. . . please don't cry. . . we're still together. . . the four of us. Please. . ."

She tried to control herself and dried her eyes. With a thin smile, she said softly, "I really should be stronger. You and the boys had to suffer the same loss, and we all should help each other."

Everyone remained silent for a long time with only the clicking of Hank's needles interrupting the thoughts of the family group. Finally, Mrs. Armstrong said, "I think I'll go to bed now. I feel so tired and washed out. I didn't sleep a wink the last two nights in that bed all alone. Don't make it too late Hennie. . . and you boys also," she warned. Kissing each of her children, she went to the door.

Hank asked, "Do you need anything, Mother?"

Mary Armstrong was touched by the concern in his voice. "No Dear. I can manage. Thank you."

One could hear a pin drop in the living room, as the three boys listened for her bedroom to close.

Robert moved to the couch and sat beside Hank. "Gee. . . I'm sorry that you have to go through all this. We discussed it with Anne, and it is really better not to upset Mom just now, not more than is necessary anyway. We hope that you don't mind playing along for a little while."

"But, for how long?" Hank asked with a painful grimace. "I don't want to play a girl one minute longer than absolutely necessary. I feel so silly. Everyone will think I'm a sissy or something."

Peter nodded understandingly, "I can imagine how you feel! I know I would feel terrible in your place."

Robert added thoughtfully, "Well. . . at least you're far away from home, and very few people will recognize you. Anyway, we have no choice. We have to get you some clothes that will make you look authentic, and you must promise to try and behave like a girl. I'll phone Mrs. Kerr, explain our problem, and ask if she can help us tomorrow."

"But, the girls would find out!" Hank objected with a red face.

"That can't be helped. I'm sure when we explain the circumstances, they will be more than glad to help you. I'll ask them to keep their mouths shut, and I'm sure they will."

"I trust Jackie," Hank replied, "she's nice. But, Terry can be a mean tease. . .remember last Saturday night? I sure don't trust her with any secret!"

"Don't worry," Robert replied, "just keep your cool. I'll talk with Mrs. Kerr, and I'm sure she will take care of everything. I'll call her now. . .it's not too late."

Robert dialed the number, and his brothers heard him talking to Mrs. Kerr, explaining the strange circumstances, and asking for her help. He was happily surprised when she sounded almost enthusiastic about their plan and promised to do everything within her to make it a success.

Hanging up the phone, Robert informed his brothers, "It's all set. Mrs. Kerr says they have plenty of clothes to spare for you to borrow. She expects us at eight o'clock tomorrow morning. We will have to get away early before Mom wakes up.

Soon afterward, the boys went to bed. Hank felt kind of funny. . .a little guilty, taking the ribbons out of his pigtails, like he was disloyal to his mother.

The next morning when he awoke, he saw his pillow slip spotted with lipstick stains. That reminded him forcefully of his predicament. The idea of having to go to the Kerr's house to be dressed as a girl, did not appeal to him at all. He hesitated for a moment as he considered what to put on. His pinafore again? As his mother was still asleep, he opted for his usual slacks and shirt.

At breakfast, Anne told them she had taken a tray up to their mother. "She was still asleep, but the door woke her. She's feeling a little better after a good night's sleep. She told me to remind Hennie that she had to shop for some black dresses this afternoon."

"Oh no," Hank groaned.

"Oh yes!" Robert said firmly. "If you make Mom feel worse again, I'll knock your head off!"

"But, I can't go out in the street wearing girl's clothes!" Hank said, panicking.

Robert was adamant. With a warning tone in his voice, he said, "You can, and you will!!! You just have to make the best of this situation. Last night, in your pigtails, you looked exactly like a girl. So don't worry. You just have to learn to act like a girl. . .and you had better learn quickly or someone will be sure to recognize you."

Peter said, "I'll help you Hank. . .honest I will. Whenever I see you do something like a boy, I'll tell you right away."

Feeling terribly uneasy, Hank rode with Robert to the Kerr

residence. Having thought to bring a couple of suitcases, Robert gave them to Terry and Jackie, who were dressed in identical white pinafores over their dresses.

Terry looked especially humiliated at being exposed in this silly apron over her dress, and she hated Robert's condescending smile.

Jack put his arm around Hank and said, "Aunt Julia is waiting for you upstairs in my room. She told us about your problem, and she has already picked out some of my things for you to borrow."

Hank crimsoned and nodded. He let himself be led upstairs, casting a last desperate look at Robert. He was to receive no help there as his brother's attention was already centered on Donna, who extended her condolences and invited him into the living room for coffee.

Mrs. Kerr greeted Hank with a tender kiss. "I'm so sorry to hear about your father, Hennie. . . and I think you are really a special person to make this sacrifice for your mother."

That made Hank feel a little better, although his shoulders sagged when she called him Hennie.

"Now, get undressed Dear," she stated in a businesslike manner.

"In front of HER???" Hank asked, indicating Jack, in unbelieving exasperation.

"Jackie, you leave the room for a while," Aunt Julia said, with a wink behind Hank's back. "You can return in a few minutes and help Hennie pack her new clothes."

Hank hoped that Mrs. Kerr would leave also, but she made no move to do so. As he hesitantly started undressing, Aunt Julia recognized the problem. "Go ahead. . . take off your pants, Dear. You need to accept the fact that you're going to be a girl now, . . . and it's quite alright to undress when you're alone with women."

Still, Hank turned his back when he removed his trousers. She had to nudge him again before he dropped his shorts also. He quickly, yet awkwardly watched as she tied a modesty patch of silk about his loins.

Blushing all over, he turned to face Mrs. Kerr, who studied him for a moment. "Arrange yourself a little better, Dear. . . so you'll be flat in front."

Hank knew exactly what she meant, and he turned red down to his navel. Forcing his hand into the tight garment, he pushed everything back between his legs.

"That's better," she said handing him a plain pair of pink nylon panties. Just as they were in place about his hips, Jack knocked at the door. "Come in Jackie."

Hank wished he had never been born, when a glance in the mirror showed how girlish his lower torso looked already and knowing that this pretty girl would see him wearing only a pair of girl's panties.

However, Jack looked at him with such understanding eyes, that most of his shame and uneasiness receded. "She is a nice girl," Hank thought, "she understands how terrible this must be for a boy."

"Now Jacqueline. . . go to the bathroom with Hennie and make certain that there is no unsightly hair anywhere. You know how to do it, right?" she added with a significant smile.

Jack had to pull on Hank's hand to get him to come along, as his embarrassment was all too obvious. Imagine having to go to the bathroom with a girl!!!!

Jack was just as uneasy at the double meaning of his aunt's remark. With the help of a large jar of depilatory cream and a razor, Hank's legs, arms, under arms, and chest were soon as smooth as silk. He did not have too much hair to begin with. Jack shaved the lower part of Hank's tummy right down to his panties so he looked authentically female, just as Donna had done with him.

Watching Jack go about this business, Hank said, "Gee. . . it looks like you have done this all your life."

Jack blushed deeply, his hands beginning to tremble, and replied uneasily, "Well. . . a girl always has to take care that she's smooth everywhere. You wouldn't want to look like a hairy ape, now would you?"

For good measure, Jack covered Hank with a fragrant powder and was glad he had on his pinafore so he could avoid getting it on his sweater and skirt. After putting some perfume in all the right places, he led Hank, blushing and smelling like a rose, back to his room where Aunt Julia was waiting impatiently.

"That's much better," she said, and then to Jack, "Help him dress, dear. Remember, it is very important that he look like a real girl. . . or his mother will be unhappy. And, make sure he knows how to put everything on himself. He'll have to do everything for himself when he gets home."

Jack handed a matching bra to the embarrassed boy and showed him how to slip it over his arms.

Aunt Julia made him practice fastening it in the back. When he was clumsy at it, she said, "Don't worry too much about it. You have a maid at home who will be glad to help until you have learned to do it yourself." Then she put a realistic pair of falsies into the cups of the bra, making Hank blush.

A boned corset was next. Jack. . . already feeling bad about helping this boy become a girl, looked apologetically at Hank. "This will be uncomfortable at first. . . but after a couple of weeks, you won't know you have it on. It will make your middle small like a girl's."

Aunt Julia watched with relish as she saw Jack pull the laces very tight, making Hank grimace with pain.

"Hey. . . STOP IT. . . PLEASE!!!! I can hardly breathe," he

pleaded, putting his hands to his waist in an effort to relieve the terrible pressure.

"You'll just have to suffer a bit. . . you want to look like a girl. . . for your mother's sake. . . don't you," Aunt Julia said coolly.

Hank just nodded. He was speechless as he had not realized how uncomfortable this was going to be. He just stared at his now quite feminine figure in the mirror.

Flesh colored nylons followed and were tightly fastened to his corset. Now his legs looked even smoother and more girlish than before. A fancy nylon slip covered with lace at the bodice and hem was dropped over his head, and it gently glided over his foundation garment.

Without knocking, Donna entered the room. Hank just stood there, red with shame, as she studied him in his shameful feminine underwear. "I want to help too," she said. "I'll do his face." She pushed him into a chair and started plucking his eyebrows into thin, graceful curves.

Meanwhile, Aunt Julia and Jack discussed what outer clothes Hank should wear. "His mother will probably want to go shopping with him for his own things. Let's see, she's in mourning, so nothing bright. We'll start off with a dressy white blouse and this black velvet skirt, and. . . black shoes to go with it."

They put these aside and began filling the suitcases with all kinds of girl's clothes, skirts, dresses, shoes, nightwear. . . all items that Jack, Terry, or Donna had worn but were still in excellent condition.

Jack felt a pang of regret as he saw one of his favorite dresses disappear into the suitcase.

Aunt Julia grinned as she recognized the meaning of his expression and his feelings. She quickly consoled him. "We'll go shopping for you too, Dear, and get you some nice new things. Maybe we can all go together. . . with Hennie and Mrs. Armstrong. I'll call her when we get downstairs."

Donna had finished with Hank's face and started with his hair. "It's nice and long. I see somebody already cut the bangs in front. Did you do that?" she asked Hank.

"No, Mother cut it last night, and then she put it in silly pigtails."

"That's a good idea. . . but a little young for you. . . Oh, I know. I just saw the cutest picture in a magazine." She proceeded to part his hair in the middle, all the way to his neck. After combing his bangs neatly in front, she gathered the hair on each side of his head, tying in a black ribbon to keep it neatly gathered just behind his ears. The locks stood away from his face, framing it girlishly with the black ribbons contrasting nicely with his brown hair. "How do you like it this way, Mom?" Donna said with a satisfied look on her face.

"Very nice, Dear, very nice indeed, and just right for her age."

Jack buttoned the close fitting, white, frilly blouse in the back. It sure showed Hank's new bosom! The lace of his slip showed through, and the short sleeves made his slim arms look extremely girlish. The black velvet skirt also fit beautifully, thanks to his tight corset. A wide black patent leather belt was buckled on and really accentuated his now trim waist.

"Better start her off with no more than two inch heels," Aunt Julia instructed Jack.

As Hank had trouble bending because of his painful corset, Jack kneeled down and forced Hank's feet into the small shoes. Then, he helped Hank up and led him to the mirror, himself amazed at the transformation they had accomplished. Hank walked like he was on eggs for the first few steps, but then, he began to master these strange new heels. He remained in front of the mirror, the center of attention and admiration of the other three.

Donna bent over in laughter as Hank, in complete confusion, looked behind him to find the pretty girl who reflected in the mirror.

Even Jack had to smile.

Aunt Julia said, "Yes Hennie. . .it's really you. . .aren't you pretty?"

"But. . .I. . .I look like a girl," Hank exclaimed, still not believing his eyes.

"Of course you do Dear. . .and you're going to be one now. You'll see how much fun it is. I really think you should have been a girl to begin with. No real boy could make such a convincing and natural girl just by changing clothes."

Hank blushed deeply. Did she really mean that? Was she right. . .could it really be? He knew that he had always felt a little different from the strong Robert and the wild Peter, but he had always known he was a boy. . .no fooling. No. . .she must be kidding. . .trying to make him feel better. With a smile, he wondered what his mother would think of him now. "I hope Mother will like this outfit on me," he said, thinking out loud.

