



*Reluctant Press* presents:

# A LEAP FOR LIFE

Norman Way



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A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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# A LEAP FOR LIFE

**By Norman Way**

It was raining again. The windshield wipers were barely keeping up with the torrent. It was coming in sheets, whipsawing across the highway from west to east. It would let up for a little while and then continue. I was almost tempted to pull over to the side of the road for a few minutes until it let up.

I drove into my parking space and shifted the car into park. The weatherman on the radio announced that it would probably be an all-day soaker. I shut off the ignition and put the keys in my purse. Slipping my purse over my right arm, I grabbed my umbrella with one hand, the door handle with the other, and stepped out of the car just as the torrent increased.

I opened my umbrella, a sudden gust of wind nearly tore the umbrella from my grasp but I managed to hang on to it. I slammed the car door shut and walked quickly to the front door of the office building. Once inside, I shook the water off the umbrella and collapsed it as I went upstairs to my second floor office. My receptionist Cheryl was already there, reading a magazine. She smiled as I walked up to her.

“Good morning, doctor,” she said. “Nice weather if you’re a duck!”

“Good morning, Cheryl, it certainly is,” I answered as I walked to my inner office and closed the door.

I opened the umbrella again and set it on the floor to dry. After hanging up my raincoat and hat in the closet, I sat down behind my desk. Cheryl had put the mail on the top of my desk. I sorted through it and tossed the junk mail half of it in the garbage unopened. I took out the letter opener from my top drawer and slit open the remaining envelopes.

I put several invitations to charity dinners in my purse along with a short letter from my son who was serving on an aircraft carrier based in Japan. The bills I set aside. I would write the checks and mail them when I left later that day. The phone buzzed and I answered it.

"Your eight o'clock is here," said Cheryl.

"Okay, send him in," I said.

I checked my appearance in the mirror of my compact, then replaced it in my purse as the first patient of the day walked in and greeted me.

"Good morning, doctor," the large black man said as he took his seat opposite me.

"Good morning to you too, Sam," I answered.

Sam Caldwell was a former high school football star. His linebacker build made him an imposing figure. A knee injury in his senior year had ended his hope of a college scholarship and of course any possibility of a pro career. He was now confronting a much more serious challenge.

His face was expressionless as always. It was his way of hiding his feelings, not unlike many men I was treating for the same thing.

"How have you been?" I inquired.

"Not particularly good. I'm making decent grades in college but my heart isn't in it. I'm sure I will be a competent teacher some day. It's just that this thing has had me torn up since I was a kid. I can't see any end to it. I was always pushed into manly things and driven to be masculine when I wanted to do just the opposite."

"You are in your second year of college now. By the end of the year you will have to declare a major. Do you think teaching will be a proper career move for you?"

"Not really but I have to do something. I like being around people. I loved the atmosphere of high school and college. Teaching would be sort of like an all-day social environment rather than a work environment."

"I see. I hate it when I hear somebody say 'I have to do something' because it indicates no interest in any particular field and you are just doing this to get 'some job'. Teaching jobs, by the way, are not as plentiful as you might think with all the school consolidations and budget cutbacks. There are more openings in major cities than small towns or rural areas but there can be problems there too."

"You mean like high crime areas and drug or violence-related incidents?"

"Yes. You are a likable person, Sam, and I think you would find it rewarding if you became a teacher. However, you should also be aware that 'nice' people like you are the ones who burn out first. I'm not sure you have the constitution to stick it out for the long haul. Besides, as you know, the teaching profession is not very high-paying. The good news is that if you pursue the change you are seeking, there would be more acceptance of it in a larger city like LA or New York. You would be judged by your competence in the classroom and not anything else."

"That's good to hear. I haven't really made up my mind yet but I have the rest of this and next semester before making my decision. I think I'll just plod along until then."

"I think it is a good idea for you to wait too. Now then, are you still crossdressing?"

"Periodically, though it is only in my apartment and only night gowns. Because of my size, I'm limited to buying clothes from websites that cater to larger women. I doubt if I

can ever find dresses or skirts that would fit me properly. My arms and shoulders are sizable and the nightgowns are loose-fitting. I feel relaxed and very feminine when I put them on. I just wish I looked like the women who model them."

"No kidding, Sam. So do a lot of women! If you should decide to begin transitioning, what did you have in mind for a wardrobe?"

"I guess I would be relegated to pantsuits for the most part. It would be better in the long run because of my size and still be within the dress codes of the school system. Heels are out. I found a pair of high heel slippers from an internet website. They were expensive but they fit me perfectly. I enjoy wearing them around the apartment with my nightgown but as far as work is concerned, I would have to stay with flats. I am just under 6'1" tall now. With heels I would be towering over everybody. I'm afraid it would just draw more attention to me than I want. Besides, a few hours in four-inch heeled slippers around the apartment is one thing, a ten-hour day in four-inch heeled pumps is another."

"Well said, Sam. Believe me, there are many women who agree with you on that point. Unfortunately, the majority of them were not given the choices you will have. Have you experimented with makeup at all?"

"Just once. I'm a very dark skinned black man. I have thick Negroid lips. If I was light-skinned or of mixed race, I probably could look more feminine. With a couple of years of hormones and my beard removed, I would still look like a large black man in a dress wearing lipstick and eye shadow. I would probably stay away from makeup altogether, at least until I can see the results of beard removal and the hormone treatments."

"I see. You know you have very masculine facial features. There is something called 'facial feminization surgery' but in your case I don't know if it would help that much. Of course you would have to have your Adam's apple reduced but do you think you would have a feminine appearance?"

"Well, I'm not so sure. It's hard to imagine exactly what I would look like. The problem is doing it is expensive and if I don't look the way I think I should, I would be unhappy. I mean, I know I can't look the way I WANT to, but I have to have a passable appearance. It's always been an aesthetic world and I doubt if that will change by the time I'm done."

"I agree. You haven't said anything to your family. What do you think will happen when you do?"

"I have no intention of maintaining any family connection whatsoever. Whenever, if ever, I decide to transition, I will stay entirely in the closet until it is completed. Then I will leave here and make my life elsewhere as if I had no family at all."

"I see. No doubt then that your family would not accept you as a woman?"

"My father would kill me first. He would see me as a freak or a fag and would very likely deny I was of his seed. I was his first-born son. I have no siblings; while my mother might be a little sympathetic, I am quite certain my father would blame her for 'mothering' me too much and I don't want that to happen. It is better that I disappear off the face of the earth than to talk to them about this."

"Okay. I guess that is all for today, Sam. I want to see you again in a month and we will discuss the hormone therapy and transitioning in more detail. See you then."

I stood up as he did and watched him leave my office. This muscular lad had a good head on his shoulders and was certainly capable of undergoing the changes he wanted to make. His excellent health would make his post-op recovery period shorter as well.

I was concerned about his ability to adapt to the female world. Because of his size and appearance, he would most likely fail in that respect. He could wind up dead by his own hand, be forced to either return to his male environment, or resort to porn or prostitution to make his living. If he did that, AIDS would probably kill him within a year or two.

I walked over to the window and watched as he walked across the parking lot. He still had that linebacker amble. I walked outside of my office. Cheryl was on the phone. I went past her to the machine and put a teabag in a cup. I filled the cup with hot water and pushed the teabag to the bottom with the spoon. My next appointment was in about thirty minutes so I returned to my desk and picked up the morning paper.

While sipping my tea, I read the paper and tossed it in the garbage can when I finished. Cheryl buzzed me as I finished my tea. I dumped the tea bag on top of the discarded paper and answered the phone.

"Mrs. DeVille is here," said Cheryl.

"Fine. Please send her in," I answered.

I put the cup aside and watched the elderly Mrs. DeVille walk slowly towards me. She had lost her husband of 52 years nearly a year ago and was having a difficult time. Her son and daughter had convinced her to sell the house and move to a retirement apartment. She hadn't been happy there and had not made many friends. She no longer had her garden and seldom ventured out. She looked tired as she took her seat in front of me and managed a weak hello.

I spent most of her hour encouraging her to interact with the other residents. I felt that she should stay busy with arts and crafts or go on the many trips the complex offered at very low cost to the senior residents. The more involved she was with others her own age, the better off she would be.

She was more withdrawn than when she first came to see me. I knew this was typical of men and women her age and I was a bit frustrated at not being able to get her to see all the things that were available to her. I wanted her to understand that she had not moved there to die but to live. She said she would try and I let it go at that.

I had an hour before my next appointment so I decided to write out the checks for the bills. The rain had let up so I decided to mail them myself. I picked up the dry cleaning on my way back to the office. I didn't have much left to do and I was looking forward to having dinner with my husband.

The rest of the day went by quickly. Just after three, as I was putting on my coat, the phone buzzed. I wondered what that was about since I had no more appointments the rest of the day.

"There is an attorney here, a Mr. Alden Swanson. He says he needs to see you right away," she said.

"Send him in," I replied as I took off my coat.

A portly man with thinning grey hair and thick glasses walked in carrying a silver urn and a briefcase. He set the urn down on my desk. We shook hands and he sat down.

"Dr. Rebecca Wilson, I am here on behalf of the late Jean Randolph. She passed away of cancer several days ago. It was her wish to be cremated and that I bring her ashes and this package to you."

He opened his well-worn leather briefcase and handed me a box about 18" by 12" by 4". When I opened the box, I found a book inside, similar in size to the old ledger books accountants used to make financial entries in. My heart was pounding as I looked it over.

"Thank you so much. I had no idea Jean was even sick. She was a good friend of mine and my mother. Mom passed away of breast cancer last year and I never knew my father as my parents divorced when I was very young. Excuse me, this is a bit of a shock. Did you know Jean at all?"

He shook his head.

"I was just about to retire when she came to me with a request for a will. It was one of the last things I did. This was about nine months ago. My associate called me when she died as she had specified that I should be the one to deliver these things to you. Apparently she had no family and few friends. I am sorry for your loss."

"Thank you, Mr. Swanson."

He got up and left my office. I sat there for some time looking at the book and the urn. I was lost in thought and did not hear Cheryl come in.

"Excuse me, doctor, it's almost four. You have no more patients today. I finished the billing. If there is nothing else, I would like to go home."

"Of course, Cheryl, you go right ahead. I have a couple of things left to do and I will be leaving too."

She was just out the door when the tears came. I reached in my purse for a tissue and wiped them away. I blew my nose and then opened the book. As I paged through it, I realized it would take some time to read the whole thing. I didn't want to be late for dinner with my husband so I closed the book and put it back in the box.

After replacing the cover, I stepped in the restroom to touch up my makeup. I put on my coat and hat, picked up my umbrella, and walked out the door. I would come in tomorrow to read the book. Tight now I didn't want to think about her as I knew more tears would come.

The restaurant had only a few patrons when my husband and I walked in. The hostess seated us and left the menus. She returned shortly with a bottle of wine and we placed our order. As we sipped our wine, I told him about Jean's death and he nodded in sympathy.

Twice during the course of the meal, he asked me if I was OK. I said I was of course but with my parents both dead, Jean was the last person who was really close to me other than my husband. He had been adopted at an early age and both his adoptive parents were dead now too.

Despite having a loving husband, a son in the Navy and a daughter just entering medical school, I felt very alone. I had grown up alone with no siblings and because of my parents divorce, there was no father figure in my life either.

I had met Jean just about the time I started school. She was a free lance writer and a good friend of my mother's. She had always been there for birthdays, graduations, etc. I considered her to be my second mom as well as a friend.

We finished our meal and went home. That night I had some more wine as I knew I would have trouble getting to sleep. I was right. Despite the alcohol, I kept reliving some of the things the three of us did when I was growing up. Those memories were some of the best times of my childhood.

We were *almost* a family. Mom had continued to date but never did remarry. Jean was always a great sitter. We spent more time outdoors than indoors. She was an avid hiker and we spent many happy hours at the parks in the area.

I was at her small apartment only a couple of times. She loved her new computer and she let me learn many things on it. She was always encouraging me and kept telling me to look on the bright side of things, no matter what.

When high school graduation neared, she told me to take some general college courses first before deciding what to do with my life. The best advice I ever got and the advice I give my patients is to "find something you like to do" and "never, EVER, take a job for the money." Those two things had stayed with me. I closed my eyes and sleep took over.

The alarm shocked me into wakefulness. It seemed like I had just closed my eyes. I got up and shut the alarm off. I sat on the edge of the bed a minute, then remembered that I was going into the office today to read Jean's book.

I dressed in jeans, a soft flannel shirt and sneakers. I made some toast and poured myself a glass of juice. I wasn't particularly hungry. When I finished eating, I made myself a cup of tea. I went to the front door and retrieved the morning paper. I couldn't get interested in that and finished my tea. I guess my mind was on the book in my office.

I got in my car and backed it out of the garage. The sun was shining brightly already as I headed for the office. Traffic was light this Saturday morning so I made the trip in about half the time it normally took me during the week.

I parked my car in the empty lot and walked to the front door. The floor crew was just leaving as I entered the building. The freshly vacuumed carpet looked good and the building smelled clean. I went upstairs to my office and unlocked the door.

As I entered my office, the urn on my desk was the first thing I saw and I felt my pulse quicken. I had promised myself I was not going to get emotional. I put the urn on top of the filing cabinet behind me rather than have it there in front of me as I read Jean's book.

I opened the blinds to let the warm sunshine in, then sat down at my desk. I took the book out of the box and set it down in front of me. My pulse began to elevate again. I sat back and took a couple of deep breaths and tried to relax.

