



Reluctant Press presents:

A Boyfriend Named Judy

Dulcinea Daily



ILLUSTRATIONS BY COLLETTE ZASTROW

A 'YOUNG ADULT TV' NOVEL

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A Boyfriend Named Judy

by Dulcinea Daily

Chapter 1

The summer of 1999, I expected, would be at least as boring as any before it. I would be friendless and alone at the age of 12, as I had been at 11, 10, and every age before that, so far as I could recall. My childhood was almost gone, and I had never known the joy of living—or so it seemed to me then.

The first faint hint that my boredom might not be eternal came, one rare cloudless day, from Christie Geistman, a neighbor girl my age and a fellow unpopular “brain.” I had seen Christie sometimes at school, and also at the Sunday school my parents made me attend (although I didn’t believe in God) but usually I ignored her. Last year, when she came over to play in our backyard wading pool, her swimsuit was all-concealing and her breasts almost negligible. This summer she came over again, and she was much harder to ignore.

She had a new swimsuit, which showed off her figure to good advantage. Her hips and legs, though too stout to be stylish, were already well-formed and womanly. Her breasts, though still small by grown-up women’s standards, were much bigger than they had been last year. Her well-sculpted cleavage was noticeable above her too-low neckline, even when she wasn’t bending over. I wondered why her strict parents had permitted such a thing—if they had—but I wasn’t about to ask them to withdraw their permission!

“Hi, Jim!” she said with a big, friendly smile. “Nice to see you again!”

“Hi, Christie,” I said. “Uh, nice to see you too.” I would have been lying, if I’d been talking about her face instead of her figure. She had been one of the ugliest girls in my sixth-grade class at Oceanview Park Middle School—or so all the kids

had thought, including me. She had bushy black eyebrows, thick eyelids, a too-big mouth, a boyish jutting chin, and a big nose that looked too much like a hog's snout. Her long hair was a disgustingly grayish shade of mediocre brown; fortunately, a big white bathing cap now covered it up. Only Christie's big, moist, long-lashed brown eyes were pretty—very pretty indeed, I now saw.

"Are you going to VBS this summer?" she asked.

"VBS" meant Vacation Bible School. I was *not* going, if my parents didn't make me go. "Uh, I don't know," I answered.

"I think it'll be a lot of fun," she said. I could not agree, but at least I didn't tell the truth: "I think it will be sickening, idiotic, and a total waste of time."

"I hope I'll see you there," Christie told me. She was delightfully friendly, I had to admit, and she seemed to like me a lot. She didn't know I wasn't really a Christian. Maybe, I thought, her new swimsuit was supposed to show me how much she was "worth waiting for." What an exciting Christian wife she would make.

"Well, let's dive in," Christie said. We did. I got big eyefuls of her beautiful figure, and I felt the excitement that predictably followed the eyefuls. She made no effort to conceal her wet, glistening, astoundingly lovely breasts. A few times, I fancied, she even shot a quick grin at me, as if she knew what I could see and she wished I might see more.

I might even ask Christie for a date, I began to think—despite her ugliness, her Christianity, and all—if I thought she would let me take her bra off and feel her bare breasts. I didn't ask her, though. Even if she accepted and if her parents miraculously let her go, it would never work. She wouldn't let me feel her breasts, and sooner or later she would find out I wasn't really a Christian. That would be the end.

At last Christie got out of the pool and dried off. My mom had come out of the house and was sitting in a lawn chair.

"Hi, Mrs. MacGregor!" Christie said, sounding just a bit nervous.

"Oh, *hello*, Christie!" said my mom, raising her eyebrows high. "My goodness, you're really *growing up*, aren't you?"

I tried hard to hope this was merely the sort of meaningless thing that grown-ups said to boys and girls who weren't really grown up yet. Surely, I tried to hope, my mom would not betray Christie to *her* mom: "Doris, I think you should take a look at Christie's bathing suit and see if it needs some alteration! I really think it's cut a bit lower than it should be, and you know Christie is a growing girl...." Christie's strict mom would need no bigger hint than that—and then I would never see even a glimpse of Christie's breasts again.

"Well, I don't know about *that!*" Christie giggled, now sounding very nervous indeed. She grabbed her blouse and put it on fast, even before she put on her slacks. "See you at VBS, I hope, Jim!" she said. Then she was gone.

At once I turned away from my mom, went into the house, and entered the bathroom, unbearably excited from my time in the pool with Christie. I needed to give myself some relief, *right now*—or so I thought.

I stripped. I decided to take a shower. I always got the finest relief in the shower. Now all I needed was a fantasy to warm my heart. A few times I had beaten off cold, with no fantasy, but I hated it.

My gaze fell upon my bare breasts. I already knew they were plumper and more girlish-looking than other boys' plain, flat chests. The teasing I got from other boys, in the locker room at school, had left no doubt of that; the boys called me "girlie" and "cutie," and even told me I needed a bra. I hated the teasing, and I had also hated the breasts—until today. Now the sight of my own smooth, hairless little breasts was pumping up my excitement even beyond the level it reached when I saw Christie's bigger ones.

I stood and gazed upon my newly-discovered young-womanly loveliness, with eyes wide open to new and deep delight. My breasts were girlish not only in size but in shape, I fancied. Much more than my breasts, as well, looked feminine to me now. My big brown eyes were soft and tender-looking; my lips, though small, were full and deep pink, like the lips of a pretty girl who needed no lipstick; my dark brown hair, though not nearly long enough for a ponytail, was bushy and quite long enough for a girl's cute short hairdo. My hips were broad like a girl's, though my stout waist was not very girlish. Something else, ahead of my hips, was even less girlish—but I could take care of that right now.

I reached down and pressed the hard evidence of my boyhood into hiding between my short thick thighs. Now, so far as anyone could tell from the front, I was a girl—and it felt very good indeed, I found, to be a girl. Might I myself be the girl of my dreams? I wondered—a girl as good and sweet and friendly as Christie, but beautiful too, and *not* a Christian?

I gulped. I was afraid. I knew this was not normal. My dad had warned me about "homosexuals"—who, he said, were boys who liked to wear girls' clothes and kiss boys. I felt shame and fear at the thought that I might become a "homosexual"—and yet I could not ignore or abandon my new, already beloved girlish self.

I would do the deed, I decided; I *must* do the deed. In deepest, darkest secrecy, I would let myself be the girl of my blissful dreams—no longer a bored and boring boy named Jim, but a sweet, warmhearted, exciting and excitable girl named *Judy*. I would be a good girl, a "brain" and a virgin, yet secretly eager to please some special boy who needed me—even to let him feel my bare breasts.

I looked at myself again in the mirror. I looked like a girl now, but not *enough* like a girl. I must have girls' clothes, too, I decided; yes, I must have a girl's bathing suit and cap, just like Christie's.

The urge to beat off and gain relief, at the cost of losing my bliss, was gripping me. I fought it off hard, I resisted the temptation—almost as if I were a good, pure Christian boy, I thought with a little laugh. If I obtained relief, I knew, my precious new feelings of girlishness would go away—and they must *not* go away.

I had more urgently important things to do than to spring a gusher in the shower. I must get a bathing suit and cap for myself as soon as possible. I must become the girl of my dreams—this very day.

I grabbed a tape measure and the catalog from Farman's, a big local clothing store. I read the pages about how to measure your hips, waist, and bust; I found my magic numbers and carefully wrote them down. Then I looked at the bathing suits in the catalog, and decided which one I wanted—a pretty flowered one-piecer with a daringly low-cut top, a very loose waist, and a cute little skirt to hide my boyhood completely.

I put on some mediocre boys' clothes and strode out to get my bike. I rode fast to the shopping center where Farman's nearest clothing store was located, on the edge of Pacific Heights, the proudly progressive city to which I already longed to escape from our staid, conservative suburb of Seaview Grove. Farman's was more than three miles away, but it was worth every stroke of the pedals. I locked my bike, entered the store, and zeroed in on the girls' bathing suits.

It was for my girlfriend, of course. This was the only reason why I would ever look for a girl's swimsuit. This was the bogus story that, I hoped, would carry me through a brief encounter with even a glaringly disapproving clerk.

After searching through many suits that weren't the one, I found it—my style, my size, and all. I gazed upon it with loving satisfaction. "PACIFIC COVE Girls' and Ladies' Swimwear," the label proclaimed. The package showed a picture of a pretty girl no more than 11 or 12 years old, with short, almost boyish blond hair and very small but finely formed breasts, wearing the swimsuit and proudly showing off her new cleavage for all to see. Soon the swimsuit would be mine; soon, in strictest secrecy, I too would be a young lady, as pretty as she, with breasts almost as big and a cleavage almost as cute as hers. I was so excited that I almost forgot to pick up a bathing cap too.

I approached the counters, my heart pounding hard with every step. The store was not busy just now; only one clerk was on duty here. She was plump and middle-aged, with modest-sized breasts beneath an opaque white blouse; she wore plain undistinguished glasses and had medium-length, curly gray hair. Absurdly I felt afraid of what she might think of me—but, when she turned toward me, she gave me a friendly-looking smile. Relieved, I walked up and showed her my packages. My relief grew greater when her smile grew bigger, and more knowing too.

"Ooh, something pretty for your girlfriend, I see!" she said. Her soft high voice sounded sweet and almost young. Her kind-looking hazel eyes sparkled as she spoke again: "We've got a special on panties and bras; do you think she might like some of those too?"

I gulped and stared at her; then I quickly looked away. She knew. She *must* know. Surely boys my age didn't really buy *panties and bras* for their girlfriends. If they bought them at all, they bought them for *themselves*.

This, then—I thought—was my big chance! I could stock up on girls' clothes, so far as my limited savings allowed—that is, I could buy a pair of panties and a

bra. This lady would fully understand, she would be kind to me—and I would not be embarrassed, though I would be *frightfully* excited.

“Uh—yes, I guess she might, now that you mention it,” I said. I could feel myself sweating and blushing. “Where are they?”

“Right down that aisle.” She pointed out the location. “Would you like me to keep those here for you while you go and look?”

“Uh, yes, thank you.” I handed her the packages and walked down the aisle.

I must calm down, I told myself; I must make sure I wouldn’t spring a gusher in my pants, right here in the store. I must pretend I was really a girl on an ordinary shopping trip, performing the routine, unexciting action of buying a bra, slip, and panties. It was just as if I were a boy buying T-shirts and boxer shorts, I insisted to my incredulous self. Yes, that must be the ticket—but the ticket was ripped to shreds, I feared, as soon as I saw my bra.

“SUSIE’S JUNIOR INTIMATES” was the name; low-cut, thin-strapped, cream-colored, and deliciously lacy was the game. A shyly smiling girl as young as the one on the swimsuit package, with long curly black hair and breasts barely bigger than mine, was letting me see her wearing it on the package, and I looked on beauty bare—or almost bare. It was the right size around, and I knew that even the cups were almost small enough to fit me perfectly. It was a front-hook model too, so I could have some hope of success in fastening it. I grabbed it and held it tight.

Next must come the panties. I looked up and down the shelves for some that might fit me well and allow enough room for hard evidence, either exhibited or concealed. At last, almost at the end, I found them. “PATTI’S PUFFIES” was the brand; the package showed a buxom-looking woman with bright red hair in an old-fashioned British police helmet, wearing nothing else but some puffy hot pink panties on her great broad bottom. She was covering her breasts with her arms, looking over her shoulder, and laughing out loud. “Tired of squeezing a big-girl bottom into little-girl undies?” the label said. “PATTI’S PUFFIES are the ones for you!”

I laughed too, and picked out a pair of pink ones in my size. Now I would pay, and go, and become a lovely young lady. “Very nice!” the saleslady said when I returned to the counter. “Would your girlfriend like a dress too, or a skirt and blouse?”

“Uh, not right now,” I said. “I can’t afford them.” Surely, I thought, this good woman knew exactly why I would want a complete outfit for my nonexistent “girlfriend”—and yet, unbelievably, she *approved*, she was fully on my side!

“Well, you’re welcome to come back when you can,” she said.

“Uh—thank you!” I said. Out of my wallet came almost all my life’s savings—mere money, of little value compared with the priceless goods I soon held in two Farman’s shopping bags. I paid a few cents extra for the second bag, hoping it might be useful for concealment.

“Thank you,” she said, “and please come again any time.”

“I will,” I said. I started to leave, but then I stopped. I had to know if this good woman fully, truly understood. I glanced around to see if anyone might be listening; I didn’t think anyone was.

“Have you—have you met my girlfriend?” I asked her, groping for words.

She stared at me; then a light seemed to dawn in her eyes. “Well,” she said slowly, “I’m not sure. What’s your girlfriend’s name?”

“Judy, Judy MacGregor.”

“I see. That’s a pretty name.” She seemed to be watching me closely. “Well, do you *think* I’ve met her?”

I watched her almost as closely. Silently I nodded “yes.” Slowly I brought my thumb up and touched it to my chest.

She nodded too. “Oh, yes, I *have* met her,” she said. “She has short brown hair, and big brown eyes; she’s shy, and pleasingly plump like me”—she smiled—“and very pretty. I, I’d like to get to know her better.” Surely, I fancied, the woman could hear my heart shouting across the gap between us: “*Yes! You understand!*”

She gave me a card with the name, address, and phone number of Farman’s, together with her own name, “Susanna Brinkman.” On the back of it she wrote her e-mail address. “Well, I hope I’ll see you again,” she said, “and I hope I’ll get



some e-mail from you too,” she told me quickly. She added, in a soft sweet whisper, “*Judy!*”

I put my bike away, reentered my house, went to my room, and closed the door. My treasures were safely concealed—for now—in my trusty backpack. I scrutinized the entire room, trying to find the most secure hiding places. At last I decided on a couple of spots in back of some big books on my shelves. I ripped the packaging off my precious goods and put it in my pack for later disposal; then I put the swimsuit and cap in one bag, the panties, bra, and slip in the other, and hid them behind the books.

I sat down at my computer and composed an e-mail message to Susanna. “Dear Susanna,” I wrote, “thank you so much for understanding that I’m my own girlfriend—I mean, that I bought girls’ clothes for myself! I’ve been wondering what made you able to understand me so well, when you’d only just met me. Most people can’t or won’t understand, I think. Why are you so different—and so much better? If you can tell me, I’d really love to know. Please write soon if you can! Your new friend, Judy MacGregor.”

After that, I opened a book and tried to relax. I ached below the waist from hours of unfulfilled yearning. I must stop aching by tonight, I thought, for tonight would be the magic night when I would fully turn into a girl.

At last, after long slow hours, it was time for my shower. I no longer ached, at least not much. Wearing my ordinary boys’ clothes, I easily concealed my treasures beneath my arm in my wadded-up bathrobe.

I entered the bathroom and stripped for action; I hid my boyhood and put on the bathing cap. My hammering heart was crying out, warning me of what might happen if I went ahead and put on the bathing suit, but I paid no heed. I *must* put it on, without a moment’s delay. I stepped into the deep abyss between the shoulder-straps, first with my left foot and then with my right; I pulled up the straps to cover my nudity, at least in part.

The straps touched my shoulders; I now looked just like a girl. Surprisingly, even the little bra-cups of my bathing suit fit me almost perfectly. Much of my cleavage was shown, and even discreetly emphasized, above the low flowery neckline. My legs, too, were obviously the legs of a buxom girl, and the growing warmth between them was more girlish still. The vividly colored, flowery pattern of my bathing suit made my whole body look like a garden of girlish delights. I gazed upon my lovely girl-self in the joy of dawning womanhood.

My excitement, almost unbearable now, caressed me all over, as if with gentle fingers. Hidden between my thick thighs, the lone remnant of my boyhood was quite invisible—but still it was making its fervent presence felt. I couldn’t keep from squeezing my legs together, again and again, as the fuel between them kindled and burst into flame.

A sudden shock and a quaking sensation struck me. My loss of bliss, which I had been fearing, was coming upon me right now. I grabbed my shoulder-straps and thrust them downward, baring my little breasts, racing to strip off my bathing suit, to keep it clean and dry.

I lost the race. Softly, in hope that my parents wouldn't hear me, I groaned in dismay. Thoughts of concealing the swimsuit in a bag, in my backpack, and taking it to the Laundromat for cleaning, rushed through my failing mind and soon departed.

Sadly I gazed upon my bare breasts, exposed as tiny by girlish standards. I dropped the straps and raised my hands to cover my breasts demurely with crossed arms—and to rub them in lingering memory of departing sweetness. Then I quickly stripped and entered the shower.

* * * * *

Next morning I checked my e-mail, and found with delight that Susanna had replied already. I opened her message at once. "Dear Judy," she said, "I was so glad to meet you, and I hope I'll be able to explain why I can understand. I couldn't always—no, indeed! Somehow I feel sure I can trust you to keep this a secret, so I'll tell you; please don't let me down."

"*Never!*" my heart cried out. I raced to read on.

"Several years ago," Susanna wrote, "I caught my husband wearing one of my pretty nighties—a nice, lacy, low-cut one that I knew he liked to see *me* in. (I'm blushing as I write this—but don't mind me!) I was absolutely horrified. I'd never had any idea that he would do such a thing. I was afraid he must have been *cheating on me with men*, or some such terrible thing!

"I'll spare you all the details—but, after too much pain and heartache, at last I found out the truth, with the help of a very wise old friend of ours. My husband wasn't cheating on me with men after all. The truth still hurt, but it didn't hurt as much as *that* would have done.

"The truth was that—I don't quite know how to say this in a decent way—my husband's even older than I am, if you can believe that, and he hadn't been finding it very easy to perform his *husbandly duties*, if you know what I mean. He'd started wearing my nighties because, you know, it made him get excited enough to do what he knew I still wanted him to do! (Oh, dear, I must be blushing red hot now—I'm glad you can't see me, and he can't either, since he's already gone to work!)

"I felt really insulted by that at first; I felt that my husband should find *me* quite exciting enough by myself, and not need to wear my clothes too! At last, though, I could see that it was pretty silly for me to be insulted. It wasn't as if I were still young and shapely and charming, after all! It hurt for me to face reality, but I decided I had to face it: I was a fat old woman, I wasn't very attractive any more, and there really wasn't any reason why my husband *should* find me exciting enough on my own! I still loved my husband terribly much, though, and I did still want him to do those good old husbandly duties (blush)—so I decided there was only one thing I could do. One night, at bedtime, I told him I was sorry for getting so upset, and I didn't mind him wearing my nighties after all; and then I swal-

lowed hard, and told him I'd even like to see him in them, if he wouldn't mind letting me see him.

"Oh, dear! Was he ever relieved to hear me say that—and did he ever sweep me off my feet! Before long I even started to *like* seeing him in my pretty things—because then I knew what was going to happen soon! (Blush, blush, *blush!*) Our married life has been so *wonderful* since then—all because I decided, at last, to accept my husband as he was!

"And so, you see, I've got a terribly soft spot in my heart for boys and men like my husband, who love to wear feminine things. I'm afraid so many of them may have given up hope of ever finding a woman to love them and understand them. If I can ever help even one of them keep from giving up hope, I'm going to help!

"Judy—sweetheart—please don't *you* ever give up hope. Somewhere, sometime, I'm sure you'll find the right girl, or the right woman for you, someone who can really understand you. Please hope for her, and wait for her, and marry her. Will you do that for me? I hope so! Please write again! Blessings, Susanna."

I had to think of Christie. It was foolish, I knew. Christie was a Christian, a *fundamentalist*. No doubt she would think it was an abomination for a boy to wear girls' clothes. Still, she was the only girl I knew who liked me—and at least I could *fantasize* about her liking my secret girl-self too.

Before fantasizing at full blast, I quickly replied to Susanna: "Dear Susanna, You're so wonderful! Your husband is one of the luckiest men in the universe, and you are *not* old and unattractive! I'm going to keep up hope, all right—no matter how hard it is!"

Almost as soon as I had written the last words, I feared they were not true. I sent the message before I could delete them. Then I turned to my fantasies.

In my glorious vision, Christie appeared before me again, wearing a lacy low-cut nightie with thin shoulder straps. I was wearing one just like hers, and she was grinning to see me. Our parents were nowhere around. Soon we were pulling each other's nighties off. When our bare breasts touched, I was far more excited than I'd ever been before.

* * * * *

That night I returned to the bathroom, now clutching my panties and bra within my bathrobe. This time, I firmly demanded of myself, I must *not* get all gushy; I must not lose my bliss before the right time for relief. I had gone to the Laundromat and returned with my bathing suit clean and dry, but I had felt far too much embarrassment while doing so. Such a thing must never happen again.

I turned away from the mirror while stripping, so as not to see myself at all until I saw myself in girls' clothes. First my boyhood vanished again between my

legs; then, pressing my thighs together, I bent down and pulled up my puffy pink panties—fully clean, fully dry.

My fingers trembled as I moved to put on my bra. I was glad I had chosen a front-hook one, for I could never have fastened the hooks behind my back. Even with no padding at all, the pretty little thing was very flattering to my figure; the lacy cups were so small that even my plump, petite breasts could fill them.