"Of course she will dear. . .she's already very happy to have a daughter. I just know she will feel much better when she sees how pretty you are," Aunt Julia declared firmly.

"Donna, give him instructions on how to sit, stand, walk, and move. Make him practice until he does it right. I'll go down and tell Robert how successful we have been."

Donna put Hank through his paces. . .old stuff now for Jack, who watched with interest and concern. Hank caught on surprisingly well, and quickly, his movements got smoother as he was taught to move from his hips with shorter more fluid steps.

"Jackie. . .you teach her to curtsy. Her mother will be so pleased if she is greeted correctly by her new daughter," Donna said when

she was satisfied with Hank's initial progress.

Within ten minutes, Hank could curtsy fairly well, if still a bit uncertain. "You will have to remember that they expect you to do this whenever you meet or talk with older people," Jack told him. "The girls in America don't do it. . . but here it's considered good manners."

Hank nodded, dipping once more, holding his skirt as Jack had showed him.

Jack studied the new girl for a moment, then added some tasteful touches of his own. He put a small black velvet ribbon around the neckline of the blouse, and a silver bangle on each arm. "These will remind you that you must be a girl now," he explained. "I'm sure they will help."

Hank nodded blushing. "I had better not forget. . . or I'm in big trouble," he admitted. "Tell me the truth, Jackie. Do I really look like a girl?"

"You saw yourself in the mirror," Jack replied. "Just be careful to move as Donna taught you, and no one will ever suspect the truth. Let's go downstairs and show you off to your brother."

Hank froze at the idea. Jack put his arm around Hank's trim waist, knowing what he was experiencing. . . having to face his brother. . . looking so completely like a girl. Jack was glad that he had never been forced to expose himself to his mother, his sister, his friends, or other people who knew him as a boy. He felt a strong sense of friendship and identity to this person who was undergoing the same terrible transformation as himself.

He hoped to see a lot of Hank. Maybe he could help Hank through the difficult adjustment period he knew would follow. He knew from first hand experience how terrible those moments could be. KNOWING you're a boy but, . . . everyone thinking you're a girl and treating you as one. Also, there were those worse times when he would realize that he really did look like a girl. Before long, he would learn to act like one, and yes, . . . FEEL like one. . . and sometimes, even to think of himself as a girl.

With a blush of embarrassment, Hennie was presented to Robert. "Here's your new sister HENNIE," Donna said smiling.

Robert had to swallow several times as Hank, his eyes lowered in shame, dropped a girlish curtsy for him. Seeing Robert's tremendous surprise, he felt different now, . . . weaker somehow.

"Why SIS. . . you're beautiful!" Robert exclaimed in honest admiration. He took one of Hank's hands and made him turn around for him. "It's unbelievable," Robert said to Donna. "She really IS a girl now."

"That's what we said," Donna agreed. "We all think she should have been a girl in the first place. . . no boy could be so pretty."

Hank blushed still harder at these words. What were they saying? Did they really mean that? Was it really true??? Was that why he had been so handy in the kitchen that Saturday night? And. . .why HE. . .instead of his brothers had served at the table?

"Will you have lunch with us?" Mrs. Kerr asked.

"No. . .thank you. . .we had better run. Mother will be wondering where we have been. We really have been gone too long already," Robert said.

"Alright then, . . .goodbye Hennie. . .be a good girl now. We hope to see a lot of you. Make sure to call us if we can be of help," Aunt Julia said.

"Yes, Mrs. Kerr," Hank said as if in a daze.

"Now Dear, don't forget your curtsy," she admonished him.

Hank blushingly complied, dipping first to her and then to Donna.

Meanwhile, Robert carried the suitcases to the car. Hank was so surprised when his brother opened the door for him and helped him in, that he barely managed a tiny smile and a "Thank you." He was relieved that Robert had not any remarks or criticism as the contrary seemed to be true. Robert looked genuinely pleased at his brother's appearance and behavior.

During the ride home, Robert said, "You really do look great Sis. . .remember now. . .it's all up to you to be a model daughter to Mom. I'll help you all I can, of course, but you're the one who has to make sure to act like a girl all the time without any mistakes."

Hank nodded. "I know. . .I'll try. . .really I will."

"Good," Robert said smiling. "You know it's going to be kind of fun to have a grown up sister all of a sudden."

Hank blushed deeply but did not reply, keeping his confused thoughts to himself. His main worry was how long this thing was going to last. He sure hoped it wasn't long. Imagine. . .he might get so used to his new role, that he would have trouble reverting to his former status as a boy. That would be horrible. . .absolutely horrible!!! He could hear the boys in school now calling him. . .QUEER. . .FAIRY. . .and those other terrible names.

When they got home, Anne met them at the door. She was totally flabbergasted. "Hennie. . .you're a very pretty girl. What a cute outfit you're wearing. I'm glad you are home because your mother has asked for you several times already. She even refused to eat her breakfast unless you bring it to her. Perhaps, you had better go up and try to cheer her up again."

On the stairs, Hank met Peter who was so surprised that he was speechless for a moment. Finally, he stammered, "Hank?????..." as if to make certain this cute girl was really his brother.

Hank nodded, secretly pleased to see the admiration in Pete's eyes.

"But you look so natural. . .like you have always been a girl and worn skirts," Peter observed, causing Hank to blush again.

"I can't help it," he replied. "Donna made me look like this."

"Well. . .she sure did a good job. I know Mom will be happy to see you dressed like this."

"I sure hope so," Hank replied. "After all, I'm doing this for her."

As Hank walked toward his mother's room, Pete kept staring at his brother in skirts, amazed at how he already seemed to walk differently.

When Hank knocked at his mother's door, she called out, "Who is it?"

He hesitated only a moment before answering, "It's me Mom. . .Hennie."

"Oh. . .come in Dear. I've been waiting for you all morning."

He opened the door and dropped a perfect curtsy, saying, "Good morning Mom."

If he had thought that his mother would be surprised, or say something about his appearance, he was sure wrong. She acted as if everything was completely natural and his appearance normal in every way. "We're going shopping this afternoon for some black dresses, Dear, and I want you to be ready right after lunch. By the way, that outfit looks really nice on you." She gave no hint to indicate she was aware that this was her second son in a skirt and blouse.

With a shock, Hank realized the extent of her terrible confusion terribly so. She actually thought that he was her daughter. That thought really scared him, but what could he do or say? Exactly nothing! He merely stood there, trying to avert his eyes while his mother took off her robe and began to dress. After a while she said, "Hennie, please help me zip the back of my dress."

While she did her hair, Hank, . . .not knowing what else to do, folded her nightgown and made her bed. Seeing the twin bed empty reminded him forcefully that his mother was now all alone except for her children. Tears welled up in his eyes as he patted his father's bed and remembered those treasured moments when, as a boy, he had been allowed in the parental bed on Sunday mornings. At these times, he had to fight for their attention with Robert and Peter. He felt, for a moment, the terrible grief she must be suffering. It made him renew his promise to do his part to help. . .even if that meant going around as a girl for a while. The high praise of the Kerr family had pretty well convinced him that he looked exactly like a girl anyway.

With his mother's arm around him, he went downstairs. Mrs. Armstrong remained in the hall to make a telephone call, while Hank went ahead into the living room, where he found Anne and his brothers talking seriously. All three looked at him. . .the big question still in their eyes, and Peter was unable to hide his amazement.

"She really thinks I'm Hennie!" he said with a sigh. "She didn't notice my change of clothes. . .or anything. . .and I have to go shopping with her for black dresses this afternoon."

"Well Dearie. . .," Anne said, "you've nothing to worry about. You look sweet, and when you get more used to your new clothes, you could fool anybody. . .including me. . .and I know the truth."

The subject of their conversation entered the room saying, "Good morning boys." Then, turning to Hank, she said, "Mrs. Kerr will pick us up in her car at two o'clock. To make sure we have plenty of time, we must eat lunch right away. Hennie. . .you help Anne, so we'll be ready on time."

Anne was only too glad to get some help. She took Hank to the kitchen and made him put on the pinafore again. Then, she showed him how to set the table and had him help to carry in the food.

Mary Armstrong's eyes followed her daughter around as she worked at her task. She appeared to get a special charge out of watching him. It made him nervous, but he could do nothing but earnestly perform his assignment. His insides were annoyed at being stuck with this sort of job.

After lunch, Mrs. Armstrong took her son upstairs, checked her own face, then studied her daughter. "You had better touch up your lipstick, Dear."

"But Mom. . .I. . .I uh. . .I have none left," he responded in exasperation.

"How dumb of you Dear! Here, you can borrow mine, but you must remind me to buy some for you this afternoon." She really acted surprised that he had let his lipstick run out.

Promptly at two o'clock, the Kerr Rolls Royce limousine arrived. As Hank and his mother left the front door, Hank threw up his hands at his brothers as if to say, "Help. . .can't you do anything about this?"

His brothers could only stand there, unable to offer any comfort or assistance.

As they drove to the city, Aunt Julia talked most of the time, suggesting some quality department stores.

Terry and Jack tried to put Hank at ease when they saw his terrified eyes. "It's always fun to shop for clothes," Terry said, "you'll see."

Jack remained silent, happy with the thought that he would miss his regular session with Mrs. Thornsby that afternoon.

Walking between Terry and Jack and copying their posture and steps as best he could, they entered a large store. Hank was grateful for the company of his companions. Imagine. . .if he had to go here alone with his mother! He could never have produced enough courage. When he saw that no one seemed to notice anything out of the ordinary, he calmed down somewhat and was able to concentrate on

the matter at hand.

His mother really went to town! She started buying left and right. She bought stockings, panties, bras, and nightgowns as they quickly moved from department to department. She even bought some nice earrings which she promptly made him wear.

Terry even gave Hank a funny look when his mother asked his advice about the color and style of certain models of fancy underwear. "Isn't this darling, Hennie," she would say, holding up a pair of dainty panties or a particularly lacy petticoat.

Hank, with a crimson face could only reply, "Yes Mom. . .it's very beautiful."

In the Young Miss department, Hank was obliged to have Terry help him out of his back-buttoning blouse. Then came the humiliation of dropping his nice velvet skirt and exposing himself in his slip and corset. This shocked and embarrassed him to the core!

Hank and Jack tried on numerous dresses, including several black ones. The sales lady had been told of the pending funeral. Each time they put on a different dress, they rejoined Mrs. Armstrong and Aunt Julia to get opinions.

Jack found one that he liked and figured he could use it for other dressy occasions or dark weather. He put his hands on his hips and bent his right knee with his leg in front as if to show off his nylons. From primping before his mirror, he knew this was an attractive stance. Hank tried to copy him, but he looked much more stiff and unnatural.

The sales clerk, who was watching, said to Jack, "You can take the colored scarf out for a more subdued look."

Jack nodded, "The long sleeves are quite warm for summer," he objected.

Aunt Julia shut him up. "It looks dressier with long sleeves for a funeral. Think of the boys in their warm shirts, ties, and jackets."

Hank's dress had a high mock turtle neck and a white rope belt. Mrs. Armstrong said, "We can replace that rope with a black leather belt. . .it looks far too sporty for a funeral."

Hank nodded, dropping his arms.

Watching Hank standing there so stiffly not knowing what to do with his hands without pockets, Aunt Julia said, "Mary, Jackie has been going for exercises and dancing lessons at a physical education class. The teacher used to be an instructor at a girl's school. Why don't you send your daughter there too? It will help her posture so much and teach her to move with grace and elegance."

"Oh, that would be very nice," Mary Armstrong replied. "It will be so much fun for the girls to do this together. I always enjoyed dancing and ballet as a girl, and I'm sure Hennie will also."

Hank looked helplessly at Jack. As their eyes met, Jack, through

his expression, tried to convey his understanding and sympathy. He knew all too well what this boy was experiencing.

They bought a number of summer dresses, short and long skirts, a tennis dress, and other play clothes. . . even a two piece bathing suit. Hank was glad that he did not have to model that number! The clerk said that since she knew his size and measurements that she was sure it would fit nicely.