I wasn't sure what to expect but I wanted to read this in its entirety before going home. It would turn out to be more than I bargained for. I opened the book and began to read. The black ink was faded but still quite legible. Jean had the most beautiful handwriting.

## JEANS STORY

I have always felt this way. I can't remember a time when I didn't. At a very early age, I knew something was wrong. I was different. When I would stand naked in front of a mirror, I knew that thing hanging between my legs didn't belong there. I hated it. I detested it. It wasn't supposed to be there and I wanted it removed. It felt like it was in my way when I walked, stood or sat down. It made me feel uncomfortable. It wasn't a part of me. It belonged to someone else. I prayed to God to fix my body so I could be normal.

Of course my prayers went unanswered. I was mad at God for what he had done to me. What did I do to deserve this? How many others were there like me? Was I the only one who had been cursed like this?

My father gave me a ball and bat. I didn't want to play ball. I wanted a Barbie doll like my sister had. I wanted to dress her up and fix her hair. More importantly, I wanted to dress up and fix *my* hair.

I watched my mother put on her makeup and wondered what that felt like.

Mom would put her and my sister's hair in curlers and when the hair was dry, remove them. She would brush the hair until it shone. I wanted long shiny glossy hair like that too as well as pink ribbons or bows to wear in it. My father insisted I have a crew cut like his.

"It's more manly," he said.

I didn't feel manly at all, in fact I felt almost naked with such short hair.

When I started school, I excelled in my studies. I learned fast and enjoyed the academic challenges. I didn't participate in class very much so the teachers labeled me as "shy."

I hated recess. I was not very athletic. I disliked being around boys as they were loud and rowdy; the girls were quiet and soft spoken. I felt like I didn't belong anywhere, not with the girls or the boys, so I was alone quite a bit.

I spent more time in the library than the other students. I liked the quiet. It was easier to concentrate on my studies. When I finished my schoolwork, I would sit in the magazine section. I would choose a copy of a men's magazine and then hold it slightly down in front of me as if I were reading it while I glanced over at the fashion magazines.

I loved the way the women on the cover looked. Perfect hair, perfect makeup, perfect fitting clothes and of course those beautiful high heeled shoes. I imagined what it would be like to wear a dress and walk down the street in those high heels with the breeze blowing my skirts around me.

In the evenings, weather permitting, my father would take me to the nearby grade school. On the blacktop playground, he would pitch the ball to me and I would practice my swing or we would go on the basketball court and I would practice my dribbling and free throw shooting. I was never going to be a good athlete but I got better and better the more we practiced.

My father was a good coach, never berating me for my mistakes; he just kept offering his encouragement. I hated doing this. I wanted to be in the kitchen baking cookies with my mom and my sister but I wanted to get my father's approval so I continued.

On Saturdays, my dad would go golfing with his buddies. I liked helping my mom and my sister with the housecleaning and laundry. I got to put on an apron. This was a thrill for me. It was as close as I could get to being allowed to wear a dress.

The frilly apron made me feel like a real girl. The girl I secretly knew I was. I hated being an impostor. I felt dishonest. It was as if God had played a cruel joke on me. Nobody knew about it except me and I couldn't tell a soul. I felt trapped and imprisoned in this body that I knew didn't belong to me. It wasn't mine and I wanted out but what could I do?

Junior High was worse than grade school. There were twice as many kids, twice as much noise, crowded halls and classrooms and altogether too much congestion. Once again my only solace was the library. I would finish my studies and then daydream about being someone else, who was somewhere else.

The dress code was relaxed; I never understood why the girls wore jeans instead of skirts. Some of them wore makeup and occasionally in the lunchroom I would watch with envy as they would apply lipstick after they had finished eating.

I wanted to wear lipstick and eye makeup too. I wanted to have my ears pierced and wear an assortment of earrings like they did. I envisioned myself in a dress or skirt with a made-up face carrying my books in one hand with my purse in the crook of my arm as I walked down the hallway chatting with the other girls about fashion, makeup and, of course, boyfriends.

I never found myself attracted to boys. I knew that wasn't normal yet I never found myself truly attracted to any of the girls either. There were some girls I liked and some I didn't like. I felt more comfortable around boys, I guess because I was one.

I always felt a little uneasy around girls. Maybe because if I felt I was a girl, then liking one would indicate I was a lesbian. I was in a real conundrum trying to figure out not only what was wrong with me but what was I going to do about it.

I tried out for both the baseball and basketball teams but didn't make the final cut even though I had played some little league baseball over the summer. I took some golf lessons and found I was better at it than the other sports I had tried.

Dad was pleased when I made the freshman team. From then on, he took me golfing when he wasn't with his friends. I managed to beat him most of the time which tickled my mother no end. The freshman team placed third in the state tournament that year, missing second by one stroke and first by three. Mom and Dad were both happy with my prowess.

At home when I wasn't doing school work, I liked to page through the mail order catalogs and look at the latest women's fashions. I loved the lingerie and formal apparel section the best. I kept one finger in the men's section so I could flip the page back if someone came into the room unexpectedly.

Whenever my parents would go away and my sister was with them or gone somewhere with her friends, I would go upstairs to their bedrooms. I would try on my sister's panties or my mother's slips. I loved the feel of the tricot. I felt like a real woman. I got braver and tried on some skirts and dresses too.

I was also very careful to put everything back where I found it, just exactly the way I had found it so no one would be suspicious of anything. Later, when they returned, I would be watching TV or reading.

As my freshmen year drew to a close, I accompanied my sister and parents to the mall. Dad and I sat on a wooden bench in the middle of the concourse while mom and my sister shopped for her prom dress. I looked at all the beautiful gowns displayed in the window. In the very front were a dozen purses and matching pairs of high heel shoes.

I closed my eyes and imagined myself trying on all the dresses and pairs of high heels. I had long hair, earrings, and a perfectly made-up face as I walked back and forth through the store modeling the gowns to the delight of a private audience seated on both sides of the long aisle.

Back at home, my sister put on the dress she had bought and modeled it for Dad and me. The spaghetti strap dress was light pink in color and the hem was just about the knee. The pink chiffon was in tiers and fit her perfectly. She seemed to walk effortlessly in her four-inch heel shoes. I imagined myself wearing the dress and high heels. I wanted to look as gorgeous as she did.

A month after the prom, I got my chance and spent an hour wearing her dress over pink panties. I wobbled in her high heels as I walked back and forth across the upstairs hallway carrying her pink purse the way I had seen her do. The shoes were too big and the dress did not fit right but I loved what I was doing. I felt girly and so feminine, like I was one of the girls in the prom magazines I had seen in the library.

I turned sixteen that June and started driver's education. I was still too young to work but I wanted to get my license very badly. I would then be able to borrow my parents' car and get away by myself. Every kid's idea of freedom begins with a DL and a car. Then I would be able to go anywhere I wanted to, whenever I wanted.

I earned a little money over the summer mowing lawns. I played golf with Dad as often as we could. I was still unhappy about my situation. What made matters worse was that I was being pushed, molded, and formed to fit into a male world.

It was a world I didn't want to be in but it appeared to be the prison I would be spending the rest of my life in. The thought of it made me shudder. For a fleeting instant, I thought that even death would be preferable to the life I was facing.

At the end of the summer, my sister and I registered for school. She would be a senior and I would be a sophomore. If I thought Junior High was bad, Senior High was worse. It was even more crowded. It had nearly two thousand students in a school designed for thirteen hundred. I was miserable, to say the least.

Football and basketball players were the kings of the hill. Tennis and golf players like me were almost invisible even though the tennis team was one of the top two in the state and our golf team was rated fourth.

Once again I found my solace to be the library. I found myself reading not only for school assignments or enjoyment but to see how writers write. Most of all, I enjoyed writing themes for English class. I was thoughtful and creative. It pleased me that my writing always got high marks.

The local paper sponsored a short story contest and I won a hundred dollars for my submission. I began to spend more time creating characters and story lines. Another submission to a teen magazine brought me two hundred dollars.

It didn't take a brick to fall on my head to get me to realize that there might be a career opportunity here for me. It also got me some attention from my fellow students who were interested in writing. I was no longer as invisible as I had been before. It made me feel good to know my accomplishments were being recognized by somebody and I was being looked up to and respected by at least a few of my classmates.

At home I was still crossdressing. Whenever the house was empty, I would be in front of the mirror wearing my sister's or my mother's things. I wanted to wear makeup too but I didn't dare. These brief sojourns into femininity brought me a lot of enjoyment even though they were short-lived.

The bottles of perfume on my mother's and sister's vanities were of a delightful feminine scent. I fantasized about taking a steamy bubble bath, drying off, then dusting myself with the perfumed body powder before putting on my pink nightgown and sliding between my pink satin sheets to drift off to a deep and restful sleep.

Occasionally on Saturdays, I would bike to the mall and sit on one of the benches across from the women's stores. Closing my eyes, I would imagine myself wearing whatever was displayed in the window. I wanted to wear a tight skirt and heels while I walked thru the stores at the mall.

Underneath my frilly blouse was a lacy camisole and beneath the skirt was a matching half-slip. I had very little body hair but I wanted to be hair-free so I could enjoy the feel of nylons and the tricot half-slip against my legs as I walked.

I was getting more and more frustrated with my situation. I jogged and biked a lot. I began eating a little less. My weight loss wasn't immediately noticeable as I had purchased smaller size jeans. My buttocks had developed nicely and between my exercising and golf outings I was in very good shape.

In January, I won another prize for a short story in the local paper. The high school newspaper wanted to interview me but I said no. I didn't think I was an interesting person and I didn't want the other kids to think I had a "big head" now that I was not only a published author but had been paid for it as well.

At the end of the month, I got an interview for a part-time job at a large sporting goods store at the mall. Dad drove me to the interview. Afterward, as we walked down the mall, I saw a bridal-prom fashion show in progress. I wanted to stay and watch but I couldn't.

I envied the girls in the show. I would have given anything to spend an afternoon modeling those beautiful gowns and high heel shoes. What a joy that would be, I thought to myself, dressed in all the feminine finery, parading around in front of the assembled crowd.

That night I dreamed I was wearing one of those beautiful white satin gowns flared out with petticoats, walking effortlessly down the promenade area in four-inch heeled white pumps. Women looked up at me with appreciative glances, applauding as I walked by.

Some of the older women had wistful looks in their eyes as they remembered being young and pretty.

I hated my body. I wanted to change it and remove all the hair. Then I would rub lots of lotion on myself so I would be girly soft. This would enhance the feel of the white satin and the nylon hose on my skin. I knew I couldn't do that just yet any more than I could grow breasts to fill out the white satin bra cups or let my hair and nails grow to a feminine length. It made me feel heartsick of course. I was being unfairly denied my right to be feminine, to be myself.

The next day I was called at home and notified that I had the job. I would start the next weekend working in the section that sold a complete line of golf clubs and accessories. The pay was just above minimum wage plus a commission. It was a place to start and I got a substantial discount for myself and my family. Maybe the job would keep me busy enough to take my mind off other things. I had my doubts about that but I was going to give it a try.

I learned my job quickly and soon got a raise for my salesmanship. While I loved golf, I was able to sell tennis, volleyball, basketball and football items with the same authority and success as I did the golf products. Within another month, I was making as much as any two of the other part-time employees.

My job kept me busy and I banked most of what I earned. At home, I sketched a few more outlines for stories. I crossdressed when I could but with my job, I had less time for it. I enjoyed these brief times en femme and wished they could last all day.

I wanted to buy one of the pink tennis dresses at the store. I thought of wearing a pink bra and pink ruffled panties underneath the short-skirted uniform. Unfortunately I had to be satisfied with just looking at them as I walked down the aisle.

Some nights I didn't sleep well. I was thinking about all the dresses I could be wearing with high heel shoes and makeup. I also spent a lot of time wondering what I was going to do. Not just a career but about my "situation," for lack of a better word. Eventually I would have to take my place in the world but "as what" and "doing what" were still up in the air. My workouts and smacking a golf ball were good outlets for my frustrations.

Trying to find someone or something to blame was fruitless. I was just wearing myself thin over what I had no control over. Nevertheless, it was going to be my problem to solve for better or worse, that was for sure.

One of the girls who worked in the women's department had mentioned a ranked tennis player who had changed his sex and was now the recipient of a lot of unwanted publicity. She had called him a freak and we all laughed.

I stopped at the branch library the next Saturday after work and looked up both the player's name and the word "transsexual" in the card catalog. I found two books, one by a man who had gone to Europe in the fifties and came back a woman and another by an eye doctor in New York. Both books gave me a good insight into what I was in for if and when I transitioned.

Both books were at the main library. I didn't want to order them to be sent here so I jotted down the catalog numbers so when I got downtown, I could look at them without any

inquiring eyes. This was not something I could afford to be caught reading by someone who knew me.

It was late April when the golf team got going again. We were much better this year and we finished second in the state. My parents were very proud as I accepted the best score trophy with a four under par 68. I passed my final exams with high scores and would be working full-time at the store until school started again in the fall.

We were at the beach one Sunday when I saw a girl about my age walk by us. She was wearing a bright pink bathing suit and cap. Her finger and toenails were a delicate pink. The swimsuit flared out slightly at the hips to form a skirt. I was *so* envious of her. Her skin was flawless as well. I closed my eyes and wondered what it would be like to be her. If only *I* could look that good!

With the warmer weather, I was very busy at work. I had fewer and fewer chances to crossdress. The desire to do so was always there however and I missed not being able to crossdress more frequently. It had a calming and peaceful effect on me. I had to admit the thought of being able to live 24/7 crossdressed was my ultimate fantasy.

