

# Look Through Any Window



Carolyn Faith Olson

Copyright © 2013, Mags Inc./Reluctant Press

***Mags, Inc/Reluctant Press TG Publishers***

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder.

***Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet***

We need *your* help! We spend several hundred dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain.

Mostly, though, we just want to be able to keep offering this service to our authors and our readers.

**Report stolen books by using the contact form at [reluctantpress.com](http://reluctantpress.com) or call us at 800-359-2116**

*Thank you.*

## **In Loving Memory of:**

**Linda Marie Holmes**

**Cynthia Decker**

**Lowla Valentine**

**Jami Bantry**

**Vicki Rene**

Five wonderful trend-setting ladies who left us in 2011.

They will be missed by all those they touched.



## About The Author

This is the fifth novel and sixth publication by **Carollyn Olson**, a married, straight, conservative, 50-plus year old cross dresser from California.

Her first book "**Deception**" was released in 2006 and was followed by "TG Short Stories" in 2007. "**Breaking Point**" was published in 2009 and "**Tricks of the Trade – A Beginner's Guide to Cross Dressing**" was released in early 2011 and in late 2011 "**Crowning Glory**" became a top seller and all five books sold out their initial printing. Second editions are now available through Mags, Inc.

Ms. Olson has been an ambi-gendered cross dresser for more than 30 years and is very active in the community. She is a proud member and the Post Mistress of the Vanity Club (<http://www.vanityclub.com>) and

the co-founder of the Mature Woman Group;  
<http://www.groups.yahoo.com/group/maturetgirls>

"I had more fun writing this book than any of the others," Ms. Olson said. "Connecting all the characters was a bit of a challenge, but I hope I have made Danny, Taylor, Dani, Robin, Karyn, Kelly, Jimmy and Nikky life like and interesting. I'm sure you will enjoy the story.

"I would like to thank my editor, Cindy Shelton, for reading and re-reading the ever-changing manuscript and for keeping me on my heels and toes. You are the best.

"I would also like to give a big hug and kiss to my Vanity Club sister and dear friend Dani Mitchell for allowing me to use her name as one of the main characters. It was fun to unknowingly combine fiction with her real life adventures. And, thanks to all the Vanity Club members and friends who approved the use of their names and helped make the book what it is.

"And thanks to The Hollies for the 1966 hit single "Look Through Any Window." It has always been one of my favorite songs and the inspiration for this book.

"Please enjoy!!!"

Ms. Olson can be reached at: [carollynolson@yahoo.com](mailto:carollynolson@yahoo.com)

# Look Through Any Window

**By Carollyn Faith Olson**

**Part 1**

**1**

Danny Mitchell was a shy, reserved teenager, growing up in a typical middle class town in upstate New York. If it were not for sports, in which he excelled, Cold River High School would have been a bore.

In the classroom, he received A-grades without much of an effort. He had very few friends and had never dated, much to his parent's dismay. Danny seemed destined to become one of the many high

school grads who slipped through the cracks and would go to either a community college to satisfy everyone but themselves, or enlist in one of the military branches. Jobs were at a minimum or non-existent for high school students. The economy was killing the once-thriving town of 5,000. Most of the residents worked for the government in the nearby state capital of Albany.

Despite standing 5-8 and weighing 150 pounds when sopping wet, Danny was a starting running back and kick returner on a mediocre football team, a point guard on a basketball squad that lost more games than it won and a smooth fielding singles-hitting second baseman on the baseball team which did win the league championship the prior year – the first in the school’s 100-plus year history. Danny was the only returning senior starter on the diamond, so a defense of the league title was slim.

His loving parents always supported Danny’s efforts whether it was in school, sports or at the local community church. As an only child, they were willing to give him the world. Danny wanted more in life but he wasn’t sure what that was. How many 17-year-olds do?

The Mitchell’s lived on a tree-lined street of established 1950’s homes, where only the paint color marked the difference between one cookie-cutter two-story home and another. The city sat on the banks of the Valley Creek River, which flowed from the reservoir outside of town. Cold River was depressing for Danny until the Robinsons moved in to the house next door the last weekend of February.

Danny had hoped he would develop a friendship with Taylor, the Robinson’s son, who was the same age

and also an only child. The one time the boys met, they hit it off like long-lost friends. Unfortunately, Taylor quickly left home to remain at the prestigious Hempstead Prep School on Long Island until graduation in May.

When Danny wasn't involved in sports, he spent much of his time in his room playing video games or interacting with his Internet friends on his Facebook page. His classmates considered him a "loner".

Baseball practice had started in the heated high school gym/field house, but the snow and cold weather prevented the team from getting outdoors, once again delaying the actual season. Danny hoped a successful senior year would result in a baseball scholarship and a ticket out of this God-forsaken town.

One early March afternoon, following another long practice, Danny was relaxing in his bedroom when his mother, Marla, called for him up the stairs.

"Danny, it's snowing again!" she exclaimed. "Would you please make sure all the windows are closed?"

"I'm sick and tired of the snow and cold," Danny replied, as he walked from room to room to check the windows.

Returning to his room, Danny looked through the window at the white flakes. The roof at the Robinson's was quickly turning from brown to white.

"It looks like it's going to be quite a storm," Danny mumbled to himself.

Then, to his surprise, he saw a figure through the Robinson's window.

"Don't the Robinson's have only a boy," he shouted to his mother as he ran down the stairs.

"Yes," she responded. "Just Taylor and he's away at school."

"I know that. But, I just saw a girl in their house through my bedroom window."

"It could be a friend or a relative," his mother replied.

"I know that too, but I thought the Robinson's were out of town."

"You're right. Maybe they came back early."

"Maybe I'll go over to their house and see if anybody's home," Danny proclaimed. "Maybe I'm just imagining things with all this snow."

Marla had never seen her son so excited about the prospects of meeting somebody of the opposite sex.

"Are you sure you saw somebody?"

"Yes! She was really cute. She had blonde hair with pigtails and was wearing what looked like a school uniform. You know, blue and white like the kids wear at St. Anne's."

"Go ahead," she encouraged him, "But don't be too long. Dad will be home in a few minutes and we're going to Pastor Espee's tonight for dinner."

"Do I have to go? I would rather stay home."

"It's your decision, but Kelly will be unhappy if you don't come."

"I see Kelly every day at school. It seems like I've seen her every day for the last 10 years."

"Do whatever you want," his mother concluded.

Danny quickly grabbed his jacket, scarf and baseball cap and raced out the back door to investigate. His heart pounded as he ran down the driveway with the bright interior lights at the Robinson's in view. Somebody had to be home.

Danny approached the front door and pushed the button for the doorbell. He heard rustling on the other side of the door and noticed an eye looking through the peephole.

"Who is it?" came a voice from behind the door.

"It's Danny, your next door neighbor."

"Give me a minute, I'll be right back."

Danny stood under the front porch dodging snowflakes and waited to see who would appear when the door was finally opened.

After about three minutes, Danny pushed the bell again, just as the door opened.

"What are you doing home?" He had hoped to see the blonde haired girl, not Taylor, staring back at him.

"Some of the kids at school got whooping cough, so they sent us all home," replied Taylor, who was wearing a blue New York Mets baseball cap backwards on his head. "Sorry I took so long to get to the door. I spilled a drink and broke a glass in the kitchen and had to clean it up. Come in. I just got home a few hours ago."

Danny surveyed his surroundings as he entered the foyer.

"Are your parents still out of town?"

"They'll be home Saturday," Taylor responded.

"My mother and I saw the lights were on and we were worried somebody might have broken into your house," Danny said half-heartedly as he looked around hoping to see any semblance of the young lady in the window.

"Everything is OK," Taylor assured. "Can you stay for a few minutes?"

"I'm sorry, but I have to go. We have to go to dinner at some friends tonight. I don't want to go, but my mother insisted."

"How about tomorrow?" Taylor requested.

"I have school, but I can come over after baseball practice."

"Why don't you come for dinner?" he insisted. "I know my parents won't mind. Maybe I can get us a pizza."

"Sounds good to me," Danny said as he walked toward the door. "See you about 5?"