At the shoe department, Mrs. Armstrong again went overboard. She bought high heeled shoes, which Hank was sure he could not manage. In addition, they bought dressy shoes, loafers, tennis sneakers, colorful sandals, and even a pair of little white boots. She insisted that Hank try on every pair for fit, even the open toed sandals.

By this time, Mrs. Armstrong had made such large purchases that the floor manager came over to ask if he could assist. He led this party of good customers from department to department, making Hank feel terribly uncomfortable. He wished that man would just go away!

At the cosmetic counter, Mrs. Armstrong insisted that the clerk try out various colors of powder, makeup, and lipstick to see which looked best on Hank. She also made him sniff and chose his own perfume. The girl, happy with her large sale, gladly demonstrated everything, and soon, Hank smelled like a perfume factory.

Hank was awed, and quickly became dizzy with all these instructions and uses of the many items he had never heard of. There were astringent lotions, vanishing creams, blusher, mascara, eyeliner; more than he could ever hope to remember.

Finally, it all became too much for him, and he pleaded with his mother, "Don't we have enough now, Mom? Please. . . I'll never wear all that stuff."

But his determined mother paid him no mind. While choosing nail polish, she noticed his short nails and somewhat rough hands. "You should take better care of your hands, Dear. Boys like for a girl's hands to be smooth and soft."

As a result, they bought hand cream, false nails, a complete manicure kit, polish remover, as well as many different colors of polish. Both Jack and Hank were awestricken at the way Mrs. Armstrong was buying practically everything in sight.

When she insisted the clerk fit Hank with false eyelashes, Mrs. Kerr finally spoke up, "That's the last thing dear. . . we really have everything now."

So Hank was fitted with long curly eyelashes, making his face even more girlish.

Terry wondered all this time why Mrs. Armstrong seemed to know that Hank needed everything in clothes and makeup, yet refused to admit to herself that her daughter was really her son.

Mrs. Armstrong surveyed her purchases. "Now, do we really

have everything???"

Terry spoke up. "I think we forgot gloves."

This earned her an elbow in the ribs from Jack, who whispered, "Let's get out of here. . .my feet hurt."

Several pairs of gloves were bought, short ones for daytime including black and white over the wrist styles. Mrs. Armstrong also chose several scarves at the same counter, just before she spotted the hat department. Thus, Hank was made to choose several hats. As he put one smart hat with a small brim, he just couldn't recognize himself in the mirror. That pretty girl with the long eyelashes, soft skin, and smart hat on her girlish hairdo, could NOT be him. It was impossible!!!

Mrs. Armstrong was not through yet! She steered him into the wig department and selected a long blonde wig.

"Please Mother, can't we do this another time? I am tired, and I want to go home!"

"No Dear. These are on sale now, see??"

As the girl placed the long blonde wig on his head, he REALLY looked different.

"Oh, you look darling with blonde hair. We'll have to bleach your own as soon as we have time."

Finally, Aunt Julia managed to get Mrs. Armstrong out of the store. The store manager promised to have everything delivered the next day in time for the funeral.

In the excitement of shopping for her daughter, Mary seemed to have temporarily forgotten her grief.

When Mrs. Kerr's car dropped them off at home, Hank remembered to curtsy nicely to Aunt Julia and thanked her for the ride.

Terry kissed Hank full on the mouth saying, "So long Hennie. . .we'll see you tomorrow, I hope."

Hank blushed, and noted that no one missed his obvious enjoyment at being kissed by Terry. He could not conceal the excitement that rose in his body. In the meantime, Jack had unloaded the few parcels they had taken along, mostly cosmetics and some underwear. Before he could think straight, he followed Terry's example and kissed the tired, confused Hank on the cheek saying, "Good Luck!"

For some unknown reason, Hank did not feel the same strange emotion with this pretty girl as he had with Terry. On the way in, he wondered about that. Why was he more sensitive to Terry than to Jackie, who was prettier and much nicer?

As the Kerr's rode home, Terry said, "With all those clothes and everything, Hennie will be the best dressed young girl in London."

Aunt Julia smiled. "Yes, and I think she will like being a girl after a while. . .don't you Jackie?"

Jack thought for a moment, trying to analyze his own feelings.

Then he said doubtfully, "I don't know. . . I really don't know." He realized that Hank's situation would be much different than his own had been. He had been surrounded by only girls and women, except for Paul who had also worn girl's clothes. Hank had two aggressive brothers to contend with. That was sure different! Hank must feel awfully ashamed having to play girl before them, he imagined. He cringed at the thought of how he would feel if his own sister saw him as a girl. What a horror that would be, and how she would tease and humiliate him. He had rather DIE!!!

That evening after dinner, while Terry and Jack were working on their needlework, Jack's thoughts were frequently with Hank. While he felt sorry for him, it was a comforting thought that he now had a friend who was in the same boat, undergoing the same torture. Somehow, it seemed to make his own position less humiliating. After all. . . as soon as the summer was over, he could go home. There was no way to tell how long Hank would have to wait to get his trousers back. Based on his mother's large and expensive purchases, that might be quite some time.

Hank's brothers could not believe their mother would go so far in her transformation of Hank into Hennie. Yet, they could not keep their eyes off their new sister with her long eyelashes, heavy makeup, earrings, long blonde hair, exuding strong feminine perfume. They barely recognized him, and their attitude toward him changed perceptively. While they felt sorry for him, when they thought about it, they began to forget that he was really their brother. This change of attitude showed when Peter pushed Hank's chair in at the dinner table, while Robert did the same for his mother.

In the past, the brothers had always been rough with other in speech and manner, but now, they acted polite and protective. Peter even felt a pang of jealousy at the distinct preference his mother showed for her new daughter. Of course, that very fact made the situation more acceptable to Hank. He enjoyed having his mother's almost constant attention and their talks about his new clothes and their shopping trip.

After dinner Mrs. Armstrong was obviously tired. She sat silently in her chair while Anne cleared the table. Hank did not feel too good either. He had eaten too much, and his corset hurt like the dickens. So did his feet!

Robert tried again to discuss the details of the funeral and read her many of the cables they had received from home, but his mother began to act funny again. Her eyes clouded over, and her face took on that vacant far away look again. He finally gave up and urged her to go to bed.

She nodded, and started to leave the room. When she reached the door, she turned and asked, "Hennie, would you mind sleeping with

me tonight? I feel so lonely now, and it would be so nice knowing that my bed won't be empty. I'll have my daughter there if I need her."

Hank looked helplessly at his older brother, who just shrugged his shoulders and nodded his head indicating that he could offer no help.

So, once again, Hank was exposed to the experience of seeing his mother in her underwear, while he himself had the unfamiliar task of removing his female clothes. Try as he might, he just could not loosen the laces of his corset, and he had to ask his mother, who was already in bed, to help him.

She smilingly loosened them enough so he could open the busk, in front. "I used to wear one of these. . .I'm so glad that you are interested in keeping a neat waistline. That's what Dad liked most about me, I think," she added with tears in her eyes. "You really should wear it at night too. . .it hurts less in the daytime, if I remember."

Hank was in a quandry as to whether or not to remove his bra. If his mother saw his flat chest, would she realize the truth? He dared not risk it. For the same reason, he kept his modesty patch on, even though it was uncomfortably tight. This time, he remembered to wash off his makeup. He even realized that his pajamas would look out of place and give the whole show away. So, he asked his mother if he could borrow one of her nightgowns.

Mrs. Armstrong looked confused for a moment, no doubt wondering why her daughter wanted to borrow one of her nightgowns. But her mind, working strangely, refused to recognize the truth, and she replied, "Of course Dear."

So, Hank slept in his mother's nightgown, in the bed formerly occupied by his father. Thinking about this and the strange things that had happened that day, he lay awake. The thoughts of his dad and with the grief of everything, he broke down and cried softly like a little girl.

His mother heard his sobs and leaned over to console her daughter. "I know Dear. . .we all miss Dad very much. . .just go ahead and have a good cry. . .it will make you calmer." She caressed him and put her arm around him, something she had seldom done since Peter's birth. Her actions gave him a strange satisfaction. Being his mother's only daughter was not too bad after all, he thought, having missed and craved her special attention for so many years. After drying his eyes, he really did feel better.

She kissed him, and said, "Try to sleep now, dear."

Exhausted from the events and emotions of this strange hectic day, he fell asleep. His last thoughts were on Terry's kiss.

In the morning, he woke when the sunlight streamed through the

windows. Seeing that his mother was still asleep, he grabbed yesterday's clothes and tip toed on his bare feet out of the room, intending to get dressed in his own room. In the hall, Robert, Peter, and Anne stood talking in whispers. Peter's eyes grew large upon seeing his brother in a feminine nightgown, the bosom realistically pushing against the soft fragile garment.

"How's Mom, Sis?" Robert asked.

"She's still asleep," Hank whispered, blushing at being called "SIS".

Anne took command of the situation. Taking his hand, she said, "You boys go about your business while I help Hennie dress." Leading him to his room, she said, "Dear, you must remember to wear a robe over your nightgown. It's not decent to let the boys see you in your nightie. You must remain modest and respectful."

Hank hardly recognized his room. Anne had taken out all of his former clothes and even changed the decor somewhat, making it appear more feminine. "What did you do with my clothes?" he asked in a concerned voice.

"We couldn't let your mother see them. . . could we? . . . Understand?"

Hank nodded, overcome with all the sudden changes.

"I put all of your new clothes from the Kerr's in place dear. Now, go take a bath. Like a child, she led him to the bathroom. She filled the tub while he took off his mother's nightgown and his own bra and girdle. Strangely, he did not feel self conscious in the presence of this older woman. As a matter of fact, he was glad that she was there to help him in this strange situation. Somehow, he felt it was alright for her to be there, now that he was to be a girl.

She put plenty of bathing salt in the tub, and while he washed himself, she went to get fresh underwear. She stayed to help him dry himself and then dressed him, giving him his modesty patch, panties, bra with inserts, and laced him into his corset, completely ignoring his male attributes. . . as if they weren't there. That made him feel strangely feminine, as if the clothes alone wouldn't do it.

Anne seemed to enjoy lacing his corset. When he complained, that it was even tighter than the day before, she rebutted, "It has to be completely closed to give the right effect to your figure. Look what it does for your middle."

Hank had to admit that his waist was completely girlish now. Amazingly so! He remembered Donna's words that he should have been a girl. Then, the pain in his middle brought him back to reality. Trying to relieve the pressure with his hands, he said, "Gee. . . I wish Mom had chosen Peter for her daughter."

Anne smiled and shook her head, "Peter would not look half as pretty in a dress as you, Dear. I really think you should have been a

girl. I'll bet that when your mother was carrying you, she was fervently wishing for a girl. It must have had some effect on you, because really, . . . you look like one. You know that you were always different from the boys. . . so nice and quiet."

"Do you really think so, Anne?" He asked in a frightened voice. "Don't say that unless you really mean it."

"Yes Dearie, I'm serious. . . you'll see. . . in a very short time you'll feel as though you have always been your mother's daughter."

"But Mom will soon realize the truth. . . won't she?" he asked hopefully. "And then, I can be my old self again."

"Of course Dearie, . . . but until then, it's skirts for you!" Anne said trying to sound convincing, but Hank was not at all satisfied. The big question still remained unanswered in his mind. Attempting to avert his thoughts, Anne said, "What would you like to wear today, Hennie?" She knew this placed him in the position of saying what feminine garments he WANTED to wear.

Hank went over to the closet and looked at the feminine clothes, skirts, blouses, and dresses hanging there. There was so much to choose from. He decided to pick something with which he was familiar. "The same as yesterday, I guess, . . . I shouldn't wear anything bright, should I?" he said, looking to Anne for help.

"Alright, the black skirt looked good on you, and you can wear it again, but with a fresh blouse of course. Better put your makeup on first, Dearie."

So, in his slip, before his vanity mirror, he tried to remember what Donna had done the day before. While the results were far from perfect, he looked credible enough, but his hair gave him trouble. Anne did it for him in the same style he had worn the day before, with two black ribbons gathering the long locks on each side of his face.