I had always been very conscious of the way women looked wherever I was whether at work, the beach or the mall. I was very critical of most of them because they didn't seem to want to look like women.

None of them seemed to care about their femininity. Few wore makeup. Most of them wore slacks or shorts without heels. I thought they should wear skirts or summer dresses like I wanted to wear.

In August, I sold another story to a teen magazine. I was happy to get published and the extra money was nice too. I also participated in a teen golf tournament and won it by three



strokes which pleased Mom and Dad very much.

The host of the tournament, a prestigious country club, sent me a letter thanking me for my participation and inviting me to fill out an application for the pro shop but I declined. This particular pro shop had quite a turnover in personnel. Part of the reason was the fact that many of the members were quite, well, "snooty" would be the polite expression.

I vowed to stay away from this particular club. I liked my job and was making good money for someone my age. I spent very little of it and continued to build a substantial savings account.

I registered for school. I would be a junior this year and my sister would be at a college several hundred miles away. She and my parents would be gone for three days to get her settled in her dorm room. I was in heaven. I could crossdress in her old clothes while they were gone without fear of getting caught.

I waited a full hour after they left before I got out her prom dress and high heels. I spent several wonderful hours walking around the house. I was up and down the stairs, back and forth across the living room. I smoothed the skirts of my dress as I sat down in a chair and got up again.

I felt just like a girl as I practiced feminine mannerisms. I had been so conditioned to behave in a masculine way that this behavior seemed unnatural at first but I continued. I kept wishing I could **be** this way, instead of just acting this way.

I got brave and used an old lipstick of hers I had found in the trash to see what I would look like with makeup. I looked even better with pink lips and cheeks. When I was finished, I scrubbed myself practically raw to make sure I got it all off.

I was quite happy with the feminine image I had seen in the mirror. I even wore one of mom's nightgowns to bed one night. The worst part of all this was that no matter what I put on, it all had to come off eventually and I had to return to being my male self again.

I was still socially ill at ease around girls. I hadn't dated anyone yet and though I had begun to masturbate frequently, it was always while imagining my self crossdressed in lingerie or glamorous dresses and heels. The relief was only momentary. I would go back to feeling lonely, out of place and more confused than ever about what and who I was.

That fall I met Morgan. She was a senior who had transferred in from the West coast. Her parents were divorced and her mom was a nurse at a large hospital close to where they were living. She had a strong personality and was an excellent tennis player. The tennis coach was glad to see her. Graduating seniors had left a team of mostly juniors and sophomores, most of whom were marginally talented.

The other girls in my classes were not unfriendly but Morgan showed a genuine interest in getting to know me. "I like quiet guys like you," she explained.

We had math and history classes together and also shared the same lunch break. I felt really comfortable around her and enjoyed talking with her at noon. We liked different sports but shared an interest in quieter music and environmental causes.

It was just before Halloween when at lunch one day, she asked me for a favor. She wanted me to come over that evening and help her with a project she had been working on. I agreed with out pressing her for any details.

Her home was within walking distance of mine so after supper that night, I went over to her house. I guess I was more excited about being alone with her than I was about helping her with her project.

She met me at the door with a smile. She was dressed in jeans and a T-shirt. I followed her inside the tastefully decorated two-bedroom duplex they were renting. She led me to the living room and motioned me to sit on the couch as she went to a small bar and poured me a glass of wine.

Her mom was working three to eleven that night so we would be alone. I was thankful for that. Since meeting her, I had begun to feel more like a man. Maybe this relationship would help me rid myself of all those feelings of femininity that had been troubling me.

She handed me the glass of wine and sat down next to me. I was a bit concerned as I had no previous experience with alcohol. We were both underage. Feeling a little brave, I figured what the hell. I took a gulp of the wine. The wine had a berry flavor and it tasted good to me.

We chatted briefly about school and our team's chances of winning at state this year. She then explained that her mom had gotten a great buy on her designer tennis dresses but they needed slight alterations. Her mom would be unable to help her because of her work schedule and she wanted me to put the dresses on just long enough to have them marked for the needed alternations.

It sounded like no big deal to me and I would have a chance to wear a dress for a short time so I agreed. I finished my glass of wine. I got up and followed her into the bedroom.

"Take off your clothes and put on the stuff on the chair. Come out when you are done," she ordered in a firm voice.

I undressed and put my clothes on the bed. On the chair was a bra and panty briefer. I put the panty briefer on first, then slipped my arms through the bra straps. I could only manage to get one of the back hooks closed and went out to the hall where Morgan was waiting.

Her face brightened when she saw me. I turned around and she giggled as she closed the other two back hooks. She had turned the stereo on and soft music was playing in the background. I was beginning to feel the effects of the wine.

"Back inside," she said as she patted my buttocks.

In the bedroom, she got a pair of breast forms from her dresser drawer and inserted them in the bra cups. After adjusting the straps, she stepped back and looked me over. Satisfied, she removed a pink tennis dress from her closet, unzipped it, and took it off of the hanger. She helped me put it on, then zipped me up.

"We're about the same size, though you are shorter, so I'm glad you were willing to help me out. Most of the girls I know are shorter than I am and not as broad shouldered. Now I want you to walk in front of me out to the living room."

I did as she asked me to and stopped in the middle of the living room floor. She picked up a measuring tape, some pins, and a piece of marking chalk. I stood still while she measured my bust, waist, hips and then the distance from the hem of the skirt to my knees.

I felt strangely calm while she did this, almost like I belonged in a dress. She pulled the slack from the dress in several places and inserted the pins. After marking them, she stepped back and looked me over as she made some notes on a pad.

“That looks pretty good,” she remarked. “Please walk over to the dining room and back for me.”

I did so and she was quite pleased. She unzipped me and helped me take the dress off. She took it into the bedroom and shortly came back with two more dresses. I put each one on and she jotted down her measurements, pinned up the slack and marked their location. I walked away from her each time and she nodded her head in approval.

By now, the wine had begun to hit me. I felt giddy and with the last walk, I placed my hand on my hip like I had seen models on TV do and sashayed a little as I walked back to her. She burst out laughing as I stopped in front of her.

“Hey, you do that very well, just like a girl!” she teased. “With a wig, some makeup, your arms and legs waxed, you could pass easily!”

“Thanks but no thanks,” I said as we went back to the bedroom where she unzipped me and helped me out of the dress.

Now I felt more than a little woozy. I was enjoying myself but didn’t want to admit that to Morgan. I turned around so she could unhook my bra as she walked to the closet to hang up the dresses. She came back but instead of unhooking me, she wrapped her arms around my waist and began nuzzling my neck.

I was taken completely by surprise. Her strong arms spun me around and I saw she had taken off her shirt and pants. She pulled me close and kissed me hard before I had a chance to say anything. She was a strong, athletic girl. I feebly pushed her away as she forced her tongue into my mouth. I fell limp in her arms as she kissed me harder and then slid my panty briefcase down around my ankles.

Without a word, she picked me up and tossed me on the bed. From her vanity table, she removed a condom from its wrapper and put it on my penis. She kissed me hard again and shortly we were coupled.

It was hard to describe the way I felt. I had been brought up to believe that men were aggressive and women were submissive. I thought that my first sexual encounter would be that way as well. Despite my strong feelings of femininity, I had not anticipated being the submissive one.

As I lay curled up in her arms, I felt strangely fulfilled. I had been beautifully seduced. But she had been the seducer and I had been the one that was seduced. Our intercourse had been pleasurable but there seemed to be something missing. Maybe it was because she had made me feel more womanly than manly. I wasn’t sure. Maybe my lack of masculine feelings combined with a desire to be feminine and be seduced made me feel this way.

I fell asleep in her arms thinking about this. She woke me up by kissing me. I responded and we had sex again. When we finished, we showered together, then we dried each other off. There were no words exchanged between us as none were necessary.

I got dressed and walked out the door. I was just a block away when I saw her mother's car pull into the driveway. I got home, crept noiselessly up the stairs, and went to bed. I was a man, but what *kind* of a man I wasn't really sure.

At school the next day, she said nothing, just smiled at me in a rather coy way. On Thursday, she asked me to come to her house that night about seven. I said I would be there.

It was hard to concentrate on anything for the rest of the day. My mind was already at her house wondering what pleasures lay in store for me. In the last class of the day, I was called on for not paying attention, giving the class a good laugh.

I ate supper in a hurry and finished my homework in record time. It was a little before seven when I left the house and headed for Morgan's place. I rang the bell and she let me in with a big smile on her face.

She gave me a glass of wine but this time I sipped just a little of it. I had gotten up the morning after our first time together with a slight headache. I wasn't sure if it was the wine itself or the fact that I wasn't used to it but it was a school night and I didn't want to take any chances.

She had been invited to bring a date to a Sadie Hawkins Halloween party Friday night. She hadn't made many friends since her arrival here and had been turning down dates with the jocks whom she did not care for at all.

I said I would be happy to join her and inquired about a costume. Her face broke into a wider grin and she said that she already had one for me and I just needed some "additional preparation." I took another sip of the wine, wondering what this would involve.

She took my arm and we walked into her bedroom. She handed me a pink satin G-string.

"Put this on and I'll get the stuff I need," she said with authority.

I began to undress as she left the room. I put my clothes on the bed and put the G-string on. The pink satin patch in the front barely covered my small genitals. Morgan returned from the other room with a plastic bag.

"Stand spread-eagle in the middle of the floor," she ordered as she removed the contents of the bag.

I did so. Over the next forty minutes or so, she applied wax strips on my arms and legs. It wasn't too painful when she pulled them off as I had very little body hair. When she was finished, I looked down to see my body was now hair free as any girl's.

I ran my hands over my smooth legs and liked the way they felt. She put on a pair of disposable latex gloves and rubbed some hand lotion on me to ease the sting. It felt really good to be hair-free all over, just like a girl.

"There, I'm all done, and you, girly boy, look just great! Take off the G-string and get dressed. We'll finish our wine and then you can go home. Be back here tomorrow night at seven and we'll get dressed. Pam will pick us up at eight and take us to the party."

We finished our wine and I left her house. I still didn't know what I was going to be wearing but I was sure of one thing: It wasn't going to be a pair of pants. I had never en-

joyed a shower more than I did that night as I soaped up and rinsed off my smooth hair-free girly skin.

The next day school dragged on. Morgan said nothing to me about the party, just chatted about the weather and the surprise quiz we had in the math class. That night after supper, I breezed through some of my homework, then walked to Morgan's house.

When she opened the door, my mouth fell open. She was wearing a well-tailored tuxedo, red cummerbund, and flat black shoes. Her long black hair was pulled back and she had a mannish look to her. She grabbed my hand, pulled me inside, and practically dragged me to her bedroom.

"Get undressed and into your lingerie, then sit at the vanity," she barked.

She stood by the door with her arms crossed in an authoritative manner and watched me take off my clothes. She hadn't spoken to me like that since I had known her. Her assertiveness excited me and I felt my pulse increase as I put on a pair of pink panties, pink bra with inserts, and a pink garter belt.

The panties felt good against my skin. I rolled one of the pink seamed stockings down and slipped it over my right foot, then smoothed it up my leg and attached it to the garter. I put the other stocking on, fastened it and took my seat at the vanity. She closed the other two back hooks and adjusted the straps.

Using some small strips left over from the other night, she removed the peach fuzz from my face. Then she applied a layer of face cream, liquid makeup, a drop of pink liquid rouge on each cheek and filled my lips in with a thick layer of creamy pink lipstick. She added long clip-on earrings, a single strand pearl necklace and a matching bracelet.

She put the makeup items in a dainty satin chiffon purse, then opened a package of pink press-on nails. Working carefully, she made sure each nail fit the finger perfectly. Last, she took a blonde wig off of its stand and placed it on my head, then pinned a large pink satin sissy bow to the top.

I couldn't believe the reflection in the mirror. I made quite a pretty girl and what's more, I felt pretty too. I wanted to look like this all the time; I wanted to stay like this forever. "Pretty in Pink Forever" sounded like a movie I should be starring in.

"God you are looking fabulous!" she squealed. "Now come over here to the closet."

I walked over to the closet. She opened the doors and removed two short pink petticoats, placed one inside the other and handed them to me. I stepped into them and brought them up to my waist. I put on a pair of pink elastic garters with large pink bows in the front.

She took out a pink satin sissy dress that took my breath away. She unzipped it, took it off the hanger, and held it up by the hem. I put my arms through the short, tiered puff sleeves. After adjusting the hem around the petticoats, she zipped me up and closed the small hook at the top. From the bottom of the closet, she removed three boxes of pink high heels. The second pair fit as if they were made for me. My costume was complete.

"Now I want you to walk in front of me to the living room so I can see how you do in heels."

She picked the dainty pink purse up from the vanity and slipped it over my left shoulder. I took tentative steps. The pink patent leather pumps had three-inch heels. I didn't wobble as much as I had first done in my sister's four-inch heel prom shoes. I walked out to the living room, turned around, placed one hand on my hip, and waited for her approval.

"That's pretty good. I could almost swear you have walked in heels before," she said with a grin. "Now walk back to the hallway, turn around and walk back towards me again with shorter steps. Keep your head up, your elbows in, and let your hands dangle at the wrist. Stop in front of me and twirl around once, then put both hands behind you and fluff your skirts."

I did as she instructed and when I stopped in front of her she smiled her approval. I couldn't say for sure but I think she knew that I secretly liked taking orders from her and took great pleasure in the way she had me dressed in such a feminine outfit.