Now I turned to see myself as a girl. I combed my hair in as girlish a style as I could, though I wished very much it was longer. In the mirror I gazed into my own eyes and glanced at my quivering lips; then I surveyed my body with full satisfaction.

No one, surely, seeing me now, would think I wasn't a girl—a *beautiful* girl. My bare budding breast-tops and cleavage, above the sweet lace of my young girl's bra, would surely excite any girl-crazed boy who viewed them. My panties were equally girlish, and devoid of any offensive boyish bulge. My hips and legs were obviously a *girl's* hips and legs, as curvy and shapely as any connoisseur of buxom girls could wish.

Everything was perfect now, and my panties were still clean and dry. A flush of gladness filled me at my success: I had done the deed, I had put on girls' clothes without losing my bliss! Quickly I stripped and entered the shower—as a nude girl, of course—to celebrate my success.

Chapter 2

I succeeded in not attending Vacation Bible School; I did not see Christie again for weeks, except in my fantasies. When I saw her again, I was shocked. Her swimsuit had been horribly mutilated—if adding material can be called mutilation. Nothing remained of her formerly fascinating neckline but a seam. A crudely added patch, stretching from strap to strap, now reached up to her neck as if to strangle her.

“Hi, Christie!” I greeted her. “Long time no see. It's, uh, good to see you again.”

She gave me a smile so big and bright that, for a fleeting moment, I thought she looked almost pretty. “It's good to see *you* again, too, Jim!” she said. “I'm sorry you couldn't make it to VBS!” She was not only almost pretty but quite kind, giving me the benefit of the doubt—not even suggesting that I might have eschewed VBS in disgust and loathing, as in fact I had.

“Uh—your swimsuit looks different,” I said, getting right to the point.

“Um, yes, I'm afraid it does.” She gave an embarrassed little laugh. “Your mom thought the neckline was too low, and she told *my* mom. Then my mom took a look at it, and she knew I'd sneaked out and bought it without her permission,

and she was—well, she was really unhappy about that, and she put me on restrictions until now.”

I laughed. I was starting to like Christie more, no matter how ugly her face might be. “You sneaked out and bought it without her permission?” I adopted an obviously false, pompous, sanctimonious tone of voice. “Did you really think that was how a Christian young lady should act?” I laughed again.

Christie blushed. “Well—I guess maybe not,” she admitted, “but—I thought you might like to see me in it anyway.”

I stared at her. She was making it totally obvious that she liked me a *lot*. “Well—thanks!” I stammered. “I *did* like to see you in it. I thought—you looked really nice in it.” I wasn’t exactly lying, I told myself. She *did* look really nice; at least some parts of her did.

Still blushing, she looked away and down. “I guess that means you think I don’t look so nice in it now that it’s been”—she paused, took a breath, and dared to say the word—“*ruined* like this!”

What a girl! What a heart might lurk between those lovely breasts, below that ugly face! I couldn’t let her down by answering truthfully, I decided at once. If I needed to lie, I would lie—but I must help Christie and even be her friend if I could, not hurt her and shun her.

“Christie,” I said, softly and awkwardly, “sure I liked it better the other way—but you still look nice.” Her frightened, adoring eyes, hardly daring to hope, fixed upon me at once. I must *never* let her down, I decided; I must make her heart as warm as she would let me. A few kind little lies about her looks were a small price to pay, to bless and keep and cherish such a heart.

“You *always* look nice—to me,” I told her, and I tried to mean it. I would start with her bad-looking nose, I decided. No longer would I think it looked like a hog’s snout. It was a fully human nose, much less than twice as big as the average human girl’s nose—and it was *turned up*, which (in a more popular girl with a smaller nose) would be thought quite cute.

She seemed to be starting to cry. “Thanks, Jim,” she told me without looking at me, at least not for more than a glance. “I really needed that!” She was blinking fairly rapidly. I wanted to take her in my arms, to comfort her, to show her I loved her, but I didn’t dare.

“Any time,” I said, and I meant it. “Um—why don’t we get in the water?” She readily agreed.

I wished I might ask Christie for a date, and I did ask her before she left that day—but I feared I knew what would happen, and it did. “Jim, I’d love to go on a date with you,” she said, “but I just can’t. My mom’s watching me closely. I’ll get punished pretty badly if I sneak out again. My mom doesn’t even believe in dating, only in *courtship!* She thinks I’m not even supposed to *think* about—liking a boy a lot, until I’m ready to get *married!*”

“That’s horrible,” I told her most sincerely. *Why don’t you quit being a Christian, and defy your mom, and kiss me?* I thought of asking her—but I didn’t dare.

“I think so too,” Christie assured me. “Well, we can’t go on dates in the *flesh*, but—consider yourself dated in spirit, and *kissed* in spirit too!” She was blushing really red now.

“Thanks, Christie,” I said. “I will—and the same to you!” My heart was won; I was too far gone to shut up now. “I like you a lot—and we’ll go on a *real* date someday, I promise!”

“Oh, Jim!” she cried, as far gone as I was. “I can hardly wait—and I like you a *whole lot* too!”

* * * * *

I saw Christie no more until school started. Her mother, I figured, had let her come over for only one purpose: to display her in captivity, to make a false show of the supposedly total triumph of Christian modesty and purity over worldly indecency. Fortunately, though, her mother had not yet decided to send her to a Christian school. On my very first morning in 7th grade, before an assembly in the gym, I saw her; I waved at her; I walked to meet her and gladly greeted her.

“Jim! Hi!” she said, looking as if she wanted to hug and kiss me right there in front of the gathering crowd. “I’m so sorry I haven’t been able to see you again. My mom wouldn’t let me come over. I think she’s afraid we’ll go on a *date* or something!” She giggled just a bit.

A few girls, standing nearby, turned and stared at Christie from behind, and glanced at me. They might imagine Christie was quite a cute girl, I fancied—with a very good figure, and an abundance of long, wavy, fluffy hair, actually rather pretty in spite of its mediocre color. They would get no letdown from *me*, though they might be shocked if they could see her face. “Well, she can’t stop us from going on a date for *lunch* here at school, can she?” I asked with a grin. “How about a date?”

She looked as if I’d just asked her to marry me and she was going to accept. “I’d love it!” she said. “Noon in the lunchroom?”

“Fine with me. May I escort you to your seat?”

“You certainly may!”

She turned. The girls stared at her, seeming shocked indeed at the thought that an ugly girl like her could attract a boy. They grimaced with eyes wide open; one of them even shrieked a little bit. Christie paid them no heed. Her great eyes, glowing with love, were fixed on me. I offered her my elbow to escort her, but she took my hand, and I was glad she did.

* * * * *

“My mom’s pretty afraid of what might happen to me as long as I’m in public school,” Christie confided in me at lunch. We sat alone at a table, for the best false imitation of a private conversation we could get in the big crowded room. “I think she’s afraid some boy is going to *seduce* me.” She giggled. “I told her I wasn’t going to let any boys seduce me, but I’m not sure she believed me. She’d be peeved if she even found out I was sitting together with a good Christian boy and talking with him at lunch. She doesn’t think I’m ready to have anything to do with boys!”

I glanced around in embarrassment, fearing someone might have heard Christie falsely calling me a good Christian boy, but I wasn’t about to let her down. If that was what she thought I was, she could keep on thinking so, and she could keep her adoring eyes fixed firmly on me for as long as she liked. I knew the “good Christian boy” game pretty well, I thought, and I could play it all right. Hypocrisy would be a small price to pay for Christie’s devotion.

“I hope she doesn’t find out, then,” I said. “But what’s supposed to be wrong with having something to do with a—a good Christian boy?”

“Too much temptation, I guess, or something,” Christie said. “Even good Christian boys can give in to temptation, and get good Christian girls to go along with them. If they don’t have anything to do with each other, then they can’t give in to temptation with each other.” She gave an ironic little smile. “If God hadn’t made the world, then nobody could have committed any sins. I’m glad my mom wasn’t there; she probably would have told him not to do it because it was too risky!”

I laughed and stared at her in surprise. Was this any way, I wondered, for a good Christian girl to *honor* her mother? Did I dare ask her? I feared I would offend her, I feared she would shut up, and yet I must speak: “Well, uh, I’m glad he made the world, and made *you*—but is that really any way for a Christian young lady to talk about her own mother?”

I laughed again, as if to assure Christie that I didn’t think she had done anything very wrong, but she stared and put her hand over her mouth in obvious shame. “I guess it isn’t, is it?” she said. “I’m afraid I’m not always very good about honoring my father and mother. It’s just so *hard* sometimes.” She gave me an imploring look. “Do you know what I mean, Jim?”

“I sure do,” I assured her. “Um—well, nobody ever said the Christian life was easy.” I almost choked on the words, but I forced them out.

Christie’s eyes sparkled with delight. She obviously thought me a very good Christian boy indeed. “That’s for sure,” she confirmed, “but it’s not quite so hard if you’ve got a good Christian friend to help you—even if she’s a girl and you’re a boy!”

* * * * *

Days, weeks, months had slipped by. Now it was almost Christmas, and almost everyone in school (it seemed) knew that Christie and I were in love. Christie now had some friends besides me; in a way she was even a popular girl, and she bore her newfound popularity most graciously. The other girls must have wondered what could be her secret—how a supposedly ugly girl like her could have entered the small, select realm of seventh-grade girls with genuine *boyfriends*, and yet remained a good girl and a virgin, as she obviously had. They had come in wonder and stayed in admiration, I was sure, for Christie was as honest and faithful a friend as they could ever desire. She really was pretty, too, I now thought, aside from certain insignificant facial irregularities. She was always neat and clean, almost always smiling, and her clothes were far prettier and more feminine-looking than the average seventh-grade girl's clothes.

My heart belonged wholly to Christie now. I would have done anything for her; I would even have tried to become a true Christian if it had been really necessary, though I still hoped it wouldn't be. I was trying hard to resist temptation for her sake. I had not seen my panties, bra, or swimsuit for many weeks. I had been forcing myself not to gush in the shower and in bed, trying to keep myself pure for love of Christie, and at last I was receiving my just reward: *wet dreams*, the first ones I had ever had in my life. My latest one, just last night, was the greatest yet: I dreamed of being married to Christie, and of "going all the way" with her while standing up in the shower. I didn't even know if it was really possible—but, if it was, I knew I was going to do it if ever I could.

I waited for her to arrive. We couldn't walk to or from school together, because her mom or her dad always brought her and picked her up. The first moment I would see her today, like every other school day, would be when she came around the corner beyond which her parents couldn't see her. Then I would greet her, and we would hold hands, and we would begin another school day full of the warmth of our love.

Someone was coming around the corner. It was Christie. "Christie! Hi!" I greeted her. She stopped and looked at me, but quickly closed her eyes and looked away.

"Christie! What's wrong?" I asked her. She looked at me again, blinking her eyes. They were red from crying.

"I'm not going to see you at school any more after Christmas," she told me, forcing herself not to sob. "My parents are going to send me to a Christian school, Pacific Heights Christian. It's because they found out I've got a boyfriend here—they found out about *you*—and—I can't stand it!"

She could no longer keep from sobbing. I grabbed her and held her tight, as if that could keep me from losing her, or keep me from exploding in outrage at her parents. She held me just as tightly in return, oblivious to the students passing us and staring.

“They can’t stop me from loving you, Jim,” Christie whispered between her sobs. “I’ll always love you, no matter what!”

“I’ll always love you, too, Christie,” I whispered back, though I feared I didn’t know if it was true. “But—how can we keep in touch? Do you have an e-mail address?”

“No. We don’t have any Internet access. My parents—or at least, my mom thinks it’s too dangerous.”

“Uh—can you go to the library, and use a computer there for web-based e-mail?”

“No. I don’t get to go to the public library, because it’s got some evil books, plus people can get on the Internet and see bad things.”

I felt as if Christie’s parents were choking me to death. “So—this is your last day here?” I asked her. I knew the answer already, for this was the last school day before winter vacation.

“I’m afraid so,” she said. I was afraid she was going to start sobbing again.

“Well, then,” I whispered, “would you kiss me good-bye now, in case we don’t get a chance later today?”

Her eyes opened wide. “What, right here in front of everybody?” Students were still walking past us, and some were still staring.

“That’s the only place we’ve got, isn’t it?” It was indeed. I had never kissed her before, because students would have stared and we might even have gotten in trouble for public display of affection. Now I didn’t care.

“Yes.” She gazed at me; she closed her eyes; she raised her lips to mine. A couple of girls began to shriek. I paid them no heed. I had never kissed a girl and I had no good idea how to do it, except I was pretty sure Christie wouldn’t want me to stick my tongue in her mouth. I held her face in my hands and touched my lips to hers for only a brief moment; then I hugged her tight again. I was glad her parents weren’t there, so I couldn’t try to strangle them.

* * * * *

That night I was all alone. I needed to numb the cold in my heart; I needed to keep myself from thinking about killing Christie’s parents. I thought of reenacting the scene in my greatest wet dream, with the modification that I wouldn’t be married to Christie, and we would still be in seventh grade. I would somehow sneak

into her bathroom and see her in the shower. She would feign reluctance, but I would clasp her to myself, feel her heart pounding, feel her whole body signaling that she was very far from reluctant. Then I would go all the way with her, standing up right there in the shower, whether it was possible or not. Her parents would hear us; they would pound on the locked door in outrage. Then they would start to break down the door—but I would finish the job, and Christie and I would escape, fully nude, through the bathroom window and vanish into the night.

It was a ridiculous, idiotic fantasy, of course, but that wasn't the main reason why I decided not to enact it. I didn't enact it because I was sure Christie was a virgin, and I didn't want to destroy her virginity, even in fantasy. Was I turning into a Christian after all? Or was I a homosexual who would never really want to have sex with a woman? Or did I simply cherish Christie's lost love too much to do anything she wouldn't want me to do? I didn't know. I knew only that, the longer I thought of doing it with Christie that night, the limper and flimsier the evidence of my boyhood became.

I thought of becoming Judy again, for the first time in months. Absurdly I feared I would betray Christie's love if I turned into Judy—and yet I *must* turn into Judy. Only as Judy could I fill my hollow, aching heart with warmth. Only as Judy could I give even an imaginary boy, a good lonely boy *just like me*, the love he needed.

I selected my swimsuit. It would remind me of Christie and it might make me cry, but it would turn me into a girl as kind and loving as Christie—the *only* girl so kind and loving I might ever see again!

I concealed the swimsuit and cap, entered the bathroom, and stripped. I was crying indeed, just as Christie had cried to lose me. Now I made myself look as much like Christie as I could, as if I could keep her always with me by becoming her myself.

* * * * *

Christmas came and went in the same old way. I didn't believe in Jesus, but I didn't make a fuss about not believing in him, even though my heart was screaming the "F word" at him for stealing Christie from me. I accepted some presents with little or no gratitude, and pretty soon I forgot about most of them. As soon as I could, I returned to ignoring my parents and my younger brother as much as possible. Next day I went to Sunday school and saw Christie, but we had no chance to talk; her parents hauled her out of there at once. She seemed almost afraid even to look at me.

That was the last week of 1999, the year of the great Y2K scare. On New Year's morning I woke up early; I flipped a light switch; I was glad to see that the lights still worked. I turned on my computer and held my breath; it worked too. Almost

everything worked in the great new year 2000, at least as well as it had before—except my lifeline to Christie. Only a few houses down the street, she might as well have been on another planet, one that had no communication with the earth.

I didn't forget about Christie—at least, not at once. I saw her at Sunday school for a while, but we hardly ever got a chance to say a word to each other, much less to proclaim our undying love. Then Christie stopped coming to Sunday school; I figured her parents must have switched to some even stricter, crappier church than ours. Now I was sure I would never see her again.

Chapter 3

I tried to forget about girls and sex as much as possible. It didn't work very well, but at least it gave me a challenge. By the end of seventh grade I was pretty good friends with a boy in my class at school named Steve Monohan, who went to the same Sunday school as I did too. He was a brainy little red-haired guy, a computer whiz, who wasn't quite at the “girls-and-sex” stage of life yet; I was glad he wasn't.

I liked to hang out at Steve's house, eating cookies and milk, listening to him talk geek-speak in his little high voice, and having nothing whatever to do with girls or sex. Unlike me, Steve had a pretty good computer; he liked to have me come over and see what it could do. With Steve as my friend, with Susanna still as my grandmotherly e-pal, and with an occasional visit to Farman's to see Susanna and to buy more girls' clothes, I endured the barren desert of eighth grade without Christie and without hope.

By the end of eighth grade, Steve had changed a lot. He was getting almost as tall as I was—not that this was very impressive, for even now, at 14, I was less than five and a half feet tall. Steve's voice was getting deeper, too, and he was getting interested in girls. He had made it clear that he didn't really believe “all that crap” that was fed to us at Sunday school, any more than I did. Our secret, our shared unbelief, drew us even closer together.

When school was out, I spent hours at Steve's house almost every day. By now I was fairly good at painting pictures with the computer—mostly pictures of pretty girls, some of them with little or nothing on. Steve was now viewing them avidly, and begging for more. Many of my pictures of girls—bathing beauties, sexy cheerleaders, daring dancers, lingerie-clad models, blushing bespectacled “brains” in sheer blouses and flimsy bras, and even bare-breasted “bunnies”—were getting to look more and more like *me*, though I was still too shy to point this out to Steve. Steve's mom, though he said she was pretty strict, was friendly to me and seemed to think me quite a normal boy.

Everything changed, abruptly and shockingly, near the end of summer vacation. In that carefree August of 2001, some of my pictures of girls were looking al-

most *exactly* like me: plump, brown-eyed, short-haired, small-breasted beauties that Steve couldn't get enough of. I started to bring my girls' clothes to Steve's house in my backpack, hoping he might want to see me wearing them. By now, from my periodic visits to Farman's and Susanna, I had accumulated some blouses and skirts, and they had joined the undies in my backpack. One fateful morning I even wore my bra and panties under my plain boys' clothes, and I dared to reveal myself fully.

Steve was watching over my shoulder as I sat at his computer and opened a picture of a girl with a face as much like mine as I could make it, opening her blouse to reveal a skimpy bra that was just like mine too. She wore a white headband, and her hair was parted in the middle; I removed the headband and changed the part to be on the right like mine. My shirt was sky-blue; I changed her blouse to a sky-blue shirt like mine. She wore a short white skirt; I changed it to baggy dark-blue trousers like mine. Now I was unmistakable—standing there right in front of Steve, stripping off my dull boys' clothes, revealing the pretty girl-ish *me* beneath in a low-cut bra.

"Wow!" Steve said in astonishment. "Hey, that looks just like *you!*"

I gave a little laugh. "Do you really think so?" I asked him, glancing quickly at his wide-open eyes and shyly looking away.

"Yeah!" he said. "Hey, that *is* you, isn't it?"

I laughed again, still afraid to say yes, but knowing now that he really wanted me to. "Well," I said, "now that you mention it—yes, it's me."

"Are you kidding?" he begged to know. "You mean—you really wear *girls' clothes?*"

The urge to reveal myself fully overwhelmed me. "Yes, I really wear girls' clothes!" I told him, almost breathless. My fingers were trembling so frightfully I could hardly unbutton my shirt, but I forced myself to do it anyway, popping one of the buttons in my haste to do the deed. I opened my shirt just as I had portrayed myself doing, giving Steve a full view of my bra and my breasts. I could feel the blood surging forth from my heart to engorge my hidden nipples. Steve's eyes were bulging more than I had ever seen a boy's eyes bulge before.

"Would you like," I managed to ask before I had to gasp for breath, "to see me wearing *all* girls' clothes?"

"Wow!" Steve was gasping too. "Wow! Uh—yeah! Would I ever!"

"Your mom won't come home and see us, will she?"

"No! She just left to go shopping a little while ago, and she's going to several stores. She won't be home for hours!"

That was enough assurance for me. I grabbed my backpack and strode to the little half-bathroom next to Steve's big basement bedroom, near the open stairway to the main floor of the house. My heart was pounding, my hard evidence throbbing. I tried to force myself to calm down, though I felt sure I wouldn't succeed. In

front of the little half-length mirror, I breathed deeply and began my transformation.

My shirt slipped off my shoulders. I raced to put on my pink girl's top, with little puffy short sleeves and a low-cut neckline to show off my cute little cleavage. Swiftly I dropped my trousers—only to reveal a most un-girlish bulge in my puffy pink panties.

That would never do—but did I dare hide my bulge between my legs and walk awkwardly out, with it hidden, to meet Steve? I feared I would lose my bliss if I got even a tiny bit more excited than I was now, and yet the girlish impression would be almost wholly spoiled if an impossible five-inch “clitoris” distended my skirt!

I had to do it, I decided. Breathing deeply to try to control my excitement, I pulled my panties part way down to make room. Slowly, with utmost care, I pressed my boyhood's hard evidence down and back.