Finally, he was ready. Anne told him to put his room in order, and when it was done to her satisfaction, she said, "I don't mind helping you Dear, but I lost so much time, you'll have to help me in turn. Put on your apron and help me fix your mother's breakfast. You can carry it up to her, then check your brothers' rooms and make their beds.

Hank nodded, not too happy about this latest development. As a boy, he had been free as a bird to do as he pleased. Now, he realized why his mother had sometimes complained about their lack of cooperation. As a girl, he was expected to chip in with the chores, but why couldn't his brothers make their own beds? Still, he did nicely as he was told. While tying his pinafore on, he decided to ask Peter and Robert to make their own beds.

When he carried his mother's breakfast up, he was rewarded with a warm smile and an affectionate good morning kiss. While she ate, he picked up her room and made the bed they had slept in together.

When his mother started to undress for her bath, he quickly found an excuse to leave the room. He said, "I must take your dishes to Anne to be washed."

As soon as he entered the kitchen Anne asked him to dry the dishes and put them away. He did so without complaining, but when she later told him that she would show him how to do some ironing, he complained to Robert. "Do I have to work ALL the time? Anne is making me do the ironing, and I think you and Pete can make your own beds."

His older brother said firmly, "Now Sis. . .while Mom is upset, Anne has charge of the household. I feel sure she wouldn't ask you to do things other girls don't normally do under the circumstances. Mom is spending an awful lot of money to make you look pretty, and it's only right that you do some things in return. Anyway, Mom will be happy if she sees you helping like a girl."

"But if I behave like a girl, that will only reinforce her belief that I'm her daughter," Hank objected.

"Now Hennie. . .I am now the man of the house, and I feel I have full authority over a younger sister. So be quiet and do your ironing and whatever else Anne asks you to do."

Robert said it in a manly tone of voice that Hank had never heard before. His statements carried such logic that Hank readily yielded to his brother's authority. Without thinking, and before he realized what he was doing, Hank dropped a perfect curtsy, whispering, "Yes Robert."

He crimsoned when he realized what he had done. Robert nodded in response to the polite gesture and turned away. Hank was glad, because he felt humiliated. . .even moreso because he blushed so deeply. He was aware that his clothes were affecting him. . .his thinking. . .and even his personality. Only two days ago, he would have given Robert a strong argument and probably ignored his order. But now, his whole manner had changed, and instead, he had meekly curtsied for his brother. He felt so much weaker and softer now. . .as if Robert, a man, had every right to tell him what to do. . .and that it was his duty, as a girl, to obey and respect his wishes.

After Anne set up the ironing board, Hank felt so strange ironing the pretty things he had worn and would wear again. And, it was most humiliating to have to iron his brothers' under clothes, trousers, and shirts. He was most unhappy about it, that was for sure.

When his mother came down wearing a stylish black dress, he hoped she would say something about his ironing. Maybe she would notice and say he would not have to do it. But to his chagrin, she acted as if it was completely normal for him to do this sort of thing while wearing a pinafore.

She did stop and talk with him, revealing her plans for the

afternoon. "Hennie Dear. . .after lunch, let's you and I take a walk. I just have to get out of the house for a while and get some fresh air. You can wear one of your new black dresses." She left him to work.

Hank's face showed both anxiety and fear. Now, he would be forced to go out in the streets as a girl, and this time, without Terry and Jackie. What if someone recognized him? How could he get out of it?

Robert passed by the laundry room, and Hank called him over saying, "Mom wants me to go out with her for a walk after lunch. . .but I can't do that. . .people will see me. . .can't you do something?"

Robert looked at his former brother. "Now Hennie. . .everything depends on you. You must do this for Mom and for us. Just look at yourself. You're all girl now, and you're as cute as a button. In that skirt and apron, nobody but nobody would suspect, let alone believe, you're a boy. Don't worry about anything, and do as she says, because if you upset her even a little bit you'll have to account to me. Is that clear?" he added with a threat in his voice. "We must all do our part to help Mom through this terrible time, and that includes YOU! Is that understood?"

Hank opened his mouth to retort, but Robert cut him off. "No argument Sis! I mean it. . .if you cause any problems for Mom, I'll get you for it. . .even if I have to turn you across my lap and spank you like a little girl."

Tears welled up in Hank's eyes, which he tried to hide by turning away quickly and minced back to his ironing board. Robert shrugged his shoulders and walked away. There just wasn't anything he could do about Hank's situation, as sad as it was for his brother. There simply was no other solution.

Now, and for the first time, Hank realized that he, and he alone, had to carry this burden, and he cried. His brothers did not really care how HE felt, because it did not concern THEM personally. THEY did not have to play girl and do girlish chores. Yes, it was all up to HIM. Tears of humiliation and loneliness rolled down his cheeks. The way Robert had spoken to him; the way he had treated him was as though he was a. . .a subordinate little sister.

If it were not for his mother's sake, Hank would have stopped this nonsense here and now. . .before it went any farther. . .and before he risked getting used to this new role. He knew this was possible if it lasted long enough, because already, he felt somehow different than his brothers. He felt like he was no longer one of them. . .like he actually belonged to the opposite sex. They had already begun to accept him as their sister and expected him to act the part. Sure, it was easy for them. But, he reconsidered, if it really helped Mom get over her depression, maybe it was worthwhile. She did seem to enjoy his company now, and he really appreciated that part of it. Yes. . .maybe

he should go along with this crazy scheme a while longer. . . a SHORT while.

His mother asked him again to help Anne with lunch so they could get out early while the sun still warm.

"Yes Mom," he said with a polite curtsy, which was quickly becoming a habit with him.

Anne showed him what had to be done, had him set the table, and carry in the food. She praised him highly when he showed progress and behaved properly.

After lunch, his mother called him from the kitchen where he was drying the dishes. "Hennie. . . come up and change, Dear. I'm almost ready."

Hanging up his apron, he joined her in her bedroom.

"Why don't you wear that nice black dress with the white belt, Dear? It's so becoming on you."

Hank nodded. He had liked that sporty costume because it had two pockets in front, and the front zipper was easy to close.

"Wear the white sandals with it, . . . they'll be easier for walking."

Hank did as he was told, although he disliked the feminine open toes. She combed his hair for him and tied in white scarf with black polka dots behind his head. Then, she added white plastic bangles on his left wrist, looked him over, and said, "You look really stylish in your black and white ensemble."

Just before they went downstairs, Hank saw a pair of his mother's sunglasses. Pleased with himself for thinking of it, he put them on. Now, it would be harder for anyone to recognize him.

As they said goodbye to the boys, Hank saw Peter's eyes rise in disbelief that this pretty girl was really his brother.

After they left, Peter remarked to Robert, "Did you see how Hank looked. . . it's unbelievable. I couldn't tell him from a real girl. . . and I'm his brother!"

Robert had to agree, "Yes. . . it's remarkable. . . but it's always HENNIE now. . . and don't forget it!"

"SHE has nice legs too!" Peter added, grinning and emphasizing the feminine pronoun.

Robert chided his brother for that terse remark. "Damn it Peter. . . don't make fun of her! How do you think you would feel having to play a girl?"

Pete's face depicted horror. "I couldn't. . . I wouldn't. . . that's just terrible!"

"Well then. . . think about that and treat Hennie very nicely and with respect. She's doing this for your benefit as well, you know. We all want Mom to get over this quickly."

Peter nodded and pledged his support.

In the streets, Hank was terribly nervous at first. However, when

he saw that nobody noticed anything out of the ordinary, he became more confident. He felt safer behind his sunglasses. It was easy to fall in step with his mother, as his narrow skirt and tight corset forced him to walk in a completely feminine manner. His white gloves felt a little strange and so did his purse, but after a while, he became used to even that.

Mrs. Armstrong finally broke the silence. "I thought we might visit Mrs. Thornsby Dear. . .the lady who gives ballet lessons. I agree with Mrs. Kerr that these lessons would be very beneficial for you. They will give you something to do afternoons, and Jackie will be there as well."

"But Mom?" Hank started to object. Then, he shut his mouth quickly as he remembered Robert's warning. How strange her mind worked, thinking about dancing lessons the day before the funeral. She was really mixed up! He decided not to argue with her just now.

The trip to the Thornsby house took half an hour at a leisurely pace. Hank rang the doorbell, and after a bit, a pretty girl in a white summer dress opened the door. Politely, she invited them in, asking them to wait in the hall until she could inform her mother that she had visitors.

"Mrs. and Miss Armstrong," Hank's mother stated.

Mrs. Thornsby was about to start the ballet lessons with Jack in the former dining room, which she had lined with mirrors on one side. Today, another pupil had joined them, a little girl of seven, named Loraine. Jack was pleased that she was there. Not only was she a cute tyke, but she averted Mrs. Thornsby as she now had two pupils to watch.

Jack was amazed at himself for feeling so attracted to this little angel. She was dressed exactly like himself, in a black scoop necked tight leotard over white opaque tights, except that he had long sleeves. She even had her hair the same way. What made him feel so soft and warm toward this little girl? How much had he changed? Only a few weeks ago at home, he would not have given a child. . .let alone a little girl. . .a single look. He put his arm protectively around her shoulder. She smiled, being pleased to have found such a nice grown up friend who could help her with the hard exercises.

Just then, Ellen came into the room, telling her mother she had visitors who wished to speak with her. "You may sit for a while," she said brusquely to Jack.

He sank down on the wooden floor with his arm resting on his knee, engrossed in his thoughts and wonderment why he now felt this attachment to little children. . .like a girl.

"Jackie," Loraine said, touching him on the shoulder, "will you help me with my slippers?"

This brought him back to the present. Smiling, he said, "Of course

Dear. . .give me your foot.”

Just as he finished tying the strings of her slippers, Mrs. Thornsby came back in followed by Mrs. Armstrong and Hank. Blushing prettily at being seen in such an abbreviated costume, Jack quickly rose and performed a gracious curtsy for the visitors, that a real ballerina could not have improved upon. His eyes met Hank's for a fleeting moment, and both boys blushed and dropped their lashes.

Mrs. Armstrong embraced Jack, saying with a broad smile, “Hello Jacqueline. . .you are so elegant and graceful.” Then to Hank, “See Hennie what a little ballet training does for a girl?”

Hank nodded shyly, taking in the lithe body of Jack in tights. “Her figure looks less developed now,” he surmised. “Probably because she is not wearing a bra. Anyway, I shouldn't talk, having none at all.”

Then and there, Mrs. Armstrong made arrangements for Hank to join Jack in his ballet lesson every afternoon.

“I must reserve the right to discipline her. . .if you really want results. I find that girls often need discipline to make them try really hard and obey my instructions.”

“Oh. . .that's alright of course. . .you just do whatever you think necessary,” Mrs. Armstrong replied casually. “A girl sometimes needs some stiff discipline. I sure had plenty of it at home when I was growing up.”

The Armstrongs stayed for a while to watch Jack and Loraine go through their paces. Hank felt uneasy knowing that he would be trained like that. . .dressed as they were. He flushed at the idea. What was he letting himself in for? If he were trained to move so elegantly and fluidly, would he ever be able to return to his boyish ways? And, what did Mrs. Thornsby say about discipline????

Jack, while dancing, was just as uneasy. Afraid of discovery in his dancing costume, he did his very best to move as femininely as he knew how. And, he succeeded only too well, from the looks of Hank. Of course, the comparison with the more clumsy little Loraine helped also.

Mrs. Armstrong awoke Hank from his worried dream. “Come on Hennie. . .we might as well go shopping for some of those ballet clothes right now.”

She embraced Jack before leaving. Turning to Hank, Jack put both hands on his shoulders as if to say, “I know how you feel.” Aloud, he said, “You look very nice Hennie. . .really you do.”

Hank blushed even more, knowing that this girl obviously meant what she said. When he saw his mother beaming happily at the compliment, Hank tried to smile also, unconsciously straightening his posture while saying, “Thank you Jackie. . .you dance beautifully.”