"God, if I didn't know you, I would swear you were the perfect Junior Miss!" she exclaimed.

"Now I want you to walk over to the couch and sit down. Remember to smooth your dress with your hand before you do and cross your legs."

I followed her instructions again in my best effeminate manner. I felt deliciously feminine. The panties and the dress felt so right on me. After I crossed my legs, she walked over to me.

"Now, open your purse and take out your compact and lipstick. Apply some lipstick, then replace the items in your purse."

Again, I did as I was told. The creamy makeup looked good on my mouth as I smoothed it out. I couldn't help but feel like I really was a girl instead of an impostor. I replaced the items in my purse and looked up at her.

"Very good, I couldn't have done better myself. Now one more thing, close your eyes please."

I closed my eyes and felt her remove something from the purse in my lap. Shortly there was a "pssst" behind each ear. The sweet scent of perfume reached my nostrils as she grabbed each wrist and squirted them also.

"Geeze! I don't think you should have done that!" I objected, even though I loved the sweet feminine scent.

"Calm down. You can't just look or act like a girl, you know. You should smell like one too! I mean it's only for one night. After the party, I'll clean you up. When you get home, just splash some of your dad's after shave on and nobody will be the wiser."

The sound of a car horn honking from the driveway interrupted what I was about to say.

"That will be Pam. Let's go, take my arm. For tonight, you can call me Butch and I will call you Cissie and remember to speak in a softer, more girly voice."

"Okay, Butch," I answered as I stood up.

She slipped a pink mask over my wig and eyes. She put on her black mask and we walked to the car. She held the back door open. I smoothed my dress as I sat down and swung my legs in, like I had seen women do. She got in next to me and introduced me to her friend Pam and her date who she also called Cissie. It seemed I had been somewhat misled about the theme of this party.

A short time later, we arrived at a large home several miles from Morgan's house. Once again, Morgan held the car door open as I swung my legs out. In ladylike fashion, I stood up and fluffed the skirt of my dress. I felt very girlishly feminine as I took Morgan's arm and we headed towards the front door behind Pam and her date.

Pam rang the bell and shortly the door was opened by a tall girl dressed in a black tux just like Morgan and Pam. She stepped aside and we entered the house.

There were several couples seated in the living room sipping their drinks. Soft music was playing in the background as the hostess introduced us to the other couples. All the pink clad sissies were served a Pink Lady while the tuxedo-clad girls got a glass of wine.

Each mannishly dressed woman was introduced as "Butch" and each crossdressed boy was introduced as "Cissie." I gave everyone a limp dishrag hand shake and tried to speak in a softer, more feminine voice. I felt euphoric, like I was literally floating in femininity.

I couldn't help but notice all the boys, like me, made terrific girls. They were all very feminine and very passable in their ruffled satin dresses, high heels, makeup and satin hair bows.

We danced closely to the soft music and exchanged partners several times. Each time I held out my hand, it was in the firm grasp of one of the women in black. I had never danced backwards before or in high heels but it came to me easily. I was quite comfortable in the arms of these strong women and liked the fact that they took the lead. I began to relax and felt at ease in my role of being the "girl."

The hostess took pictures of each couple. Then she took two pictures of all the sissies together. In the first picture, we all stood together with our hands at our sides. In the second, we were all holding up the hems of our dresses up to show off our dainty pink panties.

Next, individual pictures of the sissies were taken. The first was with our hands at our sides, and the second was with us holding up the hem of our dress to show off our panties. I was wondering what would become of the photographs. I didn't mind since we were all wearing masks.

This frivolous activity was fun and I was pleased at how feminine I looked. I was feeling better than I had ever felt in my life. It wasn't just the softness of the lingerie or dress that I was wearing. I felt normal, like I should be this way. I enjoyed being not only feminine but effeminate. I wasn't "acting" like a girl; I was just being myself, the person I really was.

All good things must come to an end. The party broke up around eleven-thirty. We walked out to the car. I loved hearing my high heels clicking on the sidewalk. As Pam drove us back to Morgan's house, I began thinking about how I would have to take off all

these pretty, feminine clothes and high heels. I would have to regress back to my male being again and it was not a pleasant thought.

Back at Morgan's house, we went inside and Morgan noticed the answering machine was blinking. Her mom had left a message that she had to work overtime and wouldn't be home until much later. Morgan grinned as she took my hand and led me into the bedroom.

It seemed like she was out of her tux in no time. She unzipped me and pulled the dress over my head as I stepped out of my heels. I slid my petticoats off and handed them to her. After hanging them up next to the dress, she stood in front of me naked with that look you see on the cat's face as you are about to open the can of tuna.

She kissed me hard. With both hands on my waist, she slid the garter belt and panties down. I giggled girlishly as she pulled the lingerie off. Later, as we lay together, she whispered to me, "You should have been a girl, you know."

I didn't answer her. We made love again. Much later, she helped me remove the jewelry, nails, and makeup. She placed the wig on its stand and I got dressed. It seemed a shame. I knew she was right. I wanted to stay in that dress and heels. I didn't want to go back to being a male again. She had allowed me to step into the world of femininity and I loved every minute of it. She patted my butt as I walked out the front door.

"Thanks for a wonderful evening," she said.

I thought about a lot of things as I walked home. It certainly had been a wonderful evening. One which I had secretly hoped would never end, but of course it did. I wanted a *life* like this, not just a night. I wanted permanent femininity not a costume for one evening.

I entered my house and went immediately to the bathroom. I used plenty of aftershave to mask any scent of perfume and checked myself in the mirror above the sink. There was no trace of makeup. I showered with some masculine-scented soap, brushed my teeth and went to bed.

I went right to sleep and dreamed of being with Morgan. I was standing in front of her naked. I had breasts and a vagina. She was smiling as she walked towards me with her arms outstretched. As I wrapped my arms around her neck, the peaceful quiet was shattered by a loud noise.

My alarm clock brought me back to earth. I got up and went into the bathroom. In the mirror, I saw the boy I still was. I had no breasts and my manhood was still there. I got dressed and went downstairs to eat breakfast.

That weekend I busied myself with raking leaves and edging the sidewalk. It was still fairly warm for October. The weather would then get colder and the snow would come. I enjoyed the change of seasons. Midwest winters can be brutal but they are always followed by the warmth of Spring and the heat of Summer. The birds return, gardens are planted, and things turn green again.

That week at school was no different. Morgan and I shared lunch and conversation. Sometimes it was almost as if nothing had happened between us. On occasion, I would catch her looking at me in a funny way, then look away quickly.

At night, I had dreams of wearing not only the pink dress but many dresses similar to it in a variety of pastel colors and styles with matching panties, petticoats, a purse and heels, smelling sweetly like any girl would want to.

The next several weeks were more of the same. My facial and body hair, fuzz, had grown back a little. I was surprised that it was slow in growing back but Morgan said it was quite normal. Then with a grin, she added, "For special girls like you!"

The Wednesday before Thanksgiving, school let out early at two PM. Morgan asked me if I would like to make some real money. When I asked her "doing what," she just smirked and said if I was interested in earning more for one night than I made in two weeks at the store, I should let her know when school resumed. "Think about it," she said as she walked away with that coy look on her face.

My sister came home for the holidays and we had an enjoyable visit. She had been very upset about not being accepted to a major university but she found the small Iowa college's curriculum to be challenging. Life on a small town campus had its rewards as well.

Before she left on Sunday, she took me aside and asked me if anything was wrong. I said no and she asked about my weight. I said I had been working out and had lost a few pounds but that I was feeling fine. She accepted my answer and nothing more was said. My parents, if they did notice, had not said anything to me.

On Monday, Morgan sat across from me at lunch. She had that look on her face again. I was puzzled about this as I made decent money at the store and couldn't imagine what she was talking about. We finished our lunch and she handed me a plain brown paper sack.

"Don't open it until you get home," she instructed.

I nodded and placed it in my notebook. It was hard to pay attention to anything the teachers said that afternoon. As soon as I got home, I went straight to my room and opened the sack. Inside was a copy of a magazine called "Domination Unlimited."

I was a bit taken aback as she hadn't struck me as someone who would be interested in pornography. I paged through the magazine to find no pornography at all. There were just pictures of women in black leather or latex outfits brandishing whips or paddles, surrounded by a variety of devices to encumber or restrain individuals as well as to inflict pain upon them.

It looked like somebody's idea of Heaven, or Hell, I wasn't sure which. I guess I never had given this type of fetish behavior a thought one way or the other. Different strokes for different folks.

In some of the photographs, the dominatrix who was administering the "treatment" was assisted by a very pretty girl dressed in a black satin puff sleeve French Maid minidress, fishnet or seamed stockings and very high heeled stiletto pumps.

Not only did she assist the dominatrix in dishing out punishment but in several photos, she helped feminize the restrained men. She would apply makeup to their face, then dress them in lingerie, dresses and high heels in the "Male to Maid" section.

The last page of the maid section had an admonition at the bottom. Under the photograph of a pretty blonde in a pink sissy maid outfit, the caption read, "This is Alice, for-

merly Alfred. If we could do this for him, imagine what we can do for you! Satisfaction guaranteed!"

I was stunned at this. I looked closely at the maid pictures and couldn't tell if they were really women or men who had been feminized, like Morgan had already done with me. I was more than curious what Morgan had to do with all this.

I wasn't certain I wanted to be a part of it but I also knew that down the road if I were to transition, I would need more money than I was making at the store. It really didn't take much for me to convince myself that I should talk to Morgan. Why not combine my love of crossdressing with a job opportunity?

I put the magazine back in its envelope and put the envelope under some old clothes in the bottom drawer of my dresser. Time will tell, I thought to myself.

The weekend passed slowly. I guess my mind was in that bottom drawer of my dresser, at least when I wasn't thinking about being able to be crossdressed and made-up all the time. I still had dreams of wearing party dresses and heels, which made getting up in the morning and putting on my male clothes all the more difficult.

A sudden dip in the temperature signaled that winter was here to stay. Soon the white stuff would be flying around. I would be selling more ski equipment and clothing to go along with it. I liked the hot pink ski outfit in the women's department as well as the pink down parka with the white fur trim.

Monday, I sat down next to Morgan in math class and whispered "Tell me more." She smiled and whispered "At lunch" as she opened her notebook. I settled back, trying to concentrate on the teacher's lecture. It seemed to be a long time until lunch. Finally, the bell rang to end the last class of the morning.

I rushed to my locker to get my lunch and then hurried to meet Morgan in the cafeteria. She looked up at me with a grin as I sat down. I dug into my sandwich as she took a sip of her drink.

"You know how pretty you look when you are, shall we say, properly dressed? Well, why not put that feminine image of yours to good use? The magazine I gave you should indicate what kind of a place you would be working in. It's all strictly confidential of course and you would be paid as a 'consultant' just like a dominatrix is paid. You would get fifty bucks for each customer you assist with. The sessions last about forty minutes to an hour and you would work from about nine PM to midnight or a little after. Friday and Saturday nights are usually the busiest and therefore the most lucrative.

"You could come straight from the store after you finish work and you would never work on a school night. It is a ways from where you live but you could borrow your dad's car until you have enough money to get your own."

She paused for a minute, then said: "What do you think?"

"Well, I don't know. I mean, this is pretty much an adult thing. Going to a party in a dress is one thing but working like this is another. What if the cops find out? Isn't this prostitution or something?"

"No. Nobody has sex with anybody. It is just fantasy role-play. You are eighteen, right?"

"Well no, not exactly."

What do you mean not exactly?"

"I mean I am a junior but I won't turn eighteen until the end of January."

"Hmm, that changes things a bit. I can't bring you into this if you are not an adult. Are you interested in this or not?" she asked in a sharp tone with a serious look on her face.

"Well yes, I could use that kind of money but I couldn't start until I am of age."

"Okay, that settles it then. When do you finish work Sunday?"

"Actually, I'm off this Sunday."

"Good. I'll pick you up around one and I'll take you to be fitted."

I was about to ask some more questions when the bell rang, ending the lunch period. She got up quickly and walked away. I gathered my books up and went to my next class. Again I found it hard to concentrate on my studies. I wondered what I was getting into, even if the money was good.

That Sunday, afternoon she picked me up and drove me through the downtown area to a small grey building in the industrial area. We parked in the back and walked to the door. She pushed a button and a female voice came thru the intercom. Morgan identified herself. When the buzzer sounded, she opened the door and we went inside.

I followed her down a hallway and into a small office. A middle-aged grey-haired woman was at the desk. Morgan introduced me to Susan Marks, the owner. Susan shook my hand as she looked me over with a smile.



"Are you *sure* you want to do this?" she asked.

I nodded my head and answered "Yes Ma'am, I do. I will be eighteen on January 18<sup>th</sup>."

"I see. Well, alright. Morgan, take him into the dressing room and let's get him outfitted. I will join you in a few minutes."

We left the small office and went a little further down the hall to a larger room. There was a restroom at the back. Next to the restroom door was a large clothing rack with shoe boxes underneath. On each side of the room were several vanities with a locker next to each one. Morgan opened one of the lockers and handed me a white plastic bag.

"Undress, put your clothes in the locker, then put your lingerie on," she ordered.

She left the room as I began undressing. I hung my clothes up in the locker. I opened the plastic bag and put on a pair of black satin panties, a black bra with weighted inserts in the cups and a black garter belt. I opened the package of fishnet stockings and put them on, too.

Morgan and Susan walked in. Susan's mouth fell open when she saw me.