"Great," Taylor concluded. "See you then. Bring one of your video games. OK?"

"I will. See you then."

Danny walked slowly through the snow and attempted to analyze the last 30 minutes.

"I know I saw a girl. Maybe it was one of Taylor's friends. Maybe she brought him home from school? But, that can't be. I think he goes to an all-boys school."

Danny's father, Tim, had returned home from work in Albany, where he was an assistant to the State Treasurer, and asked if everything was OK next door.

"Yes, it is," Danny confirmed. "Taylor came home for a few days because they closed his school due to

some kids getting sick or something like that. He invited me over for dinner tomorrow night."

"He's not carrying any illness is he?" his father replied.

"No, he didn't say anything. He seems to be OK."

"Good, you don't want to get sick before your game this weekend. Maybe you can get to know him better."

"We'll be leaving for the Espee's in about 15 minutes," Mrs. Mitchell interrupted. "Are you going to go?"

"I think I'll just stay here. I had a long day with school and practice today."

"Kelly will be disappointed," chided his mother.

"I doubt it." He had some work to do.

"There's leftover lasagna and salad in the frig," his mother informed him. "Help yourself."

Danny said good-bye to his parents and climbed the stairs to his room. He turned on his computer and looked out the window hoping to once again spot the mysterious blonde.

"Hempstead Prep School," Danny said aloud as he started a Google search. The school website appeared within seconds. He scanned the web page and quickly confirmed the high school was all boys. He continued to survey the school site hoping to find a picture of Taylor on one of the sports teams or in a school activity. His search was fruitless.

"For a rich school, their site sucks," Danny exclaimed.

At the bottom of the web page, Danny noticed a link for Harper's Academy. He clicked on the blue lettering.

"A girl's school connected with Hempstead," he said to himself. "Interesting!"

Danny discovered the schools were only two blocks apart and had a number of coordinated activities, including sports, dances, plays and some classes. Searching the site even further, he found pictures of the girls in their school uniforms – blue and white pleated skirts and white blouses or sweaters.

"That explains it. The girl I saw must have brought him home. Maybe she lives around here too. I'll have to ask Taylor tomorrow."

Danny turned off the computer and looked out the window again. The snow was falling even harder. He prayed his parents would drive safely to the Espee's.

"I should have gone with them." He turned on the television and semi-consciously watched a mindless comedy show. His spirits had been dashed, at least for the moment.

## 2

The snow had stopped after dumping 6 inches and the sun shone brightly. Baseball practice however had been cancelled due to a scheduling conflict in the gym. Danny rushed home to finish the few chores his mother had left him on a list attached to the kitchen bulletin board. He didn't want to be late for dinner at Taylor's.

As Danny entered the back door of his house, he heard a voice which seemed to come from the Robin-

son's back yard. He rushed up the stairs and slowly peered through the blinds, hoping to not draw attention.

"There she is again!" Danny said softly. His heart skipped a beat. On the Robinson's back patio, was the blonde young lady in what appeared to be a cheerleading outfit, working on a routine. He watched intently as she did cartwheels, the splits and jumped in the air, with an ever-present smile on her face. She was good and Taylor was not in sight.

Danny, still peering through the blinds, leaned closer to the glass to get a better look, and lost his balance. The noise from him crashing into the pane of glass startled the young lady. She looked up to barely see an admirer trying to right himself in the second story window. Without hesitation, she disappeared into the house.

"Rats," Danny shouted as he moved to the center of his room and stomped on the floor. "I just ruined everything. She's going to tell Taylor I was spying on her."

Danny was hesitant, but decided he would still go to Taylor's for dinner; however, the landscape had changed. He and the blonde's eyes had met. She was not a dream. He was inclined to not say anything to Taylor unless he brought it up first.

Danny grabbed his Mets hat, said good-bye to his mother and walked out the door to the Robinson's. He knocked on the front door at precisely 5 o'clock and was greeted by Taylor, who was also wearing his Mets cap reversed.

“We already have one thing in common,” Taylor said as he greeted his new friend. “We both like the Mets and I bet you hate the Yankees too.”

“You bet,” Danny replied, as the boys walked into the family room. Taylor gave Danny a tour of their home, which was identical to the Mitchell’s, but with a reverse layout. Danny again looked for any trace of the blonde without success.

The pizza arrived and the boys ate every piece. They talked about their background, schools and favorite video games.

“Want to play Madden 2010?” Taylor asked, referring the virtual football game.

“Why not?” Danny concluded.

Taylor hooked up the television and asked Danny to select his team.

“I’ll take the Bills (Buffalo),” Danny said.

“And, I’ll be the Jets (New York),” Taylor opined.

As the game went on, Taylor casually mentioned his blonde friend.

“Robin said you scared the heck out of her this afternoon,” Taylor laughed.

“I guess I did. Please tell Robin I’m sorry. I heard a girl’s voice in your back yard, so I took a look out of my window. I accidentally slipped and fell into the window. I didn’t mean to scare her. She is really cute.”

“Yes, she is, and I will tell her you’re sorry. She brought me home from school the other day. She goes to Harper’s.”

“Does she live in Cold River?” Danny asked.

“No, over in Altamont.”

"I'd sure like to meet her."

"Maybe you will...some day. Let's get back to the game."

The fictional teams traded leads with every possession of the ball. Defense was lacking until the last minute when Danny's Bills blocked a field goal attempt to secure the win.

"That was great," Taylor exclaimed, as he gave Danny a little shove. Danny reciprocated with a friendly push. Within seconds, the boys were laughing and wrestling on the floor. Danny lost his hat and Taylor teased him by hiding it behind his back. Danny attempted to wrest his cap from his friend but failed, so he quickly grabbed Taylor's hat off his head.

Danny stepped back to avoid a competitive swipe of Taylor's hand and suddenly the wrestling stopped. Taylor's face turned from red to flush as his hair fell to almost shoulder's length in a shaggy blonde crop.

"I didn't know you had long hair," Danny proclaimed.

"I didn't want you to know, that's why I pulled it up under my hat," an embarrassed Taylor explained, almost in tears.

"I'm sorry," Danny added, who thought it might be time to go home. "I know lots of guys with long hair. But theirs is not as stylish as yours."

"I don't always have it this long."

"Maybe I'd better go home. It's getting late and I have school tomorrow."

"Please don't leave. I need to show you something."

Danny followed Taylor in to his father's office. He turned on the computer.

"You know I go to an all-boys school," Taylor continued, as the computer went through its sign-on process. "Every year the theatre group presents a satirical play. It's a tradition. Last year we did *The Lizard of Odd*, an off-beat take on the *The Wizard of Oz*. Two years ago we performed *Cinderella* and this year we are doing *Fannie*, which will barely resemble *Annie*."

"Sounds like fun," Danny stated.

Taylor gained access to his school's website and clicked from one link to another until he found the *The Lizard of Odd*.

"Since we don't have any girls, a few of the boys must play female roles," Taylor informed his friend, pointing at the screen. "That's me."

Danny scanned the computer screen and saw a figure, which looked like a queen, wearing a long, flowing, sheer purple dress and a crown, waving a silver wand.

"I played the wonderful witch of the North, Glenn."

"Don't you mean Glenda?" Danny answered.

"No, Glenn. Remember the play is a farce."

"You look great," Danny responded, as he closely looked at the slideshow of pictures. "I would never have known you were a guy. You really look good in a dress."

"Makeup can create miracles. The makeup artist at our school could do the same thing with you. You should have seen the guy who played Dorothy. He looked just like Judy Garland."

Danny laughed. "I'd never do that."

"It's a lot of fun. Why don't you come with my parents to the play in a couple of weeks? Fannie is going to be so funny."

"What part do you have in Fannie?"

"I'm playing the lead. That's why I let my hair grow. We're going to dye it red...you know, to fit the part. This year is going to be the best play ever."

"So you will be Annie, I mean Fannie," Danny chuckled. "If we don't have a game, I'll go. I gotta see this."

The friends slapped hands.

"Should we make a couple of root beer floats?" Taylor asked.

"Let's do it," Danny replied as the boys proceeded to the kitchen.