Suddenly, it did not feel so bad to play girl for a while. As long as he looked this good.

After they left the house, his mother led him straight to the shopping district to purchase tights, leotards, a tutu, and ballet slippers.

While Mrs. Armstrong was sad most of the time, occasionally she sounded almost cheerful, being diverted by the pleasant chore of shopping for her teenage daughter. Except for that strange quirk of thinking Hank was her daughter, she seemed perfectly normal.

Hank was glad when they finally arrived home, loaded again with packages. His feet were tired, as he was not used to wearing those sandal type shoes.

"Why don't you change into something more comfortable, Dear?" she said to Hank, as she accompanied him to his room.

It was good that Anne remembered to remove all of his boy's clothes, Hank thought as his mother went to his closet. While Hank stepped out of his black dress, she chose a very feminine lounging outfit consisting of soft black silk widely flaring pants. To fit over them was a pinafore style dress with a large collar. The organdy material was decorated with a red stripe along the collar, the hem, the waist band, and repeated on the sleeves where the cuffs fit close to his arms above the elbow. This outfit was very stylish in the little girl fashion that was now in vogue for young women. She fixed his hair, like the day before with black ribbons on each side behind his ears. He chose black, cross strap slippers with straps over his instep and around his ankles. His mother was obviously happy to be able to dress her girl so prettily.

When Robert and Peter came home, having played tennis, they could hardly believe their eyes. They were totally surprised. Was that pretty girl in that feminine outfit really their brother???

Robert regained his wits first, and said, "Hi Mom, hi Sis."

Peter followed suit adding, "How was your walk?"

Their mother told them all about Hennie's new ballet teacher and asked her "daughter" to serve the boys a cold drink.

Peter could hardly take his eyes off his brother as he obediently minced from the room with his skirt rustling with each step.

Soon, Hank returned with the drinks, neatly served on a tray. He even remembered to place coasters on the highly polished side tables.

The boys grabbed their glasses with nary a thank you, and Hank became annoyed again. He was now obtaining an insight into the thankless task of a female serving men in her household. She came to realize it was expected of her to do so without complaining, and that a sign of appreciation would hardly ever be forthcoming.

When he sat down to enjoy his own drink, he was made to feel uncomfortable by Peter's constant stares of admiration and surprise.

He was so conscious of it, when he sat down, he automatically smoothed the organdy skirt neatly under him. It was as if he WANTED to look neat and LOATHED wrinkled skirts. He blushed as he realized that he was unconsciously adopting feminine mannerisms. The way he sat with his knees and ankles together was further evidence of this fact.

Sure, Donna had told him that nice girls always sat that way, but he had done it without thinking. What made him do that? Was Anne right???? Was he really meant to be a girl. . .? He wished Peter would stop studying him. When he saw Robert's eyes looking at his femininely shod feet, emerging from under his soft flared pants, he modestly drew them in. Should he really have been a girl. . .like Terry and Jackie?

That thought did not leave him all during dinner, or later when his mother made him take up his knitting again. It kept on hammering at his brain again and again that because of his new clothes and new activities, he was becoming different from the boys. With his fingers slowly getting more adept with the needles, he knew it would not be long before the others would notice as well. His soft, light clothing constantly reminded him of his predicament every minute of the day.

That evening, his mother again asked him to sleep in her room. As the store had delivered all of their purchases from the day before, Anne told him that she had them all stored neatly away in his room. Before entering his mother's room, he went to his own and put on one of his new baby doll nightgowns. He decided again that he should keep his bra and panty girdle on. Remembering Anne's warning, he put on a soft pink satin lined robe, and left his room. He was glad he remembered the robe as he met both of his brothers in the hall. He would have been so embarrassed for them to see him in his abbreviated nylon nightie.

Robert said, "Good night Sis," with a friendly smile. He acted completely natural and THAT annoyed Hank also.

Why did they accept him as a girl so readily? Well, at least they didn't tease and make fun of him. In his mother's bedroom, he kissed her good night and was soon asleep.

On the day of the funeral, the weather was gloomy, and occasional rain fell from the grey windswept skies.

Jack, Donna, Terry, and Mrs. Kerr were all at the service dressed appropriately in black. Paul was wearing a neat dark blue suit.

When the Armstrong family arrived behind the coffin, Jack could not take his eyes off Hank. He was dressed in his new form fitting black crepe outfit with the high demure neck and long sleeves. No one could have possibly guessed that this was really a boy who had worn dresses for only a few days. He wore dark red lipstick, blue eyeshadow, heavy mascara, and his hair was parted in the middle and

ted with ribbons. On his hat, was a cute little black toque with a veil covering most of his face. Like his mother, he wore black nylons and high heel shoes.

During the minister's sermon Jack saw that Hank had to dry his eyes several times. . .like his mother. . .while the boys sat pale and straight, controlling their emotions like real men. All during the service, Jack wondered about that phenomena. Why did Hank have to cry and not his brothers? Did Hank really have a girl's temperament? Was that why he acted so convincingly as a girl?

During the burial ceremony, the rain stopped, but the bleak sky and the stiff wind blowing through the leaf covered trees made it seem more like November than July. After the final prayer, everyone was sad, and Aunt Julia went over to Mrs. Armstrong and invited them to dinner. The invitation was accepted as a welcome diversion. Anything rather than go back to that lonely house.

A few of the Armstrong acquaintances were present and came over to speak and shake hands. None of them seemed to notice that there was now a daughter and two sons where there had previously been three sons.

At the Kerr house, Jack and Terry were pressed into service as it was Sarah's day off. Jack almost looked like a maid in his black dress and white pinafore, serving cookies and sherry.

When Donna called the girls into the kitchen to help prepare the meal, Mrs. Armstrong said to Hank, "Hennie. . .why don't you see whether you can help as well."

Obediently, Hank stood up, giving a meaningful glance to Robert and Peter. Nevertheless, he remembered to curtsy nicely to Mrs. Kerr and his mother as he left for the kitchen.

With a grin, Donna accepted his offer to help, and promptly popped him into a white pinafore. She sent Terry to the dining room to set the table so she could enjoy the domination of these two boys in skirts. She especially savored the spicy idea that Hank did not know Jack's real sex. The way Jack looked and acted certainly belied the fact that he was really a boy. With almost two months of experience as a girl, he helped so effectively that anyone would have assumed that he had done this type work all his life.

She put Hank to work peeling potatoes, while Jack washed some lettuce and tossed a salad, something Sarah had taught him. Yes, he was becoming real handy in the kitchen, Donna thought smilingly.

During dinner, the conversation was animated although far from merry. Mrs. Kerr sat at the head of the table, with Mrs. Armstrong at the other end. Donna sat between Robert and Peter while on the opposite side were Terry, Jack, and Hank, looking so demure in their frilly pinafores. Mrs. Armstrong had insisted that her daughter, Hennie, sit beside her. Occasionally, she would stroke his hair or pat

his hand.

When clean up time came, Donna bowed out leaving the three younger girls to do the work. With six hands, it went fairly quickly. Terry embarrassed Hank several times by making snide remarks about his inexperience at handling pots and pans. Jack gently showed him by doing, and Hank soon learned how to do all these things right and neatly.

After dinner, the girls served coffee while Robert poured the cordials. Hank made a face thinking that there were now eight more glasses to be washed and put away, something he never would have thought of in the past. When those cups and glasses had been cleaned, the girls took off their aprons and returned to the living room. Jack, from force of habit, started on his embroidery. Terry followed with a sigh.

The others watched them and talked. "I have neglected to teach Hennie to embroider and things," Mrs. Armstrong said. "I just don't know why I never thought of it before, but now we will start her on something right away. She's already started knitting a scarf for herself." Turning to Hank, she added, "You'll have to begin something like that tablecloth also, Dear. It will give your hands something useful to do, whenever you sit down and your chores are finished. It is such a relaxing pleasure to use your hands and train your fingers to make something beautiful that lasts forever."

Mrs. Kerr exchanged a significant glance with Robert. It was clear that none of the confusion had gone from Mary Armstrong's mind. She really and truly thought that Hennie was her daughter. It was impossible, but there it was. When Mrs. Kerr could talk with Robert privately, she said, "I can see that your mother is still too overcome with grief to realize her mistake. You three had better go along with it for the time being. And, always remember to help your sister all you can."

Kissing Hank good night, she said, "If you need any help or advice dear, just phone. Jackie and Terry will be right over if you need them."

Hank nodded gratefully, as he pulled on his black kid gloves. Terry confused him no end by giving him a lingering kiss full on the mouth that made his blood race through his veins, causing him strong discomfort in his restrictive modesty garment. Why did she have to kiss him like that? Did the others notice it? From Donna's smile he saw that she surely hadn't missed a thing. Was Terry doing this deliberately to let him know that she still thought of him as a boy? That, at least, would be something.

That night, Hank lay awake in his father's bed for a long time. This was the fourth day he had been forced to play girl, and no outsider had discovered his secret. Did he really look and act so much like a

girl? How in heaven's name was that possible? He had always thought and acted like his brothers. . . even though he had to admit that he had a quieter nature, was less aggressive, and smaller in stature. Unless what Anne had said was true????? That thought kept on bothering him until he finally fell asleep, exhausted by all of the emotions of the day. His last conscious thought was that his soft nylon nightgown gave a much more enjoyable feeling than his cotton pajamas.

The next morning, when he awoke, Hank remembered his new status. His mother was still asleep, so he tiptoed to his own room to dress. For morning wear, he chose a bright colorful striped long sleeved house dress with nice white cuffs and collar.

On an impulse, he put on his long blonde wig, feeling that somehow it would help his disguise and look better with his dress as well. His makeup gave him little trouble as he just powdered his face, rubbed a little rouge on his cheeks, touched up his eyebrows, and applied some pink lipstick. He was satisfied with this because Donna had explained the difference between glamorous evening makeup and that for ordinary house wear. While he didn't look exactly glamorous in this outfit, he did feel completely natural and comfortable in his role.

His greatest trial came when he entered the living room. He was somewhat self conscious at showing himself in this dress that his brothers had not yet seen.

Peter greeted him with, "Good morning Sis, how about some breakfast? It's Anne's day off, you know."

Hank blushed in anger. The boys said nothing about his dress, apparently accepting it as his proper attire. Thinking over his situation, he became even redder in anger. Really? Did his brothers really expect him to prepare and serve their breakfast just because he was wearing a dress?

Robert confirmed that assumption when he said, "Now Pete, . . . it wouldn't harm you to help your sister. Don't act like a spoiled brat."

Hank did not fail to notice that Robert was not inclined to help either. They could have made their own breakfast, but no! They had already accepted the fact that they now had a sister and that such tasks were her duty. A female had to serve men. Neither of the boys realized how angry their attitude made their brother.

Peter replied cheerfully to Robert's remark, "Okay, I'll help. . . with the eating that is." Then more seriously, "Just tell me what to do Hen."

Hank swallowed several times, just looking at his brothers while the truth dawned on him. They truly expected him to take care of this meal for them. Tears started forming in his eyes. He knew, under the

circumstances, he had to dress as a girl temporarily, but that shouldn't mean they could take advantage of him and make him do all of the house work. Why did they treat him as a sister and accept his manner of dress as natural. . .like he really was a girl?

As an excuse for Peter and Robert, one might say that because of the way Hank looked in his colorful dress and wig, nobody, but nobody, would suspect that he was a boy. Not with those smooth shapely legs, small waist, and apparent bosom, they wouldn't. His appearance made it all too easy for them to think of him as a girl, and they were doing just that.

Abruptly, Hank turned to leave for the kitchen, telling Peter in a curt tone of voice. . .which did not even begin to tell how he felt, "You set the table Peter, and I'll see what I can do in the kitchen."

Not wanting to stain his new dress, Hank went to the linen closet and took a pink and white striped apron and tied it around his waist. He blushed as he did so, realizing that was exactly what a real girl would have done. . .not only remembering to wear it. . .but trying to tie as neat a bow in the back as possible. Why had he even thought of it?