"Morgan, you were absolutely right! He is gorgeous!" Susan exclaimed as both women laughed.

Morgan closed the back hooks and adjusted the breast forms and bra straps. She walked over to a large clothing rack next to the rest room door. She handed me two short white petticoats and I stepped into them. The black satin French Maid costume was next. After she zipped me up, I tried on several pairs of high heels from the shoe boxes on the floor. I found a pair that fit and put them on.

It was a little eerie as I walked carefully back to the vanity in those black leather five-inch stiletto pumps. There was quite a difference between walking in them and the three-inch heels I had worn to the party.

I sat at the vanity; Susan fitted me with a black wig, and pinned the maid's cap on the top. Next she applied red rouge and a thick layer of creamy red lipstick. She attached the long earrings and matched my red lipstick with a set of bright red press-on nails. When she finished, both women were all smiles.

"Okay, let's see you walk," asked Susan.

I took a deep breath and walked past the women and out into the hall in my best effeminate manner. They watched me go down the hall and come back. I remembered to keep my elbows in and my arms across the front of my body with my hands dangling at the wrist. Despite the higher heels, I walked effortlessly in the well-fitting leather pumps.

"Once more," ordered Susan.

I turned around and made the trip again, trying to be girlish and effeminate. The stiff petticoats flared my costume out nicely and the jarring effect of the stiletto pumps made the skirt bounce. I walked back to where they were standing. The looks on their faces told me all I needed to know about how good I knew I looked.

"You are exactly the kind of image I want to present here," remarked Susan. "Now let's go back into the dressing room."

I walked ahead of them and when we were back inside, Morgan pushed the clothing rack away from the wall while Susan retrieved a camera from the vanity table. She had me stand against the white wall while she took several pictures. The locker room door opened and a woman in full dominatrix costume entered.

"Diane, I want you to meet our new sissy maid, Leslie. Leslie, this is Mistress Diane. Please curtsy for me now," said Susan.

I had seen women curtsy but had never done it before. I grabbed the hems of my dress and petticoats, took one step forward away from the wall, then placed one foot behind me, squatted down a little and then stood back up. I took Diane's extended hand, gripped it softly and said: "I am pleased to meet you, Mistress Diane."

She released my hand, then stood next to me against the wall with a stern look on her face and a riding crop in her right hand. Susan took two more pictures as I pretended to look intimidated.

"Pull up your skirts," ordered Susan.

I did so and she took two more pictures of me smiling broadly as I showed off my panties. Diane looked on approvingly.

"Now turn around and stand still," ordered Susan.

I followed her instructions. Mistress Diane pulled up the back of my costume. She held the skirt and petticoats in place with the riding crop so Susan could take two more pictures of me revealing the four rows of bright pink ruffles standing out in stark contrast to the black satin panties.

"Okay that's it," said Susan.

I walked back to the vanity and sat down. Mistress Diane left the room with Susan. Morgan helped me undress, remove the wig, jewelry and makeup. She put my wig, costume and shoes in the locker. On the top shelf of the locker she put the press-on nail set and the makeup items.

"It's almost lunch time, let's go get something to eat," said Morgan.

I double checked myself in the mirror to be sure all traces of makeup had been removed. As we walked past the small office, I could hear Susan and Diane break into giggles.

Morgan and I had lunch at the mall as she had some shopping to do to. Over chicken subs, she reminded me what a pretty sissy maid I was and suggested I could come to the house and clean for her and her mom. She laughed as I shook my head no.

"Everybody there uses a stage name," she replied. "I thought you would like 'Leslie' since it is more girly than 'Jean,' a feminine derivative of your real name."

She was right. I *did* enjoy being addressed by a girl's name. I liked the way I looked too. I felt exhilarated as I walked back and forth in front of the two women as my petticoats bounced under the short skirt of the mini-dress. I felt at ease, very feminine. I was enjoying myself and fantasized about what it would be like to be able to do this all the time.

We finished eating and went to the large women's department store so Morgan could pick up a few things. When she finished, we passed the lingerie section and the cosmetic kiosk. She looked at me with a grin and said, "See anything you like?" as she giggled.

"Yes, of course I did." I replied. "I would like one of everything."

She nodded approvingly, then she took me back home. I went upstairs and wondered if I was doing the right thing. The money was too good to pass up. I loved being "Leslie." I loved being feminine. I didn't want to take off the pretty dress or the makeup.

This job, if you could call it that, would be a chance to spend several hours en femme and enjoy my feminine persona. It would allow me to be myself even though I would be playacting for the clients who came there. All in all, I felt I had made the right decision. Until I was able to resolve my feelings, I would have this opportunity to be the girl I really wanted to be, at least for a little while anyway.

The holidays came and went. My sister came home and we had an enjoyable visit. I passed my semester exams with ease and was ready to start the second semester though my new job was on my mind more than school.

I hadn't crossdressed since I got back from the Halloween party with Morgan. I was aching to get back into dresses and heels. School began on the tenth and I had eight days before I could begin work for Susan. I was really looking forward to it.

My birthday was a quiet affair. My sister called to wish me well. I had received a new set of golf clubs at Christmas to replace the used set I had been using. Because of the expense, it was a combination Christmas/birthday present.

That weekend, Morgan picked me up to take me to the dungeon as Susan wanted to go over a few things with me before I started work. She handed me a brown envelope as she pulled out of the driveway.

"These are yours to keep," she said with a smile.

I opened the envelope as she drove and looked over the 8X10 color glossies that Susan had taken the previous month. In addition, she had included some of me in pink from the Halloween party. The clarity of the pictures was very good and I had to admit I looked as pretty and as feminine as any girl.

We were buzzed in and went straight to Susan's office. She put a video tape in the player and I watched as the doms went through various scenarios for their respective clients. I asked a couple of questions and then we were finished.

I filled out and signed two statements. One indicated that I was an adult and that there was to be no sex between me and the clients on the premises nor would I ever meet them outside of work for any reason. The second indicated that I was aware I was not an employee but an "independent contractor."

Susan made a copy of each one and handed them to me. She put the originals in a locked filing cabinet, then turned around to face me.

"Remember, everything you see, do, and hear here is strictly confidential. My business depends on everyone's discretion. Is that very clear to you?"

"Yes it is, Susan," I answered quickly.

“Good. Now you start next Saturday night. Be here about seven. Be dressed and made up by seven-thirty. Remember to address the doms by putting the word “Mistress” in front of their name. Always curtsy when entering or leaving. Your first client is due about eight. Don’t forget to shave your legs, arms and face before you come in.”

“I won’t,” I replied.

“Very well, that’s all. See you Saturday night. Step outside for a minute as I have some things to discuss with Morgan,”

I got up and walked out of the office. *Well, it’s a done deal*, I thought to myself as I closed the door. I was looking forward to being a sissy maid. For a little while I could be all the girl I wanted to be, even if it was in a fantasy role-play environment.

That night at home as I looked over the photographs, I knew that I could never truly be a male. I had to make this dream a reality. The two books at the main library had been a big help but exactly how I was going to go about this was another matter. “Sex Change for Dummies” hadn’t been written yet.

Now that I was an adult, I was hoping to have enough money by the summer to see a therapist and probe a little deeper into myself. For now, crossdressing and the playacting at Mistress Susan’s dungeon would be the only releases I would have.

I worked Friday night until nine and didn’t get home until about nine-thirty. I sat down to watch the TV. After the news, I was going to bath and shave my body. After using some soothing body lotion, I was going to bed as I had to work nine to five Saturday and be at the dungeon at seven.

The anchorman led off the news broadcast with a startling announcement.

“Two dead, one critical in a shoot out at a local adult business during a drug raid. That’s our top story tonight,” he said in a solemn voice.

I sat bolt upright as a picture of Susan, Morgan and a sheriff’s deputy flashed on the screen. I was almost numb as I listened to the story of how the police had raided the place on a tip from an informant.

The deputy in question had pulled a gun in a panic and shot Susan, Morgan, then turned the gun on himself. Morgan was mortally wounded and had been hospitalized. Susan and the deputy were dead at the scene.

One of two stun grenades that had been tossed into the hallway had bounced through the open office door and caused a fire that destroyed most, if not all, of the records kept there. A brief clip showed a couple of firefighters leaving the blackened office and hallway.

Apparently the deputy, wearing makeup and lingerie, figured that once he was “outed,” he would no longer have a job and he wouldn’t be able to face his wife and two kids. No drugs of any kind had been found.

For the first time in my life, I needed a drink. I mean I REALLY needed a drink. My heart was pounding like crazy at this sudden and shocking news. What in the world was I going to do now? I asked myself. I sat through the weather and sports reports without really hearing what they were saying.

I poured myself a half-glass of brandy. I took several gulps of the strong stuff, hoping it would calm me down and return my pulse below what seemed like five hundred beats a minute.

When the news, weather and sports were finished, I refilled my glass. I shut the TV off and just sat there drinking while I stared at the blank screen. My mind was a similar blank, not knowing what was ahead.

I was absolutely terrified. I kept thinking if any of the records were salvaged, the police might come here. What would I do then? As the brandy began to hit me, all sorts of things ran through my mind. A semester of school being known as a "sissy maid" was not a pleasant thought, to say nothing of my senior year next year.

What if they put me in jail? I knew I couldn't survive that. Everybody knows what happens to pretty young boys once those doors clang shut. I was getting nauseated just thinking about all the trouble I could be faced with, to say nothing of the effect on my family.

I set my glass down and went upstairs to my bedroom. I retrieved the magazine and pictures from the bottom drawer of my dresser and brought them downstairs. I ran the magazine through the paper shredder several pages at a time followed by the photographs. I didn't want to keep anything in the house that would connect me in any way with that dungeon.

Next, I took the shredder box into the kitchen. I put some newspapers on the kitchen table and dumped some of the garbage out of the kitchen garbage can. I dumped the shredded paper in the garbage can, then put the garbage on top of it, followed by the newspaper. I washed my hands and returned the shredder box to its place next to the desk. I replaced the shredder on top of it and went back to the couch to drink the rest of the brandy.

I was now on the verge of being drunk. My pulse was still pounding as I drank the last of the brandy and staggered to the kitchen to wash out the glass in the sink. I went upstairs and undressed. I got into bed and closed my eyes.

The next thing I knew, there was an awful ringing in my ears. My alarm had gone off. In my panic, I had forgotten I had to be at work and put in eight hours before going to the dungeon at seven.

I got up quickly and shut the alarm off. My head felt like I had been whacked by a large man wielding a baseball bat. I struggled to get dressed. Normally, I didn't drink coffee but I always made a pot for my parents when I got up early.

I managed to choke down a piece of toast before the light on the pot came on. I poured myself a large cup and walked into the living room to watch the morning news. I was almost afraid of what I might hear. At least the cops weren't banging on the front door. Well, not yet anyway, but who knew when that knock might come?

I drank half the coffee before the seven-thirty break came on. Morgan had died in surgery during the night. To my surprise, Susan turned out to be Morgan's mother. She was a part-owner of the dungeon and worked there when she wasn't scheduled at the clinic. The story concluded with the words "Authorities are continuing their investigation."

I went to the kitchen and refilled my coffee cup. I watched some morning programming before driving my dad's car to work. It was a long day. On my first break, one of my co-workers announced she had never seen me hung over before. "First time for everything," I replied and got a cup of coffee out of the machine.

I forced myself to eat a burger for lunch and had another cup of coffee. By late afternoon, I felt somewhat better but I knew I was never going to get drunk again no matter what happened to me. Alcohol hadn't calmed me down that much and waking up the next morning with a hangover hadn't solved my problem or made things seem less serious either.

The newspapers had a field day with the story. On the front page of the paper were pictures of the deputy and the mother-daughter doms who had been killed. Mother and daughter were shown in their dominatrix costumes. To my shock, there was also a picture of me in my French Maid outfit along with several other sissy maids.

It was impossible to tell who they were of course with the black bar across the faces but it did scare the crap out of me. I knew by my copy of the photograph I had shredded that even without the bar, you could never tell it was me.

The story played out for several days, then it was dropped from the newspapers and the newscasts altogether. I did go to the funeral home to see Morgan and her mom. I met her mom's sister and explained that Morgan was a classmate and I wanted to pay my respects to the family.

I had trouble sleeping the next few weeks. I wasn't sure when or if a knock on the door would come; when a month had gone by, however, I figured I would be safe. Except for the photographs already published, the rest of them, as well as the business records, had been destroyed in the subsequent fire. My name along with the other doms and sissy maids must have gone up in smoke.

I was still a little uneasy. I had been looking forward to being a sissy maid even if it was on a part-time basis. I hadn't crossdressed since the murders and for some reason hadn't felt the urge to do so either.

Gradually, I became more relaxed. I had a full schedule with my classes and work at the store. I hoped that being busy would keep my mind off other things

The snows left us and with the warm weather came another golf season. I did well but the team finished a disappointing third. Sales were good at the store and I was banking a substantial amount of money for someone my age.

I felt empty without Morgan. We had been a good match. In fact, we were a perfect match. She was an athletic assertive female who enjoyed her dominant role and I was a feminized boy who enjoyed his submissive role. I often thought about the short time we spent together and wondered if I would ever find another girl like her.

In June, I made an appointment to see a therapist. After working a morning shift at the store, I drove about forty miles to a small clinic and checked in with the receptionist. I was more than a little nervous as I waited to see the doctor.

From an inner office, a tall brunette with black glasses came out and set a folder on the counter. She came over to where I was sitting and extended her hand as I stood up.