I was almost gasping for breath as I pulled my short, plain white miniskirt out of my pack. I raised my arms, let it fall to my hips, and zipped it. Though I feared that even a single step might set me off, I started to emerge from the bathroom with short mincing steps, to walk in beauty for Steve. My feet were bare; I didn't care. The girlish impression would still be most delightful, I felt sure.

“Hi, Steve!” I said. “I'm Judy!”

“*Wow!*” Steve cried out, more emphatically than before. “Hi, Judy! Hey, you look *terrific!* I really can't tell the difference!” He gazed upon me from head to toe, as if to verify doubly that I looked quite like a girl. I did.

“Hey, Judy,” Steve soon said, “can I—well—you're so cute and sexy-looking, and all that—would you mind if I felt you up?”

I laughed, sounding nervous and feeling more so. “Well,” I said, “I'm sure I'd like it a lot; I'm sure it would be really exciting!”

That was all the invitation Steve needed. He didn't kiss me; he stood behind me and reached around to squeeze my breasts through my clothes. Soon he was asking me urgently, “Judy, please, can I pull your panties down?”

“Oh, Steve!” I moaned, too loudly. “*Yes! Pull my panties down!*” As soon as he started to strip off my panties, I could restrain myself no longer; I lost my bliss and got my panties all sticky and wet. Before he could fully pull them down, a far worse disaster struck.

Steve had been wrong about his mom. She had not gone shopping, or she had come back early. She was in the house right now; she must have been fairly near the basement stairs. When she heard me begging Steve to pull my panties down, she raced to the basement. Now her short flame-red hair was standing on end, her thin plain face was flushed with blood, her ice-blue eyes were fixed on me in deadly outrage, and she was shrieking.

Steve's attitude toward me changed at once, more abruptly and more foully than I could ever have imagined. While his mom was still shrieking, he hissed in my ear: “*God damn you!*” Then he pushed me away, hard. My pulled-down panties

kept my legs from striding forth to keep me upright. I fell almost flat on my face, only barely breaking my fall with my arms.

“Mom, I’m sorry!” Steve cried while I was still on the floor. “I didn’t know he was a homosexual! He caught me off my guard and started trying to pervert me, trying to turn *me* into a homosexual too!”

His mother strode to the phone, raised the receiver, and quickly pushed three buttons. “My son’s been molested by a homosexual!” she said in a trembling, mad-dened voice. “I’ve got the homosexual right here in the house! I caught him in the act! Please come here *right now* and arrest him!” She gave the address and soon hung up.

Her outrage, though fierce, was no stronger than mine. I would *not* be arrested for molesting Steve! I was no more to blame than he was! Frantically I searched the room for an escape route, but there was none. Only the single stairway led up and out. Both Steve and his mom—now hugging each other and crying—blocked my way.

Soon I heard the fateful siren and the dreaded knock at the door. “Steve, go let them in,” his mom commanded. Steve obeyed.

Two blue-uniformed Seaview Grove police officers appeared—a tall, thin, light-skinned, clean-cut man with very short hair, and a short, pretty, longer-haired, darker-skinned woman with a bulletproof vest that concealed all evidence of breasts. “Hi, what’s going on here?” the short one asked.



“There’s the homosexual,” Steve’s mom said. “He molested my son. I caught him in the act.”

Both of the officers looked at me. Deep shame enveloped me. I felt as if the long arms of the law, many of them, were clutching my throat, choking me, and stripping off my flagrantly illegal girls’ clothes. Then the officers looked at Steve, his mother, and each other. After verifying that Steve was her son, the tall one asked, “How old is your son, ma’am?”

“Fourteen.”

“And how old is the, uh, *homosexual*, if you know?”

“Well, he’s in the same grade at school as my son, 8th grade.”

“OK, what’s your name and how old are you?” the officer asked, turning to me. For all I could tell, he didn’t really care whether I wore girls’ clothes or not.

“J—Jim MacGregor, and I’m 14.”

“What school?”

“Oceanview Park Middle School.”

“What did you catch them doing?” the short officer asked Steve’s mom.

She gasped in horror at having to speak of such a thing. “The homosexual,” she informed the officers coldly, “was begging my son to *pull his panties down!*”

The officers looked at each other again. They seemed to be trying hard to keep from smiling, or even from laughing. “I don’t think this is going to work,” the short one said, pulling out a little book. After looking in the book for a minute, she said, “Nope.” She handed the book to the tall one.

“That’s what I thought,” he confirmed after looking at the book in silence. “I’m sorry, ma’am. By law, a 13-year-old can molest a 13-year-old, but a 14-year-old can’t molest a 14-year-old if there’s no force or intimidation involved. A 17-year-old can’t molest a 14-year-old either, but an 18-year-old can molest a 14- or even a 15-year-old, even if the 15-year-old is, uh, totally willing. I know it may sound a little ridiculous, but that’s the law in this state.”

Steve’s mom gasped. Again she turned blood-red in anger. “But he’s a *homosexual!*” she cried.

“Sorry, ma’am, but under the law it doesn’t matter if he’s a homosexual, bisexual, or trisexual,” the tall officer said with more than a hint of a smile. “We can’t arrest him for molesting your son if he’s 14 and your son is 14 too, if there’s no force or intimidation.” For a moment I was afraid that Steve or his mom would lie and say there *was* force or intimidation, but they didn’t. “The only thing we can do,” the officer said, “is, if you tell Jim here to get out and not come back, and if he comes back, then we can arrest him for trespassing.”

“Get out *right now* and *never come back!*” Steve’s mom screamed at me.

“I need to get my backpack, and my shoes and socks, from the bathroom,” I said.

“Well, hurry up and get them,” the officer said. He walked to the bathroom door, as if to make sure I wasn’t going to do anything but get these items.

“Can I just take a minute and put my boys’ clothes back on?” I begged him in a whisper while I picked up the pack.

He glanced at Steve’s mom and shook his head. “Better put them on somewhere else,” he said.

Most reluctantly, I complied. I left the house barefoot, carrying my shoes and socks, without looking again at Steve or his mom. I felt stark terror at the thought that people would see me in girls’ clothes, but there was nothing I could do.

I retrieved my bike from Steve’s back yard, awkwardly put on my shoes and socks, and walked out to the street in silence with the officers. “Well, Jim, keep your nose clean, and don’t come back here, all right?” said the short one.

“Don’t worry, I won’t!” I assured her.

The officers watched me until I had ridden away on my bike, as if to make sure I wasn’t going to go back and trespass at Steve’s house. I didn’t know where I was going to go, except I knew I would never go home wearing girls’ clothes. I needed a place to take a shower and change, but I had no idea where I could safely do these simple things.

I found myself riding toward Farman’s, toward Susanna. At least *she* wouldn’t be shocked to see me in girls’ clothes, or to see me in boys’ clothes a few moments later. Yes, that must be it, I thought: I would go to Farman’s, change in the dressing room, and visit with Susanna for a few minutes if she wasn’t too busy.

By the time I arrived at Farman’s, I needed to use the restroom at once—but *which* restroom? It must be the ladies’ room, I thought; I would never dare go into the men’s room in girls’ clothes! I did the daring deed, and no one seemed to notice. With some satisfaction I noted that the fresh air had dried up much of the gush and even driven away some of the too-familiar stench, though I still felt sticky and foul. I didn’t dare emerge from the ladies’ restroom in boys’ clothes, though; I must find somewhere else. Perhaps Susanna could help me find the best place, or the least bad place, to change.

I came out of the ladies’ room and navigated toward Susanna’s counter. She gave a quick start when she saw me actually wearing some of the girls’ clothes she had sold me, but just as quickly she recovered her composure. “Oh, Judy! Hello!” she said. “I’m so glad to see you! It’s been a little while since I got any e-mail from you. How have you been?”

I didn’t know how to say how I had been. I wasn’t going to *lie* to Susanna; lying to her would have seemed like slapping her, spitting on her, or saying “God damn you!” to her. But could I tell the truth to her? I didn’t know, and yet I had to try.

“Well, uh,” I began unpromisingly, “I’ve been—well, not so good sometimes, I’m afraid, especially *today*.”

“Oh, I’m sorry for you! Can you tell me what’s wrong?”

I sighed. “Well,” I said, “I don’t know. I’m—well, to begin with, I need a clean pair of panties.”

Susanna’s eyes opened wide, but she said only, “Well, we’re having a special on Patti’s Puffies; I know you like those.” She pointed out the aisle, as if I didn’t already know.

“Oh, good,” I said. “I’ll be right back.”

I got the panties—cream-colored ones this time, not pink—and returned to pay for them. “Can I help you with anything else?” Susanna asked, as if to see whether I wanted to buy anything else, but meaning much more.

“Well,” I said, “if you know of anyplace where I can take a shower, and put on some—uh—different clothes from the ones I’ve got on...”

Susanna blinked repeatedly. For what seemed a long while she said nothing. At last she told me, “Well, it’s almost time for my lunch break—if you wouldn’t mind coming to my house for a quick lunch, and an even quicker shower...”

“I wouldn’t mind at all!” I told her at once. “*Thanks!*”

Soon I was in Susanna’s aging, mediocre-looking white car. Susanna, unlike her usual self, was almost silent. We arrived at her house, also white, and went in. As soon as we did, I stood face to face with two big images of people on the wall.

One of the people was myself, in a big oval mirror. I looked to myself like a sad, slutty, unexciting girl with insignificant breasts. The extreme excitement that had gripped me with Steve had vanished without a trace. I wondered why I had ever thought it exciting to wear girls’ clothes.

The other person on the wall, in a too-vividly-colored picture, was obviously Jesus, showing off his bright red bleeding heart in the Catholic manner. I didn’t like Jesus, I didn’t believe in him, I hoped Susanna wasn’t going to talk to me about him, and I didn’t look at him for long. Soon almost all that remained of his picture in my memory was that great red heart—completely unconcealed, unlike any normal person’s heart.

“Here’s the bathroom,” Susanna said. “You just take your shower and change, and then we’ll have a little lunch. All right?” I agreed. I took a shower, for a change, with only one aim: to get as clean as possible. Soon, no longer a pretty girl, I looked like a pretty *boy* again, wearing my old boy’s socks, boy’s shoes, boy’s shirt with small inconspicuous bare breasts beneath, and boy’s pants wholly concealing my puffy cream-colored panties.

“Come on into the kitchen,” Susanna said when I emerged from the bathroom, “and I’ll get you a sandwich. Is cheese all right?” It was. Susanna sat at the end of a little kitchen table, and said a little prayer before she ate. I sat around the corner of the table from her, and didn’t.

“Well, Judy,” Susanna said between bites, “I’m sorry to hear that everything hasn’t been going all right for you. Is there anything you want to tell me about, or any way I might be able to help? If there isn’t, just say so and we won’t mention it

again—but it sounded as if maybe there was, from what you were saying in the store.”

She looked at me and chewed another bite of her sandwich. I sighed. I couldn't lie to her, and she was the only person in the world I knew I could trust to hear such things from me.

“Well,” I said, “this morning I was wearing some girls' clothes, the ones I had on when I came here, and I was—letting a boy see me wearing them in his room. I thought he was my friend; I thought I could trust him.”

Susanna looked startled. “It sounds as if you couldn't really,” she said. “What did he do?”

“Well—I started, um, playing girlfriend for him, and”—I felt as if I were insulting Susanna by saying such things—“we both got kind of carried away.” I lowered my eyes. Susanna was silent.

“And then,” I said, “his mom caught us and called the police, because she said I was molesting her son!”

“Oh, no! But—the police didn't *arrest* you?”

“No. They said two 14-year-olds couldn't molest each other, according to the law, if there's no force or intimidation. They just made me get out of the house and not come back—which I'm not going to do anyway!”

“Oh, dear! No, that doesn't sound like a good idea at all!” I was afraid Susanna was shocked beyond belief by my revelations—but, if she was, she was trying hard to conceal it.

We ate in silence until we had finished our sandwiches. Then, at last, Susanna said, “Well—Judy—I hope I'm not butting in where I'm not wanted by saying this, but—I wouldn't want to think you've given up hope of finding a girlfriend, a *real* girlfriend, who'll love you and understand you as you are.” She looked at me and seemed to be starting to cry, but trying not to.

I looked at her and bit my lip. I tried not to cry too, but I failed. “There's only one girl who's ever liked me in my life,” I said, “and—her parents took her away and put her in a private school and won't let us see each other, because they don't want us to be in *love* with each other!”

I couldn't control myself. I was sobbing out loud right in front of Susanna. I covered my eyes and moaned in misery.

“Oh, Judy! I'm so sorry for you!” Susanna said to me. She got up, put her arm around me, and let me cry on her shoulder for as long as I needed. Then she got me some tissues and patted me on the back while I dried my eyes.

“That's so sad,” Susanna said. “I know—parents want to be careful for their children, but there's such a thing as going too far. But her parents won't be able to keep you from seeing her *forever*, you know.”

“Only until she's forgotten all about me!” I clenched my teeth in anger.

“Oh, no, I don’t think so!” Susanna said. “If she really cared a lot about you, I don’t think she’ll forget you—any more than you’re going to forget *her*. And you’re not, are you?”

I started to cry again. “I’m afraid I *am!*” I said. “I’m going to give up hope, and forget all about her, and—not care if I ever see her again!”

“J—Judy, *no!*” Susanna said, putting her arm around me again as I sobbed. “You mustn’t say that; it’s not *true!* I can see how much you love her! You’re always going to remember her! Please don’t give up hope!” For Susanna’s sake, while I was still crying, I feebly tried to raise up my fallen hope, though I felt sure I couldn’t succeed.

“What’s her name?” Susanna softly asked me when I had dried my eyes again.

“Christie,” I said. “You’re right; I don’t think she’ll forget me. I’ll try not to forget her either.”

“I’m so glad! And—well, I don’t know whether you believe in *praying* for things or not.” She gave me a quick inquiring glance. I tried to keep my face inscrutable while neither lying nor telling her the truth.

“But *I* do, anyway,” she went on, “and I’ll pray for you and Christie to find a way to get back together, if you’d really be good for each other. You won’t mind if I pray for you, will you?”

“Uh—no, I won’t mind,” I said, without much caring. I guessed it couldn’t hurt, though it surely wouldn’t help.

Chapter 4

The rest of summer vacation passed without evil incident, except that Steve Monohan—now quickly and wholly converted to fundamentalism, it seemed—sent me a few e-mails containing Bible quotes. “The man shall not wear what belongs to the woman, for it is abomination,” he advised me; “fornicators, idolators, and homosexuals shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” He told me it was a blessing in disguise that his mom had caught us, because now he knew he needed God to help him be healed of his homosexual temptations, and blah, blah, blah. I tried to ignore his e-mails, although they irritated me a lot.

Soon, too soon, came my first day as a freshman at Seaview Grove High School. Almost everyone there ignored me. Steve was there, and he was in some of my classes, but he ignored me too—especially in gym class, where other boys started teased me almost at once about my breasts.

I had been growing steadily plumper; my breasts, though still very small for a girl, were now noticeably bigger than those of any other boys I had ever seen, even very fat boys. They were big enough that my first bra was not only too small in the

band size, but too small in the cups as well. I had a nice, new, bigger bra now, even lower-cut and sexier than my first one—but no one to show it off to.

I wondered if any high-school boys—any *totally trustworthy* boys, unlike Steve—might wish to see me as a girl. Within a few days after school began, my secret craving to let some boy see me, and to play girlfriend for him, was as potent as it had ever been. I couldn't let Susanna know, for she would think I had given up hope of getting a real girlfriend—as indeed I had.

Christie wasn't here, and she would never be here. Her parents would imprison her in their Christian hell until it froze over, trapping them all in their Christian ice forever. No other girl would love me, and Christie would forget me after all, if she hadn't already. Susanna's prayers would do nothing—if not *worse* than nothing.

* * * * *

High school was a desert of loneliness, just as middle school had been. Only a few tiny oases appeared in the huge, barren wasteland of people who didn't know me and didn't care about me. One of my oases—at least I hoped it was one—was Art Club. Art was one of the few things at school that interested me. Maybe, I hoped, I might find some kindred spirits in the club.

The first Art Club meeting was held on September 10. I entered the meeting room after school and looked around. Several girls, some pretty, some not so pretty, were talking and laughing. They glanced at me and looked away. A short thin boy, with long blond hair and a face like a pretty but sad girl's face, glanced at me with his pale blue eyes and quickly looked away too. I stared at him; I would have thought he was really a girl, except his T-shirt made it clear that he had no breasts at all.

Everyone in the room, about 15 students in all, looked away from me—except for one handsome boy, or rather one handsome young man, who was giving me by far the friendliest look I had received since I came to high school. He was tall, stout, and broad-shouldered, with the biggest head on his shoulders I had ever seen. Topped by wavy chestnut-colored hair, not too short and not too long for a manly-looking youth, his head displayed a broad and brainy-looking forehead, big laughing hazel eyes, a prominent ski-slope nose, fair clean-cut cheeks, a strong-looking jutting chin, and moist deep-pink lips, as full and shapely as any lovely girl could dream of having. White teeth peeked out from between his welcoming lips, as if to tell me, "*Wow!* I'd love to get to know you!" I felt embarrassed to return his big smile, but I did it—and at once excitement rose to thrust me through.

The faculty advisor entered the room. I turned to him with relief, as if the sight of him might help to calm me down—but it did not. Almost everything about this seemingly ultra-masculine man in his 30s—his immaculate curly fair hair, his

searching gray eyes, his slightly pouting lips, his massive shoulders and forearms, his overdeveloped chest and protruding nipples (plainly visible beneath his tight T-shirt), the bulge in the front of his jeans, and his lean firm-looking hips that gave the slightest hint of a swish when he walked—seemed to proclaim, “*I’m gay!*”

His voice did nothing to dispel the impression; it was far from ultra-masculine. “Good afternoon, boys and girls,” he said, getting a little laugh. “For those of you who don’t know me already, I’m Mr. Stan Headwick, your faculty advisor for the Art Club. Welcome, or welcome back, to the *fascinating* world of art at Seaview Grove! Fair’s fair; I’ve introduced myself, so now you can all introduce yourselves too.”

The students complied. I didn’t remember most of their names after hearing them, but I did remember two. The handsome young man with the extra-big head, who introduced himself first in a confident, manly voice, was Adam Potter. The slight, sad, girlish-looking youth with long blond hair, who spoke almost last in a voice that could barely be heard, was Randy Frick. I dared not introduce myself as “*Judy MacGregor*” instead of “Jim.”

Soon the officers were being chosen. Adam Potter was the only nominee for president of the club, and was elected by loud acclamation. I joined in softly, though I didn’t know him yet. He was still glancing at me often. I hoped I would know him soon.

Club activities were then discussed. Adam seemed to have been confident of being elected president; he had quite a good idea what he wished the club to do. First, he hoped the club could go on some field trips to art galleries and museums in Pacific Heights. He also hoped to get some experienced artists to demonstrate their methods in traditional media, computer graphics, still photography, and video. Last but not least, he hoped the club members could share a lot of their knowledge and experience with each other, and get to know each other really well.

“*Yay, Adam!*” cried one of the girls. A few other girls joined in loud applause. The girlish-looking Randy Frick clapped quickly, but sedately and politely. Adam beamed at all of them, looking fully confident that he deserved their adulation.

* * * * *

After school that day, as I rode my bike home, Adam drove up to me in his car. “Hey, Jim!” he called out. “Good to see you again!”

I rode up, stopped, and stared at Adam’s car, a shiny little red foreign sports car. Then I raised my eyes to Adam—and to Randy Frick, facing straight forward in the passenger seat.

“Hi, Adam,” I said. “Uh—hi, Randy.” Randy didn’t respond. “What’s going on?”

“Just thought I’d say hi,” Adam said, “and invite you to come over to my mom’s studio sometime, if you’d like to see it. My mom’s an artist, you know, and her studio’s pretty fair. I like to have my fellow artists over there every now and then, and it’s no problem with my mom.”

“Uh—well,” I stammered, “I—sure, I’d like to see it.”

“Great!” Adam exclaimed. “Let me have your e-mail address, and I’ll give you the time.”

I fumbled with my backpack, extracted a piece of paper, and wrote my e-mail address on it with trembling fingers. I handed the paper to Adam. “Hey, thanks!” he said. “See you there soon!” Then he quickly revved the engine, shifted into gear, and sped away. Randy still had not spoken to me or looked at me.

* * * * *

The day of worldwide anguish and horror dawned like any other day. Here on the calm Pacific coast the birds sang, the clouds turned pink and orange, the same old sea breezes blew. Except for those watching television or listening to radio at that hour, no one yet knew that September 11, 2001 wasn’t just another day.

As on any other school day, I got up, got dressed, ate breakfast, and rode my bike to school. A lot of students were talking in the hallways. I didn’t know what they were talking about. I went to my first class, French. No one was speaking French. Everyone was looking at a TV set in front of the room. The announcer was talking about firefighters, and then about terrorists.