Having helped Anne in the kitchen several times over the last few days, he at least knew his way around. He decided to boil some eggs and make toast as that was about the limit of his abilities. As he liked jam on his toast, he found a jar of preserves and jelly to enhance the meal. He put everything on a tray, along with milk and orange juice. He remembered that Robert liked tea in the mornings, and that was easy enough to prepare.

He surprised even himself at how quickly and efficiently everything went. All the things that were needed seemed to come to him instinctively and Anne's words kept repeating in his head. "You should have been a girl, and you'll soon feel like your Mom's daughter, you'll see."

When everything was ready, he carefully carried the tray to the dining room, thinking that this had not been much of a job after all. He found that Peter had spread the white tablecloth and put out knives and forks, but had forgotten the napkins, salt and pepper. Also, he had done a sloppy job. Quickly, Hank corrected Peter's mistakes and chided him for using the dinner cloth instead of the usual breakfast cover.

Peter answered, "Only a girl would have known that."

Hank ignored Peter's remark, and when everything was perfect, he said, "Okay boys, breakfast is ready."

He began to tremble the moment he said "boys", as it clearly implicated that he was not one.

Robert made things worse by politely holding his chair, like any gentleman would do for one of the fair sex.

Nevertheless, Hank managed a weak smile and a "Thank you Robert," while he straightened his skirts beneath him.

Not having much of an appetite because of his tight corset, Hank listened while his brothers talked excitedly about their plans for the day. He noticed that he ate far less than half of what they managed to stash away, and he was more than a little pleased when Robert remarked that his eggs were "just the way I like them".

Both the boys acted as if they had forgotten all about their Dad and the funeral the previous day. Was it really that boys were less sensitive than girls? There. . . he had done it again, thinking of THEM as boys, while feeling differently himself. He still suffered that deep ache in his heart. He felt sad and depressed about his father's demise, not wanting to do anything, unlike his brothers who had already planned their entire day.

When breakfast was over, both Robert and Peter got up and, as usual, left for their rooms. Hank realized they had left their sister with the clean up, without giving it a thought. Anger welled up within him again. Of all the nerve!!! He almost called them back, but his soft nature won out. After all, with his apron, he was already dressed for the job. Dutifully, he went about clearing away the table and carrying the dirty things to the kitchen. Then, he remembered that he should take breakfast up to his mother and went to work to prepare a tray for her. When it was ready, he decided to cheer it up with a small vase of roses, because he knew how much his mother loved flowers.

Carrying the tray up, Hank met Robert on the stairs. Robert smiled at his girlishly clad brother and said, "I see you're taking good care of Mom, Sis." Before Hank knew what was happening, Robert leaned over and pecked him lightly on the cheek saying, "See you at lunch."

Hank almost dropped the tray, as he looked over his shoulder to see his older brother leaving the house. Heavens. . . Robert had really thought of him as a sister at that moment. Otherwise, he would never have thought to show this gentle hint of affection. "Maybe that's Robert's way of showing his appreciation for what I'm doing," he thought. "He is probably trying to encourage me to do my best at this difficult task that these strange circumstances have thrust upon me. Well, at least I know he appreciates me."

With a lighter heart, he entered his mother's bedroom saying cheerfully, "Good morning, Mom."

"Good morning Dear," she said. Then seeing the tray of food, "How nice of you to bring my breakfast. I just didn't feel like getting up. It's Anne's day off, isn't it?"

Hank nodded. Could she tell Anne was absent by the amateurish way he had prepared the tray?

While his mother ate, he straightened out the bedroom by making his own bed, picking up a few things, and dusting here and there. He

was still amazed how his mother completely accepted his activities as a matter of course, but much more surprised because he somehow knew what needed to be done and how to do it.

He thought these things over even while washing the breakfast dishes in the kitchen a bit later. He was a quite depressed as he thought, "Here I am, stuck in the kitchen like a girl. I'm wearing a house dress and doing all the work, while Robert and Peter are out having fun and doing who knows what with the other boys. To make matters worse, they have accepted the fact that the house work is now my task."

As tears of anguish flooded his eyes, he sat in a kitchen chair and, in despair, placed his head in his hands. How could they possibly accept him so completely and naturally as a girl, with no regard for his own feelings???

Looking in the kitchen mirror, he absent mindedly tucked a stray lock into place. He could not deny the fact that he looked like a girl, that was for sure. He liked the neat white cuffs on his dress as they seemed so appropriate, so prim and proper.

When the kitchen was in order, he wondered what to do next. As if in a daze, he wandered from room to room dusting here or fluffing a pillow there. Seeing that the rugs needed vacuuming, he took on that task as well. While performing that chore, he wondered if he should plan lunch, although he did not know how to cook. "Perhaps I could prepare some sandwiches, but that's about the extent of my food preparation skills," he thought.

His thoughts were soon interrupted by visitors. Terry and Jackie came in and found him vacuuming the front hall.

They exchanged a fond greeting, with Terry again kissing him affectionately on the mouth.

Jack, who was wearing a soft light blue sweater and skirt set and carrying a white patent leather purse over his arm, said, "How is everything, Hennie?", and after a pause, "Do you need any help?"

"Yes. . .thank you. I made breakfast for the boys (he swallowed hard. . .there, he had done it again), but I don't know what to do about lunch. I can't cook, and it's Anne's day off."

"Let us help you," Jack urged with a smile. "Terry and I have had some experience with that sort of thing lately."

"That would be nice," Hank said with relief. He had been worried about his brothers coming home hungry and demanding to be fed. "And, you could stay for lunch?"

"Fine," Jack said, "and afterward, we can go together to Mrs. Thornsby's. You do have lessons there this afternoon, right?"

Hank nodded, remembering the arrangement his mother had made.

Jack did nothing to make it sound more appetizing when he said,

"She is just terrible! She screamed at me yesterday for one little mistake, and then made me do ten minutes extra exercise. When I finished, I was so tired I could hardly walk home.

Hank paled. His mother had given Mrs. Thornsby disciplinary power over him as well.

At that time, Hank's mother entered the kitchen. "How nice of you girls to visit Hennie. She put you to work, I see. Hennie dear, that's no way to treat your guests."?

"We offered to help, as Hennie didn't know what to make for lunch," Terry replied.

"Oh. . .well, let me help you plan the menu. Let's have some coffee while we talk it over."

Hennie and Jack served the coffee on the terrace. While the others talked about various feminine subjects, Hank remained silent. He was worrying about those silly dancing lessons and how he could get out of them.

His mother noticed his preoccupation and said, "Why are you so quiet Hennie? Remember that you have guests, and you must entertain them."

"I feel so unhappy about Dad," he replied. "And, I really don't want to take those ballet lessons at Mrs. Thornsby's. Jackie says she is a terrible woman who yells at you when you make mistakes."

"Well Dear. . .good teachers have other things to worry about than being nice. Mrs. Kerr recommended her very highly. Face it, compared to Jackie and Terry, you sometimes move like a drill sergeant. You must learn grace and elegance darling. . .believe me. . .this is all in your best interests."

"But. . ."

"No more arguments dear! I want you to go there every afternoon for a while, just like Jackie. You two will have a lot of fun together once you adjust to the routine."

Hank sighed. He did not dare chance getting his mother in one of her moods again. Anyway, he had no chance as the boys returned, and he had to serve them coffee also.

Peter spent most of his attention on Jack, in his usual overbearing manner. This made Jack feel girlishly passive, as he was compelled to sweetly agree with whatever theory Peter saw fit to expound.

After the three girls finished the dishes, Mary Armstrong wanted to see Hennie in her leotard. So again, Hank was forced to dress in the presence of two girls. He managed by taking his white tights and long sleeved black leotard into the bathroom to dress.

"It fits you nicely dear. . .you can put your dress on over it.

When Hank zipped up the back of his dress, he looked at his white legs. "It looks funny," he objected.

"No dear. . .it's alright. . .it looks like you're wearing long white

stockings," his mother calmed him.

Terry agreed.

Robert was asked to drive the girls to Mrs Thornsby's and then drop Terry off at the Kerr home. Hank took his tutu and slippers with him in a brown paper bag.

When they arrived at Mrs. Thornsby's, they found her in a foul mood, dressed in slacks and a mannish looking shirt. "Oh. . .there you are," she said, without so much as a hello or a good afternoon. . .not even nodding when the boys curtsied for her. "Change quickly," she ordered, pointing to a room off the hall.

Hank stopped in his tracks, and in deep consternation said, "I can't change in the same room with her."

For a second, Mrs. Thornsby hesitated. Then, she realized that Hank did not know Jack was a boy like himself. How quirky! With a vile grin, she insisted, "Do as I tell you. You are a girl now, too! Quickly, or do I begin the lesson with a caning???"

With a deep blush, Hank entered the room behind Jack.

"You go first," Hank said. "I'll keep my eyes closed."

"No. . .she'll get mad at us if we don't hurry. I'll change in this corner, and you can use that one. Anyway, you just have to take off your dress and put on your slippers." Jack had already dropped his skirt, and Hank quickly turned his back to him. Hank had difficulty unzipping his dress in the back but finally made it, and carefully pulled it over his head.

Jack was tying his ballet slippers when Hank finally turned around. He was feeling strangely nude in this tight fitting body hugging outfit, as Jack showed him how to put on his slippers. When they finished, the boys, were both dressed identically in their white tights, and black scoop necked leotards, sleek and trim. Seeing Jack made another mental change in Hank because he was now dressed exactly like this pretty girl.

Mrs. Thornsby made them both do the early beginners exercises and steps. "This will be a good refresher course for you, Jackie."

When Hank, untrained as he was, made mistakes and moved clumsily, she yelled him several times. She screams got even louder as she became more and more annoyed.

Finally becoming exasperated with Hank's efforts, she yelled at the two boys. "Get into your dresses!"

"Watch Jacqueline, Hennie," Mrs. Thornsby said rather briskly while taking Jack into her arms. "You can learn from her mistakes."

Jack knew his teacher fully realized the humiliation he experienced at having to dance in skirts while being watched by another boy in the same circumstance. Nevertheless, he tried very hard, fearing the worst if he made a mistake. He just HAD to be light on his feet to prevent Hank from guessing his secret.

Hank admired the fleet footed Jack as he whirled around the floor with his skirt flying high in the turns. He picked up some pointers on posture and girlish mannerisms, that he would try to imitate.

Finally, they were dismissed. Walking home together, Hank complained loudly. "I don't like this. . .I don't like it at all! She is strictly horrible! When I get home, I'm asking mother to let me quit. Why do you keep going to that horrible woman Jackie?"

Jack sadly replied, "Aunt Julia makes me go. . .so what can I do?"

They were silent for the rest of the way home, with Hank occasionally shaking his head as if he still could not believe what he had been through that afternoon.

Mrs. Kerr welcomed them with a big smile. "Well girls. . .how did it go?"

"Terrible!" Hank responded. A kick on his leg warned him to let it drop, so he complained no farther, instead dropping a nice curtsy when he was invited for tea.

Afterward, Hank was driven home by the gardener's son.

When his guest had left, Jack neatly put the cups on the wagon for Sarah to haul away. Then, he joined Terry on the couch to work on his ever present tablecloth.

"I'm so glad that Mom doesn't make me go there with you and Hennie," she sighed.

"I wonder why she doesn't?????" Jack thought aloud.

"Because I don't have to learn how to be a girl," Terry replied nastily.

Aunt Julia came in and said to Jack, "That blonde hair looked so good on Hennie. I wonder how YOU would look as a blonde, Jacqueline?"

Jack blushed and shrugged his shoulders. He had learned to be careful when she used the name Jacqueline. It usually meant she had some new humiliation in store for him.

Terry said, "I'll bet she would look beautiful with blonde hair. Blondes are supposed to have more fun, you know," she added smiling maliciously.

The subject was dropped, and Jack forgot all about it until the next morning at breakfast when Aunt Julia announced, "We have to go into town today, Jacqueline dear. You have an appointment at the beauty parlor at ten o'clock. Afterward, we can have a pleasant lunch together and go shopping in the city."

"What about Mrs. Thornsby," Jack asked, hoping he was to get out of that terrible ordeal.