"I am Dr. Tammy Shaw," she announced as she squeezed my hand. "Please come with me and we'll get started."

I released her hand and followed her inside her office. She pointed to a chair in front of her desk and I sat down. She looked over the medical questionnaire I had filled out and then looked directly at me as she spoke.

"I tell all my patients like you the same thing right away. Because this is a deeply personal thing, something you have never shared with anyone, I need you to be honest with me. The best way for me to help you is for you to tell me the truth about everything. Don't lie to me, don't embellish, and don't leave anything out. I cannot help you unless you answer all my questions, no matter how much you may want to keep the answers to yourself because they are too personal. Everything here is confidential so you should have no fear of anyone finding out anything we have discussed. Is that understood?"

Her straightforward manner surprised me. I had never intended to mislead her but apparently some men would, thinking the things that were too painful to talk about could be ignored or lied about.

"I understand completely," I replied. "I have no reason to lie or mislead you about anything."

"Good. Then we can begin."

With that, she began to probe me skillfully with questions beginning with my first childhood recollections to the present day. She was a skilled doctor; unlike a surgeon who uses a knife, she used words. My hour flew by. I felt much better about deciding to see her and made an appointment to come back in a month. I paid the bill in cash and left her office.

Driving back home, I felt more relaxed. I had gotten a lot of things off my chest and found it very gratifying to have someone to talk to about this. Maybe there was a light at the end of this tunnel, after all, and it wouldn't be a train.

Dr. Shaw was neither supportive nor critical about the things I had said. She operated in a completely objective manner as she proceeded to ask questions and jot down the answers and an occasional note or two as we talked.

I was surprised to find I was one of many, not only patients of hers but men and women world-wide who had these feelings. There was more research being done in this field. Therapists were seeing more and more people like me. It was like there was this hidden world invisible to the naked eye that had now suddenly appeared. I found these sessions helpful and wanted to continue to see her on a monthly basis.

I sold a short story in the spring and had just sold another one when I began school that Fall as a senior. I had achieved some local notoriety and received a number of inquiries from liberal arts colleges about my educational plans. I set them aside for future reference.

I met Ann shortly after school started. We had journalism and psychology together. Her family had moved here from northern Minnesota and we clicked right away. I felt very much at ease around her.

I had saved enough money to buy a used car and I asked her out. We had many things in common. She was a quiet sort who, like me, enjoyed the library and quiet places. It wasn't long before we began to see each other on a regular basis. Maybe now I had a chance to become a man after all.

I asked her to the prom that Spring and she accepted. I was falling in love and maybe I could be the man I should be instead of the woman I felt I was.

We had an enjoyable evening. After graduation, I wanted to see more of her but between work and my writing time didn't always allow it. I sold another, longer story in June. It brought a larger check as I was getting better at creating good stories.

I had enrolled at a satellite campus for the Fall and spent two days a week revising and editing some campus publications. I didn't want to pick a major just yet but I liked writing, so journalism seemed to be the obvious choice.

The Fourth of July Weekend was a hot one. Ann's parents were gone for the weekend and we made the most of it. Between getting lathered up between the sheets and sharing steamy showers, I began to feel like a real man.

This time I was in the role of the aggressor but the sex wasn't as fulfilling to me as it had been with Morgan. I felt I had to be the dominant half of my relationship with Ann and I wasn't really comfortable with it.

Ann liked literature and, of course, the library. She wanted to teach. Our common interest in the quiet things made us quite compatible. We both began classes and had full days which left our time together limited.

We celebrated the end of our first year of college and our first year together with dinner at an expensive restaurant. I thought about asking her to marry me. We were both working part-time and we both had saved money by living at home.

I decided to throw caution to the winds. The following week as we walked past a jewelry store, I asked her to marry me. She had seemed rather pensive that day as if something was bothering her. She smiled brightly and accepted. We went inside and picked out a modest set of rings.

We told our parents the next day. When her mom asked about a date, Ann immediately blurted out "The first Saturday in August. We want to be settled in our apartment before school starts again." This took me by surprise as I had not said anything about a date.

We put a deposit on an apartment and began moving things in. The ceremony was very nice and we began our life as man and wife in a large one-bedroom apartment that was on the bus line to campus. We walked or biked to class or work whenever we could. Life seemed to be right for a change.

My new word processor made my writing much easier and I sold another short story in October. The day after the check came, we went out to celebrate at a Mexican restaurant. The following morning she was up early. Behind the closed bathroom door, I could hear her vomiting. I thought it might have been the food as she had never really cared for Mexican cuisine. It was a new restaurant and a classmate worked there so I had talked her into trying it.

When her sickness continued, I insisted she see a doctor. She said she would make an appointment. Several days later when she returned from the doctor's appointment, her face said it all.

"I'm pregnant" was all she could say. I put my arms around her and told her not to worry. I would take care of her. In spite of our precautions, in about six months we would be parents.

We waited until the weekend to tell our parents. They were excited about being grandparents and I feigned happiness as we celebrated with a glass of champagne. I had hoped to put off having kids until we had been married awhile and our financial situation was better. I was also concerned about my "feelings." I was already a husband and about to become a father. Should they become stronger, what would I do then?

We began to cut back on the frivolous things in our budget. I had not said anything to Ann about my monthly trips to the therapist. I paid for them in cash so I would not be getting a bill at home.

She had never questioned those times twice a month when I was gone. We both wanted to have time apart for ourselves. She had done the same, usually going to the park or craft shows. Now with the baby coming, our personal time apart from each other would probably be curtailed to some degree.

Dr. Shaw felt I had reached a point in my therapy where I had to make a choice. I would either have to start taking hormones to begin my transition or stop altogether. This was going to be extremely difficult with a new wife and a baby on the way. My "feelings" had continued to resurface and they were getting stronger than ever.

Since I had met Ann, I had not crossdressed at all and I had to admit that I missed it. Our sex life diminished as Ann got bigger. I bought a pink peignoir and a pair of pink fuzzy toe slippers from a store in a mall on the other side of town. I kept them in the bottom drawer of my toolbox in the basement storage area.

When I knew she would be gone, I put them on and walk around the apartment. The luxurious tricot made me feel real good, just like a real woman. I thought about putting on a little of Ann's lipstick and blusher but decided not to. Masturbating afterwards didn't make me feel much better but it did provide me with some physical release.

You came into this world on March 29<sup>th</sup>. We named you Rebecca Marie, after my mom and Ann's mom. The first few months were trying as you might expect but we managed. Ann wanted to look for a two-bedroom apartment but I said I thought we should wait. She was a bit puzzled but agreed.

It was my April appointment that was the turning point, I guess you could say. It was time for me to either "urinate or get off the commode" so to speak. I knew I could not go on like this forever. I would have to make a clean break from my immediate family as well as my relatives.

Once again, Dr. Shaw was non-committal, noting that this was going to have to be my decision and mine alone. We discussed it at length but it would come down to the fact that it was going to be my choice which way I wanted to live.

It was going to be hard but the vacillation between wanting to be female and having to live outwardly as a male and now a father would eventually be too much for me. I got my first hormone shot that day and went home to devise a plan for my new life.

I told Ann I was going to a writers' conference the first week in June after school was done for the year. I flew to Las Vegas but instead of attending the numerous workshops I boarded a connecting flight to San Francisco. Both flights were pleasant and they gave me plenty of time to think.

I got an apartment under my femme name "Jean" in a suburb close to the clinic where I would see a physician and a therapist referred to me by my current therapist. I also saw an attorney and applied for a name change. Changing my birth certificate would have to wait until I was fully transitioned.

I found an editing job with a small adult publisher that published books about people like me and was happy to hire me while I transitioned. The salary was small and would barely cover my living expenses but any port in a storm, you know? The money from my writing would probably be going to child support. The only thing left was to tell Ann. I dreaded the thought of hurting her but it would eventually come down to our marriage or my sanity.

I felt exhausted when I got back and began preparing for my departure. I got rid of a lot of unnecessary things I had accumulated. I cleared all my personal bills as they came due. Another story was sold and I kept the cash at home. We had separate checking accounts so I began to systematically withdraw the money and keep it in a shoe box in my closet. I sold my tools. I mailed my peignoir and shoes along with all the money in fifties and hundreds to my apartment in my femme name.

I read several books in the library about how people managed to disappear. It was not that difficult but most people wound up getting caught. I thought it would be best to just go with their knowledge and not come back. I would sever all ties completely. It was almost as if I were dead. In fact that is what I would be in a sense. A man dies and a woman is born.

I decided to tell Ann the truth but that her and my parents would never know. "Irreconcilable differences" would be on the divorce papers. That seemed to be the best way to go about this. I wasn't sure if Ann would do it, but I had to trust her. There was so much at stake here and I wanted to go about this the right way without hurting anybody. I had only about six weeks left before I had to leave and it was beginning to drain me.

We were on a schedule. You were a good baby and there weren't any problems. I had lost some more weight but I was glad to be staying thin. Despite feeling drained and more tired than usual, I was in still in excellent health.

The last week was a hard one. I had given notice at work and picked up my last check on Friday. I closed out my bank account and school records. Saturday, I boxed up some clothes and my word processor. I mailed them to my new femme address. I waited anxiously for Ann to get home. When she got home, she checked on the baby and then we ate supper.

That night I told her everything. It was the most exhausting thing I had ever done. When I finished, there was no expression on her face. I guess she knew there wasn't much point in trying to change my mind or try to work something out.

It wasn't as if there was another woman or that I had tired of being married to her. I left her the name of my attorney who had already drawn up some papers. We never said another word to each other. The next morning, I got up early and left.

It was a long drive to Las Vegas. I stayed only a day to set up a mail referral from a P.O. Box and then drove to San Francisco. The apartment seemed cold and empty. The stuff I had shipped was left in the apartment by the manager. I felt as if a tremendous burden had been lifted from my shoulders and my emotions. As much as I was looking forward to my new life, I felt very alone.

I kept busy at work and with my writing. Everything had arrived in good shape and I had things re-arranged the way I wanted them. In about ten days, I got a letter from my attorney with all the papers that needed to be signed. I signed each one by the "x" without reading anything and mailed them that day. The painful part was over and the hard part was ahead.

I made appointments for electrolysis. I saw my new therapist and received another shot. I had myself castrated and my Adam's apple was reduced. After three months, there was a noticeable difference in the texture of my skin. I couldn't wait to get a decent feminine wardrobe. That was still at least a year away. I wanted to be very passable before I went out in public for the first time.

I submitted work to publishers under my femme name. I made several sales right away. I sent checks to my attorney monthly through the mail referral service in Vegas. I never did hear back from Ann or my family but I didn't expect to. I couldn't begin to imagine what thoughts they were thinking about my sudden departure.

The first holiday season without them was hard. I sent a Christmas gift for Rebecca but it was not acknowledged. I really felt very alone. I missed my family terribly but I had made my choice and knew I had to stick with it.

By the first of the year, most my beard was gone and I began to experiment with makeup. I studied some books at the library and bought some cheap stuff at a discount store. I hadn't gotten a haircut in nine months; I couldn't wait for it to grow out longer so I could style it. I continued to exercise and my weight had stayed down.

My breasts were now enlarged but not as big as I thought they should be. The therapist and my doctor assured me they wouldn't get much bigger. Breast enhancement surgery would be the only option and that would have to wait until I had completely healed from my SRS surgery.

I spent more time in front of the mirror than I used to. My hair was nearly shoulder-length and my body hair was almost non-existent. I had my last visit for electrolysis and had my eyebrows thinned and shaped. I was very pleased with the results I had achieved so far. I had a much more feminine appearance now and I felt I would have no trouble passing into the feminine world I wanted so badly to be a part of.

I sold another story, a longer two-part one, and was handsomely rewarded for this one. That and a raise at work gave me a little breathing room. I can't say I was really happy yet. Relieved would be a more appropriate description.

I was going to be who I really was and be able to live my life as a normal human being. I would no longer have a life of being an impostor, doing things that I had to do rather than what I wanted to do. Many people would hate someone for doing what I did, some of them, perhaps, out of jealousy, because I did what so many of them would not or could not do.

Six months went by and I felt I was ready. My therapist gave me the go-ahead and I made an appointment with a surgeon. In another six weeks, I would become a woman. I knew I was doing the right thing but I still had fears as well as hope.

I had my nails done and my hair styled. I bought expensive lingerie, some good fitting shoes and assembled a basic wardrobe from local thrift and second-hand stores. I donated all my male clothing to the same stores except for what I had on my back.

I paid for the surgery up front and entered the hospital the night before. I did not sleep well at all. They came and got me at nine AM. I remember being prepped and wheeled down the long hospital hallway to the operating room which was all green. Everyone was gowned up and masked. The doctor asked me once more if I was sure I wanted to do this. I nodded, said yes, then closed my eyes.

When I woke up, I felt as if I had been ripped in half and stuck back together again. I had never felt this bad in my life. The only thing that kept me going was that I knew I was going to get better. I was now the woman I had always



wanted to be. Despite my pain, I knew my future was going to be much better than the past.

The next several days were pretty rough but the wonderful nursing staff helped me through it. My first bath was a unique experience as I saw my womanhood for the first time. Gradually my strength increased and I was ready for discharge.

The sun shone brightly that morning. It was a new day, I had a new body, and a new life lay ahead of me. I was thrilled. Now I was the woman I should have been to begin with and I could begin to have the life I always wanted to have.