Danny returned home just before his 11 o'clock curfew, thrilled to have a new friend and to learn Robin was not a figment of his imagination. Taylor had also accepted Danny's invitation to attend Cold River's first baseball game on Saturday.

Taylor, with his hair again secure under his Mets cap, sat in the stands of the historic Cold River baseball park with Danny's parents and cheered the Beavers to a 6-1 victory. Danny had been moved to shortstop and handled the position flawlessly. As the lead-off hitter, he had two singles, a double and scored two runs.

"You're really good," Taylor told Danny as they exchanged high-5s after the game.

"We're going to get something to eat," Danny informed his parents.

“You guys have fun,” his father replied. “Drive carefully.”

“I’ll be home in a few hours,” Danny replied as he walked towards Taylor’s BMW.

Taylor’s parents, Mark and Linda, arrived home late Saturday night and shuttled him back to school the following day. Danny felt like he was going through withdrawal with the departure of his new best friend.

“I’ll see you in two weeks,” Taylor reminded Danny as the Robinson’s car backed out of the driveway. Danny’s baseball schedule was clear, so unless there was a last minute change, he would go to Hempstead to see Fannie. He couldn’t wait. Hopefully, Robin would be at the play as well.

Cold River was looking much better than it did 48 hours earlier. Could it get any better?

### 3

The next two weeks flew by as Danny anticipated his trip to Hempstead Prep. He had talked with Taylor twice on the phone and the anticipation of his visit and the performance was building. Taylor had arranged for Danny to spend the night in his dorm room, while his parents stayed in a motel.

The Cold River baseball team had won five more games. Danny’s coach decided to keep him at short-stop, but dropped him from lead-off to third in the lineup to better use his batting skills.

“Just like Dustin Pedroia,” Danny, who idolized the Boston Red Sox MVP second baseman, surmised. He had responded by leading the team with a .545 average including a home run, the first of his career. The team,

which was predicted to finish in last place, had won their first six games of the year and was leading the league.

Despite all the excitement, Danny was a bit perplexed about Robin. He had asked Taylor if she would be at the play and he was very hesitant.

“Maybe he just wants to keep her to himself,” Danny thought.

Danny had scoured the Hempstead Prep website and found one fuzzy picture of a girl who resembled Robin leading cheers for the football team. Curiously, he could not find any trace of her in the Harper’s year-book.

“Maybe she didn’t attend the school until this year,” he surmised.

Friday’s school schedule had been set for a limited day, and Danny anxiously awaited the noon dismissal bell to ring. He had left his backpack with Taylor’s mother in the morning and she and her husband would pick up Danny at Cold River High for the three hour drive to Hempstead.

The drive to Long Island went quicker than Danny had expected. Stories literally bounced off the car windows as Taylor’s father, a big sports fan, and Danny talked baseball. Danny asked a few questions and discovered Taylor’s father worked as a lobbyist for a health insurance company and spent much of the time soliciting support from the politicians at the State House. His mother was a nurse at Albany General Hospital. He was tempted to ask about Robin, but decided to wait for another time.

Taylor’s mother explained to Danny what he could expect at Hempstead.

"The school is a bit snooty," Linda said. "The only reason Taylor is at Hempstead is because the New York public schools are so bad. We lived about a mile away from the campus before we moved to Cold River, so it was an easy fit."

"I've only been at a few private schools and that was for a baseball game," Danny replied. "I'm looking forward to it. I even packed a shirt and tie."

"I don't think you will need it," Mark chuckled. "They aren't that stuffy. In fact, the play should be very light hearted and you'll get a lot of laughs out of Taylor's part."

"That's enough," Linda said abruptly. "Remember, Taylor asked us not to tell Danny about the play. He wants it to be a surprise."

"I already know he has the lead role as Fannie, but that's about it," Danny responded.

"I didn't know that," Mark lied. "I'll zip my lips."

"That will be a first," Linda countered, as everyone laughed.

The Robinson's car entered the school parking lot and Taylor, with his flaming red hair, rushed to the car.

"You made it," he exclaimed, hugging his parents and then slapping hands with Danny.

"I love your hair," Danny quipped.

"Wait until you see me in the show. We had one final rehearsal last night and a reviewer from the New York Post was there along with a number of Broadway producers."

"Did they say anything about you?" Mark asked.

“Of course, the reviewer said I stole the show. And a man from the real Annie asked me if I was interested in summer stock.”

“What did you say?” Linda inquired.

“I told them ‘yes’,” Taylor responded, trying to contain his excitement.

“Well, we’ll talk about that later,” his father decided.

“Let me show you my room and around the school,” Taylor proclaimed to Danny, who had his backpack over his shoulder.

“We’re going check in to our motel and get a quick dinner,” Linda informed the boys. “We will be back in about an hour.”

“Don’t be late,” Taylor said with a wave. “Showtime is 7:30.”

Taylor and Danny headed off towards the big brown brick building at the north end of the parking lot. The school had been built in the mid-1900s and had more of an English style than American. The school was surrounded by ticky-tacky, but clean, houses which could have been built prior to World War II.

Taylor gave Danny the royal tour, including the modern classrooms, gym, cafeteria and all-weather football field, which were quite a contrast to the brick structure. Taylor’s dorm room was a bit cramped for two students, but as neat as a mini-hotel suite, with single beds, a refrigerator, television, desk and computer. Sports and music posters covered the walls.

“You can sleep here,” Taylor said as he pointed to one of the beds. “My roommate has already left for Spring Break. His parents took him to England.”

“That must be nice. I’ve only been to Canada.”

“He’s originally from London, so they are going home to visit relatives and to see Manchester United play a couple of soccer games. So relax, and enjoy yourself. How’s baseball?”

The boys remained in the room for a few minutes, before they joined Taylor’s schoolmates in the cafeteria for a chicken dinner. Danny changed from his Levi’s and sweater into slacks and a dress shirt, sans the necktie.

“You really take this play seriously, don’t you?” Danny remarked.

“It’s the biggest night of the school year, so be prepared for anything and everything. This is not your typical Annie production.”

The Robinson’s met the boys outside the cafeteria.

“Break a leg,” Danny told Taylor as he departed for the theatre. Taylor laughed and gave Danny a hug. “Isn’t that what you’re supposed to say for good luck?”

“You’re right,” Taylor replied as he ran toward the theatre.

“I’ve never seen him so excited about anything,” Linda said to Mark and Danny. “Maybe it’s because we’re all here.”

The theatre resembled a classic movie house, with a balcony, elevated side seating, chandeliers dropping from the ceilings and a burgundy curtain draping the stage. Soft music played, but was drowned out by the chatter from the audience.

The fourth row seats were center stage. Danny scanned the program and read the storyline. The only mention of Taylor was in the credits: Fannie – Taylor

Robinson. He knew Taylor was playing the part of a girl named Fannie, but he didn't know what to expect. Danny was introduced to a few of the Robinson's friends, but he quickly forgot their names. Instead, his eyes were exploring the room for a glimpse of Robin.

The music blared and the lights softened. The play began.

Taylor was fantastic as Fannie. The story barely resembled the Broadway classic. Taylor was not the sweet little red head from the original production that lived in an orphanage and was fortunate enough to leave for the home of "Daddy Warbucks." Instead, Taylor was raised in a brothel managed by the evil Miss Horrigan.

As the storyline developed, Taylor grew from a little girl, who scrubbed floors and catered to Miss Horrigan's every whim, into a statuesque young lady. Danny felt the plot was a combination of a rich-man's Cinderella and rag-tag Annie, as Fannie was always in the sights of Miss Horrigan's threats and mistreatments. Fannie's only way out was to become a lady-of-the-night where her number one customer was "Daddy Bigbucks."

Laughs filled the theatre throughout the first act and when Taylor returned as a grown up Fannie after the intermission, he raised the roof.

Danny was amazed when Taylor appeared. No longer was he a little girl in a smock, thread-bare dress and tattered shoes. Instead, Taylor wore a tight-fitting, barely thigh-high orange and gold dress which displayed every curve one could imagine. He walked naturally on 5-inch platform heels, carrying a stuffed dog in his left arm and a 12-inch cigarette holder in his right hand. Smoke filled the stage.