"We'll cancel that for today. . .I'll call her. She hates these interruptions, but I guess I can convince her this one time. You don't have to dress up too much, as we won't be too long."

Jack was thankful for little favors. At least, he would not have to

face Mrs. Thornsby that afternoon. Poor Hank would have to be there all alone now. Maybe little Loraine would be there. Mrs. Thornsby always seemed a little more restrained when the small girl was there.

Dressed in a simple thin sleeveless white blouse, that clearly showed his slip and bra straps, a red tartan skirt, and carrying a black handbag that matched his three inch heels, Jack joined his aunt in the car.

In the city, they stopped in front of a beauty shop. As she led him toward the door, he said, "Aunt Julia, I don't need to go in there. I can wash and set my own hair."

"Well Dear, your hair is getting nice and long now, so I thought I would treat you to a professional set. One's hair always looks so much better when experts do the job. You just relax and enjoy it. Your aunt knows what is best for you."

Silently, Jack followed her in. They were politely greeted by the manager, a thin dark man with a tiny moustache and a french accent. His manner was quick and nervous. . .almost like a scared mouse, Jack thought.

"Oh. . .Madame Kerr. . .Bon Matin. . .everything is ready for your niece."

"Fine, Mr. Marceau. Give her the full treatment, as I instructed, and I will pick her up in two hours."

Jack was installed in a small cubicle. A pink sheet was draped over him and a young girl started washing his hair. The warm water and gentle massage felt nice, so he relaxed and let her have her way. After she rinsed, Mr. Marceau himself came in and worked a smelly lotion into his hair. He applied the lotion and rinsed it twice at fifteen minute intervals. After the last rinse, his hair was rolled into curlers, and he was put under a dryer. The whole thing took so long that he began to wonder why women put up with this kind of torture so regularly, just to look good.

When his hair was dry, Mr. Marceau brushed, combed, and styled it, trying several different looks. Jack just relaxed with his eyes closed, as the man definitely knew what he was doing. Jack, of course, was curious as to how his hair would look when he was ready.

"With your perfect soft skin, you can wear your hair in the back, which is so nice for a young girl like Mademoiselle."

Jack felt his hair parted in the middle, with barrettes on each side to keep his locks behind his ears. Finally, Mr. Marceau was satisfied, and he began to make up Jack's face, shaping his eyebrows, and touching up his lipstick in a new redder color.

Just as he was finishing up with the gloss, Aunt Julia came into the cubicle. When the girl carefully lifted the pink sheet allowing him to get up, Jack hurried to the mirror for his first view of his new coiffeur. What he saw made him freeze with horror! They had

bleached his hair, rinsing it until he had gorgeous long blonde tresses. . .almost platinum. . .beautifully curled, waved, and hanging over his shoulders in the back. "Aunt Julia," he exclaimed with panic in his voice, "I'm blonde!"

She held him forcefully, giving him no chance to finish the sentence. "You've done a marvelous job Mr. Marceau," she said, studying Jack's new hairdo from all angles. "This style really does a lot for her face."

"It is my pleasure, Madame," the hairdresser said with a gallant bow, "to make such a pretty girl look even more beautiful."

Before Jack could say another word, his aunt paid the cashier, and took his arm, and led him out into the street.

"Aunt Julia. . .why did you let them do this to me? I can't go home like this!!! No boy has hair this color!"

"Well, we can always cut it," she said curtly, not failing to notice Jack's doubtful look. Apparently, he was already fond of his long hair.

"Yes," he replied hesitantly, "but the color would still show. . .even when it was short. Everyone in school will know my hair was dyed."

"That's no problem. If you want, we can always dye it back to your old mousy color. Anyway, don't you agree this light color makes your hair even more beautiful? Look how it shines. . .it's so thick, and it makes your face even more girlish. You ought to be very proud of your new look."

Jack remained silent. When they stopped in front of a display window with a mirror, he had a chance to further examine himself. He had to admit that he looked real good with this new hair style and the redder lipstick Mr. Marceau had applied. Whenever he turned his head, the soft curls caressed his neck and shoulders. That felt good, too. But, he shivered with the thought of going home with this color hair. He could never agree to that.

Aunt Julia apparently did feel a little guilty that she had done this without consulting him, because she said, "As a reward, we'll buy you a nice dress from the latest fall collections. They are in the stores now."

Quietly, they walked a few blocks. Jack easily kept pace with his aunt, as he was now completely used to walking in high heels with skirts swirling around his legs. He knew he looked like any other girl, but he was annoyed that he could now walk the streets in skirts without even being nervous about it. What was happening to him? Here he was. . .a wild boy only six weeks ago, and now he was eagerly anticipating the pleasure of trying on and buying a new dress.

The sky had become cloudy, and a cool wind had started to blow. Jack rubbed his bare arms and shivered a little. "You should have

worn your cardigan," Aunt Julia chided him.

A bit later, they entered a shop. His aunt gave him a free hand, and soon, he was going through the racks.

The sales clerk, a matronly woman, said, "We have just received our new fall collection, and there are some very nice dresses for girls your age, designed in France."

Aunt Julia's eye caught a darling demure dress in a black and white check, with prim white cuffs and collar. "Try this one on," she ordered, taking it off the rack and handing it to Jack.

Seeing the long sleeves, Jack argued, "That's not a summer dress. . .it feels heavier, and it has long sleeves." He did not object too strongly because he also thought the outfit quite stylish, and he had to admit it attracted him. However, feeling the more substantial material with his hand, he remarked, "This is really for Autumn wear Aunt Julia. . .and I'll be going home in September."

"That's alright dear," Aunt Julia said, "over here, it gets quite cool in late August. Go ahead, and try it on."

In the dressing room, Jack quickly and with experience divested himself of his blouse and skirt. He had no trouble pulling the attractive dress over his head. He was; however, very careful not to muss his new hairdo. It struck him as strange that he now thought of such things. He liked the front zipper and the way the dress looked on him in the mirror. It fit well, he had to admit, and those black tabs on the collar and cuffs gave it a special interest.

As he stepped back into the store, the sales lady exclaimed, "Why Miss. . .it looks as if it were made for you. If I had a daughter, I would want her to look just that way."

Aunt Julia beamed as Jack asked shyly, "Do you really think so?"

His aunt answered for her. "It's just perfect for you dear, and it's dressy enough so you can wear it anywhere. That black belt perfectly matches your purse and shoes. It's just YOU! I can't add anything else." They decided together that this was their choice, and Aunt Julia paid while Jack stood admiring himself in the mirror.

Another customer, and a young girl Jack's age were watching. The girl said loudly, "Mummy. . .can I have a dress like that? I want to look like her."

Jack was too pleased to conceal a happy smile, as he turned his toward the girl saying, "I like it too."

Because of the many compliments and the realization that it really did things for him, he knew this dress would soon become one of his favorites. It possessed a simple styling usually found only in very expensive dresses. He was actually grateful when his Aunt said, "Why don't you wear it home dear? You were cold in your blouse a while ago, remember?"

Back in the street, Jack actually felt happy in his new dress. When

that thought occurred to him, he wondered what kind of boy would be happy to be wearing a new dress and wanting to show it off. He basked in this thought as he caught the many admiring glances, from both men and women, cast his way. His pride, generated by this admiration, made him walk more erect with his chin provocatively tilted up. . .like a female who knows she is beautiful and enjoys every moment of it.

When they arrived home, Donna met them at the door. "Why Jacqueline. . .your hair is just beautiful. . .and that new dress. . .is simply YOU! Wherever did you get it?"

Jack happily turned around with the grace of a model, proudly showing off his new dress and hairdo. His hair flew around his face, and he enjoyed the clean perfumed smell.

"We have visitors Mother," Donna said. Then to Jack, with a funny teasing smile, "Girlie. . .do we have a surprise for you!"

Jack's happy smile disappeared, and he experienced a deep foreboding sensation of impending doom from Donna's cheerful excitement.

After Donna whispered a few words in her ear, Aunt Julia smiled, looked him over critically, shrugged her shoulders, and motioned for him to follow her into the living room.

Jack was totally unprepared for the terrible confrontation that awaited him. Immediately upon entering the room behind his aunt and Donna, he recognized the visitors and was dumbfounded beyond belief. Looking at them, he stood silent and motionless as if struck by lightning! There, sitting and waiting for him, was his best friend, TIM DAYNOR, his sister Cathy, and their mother!!

Terry was sitting on the couch in a plain grey dress and pinafore, looking on with interest. She full well realized how terrible this ordeal was for Jack! She could imagine the humiliation he was suffering, being seen completely dressed as a girl by his friends who knew him only as a boy. Still, while she sympathized with her mortified cousin, she also envied his stylish new dress.

The Daynors looked with interest at this pretty girl, who stood stiff as a puppet, blushing for all she was worth.

Undaunted, Aunt Julia greeted her guests, introducing herself and welcoming them graciously. Then turning and taking Jack's arms, she pulled him forward saying, "This is my niece, Jacqueline."

"Don't forget your curtsy," Donna whispered in a nagging voice.

Automatically, Jack dipped for Mrs. Daynor, then took her hand. He shook hands with Cathy and finally with his friend Tim, who had risen as soon as the ladies entered. Jack was unable to utter a word.

Fortunately, Mrs. Daynor started to explain her visit. "Tim would leave me no rest until we came to visit Jack," she said with a smile. "Our trip to England was a surprise for the children, so there was no

time to write and tell you that we planned a visit.”

Jack became even redder as the full realization of what had happened seared into his mind.

Tim kept staring at him with such sheepish admiration, it was obvious he had not the faintest idea that this pretty girl was, in fact, his good friend, Jack.

However, Cathy was not so emotionally affected. She coolly studied this girl in her pretty dress, and her feminine intuition started working full speed. She sensed the strange nervousness that Jack could not camouflage. Suddenly, she started to giggle, then laugh, until tears ran out of her eyes.

Mrs. Daynor, shocked by her daughter's behavior, said, “Cathy! Stop that! What's the matter with you?”

Like the blow of a hammer, Jack was hit with the knowledge that Cathy had seen through his disguise. She had recognized him! In complete misery, shock, and humiliation, he put hands over his face and ran from the room as fast as his heels would carry him. In his room, he fell face down on the bed and cried his heart out.

Weeks and months of frustration, fear, confusion, and scrambled emotions extracted their toll. As he lay there, hysterical with the humiliation of it all, his legs thrashed from the pain in his soul. He didn't know how long he lay there, as time had lost its meaning. He barely noticed the sound of someone opening the door. He no longer cared. . .about anything. His life was surely ruined. His best friend had seen him. . .and actually admired him. . .dressed as girl.

He felt someone touch his shoulder. “Go away,” he shouted. “I wish I were dead!!!”

“Jack. . .” the voice said. “Don't feel so bad.”

When he recognized it was his friend's voice, he cried even harder. “Go away. . .leave me alone. . .PLEASE!! I just want to DIE!!!”

“Jack. . .please. . .let's talk,” Tim said. “Your aunt explained everything. Please don't cry so.”

But, Jack could not stop, even if he wanted to. He was too miserable to care about anything. . .friend or foe. Between his sobs, he heard Tim leave.

In a few minutes; however, Tim returned with Aunt Julia. She looked disdainfully at her distraught nephew and said in a firm voice, “Now Jackie, stop that! This is not the end of the world. You can't act like that when you have guests. I won't have it! After all, your friend came a long way just to see you, and the least you can do is show a little courtesy. Come on, be a good girl!!!!

Jack did not react or reply.

Aunt Julia ordered him again to stop his tantrum, but after three times, Jack still ignored her. Then, her voice turned hard and forbid-

ding. "Jacqueline, if you don't get up this very instant, I'll get the cane and give you a good dose right on your panties, and I don't care whether Tim sees it or not! Imagine, wrinkling your newest dress like that! Get up. . .NOW!"

Tim, hearing these threats, turned pale.

The threat worked. Jack slowly sat up on the bed and wiped his tear filled eyes with his hands, thus allowing Tim to observe his neatly manicured and polished nails.

"Now, fix up your face and come downstairs for tea. Do you hear?" She said it so harshly that Tim could not remove his eyes from her hard face.

