

Gene Genius



Jenny Winters

An "Adult TV" Novel

Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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By Jenny Winters

How do I describe myself after the last couple of years?

I'm probably quite reserved now and I think I've worked out the direction I want my life to take. I know that I want to keep a lower profile.

Did I say I've registered for pre-med courses and need all my time to study if I'm going to reach my goals? And I know I have the determination to do that.

Most importantly, the prurient interest in me from the popular press has subsided. At first they all wanted to make something out of nothing; they'd dig up an old story and update it with a new photograph. I got quite afraid to go anywhere, and don't even ask about me being camera-shy.

I think they were trying to work out who I was. For the first eighteen years of my life no one was interested; then they were trying to work out who I'd be-

come before I knew myself. The number of people I barely knew in school who were prepared to say that I was always a little strange or different amazed me.

I didn't think I was any of these things.

I hated it when they told me that I was a girl all along. I didn't think I was. It was time and friends; they got me through it. My friends were the kind of girls that life was favourable to and they taught me to be like them.

I got into doing my homework and they taught me how to look good, how to act around boys and the value of female friendships. The more I worked at it, the easier it became.

When I let myself, I found that I could enjoy life as a girl and that made me enjoy it even more. I could even enjoy the attention... and the boys.

That genetic test did me a lot of favours after all.

Things were strange for more reasons than just my personal situation. When COVID hit, those in charge of things seemed not to know how to respond to it. No one knows why to this day but my little town and county was hit particularly hard by it. A disproportionate number of people got it bad. Not everyone made it through.

Not knowing what else to do, our local schools were closed. It wasn't an elegant solution but there didn't seem to be one available. As it turned out, the planned month-or-so closure was extended several times until it was decided that we'd just skip the current school year. All the kids stayed home; socialising was scant as well, making us all kind of recluses.

Phone calls and text messages replaced face-to-face hanging out.

When the dust settled, we all returned to school to pick up where we had left off. As a result, we were all 18 or 19 when we started senior year of high school. As I had always been less well-developed physically than the other boys, I had hopes that my physique would catch up to the others. That didn't really happen, though. I was still more slightly built than my peers. Just my destiny, I guess. I would just have to learn to accept it and live with it. Things could be worse.

"Pay attention everyone; this is important." Mr. Reynolds stood in front of the class. "This term we've been studying why we're all different and why we're all the same. We may look different..."

"Peter's *all* different." Melanie Chapman was never slow to make some comment in class.

"See me afterwards." Mr. Reynolds looked at her severely and paused to look round at the thirty students in front of him.

"We may look different and as we saw, our families have different stories to tell," he continued. "Now the school's programme has been nominated for recognition throughout the state, and this has presented an exciting opportunity to you all."

He paused and beckoned for Martha Hawkins, his deputy, to step forward. "The school's been contacted by Gene Genius with a free offer. The company does DNA analysis; who knows what that is?"

A couple of hands came up and she looked to the one on the back row first, indicating that Hamilton Baker should speak.

“It’s the analysis that tells you what diseases you’re going to get.”

“It can do that,er” our teach agreed and then turned to Chelsea Kane at the side. “It can tell you if your parents are for real and that you weren’t adopted.”

“That’s right too but the offer we have is slightly different. It won’t do any of those things, but it will tell each of us what our origins are.”

“I think mine was a test tube.” Melanie again. “A dirty one at that.”

“I don’t want to tell you again.” Mr. Reynolds stood and glared at her.

“This offer is different,” Miss Hawkins continued once the class had settled down. “This would tell you about your ancestors; where they came from back in history, and it may give you some insight into how different we are and how alike we are. It’s not going to delve into your genetic future or even your parents’ past.”

The latter remark attracted a snigger at which she paused again.

“It would tell you if your ancestors came from Germany or Spain, Nigeria or Japan. We’re all something of a mix when we look at generations long past and forgotten.”

“What does that mean?” Chelsea asked. “Will it tell me if I’m related to a duke or a lord somewhere?”

“No, it will only give an indication of where in the world your ancestors lived a long time ago.”

“Mine shows all kinds of interesting things that I never knew.” Mr. Reynolds stood and held up a chart. “It says that my distant origins are mainly in Sweden, with some Irish genes there too. I have a minor piece of this genetic information from Spain. Can anyone tell me why?”

“It could be from ships wrecked in Ireland after the Spanish Armada,” Chelsea replied. “We studied that in history. Some ships were wrecked off the coast and the sailors stayed there.”

“That’s my speculation too,” Mr. Reynolds replied. “Of course, it’s only speculation and I’ll never know the answer.”

“That’s a bit boring,” a voice mumbled from the back of the class.”

“But there’s more; it also shows a trace of Arab peoples too. I think that’s because there were Arabs in Moorish Spain, prior to their expulsion in the Fifteenth Century. They were cruel times and wars were bloody affairs but at some time, someone may have married a man or a woman of Arab extraction.”

“My origins are from Nigeria,” Miss Hawkins interrupted politely. “And I too have some Arab in my genetic makeup. I think that means some intermingling with the Arab traders from North Africa.”

“The point of all this is to show that we are all different, even best friends and neighbours may have different genetic sources.” Mr. Reynolds looked to his notes. “This company have offered to do the same study for each member of the class.”

“Does that mean they want our blood?” Rosa Zumba asked.

“No, they ask for a swab from your cheek and a saliva sample. It’s sealed and labelled, then analysed.”

“Better make sure yours isn’t from Melanie Chapman,” Peter told her, smirking at his tormentor, while Rosa pulled out her tongue at him.

“This is being provided for free,” Mr. Reynolds continued. “The company want to use the date, anonymously of course, to include in an information pack. As you’re under eighteen, your parents will have to consent to you taking part.”

“They may find you’re too closely related to a monkey.” Melanie pointed at Peter.

“There’s an information pack for your parents.” Mr. Reynolds ignored the interruption; it was the end of term after all. “Please tell them it’s not a paternity test or anything like that. There’s an example of a test result in the pack to reassure them. Next term, when you all have results, we can compare what we have learned with our fellows and consider if there are any conclusions we can draw.”

“Please can we have the consent forms back as soon as possible and when you’ve done that, we can hand out the test kits,” Miss Hawkins said as Mr. Reynolds passed out forms. “You’ll have to come to the staff room to give your test under supervision. They don’t want to be analysing your dog’s saliva.”

“Or something else.” Melanie smirked as the others caught her meaning.

“I’ve read all the papers that you brought home from Mr. Reynolds,” Peter’s mom said across the din-

ner table one evening shortly afterwards. “I’ve also looked on the internet.”

“And should I take part?” Peter asked.

“I think you should,” she replied. “After all it’s free and probably a bit of fun at best.”

“Don’t you think it’s accurate?” Peter asked.

“I think they can read your DNA quite accurately.” She looked up from her dinner. “Then they do some sort of ethnic comparison to see where our ancestors lived in the past. They compare your results with the results from people in different parts of the world.”

“I don’t understand.”

“If your genetic profile looks like people from one country, they can assume that your ancestors came from that country. I know my mother was Irish and my father was American Italian, so both of those would be in your DNA.”

“I get that, but what about my father?”

“He didn’t stay long enough for me to ask those questions.” She laughed easily now; it had been a long time that we’d been alone.

“Have you no ideas?”

“I thought he was from Wisconsin but where his parents came from, I’ve no idea.”

“Are you saying that I *should* take part?”

“I don’t think it would do any harm,” Mom replied. “The school wouldn’t be doing anything like this if the education department didn’t approve.”

“Will I discover lots of cousins?”

“No, this is limited to an ethnicity analysis; that means whereabouts your ancestors lived. “If you want to find lost cousins, then you have to pay for a different analysis and we can’t afford that.”

“I’m not sure I want to anyway.” I was secretly relieved to hear that.

“At the end of this class, I’ll be handing out your DNA test results,” Martha Hawkins announced at the first session after the vacation. “I’ve results for everyone except Melanie Chapman...”

“They probably found her mother was a donkey...” a voice called from the back row.

“And her father was a skunk,” another voice announced to class laughter.

“Her results will be here tomorrow so there’s no need for that.” Martha looked round the class severely. “The envelopes are sealed and they’re addressed to your parents or guardians, so take them home before you open them.”

As they walked homewards together, Peter, Chelsea, and Rosa fell into step.

“I’m so tempted to look at mine now.” Rosa waved her envelope at the others.

“I’m taking mine home,” Peter said. “Mom deserves to see it first.”

“Oh you are goody-two-shoes.” Chelsea pulled a face at me. “I’m going to open mine if there’s no one else home. There won’t be any surprises in mine. I’m an all-American girl.”

“I think mine will say something about Mexico and Spain,” Rosa said. “But I’m going to wait for Mom and Dad to look with me.”

“I’ve no idea what mine will say,” Peter added. “I think I’m going to be surprised whatever it says. I don’t know anything much about my ancestors beyond what Mom’s told me.”

“I hope it’s a good surprise,” Rosa laughed as we parted to go home to our own separate houses.

“You’re very quiet,” Peter said as he watched his Mom read the results of his DNA analysis.

“I think you’d better read this,” She said softly, passing the papers to him.

“It says that I’m part Irish, and part Italian, with a smaller percentage match with Greece and Scotland,” Peter replied. “That sounds good; there’s nothing strange there. I almost wish there was something different about it.”

“You haven’t read it properly.” His Mom reached out and took his hand. “Look at the top line.”

Peter looked again and was silent for a few moments. “They got my age right, but they say I’m a girl. They must have got that wrong.”

“I’m sure there must be some mistake there,” Mom replied. “I’ll call the school in the morning and get them to check your test again.”

“I’m Irish and Italian.” Peter shared a part of his result with Chelsea and Rosa when they met to walk

to school together next morning. “No surprises there.”

“I’ve got ancestors in North Africa as well as Spain,” Rosa shared.

“Mine are French as well as English and Scottish, with a bit of native American thrown in to the mix,” Chelsea confessed.

“So you’re not quite the all-American girl.” Rosa laughed and then ducked as Chelsea playfully pretended to hit her.

Before Mr. Reynold’s class, which was the last of the day, Peter was summoned to the principal’s office.

“Gene Genius wants to do another test. They say their process couldn’t have made such a mistake,” she announced after they’d got past the introductions. “This is Doctor Faust who’s come to make sure they get an accurate sample this time.”

At this, a lady stood from a chair in the side of the room and smiled.

“I’m sure there must have been some cross contamination of your sample.” She smiled. “Maybe you kissed your girl a little too enthusiastically before you took the last test.”

“I don’t have a girlfriend,” Peter replied, feeling a little confused.

“We pride ourselves on lab security and the protection of samples, so maybe something went wrong.” The lady smiled again, this time with a little hesitation. “I’m here to take another sample. We’ll rush it through and send the results directly to your Mom.”

Peter knew the routine and opened his mouth as she swabbed his inner cheek and sealed the swab in a test tube.

“To be certain, I’d like you to give a saliva sample.” She handed him a second tube.

“You want me to spit into this?” Peter asked.

“A little saliva is all that’s required.”

She watched as he licked his mouth, then dribbled a little liquid from his tongue into the tube. She took it from him, sealed the top, and attached labels to the two samples.

“Thank you Peter, these will be analysed as soon as I can get them to the lab. Your Mom should have the result tomorrow evening.”