Danny could not believe the person playing Fannie was his friend. He looked and acted like a woman; very pretty and a bit sexy too.

Fannie is eventually swept off her feet by “Daddy Bigbucks” and escapes from the clutches of Miss Horrigan, played by Taylor’s good friend, Jamie May, who was almost as convincing in his female roll.

The play concluded with a party at “Daddy Bigbucks” home and a “Glee” like dance routine. Taylor and some of the other characters had to quickly change into school girl outfits for the final dance and sing-a-long.

“Oh my God,” Danny said out loud as he spotted Taylor’s now curly red trusses. “He looks like a red-headed Robin. Could it be?”

The curtain closed to a standing and shout filled ovation. Danny stood, clapped his hands and cheered. The curtain rose again for an encore and Taylor took the microphone. He introduced the major cast members and the music started again. In a near-soprano voice, Taylor sang the Annie theme song “Tomorrow”. The audience and cast sang along and shouted their approval. Taylor curtsayed as the other cast members followed suit. The curtain closed to another roaring ovation.

“How’d you like it?” Linda inquired.

“Fantastic,” Danny bubbled. “Taylor can really act. I didn’t know he could sing and dance too. He was so convincing that I would have never known he wasn’t a real girl.”

Linda and Mark laughed and nodded their heads in agreement.

"Let's go find Taylor," Linda continued. Danny followed the Robinson's through the crowd to the side of the stage. Taylor appeared moments later still dressed as a dancing school girl.

"You were unbelievable," Danny commented as he ran his hands through Taylor's hair. "You're cuter than most school girls I know and you were a beautiful hooker. How'd you learn to walk in those high heels and dress?"

Taylor blushed and laughed at Danny's expressions.

"Practice. Remember, this is the theatre, so I had to learn my part. Just like when you learned how to play baseball. It's been a lot of fun. I wish we had a couple more shows."

Taylor's parents gave him a congratulatory hug and kiss.

"Is it alright if I take Danny to the cast party?"

"Is it OK with Mr. Foster?" Mark inquired.

"Yes, he said it would be OK," Taylor said with a smile.

"Don't you have to change first?" Linda remarked.

"No. Everybody is wearing their costume. It will make the party even more fun."

"Go have a good time," his father insisted. "We'll see you tomorrow at breakfast."

Taylor took Danny by the hand, fingers entwined. The party was awaiting back stage.

"They make a cute couple," Linda whispered to Mark.

"Don't get ahead of things," he countered.

## 4

The boys returned to the dorm after 2 o'clock. Taylor was still dressed in the school girl costume and headed to the bathroom to remove his makeup and to enjoy a shower. Danny fell on the bed exhausted from the games, singing, dancing and delicious food.

Not only did Taylor play his part on stage, but he did as well at the party. Danny could not have imagined a better "date".

"Try to treat me as if I was a girl," Taylor had asked Danny as they entered the party scene.

"I'm not very good at this," Danny replied, interested, but a bit uncomfortable with the situation. "I'll do the best I can."

"Just think of me as Robin," Taylor insisted. Danny didn't resist. Taylor surely resembled Robin.

They had sat side-by-side while eating, danced until their feet were sore, sang until they nearly lost their voices, and held hands as if they were a "couple".

"You're friends are so nice," Danny told Taylor when he emerged from the bathroom in his pajamas. "They treated me as if I went to your school."

"Yes they are. They thought you were great too."

The boys slapped hands, turned off the light and fell into their beds.

"I want to thank you for all your support," Taylor said, as a slim thread of light slipped between the dorm drapes. "I hope you didn't mind me staying in character for the party."

“Not at all,” Danny replied, as he tried to stay awake. “I’ve never had so much fun.

You were my first ‘date’.”

“Maybe we can do it again,” Taylor said with a chuckle. Danny laughed as well unsure of what to say or not to say.

Taylor quickly fell asleep while Danny stared at the ceiling, happy, but perplexed. He had caught a glimpse of Taylor through a crack in the bathroom door with what appeared to be firm round breasts.

“I’m almost sure that Taylor is Robin. But, how can I approach him about that? Taylor is so much fun, but I can’t date a boy. Is this weird or what? I finally have a friend and I don’t know if he’s a boy or a girl.”

Danny would find out sooner than later.

The boys had less than 5 hours sleep. They were to meet Taylor’s parents in the cafeteria for breakfast a little after 8 before the ride home. The dorms were closing for Spring Break at 9. Taylor would be free from school for two weeks, but Danny had classes again on Monday and two more games on the schedule.

“Can you come to my games this week,” Danny inquired.

“I’d love to. Should I come as Fannie?”

“Now that would be something,” Danny replied with a smile. “My teammates wouldn’t know what to think.”

The ride home was uneventful. The boys were exhausted from the night before and slept most of the way to Cold River.

"Can you come over tonight?" Danny asked as he exited the car in the Robinson's driveway. "We could watch a movie."

"That would be fun," Taylor countered.

"Sorry boys, but we have some things for Taylor to do," his father interrupted. "Tomorrow might be better."

"Awe dad," Taylor said with a shrug of the shoulders. "You take the fun out of everything."

"Tomorrow's fine," Danny replied. "I was planning to go to the batting cage after church. Want to go with me? How about 2 o'clock?"

"Yes, that would be fun," Taylor quickly answered. "Maybe I can take a few swings too."

"OK, then, it's a date," Danny laughed. "Oops, maybe I shouldn't have said that."

Taylor snickered but didn't say a thing.

"See you tomorrow," Danny said as he grabbed his backpack, hopped over the short picket fence that separated the homes and walked to the back door of his house.

## 5

Danny sat in church with his parents but his mind continually wandered from Pastor Espee's sermon. His thoughts encompassed Robin, Taylor, Friday night's cast party and baseball.

"I'm going to have to ask Taylor about Robin again," he decided. After seeing Taylor in his role as a

girl in the play and his resemblance to Robin, he had to know the truth.

“What if Taylor and Robin are the same person? I like Taylor and don’t want to lose him as a friend. And, I would love to meet Robin, if there really is a Robin. What am I going to do? Maybe I should ask my parents or Pastor Espee?”

The questions were compelling.

Church couldn’t have ended fast enough. Kelly spotted Danny before he could get to the Mitchell’s car.

Kelly was a cute and perky brunette who always had her eyes on Danny. Sports, especially baseball, had been his escape and he had very little interest in girls until Robin. Kelly was more like the sister he never had. She was fun to be with, and despite her failed efforts to get Danny to ask her for a date, considered him one of her best friends.

“Hi Danny,” she said upon getting his attention. She was attired in her Sunday best, a pinkish polka dot dress, white sweater and white heels. Danny had to admit she was one of the prettiest girls in the school.

“Good morning,” Danny politely said, wishing he could have made it to the car a little faster. He wanted to get home to meet Taylor.

“Do you have a date for the senior ball?” Kelly asked.

“Not yet. I don’t know if I’m going to go.”

“You never go to anything. It’s your senior year. You have to go. Please do it for me.”

“I don’t know.”

“I’ll go with you.”

"Let me think about it," he said, looking for an excuse.

"OK," she said with a smirk, as she walked back toward the church. "Maybe somebody else will ask me!"

"I hope they do," Danny said soft enough so she could not hear him. "She can really be a pain."

Taylor was waiting in the front yard when Danny returned home from church. He had a baseball glove and bat in his hands and his Mets cap on backwards on his head.

"I'm ready when you are," he said.

"Give me about 30 minutes," Danny countered. "I need to change my clothes and get some lunch. I'll be out as fast as I can."

Danny ate a double-decker peanut butter and grape jam sandwich as he switched from his slacks and sweater into his baseball garb. He said good-bye to his parents and raced out the door. The batting cage was a 15-minute walk away, which gave the boys enough time to talk.

"Did you go to church this morning," Danny asked Taylor.

"Yeah, we went to early mass," Taylor responded regarding the service at St. Anne's.

"My parents are going out of town again tomorrow, so I will be home alone. That's why I couldn't come over last night. They wanted to spend some time with me and talk a little about my future. I have to be home by 5."