Jack just nodded, still sobbing so hard, he couldn't speak as his aunt left the room in a huff.

When she was gone, Jack moved over to the edge of his bed. As he did so, his skirt slid up his thighs, revealing a generous portion of his lace edged slip and the tops of his nylons to his friend's staring eyes. Seeing what had happened, he immediately jumped to his feet to allow everything to fall back into its proper place. He sat beside Tim on the bed, but he still was far too ashamed to look him in the eyes.

"I know how you must feel Jack. . .I think," Tim said softly. "Please don't act this way. Your aunt explained everything to us. . .and after all, I am your best friend."

Jack grew cold with fear. Taking his hands from his face, he spoke for the first time. "What did she explain? How could she explain? What did she say?" He cringed with the thought of a probable explanation. He could just hear his aunt explain, "He should have been a girl. . .can't you see that?"

Tim replied, "Well. . .you know. . .she said you misbehaved, and she had to punish you this way. 'Pinafore Punishment', she called it. She told us it was quite common in England. Boy, am I ever glad I don't live in this crazy country!"

"What else did she say?" Jack inquired, drying his face.

"Well. . .she said that from the time she dressed you as a girl you became much more polite, helpful, and submissive. Everybody liked you better this way, and she sort of let it get out of hand. She told Mom that you made a sweet, pretty girl, and you helped around the house a lot.

Jack was silent for a while, wondering what Tim thought of him now. "Do you think I'm nicer this way?"

Tim hesitated for a second, just long enough for Jack to wish he were dead. "You do look awfully nice. . .and you're much prettier than Cathy," he said, softly stuttering as if he hated to admit that awful fact to his friend. "You look so much like a girl,. . .and you cried like

one. You're my best friend, and I feel terrible for you. I just don't understand why you have changed so much. You're like a real girl. You walk like one, and even your voice seems changed. What's happened to you Jack? How could they change you so much so quickly?"

Jack blushed deeply and played with the hem of his skirt. He realized that already he felt strange to be called Jack again. Interrupted by his sobs, he told Tim the whole story. He told how he had been forced to wear kilts, then petticoats, and finally dresses and skirts. He further told how he had been forced to submit to Aunt Julia, Donna, and Terry. He tried to convey to Tim how defenseless he had been, all alone, so far away from home, with no one to turn to for help. He added how he had been blackmailed into dressing and behaving the way they wanted. "If you and the other boys at school had seen those pictures of me wearing a kilt, I never would have lived it down."

"But, why do they want you to be a girl?" Tim asked trying to comprehend the extent of his friend's dilemma.

"I don't know. . . I really don't know. Aunt Julia says I behave better and look nicer dressed this way. Mother ordered me to do precisely what Aunt Julia said. . . or I would really get it. I just had to go along with them. And then, day after day, I sort of became used to wearing skirts, and in spite of myself, I seemed to change a little more every week."

Terry entered the room, as usual without knocking, and looked at the two boys sitting on the bed. Her face barely controlled a grin as she said, "Mom wants you to come downstairs right away. The tea has been waiting for ten minutes. If you know what's good for you, you'll hurry."

Automatically, Jack stood up and straightened his skirt. He was so used to doing as he was told, he did not think to disobey or rebel, not even in the presence of his best friend.

Tim watched in awe as Jack powdered his face, replaced his ruined mascara and eyeshadow, touched up his lipstick, and added a hint of a pleasant perfume. Picking up a hairbrush, he quickly and skillfully restored his recently acquired blonde tresses neatly into place. He then straightened the skirt of his black and white checked dress, smoothed out the wrinkles, and pressed the cute white collar with his hands until it encircled his neck neatly again. His every move spelled G-I-R-L!

Tim was confused beyond belief, seeing his friend doing all these feminine things for himself and doing them so automatically and skillfully. Did Jack, in some way, enjoy being a girl? What had they done to his friend?

As he followed Jack and Terry downstairs, he thought, "What a strange situation this is! My best friend is wearing a pretty dress,

nylons, high heels, makeup, and recently styled long blonde hair. England sure is a crazy country!"

When they joined the others for tea, Jack shamefully lowered his eyes to avoid looking at Cathy and her mother.

Donna; however, was determined to humiliate him farther. Dangling his lacy white pinafore before his eyes, she said, "They're your guests dear. . . you pour the tea."

Jack was so browbeaten by now, that he obediently put his arms into the ruffled pure white garment and let Donna tie a fussy bow in the back.

Mrs. Daynor and Cathy watched his every movement with great interest. When Jack handed Cathy her cup, he thought he felt a note of compassion. . . or maybe it was sympathy. At any rate, there was no scorn, which he had feared. This made him feel a little better. Being busy also diverted his mind from his problem somewhat. He realized that the worst had now happened. Tim and Cathy would tell everyone at school about his being a girl for the summer, and his life would be over. However, as the conversation flowed, he managed to calm down a bit.

Tim sat beside Jack and told him about their vacation plans and the airplane trip. They exchanged experiences and became so involved that Jack began to act naturally and sometimes even forgot about his dress. The others accepted him as well, and soon the conversation was general, almost as if the incident had been forgotten or did not exist.

There were bad moments, of course, like when Aunt Julia ordered him to show his embroidered tablecloth. His looks could have killed her, but he obediently showed it to Mrs. Daynor and Cathy, while Tim looked on in surprise. He had not yet realized the extent of feminine activities forced upon his friend. Mrs. Daynor and Cathy praised his work highly, making him feel even worse. Now, Tim might think he enjoyed embroidery, and that was why he was so good at this silly girlish work. Why did Aunt Julia and Donna constantly humiliate him so?

Paul and Tim got along fabulously, while Jack, sitting quietly in his dress and pinafore with his knees together, envied them. He watched them sitting slumped over and sprawled out in their chairs talking about sports and school. He felt so left out. They were treating him differently, as though he were no longer interested in boyish hobbies and games. Finally, the two boys left the room without inviting Jack to come along. Paul wanted to show Tim the grounds, and once again, Jack was left with the women, discussing their things.

Everyone liked each other, and as a result, the Daynors were invited for dinner. By the time the evening was over and the guests had to leave, Jack had been completely accepted as a girl. This was

small wonder, as Aunt Julia and Donna let no opportunity pass to show him off as a girl. They even made him help the maid in the kitchen, which no self respecting boy would consent to do.

The older women made plans to get together again soon, perhaps a concert, a movie, or a sight seeing trip in London.

When Cathy kissed Jack goodbye, she really put her heart in it! This gesture made Jack feel terribly uncomfortable and very pleased all at once. Was she trying to tell him something? Maybe even that she still thought of him as a boy? He had always had something of a secret crush on his best friend's sister. The pleasantness of the moment was erased as Tim casually shook hands saying, "Good night Jacqueline," as if he now thought of him as a girl. Why was Tim using his girlish name? Was even he accepting him as a girl now, as one of the opposite sex?? After only one evening????

Later that night, Aunt Julia came into Jack's room and found him, in his slip, busily removing his makeup. "You behaved very poorly this afternoon when you greeted your guests." Her face was hard. No doubt she realized that at a major part of her blackmail threat had been removed now that Tim had seen him as a girl. He now needed other reminders to keep him in line. "We won't have such behavior! You and I had an agreement. You're a girl now, and there is no reason why you should be ashamed of it. . .no matter whom you meet. You know we want you to be a sweet, obedient, passive girl, without any tantrums, and without a will of her own. Your disobedience tonight has broken our agreement and leaves me no choice but to mail those photographs, along with some others of you wearing dresses, to your mother and sister. I may give you a lesson with the cane as well."

"Please, Aunt Julia, don't sent those awful pictures to mother and Jo. Haven't I been humiliated enough already? I would be embarrassed to death if they knew how I spent my summer. I promise to behave correctly as your niece from now on. . .really I will," Jack said in an urgent tone of voice.

She knew her upper hand with her hapless nephew had been restored, and she pressed her advantage. "Your silly demeanor deserves to be punished! Sending those photographs to your mother and sister would be just what you deserve for being so rude to your guests!" she repeated harshly. "Nonetheless, I am not a heartless tyrant. I will give you one more chance to comply with my wishes, but if you disobey me again, I promise you the photographs will be posted in the next mail!"

With that, she abruptly left the room. Jack was a howling bundle of misery. On top of the humiliations of the day, the threat of her sending those pictures to his mother and sister was more than he could take. If he had known where his clothes were, he would have run away, regardless of the possible repercussions. He again started to

cry hysterically. . .even harder than during the afternoon. He felt deserted, mistreated, confused, and uncared for. They just did whatever they wanted with him. He cried and cried until he had no tears left. Dressed as he was, he finally fell asleep in total exhaustion.

The next morning, he felt only a little better. His body was stiff from the unusual sleeping position. But worse,. . .his spirit was dampened by the ruthless realization that he was a mere puppet. . .a plaything. . .of the ruthless women in this house.

He cringed when he wondered what Tim was thinking of him now. Why had he so quickly become used to seeing him dressed as a girl, and why had he treated him like a girl most of the evening? Would he tell their friends at school? How would he ever be able to face the school crowd again? In the past, the thought that he would get away from all this nonsense come September, was comforting. Now, that hope had vanished. Everything was changed, and the idea of going back to school with Tim and Cathy in the know, was far from attractive. He hated the idea of having to meet Tim again, but, he had to talk with him to be sure certain that he would not tell anybody back home. He just had to, but could he trust his best friend to keep his mouth shut about this crazy thing? And what about Cathy? He was not so sure about her.

He dressed in his light blue playsuit and a nice crisp fresh white blouse. After finishing his makeup, he brushed his newly styled long blonde hair in front of his mirror. Heavens. . .if Tim saw him now in these girlish bib shorts showing off so much of his trim smooth legs, what would he say? What would he think of him? He decided that there was nothing he could do. Anyway, Tim might not come to this house again. So, secretly pleased that he looked good in his cute outfit, he went down to breakfast.

Aunt Julia smiled at him and said, "Good morning dear. . .you look very nice this morning."

After last night's conversation with his aunt, Jack could only say, "Thank you, Aunt Julia."

Paul spoke up. "I have asked Tim to play tennis today Mom. Do you suppose we could use the Armstrong's court?"

"If you call beforehand, I'm sure it will be alright. But then, it would be polite to ask Hennie, and maybe the boys also. Poor Hennie could use some diversion."

Clearly intrigued with the idea, Donna said, "Yes. . .Paul, Tim, Hennie, and Jackie would make a wonderful foursome, don't you think?"

. While Paul had intended to play singles with Tim, he knew enough not to argue with the dominant women of this strange household. He readily agreed, knowing that both Jack and Hank played an acceptable boys game. "It's alright with me."

Jack quickly interrupted. "I won't play. . .I can't! Not with Tim. . .in my short tennis dress!" He sounded much firmer than he really felt inside.

Aunt Julia looked at him for a few moments with her hard eyes penetrating his very soul. Finally, she said, "You will do as you're told Jackie, and nicely! Don't you remember our conversation of last night?"

"Yes Aunt Julia, but I can't. . .I really can't play tennis with Tim. . .not in that short dress." He sounded much less sure of himself now.

"You'll play if we tell you to, Jackie," Donna said emphatically. "You know you have no choice."

Jack looked hopefully at his aunt. "No, I couldn't. . .I really couldn't. . .please Aunt Julia. Don't make me play tennis with Tim in that short dress. Let me stay home. . .please? I would die of shame if Tim saw me like that."

"Now Jackie. . .don't be obstinate. I won't have it! Your friend saw you yesterday in that pretty new dress as the girl you are. You would look awfully silly if you suddenly turned up in boy's clothes. . .especially with that hair and your nice figure. We explained the situation to them, and they accepted it without question. . .and they liked you. You know they did.

Jack turned red with fear and apprehension. Tears of shame welled up in his eyes, although he desperately tried to control them. He didn't want to cry like a girl in front of Paul. "Please. . .oh please Aunt Julia. . .please say I don't have to go. I would be so ashamed. . .that skirt is so terribly short."

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