Before long—I think it was before long—a replay came on. Mind-annihilating evil came into full view on the TV screen. Closer and closer the big airplane came to the mighty tower, aiming for maximum death and destruction and terror. I wished I couldn’t believe my eyes, but I could. Most of my classmates had probably seen it before—it was now past eleven o’clock on the East Coast, and the shock had struck hours ago—but still many girls were shrieking, and many boys were shouting or groaning, when the plane smashed into the building and exploded. I had never seen it before. I could say nothing, feel nothing, think nothing.

For the rest of the day it was more of the same. No one did any schoolwork. Some students were even praying out loud, and no one was stopping them. I was not praying. I was starting to fear that God might be real after all—but, if he was, I loathed him.

The terrorists, who were supposed to be responsible for the monstrous attack, supposedly thought their God, Allah, had commanded it—and what if they were *right*? Wouldn’t it be just like God to do such a thing? Hadn’t God sent Steve’s mom to break up Steve and me at the height of our excitement? Hadn’t God

struck to steal Christie from me, using her parents as tools to work his will? Wouldn't God hear Susanna's prayers for me and Christie to get back together—and wouldn't he answer them by making sure we *never* got back together? It was just like him, I thought—and he was *proud* of it.

I remembered what Jesus had said in one of my Sunday-school teacher's favorite parables, the one about the rich man who built big barns, stored up his great treasure, and got ready to live a life of blissful ease. "*Fool!*" God said to him. "You die *tonight!* Whose will all this be then?" To the Sunday-school teacher, this meant you were supposed to act at once to get saved by accepting Jesus as your personal savior, or else it might be too late and you'd be a fool in hell. To me, it meant God was a terrorist who would never get anyone to believe in him without threats, and who would strike in the worst way, at the worst time, to enforce his threats.

"*Why don't you just leave us alone and let us live our lives in peace?*" I begged of God in silence. He refused to answer me.

In the days that followed, when cries of "God bless America" filled even the unhallowed halls of Seaview Grove High School, I wanted to cry out against God—but I didn't. I was a coward to the core, or almost to the core. At least, though, I did tell my parents I wasn't going to Sunday school any more. They shouted at me, imposed a few weak punishments, and threatened stronger ones, but I refused to give in. When Sunday came, I had won; I didn't go to Sunday school. Instead, I escaped from the horror that seemed to be engulfing the world; I went to Adam's house and saw his mother's studio.

* * * * *

My heart rejoiced as I pedaled my bike away from my parents' house. The air was fresh and cool, the sun was shining, a few red and golden leaves had begun to appear on the bright, free trees that dared to stand out from the dark, disapproving mass of immutable evergreens—and I wasn't going to Sunday school! The same old boring lies were being told right now in the same old stuffy rooms, and I wasn't there!

I rode toward the little shopping center near the high school, according to plan. Adam had e-mailed me yesterday, inviting me to come to his mother's studio before lunch today. I was to meet him at the shopping center, lock my bike there, and ride to his house in his car. That way I wouldn't get tired and sweaty from riding up the steep hills to the high bluff, overlooking the water, where Adam and his mother lived.

I was thoroughly prepared. Adam had mentioned that he hoped I might like to do a bit of *modeling* in the studio. If there was any chance that he might want me to do some modeling in girls' clothes, I wasn't going to pass it up. I was wearing

plain dull boys' clothes, but my backpack was stuffed with pretty girls' ones—the same pink low-cut top, white miniskirt, cute bra, and even the same puffy panties I had been gushing in when Steve's mom found us out, now washed clean and good as new.

I arrived at the shopping center. Adam was waiting for me in his car. He waved at me and honked. I waved back and smiled at him.

"Hey, cutie, how about a date?" Adam asked me with a grin when I had ridden up to his car and dismounted.

I almost gasped; then I quickly laughed. Could this really be happening? Might Adam really want me to be his girlfriend—and might he *never* turn fundamentalist traitor, as Steve had done?

"Uh—*well!*" I stammered. "Adam, this is so *sudden!*"

"No use wasting time," he said. "I like to get right to the point. I'm bisexual. I like to date boys and girls both. If you don't like it, leave now."

I took a long, deep breath and tried to exhale slowly. My heart was pounding so hard I could barely breathe. "I'm not going to leave," I told him. "Just let me lock my bike."

I did; then I got into his car. "You mentioned you might like me to do some, uh, modeling for you," I said as he started the engine. He turned and looked straight at me. "Well," I said, "I don't know if this is what you had in mind—but I've got some girls' clothes in my pack. Would you like to—see me wearing them?"

Adam's eyes bulged, and he gave a hearty laugh. "*Wow!*" he said. "Would I ever!" He gripped the stick shift firmly, thrust it into gear, and zipped out of the parking lot. Soon we were speeding up a winding road, lined all along with ever-greens, toward the summit of a hill high above the water.

* * * * *

"Mom's probably not up yet," Adam said as we quietly entered the house. It looked like a fairly new, custom-built one. "I'll introduce you to her in a little while. How about coming up and seeing the studio?"

I did not need to answer aloud. He led me up white, thickly carpeted stairs to the upper floor; then he opened a heavy-looking door and showed me into a big room with a cathedral ceiling and skylights. All around the room were works of art—paintings, drawings, photographs, and more—as well as a big-screen TV. On one side was a posing area for photos, in which a big light-blue backdrop faced a formidable-looking camera on a tripod, with a big old-fashioned black hood to cover the photographer's head.

I looked at some of the photos on the wall. A thin, pretty, but sad-faced young woman, with long blond hair and perfect little breasts, was prominently featured in them, displaying herself in a dancing gown, a swimsuit, an old-fashioned school uniform with her skirt yanked way up, and more. It took me a moment to realize, with a shock of excitement, that this young “woman” was really Randy Frick, with fake breasts, in girls’ clothes.

“Before we go any farther,” Adam said, “How about letting me see you in those girls’ clothes? I can’t wait to see this!”

“Uh—OK,” I said, looking around. “Where shall I change?”

“How about right here?” He indicated the posing area.

“*What?*” I gave a nervous laugh. “You mean—you want to watch me change?”

“And *shoot* you changing, if you don’t mind,” he said with a big grin. “I mean shoot *pictures* of you changing, of course! ”

His words shot me through with fear. I hardly knew Adam yet. What if he exposed me? What if he let boys see pictures of me posing as a pretty girl in sexy feminine clothes, or as a *nude* girl with tiny breasts and no visible evidence of boyhood? How could I dare give him, or anyone, such power to crush me?

“Of course,” he said, “there *is* a dressing room right over there, if you’d rather use it.” He pointed to a narrow door at one side of the room.

I looked at him. He was still grinning, but not at all maliciously—rather, as if he was hoping to be my best friend and closest confidant. Somehow I was coming to trust him already, very quickly. Surely, I began to think, Adam would never betray me! And besides, I was so absurdly excited at the thought of turning from boy to girl in front of him that I couldn’t refuse, even if he *was* going to “shoot” me and if he might expose me.

“Uh—I don’t need it,” I said. I gave him a little smile and unbuttoned the top button of my shirt.

“That’s more like it!” he congratulated me. “Let’s get some *shots!*”

He told me to put on my girls’ clothes. My hands were trembling so much I could hardly open my backpack, but I forced myself to do it. I had brought two pairs of puffy panties, pink and white, in case one pair happened to get wet and sticky while I was here. The danger that this might happen, I felt, was now extreme.

I pulled out the pink panties. Keeping my legs together to hide my evidence, I demurely inserted one foot and then the other. Slowly, delicately, I pulled the panties up, not daring to feel the full delight that was flooding me. I breathed deeply with my mouth open, in hope of calming myself and preventing a sudden loss of bliss. My panties slipped up to my loins, touched my hard evidence beneath my big bottom, caressed me as if they were in love with me—and yet, with grim determination, I kept myself from gushing in their grasp.

“Oh, *baby!*” Adam cried out. “This is unbelievable! You’re the best!” His words clutched my heart and drew me close to him. I began to feel that I would do anything—anything at all, without restraint—for Adam, who thought I was “the best.”

Adam took front and side shots of me in my panties with my breasts bare; then he asked me if I had a bra. “Of course!” I told him, giggling. “I’m not the kind of girl who goes around without a *bra!*”

He laughed heartily. “Oh, of course not,” he said. “It’s better that way. I can’t get excited about taking a girl’s bra off if she doesn’t have one on!”

I looked at him and blushed more hotly than I had been doing. “Well,” I said, looking straight at him and going wild with desire to let him take my bra off, “I’d better put mine on, then!”

I did. He shot me wearing it, several times. “How about the rest of your girls’ clothes now?” he asked me. “Oh, by the way, I don’t want to call a beautiful girl like you ‘Jim’! Do you have a girlie-name I can call you?”

“I’m Judy,” I told him, putting on my pink top. “And—I’m so glad you think I’m beautiful!”

“Judy, you’re the very best,” Adam assured me. “I’ve never seen a girl like you before!”

“Well, isn’t that sweet!” I heard a high, friendly-sounding female voice saying, even before my breathing had slowed almost to normal speed. I jerked, as if to flee from Adam in fear, but he calmly held me tight.

“Hi, mom,” said Adam, as if it were the most normal and natural thing in the world for him to be caught with a girlish boy. “Breakfast ready?”

“It will be soon enough,” said the voice, “but there’ll be plenty of time for you and your friend to *shower* first! Do I rate an introduction?”

Adam laughed. “Sure! Mom, this is Judy.” He turned me around to face her. “Judy, this is my mom.”

My eyes started bulging at once. Though she must have been more than 40 years old, Adam’s mom was almost shockingly beautiful, with a finely-formed oval face, light golden-brown skin, great dark eyes, full lips, wavy hair just like Adam’s but longer, a nose like his but smaller—and firm, middle-sized, unbearably delectable-looking breasts with big dark nipples, almost wholly unconcealed by her flimsy negligee.

“I’m really delighted to meet you, Judy!” said Adam’s mom. She sounded as if she meant it. She seemed more different from Steve’s hateful mom than I could ever have imagined.

“Uh, I’m delighted to meet you, too,” I told her. I tried to force my eyes away from her breasts, but I failed.

“Well, let me change into something less comfortable,” she said with a little laugh. “Then we’ll have breakfast—and some really good conversation, I hope! But first, don’t forget your showers!”

* * * * *

Sunlight filled the big, cheerful-looking kitchen where we sat down for breakfast after showers. Beyond the big picture window, the beauty of earth and sea and sky was on display: bright leafy trees, high evergreens, deep blue water, dark green islands, and creamy, puffy white clouds in the midst of the sun-kissed blue sky. Before me, on the homely wooden table where we sat, were big white plates piled high with scrambled eggs, turkey bacon, fruit salad, whole-wheat pancakes with honey, and more.

“Well, Judy,” said Adam’s mom, “it’s so wonderful to have you here with us! You’re an artist too, aren’t you?”

“Um, well, yes, kind of.”

“Don’t be too modest! I’ll bet you’re *excellent!* And you’re a *model*, too! You look absolutely lovely!”

“Well, thank you!” I was wearing the same feminine clothes in which I had posed for Adam, except I now had my clean white panties on. I did think I looked rather nice, but I could never have imagined that a *mom* would think so too.

“Adam and I have been very lucky so far,” his mom said. “We’ve been able to pursue our artistic interests to the full, without worrying about money, thanks to Adam’s father. You know, whatever I might want to say about Adam’s father—and I’ve said plenty of things about him in our time, believe me—at least he was a good provider, a *very* good provider. Wasn’t he a good provider, Adam?”

“Excellent provider,” Adam agreed, stuffing his mouth with eggs.

“I’ve come a long way since I married him,” Adam’s mom



reminisced. “I thought we were going to live happily ever after, just like in the fairy tales,” she said, with only a hint of bitterness in her voice. “I was a stay-at-home wife, and a nice, innocuous artist, making nice, innocuous works of art. My husband had to work long hours to get ahead; I didn’t even suspect yet that he had any other reason for spending so much time away from home. After a few years Adam came along, and we were just the perfect little family.” She was whetting my thirst to know why they weren’t any more.

“Everything was fine,” she said, “except for my nagging suspicions that Adam’s father was cheating on me. At last, only a few years ago, I found him out for sure. Do you know, even when I had absolute *proof* of what he was doing, my husband accused me of *faking the evidence*, rather than give in and admit what he’d done!”

Only for a moment had Adam’s mom raised her voice, but the fire in her eyes did not vanish nearly so soon. “The *lying* was what I really couldn’t stand,” she told me. “I really didn’t care what my husband was doing—if only he would be *honest* with me about it! But he wouldn’t—so we’re not together any more.”

“Damn shame, too,” Adam butted in. “He wouldn’t be a bad guy at all, if it wasn’t for the lying. I’m for total honesty, myself.”

“Oh, so am I!” his mother fervently rejoined. “It doesn’t bother me a bit to see Adam doing the same kinds of things his father did—because Adam’s always been *totally honest* about it!” A moment of silence, in reverence for Adam’s total honesty, ensued.

“As I was saying, though, Adam’s father *was* a good provider,” said his mom. “Once he finally realized we were through, he agreed to a very reasonable settlement for us, to get us off his back. Now Adam and I are set up for life, so long as our investments stay good!”

Her dark eyes drew closer to me, as if seeking to hold me in their grip. They now had little competition from her breasts, encased in a tight black top. “After I decided that *total honesty* was one of the most important things—or *the* most important thing—in life,” she said, “of course my art changed a lot. I had to show *reality* for a change! Naturally, when I did, the local fundamentalist fanatics in Seaview Grove started using me for target practice.”

“That’s sickening,” I said. “I can’t stand fundamentalists.”

“Oh, of *course* not! And I’m sure they can’t stand *you* as you really are, either! I’ll bet they’d think you were an *evil abomination* if they could see you now!” She gave a little laugh.

“I know they would,” I affirmed. “One of them actually *called* me an abomination.”

“Well, welcome to our select little club—the *Evil Abominations’ Club!*” she said with a bigger laugh. Adam gave an even bigger, heartier one.

“We artists,” Adam’s mom informed me in a confidential tone of voice, “are going to have to stick *very* close together in the days to come, and the *years* to come.”

I tried to keep my face inscrutable, but I couldn't help fearing that Adam's mom might be crazy. I glanced at Adam, whose eyes were fixed on me while he chewed a big bite of food. When he saw me looking at him, he rolled his eyes and grinned. His message was unmistakable: *Yes, I know my mom's crazy, but I love her anyway!*

"Well, mom, there's not a lot we can do about the fundamentalist master criminals," Adam said, injecting a note of cheerful common sense while he finished off his brunch. "We'll just have to do whatever it takes to stay afloat and fight off the local fanatics."

"That's for sure," his mom agreed. "*Whatever it takes!*"

Adam grinned at me; I smiled at him; I felt quite at home. Yes, I thought to myself, I *was* quite at home. Adam and his crazy mom—the only people in the world, who knew me as I really was, besides Susanna—were already more like a family to me than my *real* family. "Let's stay afloat and fight *together*, then!" I cried out. Adam and his mom applauded me loudly.

Chapter 5

"Oh, baby!" Adam murmured, baring my breasts and kissing my nipples. "Oh, *baby!*" he moaned, plunging his hand between my thighs in search of hidden delight. "Oh! Oh! Baby, baby, *baby! YES!*" he groaned in the agony of desire. "It's time! We've got to go *all the way!*"

I resisted and protested: "No! Wait! Please wait! I'm not ready for this!"

"Baby, you've *got* to be ready," he insisted. "I'm ready, you're ready, my trusty condom's ready, we're all ready *now!*"

"*No! Don't do this!*" I cried. "I'm not ready! I'm a virgin! I'm a *virgin!*"

"Oh, *baby!*" Adam whined. "A *virgin?* Are you serious?"

"*Yes!* I'm serious! I've never gone all the way before, and I'm not ready! I won't be ready—until I get *married!*" I stood up and faced him in the nude, with my boyhood still concealed. "I really think I'm *worth waiting for*, you know!"

"But"—Adam made a choking sound. Then he was silent.

"Well," he said at last, "if that's the way it's going to be—then I guess that's the way it's going to be!" He stood up and gave me a kiss on the cheek. "You really are worth waiting for—my sweet virgin baby! Just say when!"

He walked out of the studio and shut the door. I stood with my back toward the camcorder that Adam's mom was aiming at me. She zoomed in on the hidden evidence of my boyhood, below my buttocks.

“Judy, that was *perfect!*” Adam’s mom cried out. “We’re really going to hit the *big time* soon!”

She spun me around and hugged me. “Do you know what?” she said. “The leading adult-video producer in Pacific Heights, *Rod Rimstone*, is terrifically interested in what we’re doing here! As soon as we can show him the full story, he wants to talk *seriously* about turning the concept we’re developing in our little home video into a fully professional production, and he thinks you and Adam are the perfect, fresh-faced, beautiful young people for the starring roles! This is really going to be on the *cutting edge of excellence* in adult video—and it could make our entire future! Take your shower *quick*, and I’ll tell you lots more about it!”

* * * * *

I took my shower quickly, dried off, and put on a flimsy negligee that Adam had bought for me. It looked a lot like the one his mom had been wearing the first time I met her, almost a year ago now. It had a low neckline with little rosy things all along the edge, and it showed my nipples almost as plainly as if I had been nude. The negligee had driven me wild when I first put it on, when I was fully gripped by the urge—but I wasn’t now. I looked almost totally girlish, complete with wavy shoulder-length hair, uncut since I stopped going to Sunday school—but now I was almost *bored* with my total girlishness.

I sighed. I missed Susanna. I had no occasion to go to Farman’s now, for Adam bought all my feminine clothes for me. For many months I hadn’t seen Susanna; for almost as many, I hadn’t even e-mailed her. She had sent me a friendly message, and I had written nothing in return. The thought of e-mailing her, or even going to see her, gnawed at me from time to time—but I found ways to numb the pain of the gnawing.

I left the bathroom and went to the big kitchen, not quite so cheerful-looking now as it had been when I first saw it. Even now, on this last Sunday in August, the sky outside was a uniform shade of light gray, a typically disappointing summer sky in greater Pacific Heights. What the sky lacked in cheerfulness, though, Adam and his mom made up for. They were almost literally bubbling with joy.

“Judy, I don’t know how much you know about Rod Rimstone yet,” said Adam’s mom. “I don’t imagine you’re much of a connoisseur of *adult video* at your age! How old are you now—15, 16?”

“I’m 15.”

“Well, of course, that’s an extra reason why we need to be very *discreet* right now about what we’re doing, especially since Adam’s turned 18 already. The police here in Seaview Grove are absolute *assholes* about that kind of thing. Do you know, a 17-year-old and a 14-year-old can eagerly screw each other’s brains out for all the law cares—but, as soon as they turn 18 and 15, the 18-year-old is

guilty of a *felony*! And Seaview Grove's finest would literally *drool* at the thought of arresting the 18-year-old and sending him off to be *butt-raped in prison*! Can you believe that?"

"Um, well, I've heard of that law before. It sounded pretty stupid."

"Pretty *deadly* stupid! But you can easily pass for 16, and that's what's important. Rod Rimstone has a really sharp attorney, Art Mixton, working for him, and Art says everything's OK if we've got a reasonable belief that you're at least 16. You look very mature for your age, Judy, honey—*very* mature. Doesn't Judy look mature for her age, Adam?"

"*Damn* mature," Adam affirmed after gulping down a big bite of breakfast. "At least 18 or 19, I would have thought."

"That's right," said his mom. "Now, as I was saying, Rod Rimstone is the leading producer of adult video in Pacific Heights, but there's much more to it than that. Rod is literally doing for *hard-core* what *Hefner* did decades ago for *soft-core*! You know how Hefner attained his legendary, fabulous wealth, by playing on every boy's and every man's fantasy of getting to see that sweet, wholesome girl next door in the nude; well, Rod Rimstone's simply taking that approach one step further, or maybe *several* steps further. He's banking on every boy's and every man's fantasy of *going wild* with the sweet wholesome girl next door, or *boy* next door—or maybe with someone even closer to home!"

Adam's mom leaned close to me and bent over. She was wearing the same negligee she had worn when I had first met her, the one that looked like mine. She was making sure I could see her bare breasts inside it. I could. Her nipples were hard.

"Judy, sweetheart," she said, "I know we can trust you; I know you're *fully* on our side. I'd like to help you see what you're getting into with us. I'd like you to see one of Rod's productions—a very special one, the first one of our little home movie concepts he turned into a fully professional production. Would you like to see it?"

"Uh—well, sure," I said. I was lying. I was too cowardly to tell the truth. I didn't want to see any "adult" hard-core videos now, much less to act in one.

"I knew you would," she said. "I can see that you want what we want. We're all in this together, and we've all got to *stay* in it together. So long as we stick together, and stick with Rod Rimstone, we're on the road to literally *limitless wealth*!"

She laughed. "Take *that*, you Goddamned right-wingers!" she said. "You know, Judy, I used to wonder how I ever got sucked into that fascist idiocy. I don't wonder any more. It was *wealth*, pure and simple. When I became totally honest with myself, I could see that I never really cared anything for all that crap about freedom, patriotism, truth, justice, and the American way. I thought the conservative road was the royal road to *wealth*—and it *was*, for me, for a while. Then my dear, wealthy husband went bad on me, and now the excellent investments he dumped

on me are going bad too—but, when the going gets tough, the tough do *whatever it takes* to stay on top! Isn't that right, Adam?"