I stayed home for another week before returning to work and then for only half-days. Two more weeks passed and I returned to work full-time. Two more checks came in for short stories I had written and I used them to pay off half of my hospital bills. My employer had suggested keeping a diary of the experience. I was paid well when I submitted it for publication in one of their adult magazines.

I saw the surgeon for a follow-up exam and he was quite pleased. With my strength back, I began exercising again and returned to the golf course once more. I hadn't golfed in over a year and I was very rusty. It was going to be some time before I could return to my former level of skill.

I felt good about myself. I did my nails in pink and I never left the apartment without makeup. My hair was conservatively styled and I learned how to care for it. I loved bubble baths and being sweetly scented. My peignoirs felt good against my soft hair free skin as did my nylon stockings or pantyhose.

I reveled in my new femininity. I had a sense of joy and freedom as I put on my feminine apparel. I always appreciated the admiring glances I got from men as I shopped in the grocery store or the mall. I judged this to be my "acceptance" if you will, of being a woman. This social acceptance meant I had passed my test and was now seen by men as well as others as a woman.

Occasionally I would think about the family and life I had left behind. I kept myself focused on the life I was leading here. The support checks went out monthly. Neither the checks nor my Christmas gifts to you were ever acknowledged. I guess I simply accepted this as your mother's right. Maybe she was doing it to protect you from the truth about our divorce.

My six-month follow-up exam was short. Both my therapist and the doctor were pleased with my progress. There was only one element that was still missing. I was healed completely and had been using a dildo to keep my vagina from healing shut. This had been the most difficult part of the post-operative period. I wanted desperately to be a whole woman. I needed a man for that.

When I thought of going to a bar or a singles meeting, I got scared. I wanted to be accepted as a woman by a man. I wanted to have a deep and rewarding relationship like my parents had. I didn't want casual sex or a one-night fling type of thing. I wanted a full committed relationship with a man who would be my friend and my lover. To fulfill this need, I knew I would have to choose carefully.

My boss and another employee were the only men I knew, and both of them were gay. I had not made any male friends since transitioning. I had socialized to some degree but had not yet taken the big step of going out for the evening.

I hadn't been asked out yet. I knew I was now the one who would be approached as opposed to the other way around. I was intimidated by prospect of being the hunted instead of the hunter. As a male, I had never thought of myself that way nor did I ever see women as something to be hunted or taken.

I spent a Saturday with some local university students talking about writing. In addition, I charged some of them an editing fee to look over the things that they had written and were about to submit to a publisher. I was always encouraging them to keep writing. That's how I met one of their professors at a mixer following an afternoon get together.

Josh Cantrell had a Master's degree. His wife had died of cancer less than a year ago and the pain was still on his face as he talked about her. I asked if he had begun dating again and he shook his head no. I smiled at him and gave him a questioning look. He smiled too and asked me to have lunch with him next Saturday. I accepted.

We had a very nice lunch. He talked mostly about his work with his students and his love of writing. He had published several mystery novels which had sold moderately well. He kissed me on the cheek as we parted. That week all I could see was me in his arms. He called again to ask me out to dinner Friday.

It was a campus hangout. The pizza and cold beer were much better than the coffee, tea and cookies at the mixer. We talked mostly about our writing. I tried to keep the conversation away from me except to say I had moved here from the Midwest and that in addition to my work for a small publisher, I planned to re-enroll in school to finish my journalism degree. He didn't press for any details and obviously I wasn't going to offer any.

He looked much better than when I had first met him. His eyes were more sparkly now. Our conversation was more relaxed and jovial. He took me home and at the door he kissed me harder this time. I wrapped my arms around his neck and we held our embrace for a long time. When we finally broke apart, I smiled up at him and asked him to call me again. He walked away and I let myself in my apartment. I hadn't felt this good in a long time.

I thought about him more often than I cared to admit. I was in a quandary as to whether I should tell him about my situation. I was as much a woman as I was ever going to be but I thought I owed him that much.

I wanted very much to have an affair with him but I had concerns about the fact that I might not be able to please him, at least in the way a biological woman could. There are some things you just can't fake.

He called me again the following weekend. I bought a beautiful black cocktail dress with matching gloves, shoes, and purse. It was a wonderful dinner date and at the door, I asked him in. I poured each of us a glass of wine and sat down next to him. After some small talk, I came right out with it. Blurted out was more like it.

When I finished, I was almost on the verge of tears. He looked at me without any expression as he took the wine glass from my hand and kissed me. Then he took my hand

and led me to my bedroom. Seeing the pink peignoir hanging in the open closet, he pointed at it with a grin.

"Get comfortable, I need a minute," he said and walked towards the bathroom.

I don't think I ever undressed faster in my life. I scented myself, slipped on the peignoir, and waited for him to come back. When he did, his eyes widened at the sight of me.

"You look great in pink," he said as he undressed.

Later, as I lay curled up in his arms, I felt close to tears again. We didn't speak for some time.

"You were fine," he said. "Just fine."

I guess I needed more than reassurance. I turned to him to ask and he put his finger over my mouth. Then he kissed me hard and we made love again. I slept soundly, secure in the knowledge that I was a woman now, as much as I was ever going to be.

The next morning, he joined me in the shower. "I like the pink shower cap," he said with a grin as he stood next to me and began soaping me up.

Over breakfast, he said he had a busy week ahead but that he wanted to take me out again next Saturday night. I agreed. He handed me the Sunday paper as he left.

There wasn't much in the paper that I found interesting. But then what could possibly be more interesting than what I had experienced the night before? I had lost my virginity, again. I had not experienced orgasm the first time but I did the second. Maybe because I was less apprehensive, I don't know. It was good to have a man inside of me and have been able to please him.

I do know that now I felt like a woman, a whole woman, a real woman. I was very happy. I had accomplished what I had set out to do. I felt completely fulfilled. Except for having a baby I was now "complete," if that was possible for someone like me.

We began seeing each other on a regular basis. We attended several university functions. On two occasions, the wife of one of the other professors told me in the ladies room that they were happy to meet the one who was putting the "spring" in his step. Apparently the change in his behavior had been quite noticeable.

"Oh! Do I detect a blush?" chided one of them as I giggled girlishly while re-applying my lipstick.

I had begun to feel very much alive, though I wasn't sure if "in love" was the right term. There were several comments at work about me smiling more lately. I took everything with good humor. I guess I had good reason to smile more. Things certainly looked brighter than they ever had before.

I started working on a full-length novel. I was making good money now. My income was a bit higher and my stories were selling for more than just a per-page compensation. I continued editing students' work and offering advice at workshops. I always tell them, "If you're here for the money, you have picked the wrong career."

As a struggling writer myself with several years of experience, I knew every one of them thought about the seven-figure book and movie rights deals that a handful of

well-known authors were getting. They had to be made aware that they were probably years and years away from a deal like that, if it ever came.

My life was fuller than I had ever thought it would be but I missed seeing my daughter very much. I had paid off all my medical bills but money was still a bit tight. I thought about going back next year. It would be just for a day or two. I would see them both and then be gone.

I wondered what she looked like now. I wanted to have a picture but if I asked, I would probably be turned down, so I didn't. I hated missing seeing her growing up. That period of time was gone forever and I knew I could never get it back.

Josh and I spent as much time together as our work would allow. He always treated me like a lady. I enjoyed his company and hated being apart from him. We had a lot in common and I thought about what I would say if he asked me to marry him.

I guess that was a little presumptuous on my part. Then again, if he did ask me, what kind of a wife would I be? He had no children from his first marriage. What if he wanted to adopt? What kind of mother would I be? Would he be happy with a "created woman" as opposed to a natural-born one?

All my fears and questions would soon be answered. Through some literary connections, I learned of an opening in the editorial department of a large Midwest publishing firm about forty miles from where I used to live. I contacted them and met with a member of their editorial staff at a workshop in San Francisco.

We had a very good conversation and the salary was much better than I was currently making.

I was notified that I could start about the first week in November. I accepted and started to make plans to move. I called Josh and got no answer. That night on the news, I learned he had been broadsided at an intersection while he was coming home from the airport.

I was devastated to say the least. I closed my eyes and could see his devilish smile. I poured myself a glass of wine. With my glass half-empty and the memories of our times together flooding back, I closed my eyes and cried. I had lost a friend, a lover, and a part of myself. Now I had to start over again. I would be in familiar surroundings but with no friends. I finished the wine and went to bed.

Josh would have been pleased at the turnout for his funeral. There were a lot of people there. Friends, students and former students came to pay their respects to the man they new as just "Josh." I skipped the wake held at a local downtown college hangout. I had shed enough tears and more alcohol wouldn't help me.

I began making plans to relocate back to the Midwest. The landlord helped me find a sublet. I packed my stuff and was ready to go. I sold my word processor and my car. Home computers had been out for several years and now there was the Internet. I figured I would wait until I was settled before investing in a computer.

The woman who interviewed me had sent me a list of apartments and some motels in the area. I booked a month at a nearby motel and contacted the movers to pick up my stuff. I gave them the motel's address for delivery. I closed out my bank and utilities ac-

counts. I spent the night at a motor lodge and went to the airport the next morning for the flight back to the Midwest.

I fell asleep for most of the flight and dreamed of Josh. When I deplaned, I picked up my rental car and drove to the motel. I rested for a day and then began looking at apartments. I found one I liked and signed a lease. Later in the week, I had my utilities hooked up.

The moving van was at the motel the next day and they brought my stuff to my new place. It was several days before I had everything arranged the way I wanted it. I bought a used car and returned the rental. I was safe and secure once again. Despite that, I was still alone, very much alone, and I wanted to re-establish contact with my daughter and ex-wife.

I started my new job and was pretty much settled in. I was still sending the support payments and alimony through the mail referral in Vegas. I checked the area phone books at the library and found where Ann was living. One Sunday, I drove through the neighborhood but I didn't see anyone out in the yard; no car was in the driveway either. I tried the next Saturday with similar results.

I dialed Ann's number several times but hung up each time before I finished. I was scared, I guess. I wasn't sure what her reaction would be. You don't just walk out of someone's life, then suddenly reappear and ask to be let back in again. I wanted so much to see you but I wanted it to be at the right time and place with your mom's OK.

I was enjoying the challenges at work. My income was increasing and I was financially more secure than I had been in several years. Despite Josh's death, I was very happy. I had become a survivor, to say the least.

I liked the image I saw each morning in the mirror too. I looked good in whatever I chose to wear. I loved my femininity, my bubble baths, putting on lingerie and makeup each day, wearing skirts, dresses and, of course, heels. The hormones had given my hairless body very soft, smooth skin. I was genuinely proud of the woman I had become.

Several months went by and I drove by the house again. I felt hopeful as I passed the house, hoping to get a glimpse of either of you coming out or going in. I didn't see anyone this time either. I felt maybe it was time to try calling again.

The holidays were just around the corner when I finally decided to call. An answering machine came on and I hung up right away. I changed my mind and decided to write a short letter asking her to meet me for lunch. I enclosed my phone number with instructions to call me Saturday night.

I had fears she would want no further contact with me. When the phone rang on Saturday night, I ran to answer it. I sat down at my desk and took a deep breath before picking up the receiver. It was so good to hear her voice. We agreed to meet at a restaurant in the shopping mall close to where she lived.

I hung up the phone and let out a gasp of relief. I opened a bottle of wine and poured some in the glass, drinking half of it right away. I sat down in my recliner and pondered what lie ahead just sixteen hours away. What would she say? Would she be angry? She certainly had a right to be. I finished the wine and got ready for bed.

I didn't sleep well so I was up earlier than usual. I ate a single piece of toast and drank a glass of juice for breakfast. I read the Sunday paper. The closer it got to noon, the more apprehensive I became. I half-expected her to call and cancel. She would have some flimsy excuse to postpone it for "another time."

I slipped off my pink nightie and stepped out of my high heeled slippers. I stood in front of the full-length mirror on the back of the bedroom door and looked at myself. I saw a beautiful woman looking back at me. I wondered if she would see me that way or would she see a freak of nature, an oddity?

I put on white foundation garments and sheer hose. Sitting at my vanity, I applied blusher and pink lipstick. I added a spray of perfume. I leaned closer to the mirror to check for any stray hairs. My electrologist had been very good. My face was totally hair-free and my eyebrows were perfect. I brushed my hair a dozen times. Once it had grown out and I had it styled, I looked much better. While shorter hair is easier to care for, I liked mine shoulder-length.

I got up and went to the dresser. I put on a pink camisole with white lace at the top and the matching half slip with white lace at the bottom. I chose a pink filmy blouse and pink skirt. I stepped into a pair of three-inch heel pink patent leather pumps.

After putting my pink wallet, car keys and my makeup items in the matching pink purse, I looked at myself in the full-length mirror again. A pretty woman in pink was looking back at me. I looked good in pink. I felt good in pink. More important, I guess, was that now other people saw me as a woman in pink too.

I walked to the front door and took my winter coat out of the closet. As I slipped it on, I looked at the woman smiling at me from the small mirror on the opposite wall. Satisfied, I put my gloves on and walked out the door.

My heart was pounding as I drove to the mall. When I arrived, I sat in the car for a few minutes and thought about what I was going to say. Exactly how do you begin a conversation with a woman you divorced so you could become a woman too?

I mean what's a good opening line? "HI! Wait 'til you see what I got now! Let's go into the ladies room and I'll show it to you!" Or maybe "Does this skirt make my butt too big?" "These heels are killers. How do you women do it?"