“What was that about?” Chelsea asked when Peter caught up with her and Rosa to walk home after school. “We were worried when you didn’t come back into class.”

“They wanted to re-test my results,” Peter replied.

“Was there something wrong with them?” Rosa broke into a grin. “Don’t tell me that you’re cross between a donkey and a skunk?”

“No, I don’t know why they selected me,” Peter replied, knowing that he knew exactly why he’d been selected for a re-test.

“Now that you’ve all had time to read your results from Gene Genius, you’ll realise that each and every one of us is the sum of different ancestors and although we never knew about them before, they made

us what we are today,” Mr. Reynolds addressed the class. “Miss Hawkins will be returning to these results in class next term, but we have to return to learning about our legal system.”

“Why can’t we talk about the results now?” Chelsea asked. “It’s fresh in our minds.”

There was a murmur of agreement from the class but the teacher held up his hand.

“There’s a problem getting the full results,” he said. “The company has asked us to put it on hold. They have to check some of their systems.”

Peter could feel his face redden. He could guess what the problem was and he sunk in his seat, afraid that it might be revealed. Fortunately, the subject was changed quickly.

Then it all went quiet; no word of the result, just seemingly endless waiting. Peter tried to dismiss the second test from his mind as days turned to weeks but there was a nagging feeling in the back of his mind.

“You’re the only one being re-tested,” Chelsea said as the three of them walked home a few days later.

“I’m sure I’m not,” Peter replied and quickly changed the subject.

He examined himself in his bathroom mirror daily. The results had shocked him far more than he cared to admit to anyone. He knew he wasn’t like the other boys and didn’t fit in with their enthusiasms for sports and video games involving warlike scenarios.

All he saw there in the mirror was a boy. He had a penis after all; sure he was skinny but he didn’t have any curves like some of the girls in his class. He did-

n't have breasts either, although his chest was the only bit of his anatomy with a little spare flesh.

As he scrutinised his reflection, his mind wandered; he couldn't stop it even though it frightened him. He wondered if the test was really correct and that he was a girl. That couldn't be true, one side of his mind argued. He had a penis and girls didn't have those.

The other side of his mind began to wander, even though he didn't want it to. What would it be like to be a girl after his eighteen years as a boy? Maybe he wouldn't get ignored and pushed around by the jocks, the sports players, and the bullies who liked to pick on him because he was the smallest in the class.

Without conscious thought, he reached to loosen his hair from the band which held it in a low pony tail. He brushed it through and watched as it fell over his shoulders in a dirty sort of blond haze. He'd always liked to wear his hair long, whatever the fashion of the day.

He brushed it through again, then pulled on a tight black T-shirt. His hair fell over it, covering that part of his chest where a girl would have budding breasts. As the thoughts gelled, he shuddered and turned away. He threw off the shirt and tied his hair back again. He tried to dismiss these thoughts and images from his mind.

But they lingered.

The first Peter knew something was afoot was on a Thursday afternoon near the end of term. His Mom's car was in the school car park as he came out. A chill ran through him; maybe there was a result at last.

He pretended not to notice and jogged to catch up with Chelsea and Rosa for their usual walk home.

“I wonder what the problem was,” Rosa said. “The gene results must have shown that one of us was related to a monkey.”

“Was it on your father’s side or mother’s?” Chelsea laughed. “What do you think, Peter?”

“I don’t know that I’m that interested,” he replied, hoping that they’d change the subject.

At that moment, his mother’s car came past, pulled to the side, and waited for him to come level.

“You’d better hop in,” Mom said through the window. “We have to be somewhere. I’m sorry to interrupt, girls.” She waved to them as she pulled away.

“What’s happened; is it my results?” Peter asked. “I saw your car at school.”

“I think you’d better wait until we’re somewhere we can talk properly,” she replied.

“Don’t tell me; they’ve found that I’ve got a fatal disease.” Peter didn’t think before he spoke, then realisation dawned. “They’ve done it again and got the same results.”

He looked across the car at his mother who kept her attention firmly on the road ahead. She didn’t reply at once but pulled into a diner with tables outside, at the edge of a lake. They got a table and ordered Cokes and pizza without saying anything more significant.

“You’re stalling, Mom.” Peter said softly, looking at her with a question in his eyes.

“The test says that you’re a girl,” she said, looking him in the eye. “There’s no doubt, they did the swab and the saliva, then they sent it all away to another lab to check the results.”

“So we don’t need to tell anybody.” Peter looked at her.

“The school principal was the one who told me,” she replied. “It’s too late to say that.”

“And Melanie Chapman’s mother is the school secretary.” Peter could hear panic rising in his voice. “That means everyone will know.”

“I’m sure she knows that she has to be responsible and keep confidences,” Mom replied with a frown on her face. “But she’s an awful gossip.”

“I don’t think I want to go back to school,” he said and slumped down in his chair, looking away with a tear in his eye.

“I can’t go back to school on Monday,” Peter said on Friday evening after Mom had explained for the third time what the school principal had said.

“It’s the school board, not simply the principal,” she explained. “Mr. Reynolds and Miss Hawkins were at the meeting and they said they’d look out for you if you were worried about anything.”

“Worried? I’m petrified.” Peter’s eyes clouded with tears. “There must be some mistake. I’m a boy. I was always a boy and I always will be.”

“You have to face it, that’s not what the genetic tests say.”

“But I have a penis and boy things.”

“I don’t understand it either.” Mom reached out and took his hand. “I’ve arranged for us to go to the University Hospital; you’re going to see a professor there who’s an expert in these things and that may explain some things.”

“There’s nothing to explain, other than how I get out of this mess.”

The professor was ready as soon as they arrived in his rooms. They were bright and cheerfully decorated with easy chairs as well as a desk.

“I think that I’d better conduct a short physical examination before we discuss anything,” the professor said after he’d introduced himself. “I’ve read the report from Gene Genius and then the reports from the further tests conducted independently. I have to be honest and say that they all point in one direction.”

“They must be wrong, all of them.” Peter felt his face turning red with shock; it wasn’t what he wanted to hear.

“That’s why we need to do a physical examination.”

Peter was about to say something more; something angry, but his mother interrupted.

“The professor isn’t taking sides; he’s doing what he’s been asked to do,” she said. “If there’s been a mistake, this is where we find out the cause.”

“Okay, let’s get it over with.” Peter stood and walked to the examination room at the side of the office.

“He took samples all over again.” Peter came back to sit with Mom in the Professor’s room. “Not only did he do the cheek swab. This time it was blood and I had to make water into a glass container. It’s hard to do when someone’s watching.”

“At least he’s being thorough.”

“It must be costing a lot.” Peter looked up. “Who’s going to pay for all of this?”

“The school board has arranged it so I think they’re paying. They told me that the professor was keen to meet you because he’s never heard of another case like this.”

“I don’t like being poked and prodded like that.” Peter pulled a face. “It’s like I’m a piece of meat.”

“Welcome to a girl’s world.” Mother couldn’t help but giggle, even though she tried to suppress it.

“Okay, I get the joke.” Peter laughed too. “Rosa wrote a school paper for our civics class about girls being treated like that; for their body, not their personality.”

“I’ve asked for immediate tests to be run.” The professor came back into the room. “I should have them later in the week. Of course they won’t be written up properly, but they should answer some of the questions that we may have.”

“Did the physical tell you anything?” Mom asked.

“Let’s leave all the questions for now. I know they’re burning in your minds, but I don’t want to say anything until I’m sure that I have all the results.”

“When will that be?” Mom asked. “We’re both really worried about all this.”

“We can meet later in the week. I’ll get my secretary to call you in and we can discuss it all then.” He smiled; Peter noted that he avoided answering the question. “I have your cell phone, I’ll call when I have the preliminary results and we can talk it through.”

“I think he found something and he didn’t want to tell us,” Peter said as they walked back to their car.

“He was only being cautious,” Mom said but her tone of voice suggested that she didn’t really believe what she was saying. “We’ll find out more when he calls.”

Conversation was stilted and difficult as they waited for that call. They had lunch, then went to a movie. Peter’s attention wasn’t on the screen even though it was the sort of movie that usually enthralled him. One thought repeated itself over and over again.

“What do I do if they decide that I really am a girl?”

“Why were they whispering behind my back and looking at me so strangely?”

Peter sat in the school lunch room with Rosa and Chelsea a couple of days later. He hadn’t wanted to go back to school, but Mom persuaded him. Now he was feeling that it was a big mistake.

“I don’t think they were.” Rosa looked away as she spoke.

“I think you know why,” Peter replied.

“Okay, you’ve got to know.” Chelsea broke the silence. “It’s only fair. Melanie Chapman’s been telling people that you’re really a girl and that your mom’s been disguising you for years.”

“That’s nonsense.” Peter almost laughed.

“Her mother’s on the school board,” Rosa reminded them. “She says that he overheard her on the phone talking after their last meeting.”

That news hit Peter hard. His mind went immediately into all kinds of what-if scenarios. He didn’t hear Rosa or Chelsea until he felt his arm being prodded.

“Is there something we don’t know?” Rosa asked. “We’re your friends, after all.”

“There is something you don’t know.” Peter hesitated. “Those genetic profiles; mine threw up something strange, and it’s being investigated.”

“You’re not dying are you?” Chelsea blurted out, then realised what she’d asked. “Me and my big mouth. I’m sorry.”

“I don’t know if I want to say anything else.” Peter knew he’d already said too much.

“You can’t leave it there.”

“It’s not good.” Peter weighed his words. “The tests said I was a girl.”

“What’s not good about that?” Chelsea laughed. “We’re girls and we don’t do so badly. We just have different plumbing.”

“There’s a professor studying my ‘plumbing’ as you call it.” Peter knew he’d not get away without telling the full story. “I’ve had all kinds of tests. I don’t know

what they're going to show until I see the professor again."

"But you're all right; you're well, I mean?" Chelsea stumbled over her words.

"He said I was fit and healthy," Peter assured them. "He just didn't say if I was a healthy boy or a healthy girl."

"So if he didn't say you were a boy..." Rosa's voice seemed to stop as her thoughts caught up.

"If he didn't say that, there's nothing to worry about. We're girls and there's nothing wrong with being a girl."

"There is when you've been a boy all your life."

"I can understand why you might be afraid." Rosa looked round the room. "This lot might not be the most helpful or understanding bunch in the state."

"But don't worry." Chelsea smiled. "We're your friends and we'll look after you whatever happens."

"It will be like having a baby sister to join us." Rosa blushed when she realised what she'd said. "I mean we could help you to have some fun if you have to be a girl."

"I'm not sure that there's going to be a lot of fun." Peter caught sight of Melanie Chapman staring at him.

"I don't think you've got good news for me." Peter looked at the expression on the professor's face as he and his mom sat across the desk from him.

“I have run every test I can and I can tell you that you’re in very good health. Your height and weight are as they should be and your body is functioning perfectly. All your major organs are quite within the expected range.”

“There’s one question you’re not answering,” Peter said, looking directly at him.

“If you want me to say that you’re a boy, I can’t.”

Peter let out a sob and covered his face with his hands. The room went silent as the professor waited for Peter to stop sobbing.

“Physically, you have some anomalies which make you look as if you’re a boy but your internal organs as well as your genetic tests show that you’re really a girl.”

“But I have a penis,” Peter shouted, tears still running down his face.