"Damn right," Adam affirmed, finishing off his big breakfast. "*Whatever it takes!* We're on the inside track, too!" He looked me in the eye. "This video you're about to see has gotten a lot of critical acclaim from people in the know," he said, "but the one you and I are working on right now will be the one that makes us really hit the *big time!*"

Chapter 6

On Monday, the first day of school, I rode my bike alone again to the desert of loneliness. I now knew a few people to speak to, but still I had no friends. I no longer thought of Adam as my friend.

Randy Frick walked past me. He did not speak; he did not look at me. He had *never* spoken to me, and never looked at me for more than half a second. For a wild, crazed moment I thought of calling after him, greeting him, trying to be friends with him, maybe even trying to make common cause with him against Adam and his mom. Before I could decide whether it would be unbearably idiotic to do such a thing, he was gone.

I went to my first class, English. I looked around and saw no one I knew. I took a seat near the front of the room. Soon the teacher, an ancient, notoriously pedantic female named Miss Dudley, was calling roll. Supremely bored, I heard name after name that I didn't know and didn't care to know. Then a single, unforgettable name gripped my ears and jerked me out of my boredom.

"*Christie Geistman,*" said Miss Dudley. It wasn't possible, I thought. There must be another Christie Geistman. The *real* Christie, *my* Christie, wasn't in this room. If she had been, I would have noticed her at once. These thoughts didn't keep me from listening with all my might to the sullen, sad-sounding voice behind me, responding to the call: "Here."

It *might* be Christie's voice, I thought. It might, it could, it must! I turned around. I still did not see her, and yet I *must* see her. At last, by process of elimination, I fixed upon an unhappy-looking female with mouse-brown hair hacked almost incredibly short, wearing a loose plaid shirt and big-hipped, baggy black pants.

She wasn't looking at me; she was looking only at the floor. I stared at her. Yes, this must be my Christie after all; no one else had a nose like that, and even her ugly clothes couldn't wholly hide the beauty of her figure from my X-ray eyes. But *her* eyes—they were as big and brown as they had always been, but they were bleak, loveless, *ruined*.

I clenched my fists and turned away from her. I was going to find out what had happened to her, what had destroyed her. I was going to talk to her as soon as I

could—even if she fled from me, or if she shrieked at me, struck me, and spit in my face.

Miss Dudley had almost reached “M” in the roll call. I turned to face Christie again. I was going to see her face when she heard my name.

“James MacGregor,” said Miss Dudley.

“Here,” I said. I saw Christie jerk. Her eyes leapt up to see me. She hesitated, as if in fear; then she forced them down again. Thunder struck hard in my heart. This was my once-beloved Christie, beyond any doubt—but what hellish evil had overcome her, and *why?*

* * * * *

“Christie!” I called out. She was walking ahead of me after class. I saw her jerk again. She didn’t turn around.

“*Christie!*” I called again. She still didn’t look at me.

I strode up and got ahead of her. “Christie, what’s wrong?” I asked her. I felt afraid to spill my heart in front of her, but I did it anyway. “I’m really glad to see you again! We used to be—well, good friends! Don’t you remember? Aren’t we still—or can’t we be again?”

At last, reluctantly, she looked at me for a second; then she looked away. “I don’t know,” she said. “I’m a lot different now.”

“Well, so am I,” I said. “What about it? You’re still *you*, and I’m still *me!* What’s been happening to you?”

She was silent for what seemed an awfully long time. “You don’t want to hear about it, Jim,” she said at last. “You wouldn’t like it at all.”

I half laughed, half gasped in exasperation. “I *do* want to hear about it,” I insisted. “I don’t care if I’d like it or not. I want to hear about *you*.”

She gave a long sigh and was silent again. “Well, all right,” she said after that. “You asked for it. I’m a lesbian.”

I almost laughed, but I didn’t. I looked around to see if anyone was listening. Then I got close to her ear and told her softly, “Well, I’m gay! Can’t we be friends anyway?”

At last she really looked at me; she stared at me. “Are you kidding?” she said, as softly as I. “You’re *gay?* That’s wild!”

“So, can we still be friends?”

“Well—uh, yeah, I guess.”

“Can you meet me in the lunchroom and eat lunch with me, and tell me what’s been happening? I want to hear all about it! I mean it, Christie, I’m really glad to see you again!”

A faint spark of her old, sweet kindness seemed to brighten Christie’s eyes for a moment; then she looked away. “Thanks, Jim,” she said. “Yeah, let’s eat lunch together and talk.” She hesitated; she still did not look at me; and yet she said the words I longed to hear. “I’m really glad to see *you* again, too—even after everything that’s happened!”

* * * * *

I entered the lunchroom. Christie was waiting and watching for me, almost as if she were still in love with me. I began to wish I wasn’t gay and she wasn’t a lesbian.

“Hi, Jim!” she said. She was actually *smiling*, though she still seemed pretty shy about it. At least, I knew now, she still really liked me and wanted to be friends with me. That was a whole lot better than nothing.

“Hi, Christie!” I said. “Thanks for waiting for me!”

“Uh, any time—old friend!”

“Any time? You mean like every day?”

“Uh—wow!” She gave a little laugh. “Jim, this is so *sudden!*”

“It is not! I’ve been waiting almost two and a half years. We’ve got a whole lot of talking to catch up on, old friend!”

We got our mediocre, mildly disgusting, forgettable school lunches and sat down. “Well,” I said, “where have you been all my last two and a half years of life? The last thing I remember, your parents were yanking you out of Oceanview Park and putting you in Pacific Heights Christian, and, uh, I was giving you a kiss.”

“Oh, you remember that too! Uh—I guess we were both a lot different then.” Was she starting to blush, or was it only my fervid imagination?

“Well—maybe so. But what happened after that? You went away, and now you’re back, and that’s all I know.”

“I wish that was all *I* knew!” She looked down and shoved some food around. “Yeah, they yanked me out, all right. That was when I started to wonder whether I really wanted to be a Christian.”

I looked at her in wonder. “Did you?” I asked.

“No,” she said, “especially after my mom and dad started to break up, and my mom started taking us to this new church, Seaview Grove Full Bible Fellowship,

where the pastor said it was OK for her to dump my dad and try to get a Christian husband, because my dad was turning into an unbeliever.”

“Was he really?”

“I don’t know, but he wasn’t as gung-ho on sending me to Pacific Heights Christian as my mom was. He thought it was more expensive than it was worth.”

“Was it?”

Christie made a choking noise and a wretched-looking, but funny, face. “To say the *least!*” she affirmed. “It was worth *nothing*—or *less* than nothing! Well, my mom started accusing my dad of not being a faithful enough Christian, because he was more interested in money than in giving me a good Christian education. My dad didn’t like that at all, but he couldn’t really claim I was going to get a ‘good Christian education’ at Oceanview Park, because obviously I wasn’t. So, they didn’t talk a lot about it for a while, but it was pretty obvious that they weren’t very happy with each other.”

“Um—did they end up getting divorced or anything?”

“Yup.” She shoved some more food around on her plate. “Not before Mom found out Dad was bisexual, though. She really went crazy then, and the pastor actually egged her on to divorce him and look for a Christian husband. So she divorced him, and he moved into an apartment in Pacific Heights—but fortunately she doesn’t have a Christian husband yet!”

“You’re hoping she doesn’t get one?”

“You bet—especially if she doesn’t get one with *money!*” Now Christie was actually grinning, almost like her old, happy self. “This is the most excellent irony you ever saw! Mom broke up with Dad because she insisted on sending me to Pacific Heights Christian—but, after the divorce, she ended up not being able to afford to keep sending me there, and she had to work so she couldn’t home-school me. She’d make a *horrible* home-school mom, anyway, and she didn’t really want to. So, I got to go *here!*”

I laughed. “Well,” I assured her, “I’m really glad about *that*, anyway!”

* * * * *

“Do you want to go somewhere after school and talk some more?” I asked Christie after lunch.

“You bet! Bike to Farquhar?”

“Sounds good to me.” Farquhar Park, on the big hill beyond the shopping center where Susanna worked, was one of the biggest parks in Pacific Heights. It was well known as a trysting place for lovers, including gay and lesbian ones. It wasn’t

very safe at night, or so people said, but it was all right during the daytime. “Uh, will that be all right with your mom?”

“It will if I get home before 5:30, when she gets home from work.”

We got up to go. Near the wide doorway of the lunchroom, a couple of fundamentalists were handing out Bible tracts and trying to talk to people about Jesus. One of them was Steve Monohan. I politely refrained from giving them the finger, and simply tried to ignore them—but I didn’t succeed.

“The Holy Bible says that everything concealed shall be revealed,” Steve announced as I approached. He extended his hand, holding a tract—but then, with a quick sleight-of-hand maneuver, he handed me a picture of Randy Frick in girls’ clothes instead. “Will you turn to Jesus in your time of need—or *will you be next?*”

I stared at the picture, and then at Steve, in horror and loathing. He was grinning and almost drooling at the thought of revealing *me* in girls’ clothes. Many filthy expressions crossed my mind. Only out of respect for Christie, whom I wanted to treat as a lady even now, did I keep them from crossing my lips.

“Neither,” I told him shortly, shoving the picture into my pocket. “Get out of my way.” I put my right arm around Christie’s shoulder and we passed through the narrow gap between the fundamentalists. Only when we had passed them did my left middle finger, still politely pointing downward, stand out distinctly from its fellow fingers.

* * * * *

Christie and I rode side by side, up into the highest part of Farquhar Park. Here, surrounded by trees and strangers almost five miles from home, we could feel free to be ourselves and speak our minds. Even the weather seemed to approve: the pale gray skies of Sunday had given way to pure white clouds in a clear blue sky, on one of the few perfect days to be seen in notoriously cloudy, rainy Pacific Heights.

We dismounted and sat on an old stone bench between a weeping willow and an evergreen. “Good place for gays and lesbians,” I commented, after seeing two obviously gay men walking hand in hand. “Well, now that we’re out of hearing of anyone at school, let’s talk about it.”

Christie looked at me with wide-open eyes, but said nothing. “Um—me first?” I asked her. She nodded “yes” in silence.

“Well,” I said, “I don’t know when I first knew I was gay, but it must have been before the end of eighth grade. You remember Steve Monohan, the red-haired fundamentalist who was handing out, uh, tracts and things in the lunchroom today?”

“Ugh! Yes—what about him?”

“Well, he didn’t use to be a fundamentalist, and he used to be friends with me. I used to, um, make pictures of myself in girls’ clothes on the computer at his house, and he ate them up.” I glanced at Christie to see her reaction. She was smiling, but with pursed lips, as if she were trying to keep from laughing.

“Well,” I went on, “one day I really put on some girls’ clothes for him, and he was, uh, feeling me up. I’m pretty sure he wanted to, uh, have gay sex with me—but then his mom caught us and called the police!”

Christie gave a little shriek. “Oh, *no!* They didn’t arrest you, did they?”

“Nope. Steve’s mom wanted me arrested for molesting Steve, but they told her a 14-year-old couldn’t molest another 14-year-old according to the law, if there was no force or intimidation. They made me get out of the house while I was still wearing the girls’ clothes, though.”

“Oh, how *embarrassing!*” Christie put her hand on my shoulder, as if to comfort me in case I felt any remaining embarrassment. I loved her for the touch of kindness. I was going to *refuse* to stay gay, I decided, if only I could have Christie’s love.

She looked at me, still with her hand on my shoulder. “If you don’t mind my saying so, though,” she said, “I’ll bet you made a very pretty girl.” After a moment she added, “Prettier than *me*, at least.”

“I did not!” I said at once. With shame I remembered the time when I had thought Christie unbearably ugly—when I had been wrong, dead wrong. “Christie,” I said, “please don’t imagine you made yourself *ugly* by hacking off your hair and wearing boys’ clothes. It didn’t work, if that’s what you were trying to do. And even if it *had* worked, and if you were horribly ugly, I’d still be in love with you—just like I was in love with you in seventh grade, when you had long beautiful hair and you wore pretty dresses.”

Christie gasped in astonishment. “But—Jim!” she stammered. “Uh—that doesn’t sound like a very gay thing to say! I mean—not that it *has* to!”

“Well,” I told her, “maybe I’m bisexual.”

She seemed to be starting to cry, but her moist brown eyes were fixed on me. “I think I’m bisexual too,” she said at once. “I mean—well, I’m not sure what I mean.”

I had to put my arm around her; then I put my other arm around her too. “I’m sure what *I* mean,” I said. “I love you, Christie.”

Now she was certainly crying. I hoped it was for joy. “Jim, I love you too!” she cried, embracing me in return. “I’ve always loved you, even when I gave up hope that I’d ever see you again!”

My heart demanded that I kiss her. I touched her under the chin. She raised her eyes to me. They were filled with tears, but she didn’t seem to care. My lips came close to hers.

“Is this a date?” she whispered to me with a little smile, nestling even closer to me in my arms. “And, if so, is it our first one? Do you really think I ought to let you kiss me on our first date?”

I laughed. “Our first date,” I told her, “was in seventh grade, when we went to the lunchroom together on the first day of school. I didn’t kiss you on it. Our *last* date was when you told me your parents were yanking you out of Oceanview Park and putting you in Pacific Heights Christian. You let me kiss you *then*, if you’ll recall.”

“Yes, I did,” she admitted. “It was nice. I remember it well. Do you want to give me another kiss like that?”

“*Almost* like that,” I said. Our lips met, pressed one another closely, and stayed together much longer than they had done in seventh grade. I could feel Christie’s heart pounding against my chest. I still didn’t stick my tongue into her mouth—but softly, delicately, only for a moment, our tongues emerged from between our lips and met, as if in promise of delights to come.

* * * * *

For a long time after we kissed, Christie and I embraced each other in silence. At last she dried her eyes and said, “Well, you don’t need to tell me any more gay things about yourself, if you don’t want to.”

I laughed. “You don’t need to tell me *any* lesbian things about yourself, if you don’t want to!” I assured her.

“There’s not a lot to tell,” she said. “After the divorce, my mom got me during the week and my dad on a lot of weekends. Mom tried to get Dad’s visitation cut off, but the only thing she could say about why he was an unfit parent was that he was bisexual, and the judge didn’t buy that as a reason. So, on the weekends when I’ve been with Dad, I’ve met a bunch of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transvestites in Queen’s Bluff, where Dad’s apartment is. Some of them are pretty nasty, but some of them I like a lot better than your average fundamentalist—to say the least!”

“So, um, you liked some of the lesbians, and you decided you wanted to be like them?” I asked.

“I guess so,” she said. “Well, one in particular, Kathy Weenan, I liked a lot, and she liked me a lot too. She’s a nurse, at least twice my age, and she started coming on to me almost as soon as she met me. She was really gentle and kind, and I could tell she really needed somebody to love her. I did too, and—well, I was still going to Pacific Heights Christian then, and I thought I was never going to see *you* again. And at school I was hearing so much bad crap, or bad stuff about gays and lesbians, it made me want to *be* one!” I laughed.

“So,” Christie went on, “I could tell that Kathy really wanted to make love with me, and I started to imagine what it would be like. Pretty soon I was imagining it would be really nice, and really exciting, and I wanted to do it with her. Then one weekend we went out to dinner together to this really good restaurant, and I went back to her apartment with her, and—well, we did it.” Christie’s eyes were lowered now. “Since then, for the last six months or so, we’ve been doing it every weekend that I’ve been on visitation with Dad.”

I felt afraid to ask, but I had to know: “Are you going to do it with her again this weekend?”

“No,” Christie said at once. “My heart hasn’t been in it so much lately, and the excitement’s been wearing off a little. I think it has been for her, too, not only for me.”

She looked at me again; she gave me a lovely, mildly mischievous smile. “Besides,” she said, “I’m going to introduce her to my *new* girlfriend, if you wouldn’t mind wearing some girls’ clothes to my dad’s apartment this weekend!”

I laughed out loud. “For you, my love,” I told her, “*anything!*”

She laughed with me. “You’re a pretty good sport, Jim,” she said. “Not many guys would be willing to do that.”

“Call me Judy,” I said. “I’m going to be your *girlfriend*, after all.”

“Or my cute transvestite boyfriend,” Christie giggled. “I can hardly wait to see you—*Judy!*”

“You don’t need to wait until this weekend,” I said, following a sudden thought. “I’ve got some pretty girls’ clothes at home—and I know where I could get some more, this afternoon.”

“Ooh! *Yes!* Please do! I’ll bet you’ll look absolutely *lovely!*”

I laughed one more time. “Maybe so,” I said, “but fair’s fair. I’ll do it if *you’ll* get some pretty girls’ clothes too—like the ones you used to wear in seventh grade.”

Christie looked at me yet again; this time she did not look away. Her eyes were moist and shining. “For you, my love,” she told me with a delightful little laugh, “*anything!*”

* * * * *

We coasted back down from Farquhar Park; I led the way to Farman’s. Good old Susanna was there, and greeted me warmly even though I had ignored her for many months now. “Oh, hello! I’m so glad to see you again!” she said. She seemed uncertain whether to call me “Judy” when I had a friend with me.

“Susanna, I’m sorry I haven’t seen you, or e-mailed you, for way too long,” I told her. “I haven’t been doing very well, I’m afraid, but I hope things are better

now, and I'd like you to meet a friend of mine! This is Christie; Christie, this is Susanna."

"Hello, Christie!" said Susanna. She looked up and down at Christie, as if trying to verify that she was really a girl and not a short-haired boy with a padded bra. "I'm so glad to meet you! Any friend of—uh—J—" She stopped. She really didn't know whether she ought to call me Judy.

"Any friend of Judy's is a friend of yours, I hope!" I said. "You can call me Judy. Christie knows all about it. We'd both like to get some pretty clothes."

"Oh, would you really? That's wonderful! I'm so glad!" Susanna seemed to raise her eyes to heaven for a moment, as if in thanksgiving for a long-delayed answer to her prayer for me. Then she said, "Well, look around, and let me know what you'd like!"

We did look around. Christie selected a white, high-necked, calf-length dress with little many-colored flowers printed all over, a lot like the dresses she wore in seventh grade. It looked so good to me that I picked one in my size to match it. We got matching white knit tops and blue skorts, too. Then, flush with funds since Adam had been buying my girls' clothes for me, I bought a full knee-length skirt with a pattern of big, bright-colored exotic flowers, and a rather expensive, semi-sheer cream-colored blouse with a big lace collar. A pair of Patti's Puffies, a short heart-top slip, and a magnificent lacy back-hook bra completed my feminine outfit. I still had boys' sneakers on, and so did Christie, but we didn't care.

"It's all right if we put some of these clothes on in the dressing rooms, isn't it?" I asked Susanna after we bought the clothes.

"Oh, *yes*, of course!" Susanna said. She laughed, almost giggled. "I'd love to see you two together in them!"

She got her wish fairly soon. Christie emerged from her dressing room first in her little-flower dress. After several minutes, at least half of which I spent struggling with the bra, I came out and joined her, resplendent in the semi-sheer blouse, the flowered skirt, and more. "Oh, I wish I could take a picture of you!" Susanna exclaimed. "You're both so beautiful! Say, would you both like to come to my house sometime for dinner—maybe Sunday dinner?"

"Sure!" I said at once. "I mean, *I* would, and I'll bet Christie would too—wouldn't you, Christie?"

"Uh—you bet!" Christie said. "A Sunday would be perfect." I figured she meant her dad would let her go, and then she could go back to her mom's house later.

"Would *this* Sunday be perfect—or at least all right?" Susanna asked. "Uh, Judy, you know the very wise old friend I was telling you about, the one who helped me understand my husband and accept him the way he was, and is?"

"Uh, yeah—yes," I said, vaguely recalling.

"Well, we're hoping he can come over to our house for dinner this Sunday, and maybe you and Christie can meet him! You'd like that, wouldn't you?" It seemed

obvious that the only acceptable answer was “yes.” I gave the only acceptable answer. Christie did too.

“I’m so glad!” Susanna said. “I can hardly wait!” She wrote the directions to her house, and the time for dinner, on the back of one of her cards and gave it to me. “See you both there!” she said.

Christie and I walked toward the store’s front door. By the time we got there, we were holding hands. I was so full of bliss, I was actually out on the sidewalk in front of the store before I felt a shock of fear that someone untrustworthy might see me in girls’ clothes.

“Oh, no!” I said, glancing down through my blouse at my slip and bra. “I can’t go *home* like this!”

“Oh, I guess maybe not,” said Christie. “I can’t go to my mom’s house in my boys’ clothes, either. I actually had to wear a skirt and blouse to school today, and then I changed in the shower room. If she ever saw me in boys’ clothes, my mom would get *mighty peeved!*” Christie grinned.