"That's plenty of time. We can do at least three rounds of BP (batting practice)."

Danny once again told Taylor how much he enjoyed the play and his performance. The boys laughed about Taylor's antics as Fannie.

"What was it like wearing the gold dress and heels?" Danny inquired. "You had what looked like real breasts and a great figure. How'd you do that?"

"Padding," Taylor replied, not wanting to get too deep into the subject. "It was fun, but I liked the dancing and singing best."

"How long have you been acting?"

"Just the last two years."

Danny continued to praise his friend.

"You were great, and when you sang 'Tomorrow' you had the audience in the palm of your hand. How'd you learn to sing like that?"

"I took lessons years ago and learned how to sing falsetto. It strained my voice, but it was worth it. You know the old saying, 'the show must go on'."

Taylor changed the subject to baseball as they walked.

"When's your next game?"

"We play Tuesday at Altamont and Friday at home against East Albany," Danny said.

"We're in first place. Can you come to the game Friday?"

"I think so," Taylor answered. "I don't think I'll have anything else to do."

"Maybe Robin could meet us. You could call her and she could come to the game too."

"I could try. She could be out of town with her parents."

"There may be some college scouts at my next game. I've got a pile of letters in the mail from schools that are interested in me and my baseball. Could it be I might get a baseball scholarship?"

"I'm so happy for you," Taylor said with a smile. "I hope something will work out for you. What schools did you hear from?"

"The biggest is Oregon State. Can you believe Oregon State is interested in somebody from Cold River?"

"And why not? You've sure made a hit with me."

The boys reached the covered circular batting complex. Danny waved to a couple of his teammates in another cage and inserted his pre-paid card into one of the 10 machines.

"You get 25 balls per session," Danny explained. "Have you ever done this before?"

"Never! Is it hard?"

"I'll put the machine on a low speed for you. I'll help you. Watch what I do."

Danny stepped into the wired cage, set the speed at 85 miles per hour and pushed the go button. The balls rolled into the rack and the machine proceeded to deliver the pitches. Taylor stood outside the cage practicing his swing as Danny slapped line drives into the netting.

"Your turn," Danny decried, wiping a bead of sweat from his forehead.

"You're really good. I'll be lucky to hit one pitch."

Danny showed Taylor how to stand in the cage and set the speed at 60, a top speed for a Little Leaguer.

Taylor swung and missed the first pitch and tipped the second. The third, much to his surprise, was ripped into the netting behind the machine.

“Way to go,” Danny exclaimed as Taylor hit another line drive. After 25 pitches, Taylor was beaming about his success.

“I’m ready for another round. Turn up the machine.”

Danny skipped his turn and increased the speed to an unknowing 90. The first pitch went under Taylor’s chin and he crumbled to the ground in a heap.

“Are you trying to kill me?” Taylor exclaimed as he climbed back to his feet. Danny was laughing hysterically.

Taylor, too, began to laugh and slapped his friend on the back.

“I’ll turn it down,” Danny said. “How about 75?”

Taylor stepped back into the batter’s box and successfully connected with more than half of the pitches.

The boys exchanged turns for another 30 minutes before Taylor’s hands began to hurt. He wasn’t wearing batting gloves and he had developed a blister on his right palm.

“That’s enough for me too,” Danny concluded, showing no pity for Taylor’s hand.

“Suck it up,” he laughed, examining the blister.

“We can’t hold hands any more,” Taylor joked. Danny laughed and laughed.

Danny bought himself and Taylor a soft drink at the batting cage concession stand before starting the walk home.

"Kelly asked me to take her to the Senior Ball," Danny said. He had told Taylor about Kelly when they shared the pizza a few weeks earlier.

"Are you going to go with her?"

"Not if I can help it. She's a nice girl and I like her like a sister, but I don't want to date her."

"Come on! You said she was cute and that she liked you."

"Yeah, but she's not my type."

"Who is your type anyway?"

"Maybe, Robin?"

Taylor didn't comment as the boys walked up the front steps to the Robinson's home.

Linda greeted them at the door.

"Did you have a good time," she inquired.

"You should see Danny hit the ball," Taylor replied. "Line drive after line drive."

"You weren't too shabby either," insisted Danny.

"Your father and I need to talk with you boys," Mrs. Robinson stated. "I have asked Danny's parents to come over too. They will be here in a few minutes."

"Did we do something wrong?" Danny asked.

"Oh, no, nothing at all," Linda responded, with a smile. "Get yourself something to eat in the kitchen." She could see the Mitchell's coming up the walkway through the front window.

"Do you know what it is?" Danny asked Taylor.

"I think so, but I can't tell you for sure," Taylor replied, munching on an Oreo cookie.

"Tell me! Best friends aren't supposed to keep secrets."

"Let's just wait and see. Maybe it's nothing."

## 6

The Mitchell's had made themselves comfortable on the couch as Linda served ice tea.

The boys joined them, sitting on the carpet, between their parents.

"Thanks for coming," Mark said as he opened the conversation. "And, thank you Marla and Tim for your support and understanding."

Danny and Taylor weren't sure where the dialogue was headed.

"There are going to be some changes in the Robinson household very soon," Mark continued.

"Danny, I have already talked with your parents about what I'm going to tell you, and no, you and Taylor are not in trouble. However, this might be a bit hard for you to comprehend. We just felt that we needed to explain a few things since you and Taylor are becoming good friends."

"Not now!" Taylor squealed, as he ran out of the room with tears in his eyes. Mrs. Robinson followed in pursuit.

"Danny," Mark continued. "Very soon, Taylor has a big decision to make. You see, we adopted Taylor shortly after he was born. My sister and her husband

were killed in a small plane accident within a month of his birth. Fortunately, Taylor was still in the hospital because he was undersized."

"I'm sorry about that," Danny responded.

"After the adoption and while Taylor was still in the hospital, the doctors determined he had some physical complications," added Mr. Robinson. "I'm not going to try to pronounce the medical term and go into all the details, however, in a few months, he must..."

"Let me tell him!" Taylor interrupted as he re-entered the room, his eyes filled with tears.

"Danny, I've only known you for a few weeks, and you're the best friend I've ever had. I want to keep it that way, but that will be up to you. By the time I graduate I have to make what could be a life changing choice. I must decide if I want to be Taylor or Robin."

"You're kidding me," Danny responded, feeling like he had just been hit in the head by a pitch. Was he going to lose his best friend?

"You're Robin? Wait, I have to get this straight. You're Taylor now, and you might become Robin later? How are you going to do that?"

Taylor's father attempted to calm the situation and explain further.

"Maybe this will help. Taylor's real name is Robin Wilson Taylor. We decided Robin Robinson might be too confusing, so we called him Taylor in honor of his parents.

"Shortly after Taylor was born he was diagnosed with severe testicular cancer and he had to undergo a number of operations. His male parts had to be altered to save his life. The doctors also told us he had a hor-

monal imbalance and may begin developing female characteristics when he became a teen. Some traits have already occurred, even though you may not realize it.

“Soon after graduation and his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, Taylor will have to decide if he wants to live the rest of his life as a man or a woman. If he wants to be a man, he must have a penal implant, and if he decides to be a woman, he must complete sexual reassignment surgery.”

“Dad,” Taylor exclaimed through a flow of tears. “Isn’t anything private?”

“I know this is awkward, but this must be explained. If you and Danny are to remain as friends, he has to know.”

“I could have told him.”

Danny seemed bewildered and slowly pushed himself up from the floor. Everyone thought he was going to walk out the door. Instead, he approached Taylor and gave him a hug.

“You have to do what you believe is right,” Danny whispered in Taylor’s ear. “And, I’ll be here for you.”

Tears flowed even faster before Taylor turned and ran up the stairs to his room, locked the door and fell on the bed. Danny followed.

“Please open the door,” Danny yelled. “We need to talk, just you and me.”

The Robinsons and Mitchells were astonished by the boy’s actions.

“I knew it would be a shock for Danny,” said Tim. “It sure was for us, when you told us, but we understand. This is pretty difficult for anybody to comprehend. We only want the best for your Taylor.”