“It’s not going to function as a boy’s would.” The professor couldn’t meet his eye. “You have a vestigial uterus but with no vaginal access. That means you couldn’t get pregnant.”

Peter looked incredulously at him as if trying to absorb what it all meant, then he sobbed again.

“Please, Professor; could you give us a few moments alone,” Mom interrupted. He got up and left the room.

She hugged Peter who struggled to stop sobbing. His heart was racing and thumping in his chest. He tried to speak but words wouldn’t come.

“What do I do?” he asked over and over again. “I can’t live with this.”

“I think we should hear what the professor has to say before we start to worry about the future.” Mon tried to comfort him and held him as his sobs subsided.

“But what do I do?” he asked. “How can I live with this? I don’t know if I’m one thing or another.”

“You’re my child and I love you whatever you are.” Mom hugged him tightly. “Let’s not worry about that now.”

She went to the door and called that they were ready to the professor who was waiting in the reception area.

“Would you like me to run through all the test results?” the professor asked quietly.

“Please skip to the conclusions.” Peter looked at him intently. “Give it to me straight; the bottom line please.”

“Okay.” The professor sighed and looked down at his papers. “You are a girl according to all the results from the tests. The penis you have is small, your sperm count is nil and you do not have the ability to function as a male...”

“But it can get hard,” Peter interrupted.

“That may be but you must know that it’s quite small. I doubt that it could function in any way satisfactorily.”

“I haven’t been comparing it with anyone else’s,” Peter said. “So I don’t know that.”

“You could consider surgery,” the professor said. “I could recommend...”

“Don’t even go there,” Peter shouted, then slumped back in his chair, feeling that his options were minimal.

“What does all this mean for the future, for Peter?” Mom asked.

“That’s not up to me,” the professor replied. “I have to send a copy of my conclusions to the School Board. They initiated this examination and they have a public duty to discharge.”

“Do they have a duty to keep me safe if I go back to school?” Peter looked from one to the other.

“I’m sure they’ll consider what needs to be done,” the professor replied. “You could also consider changing schools.”

“There are only two in our town and they don’t operate in a vacuum,” Mom said. “If you’re thinking of keeping it a secret, there’s no chance that could happen.”

“I’m sure you’ll find a way forward.” The professor stood as if to say the interview was at an end.

“What can I do, Mom?” Peter had been silent for days after meeting the professor. “I’m confused. I don’t know what I am.”

“You’re my child and I’ll love you always, whatever happens.”

“You didn’t say that I’m your son.” Peter looked at her accusingly.

“You’re my child,” she replied. “And it’s not easy to hear what we’ve learned.”

“And genetics can’t be changed,” Peter said. “I’ve been looking it up on the internet.”

“Do you know what you’d like to do? I think you have to make some choices even if it takes time to work it out.”

“I don’t think I can ever work this out.”

“You know I’ll support you whatever you decide.”

“Do I *have* to decide anything?”

“I think you do.” Mother paused. “I had a call from the school principal. He wants to see me to discuss your future.”

“That doesn’t sound good.”

“I’m sure they’ll have policies to deal with transgender students.”

“But I’m *not* transgender.” Peter looked incredulous at the thought. “I never imagined how that could happen.”

“I know you’re not but those genetic results were quite clear. They were emphatic that you are a girl, even if you’ve never felt like one.”

“That doesn’t make sense.” Peter grinned for the first time in days. “I must be one thing or another; it’s impossible to be neither one thing nor the other.”

“Okay, that’s got me confused too.” Mom sighed. “Let’s take it slowly and find out what the principal has to say.”

Peter knew that he was the subject of much speculation. He hated knowing but his What’s App and Facebook contacts were full of it. Everyone knew. He

didn't respond but while most were kind, there were a few crude suggestions there too.

"What did they say?" Peter pounced as soon as Mom arrived back from her meeting with the principal.

"They say you have to attend school as a girl."

"But what about their transgender policies; don't they matter?"

"They say that they don't apply since you have clearly been wrongly registered from the start. Therefore you're not transgender within the meaning of their policy document."

"That's stupid."

"It seems so but we can't afford the lawyers to fight it and even if we could, it would take ages to get a decision and meanwhile your opportunities to study and get qualifications would get lost in the legal mess."

"What can I do?"

"I think you keep a low profile and carry on as best you can," Mother replied slowly. "It's going to take courage and maybe some things you don't like, but there seems to be no way of changing the principal's mind."

"Even if you could his mind, everyone seems to know now," Peter replied. "I daren't go out of the door in case I get called out."

"I wish I could make it all go away," Mom said consolingly. "I think being quiet and complying will be

the easiest way. You could appear to be complying on the outside, even though your feelings don't agree. Think of it as acting, or being undercover in a spy story."

"It doesn't feel like that but I can understand why you're saying that. I'm just scared, that's all."

"Chelsea called me." Mom knocked on Peter's door. "She's worried; says you're not answering when she calls."

"I don't feel like talking," Peter said.

"She says to tell you that she's going to keep on calling until you answer."

"She could be wasting her time. I don't want to talk to anyone."

"You can't hide here forever."

"I can try," Peter replied. "I'll bet that by now Mrs. Chapman will have spread it all round town just because she's on the school board and she can."

"I'm sure she'll be discreet."

"How discreet can the town's biggest gossip be?"

"Maybe it would be better to face them; show everyone that you're not afraid."

"How do I do that? I am not afraid, I'm terrified. Can you imagine it if I go to school."

"I can't imagine you not going to school. The attendance board will be chasing me for not sending you."

“But I can’t go to school with them all knowing that I’m really a girl and that I’ve been living a lie for the past eighteen years.”

“You’ve not been living a lie; it’s wrong to say that.”

“If only they hadn’t gotten that stupid test,” Peter sighed. “If only I hadn’t agreed.”

“I think I signed the consent form,” Mom said gently. “It’s probably my fault.”

“You couldn’t have known what would happen and you only did it because I asked you to,” Peter replied. “I never thought it could be lead to this.”

That day passed and the next. Peter stayed most of the time in his room, only emerging to visit the kitchen. He didn’t go to school and Mom didn’t say anything. She hoped for something to change.

“Chelsea’s come to see you,” his mom called from the bottom of the stairs. “Can she come up?”

“I don’t want to see anyone,” Peter called.

Chelsea heard him, nodded to his Mom, and climbed the stairs. She didn’t knock.

“I needed to know how you were,” she said to Peter who looked at her in shock. “I think we know what’s happened. It’s all over school.”

“I guess confidentiality means nothing,” he mumbled.

“Not where Mrs. Chapman’s concerned,” she replied. “I think she said she saw some papers that the Principal got from the school board.”

“So everyone knows?”

“It’s a nine-day wonder.” Chelsea came to sit beside him and held his hand. “You’re still my friend.”

She leaned in and kissed his cheek. Another tear escaped from Peter’s eye.

“What am I going to do?” he asked. “Life was heading one way and now everything’s changed.

“Some things haven’t changed,” she said. “I’m here and Rosa’s asked me to call her if I get to see you. She wants to come and see you too.”

“I guess I’d better get it over with.”

“That’s not the way to think about things.” Chelsea punched at the keys on her mobile. “You need some help and Rosa and I are the ones you need. I’m calling her to come right now.”

“I don’t want...”

“No protests allowed,” Chelsea stopped him in mid-sentence. “You need a shower, so go and get one. We’ll be downstairs when you’re ready.”

Half an hour later, Peter came downstairs to find Rosa and Chelsea waiting for him.

“Your Mom’s gone out,” Rosa announced. “She asked what we were going to do and then she decided to go and visit with her sister.”

“She doesn’t really like her sister.” Peter looked puzzled.

“Maybe she just wanted to be out,” Chelsea replied. “Please tell us, because the rumours are getting more and more weird, what’s going on?”

“What do you know?”

“Assume we know nothing and start from there.” Rosa pulled him towards the couch so that the girls were on each side of him. We’re your friends, remember; we don’t bite and we won’t tell.”

“I guess you know it all started with the genetic thing.” Peter swallowed hard and then continued. “The tests had to be repeated because they showed that I was... that I was a girl.”

“So that bit’s true.” Rosa looked across at Chelsea. “And you didn’t say anything to us. I guessed something was up because you went all quiet.”

“There was a lot on my mind, and now there’s a lot more.” Peter’s voice went weaker and he suppressed another tear. “I don’t know how to cope. Can I face anyone ever again? It’s not as if I could move away where no one knows me.”

“Secrets have a way of coming out,” Chelsea replied. “It’s not like you ever had a steady girlfriend.”

“You never had a boyfriend either,” Rosa chipped in and got a scowl as an answer. “Well, I mean it’s like Peter’s just one of us; we hang around together.”

“You may not be making this better.” Peter saw the funny side of this remark, despite his inner turmoil. “I guess I haven’t worked these things out yet.”

“What do you think you’re going to do?”

“They told me that I’m not going to cut it as a man.” Peter didn’t intend to be so frank, but the words slipped out.

“Does that mean you want to try as a girl instead?” Rosa asked.

“I don’t know. I think I’d make a pretty ugly girl.” Peter forced a laugh. “I don’t know how to act or behave; I don’t know anything about how girls live.”

“You’re being too critical.” Rosa stood and came to stand in front of him. “I think you’d scrub up nicely. Your hair’s really long and healthy. You always tie it back, but it could be really attractive.”

“With some makeup and the right clothes, you could be even more like one of us. You could be our third girlfriend for real,” Chelsea added.

“I’m the wrong shape.” Peter forced another laugh.

“What nature’s forgotten can be stuffed with cotton.” The girls looked at each other and laughed after Rosa said that.

“Now you’re being silly.” Peter smiled for the first time.

“Why don’t you let us try something?” Rosa looked at Chelsea.

“Yes, why not?” Chelsea agreed,

“I’m not going anywhere.” Peter shrugged. “I’m not even going back to school this week.”

“That’s a good idea. Let it all calm down,” Rosa said. “Let them speculate this week and see how you feel after the weekend.”

“We’re going to show you how girls have fun,” Chelsea promised.

“That sounds really frightening,” Peter sighed.

“It’s Friday night and Friday night was made for girls who just want to have fun.”

Chelsea and Rosa let themselves into the house.

“You could have let me know you were coming,” Peter’s mom said. “And maybe you could sing that next time?”

“If we’d told you, Peter would have found some excuse not to...,” Rosa paused to think. “...whatever we’re going to do.”

“Is he going to like it?”

“*He* probably won’t,” Rosa admitted, emphasising the male pronoun. “But then again, *she* might.”

Mom registered the “she” and decided to keep out of the way. Peter was in some state of torpor and needed shaking out of it. These were the ones to do it.

“He has no idea what’s coming,” Chelsea said.

She brushed past Peter’s Mom with an arm full of clothes, closely followed by Rosa with big case on wheels, and they headed towards Peter’s room.

“Ta da, its girl time,” Chelsea trilled as Peter looked askance at them.

“It’s not,” he said as firmly as he could. “Go away, and I’m not a girl.”

“You are and there are two of *us*.” Chelsea put her bundle on his bed. “You can co-operate and help us to choose, or we’re going to choose for you.”

“I bet you’ve been wondering what it’s like to be a girl,” Rosa challenged him, opening one of the bags for him to see the contents.