“But we can walk around *here* for a few minutes like this, can’t we?” she asked. “Look, there’s a Blessing’s Buffet over there! There’s one on Queen’s Bluff near my dad’s apartment, too. They’re pretty friendly to gays and lesbians. Do you want to check the menu—and change in the restroom?”

“Let’s go, my love,” I said.

We went; we saw; we shared a quick salad at a little table with a blue-and-white checkered tablecloth. The restaurant was a bright, plain, clean, unpretentious place with plenty of good food to choose from, exactly the kind of place I liked. It seemed like a thoroughly normal, wholesome place, and yet it didn’t seem to matter to anyone in the restaurant if I was a lesbian, a transvestite, or whatnot. For the first time ever when dressed as a girl, I felt almost as calm and relaxed as a real girl would feel—though not quite, for a real girl’s heart would surely run slower than mine. I decided to ask Christie to come here again, very soon.

“We’d better say good-bye right around here,” Christie said when we had changed clothes, left Blessing’s Buffet, and retrieved our bikes. “It’s getting pretty close to time for my mom to get home. No use taking the risk that she might see me with that most dreaded of undesirable entities, a *boy*”—her big eyes sparkled—“especially if he’s the boy I love!”

I gave her a last quick kiss. “I’ll see you tomorrow,” I assured her, “and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow!”

“To the last syllable of recorded time,” she rejoined, picking up at once on Shakespeare’s words and discarding the parts of the quotation she didn’t want. “But signifying a whole lot more than *nothing!*”

Chapter 7

Next day at school, Christie and I were together as much as possible. She didn't change out of her dress, a very plain but not unattractive light blue one. Together we watched in dismay as pictures of Randy Frick in girls' clothes spread throughout the school, evoking laughter and contempt from many students. I wished we could do something to help him, but we didn't even see him.

The following day, Wednesday, was even worse. Christie and I, with the help of precisely synchronized watches but not of forbidden phone calls, met each other on our bikes a few blocks from home and rode to school together. When we arrived, two lines of boys, accompanied by a few girls, were waiting in front of the main school entrance. Steve Monohan was among them.

Last year I had sometimes seen Randy arriving at school in Adam's car, or walking with Adam from the car to the school building. Today I saw him walking alone, crossing the street in front of the school. Christie and I locked our bikes and started toward the entrance. Randy got there ahead of us. When he did, the boys in the lines started shouting, "*Queer line!*"

I saw one boy spit in Randy's face. Another threw something that looked like a used condom at him. Steve displayed a big blown-up picture of Randy in sexy girls' clothes, and cried out that everything concealed would be revealed. Other boys threw smaller pictures of Randy at him.

Then a big, stout boy I didn't know, with ultra-short hair, mean-looking eyes, fat lips, and huge hairy arms, stepped out and slapped Randy hard in the face. "Don't get fresh with me, queer!" he demanded. "I get my blow jobs from my *girl-friend*, not from a *queer!*" The boys in the lines roared with laughter.

Randy stood still for a moment with his skinny fists clenched. He looked like he was trying, but failing, to force himself not to cry. "Goddamn queer crybaby!" said the big hairy boy. Randy turned around and strode away from school, though not before the big bully had kicked him hard in the butt. Feeling helpless and almost worthless, I watched him go.

I didn't see Randy again that day or the next. I never saw him alive again at all. The next I heard of him was on Friday morning. Even before Christie and I entered the building, we heard two girls we didn't know talking to each other:

"Hey, did you hear about that skinny long-haired guy that was wearing girls' clothes in those pictures they were passing around?"

"Guck! Yeah, what about him?"

"I heard he killed himself last night; at least I think it was him. It was on the local news this morning. His name was Randy Frick, right?"

"Yeah, Randy Frick. Are you kidding? He *killed* himself? That sucks! How did he do it?"

“Jumped off Point Ransom Bridge. Somebody driving by saw him do it and reported it.”

“God damn, that really sucks!”

I stared after the girls, who quickly changed the subject and walked on. I felt as if I couldn't breathe. I hadn't even really known Randy; I'd never spoken to him, and he hadn't wanted anything to do with me. Why was I starting to cry like a “queer crybaby”? Why did I need to hold Christie, and need her to hold me with all her might to try to comfort me? Why was my heart being throttled by foul, sickening fear?

* * * * *

The first Art Club meeting of the school year was held early, that Friday afternoon. Christie came with me, though she claimed she wasn't much of an artist. The mood was somber, to say the least. A couple of girls were crying. Adam was quickly reelected president. He announced that he wanted the club to organize a big, school-wide memorial service for Randy.

“The attack on Randy Frick,” Adam proclaimed, “is an attack on all artists. Randy's despair and suicide are a challenge to all artists. We artists need to take the lead in cherishing Randy's memory, and in trying to make sure that nothing like this will ever happen again.”

I was totally shocked, despite all I now knew about Adam and his mother. I was glad it was all right to cry at this meeting. I cried, but not about Randy.

So *this* was Adam's “total honesty”! He had *started* the attack on Randy; he had produced the pictures of Randy in girls' clothes; he must somehow have made sure the attackers and others would get them—and now he was taking the lead in “cherishing Randy's memory”! Foulter still, he claimed he was trying to make sure nothing like this would happen again—and yet he had threatened to “reveal” me like Randy, if I didn't give up my virginity to him on video this very Sunday!

Christie was discreetly holding my hand. I clasped her hand tightly in mine, but my thoughts just now were not of her. A fearsome plan was forming in my mind, and I had almost decided to carry it out.

* * * * *

“Christie,” I said softly as we were walking to our bikes after school, “you remember when we were talking in Farquhar Park, and you said I didn’t need to tell you any more ‘gay things’ about myself?” Christie nodded, her eyes wide open.

“Well, I think I *do* need to tell you a few more things. Can we maybe go back to Farquhar sometime, where we’ll have some privacy, and I can tell you?”

“Maybe sometime like this afternoon?” Christie asked. “It’s time for me to go back to my dad’s house, and that’s not far from Farquhar. Would you like to come over and meet my dad, after we’ve talked?”

“Uh, sure!”

“You’ll bring some girls’ clothes, won’t you? I think you’d, uh, fit in better in Queen’s Bluff if you wore them!” She laughed.

* * * * *

Christie and I ascended again to Farquhar Park, came back to our old stone bench between the weeping willow and the evergreen, and sat close together on it. Having changed again at Blessing’s Buffet, I wore my white knit top and blue skort, panties and bra underneath, white crew socks, and girls’ sneakers. Christie looked memorably lovely, to me at least, in her top and skort that matched mine. I dare say we were one of the cutest fake lesbian couples in the universe, at least at that moment. I now felt almost normal in girls’ clothes, or as nearly normal as I fancied I could ever feel.

“Well,” I said. I took a deep breath. Christie looked at me in expectation.

“You saw the president of the Art Club, Adam Potter,” I said. She nodded.

“Well, I’ve been doing some modeling in girls’ clothes for him. I’m not going to any more.”

“Uh, it’s fine with me if you don’t!” Christie assured me, putting her hand on my shoulder.

“I’m afraid that’s not all there is to it, though,” I said.

“Ugh! You don’t want to do it,” Christie asked me, or told me, at once. “I mean, it sounds like you don’t want to.”

“No, I don’t—but he’s threatened to ‘reveal’ me, like he revealed Randy Frick, if I don’t go through with it.”

Christie stared at me, obviously trying hard to imagine what I could be talking about. “You mean—those pictures of Randy in girls’ clothes came from *Adam*?”

“That’s right,” I said. “He’s got tons of them, or at least he had tons of them before the ‘revealing’ started.” I hesitated; then I told her, “He’s got some of me, too.”

Christie took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “And he’s going to let everyone see them,” she said.”

“I’m not going to let him do it,” I said, “and I’ve been getting kind of a crazy idea about—uh—what I might do instead of letting him do it.”

“Oh, good, I like crazy ideas!” Christie said, but with only a weak, worried-sounding laugh. “Some of them, anyway. What’s yours?”

“Well, I’m thinking I might go to the police, and—um—‘reveal’ Adam and his mom to them.” I looked to see Christie’s reaction. She lifted her bushy eyebrows high, but she said nothing.

“There’s this crazy law,” I explained. “You remember how I was telling you Steve Monohan’s mom called the police on me, but they said they couldn’t arrest me.” Christie nodded.

“Well, the law says even a 17-year-old can’t molest a 14-year-old if there’s no force or intimidation—but an 18-year-old *can* molest a 15-year-old, and it’s a *felony!*”

Christie laughed out loud. “Are you kidding? That’s totally bizarre!”

“Maybe so,” I said, “but Adam’s 18, and I’m 15. If the police could see the video, then maybe Adam could get what he deserves, even if they have to use a totally bizarre law to give it to him.”

“Wow!” Christie didn’t seem to know what to think. “Are they going to be able to see it, though? Do you really think that would work?”

“I don’t know,” I said, “but I think, tomorrow morning, I’m going to go to the police station and find out!”

* * * * *

From the far side of Farquhar Park we descended into Queen’s Bluff. Soon we were rolling down wide, straight, steep Queen’s Boulevard, clutching the brakes all the way. Here the well-known pseudo-European flavor of Queen’s Bluff was at its most intense; we saw sidewalk cafés, big balconies, narrow side streets, and many more bicycles than in the more mediocre parts of greater Pacific Heights. A blue-and-white electric trolley-bus sped past us down the boulevard, making for University Hill; another one, farther down, slowly made its way up toward the entrance to Farquhar Park.

We turned left onto a narrow street. About a quarter mile from Queen’s Boulevard we came to a pink four-story apartment building, where Christie signaled me to stop. We took off our helmets, locked our bikes, and walked up to enter the building.

Christie pushed a button near the front door. After a moment, a soft, high, extremely gay-sounding male voice responded: “Hello!”

“Hi, Patricia!” said Christie. “Is Dad home yet?”

“He should be home soon,” the male voice said. “Do you want to come on up?”

“You bet!” A buzzing sound signaled that we could enter. We walked up narrow stairs to the fourth floor, and down the hall to the last door on the right.

The door opened to reveal a short, plump, smiling, fortyish lady, or a person who certainly *looked* like a lady. She wore stylish little ladies’ glasses; her mouse-brown hair, almost the same color as Christie’s short hair and not yet streaked with gray, was long and glossy; her blue eyes were sweet and sparkling; her lips were full and deep pink; her breasts, beneath her burgundy-colored dress with white lace collar, looked large and womanly; her legs were stout but shapely. Only her voice was not quite the voice of a woman.

“Hi, Patricia!” Christie said again. “Long week no see!”

“Hi, Christie!” said Patricia. “Welcome home! Come on in!” Christie came in, but not before she put her arm around me. Patricia’s eyes opened wide when she saw me. “Well, *hello!*” she said.

“Patricia, this is Judy,” Christie said. “Judy, this is Patricia, my dad’s girlfriend.”

“Judy, I’m so glad to meet you!” said Patricia, shaking my hand with both of hers. She seemed to mean more than she said. Her eyes darted between me and Christie. “Christie,” she said softly, “am I to imagine that Judy is your new *girlfriend?*” Christie vigorously nodded “yes” and squeezed my arm.

“Oh, that’s *perfect!* I was a bit worried—well, Kathy’s waiting for you in the back room, and she’s got some news for you, and I was a bit worried about how you might react—but this will make everything work out *perfectly!*”

“If you say so,” Christie said with a smile. “I guess I should go find out the news. Judy, do you want to find it out too?”

“Uh, sure, I guess so,” I said. When I did, Patricia raised her eyebrows and almost burst out laughing. I could pass the feminine looks test pretty well, I thought, but I totally flunked on the voice.

“Oh, that’s *beautiful!*” Patricia said. “A girl lesbian and a *boy* lesbian! Say, Judy, you’ve really got the look!”

“Thanks,” I said. “So do you!”

Christie led me toward the back room, filled with sunlight streaming through a big picture window with good view of University Hill. On an old red velvet sofa facing the window sat two women who looked to be in their late 20s or early 30s, both wearing shirts and trousers. One was short and stout, with short curly dark hair and sweet, sad brown eyes; the other, much taller, had even shorter blond hair and much happier-looking blue eyes.

“Hi, Kathy,” said Christie. “Judy, this is my friend Kathy Weenan. Kathy, this is my friend Judy MacGregor.”

The short woman, Kathy, got up and shook my hand. Her eyes were wide open in wonder. Christie still had her arm around my shoulder.

“Great to meet you, Judy!” Kathy said. “Uh, Judy, and Christie, I’d like you to meet my good friend Karen Hakansson.” The tall blond woman got up and shook our hands; then she put her arm around Kathy’s big waist.

“Hi, Karen!” said Christie. “Where do you know Kathy from?”

“Work,” said Karen. “We’ve been seeing a lot of each other at the hospital.”

“And, uh, where do you know Judy from, Christie?”

“School, and home. We live in the same neighborhood, and we used to go to school together. Now we’re in the same school again, and—well, we used to like each other a lot in seventh grade, and we found out we still do.”

“Well, that’s wonderful!” Kathy looked quite relieved, though she seemed to be sweating. “I was—well, I have to say I was hoping you’d find a nice girlfriend your own age. I mean—well, I really think it’s better to stick with someone about your own age, even though—it might not always seem better at the time.” Now I was sure she was sweating.

“I think you’re right!” said Christie. “I was hoping you’d see it that way, and I’m really glad you do!” She hesitated; then she put her free arm around Kathy.

“That’s more like it!” Kathy said. “You’re a great friend, Christie.”

Kathy looked up at Karen and smiled. “Karen and I are going out to Chez Bonhomie for dinner,” she said. “We just wanted to stop in for a few minutes and, uh, make sure everything was all right with you.”

“Everything is,” Christie assured her. “Have a wonderful time!”

* * * * *

Christie, Patricia, and I sat around the kitchen table and chatted after Kathy and Karen left—or rather Christie and Patricia chatted almost nonstop, while I mostly sat and listened. Before long, a click in the lock of the apartment door signaled the arrival of Christie’s dad.

“Anybody home?” he called out in a deep, manly voice.

“We’re all in here!” Patricia said. She got up at once to meet him. Christie and I followed close behind. Awaiting us was a brown-eyed man of medium height in his 40s, wearing men’s business casual clothes, with short brown hair and an equally short brown beard, showing only a few small flecks of gray. He was quite a hand-

some man, I thought—except for his slightly hoggish nose, reminiscent of Christie’s own.

His first order of business was to embrace Patricia and kiss her on the mouth for several seconds. Only after that did he turn his attention to us.

“Welcome home again, Christie,” he said. “I see you’ve got a friend with you!”

“Yes, and what a friend!” She beamed at her dad with glowing eyes. “Dad, this is my good friend Judy. Judy, this is my dad.”

“Good to meet you, Judy,” said her dad. “Have you known Christie very long?”

“I’ve known her for years,” I said. “I live down the street from—her mom’s house in Seaview Grove.”

Christie’s dad lifted his eyebrows, even bigger and bushier than Christie’s. He grinned. “Say, you’re *good!*” he told me. “What do you think, Patricia? Can you tell the difference, except for the voice?”

“I really can’t,” Patricia said. “You’ve picked yourself a real beauty, Christie!”

“You’re right!” Christie said with a laugh.

“Where’s Kathy?” her dad asked. “I thought she was, uh, going to come over this afternoon.”

“She did,” said Patricia. “Mission accomplished; two sets of sweethearts fully satisfied with the outcome!”

“Hey, that’s excellent,” said Christie’s dad. “I guess I was worrying over nothing.”

“What, *you* worry?” Patricia said. “I can’t believe *that!*” She kissed him on the cheek. He turned around and gave her kiss on the mouth, even longer than the first one.

“Well,” Christie’s dad said when the kiss had ended, “Patricia and I are going out to dinner this evening. Judy, I’m sure you’re welcome to stay for dinner here with Christie—and, uh, we’ve got some overnight accommodations too, if you’d like to stay!”

Christie sighed. “Thanks, Dad,” she said promptly and a bit pertly, “but that really won’t be necessary!”

* * * * *

“I hope you’re not offended by the refusal of overnight accommodations!” Christie said when I was about to leave. “You know I’m in love with you, and I’m not a Christian any more—but I still want to be a virgin until I get married, at least as far as *guys* are concerned, and now as far as *anyone*’s concerned. I hope that’s all right with you!” Her great eyes implored me to say it was.

“It’s perfect,” I assured her. “I’ve had enough of the other kind of sh—of stuff; I want something better. I know you do too. What would be the point of turning me into a cheap substitute for Kathy—and *you* into a cheap substitute for *Adam*?”

“*Ugh!*” she said most earnestly. “I never even *thought* of it *that way!*” She embraced me tightly; our hearts beat hard together.

“Well, keep yourself safe,” Christie said when we were parting. “I hope you help Adam get what he deserves!”

“I hope so too,” I said, though still I felt afraid to go through with my plan.

Chapter 8

“Mom, I’m going to the library,” I called out. “I probably won’t be back for a while.”

“All right,” she said. “Just make sure to be back for lunch—and stop by the barber shop, all right?”

“Maybe I’ll stop by and say hi to the barber,” I said with a little smile. Mom and Dad still didn’t like my shoulder-length hair, but they didn’t want to force the issue with me.

I strode out and mounted my bike. I hadn’t lied to my mom. I really was going to go to the library, for a few minutes. Then—if only my very limited courage didn’t fail me—I was going to go to the police station.

My bike soon brought me to downtown Seaview Grove. Only a few blocks farther along wide Grove Avenue, the main street of our little city, the high school stood quiet and empty; beyond it was the little shopping center where I had so often met Adam. Nearer to me was City Hall, a boxy, modern, mediocre-looking structure. Nearer still, set back from the sidewalk on higher ground, was the police station, built long ago in classical style—complete with round pillars, big globe lights outside, a great concrete walkway and stairway leading up from the street, and huge capital letters spelling out “POLICE” above the wide double door. Across the side street from the station, displaying the traditional revolving cylinder spinning out infinite ribbons of red, white, and blue, was the barber shop I wasn’t really going to enter. Nearest of all was the library, a prim, functional, but cheerful-looking brick building, where I was now locking my bike.

I entered the building and smiled at the librarian at the front desk, a pretty young one with long black hair. She smiled back at me. I was wearing boys’ clothes now, of course; I might have been just another cute long-haired high-school boy, for all she knew.

I picked out a book from the new nonfiction shelf and sat down; I hardly even noticed the title. I didn’t read the book, although I stared at a couple of pages. I

was trying to make sure I knew what was the right thing to do. At last—at long last, it seemed—I thought I knew, despite the fear that still gripped me.

It wasn't just a matter of an 18-year-old molesting a willing 15-year-old, I knew. Adam was trying to *intimidate* me. He was hoping I would be so terrified by the thought of exposure that I would do anything he demanded. Worse yet, though perhaps he could never be charged with a crime for this, Adam had taken part in Randy's death; he had started the fatal chain of events that drove Randy to kill himself.

My decision was made. I arose, smiled again at the librarian, and strode toward the police station.

* * * * *

"Good morning," said the uniformed officer at the front desk, a fairly short, skinny guy with really short hair. "How can we help you?"

"Uh—I need to report some, uh, child molesting," I said, "and intimidation."

"All right," the officer said. "Go up to the second floor, room 204, the Detective Section, and ask for Detective Sylvia Cervantes."

I walked up a flight of wide marble stairs and saw a door that said "Detective Section," with the number 204 on it. There was a front desk here too, but no one was at it. I saw a couple of detectives doing things, but not looking at me. At last, from across the room, one of them noticed me and got up to see what I wanted.

As she drew closer, I could see that she was one of the officers who had been called out by Steve's mom, and who hadn't arrested me for molesting him. Her hair was shorter now, but not too short to be cute, and she now wore a blouse, not a bulletproof vest. "Hi, can I help you?" she said.

"I need to talk to Detective Sylvia Cervantes."

"That's me. What do you need?"

"I need to report some child molesting and intimidation."

She raised her eyebrows and quickly lowered them. "OK, we can go into an interview room. Have I seen you before?"

"Uh, well, you were one of the officers who came when a guy's mom claimed I was molesting him, about a year ago, and you said I wasn't because we were both 14." I lowered my voice. "I was, um, wearing girls' clothes then."

She started to laugh, but stopped herself. "Oh, yeah, I remember!" she said. "His mom was pretty peeved when she found out we weren't going to arrest you. You haven't *really* been molesting anybody, I hope—have you?"

"No, but somebody's been molesting *me*, and intimidating me too."

“Not the guy with the peeved mom?”

“No—well, actually, he’s kind of involved in the intimidation too, but he’s only about 15, like me. The guy who’s been doing it is 18.”

“Well, come on in here and we can talk about it.” She led me into a bare room, furnished only with a table and a few chairs; she put a pad of paper on the table and pulled out a pen. “Now, just start at the beginning,” she said, “and tell me what’s been going on.”

I did, while she wrote rapidly. Soon she knew how Adam had already been using me on video. She knew that Adam had been doing the same kind of thing with Randy Frick, “the guy who jumped off Point Ransom Bridge,” and that Adam had already ‘revealed’ Randy for backing out. She knew there seemed to be some kind of secret connection between Adam and Steve Monohan, which she found especially interesting, in the process of ‘revealing’ people.