"I thought Danny would leave," Marla added. "He sure surprised me when he hugged Taylor and chased him up the stairs."

"Let's just leave them alone for a few minutes," Mark replied. "Danny hasn't come back down yet, so they must be talking."

Taylor opened the door after numerous requests.

"Don't cry," Danny comforted his friend.

"I didn't want to tell you. This is so personal."

"I'll still be your friend. Remember what I said down stairs?"

"It's not that simple. Why do you think we had to move here? Some of our old neighbors found out about Robin and me. My parents were terrified somebody would hurt me. Why do you think I'm still at Hempstead? Because it's safer there.

"We moved here so I could start a new life either as Taylor or Robin. I wanted to establish a new identity. Nobody would know me. Then you came along and ruined everything."

"How did I ruin anything?" Danny demanded.

"Because we became friends." He put his head in his pillow and continued to sob.

"Nobody knows about you except me and I'm not going to tell anybody."

"What if I decide to become Robin and your friends find out I was once a guy? It would ruin everything. It would ruin our friendship. Maybe I should just kill myself."

"Stop talking like that. Why would you say those things?"

"I just want to be myself. I've always been on pins and needles around other people. I didn't want anybody to know. Why do you think I like to act? It's because I can be me!"

"I have an idea," Danny said, scratching his head. Taylor sat up from the bed.

"What?" he inquired.

"You're going to be home for two weeks, right?"

"Yeah, so what?"

"Does Robin have a lot of clothes?"

Taylor lifted himself from the bed and opened a bedroom closet. It was filled with clothes, shoes and accessories.

"Question answered," Danny laughed in amazement.

"Why don't you start dressing as Robin this week, when I come over, and we'll see how it goes. We can take it one step at a time and see how we get along."

"You're kidding me," Taylor said with the first smile on his face in an hour.

"No, not at all," Danny continued. "I'm game if you are."

Taylor gave Danny a hug and began to cry again. Danny took a handkerchief out of his pant pocket and rubbed Taylor's eyes.

"When you get your composure, let's go down and tell our parents what we have decided," Danny said.

"OK, but you go down first," Taylor said. "I'll be down after I clean up my face."

Danny complied and only told the adults "Everything is OK."

Taylor appeared a few minutes later with reddened tear-stained eyes.

"Danny and I have made a decision," Taylor announced in a stuttering voice.

"Starting tomorrow, when Danny comes over after school, I will be dressed as Robin. We are going to take things one step at a time and see if we can remain friends."

"It was my idea," Danny told the boys' parents. "I think it can work out for everybody's good. Is that OK with you?"

The Robinsons and the Mitchells happily agreed.

"Then you'll start tomorrow?" Mrs. Mitchell asked.

"Yes," Taylor responded.

"Since Danny will be home late from school, and your parents will be gone, if you need anything, please call me," Marla added. "In fact, why doesn't Robin come over for dinner tomorrow night?"

"Thanks, Mrs. Mitchell, that's so kind of you," Taylor replied as he waved to Danny. "Come with me, I have some clothes I want to show you." The boys ran back upstairs.

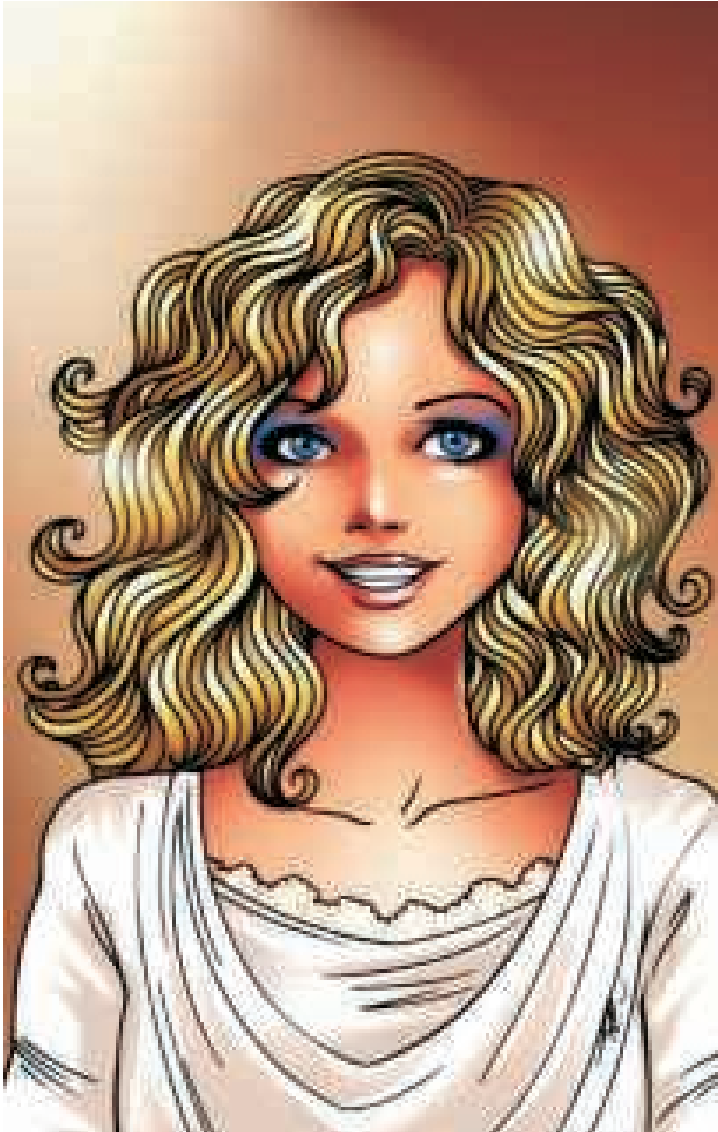
"I guess everything is OK for now," Mark concluded.

"Only time will tell," Marla added.

Danny had a hard time sleeping after Taylor's revelation. He tried to analyze the last 48 hours and came to the conclusion he wouldn't even try. Memories of the trip to New York, the play, the cast party, the college

baseball letters were too much for most people, especially a 17-year-old, to comprehend.

“I’ll just ride with everything and see what happens,” he told himself and his mind drifted off into a light sleep.



## 7

Monday flew by for Danny and baseball practice for Tuesday's big game with Altamont was flawless. A win over the hated Cougars would give Cold River a three game lead in the standings and an upper hand for the league championship. Danny felt his life, for the first time, was on a positive roll.

Danny didn't shower after practice and ran all the way home from school in his baseball attire.

"Hi, Mom," he shouted as he ran in the door.

"What's the rush?" asked his mother as he hustled through the kitchen intent on taking a shower.

"Taylor, I mean Robin," he declared.

"Can I tell you something," his mother inquired. "She's sitting in the living room. You ran right past her without noticing her."

"You're kidding me," he responded. "She can't see me like this."

Mrs. Mitchell laughed and replied: "Take your time. Robin can help me set the table."

Danny stuck his head around the corner and spotted a cute blonde, in a black and white checkered jumper, reading a magazine in the living room.

"I'll be back in about 15 minutes," he informed Robin, as his heart skipped a beat.

"She's cuter than I thought he would be," Danny told his mother, a bit confused on how he should address Taylor's status, as he double-stepped up the stairs.

Within 20 minutes, Danny had showered and dressed in an Albany River Rats hockey t-shirt, Levis and tennis shoes. He thought he would be nervous meeting Taylor/Robin but the butterflies were non-existent.

Danny hopped down the stairs and turned into the living room. Robin was gone.

“Where’s Robin?” he shouted to his mother.

“I’m setting the table,” came a feminine voice from the dining room.

Danny walked into the next room and came face-to-face with Robin. Their eyes met and they both smiled.

Robin gave him a hug and whispered “thank-you” in his ear. Robin stood about three inches shorter than Danny, since she was wearing black flats, but in heels they would be equal in height.

“You look fantastic,” Danny stated, as he scanned Robin from head to toe. Her blonde hair almost reached her blouse collar and was flipped at the ends, and her blue eyes radiated with a light brushing of eye liner, shadow and a hint of mascara on her lashes. She wore very little makeup, because she didn’t need it. Pink gloss adorned her lips.