“These are girl’s clothes.” Peter touched the bundle gingerly as if expecting it to bite.

“Well spotted,” Rosa laughed. “This is your first girly night out.”

“I can’t go out,” Peter replied. “Everybody knows.”

“So give them something to think about,” Rosa said forcefully. “Don’t let them say that you’re afraid to show your face. It could have happened to anyone.”

“But it happened to *me*. It couldn’t have happened to anyone else. What if it happened to Melanie, or her brother?”

“If it had, you can be sure he’d want to make himself the centre of attention like he always does.”

“But I don’t want to be the centre of attention.”

“You’re not going to be.” Rosa sat beside him. “We’re your friends, remember; we’re going to have a little dress-up fun together. We’ll go for a ride in Chelsea’s car. We’ll stop for a soda somewhere if you feel brave enough, then we’ll come home for a sleepover.”

“A sleepover? Have you asked my mom?”

“I’ll go and speak to her.” Chelsea stood and went out of the door.

“Stop worrying; we’re going to look after you.”

“Maybe that’s why I should be worried.” Peter forced a smile.

“That’s all fixed.” Chelsea returned and looked at him. “At least you look like you showered and washed your hair today.”

She touched his hair and then felt under his chin. “And your skin’s really smooth. Did you shave as well?”

“I’ve never had to shave,” Peter admitted. “I’ve never even had a stray hair there.”

“I bet Melanie Chapman wishes she could say that,” Rosa butted in, naming the queen bee of their school year.

“Ouch, that’s really bitchy.” Chelsea laughed and Peter joined in.

“She really loves herself, despite having Mark for a brother,” Peter said. “At least they don’t spoil another pair.”

“That’s cruel.”

“Okay, it was and I’m not being fair.” Peter blushed. “She’s really pretty but she always puts me down with just a look.”

“But she really tries to look nice,” Rosa said. “She didn’t have much to start with but she’s always looking good these days.”

“And that’s what you have to do,” Chelsea swung the conversation back to Peter. “You’ve got to be the best girl you can be.”

“Is that even though I’ve got a penis?”

“You said it yourself; it’s only a little one,” Chelsea replied. “And we, as your adopted sisters, are going to do all we can to look after you.”

“I don’t think this is a good idea.” Peter gestured towards the bundle of clothes they’d brought. “I don’t know how you expect that I can get away with wearing anything like that.”

“We’re not giving you a choice,” Rosa laughed. “If you don’t fall in love with yourself after we’ve finished, you’ve got no soul worth saving.”

“It’s all planned.” Chelsea hugged him. “Don’t worry, you’re in safe hands. We’re going to help you dress, then come makeup and hair, perfume, jewelry, and everything that a girl needs for a ride out with her girlfriends.”

“I think you’d better go home,” Peter said. “This is not a good idea at all.”

“No choice’ was what we said,” Chelsea replied. “It’s all planned. Rosa reminded me that you got your ears pierced last school year. I hope the holes are still open or something may hurt.”

“You want me to wear earrings?” Peter asked.

“You did all last school year. It was like all the boys got them at once.”

“Okay, I admit it. I did and I think the holes are still there,” Peter admitted. “I wore them all that school year.”



“Your hair’s long and straight; we can do something with that, but a little trim and a bit of styling could make it much more feminine.”

“I’m not sure that I ever want to be feminine,” Peter protested.

“I think that boat sailed with Gene Genius, especially now that it’s all around school,” Rosa reminded him. “And everyone will be expecting you to do something.”

“It’s difficult to get my head round all this.” Peter shook his head and started to tear up again.

“That’s enough of that,” Rosa said. “Here’s your introduction to lingerie. I brought you a sexy black set that I think will fit. It’s what my sister bought before she got married last year. Somehow it stayed in my drawer and didn’t move with her.”

“I can’t wear those.” Peter looked up in shock as she held up a black bra, panties and a garter belt.

“Don’t be silly; sexy lingerie is a girl’s best friend.”

“I thought that was diamonds?”

“You need the first to get the second.”

“I never thought of it like that.” Peter giggled when he saw her look. “But I still can’t wear those. I don’t have the figure.”

“I’d bet when you get them on, you won’t want to take them off,” Rosa laughed.

“But I’ve got nothing to put in the cups.” Peter touched the bra very cautiously as if expecting it to bite.

“I thought of that. That’s why I’ve brought these.” Chelsea held out a couple of flesh-coloured items. “They’re breast forms. Go on, you can touch them. My sister bought them because she thought hers were tiny.”

“*Were* her breasts tiny?” Peter said absently.

“She thought so but then she got a growth spurt and these have been in her drawer ever since.”

Chelsea pulled his T-shirt over his head expecting Peter to object, but he didn’t. Neither did he object when she pulled his unresisting arms into the shoulder straps and fastened the bra. He looked down as if he couldn’t believe it. Then she slipped the breast forms into the cups.

“Are they really this heavy?” he asked with his hands supporting the new weight on his chest.

“Think of them as girl essentials,” she said. “Of course, my sister bought these to impress; she was that sort of girl. Most girls are smaller but still need a bra for support.”

“Now are you going to get those jeans off, or do we have to help you?” Rosa held out the matching panties. “They’re quite stretchy, so they should hold your little man out of sight.”

Peter’s face flushed but he took them and went into his bathroom. Steeling himself, he pulled the panties up his legs and looked in the mirror.

She was right; his little man was held in check behind the elasticated material.

“Stop admiring yourself in the mirror.” Rosa watched Peter looking at his reflection in bra and panties. “You’ll get used to them soon enough.”

“This is a first,” Peter admitted. “It feels strange, like something forbidden, but there’s a feeling that goes with watching myself. It’s as if the extra chromosomes have been suddenly awakened.”

“I don’t know about chromosomes, but does that mean your inner girl is responding?”

“I don’t know.” Peter paused and looked at them in turn. “Do you really think I’m a girl?”

“Let’s find out,” Chelsea said. “We’re your guides to the hitherto unimagined world of the female.”

“We have it all planned; makeup and hair, then we’re going to get you dressed and take you out so that you can feel what it’s like to be a girl out there.”

“I’m not sure I want to go anywhere,” Peter said. “I’m scared. What if anyone should see me?”

“By the time we’re finished, all they’ll see is a girl. With care, you’ll be a reasonably attractive one too.”

“Do you really think so?”

“I do,” Rosa said. “You won’t stop traffic at fifty yards but you can work on it.”

“She means you have to be blonde and have a set of real curves to stop traffic.” Chelsea laughed at his shocked expression. “That means some gym work to tighten that waist and above all, the confidence to walk like you mean to own the world.”

“And big boobs would be a help,” Rosa added, laughing.

“That’s going to be hard,” Peter replied. “I don’t think I can grow those.”

“Never mind; we’ll get you there somehow.”

Peter watched as they made up his face. It was as if he wasn’t there as the girls talked back and forth, discussing eye shadow and liner, shading and contouring, shaping brows and lips.

His hair was sprayed and blowdried, sprayed again with something else so that it shone and moved in a way that he’d never seen before. It fell in waves over his shoulders and hung loosely down his back.

“I never thought my hair could look like this.”

“That’s because you always tie it back and don’t use the right products,” Rosa explained.

He resigned himself to being excluded from joining the conversation. He hadn’t the faintest idea about the things they were discussing. He sat and watched in the mirror as his face changed gradually from a pale boy to a glowing girl.

His eyes and lips took on different shapes. The scant of the makeup and the feel of lipstick and mascara all seemed so foreign. He knew girls used them every day but he had no idea that they felt like this. They even painted his fingernails a deep red.

Finally they were done and all that remained was his clothes. He sat obediently as hold-up stockings went up his legs.

“The garter belt is for when you have more experience,” Rosa explained.

He stood and moved as he was told as a dark green dress was pulled up with his arms through the shoulders and the short sleeves reached almost to his elbows.

He pulled his tummy in as the zipper fastened up the back, feeling the slight constriction as the material clung to his body and showed off the breast forms on his chest.

“I look like I have a figure,” he said in amazement. The girls looked at each other and laughed.

“You don’t mean that,” Peter said.

“I do.” Mom replied when she got over the shock of Peter’s transformation. “You weren’t handsome as a boy but as a girl, you’re quite pretty.”

“I can’t get over how different I feel,” he replied. “I feel suddenly lighter and brighter. I can’t explain; it’s as if someone’s thrown a switch in my mind. I don’t look like... well, me.”

“Does that mean you’re ready for the next stage in our plan?” Chelsea asked, dangling her car keys.

“I don’t think I’m ready to go out like this,” he replied. “It’s too much to ask.”

“Come on, if your Mom thinks you look good, surely you can believe her.”

“It’s true,” Mom said. “I know that under that you’re Peter but if I didn’t know that, I’d think you were a girl.” She paused. “And the feelings I’m getting

as I look at you make me think that maybe you always were.”

“I need a moment,” Peter said and walked from their living room and slowly went to his own room.

One there, he sat at his desk and took a deep breath. He could feel the difference; the stockings and the dress, the weight in his bra and the way he held his hands with their red nails as if to touch them would somehow make them go away. He went to his bathroom and stood in front of the mirror.

“I do feel different,” he admitted to his reflection.

He saw a hand touching his hair and the big silver hoops Rosa had given him to put in his pierced ears. They moved as he looked and their weight reminded him that he was in new territory here. His old earrings had been small studs. He’d got them to be one of the boys, now he looked like one of the girls.

The more he looked, the more he liked what he saw. There was a feeling of comfort, almost of discovering something which had been hidden for all his life. He liked the girl he saw in the mirror.

Then another thought hit him. What would other people think about this girl? Much as he’d like to become her, what would others think?

“I guess the genetic stuff is all over school by now. It may be but would that prepare them for this change? Am I prepared to ride this change and see where it takes me?”

He knew the answer but didn’t know if he was brave enough. He sat and watched his reflection. He liked what he saw more and more.

Why did life have to be so difficult?

“Come on, we’re waiting.” Chelsea knocked on his door and called softly. “You can’t hide forever.”

“It’s all a bit sudden.” Peter opened the door.

She took his hand and started to pull him along, then pushed him into the back seat of the waiting car. He looked round, and then remembered that Rosa had a two-door car. Chelsea got into the passenger seat. He was trapped and the car was moving off.

“Better that it happens suddenly and then you don’t have time to think about it too much,” Chelsea said. “And you’re not alone. We know some of the girls are going to be at that bar by the lake and I know they want to meet you.”

“But they already know me; they ignore me,” Peter protested as she turned in her seat.

“Not anymore; they don’t know the new you. I think they knew we were meeting you and they want to meet you too. Your secret is out, there’s nowhere to hide.”

They were on their way. Peter’s nerves were jangling as the familiar streets suddenly looked alien and threatening.

“You’re looking good so maybe there’ll be some boy interest.” Chelsea smiled as she said it.

“That’s all I need to make a perfect day.” He slumped back in the seat.

“It’s what you should want.” She smiled again. “Maybe that’s why you never got a girlfriend; you didn’t realise that you were a girl all the time.”

“I never thought of it like that,” Peter said. “But I don’t have breasts and I do have a penis.”

“But you said that the doctor told you that it wouldn’t work.”

“I shouldn’t have admitted that.” Peter blushed.

“And there are lots of girls who don’t have big breasts,” Chelsea said. “We’re not at all like the girls you see in those magazines that the boys pass around.”