“OK,” she said after she finished writing, “do you have anything else on Adam or his mom?”

“I don’t think so.”

“OK, let me just check their involvements on the computer. Adam Potter, and his mom’s name is—?”

“Uh, Serena Potter.” I knew her first name, but I had to think; I always just regarded her as Adam’s mom.

“Address and phone number?” I gave them to her.

“Date of birth, any other identifying info?”

“I don’t know.”

“OK, let’s give this a try. Come on out here.” She went back into the main detective area, typed on some keys, and stared at a computer screen.

“Hey, this is interesting,” she said. “This is *really* interesting.” She called out across the room to the other detective who was there: “Hey, Thor!”

“Yeah, what?” said the other detective, a massive blond Nordic-looking guy.

“Who was on the Frick death investigation?”

“Me. What about it?”

“Come here! Maybe it wasn’t a suicide after all!” Her words chilled my heart, though I still didn’t know why she was saying them.

“Sure looked like a suicide to me,” he said, approaching us. “Standard midnight bridge-jump. The story of the guy who saw it happen checked out OK. So why wasn’t it a suicide, Miss Experienced Detective?”

Detective Cervantes gave a little laugh. “He thinks he can bullshit me because I’ve only been a detective for six months and he’s been one for 600 years,” she explained to me. “OK, Mr. Experienced Detective, the guy who saw it happen and reported it was Adam Potter, right?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

“And you got the story of why Frick supposedly killed himself, right?”

“He *supposedly* killed himself,” the big detective said with seething sarcasm, “because these assholes at the high school *supposedly* made life unbearable for him—calling him a queer, ganging up on him, throwing used condoms at him, distributing pictures of him dressed up as a girl, and shit like that. We got evidence on all that yesterday.”

“What would you say,” she asked him, “if you found out those pictures came from Adam Potter, who got a guy named Steve Monohan to distribute them, in order to carry out a threat against Frick?”

The big detective stared at her. “I’d want to know what the threat was about,” he said.

“What if it was about getting Frick to go along with illegal activities of Potter and his mother, or to stay quiet about them?”

“What illegal activities?”

“Criminal deviant conduct, child exploitation, for starters.”

He stared at her longer, in cold dead silence. “If I found *that* out,” he said at last, “I *might* say, ‘Kick me in the face and call me butthead!’” His countenance changed at once; he gave a hearty laugh. “I’d sure want Potter and his mom to answer some more questions about that story. His mom was the main one who backed it up. So, are you telling me I’m actually going to find out all this shit, and find out Potter dumped Frick off the bridge and his mom lied for him?”

“I’ll bet you are, if you believe Jim here. Thor, this is Jim MacGregor. Jim, this is Detective Thor Thorvaldsen.” He shook my hand, almost crushing it.

“OK, Jim,” he asked me, “what have you got on Potter and his mom?” I told him what I had already told Detective Cervantes.

“Hot damn,” Detective Thorvaldsen said to Detective Cervantes when I had finished. “He’s got some pretty good shit on these fuckheads, if we can *believe* him. Have we got any corroboration of what he’s saying—or can we get some?”

“Well,” she said, “I was thinking we might get some from *them*, if he called them up. We’ve got their phone number verified from the involvement on the Frick death, so we’ll be pretty sure it’s *them* he’s talking to. What do you think?”

“Hmm,” he said. “It might be worth a shot.” He and Detective Cervantes started tossing around some ideas for things I might say to Adam and his mother.

* * * * *

“OK, you’re consenting to let us record this conversation, right?” Detective Thorvaldsen asked when I was ready to make the call.

“Yes,” I said.

“Cool. One party’s consent is all it takes—at least in *this* state. So make the call.”

I made the call. Adam answered. “Hi, Adam!” I said, in the most nearly cheerful voice I could manage. “This is Judy. How’s it going?”

“It’s going OK,” Adam said. “Hey, are we good to go for tomorrow?”

“Well—” I hesitated. I didn’t even want to say the word, but the detectives had told me I had to, so there would be no doubt what Adam planned to do. “Adam, can’t we do something else? I’m still afraid!”

“Judy,” Adam said, “come *on*. We’ve been over all this before. Just come on over tomorrow and we’ll talk about it, OK?”

“But—Adam, I’m *afraid!*” I said again. “I don’t *want* to!”

“Judy, come *on*,” Adam repeated. “There’s nothing to it. You can’t back out now. Please don’t get shitty with me. You saw what happened to Randy Frick. You don’t want the same thing to happen to *you*.”

“No, I don’t,” I admitted.

“Damn right,” said Adam.

I was so shocked I couldn’t think what to say next. The two detectives looked at me anxiously.

“Uh—Adam”—I groped for words—“what’s going to happen to *me*, if I don’t go through with this?”

“You’re going to get revealed like Randy, of course—and then you’re going to *kill* yourself like Randy.”

“I—but—Adam! How do you know I’m going to *kill myself* if I don’t go through with it?”

“God damn it,” Adam snapped, “I can *guarantee* that you’re going to kill yourself! Are you getting the point yet?”

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Yes,” I said. “I’m getting the point, all right.”

“Hey, why are you asking me about all this shit, anyway?” Adam asked me. “And why on the *phone*? Where are you calling from, anyway?”

“From a phone near the library. You don’t think I’m going to talk about this stuff on the phone at *home*, do you? And—I just felt like I needed to talk about some of this stuff *before* tomorrow. You don’t mind, do you?”

“Yeah, I mind. I don’t want to talk about this on the phone any more. Just come on over tomorrow and we’ll talk about it in person, if you really think we need to. We already agreed that you were going to go through with it.”

“Uh—well, then, I guess I’d better go through with it, hadn’t I?”

“Damn right,” said Adam. “Try it, you’ll like it. And just to make *sure* you’ll like it—I’m going to give Monohan a call and tell him to reveal you on Monday, unless I tell him *not* to do it. I’m sure he’ll be more than happy to reveal *you*—payback for getting him in trouble with his mom, you know. He still remembers that little inci-

dent well.” Adam laughed. “Everything concealed shall be revealed,” he said, “as the Holy Bible tells us!”

“But—after I go through with it—uh, how can I be sure Monohan won’t reveal me *anyway?*”

“You leave that to me. I’ve got a pretty good hold on Monohan too. That little asshole doesn’t really want *everything* concealed to be revealed. I’ll leave the details to your imagination.”

My imagination began to race at once, so fast that I didn’t speak again for several seconds. “All right,” I said. “I get the point. I’ll look for you in the parking lot tomorrow, the usual time.”

“That’s more like it,” Adam said. “When the going gets tough, the tough do *whatever it takes*. And remember, this has got to be *totally voluntary!*”

“I’ll remember,” I assured him. “See you there.” I hung up.

The two detectives were silent for a moment. “Hot *damn!*” Detective Thorvaldsen then said again. “That asshole needs to go away for a long, long time! I counted a possible murder, definite A felony crim deev, C felony intimidation by death threat right on the phone, and then I lost count—not to mention all the shit Jim talked about, which sounds pretty damn believable to me, and the shit about Potter’s hold on Monohan too. We’ll need the corpus delicti for the crim deev, but we’re going to get it. The divers got the body yesterday afternoon, and the autopsy’s going to include a good look at that dead boy’s butt hole!”

“Can we get a search warrant and a couple of arrest warrants done *today*,” Detective Cervantes asked, “so Jim won’t have to worry so much about what will happen if he doesn’t really go there tomorrow?”

“Yeah, we can, if I’ve got anything to say about it—and I will! A couple of slight twists on a prosecutor’s arm and a judge’s arm should do the job once I explain what’s going on.” He got up, walked back to the desk he had been sitting at, and picked up the phone.

“Well, Jim,” said Detective Cervantes, “thanks a whole lot for the information! I don’t think you’ll need to be afraid of Adam and his mom any more.”

“I hope not,” I said. “Now I’ll only need to be afraid of getting ‘revealed’ at school, if Adam can’t tell Steve Monohan to back off!”

“Well, yeah, there’s that,” she acknowledged. “But I think we’ll probably have a couple of officers ready to break up any ‘queer line’ that gets started on Monday morning, and we’ll bring Steve in for questioning about his role in the Potter scheme. He’ll have to have a parent with him, since he’s a juvenile. Do you think his mom will mind?”

“I don’t think he’ll say anything with his mom there. He was always pretty afraid she’d find out he was doing things she wouldn’t like. If he’s been doing *more* of them, I bet he’ll clam up.”

“That’s not good,” she said. After a moment’s silence she asked me, “Do you think *you* might get him to say something? You were pretty good at getting Adam to spill his guts.”

“Not if I talk to him on the phone at home, like Adam. He’d be afraid his mom was going to hear.”

“Well, then, could you talk to him after school on Monday? If we arrest Adam and his mom today and search their house, I’ll bet there’ll be a big article about it in the *Clarion*. The Monday issue should be out before school gets out. Maybe you could talk to Steve about the article, and see what he says? And would you mind wearing a wire, so we could record it?”

“What do you mean by a wire?”

“It’s a little thing with a hidden microphone and transmitting device. A police car down the street would receive the transmission and record it.”

I thought about it. “It might be worth a shot,” I said, echoing Detective Thorvaldsen. “If anyone in this thing needs to be ‘revealed’, besides Adam and his mom, it’s Steve!”

Chapter 9

Next day, alone in the house while my family was at church, I read the *Pacific Heights Informer*. Nowhere in the Sunday paper was there any mention of a police raid in Seaview Grove, but I hadn’t really expected to see one. I would have to wait until tomorrow afternoon, when the semiweekly edition of the *Seaview Grove Clarion* would appear, to see a report.

My family came back; my dad and my little brother greeted me perfunctorily, and quickly left the living room. Before my mom left too, I arose and spoke.

“Mom,” I said, “I’ve been invited to Sunday dinner with—a Christian lady who works at Farman’s department store, and her husband, and a friend of theirs. It’s OK if I go, isn’t it?”

“Oh!” my mom said. “Well—this is pretty sudden!”

“Christie Geistman’s invited too,” I added. “She’s back in public school this year, and we’ve been, uh, riding bikes together and stuff, sometimes.”

“Oh!” My mom’s face quickly brightened. “Well, I haven’t seen her for a while, but I thought she used to be a very nice girl.” Mom didn’t mention Christie’s fascinatingly immodest swimsuit, even if she remembered it. I was glad.

“I thought so too,” I admitted. “She still is.” I was so far gone in love with Christie, I didn’t even care if Mom saw me blushing, as she surely did.

“Well, I’m sure that would be all right,” Mom assured me. “We weren’t planning anything special. I hope you’ll have a really nice time!” Mom was beaming. I suspected she might be silently praying to God for Christie and me to get married someday. I guessed that was OK with me. For all I knew or cared now, even God might not be so bad after all—if he would approve of such an astounding thing as *that*.

* * * * *

I couldn’t change into girls’ clothes at Blessing’s Buffet or Farman’s; they were closed on Sunday. Christie and I went to Excellent Express, a little convenience store and gas station on the edge of the same shopping center. I had a good plan for turning into a girl now. It was so obvious, I couldn’t imagine why I hadn’t thought of it before.

Step one was to become a commonplace, inconspicuous girl in boys’ clothes. Behind the store, I parted my hair in the middle and put on a pure white headband; Christie helped me get the headband straight. My plaid shirt was loose; no one could tell the size of my breasts, or discern that I had no bra on.

We entered the store. Christie looked at some magazines and chatted with the clerk, a young lady in a young man’s shirt and trousers; I entered the ladies’ room, as any normal girl in boys’ clothes would do. Soon I emerged, still wearing my plain boys’ trousers, through which no one could see my pink Patti’s Puffies—but now I was wearing my semi-sheer blouse and my cute little lacy bra. Step two was complete; step three would be to put on my skirt and pull down my pants as discreetly as possible near Susanna’s house, for it would be pretty hard to ride my boy’s bike in a skirt.

Soon it was time for step three. We stopped by a little grove of evergreens. As if I were doing the most normal, everyday thing in the world, I opened my pack, pulled out my bright flowered skirt, slipped it over my head, and let it fall to my hips. Then I struggled with my pants until I got them off, trying not to lift my skirt too much. A pair of pretty, though fairly sensible, flat-heeled black ladies’ shoes completed my transformation. My racing heart and my trembling hands did not agree that any of this was normal, everyday activity, but I didn’t care. “You look lovely!” Christie assured me.

“So do you!” I said, and I meant it. She wore her white dress with the little flowers; it was one of the prettiest dresses I had ever seen, and yet I hardly noticed it. I was looking at her face, and I couldn’t stop looking. The ugly hog-nosed Christie of yesteryear had vanished without a trace. Like sunlight dispelling darkness, the light of love in her shining eyes was radiating beauty everywhere I looked.

At last I forced myself to look away. We walked our bikes up to Susanna’s house; I knocked. A fat, balding, but smiling middle-aged man, with pale gray eyes behind big glasses, opened the door.

“Hello, come in, come in!” he said, looking quickly from one of us to the other, as if he knew one of us was a boy in girl’s clothes but he didn’t know which. “Thanks so much for coming! Susanna’s got dinner ready; come on in and eat!”

We entered; I saw Christie and myself close together in the big mirror, side by side, our arms around each other. In the picture beside it, Jesus was still showing off his great red heart. It made me think of Christie’s heart.

“Judy! Christie! I’m so glad to see you again!” Susanna cried out, coming in from the dining room. “Come on in!” We did. On the far side of the dining room, a short, very stout old woman with pure white shoulder-length curly hair, wearing a floor-length black dress, was looking at some books in a little bookcase, with her back turned toward us. When we came in, she turned around. I almost gasped out loud. She had little laughing blue eyes behind small wireless glasses, a big red nose, a round red face, an open smiling mouth—and no breasts at all, and a long white beard.

“Bishop Bean,” Susanna said, “these are my young friends, Judy MacGregor and Christie Geistman. Judy and Christie, this is our very dear old friend, Bishop Francis Bean.”

“Hello, Judy; hello, Christie,” said Bishop Bean. “I’m very pleased to meet you both.” His voice sounded very old indeed, but it was no more womanly than mine. I tried not to stare at him. I hoped he wasn’t going to try to convert me, or Christie either.

“Dinner’s ready,” Susanna announced. “Bishop, would you please lead us in saying grace?”

He did, complete with the sign of the cross before and after. I discreetly did nothing and said nothing; so did Christie. We sat down to a big, outstanding Sunday dinner of lasagna, chunky vegetable soup, homemade brown bread, a big chef’s salad, and more.

“Bishop Bean has been very helpful to us in our marriage,” Susanna said, looking directly at me. “I’m afraid we might not have made it this far without him.”

“All you needed was some old-fashioned straight thinking and plain speaking,” said Bishop Bean. “What God has joined together, let not man put asunder—even if man wears women’s clothes! If it’s consistent with human dignity and it improves your married life, it’s not a problem. Period, end of sentence, enough said.” He took a big bite of lasagna.

“Yes, enough said—at *least!*” Susanna blushed a bit and laughed. “I went to the old cathedral girls’ high school, once upon a time,” she explained to me and Christie. “That was where I met Bishop Bean. I thought of him almost at once when—my husband and I were having these difficulties that we needed to work out. If you want somebody to tell you exactly what he thinks, ask Bishop Bean. He’s been doing that all his life.”

“I have not,” said Bishop Bean. “When you’re a bishop on duty, you’ve got to be pretty diplomatic. Terrific strain, but I kept it up. Now that I’m retired and I can relax, though, I do say exactly what I think, and nobody bothers to stop me.”

He gave Christie and me a sharp look. We still had our arms around each other. “Want to hear what I think about *marriage?*” he suddenly asked us. Without waiting for an answer, he said, “I don’t see why there’s such a fuss about prohibiting same-sex marriages. What with easy divorce, contraception, and all that, a lot of other-sex marriages in the secular world today are a lot like same-sex marriages, not like *holy matrimony*. If you same-sex couples want the same opportunity for that kind of marriage as the other-sex couples have, more power to you. Just don’t confuse what you’ve got with holy matrimony, and I won’t complain.” He took another big bite.

Susanna laughed out loud. “But, Bishop,” she said, “if Judy and Christie ever get married, it won’t be a *same-sex* marriage!”

Bishop Bean’s little eyes opened almost wide. He seemed to be stopping himself from choking on his lasagna. His eyes darted back and forth between Christie and me, as if he were trying, but failing, to see through our clothes.

“Well!” he exclaimed, after he had fully finished chewing. “I guess my old eyes aren’t what they used to be! Which one of you lovely young ladies is the gentleman?”

“That would be me,” I acknowledged.

“You’re Judy?”

“Yes.”

“A boy named Judy!” he said. “Reminds me of ‘A Boy Named Sue.’ You’re far too young to remember that old song, aren’t you?”

“I guess I must be.”

“Well, in the song, a boy’s dad named him Sue. Naturally the boy hated the name, other boys teased him, and he got into fights with them. Those fights were his dad’s idea of how to turn him into a tough, fearless man. In the end, he was glad Dad gave him a girl’s name.”

Bishop Bean looked straight at me. “I don’t know that it would be a good idea for you to get into fights,” he said, “but, for all I know, some girls’ *clothes* might be even better than a girl’s *name* to make you tough and fearless.”

Christie burst out laughing. “That’s great!” she cried. “But—don’t you believe it’s an *abomination* for a man to wear women’s clothes, like it says in the Bible?”

“Or for a woman to wear men’s clothes, as it also says in the same place?” He grinned. “Well, fair’s fair. I’m pretty old-fashioned about such things. I was born in 1910, if my parents told me the truth about that. When I was about your age, in the so-called ‘Roaring 20s,’ I thought some of the women’s fashions were pretty wild—but there was hardly more of a market for women’s *trousers* than for men’s brassieres! Nowadays, I see a world crawling with women in men’s clothes, but they often call them women’s clothes. If you can have women’s trousers, I don’t see why you can’t have men’s skirts, or men’s brassieres, or whatnot. A lot of abominations stay the same—there’s no doubt about *that*—but maybe some other so-called abominations change with the times, after all.”

“I hope so!” Christie said. “But—well, I don’t believe this any more, but I was raised to believe everything in the Bible was true for all time.”

Bishop Bean half laughed, half snorted. “I’ve got to admit I miss the good old days of my youth,” he said, “when Catholics thought it was all right to get *outraged* about the Protestant fundamentalists and their ridiculous beliefs about the Bible. ‘If it’s not in the Bible, we won’t believe it, and if it *is* in the Bible, we *will* believe it,’ they said. ‘Well, how do you know how to *interpret* the Bible?’ we said. ‘Well, you read the Bible some *more*,’ they said. They got into some pretty bad fights with each other, and with *us*, because that isn’t really the answer.” Now he was laughing out loud.

“If those silly fundamentalists would only listen to Saint Thomas Aquinas,” he said, “or maybe even think for themselves, they’d know it’s all right for a man to wear women’s clothes, or for a woman to wear men’s clothes, if they need to wear them for some good reason. For example, Saint Thomas says, they might need to disguise themselves against their enemies, or they might not be able to get any other clothes for the job they needed to do.” He chuckled. “Imagine Saint Joan of Arc asking for a suit of women’s armor! ‘I regret that I cannot accommodate you, Mademoiselle,’ the armorer says. ‘Men’s armor is the only kind of armor there is.’”

Everyone seemed to be laughing now, except me. Bishop Bean looked at me again; he pointed his empty fork at me. “So, Judy,” he said, “for all I know, *women’s* armor might be the only kind of armor there is for *you*—if you know what I mean. Do you know what I mean?”

“Uh—I guess maybe so,” I said, too reluctantly. “I’m afraid I’ve always been kind of a coward. Do you mean—I might need to wear women’s clothes, in public, to get over my cowardice?”

“You tell *me*,” said Bishop Bean. “But let me eat some more of this excellent food while you tell me, all right?” Without waiting for me to answer, he stuffed another bite of lasagna into his mouth. I silently nodded “yes” and did the same.

* * * * *

We stayed at Susanna’s house for hours. By the time we left, I hadn’t been converted, but I wasn’t so sure I hadn’t been secretly brainwashed. For all I knew now, God might be an old man with a long white beard—a lot like Bishop Bean.

“Well, are you man enough?” Christie asked me before we mounted our bikes.

“Man enough?” I stared at her blankly for a moment; then I started to understand. “You mean, man enough to wear girls’ clothes to school tomorrow?” Christie nodded “yes.”

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I guess I’d better be,” I said. “I’m going to get ‘revealed’ anyway. I might as well take the lead and ‘reveal’ *myself*.”

I looked into her admiring eyes and loved her, even more deeply than I had loved her before. Absurdly I felt that even my own dark, cowardly heart might become like the bright red, shining heart of Jesus—or, better yet, of Christie—if only Christie would stay with me for life. “Are you woman enough to come with me?” I asked her, though I was already rejoicing at what I knew would be the answer.