“Thanks,” Robin responded as she stood with her hands cupped behind her back and rolled up on her toes.

“Should I call you Robin or Taylor?”

“Let’s try Robin.”

“Well, Taylor is a girl’s name too. I like them both.”

“I haven’t decided if I will be Robin or Taylor.”

“You surprised me. I was supposed to come to your house.”

“That was my decision,” his mother admitted, as she carried a platter of lasagna, salad and garlic bread to the table.

“Robin needed a little help with her dress and called me. Zippers can cause a lot of problems for us girls, right Robin?” Marla asked Robin who nodded approvingly. “She was ready at 4, so I thought it would be better for us to spend a little girl time together.”

“That’s right. I was getting lonely. Your mother is so wonderful.”

“Your father just called and will be a little late, so it will be just the three of us for now,” his mother stated. “He told us to go ahead and eat. Just save him a few morsels.”

Danny and Robin sat across from each other and Marla noticed that they could not stop staring at each other, even when she tried to carry the conversation. A couple of times they played soft footsies under the table.

The evening flowed smoothly, especially for Danny. He felt at ease with Robin, even though, in the back of his mind, he was still confused with the Taylor/Robin situation.

But, he promised Taylor he would remain his friend, no matter what and Robin was “the prettiest girl I’ve ever met.”

Robin appeared more nervous, once dropping her fork on the floor and spilling a chunk of lasagna on her jumper.

"I'm such a klutz," she said as her face reddened a bit. "I guess I'm not used to wearing glue-on finger nails yet."

"Don't worry," Marla said in an assuring voice. "You're doing just fine."

Danny nodded his head in agreement.

Danny and Robin excused themselves to the family room where a video game was ready to go. They battled back and forth and laughed.

"Who's the beautiful young lady?" Tim remarked as he walked up behind Marla and gave her a kiss on the neck.

"Well thank you," Marla snickered as she turned to greet her husband. "Were you talking about me or Robin?"

"Both," Tim replied, playing it safe. "You're beautiful and she's cute. They sure seem to be enjoying themselves."

He noted the dining room table had been cleared. "Is there anything left for me?"

"Sure," Marla replied. "I have it warming in the oven. Let's go in the kitchen and leave the kids alone."

As the game continued, Danny said to Robin: "Do you think you are going to become a girl or stay a boy?"

"I really don't know," Robin responded with a smile. "Being Robin this week will really help me decide. I love wearing girl's clothes and very often I feel more like a girl mentally than I do a boy. And, like the other day, when we were at the batting cage, I felt like one of the guys. Baseball is something I'd never tried and it was a lot of fun."

"Before you moved here, were the kids that mean to you?" Danny inquired.

"Not until last year. One of the boys down the street saw me through the front window of our house wearing a dress. He told one of his friends and it spread like wildfire. I couldn't go outside without being called 'sissy' and some very profane names. Then one of them discovered I was Glenn in the play and the comments to me and my parents got worse and worse. And the messages left on our phone were threatening."

"Couldn't you do anything about it?" Danny asked.

"My Dad called the police, but there was very little they could do. So, one day, Dad came home and said we were moving. He can work anywhere and had spent a lot of time in Albany, so we rented our house and moved here. We felt it would be the best for me. I would have the freedom to decide if I wanted to be Taylor or Robin. Then you came along and everything has changed."

"To the better," Danny insisted.

"Kinda," Robin replied, with a little tear flowing from her right eye.

"It will be better. Here, only I know, and I won't tell anybody. You're the best friend I've ever had and it doesn't matter to me right now if you are a boy or a girl."

Tears flowed even faster and Danny gave Robin a comforting hug.

"We'll do this thing together," Danny continued. "You'll see. This will all work out for the best."

"It's going to be a tough decision no matter what I do. Are you sure you're up to this?"

“That’s what I’m here for.”

The video game came to an end with Robin the big winner. For Danny, it didn’t matter who won. He already had a winner in Robin, and that was most important.

Danny and Robin held hands as they walked to the Robinson’s home.

“Can you come to the game tomorrow,” he asked, as she unlocked the door.

“I’ll come Friday,” Robin responded. “Let’s not rush in to this too fast. I need to work everything out first. Please be patient with me.”

Robin gave Danny a surprising and quick peck on the cheek and closed the door.

“See you tomorrow night,” Danny shouted through the door.

“Good luck at the game,” Robin said, as she re-opened the door a few inches. “Thanks for tonight.”

Robin stood with her back against the door and exhaled. She felt as if she was walking on air. “Danny’s such a nice guy. I couldn’t ask for a better friend. I hope this isn’t a mistake.”

Danny looked up at the evening stars as he sauntered home. He’d never had such a good time with a girl, even Kelly.

“I can’t get too far ahead of myself. I have to remember, Robin is Taylor...at least for now.”

## 8

A sunny day and 70-degree temperatures greeted the Cold River Beavers as they arrived for the baseball showdown with Altamont.

"It's a beautiful day for a ballgame... Let's play two!" Coach Dee Wallace said as he walked on to the field, coining the famous saying by baseball Hall of Famer Ernie Banks.

Cold River had not lost in six games and Altamont needed a win to keep the Beavers from running away with the championship. The diamond bleachers were filled to capacity with fans, as well as college and professional scouts. Danny so wished Robin could be in attendance too.

The game was not much of a tussle. Cold River scored five runs in the first inning, highlighted by Danny's two-run triple, and after five innings, the 10-run mercy rule was invoked.

"We won, 13-1," Danny shrieked into his cell phone when Robin answered. "We're 7-0."

"Fabulous," said the equally excited Robin. "How'd you do?"

"Not too good. I struck out four times and made three errors."

"Stop kidding me. Tell me the truth."

"OK, I only had a triple and a double and drove in four runs. I did make an error, though. I threw the ball over our first baseman's head."

Robin laughed. "You can't be perfect. Are you still coming over tonight?"

"I plan to. I will call you when I get home in about an hour or so. I'm riding back with the coach and sometimes he treats us to dinner."

"OK. See you soon. Tell your coach to drive careful. He's carrying precious cargo."

Danny laughed and said good-bye. His heart fluttered. "She cares about me."

About 90 minutes later, Danny knocked on Robin's door, still wearing his uniform.

"You were supposed to call me," she reminded him, pointing a curling iron through the opening in the door. "I'm not ready yet. Come back in 20 minutes."

"I'll go home, have something to eat and be back soon." Robin closed the door and Danny ran home to tell his parents about the victory.

Twenty minutes turned into 30, then 35. Danny wanted to look his best for Robin, who was primping next door.

"It's about time," she chided him as he entered the Robinson's foyer. Robin was as cute as a bug in pink shorts, a flowery spaghetti strap top and flip-flops.

"Congratulations on the great game. I can't wait to go to the game on Friday."

"Thanks. There were college and pro scouts at the game too. I hope I made an impression."

"I'm sure you did." Danny didn't respond as his eyes and mind were elsewhere.

Unlike the night before, Robin's breasts were more evident as her nipples were slightly outlined by the skin-tight shirt. Robin had no intentions of telling

Danny she had been on hormones for almost two years and breast development was natural.

“Are you wearing a bra?” Danny inquired.

“Yes,” Robin said in awe. “It’s strapless. Is there something wrong?”

“I’m sorry. I just don’t understand everything quite yet.”

“That’s OK. I’m having some of the same problems.”

The two turned and walked into the kitchen where Robin had prepared the ingredients for root beer floats.

“How are you feeling?” Danny asked.

“It’s hard to say,” Robin answered. “I feel really natural as a girl. My brain seems to be working as if I was a female. But, I’m still not sure. It takes me much longer to get dressed and be ready. I’m still trying to figure out how to save time, especially when I put on my makeup. As a guy I could get ready in about 15 minutes. Now it takes at least an hour.”

“You’re prettier than any of the girls at my school.”

“Prettier than Kelly?” Robin countered as she licked vanilla ice cream off the scoop.

“Without a doubt,” Danny said with a grin.

“Then, here you go, the specialty of the house,” Robin said upon handing Danny his float.

“You’re the specialty of the house in my eyes.”