“I’d hate to have porn star boobs.” Rosa pretended to shudder. “They must really hurt.”

It was too late to say anything more. The car pulled into a parking lot by the lake where there were lots of people milling around; walking, lingering, and swimming. And there were tables and chairs near an outdoor restaurant.

“You don’t expect me to get out of the car?” Peter looked scared under his makeup.

“This dress is blowing up in the breeze,” Peter complained as they pulled him from the car. “I can feel the air moving at the top of my legs.”

“Don’t worry: your skirt’s too tight to blow up and show your stocking tops.” Rosa held his hand tightly.

“Don’t make me do this,” Peter protested as they drew nearer to the tables. “Isn’t that Melanie Chapman over there?”

“I think it is.”

“Oh no; she’s always been awful to me. I can’t believe you’re making me face her.”

“So you’ve changed sides.” Melanie stood and came to greet them.

She did the air kiss thing with Chelsea and Rosa and then went to do the same to Peter who shied away.

“Get used to it,” Rosa hissed.

Peter allowed himself to be gently pulled towards Melanie. “I think I like you better this way,” she whispered. “We might have some fun together.”

Peter pulled back and looked at her. He didn’t know how to respond.

“I’ve never done this before,” he spluttered.

“There are lots of things that I’ve never done before.” Melanie’s eyes told their own story as she spoke. “There again, there are lots of things that I’d like to try.”

Before he could think of a riposte, she turned. “Come and sit with us,” she said.

It was an offer they couldn’t refuse.

Peter sat miserable and silent as the girls chattered around him. He was too self-conscious to say more than a word or two when the conversation was directed at him. He hoped they’d realise that he didn’t want to talk and go back to their usual mode of ignoring him.

“Come and walk with me.” Melanie took his hand and pulled him to his feet. “I think these girls are ganging up on you just because you’re new.”

Reluctantly, Peter allowed her to pull him to his feet. He didn’t want to go but he didn’t know how to refuse without attracting more attention than he wanted. Rosa nudged Chelsea and they both watched as he was led away.

“I can’t really walk in these heels that they’ve made me wear,” he confessed after he’d been pulled along for a few paces.

“I’ll slow down.” Melanie looked at his feet. “You’ll get used to them when we’ve walked a little. Let me take your arm.”

Peter hoped that the girls weren’t watching as Melanie linked his arm in hers. She pulled him closer and he could smell her perfume.

“You look quite pretty,” she said.

“Thanks,” he mumbled. “Why are you being nice to me?”

“I guess I didn’t look at you properly.”

“And this is you looking properly?”

“I think so.” Melanie looked him in the eye. “I could really get to like you; maybe you could be my special friend?”

He looked at her, thinking she was being sarcastic; taunting him when he wasn’t in a position to gainsay her. He couldn’t detect that in her face as their eyes met.

“I’m really happy that you’re here,” Melanie said. “Aren’t you glad they brought you out?”

“I don’t know how they got me to come,” he stammered. “They almost forced me out of the house and I’m not sure that it was a good idea.”

“I’ve always thought that there was something special about you,” Melanie said. “You weren’t crude and nasty to me like some of the boys.”

“Are you saying that to make me feel better; or do you mean that I was never one of the boys?”

“Given your genetic test results, it seems that you really were never one of the boys.”

“Does everyone know all about it?”

“I think they do,” Melanie said. “I didn’t leak it but there’s a copy of one of the reports being passed around school and now it’s on Facebook for all to see.”

“I’m not on Facebook.”

“You must be the only one in school who isn’t.”

“Perhaps it’s as well; I’d never have come out if I’d known.” Peter looked down, watching his feet in the strange heeled shoes as they walked slowly. “Did you leak the report?”

“Heavens no,” she replied. “Mom would never forgive me. I haven’t seen her copy and I know she’s kept it away from Mark. I think someone sneaked into the Principal’s office and took a picture with their phone.”

“Mark never liked me. I was relieved when he left to go to college.”

“He’s not all bad; it was sheer bravado. Inside he was a different person.”

“Well, he managed to hide it well and now I think I’m done for.” Peter stopped and sighed.

“Don’t say that.” Melanie hugged him.

He allowed her embrace and hugged her back. They stayed that way for a few moments and then simultaneously they both looked up. Melanie’s eyes seemed huge and warm. Peter felt something although he could never explain what it was and then they were kissing.

It struck him in mid-kiss that he was kissing Melanie. If you’d ever asked him who he was least likely to kiss, she would have been the first name out of the hat. But she seemed different now.

A short touch of the lips, then they both pulled back as if realising that something had happened that took them both by surprise. A hesitation and then they were kissing again, deeper and more meaningfully this time.

Peter felt her tongue at his lips and instantly liked the feeling. His lips opened and her tongue probed into his mouth, touching his tongue and playing as she explored him. That first real kiss didn’t end but melded into another and then another.

“We mustn’t.” Peter pulled back, looking over his shoulder. “What if anyone sees us?”

“It may be too late to ask that question,” she answered as he followed Melanie’s gaze towards the path behind them

“How do we get out of this?” He turned to Melanie.

“The answer depends if we *want* to get out of this.”

They didn't have to say a word. No one said a word but their looks spoke volumes. Melanie smiled and looked like there was nothing amiss. Peter tried to ignore them all. He managed but it hurt.

Their looks said much more than words ever could.

"I think you've made a new friend," Chelsea said as they drove back homeward.

"It's not like that," Peter protested.

"Oh no? Melanie asked for your number." Rosa said.

"You didn't give it to her?" Peter replied.

"Of course; what was I to do? I couldn't pretend I didn't know it and, besides, you two looked comfortable together."

"But everyone will know." Peter blushed.

"I think that bird has flown." Rosa held up her mobile where a picture of Peter and Melanie in a hot embrace filled the screen.

Peter was still in a state of confused emotion when he arrived home. He went straight to his room, only to find things had changed.

His clothes had gone and in their place he saw a couple of dresses and some other things he didn't recognise on hangars. He opened a drawer where his pants and socks used to be. Now there were different things; things with frills, lace and softer colours. The shoes didn't look like his old sneakers either. They had heels.

“Where are all my clothes?” He sought his mother in the kitchen.

“I made a decision for you,” she replied. “The principal says you have to attend in your true gender. He won’t accept that you’re anything else but a girl and, right or wrong, the evidence is there.”

“But I don’t have girl parts.” Peter pointed to his groin. “And I don’t have breasts.”

“Not every girl has big breasts.” Mom looked sternly at him. “You can’t judge a girl by breast size; yours will probably grow as you get older.”

“I don’t believe that.” Peter slumped back into a chair. “What a mess.”

“Don’t carry on so,” Mom said. “It’s not the end of the world. Half the world does pretty well as women. You should be proud to join them.”

“But I’ve spent my whole life being a boy,” he said.

“Well, now you know that was wrong and you’ve got a chance to correct it.”

“Gee, thank you, fate,” he grumbled.

Before he could say more, his phone trilled with a call from an unrecognised number.

“Hi, it’s Melanie. I had to call. I can’t wait to see you again,” she said.

“That may not be a good idea,” he replied.

“I can’t think of a better idea,” she replied. “You don’t have a girlfriend to disappoint or a boyfriend to annoy. I don’t have anyone either and I thought if we got together, we’d be good for each other.”

“You do know they’re trying to make me into some sort of girl?” he asked.

“I think that’s delicious.” Melanie’s voice communicated her delight. “I’m really going to enjoy looking after you. You could be my little sister.”

“I have a penis.” Peter hoped to put her off.

“Then you’re my favourite kind of girl,” she laughed. “I’m coming over now.”

“But...” Peter started to object, but she’d already broken the connection.

“Are you going to come down?” Mom called up to Peter who was hiding in his room, hoping that the world would go away.

He didn’t reply.

“Melanie’s come to see you; she thinks she can help,” Mom shouted.

“I don’t want to see anyone,” Peter shouted back.

He could hear them talking downstairs and turned up his music to drown anything he might overhear.

“Your mom let me come up.” Melanie came into his room and deliberately closed the door behind her. “You’re not going to put me off.”

She came across the room to hug him. He shrugged her off but then emotion caught up with him and he felt tears coming to his eyes. He allowed himself to be pulled into her arms and started to sob against her shoulder.

Melanie soothed him, running her fingers through the hair at the back of his head, which still hung loose and heavy down his back. Peter sighed against her, allowing the hug to continue. He caught the sweet citrus scent of her perfume and realised that she was a little taller and a lot stronger than he was.

Somehow that felt comforting, although his senses betrayed the thought that he shouldn't be enjoying this.

"You poor baby," she whispered. "I know this is so difficult for you but I'm here now. I'm going to look after you."

"I don't need looking after." Peter tried to pull away but she held him firmly and he didn't try too hard.

"Don't. My mom's downstairs," Peter said as the hug continued and her hand played with the hair on the nape of his neck.

"She said she was going out to her salon appointment." Melanie continued to stroke his neck.

He looked up between sniffles and knew that she was going to kiss him. At the touch of her lips against his, he crumbled and gave himself to the sensation. Thoughts slipped away; it was all about the moment.

Melanie's hand held his head close. He could feel that her other hand was sneaking downwards, then pulling at the waistband of the sweatpants he'd changed into. Her hand continued until he felt it touching, then holding his penis.

"I don't know how big it should be." He got the words out through sniffles as he felt it stiffening.

“I’ll have to look closer.” Melanie’s hand explored further as her other hand pushed his pants down so that it stood out, firm but small for them both to see.

“I haven’t seen other guys,” Peter admitted. “Now they probably all know that mine’s small and not very functional.”

“It’s not the size; it’s the way you use it.” She stroked it more firmly.

Somehow, and he could never recall how, they ended up on his bed where the touching and feeling, kissing and fondling took over from any consideration of what they were doing. It was an instinct that he never knew he had.

Melanie straddled him with her knees at either side of his head as her lips opened to take his penis into her mouth. He felt her breath and every tiny motion of her tongue as his face came into contact with the flesh between her legs.

“Put your tongue out,” she whispered between sucking on him.

Peter did as he was told and immediately tasted the soft flesh of parts which he knew girls had but which he’d never seen before. Her hips bucked against him; a soft moan came to his ears which told him that he must be doing something right.

She rolled back off him and straddled him again, this time face-to-face. Her hand took his penis and slipped it between her legs. He knew where it was going and he pushed with all his might.

“Keep going,” she said, pushing down again.

“That’s all I have,” Peter replied through his gasps as he knew that he was going to come into her.

A twitch and another, then it was over. He felt an overwhelming sense of failure. It should feel more than that; he'd read the books. He'd been with a girl for the first time; he'd had his chance and failed. He'd failed, not through any lack of intent. He knew that the genetic tests had told some truths.

Melanie pulled off him. Peter turned to the side and cried.

"It's not that bad." Melanie rubbed his shoulders when his sobbing ebbed away.

"How can it not be bad?" he replied. "I can't be one thing or the other."

"I guess that was your first time."

"You guessed right." Peter sat up and looked at her.

"It doesn't have to be bleak," she said taking his hand. "You have Chelsea and Rosa, and now you have me. Together we can do anything."

"Make that more or less anything." Peter even managed a smile. "I can think of one thing I can't do."