I decided not to even go near anything that resembled "girl talk" or trying to be funny. I knew how good I looked and my heels had never bothered me since I always bought shoes that fit properly. Fashion would not be a good topic anyway as Ann had always been a casual dresser.

I pulled into the mall parking lot and parked as close to the restaurant as I could. As I walked from my car to the door, I looked to see if she was around. I saw no one and felt my pulse jump at the thought of her standing me up at the last minute.

I went inside to find she hadn't arrived yet so I got a table. I sipped some water as I looked through the menu. I glanced up and saw her at the hostess' counter. I motioned to her and took another drink of the ice water. My mouth dried up again as she approached.

She was casually dressed and had no expression on her face as she stood by my table and looked at me.

"Please sit down, Ann," I asked.

She took her seat across from me. Without opening her menu, she continued to look at me for a minute.

"I can't believe it," were her first words.

"I know. I can scarcely believe it either," I replied. "You are looking well. How is Rebecca?"

"I am OK and Rebecca is doing fine. Everyone has been supportive since you left. I am working part-time and continuing on with school. You?"

"I am working about forty miles from here for a publishing firm. Now that I have transitioned, I got a job opportunity to move back here. I also write freelance and have sold a couple of things. School is a part-time thing for now. I wanted to see you and Rebecca once in a while. I know I can't be a part of your lives. Things will not be the way they used to be."

The waitress appeared and we both ordered a salad. Ann's face was still blank. She did not appear to be happy or sad. I guess she might be concerned about the fact that showing happiness might encourage me to come back into their lives and showing sadness might discourage me from doing the same. She seemed to be playing this by ear.

"How are your folks?" I asked.

"Fine. Happy to be grandparents. Becky never lacks for attention."

"My parents?"

"I don't see them much. Your mom calls every Sunday. About once a month, they come over to see Becky."

I nodded as the waitress brought our order. We both started to eat and I was struggling to make conversation. I had covered the basics but there were other things I thought we should discuss. I was having a hard time finding the right words. I set my fork down and looked right at her.

"Ann, I didn't do this to you, our baby, or anyone else. This thing has had me tied up in knots ever since I can remember. I knew I had to do something or I would go crazy. I had been seeing a therapist for some time. It's like I explained to her at my first appointment.

"Imagine looking thru a pair of binoculars. First you cover the right lens with your right hand and adjust the left eyepiece. Then you cover the left lens with your left hand and adjust the right eyepiece. Now you have you two clear circles. Last, you bend the binoculars so the two clear circles coincide and become one clear circle.

"My life was two separate, distinct circles and I just wanted them to be one. When it came down to it, this was the solution. It was the only solution. Please believe me."

"I do believe you. I did some research after you left and also got some counseling from a therapist who specializes in helping people like you. I don't think anyone will ever really understand it. I know what you went through and admire your courage for doing so. I've never said anything to your folks or mine and have decided not to tell Becky either."

She resumed eating again. I had to ask about the prospect of seeing her and Rebecca in the future. Now that I was back in the area, I wanted to see her but I wanted to be on good terms with Ann for the visits. I may have given up my manhood but not my parental rights and I didn't want my visits to be an issue.

The waitress stopped by to inquire if we needed anything. Ann declined and I asked for the check.

"Ann, I would like to see my daughter. Could I take both of you to lunch, maybe a month from today?"

"Okay. Why don't I call you?"

I nodded as she got up and left. I opened my purse and left a tip on the table. As I walked behind her to the cashier, I felt relieved. At least I would be able to see my little girl.

Ann had been gracious. I had pictured her being angry and telling me to stay out of their lives. She certainly would have had the right to do so but she didn't. The ice had been broken and it was a start.

I paid the bill and left the restaurant. During the drive home, I thought about a lot of things like how far I had come and how my life would change now that I had my daughter back in my life. I was looking forward to seeing her.

If there was month of my life that had gone by more slowly I can't remember it, unless it was the month just after my surgery. I found myself thinking about what I was going to say when I met her. I wanted to ask her so many things. I guess just being able to see her would be the greatest thing of all. I didn't even have a picture of her.

A month to the day, Ann called and said Rebecca had the sniffles and she didn't want to take her out. It had been a bitter cold week. I told her I was disappointed but that I couldn't agree more. We set a date to have lunch on Valentine's Day in about a month. I was glad I would finally get a chance to see my daughter.

I kept busy with things. Again, time seemed to go agonizingly slow. I sold another story and was waiting to hear about the novel I had finished. If it sold, I would finally have more than enough money to live on and would for the first time be able to say that I was "comfortable."

I purchased a cheap camera and the accessories. I read over the instruction book the night before and took several pictures around the apartment. My new digital camera was so much better than the old film types and the pictures that I printed out on the computer were much better too.

Valentine's Day was warm one. The last couple of days had been a nice respite from a week of bitter cold temperatures. I had thought about going back to California just for the warmth. Out there, "cold" meant forty degrees as opposed to here where it meant below zero.

I drove to our arranged meeting place. Ann introduced me to you as her friend Jean. You extended your hand, smiled up at me, and squeaked, "I'm very pleased to meet you, Jean."

I took your hand and squeezed it gently. We sat down at our table and ordered lunch. I learned all about your school and your favorite things. You were wearing a pink shirt and jeans. You were absolutely adorable. When we got up to leave, I snapped a quick picture of the two of you, then left.

That night, I had some wine and cried a little. I was so close to you and yet I would always be far from you. I wanted to be there more often but I knew I couldn't. We both had full schedules and hectic lives. I was so grateful to get the chance to see you both. It filled a gap that had been empty for a long time, a gap that I was going to work very hard at keeping closed.

So it began. Occasional lunches once a month, sometimes a movie or a shopping trip. As the warmer weather arrived, there might be a Sunday picnic at one of the Twin Cities' beautiful parks. You were a lively little girl with lots of curiosity about everything and a delight to be around.

Months passed and then years. Grade school became high school with interests in boys, dating, the prom, and your first car. Your 4.0 average got you into college easily. You took on the credit load and it never slowed you down one bit. I was so proud of you. You handled everything they could throw at you and came back for more. You were a real trooper.

The income from my first full-length novel gave me the financial freedom I had sought. I continued to stay busy and sold several more short stories while writing a sequel to my first novel. Money was no longer tight.

Your well-deserved scholarship saved me and your mother a lot of money. It was a pleasure to see you grow up and become such a fine young woman. Your engagement came as no surprise. I wanted very much to be with you and your mother to pick out your dress.

The white gown you chose suited you to a T. It was close to one I had looked at when I was dating Josh. I had been dating sporadically since relocating here but I had not met anyone with whom I wanted to share the rest of my life. Josh was still with me in my heart and it was hard to shake him.

You had a beautiful day for a wedding and I was happy to be there. You were absolutely radiant. I did not attend the reception because of the mixed feelings I had and I didn't want to see my or your mother's parents.

When you finished your training and internship, I was pleased that you chose to become a therapist. You were exactly the kind of person who belongs in that profession. I was happy to give you a name plate for your desk and one for your office door when you opened your own practice several years later.

Your practice, along with your husband's pediatric practice, would provide you with a very good income and, I'm certain, a great deal of personal satisfaction as well. I was immensely proud of you and your husband for the success you both achieved.

My father's death of a heart attack and my mother's death of a stroke one year apart left me with only my sister who got everything from the estate since I no longer existed in their eyes. I was angry with myself at what I had done to them. I didn't see myself as having any choice under the circumstances.

I attended both visitations but not the funerals. I did not see my sister at either visitation as I had made a point of going very early, avoiding her. I wasn't certain what her reaction would be and that would not be the time or place to explain myself.

I had my own little wake at home by myself. I had wanted so much to amount to something. I was very proud of becoming an accomplished writer but of course my parents did not live to see that. I guess it just wasn't meant to be.

The void I had in my life was substantially filled with the births of your son and, three years later, your daughter. They were such a blessing. I kept my distance for obvious reasons. To see both of them growing up so smart and beautiful was a joy no one could measure.

The years were going by at a rapid clip. My life was full. I loved my new computer and now was able to e-mail stories instead of mailing typed manuscripts. I loved the resources the Internet had to offer. I guess for the first time in my life, I was content as anyone could be.

I had put off having breast implants. I still thought my breasts should be bigger. It turned out to be a blessing in disguise and a curse at the same time. The news of the lawsuits and of complications women had as a result of their surgeries made me glad I hadn't had the implants. There was also some controversy over HRT and that, too, had caused me some concern.

Unfortunately, in the shower one evening, I found small lumps that hadn't been there before. A week later, I got the bad news. With or without the implants, I was going to lose my breasts anyway. Of the two things I wanted most in this life, one of them may have given me a death sentence.

I didn't say anything to anybody. I wanted this to be my fight and I didn't want to have you watch me wither away and die like your mother did. Ann was a fighter but there are limits to what the human body can take. She never lost her will to live or fight her disease. Her body gave out and she had nothing left to fight with anymore.

I began to make plans. The surgery would be first. The outcome and a six-month follow-up would determine what I would do next. Fortunately, I had good insurance and I was financially well off by now so medical bills would not be a problem.

I took my medical leave and got some personal things in order. The surgery went well. My recovery was slow but I was back to work in due time. I adjusted easily to the weighted inserts in my bra once the incisions had healed. That's how I had started on this incredible journey of mine in the first place so going back to using them was no big adjustment for me.

It was the follow-up that brought the real bad news. The cancer had spread, just like it had in your mother. I knew now I was in big trouble. My prognosis was not good. I had never been a quitter but this would be a battle I knew I could not win.

The doctors wanted to proceed with surgery right away but I told them I would need time to get things in order. I had doubts about surviving the surgery and didn't want to leave any loose ends.

I sold or gave away most of my possessions. I saw an attorney to make out a will and give him power of attorney to settle my affairs when I died. You and your husband are very successful and your children will be as well so I left everything to various charities. I prepaid my funeral and cremation expenses.

The map inside the back cover will guide you to the west shoreline of Logan Lake where I want my ashes to be scattered. The happiest memories I have are of the times you, your mother and I shared a picnic lunch on that beautiful lake. If there is an eternity, then that is where I want to spend it.

I have skipped the last several chemotherapy sessions as they are just too much for me to take and don't seem to be doing me any good. I have rescheduled my surgery, not to take care of some personal matters like I told the doctors, but to let the disease take a hold of me. I am much too miserable to continue this.

I am proud of the obstacles I had to overcome to have the life I wanted and felt I deserved. All I ever wanted was to be the woman I always was and to live my life the way I wanted to. I just wanted to be complete.

I had been standing on the jagged edge of an ice floe as it slowly drifted away from the mainland of the life I wanted to have. In order to save myself, I had to make a tremendous leap across that widening chasm.

In closing, I want you to know that I loved your mother as much as any man like me could. I loved you more than I could ever tell you and I am immensely proud of the, wife, mother, and professional woman that you became.

With love, affection and admiration for the woman you are,  
Your father, GENE.

I sat back in my chair and let the tears flow. I couldn't have been more shocked if my father had suddenly walked through my office door and introduced himself. My mind was reeling as I made my way to the restroom. When I finished, I blew my nose with some toilet paper. After washing my hands, I looked at myself in the mirror. All these years without a dad and now to find out he had been there all along.

I walked to the desk and sat down again. I opened the brown envelope taped to the inside cover of the ledger. There were two snapshots of me. The first was at the restaurant with Mom when I first met Jean. The second one was taken at Logan Lake where I was feeding peanuts to a chipmunk that had hopped up on our picnic table to join us that day.

The tears came again as I replaced the photos in the envelope and took out the map. I had been there many times but I guess with her cancer, she thought I might have forgotten the way. I folded it back up and put it in the envelope. I put the ledger book back in the box and cried again.

When I stopped, I secured the box with tape and put it in the safe. I took the urn home with me. Later that evening, I called Bill Tilton, a friend of my husband, who had a fishing boat. I made arrangements for him to take me to Logan Lake.

On Labor Day, we went to the public boat landing on Logan Lake. It was windy but the sun was shining brightly as we motored around the point and headed for the west shoreline. Bill put the motor in neutral in front of the high grass where we had seen the ducks come in at dusk.

We were about halfway up the shoreline from the picnic area. I stood up and removed the cover from the urn, then let the wind scatter my father's ashes across the bay.

I sat down and faced forward. Bill put the motor in gear and we headed back to the boat landing as I cried again. Back at home, I had a glass of wine before dinner. My husband asked me if I was alright.

"For the most part, yes," I answered, but I knew that I might never be truly alright. I finished my wine and after eating, I went to bed early.

Life goes on. We continued to picnic at Logan Lake when we could. When the grandchildren came along, we took them there too. I watched with great joy as they fed peanuts to the chipmunks and sat still as the ducks flew in the bay at dusk.

I never told my husband, children or grandchildren the truth about Jean. They simply didn't have to know. It would have raised too many questions and done more harm than good if I had told them.

Late one night that winter when I was home alone, I tore the pages out of the ledger book a couple at a time and tossed them in the fireplace. When I finished, I tossed in the empty binding and the map too. As I watched them burn, the tears came again. I put the photos in my album with the others from my childhood.



Jean would never be far from my mind. Whatever lay ahead, I knew I could face it with full confidence the way I had been taught by Ann and Jean. I filled my kids and grandkids with the same confidence. "Go at everything full bore," Jean had once said to me and she had been right.

She would always be there for me. I knew I could count on that. Whatever chasm there might be ahead for any of us, we were all armed with the same courage she possessed to do what she did. We were prepared to make that giant leap just as she had done many years ago when she had made her own leap for life.

THE END