“You bet I am!” she assured me. As if her words were not enough assurance, she embraced me tightly.

Chapter 10

“Hey, you’re cute!” Detective Cervantes told me, after I had put on the wire and changed into girls’ clothes at the police station. “I hope nobody rips that dress off and sees the wire. At least I don’t think the guys in the ‘queer line’ will get a chance. We’ve got a couple of good officers watching down there already, and more of them ready to help out if needed.”

“Thanks,” I said. “I needed that!”

“So you’re going to watch for Steve and talk with him after school in a study room at the library, right—if he’ll go with you?”

“Yeah. I don’t know if he will, but it’s worth a try. I went to the library’s website and reserved the room.”

“OK, do what you can. There’ll be a car nearby to pick up the transmissions from the wire, if there *are* any transmissions. Thanks again, Jim—and best of luck!” She grinned at me and shook my hand.



“I’ll need it!” I told her. I walked out of the Detective Section, down the marble stairs, and out the rear entrance of the police station. Christie was waiting for me, and our bikes were locked there. We walked around the block, in hope that no one would see we had been to the police. I explained what I was going to try to do after school, to try to get Steve to talk about his role in Adam’s scheme, while wearing the wire to record what he said. Christie thoroughly approved. Then we headed for school, hand in hand, in our matching little-flower dresses.

I saw the ‘queer line’ waiting for us. Remembering Bishop Bean’s words to me, I thought of Joan of Arc. Vaguely I recalled that she had been burned at the stake on some kind of false accusations. I almost started to quake in fear; I hoped my rite of passage would be a whole lot less painful than hers.

Two officers were standing near the ‘queer line,’ I noted gladly as we drew near. One was almost as short as I was, but with broader shoulders and much bigger muscles. The other was gigantic, at least six and a half feet tall; he looked as if he weighed about 400 pounds.

“Hey! A matching set of *queer girls!*” a boy called out as Christie and I began to walk between the lines. I heard a roar of laughter. Boys started throwing pictures at me. I tried not to look at them. *They’d just better not throw any used condoms at Christie,* I thought. *If they do, I’ll kill them right in front of the police—if I can!* I doubted that I really would, but that was how I felt.

“Everything concealed shall be revealed!” Steve Monohan shouted. Another roar of laughter arose. Christie squeezed my hand more tightly.

A used condom hit my left breast and slowly oozed off. It happened so fast I couldn’t see who did it, but the shorter officer could. “OK, I saw that,” he said. Almost before I saw him, he had handcuffed a tall thin boy with short blond hair.

“Hey, cut that out, asshole!” the tall boy shouted. “I didn’t do anything!”

“Bullshit, I cry,” said the officer. “You’re going to Juvie Hell—or to jail!” The gigantic officer was calling for reinforcements. Within a few seconds, I heard sirens.

The same big short-haired, hairy-armed bully who had slapped and kicked Randy Frick stepped forth from the line and blocked our way with two clenched fists. “No queer girls allowed in here,” he said. “Get out of here before I rip your dress off.” Almost at once I saw the gigantic officer right behind him.

“No fuckheads allowed to commit intimidation out here,” the officer said, gently but firmly wrapping his enormous left arm around the bully’s neck and lifting him off the ground. “Let’s see if a little trip to Juvie Hell, or jail, helps you be more polite.” Some boys laughed.

“God damn it, I’m gonna sue your fuckin’ pants off!” the bully shouted, flailing his legs to try to kick the officer. “I know my rights!”

“You’ve got a right to a free public education,” the big officer told him, breathing hard while dragging him toward a police car. “Nobody was keeping you from going straight into that school. You blew it. Now get your ass in that car, if you don’t want your head any farther up it than it already is!”

Another police car arrived; yet another one followed almost at once. One officer helped the gigantic one handcuff the bully and shove him into the car, while another helped the shorter officer haul the tall thin boy into another car. Two other officers ran up to control the line.

“All right, time to break it up,” one of them said. “Everyone into school that’s going in.” Christie and I went in first. Reluctant and grumbling, the boys from the “queer line” followed.

* * * * *

“James MacGregor,” Miss Dudley said, calling roll again. “Here,” I answered. She almost went right on to the next name—until she looked at me.

“Why, Mr. MacGregor!” she addressed me, staring in horror. “Stand up!” I did. Many students turned and laughed at me.

“Do you know what the word ‘*egregious*’ means?” she asked in a frigid voice.

I did. “Standing out from the crowd,” I said.

“Especially in a *bad* way,” she said, “as in the expression, ‘an *egregious* violation of our school’s dress code!’” She pushed the panic button. A loud buzz resounded. Soon Mr. Oskill, the head football coach and assistant vice principal, strode into the room. Miss Dudley asked, or demanded, that he haul me off to see Mr. Folkestone, the principal. Without a word, he did.

Mr. Folkestone rose to meet us, and asked Mr. Oskill what the problem was.

“Dress code violation, sir,” said Mr. Oskill, standing straight and tall as a Marine, which he used to be.

Mr. Folkestone looked me up and down. “What violation?” he asked. He didn’t know me; he didn’t even know I wasn’t a girl. I had never been sent to the principal’s office before.

“Gender-inappropriate attire, sir.”

Mr. Folkestone raised his thin eyebrows high above his little round glasses. “I see,” he said. “Pretty flagrant violation. Thank you, Mr. Oskill.” Mr. Oskill left at once.

“I don’t believe we’ve met,” said Mr. Folkestone. “What’s your name?”

I guessed I shouldn’t say it was Judy. “Jim MacGregor,” I said.

“What year?”

“Sophomore.”

“May I ask what on earth you think you’re doing?”

I looked at him in silence for a moment. He was a little guy, even shorter than me and much thinner, with a bald head, big blue eyes, and a big mouth. A lot of students thought he was gay. I didn't know if he was or not, although he did have a mild case of a stereotyped gay voice and mannerisms. He was staring at me as if I were some kind of loathsome bug or worm in his food.

"I'm wearing girls' clothes to school, sir," I told him in the style of Mr. Oskill. "Turnabout is fair play, and all that. Plenty of girls wear boys' clothes to school."

"The difference, of course," Mr. Folkestone said in a soft but sarcastic voice, "is that it's *socially acceptable* for girls to wear boys' clothes."

I stared at him with my mouth open. Swarms of retorts demanded to pass my lips, but I forced them back. I could never communicate, I feared, with a man who equated what was good with what was socially acceptable, and what was evil with what was not.

"Are you gay?" Mr. Folkestone asked me suddenly.

I hesitated, but only for a second. "No," I said.

"Well," he said, "do you have any kind of sympathy with people who *are* gay?"

I thought of Patricia, of Kathy and Karen, and even of Christie and me, as we had recently been. "Yes, I do," I told him.

"Well, then," he said, "would you *please* cut out this abnormal girlie-boy crap at once? Gay people want to be accepted as *normal*. That means doing normal *things*, and it means wearing normal *clothes*. Gay people want to get married and live happily ever after, just like straight people. Gay people may get a chance to do that, not many years from now, if straight people can see that gays are totally normal, just like them. Gay people don't need any *abnormal girlie-boys* parading around and *ruining everything!* Am I making myself clear?"

I stared at him again. His face was stern, and yet he was blinking as if to keep from crying. I could see now that he was gay, and he really was afraid that "abnormal girlie-boys" would ruin everything for gays who didn't wear "gender-inappropriate attire."

"I'll have to think about it," I told him at last.

"You'll have an opportunity," he said. He pulled out a form, wrote on it, and handed a copy to me. "Three-day suspension for violating the dress code by wearing gender-inappropriate attire. I hope this will do the job. If it doesn't, I've got a lot more suspension forms. I'll see you on Thursday—and you'll be wearing boys' clothes, if you know what's good for you. If necessary, I'll have Mr. Oskill strip you down to make sure you're not wearing a *bra* or something under your boys' clothes." He grimaced.

"Can I get my books from the classroom and my locker," I asked him, "so I can study during the suspension?"

"Of course," he said. "I'll have Mr. Oskill escort you." He picked up the phone and requested Mr. Oskill's presence.

Mr. Oskill escorted me to my locker, and then to the classroom. Miss Dudley froze up all activity until I got out again. “Three-day suspension,” I stage-whispered to Christie. “See you after school at the library.” She nodded vigorously. Then Mr. Oskill escorted me out of school and shut the door behind me.

* * * * *

The day passed pleasantly—except that Christie wasn’t with me—now that I had my suspension notice, my official three-day ticket to freedom. I could have gone anywhere I wished, I guess, but I chose to spend much of the school day in the library. I actually studied for a little while; then I looked at some books that weren’t for school.

At noontime I strolled to Goodman Park, the block-square park across Grove Avenue from City Hall, and ate my sandwiches among the city workers who filled the park. I was glad I had thought to pack a lunch, foreseeing that I might not be in the school lunchroom when lunchtime came. None of the city workers had any complaints about my clothes. It was thoroughly silly, I now thought, to be afraid of letting respectable strangers see me as a girl in public. After lunch I strolled back to the library, freely swinging my girlish hips in my pretty dress and almost skipping for joy.

When the end of school began to draw near, I looked for the *Seaview Grove Clarion* in the vending box outside the library. The first time I looked, I saw the old issue from last Thursday—ages ago, before Randy Frick died. By the time the new issue appeared, students were starting to trickle out of the high school.

A front-page headline looked pretty promising: “Police Raid Local Artist’s Home.” I read far enough to verify that the local artist was Adam’s mom. I jammed a coin into the slot and grabbed a paper. Then I started to jog toward the school, but I stopped when I saw Detective Cervantes waving at me from an unmarked car near the library.

“Hi,” I said. “I’m going up to try to catch Steve. I’ll see if he wants to come to the library and talk.”

“OK, I’ll just sneak up and see if I can catch anything there,” she said. “Then I’ll come back here if he comes here with you.”

I jogged again and almost reached the school. Christie was already on the sidewalk, striding toward the library. I waved and smiled at her. “See you at the library,” I said. She smiled back, nodded “yes,” and kept walking.

Soon I saw Steve coming out of school, talking with a couple of fellow fundamentalists. I stood back and tried not to catch his eye. I hoped he was planning to walk home alone, as I had seen him doing before.

He was. He walked right past me and didn't see me. I walked behind him, letting him get almost to City Hall, before I caught up with him and spoke to him. Detective Cervantes pulled past me and turned onto a side street. I figured she was going to drive around the block and end up near the library.

"Hi, Steve!" I said. "Short time no see."

Steve glared at me. "I can't believe you're doing this," he said. "Isn't it bad enough to wear girls' clothes in *private*?"

"It isn't *good* enough," I told him with a grin. "In public, it's a lot of fun—so long as nobody's threatening you, or spitting on you, or throwing used condoms at you, or hitting or kicking you, or 'revealing' you." I stopped grinning and fixed him in my gaze, letting him see a little bit of my outrage.

"Hey, don't blame *me*," he demanded. "Those pictures weren't of *me* in girls' clothes. Everything concealed shall be revealed."

"Especially if Adam Potter says it shall be revealed—right?"

Steve's eyes bulged, but he quickly tried to contract them. "No, if *God* says it shall be revealed," he insisted.

"And Adam is his prophet?"

"You're nuts."

"Bullshit, Steve!" I feared I was sounding too much like a police officer, but I had to speak. "Look, I know you got those pictures of Randy and me from Adam. Plus, I got revealed exactly when Adam told you to reveal me. He told me on Saturday that you were going to reveal me on Monday if he didn't call you off, and you did it. He said he had some kind of hold on you, so he could get you to do what he said, and you *did* do what he said. I want to know what that hold was."

"You're nuts, I said! Who do you think you are?" He couldn't keep his eyes from bulging now; his face was turning pale, and he was sweating although the weather wasn't hot.

I walked with Steve in silence, trying to think what to do. We passed City Hall and the police station. We were directly across from the library before I spoke again.

"Steve," I said, "whatever that hold was, Adam doesn't have it any more. Adam's in jail. He's probably going to go to prison for a long, long time." I held up the *Clarion*. "Come on into the library and read this article with me, and I think you'll see what I mean." I hoped it was true; I hadn't yet read the article myself.

Steve's eyes seemed to be almost popping out of his head. He tried to grab the paper from me. I wouldn't let him. "Let me see that!" he demanded.

"In a minute," I said. "I think we might want some *privacy* when we discuss this article. How about going into a study room in the library?"

Steve looked as if he feared a trap. "Just let me *see* it," he said. "If you won't, I can just get another copy."

"I'll let you see it," I said, "but I want a *full apology* from you after you see it, and I don't want you to worry that anyone might hear the apology. It's too late for you to apologize to Randy for what you and your Goddamned goon squad did to *him* at Adam's command"—I tried to keep from getting too angry to think straight—"but you can apologize to *me*, and you're going *to*, as soon as you see that Adam can't get back at you!"

"Show me that article," Steve demanded again.

"In the library," I said. "Come on." At last he acquiesced. We waited for the traffic light to change on Grove Avenue; I saw Detective Cervantes' car parked nearby. Then we crossed the street and entered the library.

Christie was sitting at a table near the study room I had reserved. I smiled at her and entered the room with Steve. It was a bare little room with a table and a few chairs, a lot like the interview room at the police station, except it had a couple of posters about reading on the walls.

"OK," I told him, "I haven't actually read this whole article yet, but I know it's about Adam and his mom. Let's read it together, and then we can talk about it." I spread the paper out on the study-room table.

Steve said nothing. He was already devouring the article. I read it too, but it took me longer to finish. It said Adam and his mom were being held on arrest warrants for crimes including criminal deviate conduct, incest, child molesting, and child exploitation. In the raid on their house, which took place on Saturday afternoon, the police reportedly found video evidence of some of these crimes, and also found evidence connecting Adam and his mom with the "suspicious death" of Randy Frick, which Adam had reported as a suicide. Police had also recovered Frick's body, which appeared to have been sexually abused. If convicted of all the crimes listed in the arrest warrant, the article said, Adam could face up to 70 years in prison, or more if there were multiple counts. If convicted of murder in connection with Frick's death, he could face up to an additional 80 years, or life without parole.

"You were carrying out Adam's orders," I said softly, "when Adam was already in jail. You didn't know he was in jail, did you?"

"Of course I didn't," Steve said. "I didn't know until I read this."

"You wouldn't have revealed me if you'd known Adam couldn't get back at you, would you?"

Steve was silent for what seemed at least a minute. "I don't know," he said at last. "Maybe not." I hoped the wire was working right.

"Why did you do it? What was his hold on you?" Steve was silent. His teeth were clenched.

"Come on, Steve," I begged him. "I was in Adam's grip for almost a year. You were in his grip too. He told me you didn't really want *everything* to be revealed. I know there had to be something you didn't want people to know about. There's nobody in here but you and me, and you know we've both done some things to be

ashamed of. Please tell me why you were so terrified of Adam that you revealed anyone he told you to reveal—and please tell me you’re sorry for revealing me, and revealing Randy.”

“I’m sorry,” Steve said, as if this might get him out of saying any more.

“OK; well, can you tell me *why* you’re sorry? You didn’t really believe it was God’s will for you to reveal us and get used condoms thrown at us, did you?”

Steve’s fundamentalist façade began to crack. “I didn’t really *give a fuck* if it was God’s will or not,” he admitted.

“Hey, I thought maybe you didn’t,” I said. “I can’t stand *real* fundamentalists, but I couldn’t help suspecting maybe you weren’t a real one.”

“I can’t stand them either,” he said. I forced myself not to breathe an audible sigh of relief. Now, I hoped, he might really start to talk.

“Hey, cool!” I commended him. “Tell me about it! You mean you were just faking it all the time?”

“I can understand that,” I said. I hoped I wasn’t making a big mistake by asking my next question: “How did Adam come into it?”

“He came to meetings of our ex-gay group at school. Later he told me he was looking for the fakers, because he was sure there were some. He found out I was one of them.”

I held my breath. I didn’t dare make a false move. “So, uh”—I groped for words—“did he—well, stop me if I’m getting too nosy, but did he come up with some kind of way to reveal that you were a faker if you didn’t go along with him?”

“Damn right he did.” I looked at him; he looked at me. “You probably know what it was, too,” he told me.

“Do I?” I asked him. “Well, really, stop me if I’m getting too nosy, but—was it anything like what your mom caught you and me doing?”

“Not really,” he said, “because she didn’t catch you and me doing *blow jobs* with each other.” His eyes were fixed on the table.

I forced myself not to gasp out loud. “Hey, Steve, now I can understand,” I said. “Thanks for telling me. I can see how you might, uh, want to do something like that with Adam.”

“I might not want it on *video*, though,” he said. “His mom sneak-attacked and caught us on video, and she made some still pictures of us too. I was totally pissed, but I was totally terrified too. Adam told me what the deal was, if I didn’t want anyone to see what I’d been doing. I was supposed to stay a fake fundamentalist; I was supposed to give testimonies about how glad I was that God had brought me out of the gay lifestyle by revealing my secret sins—and I was supposed to be ready to reveal other guys’ secret sins too, if Adam told me to. I was supposed to organize the ‘queer lines’ when guys got revealed, and I organized the ones for you and Randy.”

Steve looked at me and bit his lip. I could see that he was trying to keep from crying, but he wasn't succeeding. "I'm sorry, Jim. I mean it. You didn't deserve that. Randy didn't either."

I said nothing; I hardly moved. Steve must not see me breathing even a single huge sigh of relief. "Hey, I can understand," I assured him again. "I'll accept your apology. That doesn't sound like an easy situation to be in. I'm not surprised at what you decided to do. Adam's a pretty, um, *commanding* kind of guy."

"I hope he gets life without parole," Steve said bitterly. "He deserves it."

"Yeah, I think he does," I readily agreed. "Um, are you going to go to the police and tell them about this?"

Steve looked thoroughly shocked. "The *police*? Hell, no! You think I want all this shit to come out at a trial, and on the news, and everything? You've got to be kidding!"

I pursed my lips. Again I hoped I wasn't making a big mistake, but I couldn't resist. In the most nearly jovial voice I could manage, I said, "Come on, Steve! I really think the police are going to want to hear about this. Everything concealed shall be revealed, as the Bible tells us!"

Steve stared at me, as if he couldn't believe I would make such a tasteless, offensive joke about something like this. "I already told you I don't really believe that crap!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I can't tell you what to do," I said, getting up from the table and picking up the *Clarion*. "Thanks for the apology. I appreciate it a lot. Can we be friends again—if I don't beg you to pull down my panties any more?" I extended my hand to him.

"I wouldn't do it even if you begged me," he assured me. "Yeah, I guess we can be friends." He shook my hand. I opened the door of the study room and left Steve to discover whether everything concealed really would be revealed.

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The rest of the afternoon was a breeze. In the library I showed Christie the article about Adam and his mom, and I gave it a more thorough reading myself. The article didn't say anything about *me*—I was glad to see—but still I got to bask in Christie's warm admiration for a few minutes before we moved on. We checked in with Detective Cervantes in the police station; she said the recording was perfect, and she wished I was old enough to be a detective. In our matching little-flower dresses, despite the difficulty of riding our bikes with dresses on, we rode to Blessing's Buffet and celebrated with pizza slices, hot vegetables, cold fruit juice, and more. Now we were lingering over little bowls of ice cream.

“Well,” I said, “I guess I’d better wear boys’ clothes when I go back to school on Thursday. It’s pretty nice being suspended, actually, but it might get old pretty fast.”

“It would be pretty strange to have a boyfriend who *never* wore boys’ clothes,” Christie said.

“Yeah, I guess it would. Did I tell you what the principal told me about that?”

“No, what?”

“He said he didn’t want any ‘abnormal girlie-boys’ ruining everything for gay people. According to him, gay people are going to be totally accepted, and be able to marry each other and everything, if they stick to wearing ‘gender-appropriate attire’—but not if they don’t.” Christie started laughing.

“It sounded pretty bogus to me,” I said, “but—well, he’s the one who gets to write the suspension notices.”

“That’s *totally* bogus!” Christie assured me. “I’ll bet you’re a lot more normal than he is, whatever you’re wearing! I hope you’ll keep dressing like this when you visit my dad’s place, and—well—wherever you like, as long as people don’t get too peeved about it. I like you a lot this way—but of course I like you a lot the other way too!”

“The feeling is mutual,” I assured her. I looked into her loving eyes, squeezed her hands, and wished I could kiss her, but the width of the table would have made it too awkward. I don’t know how I dared to say what I said next, but I did: “Too bad we’re, uh, too young to get married.”

“Oh! Uh—we sure are!” Christie seemed extremely surprised and embarrassed, though the topic obviously fascinated her—and made her blush. “Your ice cream is melting,” she informed me.

I looked down. She was right. I finished it off before I spoke again.

“Well, um,” I ventured to say, “when we *are* old enough, though, can I have first dibs on you?”

Christie laughed so long and loud that I almost started to feel a bit offended, but I shouldn’t have. “For you, Judy, my love,” she said at last when she could speak again, “*anything!*”

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