"But you can be your own person," she said. "I know I can't get what you're feeling but you have choices and chances. You don't make a bad-looking girl and with a bit of time, care and feminine artifice, you could be stunning."

"But I'm not much use to a girl and I'm not much use to a boy either."

“Don’t be too sure of that. I know these are some boys who’d love to meet you as a girl with a little extra.”

“Don’t rub it in. I know it’s little.”

“That wasn’t what I meant.” She laughed. “I think I know a boy who’d love to date you.”

“Do you mean he’d love to date a boy like me or a *girl* like me?”

“Definitely girls like you; he’s not into boys in the general sense.”

“So are you saying that I’d be better off if I decided to be a girl?”

“That’s a decision for you to make.” Melanie paused. “I think you should try it; release your inner girl and find out if you like her.”

“The principal has told Mom that I have to attend school as a girl. I can’t be transgender because I’ve never been in my real gender, according to those stupid tests.”

“I don’t know why they make these stupid rules.”

“Mom says we can’t afford the lawyers to fight the decision.”

“So when there are no choices, the choice is obvious.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that I’m calling Chelsea and Rosa. Between us, we will be able to figure something out.”

This is the point when a councillor was appointed through the Principal's office.

"I'm in a deep enough mess without someone stirring it." Peter didn't want to go.

"It can't do any harm." Mom pushed him out of the door and into the back seat of the waiting cab.

"Sure. I've read enough about councillors making things worse," he replied as she shut the car door behind him and went to get in the other side.

"I'm still sure it can't do any harm."

"I think *I* should judge that. Think how much harm I've suffered already."

"Think of it this way." Mom tried to be calming. "Maybe this should have been thought about sooner..."

"What do you mean by 'sooner'?" Peter looked shocked at her words.

"I think I should have guessed something when you didn't grow rough and tall like the other boys."

"Are you saying that you thought I was a girl way back when?"

"I'm saying that if I'd not dismissed your physical development as natural, maybe this would have been considered sooner."

"That doesn't make it any better."

"I know but I can't change things."

Peter had to see the councillor alone. He was with her for over an hour and was singularly uncommunicative on the journey home and for the rest of the evening. He didn't talk about it at all but was less reluctant when it came time to attend the next session and the ones after that.

"I think you should tell me something about your sessions," Mom said when her curiosity got the better of her.

"There's not much to tell," Peter replied. "She's helping me. I can visualise some sort of future for myself. I'm not comfortable with it all but I have to accept some of the things I can't change and maybe I have to change some of the things I can."

"That sounds like progress."

"I think it is but there's a long way to go before I know what I should do."

"You can't mope around all week," Mom said as Peter slumped listlessly into the kitchen a few days later.

"I don't see why not," Peter replied. "I hate it that you've got me dressing in these ridiculous clothes every day. Why can't I have my old ones back?"

"You know very well. The Principal has decided that you can only go back to school as a girl."

"But girls wear jeans and hoodies."

"My girl is not going to slouch around like someone whose mother doesn't insist on certain standards," Mom replied.

“You could be such an attractive girl. You were when they took you out. I don’t understand why you don’t want to look that good all the time.”

“I don’t feel right.”

“What does it take to make you feel right?”

“I don’t know. Something... anything that doesn’t make me feel stupid; like everyone’s looking and waiting for me to make a mistake.”

“I think you’re worrying too much,” Mom said. “I can understand that you might be a wonder for a few days but once you get over that, no one’s going to think anything of it.”

Peter dropped his head onto his hands at the table and remained there, refusing to communicate until his mom gave up and left him. He didn’t do much for the rest of the day or the one after. On the third day, it all changed.

“Who let you in?”

He stood in surprise as Chelsea, Rosa and Melanie all came in at once. They surrounded him, looking very much like they meant business.

“Your mom gave us a key.” Melanie held it up for him to see. “We promised her that we’d get you moving, and together were going to create the best girl you can ever be.”

“You’re coming out with us,” Rosa announced. “You’re going to learn what fun you can have.”

“I doubt it.”

“Don’t be such a dog in a manger,” Chelsea said. “How much fun did you have as a *boy* in this town? You didn’t have a girlfriend.”

“I had you two. Melanie, you just used to ignore me.”

“Maybe I learned something the other nigh,” Melanie said as the other two looked askance at her. She shook her head as if to tell them not to ask.

Peter hesitated a moment and then Melanie went out, slamming the door. She looked as if she was crying.

“We’d better go after her,” Rosa said, looking at Chelsea. They followed her, leaving Peter alone and wondering what he’d missed.

Peter moped around the house for the next few days. He tried to call the girls but his call was rejected each time. He guessed that he must have done something to upset them all, but he had no idea what.

So he wasn’t happy with the idea that he was really a girl but maybe he had no other choices. His penis seemed to have wilted at the first try. Melanie hadn’t been impressed.

Mom wasn’t much help either. Sure, she made lots of encouraging suggestions; she complimented him on his choice of clothes, even though he knew he had no real choices any more. All he had was girl’s clothes.

Then suddenly it seemed like a switch in his mind was thrown. Without being conscious of the change in himself, he started to take more care. He washed his hair carefully and tried some styling products. He even started to play with some of the makeup that had been left for him.



Of course, he made a frightful mess but then he discovered all the demonstrations on the internet and started to copy and improve his skills. He thought his mom might notice but she said nothing at all, until one evening he appeared at dinner in a tight dress, heels and so much makeup that it could have filled a canvas.

The stairs had been difficult. He'd seen actresses in the movies. They could slink down a flight of stairs and look sexy. He felt decidedly clumsy, even though he hung onto the stair rails for dear life at each step. He did it slowly and quietly. He didn't want to be seen struggling. He stalked across the room, conscious of his heels clicking on the wooden floor, determined to keep his balance.

His mother looked up and then did a double-take, looking again and smiling.

"I knew you could do it," she said as she came to throw her arms around him.

"Don't smudge my makeup." He held his head back, then realised what he'd said.

Mother looked at him and he looked at her. They seemed to take a moment to work it out and then they smiled, laughed, and hugged again carefully.

"I think you'd better choose a new name," Mom said. "There can't be many girls called Peter."

"I think you'd better re-christen me."

"If you'd been born a girl..." she started, then realised what she'd said. "If they'd told me you were a girl when you were born, you'd have been Madeleine."

“Then I shall be Madeleine from now on,” he said. “I can be Maddie for short. I think I like that but it’s a parent’s choice to name the child, so that’s who I am.”

“What made you decide to embrace your identity as a girl?” Mom asked after the plates were cleared and the atmosphere eased.

“I don’t know if I can answer that.” Peter leaned back and looked thoughtful for a moment. “I think I realised that I didn’t have many choices and that if my future was to be female, I’d better get on with it.”

“You’ve been seeing that counsellor regularly. Has she been helping?”

“She’s helping me to understand that I’m caught in a biological mistake.” Madeleine looked thoughtful as if searching for the right words. “She’s asked me if I’d like to have breast implants too.”

“How would you feel about that?”

“I don’t know,” Madeleine said. “I guess it would say that I’ve made a choice, rather than being stuck in Limbo.”

“That would mean you’re stepping into the girls’ camp,” Mother said. “There’d be no going back from there.”

“I know and that’s what makes it so difficult. I know I can’t get pregnant; I don’t have the right internal bits.” She paused and looked away. “I know I can’t be a father either, so maybe my choices are limited.”

“You could adopt,” Mother said encouragingly.

“I could do that as a boy or a girl,” Madeleine replied.

“What about other surgery? You have something that most girls don’t have.”

“You’re being tactful.” Maddie laughed at mom’s embarrassment. “To put it bluntly, I’m not going to have anything cut off. The counsellor has talked about that and I’ve read about it too. It seems a step too far for me to consider.”

“You’ve thought about it a lot.”

“I have and I think my conclusion is that having a penis, a little one, doesn’t mean that I can’t be a girl in every other way.”

“Is that a final decision?”

“Not really; I don’t know,” Madeleine said. “I think I’m going to leave it a while.”

“Should I start saving for your implants?”

“No. She says that there’s some fund she can access to help people like me along.”

“That’s a relief.”

“It still doesn’t help me decide though.”

“That’s either very mature or very cynical,” Mom said. “Are you sure?”

“I think I am,” the new girl replied. “I’ve either got to get out there and do something, anything, rather than let the future pass me by.”

“You don’t make a bad-looking girl.”

“I need to be slimmer and I need to have a figure.” the former boy laughed. “I need to get better at makeup and hair too, otherwise I’ll never fit in.”

“Does that mean you’re ready to face the world as Madeleine?”

“I think I’ll need to give it some time.”

In the end, there wasn’t that much delay. Melanie was the first to come and visit.

“I can’t believe that you’ve changed so much,” She said after they’d hugged and air-kissed like old friends. “I can’t wait to show you off to everyone.”

“Don’t be so fast,” the new girl hesitated. “They’ll all know who and what I am.”

“But I’ll call Chelsea and Rosa; they were asking about you as if I’d know more. You’re getting a special makeover and then you’re coming out with us.”

“Don’t be silly. The rest of the girls will hate me and the boys will call me all kinds of rotten names.”

“Not if you look better than their girlfriends.”

“That’s not going to endear me to the girls.”

“Some will hate you. That’s inevitable but some will accept you. Look at us; we’re on your side.”

And so quickly was it all arranged. Next day, under heavy escort from the girls, Madeleine entered the hitherto forbidden world of the beauty parlour.

“I think the whole town knows what happened to you.” Beverley the owner introduced herself. “We all really felt for you.”

“It’s not been good,” Madeleine mumbled, feeling self-conscious under her makeup. “I’d never have chosen this.”

“Honey, there’s nothing to worry about.” Beverley brought a couple of her salon girls into the huddle. “You’ve everything going for you. You’re slim and not too tall, your hair’s wonderfully healthy, and I can tell you have a poise that a lot of girls will never achieve.”

“It must be a natural look,” Madeleine stammered.

“Why be natural?” Beverly waved her arm as if to indicate the salon. “All this is dedicated to making the best use of science and art to make a girl beautiful.”

“I don’t want to look like a drag queen.”

“With our help, you’ll be stunning.”

“I don’t think I can afford stunning. It sounds expensive.”

“It’s free; all you have to do is let us use your picture in our advertising for a month.”

“That doesn’t sound good. I don’t want to advertise myself.”

“I think you do,” Beverly replied. “The whole town knows about you. If you let us announce it and show the new you, they’ll all get over it and the sensationalism will die down quickly.”

“Beverley’s making a lot of sense,” Melanie interrupted. “If you don’t have to creep around being

afraid to show yourself, you'll feel much more confident and much quicker."

"I'm not sure..."

"Trust us on this; we're girls." Melanie kissed Madeleine's lips briefly. Her look said a lot.

"I can't believe that this is me." Madeleine looked in the mirror and watched her hand with the new long red nails touching her face. "There's almost nothing left that I recognise."

"It's all you, don't pretend it's not." Beverley stood behind her. "All we did was adding a little feminine artifice."

"It's what we all do." Melanie shrugged. "You'd hate to see me without my makeup and with my hair all scraggy."

"But I have eyelashes that I've never had before."

"They're becoming the new 'must have' fashion item," Beverley replied. "I hope everyone sees how good you look with them and then they'll all come here for their own lashes."

"But I can't afford to keep having them done."

"Honey, we'll do them for free; you're our walking advertisement."

"I still feel that it's wrong. I've been a boy for as long as I can remember until that wretched test."

"All that means is that there was a mistake all along," Melanie said. "You told me that you never felt like one of the gang with the boys in class."

“I know but...”

But nothing. It’s time to accept things and be the girl you were supposed to be all along,” Melanie said. “And lashes apart, I can’t see anything that’s not natural about you.”

“What about my hair; the highlights and low-lights?”

“You look fabulous and it’s only a tiny change.”

“But it took so long.”

“Never mind, let’s get on with getting you used to living in a girl’s world.”

“I don’t think I can do that.”

“Of course you can and we’re going to make sure you know it.”

“That sounds dangerous.” Madeleine felt a tingle run through her; it might be dangerous but something told her that it might also be exciting.

“This is the way it’s going to be,” Melanie announced once they’d got Madeleine into the car. “Rosa and Chelsea have been looking for guys for you to meet. One of them is my brother.”

“Mark was always awful to me.” Madeleine remembered all the insults.

“That was then; this is now,” Melanie replied. “He’d never admit it but I think my brother has a thing for girls like you.”

“Now you’re really scaring me”

“I think he’s more scared than you are. I’ve seen his search history on the computer.”

“Let’s change the subject,” Madeleine said. “I don’t want to think about dating, or boys, or sex, or anything like that. Life’s difficult already without looking for something to make it more complicated.”

“I agree,” Rosa joined in. “Let’s go shopping.”

“You’ve never done girl shopping?” she asked. “It’s fun. We might not buy anything but we look everywhere and sometimes try everything on.”

“How is that fun?”

“You get your friends around you. They tell you what looks good and what looks awful.”

“Do they always tell the truth?”

“Don’t ask silly questions,” Chelsea interrupted and they all laughed.

Madeleine began to understand that shopping was something of a ritual, as she saw what her friends chose for themselves and what they chose for her. If anyone in the shops knew who, or what she was, no one called her out.

“Somehow, I feel that I could fit in with this,” she sighed at the end of the day as they walked back to the car from an afternoon at the mall.”

“We’re taking you dancing this evening,” Melanie announced as they dropped Madeleine at her house. “Be ready for inspection before we go.”

“Why do I need inspection?”

“Well, I’m sure you’d like us to make sure that your dress and makeup are perfect,” Rosa replied. “It’s what we do for each other.”

Madeleine knew that this was something of a test. She’d gotten used to wearing lingerie and loved the soft touch of silk and lace next to her skin. Having to put padding into her bra cups was becoming more and more of an inconvenience. She always worried about it slipping out, or worse, tumbling to the floor.

Three hours later, Madeleine was ready for her inspection. She wore a dark blue dress with a high neckline, a tight bodice and a pencil skirt, with black heels. Her hair was loose and as full as it had been in the salon. She’d spent ages getting her makeup right.

“I can’t believe you did that.” Melanie looked at Madeleine and whistled in appreciation. How on earth...?”

“I guess it’s my inner girl.” Madeleine twirled on her heels. “Actually, I’ve been practising. I knew that I’d have to make a decision and staying on the boys’ team wasn’t really an option, not when everyone knew about me.”

“But you look so good.”

“That’s down to YouTube tutorials, Beverley’s salon, and watching you guys. Don’t forget that in class, I was the best artist. Colour, contour and shading make sense to me and I can do it naturally.”

“Don’t get my daughter into trouble,” Mom called as they left the house.

“I’m not going to let some boy have his wicked way with me,” Madeleine called back, and then in a whisper added, “not unless I want him to.”

“You’re wicked; I’m shocked.” Melanie smiled as they got into the car.

They picked up Chelsea and Rosa and drove towards the middle of town where the restaurants, bars, and clubs were all close together.

“Your mom wouldn’t have let you come here a couple of years ago,” Chelsea pointed out.

“If she knew we were with someone as dangerous as Madeleine, she wouldn’t let us come now,” Melanie replied.

“I’m not dangerous.” Madeleine looked shocked at the thought.

“I think your councillor has put ideas into your head,” Chelsea replied. “It used to be that you hid away when the genetic tests told everyone that you were a girl. Now you seem determined to be more of a girl than any of us.”

“I have to make up for lost time,” Madeleine replied. “Seriously, she made me see that there were no alternatives that I could realistically hope for.”

“I heard a rumour that you were getting breasts too,” Rosa said softly.

“You’re not supposed to know that,” Madeleine replied. “I’m shocked that you could even say it.”

“I heard a rumour. You could tell us that it’s not true but I think your response tells us a lot.”

“I haven’t decided and please don’t spread these rumours.”

The car was silent for a few blocks, before pulling into a parking lot.

Two hours later, the party girls were in full swing. Purses on the floor, they danced as the pulsating rhythms filled the bar. Madeleine threw herself into it, heart and soul. It was a release as her hands raked through her hair which had started as a tame style, but now hung down her back and over her shoulders.

One minute she was dancing with the girls, the next she was dancing in the arms of Mark Chapman.

“What are you doing here?” Madeleine asked when the fog of alcohol cleared enough for her to realise who it was.

“I’m dancing with you, of course.”

“I didn’t mean that.” She stopped dancing and stood still. “I mean, why are you here tonight? You know who I am, so why are you here dancing with me?”

“Melanie said I might find you here.”

“But you were never nice to me.”

“That’s before I realised who you really are.”

“Dancing with me won’t do much for your image as a guy for the girls.”

“On the contrary, you do more than make me think about the other girls.”

He leaned in and kissed her, holding her so that backing off wasn’t easy; the shock held her rigidly there anyway.

“Why did you do that?” she gasped. “You’ve ruined my lipstick.”

“So said the guy in a dress.”

“I’m the one you kissed,” said the ‘guy’ in a dress.

“You can’t pretend you didn’t like it.”

“That’s not what I said.”

“Come on, grab your purse and let’s go somewhere we can talk.”

Without hesitation, Mark took her hand, picked up her purse and thrust it into her hand and before she could protest, she was being pulled through the doors and into the street.

“I’ve got a room in a friend’s house on the park. His parents are away and he says I can use their guest house tonight,” Mark said. “We can talk there.”

“I don’t think I should go there.”

“I think you should.”

“I think you want to do more than talk.”

“Is that a dare or a request?”

“Try me and find out.” Madeleine was feeling light headed; maybe she shouldn’t have had that last drink.

Mark leaned in and kissed her again, this time slowly and much more gently. Madeleine didn’t know if she should like it. That thought flashed through her brain before she decided that she did like it and opened her lips to let his tongue touch hers.

“Have I become such a girl?” Madeleine thought as their tongues touched.

“I don’t think I should be doing this.” Madeleine pushed Mark away after they’d kissed hard and long as soon as they were in the guest house. “I don’t know what to do anyway.”

“You just follow your instincts.” Mark’s hands were everywhere.

“I don’t know what my instincts are telling me.” Madeleine squirmed, trying to get out of his hold; trying but not too hard.

His hand slid between her legs. He pushed himself against her and she knew what that bulge was saying.

“You shouldn’t. You know I’m not a real girl.”

“Can’t you tell that I’m thinking that you’re as real as I want you to be?” Mark’s hand worked her penis which grew instantly. “If you had breasts, I’d be licking them now. Imagine my tongue there and maybe a little playful nibble to add to the feeling.”

His other hand tweaked there. Madeline could feel it even through the padding in her otherwise empty bra.

“I’m not stopping you doing that, but your other hand is somewhere else and you’re pushing against me like you want to do something else.” Madeleine’s hands went to push his shoulders away. “I don’t know what you want me to do.”

“You can feel how I’m feeling,” he said, pushing into her with his erect penis prominently bulging in his chinos.



“I know what that is,” she said, giving up the attempt to push him away. “I can feel how big it is.”

“You can’t blame me.”

“I didn’t know that a penis could be that big.” Madeleine wished she hadn’t said that as soon as the words slipped through her lips.

“I could get to like your little one.”

He grazed the nape of her neck with his teeth which sent a tremor through her body, as his hand explored that space between her legs.

Without thinking or making a conscious decision, Madeleine let her hands drop. She opened his belt and the zipper. Slipping her hand inside, she touched, then wrapped her fingers around his length.

“I think you know what to do,” he whispered, putting his hands on her shoulders and pushing her downwards. “Why don’t you take a closer look?”

“I don’t... I can’t...” She allowed herself to slowly slide down his body until she was on her knees and his penis, free from his pants, stood out in front of her face.

“Doesn’t that tell you something?” Mark asked. “You can touch it; it won’t bite.”

Almost in a trance now, Madeleine watched her hand do as he said, then watched her fingers wrap around it. Somehow the fingers didn’t look like they were hers anymore. These had red nails and looked so feminine. She felt him shudder a little as her fingers gripped the shaft.

“It’s getting bigger,” she said with a tremor in her voice.

“You can hold it. It won’t bite.”

“I shouldn’t...” Madeleine looked at it with revulsion. Then as she looked some more, it turned to a fascination.

“Doesn’t it hurt when it gets that big?” she asked, never taking her eyes off it.

“I love your hand there,” Mark gasped as if he hadn’t heard a word she’d said.

She looked up to see a different expression on his face and he pushed his penis against her hands. The red nails moved up and down the shaft as she felt it swell some more. Then, without warning, it started to spasm and globs of liquid came from the tip.

“Ugh.” Madeleine turned her face away as the first spatters hit her cheek and chin.

It continued as she pulled her fingers away and leaned back but some fell onto her dress before she could get out of the way.

“Don’t touch me.” She writhed away from his arms as he tried to hold her. “Get dressed properly.”

He complied, turning away from her. “I thought you knew that would happen,” he said.

“You may think me an idiot, but I didn’t expect that.”

“It’s what happens between a guy and an attractive girl.”

“But this girl has been a boy until a few weeks ago,” Madeleine replied. “How would I have known?”

“You have girlfriends.”

“Sure I do but they’ve been helping me with clothes and hair, makeup, and heels. They haven’t been giving me biology lessons.”

“The way you did that to me, I don’t think you need biology lessons.” Mark tried to hide a grin.

“Okay, I should have thought more.” Madeleine calmed down. “I remember the lessons ages ago but I didn’t realise it would be like that.”

Mark held out his arms towards her and Madeleine found herself slipping into them, feeling a warmth and comfort as he held her.

“I guess I need to learn a lot about this new life I’ve been thrown into,” she said.

“I’m not all bad.” Mark kissed her ear. “I like you. I like you a lot and I’ll help you.”

“I need to get cleaned up.” Madeleine pulled out of his grip. “And I’ll need to repair my makeup after all you’ve done to wreck it.”

His grin was infectious and she found herself grinning back.

“Was that my brother you were dancing with last night?” Melanie called round to the house the following lunch time. “He was very mysterious about it.”

“It was your brother and you know all about it,” Madeleine replied.

"I know you both disappeared and he took you home."

"That's all you need to know."

"I'm not the only one who saw you," Melanie persisted. "I think everyone did."

"Then you all know as much as you need to know," Madeleine replied. "I doubt I'll be seeing him again; he's obviously going to go back to college soon."

"That's not for a few weeks," Melanie replied. "A lot can happen in a few weeks."

"I'm probably not his type."

"That's where I think you're wrong. I've had suspicions about my brother for a long time. His interest sparked when he found out about you."

"He used to be awful to me before her went to college."

"I don't think he feels that way now."

"Why? What did he say?"

"Don't worry; he didn't say anything. Your secrets are safe. It was more the *way* he didn't say anything."

"Now I don't know what you mean."

"You've not developed your feminine intuition yet." Melanie smiled as she said it. "You can be a little slow sometimes. He's not said anything because he likes you; he *really* likes you."

"I'm scared." Madeleine's eyes filled up.

“There’s no need to be; you have friends.” Melanie took her hand. “We’re going to teach you all you need to know. Prepare to study Girl 101.”

Madeleine learned quickly. From being entirely complacent about dress and grooming, she discovered the importance of her image. The salon didn’t quite become her second home. Mark saw to that requirement but it was her sanctuary and her delight.

“Have you ever thought what would have happened if you hadn’t had that genetic test?” Beverley asked as she worked on her hair.

“Life would have been different, I know that,” Madeleine replied.

“Your hair would have stayed mousey.”

“But it’s better being blonder. Blondes have more fun.”

“But the guys expect you to be dumb.”

“Guys can’t have everything.” Madeleine’s eyes twinkled as she said it. “But I’m learning to play along.”

“And surely the lashes and the nails... all that maintenance must be a bind? ”

“But you and the girls are good at it all. I like the pampering and feeling good as I leave. It’s all new to me.”

“Would that be because there’s a guy in that car across the road who keeps looking in at you?”

“It may be but I don’t give away secrets.”

Madeleine hurried across the street and into Mark's car. They kissed—it seemed natural to do that now—before he drove away.

“I'm taking you to the college campus,” he said. “My roommates are away for the weekend and we can have the place to ourselves.”

“I'm not a good cook.” Madeleine looked at him coyly.

“I'm not asking you to cook. I've ordered in and we can go to the club later. There's a hot new DJ there.”

“You might be too tired.” She looked across at him.

“I guess I might be.” He caught her meaning.

Mark's dorm room turned out to be a study bedroom, with a shared kitchen and bathroom between him and his roommate. It was surprisingly clean and tidy.

“Does the place always look this good?” Madeleine whispered in his ear as they were wrapped in an embrace once the door was closed.

“You say the most romantic things,” he replied.

It didn't take long, much as Madeleine wanted it to be slow and romantic.

“This is a big bed for a single student.” She pulled him down beside her. “They must guess what you were likely to get up to.”

“Far sighted; that's what the designers were.” His hands started to explore and reach under her clothes.

“Be careful there,” she cautioned. “You know it’s not real.”

“I don’t care,” he replied, releasing the breast form from her bra and rubbing her nipple.

“You can’t do that,” she replied. “It’s still sensitive.”

“And what about this little thing?” His other hand reached for her penis. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t say that.”

“It’s okay. I know it’s tiny and the doctors said it doesn’t work like it should... or it should if I was a boy.”

“I swear you get more feminine each time I see you.” He nibbled at her nipples in turn.

“That’s because I’m reacting to your expectations.” She laughed. “That’s what my counsellor said would probably happen.”

“That sounds horribly clinical.”

“No, it’s a compliment,” Madeleine replied. “Wouldn’t you prefer to be with a real girl, one with real breasts and... other parts?”

“I’d rather have you like this,” he replied. “I think I’ve always known that’s what I wanted.”

“Life could be difficult if you’re sure.”

“I’m sure.”

“Would you like it if I told you that I was thinking of getting implants?” Madeleine said, stroking his penis into life. “You could touch my breasts and I think...”

“You think what?”

“It’s confusing. I think it would settle things in my mind if I had more of the things that girls have.”

“As well as the hair, the nails and the lashes; the heels and the dress and the perfume. Need I go on?”

“Only if you’re going to tell me how good I look,” she replied. “I think I’m getting very vain.”

“You look amazing.”

“You can do better than that. Come and show me.”

“You mean...”

“Yes, I mean.” Madeleine snuggled closer. “I’ve been learning how to do it. I hope *you* know.”

She didn’t get the chance to finish her sentence. He kissed her hard and before she had time to think, his hands were moving. He started at the hem of her dress; underneath and sliding slowly upwards. She sighed and pushed as it climbed further and then he was slipping inside her panties.

“You may not like what you find there,” she whispered, feeling her tiny penis struggling to grow to its full length.

“I could love the little thing,” he said.

“You’re going to get a chance to prove that.”

She pushed against his hand but as she did so, the hand moved to her rear, sliding between her cheeks, probing and seeking the entry.

“It’s all lubricated and ready for you to try,” she whispered again.

“Really?” he asked, failing to hide his surprise.

“A girl has to be prepared for her man,” Madeleine replied squirming against his probing finger. “I brought something with me to make sure you’re ready too.”

Then it became a frenzy of touching and feeling, undressing and wriggling against each other.

“It’s going to be best if I kneel and you come behind me.” Madeleine pulled him into position. “There are other ways, but they’re for later. Right now, I only want to feel you inside me.”

Her hands found his penis standing strong and stiff.

“Wait, you need some of this.” She smeared something onto her hand. “You need it all over to help you slide in.”

She could feel him probing at the entry as she knelt for him, her rear uplifted against him.

“You’ll have to push hard,” she said. “I’ll scream because you’ll hurt me, but don’t worry and don’t stop.”

To emphasise her words, she pushed back and felt her muscles contract against him. She took a deep breath and held still, willing the muscles to ignore their natural reaction. It didn’t seem to work.

“Come on, push harder,” she gasped, pushing back again and feeling the resistance again.

Suddenly he slapped her hard on the rump. She winced and at the distraction, he pushed harder and then he was in, beyond that first obstacle. She winced as if in pain.

“Am I hurting too much?”

“No, it’s good pain; go slowly and work your way in.” She panted and gasped with the effort as she arched her back and pushed against him.

“Keep still; let me get used to the feel.” Madeleine rocked gently from side to side against him, her breath coming in gasps between the words. “Don’t be impatient.”

“I’m holding back all I can,” he replied, his hands steadying her rear cheeks against him, as they stayed almost frozen for a few seconds.

“Now.” Madeleine pushed back hard and it was as if another line of resistance had been breached. “Do it hard.”

He rocked back and forth, faster and the faster still. Her resistance seemed to have been pushed aside now that he was there. His ball sack was the only thing stopping him from going further in.

“You’re getting bigger.” Madeleine tried to look back over her shoulder at him.

“I can feel it,” he gasped. “It’s getting to the point of no return.”

“Let me have it all.”

“I can’t stop it.”

They both pushed; her against him, him against her. She was impaled as far as she could be on his penis. It felt so big that she wouldn’t have detached herself if she’d wanted to. She didn’t want to.

Then he was coming and Madeleine could feel it. She had a vision of him spurting and spurting again, filling her, spraying deep inside her with warmth and a glow which took her by surprise.

He started to fade; she pushed against him, not wanting that to happen even though she knew it was inevitable. Slowly he slid out of her, releasing a dribble down her thigh.

“You’ve made a mess,” she chided gently in jest, turning to kiss him. “I could get to like you making a mess of me.”

They lay back on the narrow bed, sated and happy, after wiping away the obvious leakage. They cuddled and slept a little.

“I’m still dribbling.” Madeleine shook him awake. “I think you need to plug the leak.”

This time it was slower, with positions changing and each entry becoming easier.

“I know I’m going to like being your girl,” she sighed as they lay quietly again.

Girl 101 was an intensive course, made more frantic by the regular intrusions of the popular press. Somehow they’d got to learn of Peter’s predicament and his change into Madeleine.

Fortunately they were able to keep private the fact that she had found a relationship.

“Goodness knows how you’ve managed to keep that quiet,” Mom said. “But I’m glad you have.”

“They can’t have *all* my life,” Madeleine replied as she looked through the edge of the blinds.

“I don’t know what they expect to see.” Mom looked through the blinds. “At least there’s only one photographer here.”

“There was a group of them at school,” Madeleine replied. “Chelsea got a group of girls to surround me and we walked past without them spotting me.”

“It’s awful that you have to go through all this.”

“It’s awful but I’m sure it’s going to calm down. It’s not as if I was a bimbo with huge breasts and a penis suddenly unleashed on the world. I’ve decided that I’m not going to react.”

“I think that’ll be easier said than done.” Mom slumped down next to her. “I’m not sure I can understand how you’re being so calm.”

“Well, I can’t argue with the genetic test. It is what it is,” Madeleine replied. “I admit that I hated it but now that I’ve had a few months to get used to it, I’ve decided that I quite like being a girl.”

“You’ve certainly taken to it,” Mom laughed. “I never thought I’d be pleased to see you so settled as my daughter, although I do worry at the cost of it all.”

“The girls have donated all sorts of clothes and shoes and lingerie too.”

“I know, but that still leaves all your makeup, your hair, nails and eyelashes for us to pay for.” Mom smiled as she said it. “I do like having you as a daughter.”

“Maybe I should ask for some sponsorship in return for an interview. Maybe do a few bikini pictures as well.”

“You haven’t got much to put in a bikini.”

“I was going to talk to you about that.” Madeleine blushed. “My counsellor has hinted that I could get implants and she said that there’s a fund which might pay for the surgery. She’s applied for it.”

“And you didn’t think to tell me that you were this serious?”

“I haven’t decided if I want it.” Madeleine didn’t look up at Mom.

“I think you’ve decided but you didn’t know how to tell me.”

“I have decided; at least I think I have.” Madeleine looked up. “I’ve sent an email asking that an appointment be set up for me to talk to the surgeon.”

“But you can still back out?”

“I don’t think I want to back out. I’m not going to grow my own and the counsellor thinks it would help me to accept my position more strongly than anything else, and I agree.”

“It’s a big step.”

“No, it’s not. I’ve taken the big step when I agreed that I really was a girl. This is a little step and it’s going to help me fit in. I’m tired of padding and worrying that it may fall out of my bra. I won’t be able to take them off at night and they’ll always be there to tell everyone who I am.”

“You’ve really thought this through. I didn’t realise.”

“Don’t look so serious.” Madeleine’s face lit up. “It also means that I can show off and make guys stare at my chest.”

“That may not be a blessing.”

“At least they’ll be won’t all wonder why that boy’s wearing a dress.”

“What do you think of your daughter?”

Madeleine stood in a dark blue dress with a low-cut neckline. The tops of her new breasts were unmistakably there, emphasised by the deep blue pendant nestling between them.

“They look... real,” Mom said.

“That’s why I wouldn’t let you see me until the swelling and bruising had gone,” Madeleine said.

“And are you comfortable with them?”

“I am now.” Madeleine looked down. “The surgeon said that they’d drop into place once all the swelling had gone and my skin stretched a little. I was worried at first when I saw what I looked like.”

“I guess it was painful too. You’ve been very brave.”

“It felt like someone had dropped a couple of medicine balls on my chest.” Madeleine smiled at the memory. “But I had to decide to be as complete as I could.”

“And the other thing...” Mom asked, knowing that her meaning would be clear.

“I’m not going to have any more surgery, if that’s what you’re asking.”

Mom nodded and they hugged.

“You look really nice, dear.”

“Thanks, Mom.” Madeleine stood back. “Now I’d better hurry and finish my makeup and do my hair. Mark’s going to be picking me up in an hour.”

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