Robin and Danny talked more about the game and the scouts as they finished their dessert.

“What would you like to do tonight,” Robin inquired. “We can watch TV or play a game.”

"I've always wondered what I would look like as a girl," Danny announced with a chuckle.

A surprised Robin responded: "I could always show you."

"I'm just kidding," Danny replied. "I wanted to see your reaction. Let's just watch some TV. I'm pretty tired tonight."

The two sat side-by-side on the couch holding hands until Danny fell asleep.

"Some date you are," Robin thought. She picked up the phone and dialed the Mitchell's.

"Danny fell asleep on the couch," she told Danny's mother. "He's pooped out. Is it OK if he spends the night?"

"No problem, as long as you're Taylor not Robin," chided Mrs. Mitchell.

"Don't worry, it won't get that far. I'll be Taylor again before he wakes up."

"Just make sure he is home by 7 for school."

"I'll probably kick him out before then. Bye."

Danny was slightly snoring when Robin turned off the television. She covered him with a blanket, turned off the lights, and went upstairs to her bedroom.

"What luck? The first time I have a man spend the night with me and he conks out."

Robin had other ideas.

## 9

Danny awoke a little before 6, not realizing he was still at the Robinson's until he spotted Taylor sleeping on the floor.

"What am I doing here?" he asked, waking Taylor from a sound sleep.

"You pooped out on me last night. I phoned your mother and she said you could spend the night."

"Did I sleep with Robin?"

"No, she disappeared shortly after you fell asleep. You're still a virgin, I think."

Danny didn't answer.

"I'd better get home. I have to get to school by 8."

Danny walked to the door and the boys said good-bye.

"Have a good day at school," Taylor remarked. "I'm may go out and buy some new clothes today."

"For Taylor or Robin."

"You'll just have to wait and see," Taylor said with a wink of the eye. "See you tonight?"

"Sure thing," Danny said as he waved goodbye.

Taylor ate a quick breakfast, showered, and dressed as Robin. She was going shopping at the Crossgates Mall in Albany for the first time and wanted to be home before Danny returned from school. The weather had cooled overnight, so Robin decided to wear a white sweater, black slacks and boots. By 10 o'clock, she had parked her father's Impala and entered the mall.

Shopping as Robin was a dream come true. In the past, her mother had selected her feminine items, even when Taylor tagged along. This time, Robin tried on clothes in the dressing rooms with the assistance of the courteous and helpful sales ladies. Before noon, she had two bags full of items, ranging from undergarments to a cute party dress and a credit card bill of over \$300. She also bought Danny a surprise gift.

“Gosh, things add up fast,” she thought. “Thank goodness Dad set me up with a high limit.”

She ate lunch at the food court and reveled at her success. By 1 o’clock, she was on her way home.

Danny forgot to tell Robin about the minimum school day and shortened practice and was sitting on the Robinson’s front porch when she arrived home.

“Surprise!” he said, greeting her as Robin drove the car into the garage.

“What are you doing here?” she asked.

“I forgot we had a short schedule today. I guess spending the night with a girl can do those things. I didn’t know you were going out today. You look great.”

Robin slapped Danny on the shoulder and said: “Then you might as well help me with my bags.”

“What’d you buy?” he inquired, looking in the trunk. “Did you go to the mall?”

“Sure did. It was so much fun to shop on my own. I can’t wait to do it again.”

Danny carried the bags into the house as Robin kicked off her boots.

"I'd never shopped as Robin before. It was so exciting. Everybody was so nice. I even got compliments on what I was wearing and it really wasn't anything special."

"You'd better get used to it. You're a lovely young lady."

Robin again slapped Danny on the shoulder. He grabbed her and stared into her eyes. He wanted to kiss her, but decided now wasn't the right time.

"Please don't do that again," he chided, feigning injury. "You might hurt my throwing arm. You can hit me in the left arm instead."

Robin giggled and said she was sorry.

"I have to go home for a few minutes. I'll be back soon."

"I have plans for us tonight, so don't be late," Robin insisted.

"What are we going to do?"

"You'll just have to wait and see."

## 10

Robin had everything laid out on the bed and awaited Danny's arrival.

"This is going to be so exciting, if he agrees," she said aloud.

Robin was wearing a new off-tan chiffon dress and matching 3-inch heels she had purchased that morning at the mall. She couldn't wait to see Danny's reaction.

The doorbell rang and Robin slowly walked down the stairs and opened the door.

"Wow!" was Danny's reaction. "I love the dress...and the shoes. My goodness, you are stunning."

"I wanted you to see the dress and shoes I bought today. I'm so glad you like them."

"Could you help me with something," Robin requested, as they walked into the living room.

"Sure thing," Danny replied. "Anything for you."

Robin pulled back her hair from her right ear and handed Danny a looped earring.

"You got your ears pierced."

"Not really," Robin answered. "I had them re-opened at the mall today. I'm supposed to wear studs, but tonight, I want to wear something a little fancier."

Danny complied and guided the earrings into Robin's lobes.

"Perfect," he said. "They match your necklace too. You're so beautiful. Since you are all dressed up, why don't we go out some where?"

"Maybe tomorrow or Friday," Robin cooed. "I want you all to myself tonight."

Danny wondered what she meant by that but decided to wait and see.

"Come up to my room with me. I have a surprise for you."

"Now this is getting good," Danny thought.

Robin took him by the hand and gracefully climbed the stairs. They entered the room and Danny noted the clothes on the bed.

"These must be the things you bought today," he reckoned.

"Yes and no," she replied. "Remember, last night when you asked what it was like to wear girl's clothes? And, you wondered what you would look like as a girl. Well, here's your chance."

"I don't think so," Danny said as he coughed. "I was just asking you a question."

"Awe, come on, Danny, nobody will know. We're both the same size. It will be fun."

"I can't."

"Why not?" she asked again, with a frown on her face. "Do it for me, please. You might really like it."

"I could never look like a girl. No matter how much makeup I have, you'll never get the boy out of me."

"I'm not asking to take the boy out of you, or anything like that," she said, pushing the point. "I think you will make a cute girl. Look at me."

Danny figured he was losing the war. Robin's house was secure and if he couldn't trust her, who could he trust.

"O.....K, but only tonight."

Robin kicked off her heels, handed Danny a purple robe and asked him to take off his clothes in the bathroom.

"Just relax," Robin demanded, as he appeared from the bathroom. She had him sit down at her makeup table and started to work. She flipped her mirror around so Danny's could not see the transition. Within 30 minutes, Danny looked more like a Dani.

“Now, that didn’t hurt a bit,” Robin said, admiring her work. “You’re face is really easy to work with. You don’t have much facial hair do you? It’s so smooth.”

“I don’t have very much hair anywhere except on my head,” Danny replied, anxious to see what he looked like.

“Not yet,” Robin responded to his request to look in the mirror. “We’ve only just begun.”

Robin had glamorized Danny with a tan base, brownish eyebrows and blush, and off-brown eyeliner and mascara. She highlighted his eyes with the new smokey brown eye shadow technique.

Robin handed Danny a pair of pink panties and left the room for his privacy. He quickly complied.

“This is starting to get interesting,” he thought.

Robin returned: “Now the pantyhose.”

Danny took the pantyhose and put them over his head and started hopping around the room as if he was a rabbit.

“Stop that!” Robin squealed with a laugh. Danny kept hopping until Robin pushed him on the bed.

“Now, please, put them on your legs.”

“This isn’t as easy as I thought it would be,” Danny chuckled in a faux-female voice.

Danny slid the pantyhose over his legs and stood on his toes as he pulled the waistband in place. Robin inserted homemade foam hip pads inside panty hose. He turned to his left and right and admired his legs.

“You have great legs. I know girls that don’t have legs that look that good.”

“Must be from the sports I’ve played.”

Robin had Danny turn around and lift his arms. She walked up behind him and slipped a bra around his chest and fastened it in the back. Danny followed her instructions and put his arms through the loops.

"It's a little loose," Danny noted.

"It won't be in a minute," Robin snickered as she placed breast forms into the bra pockets. "Perfect!"

Danny admired his appearance as Robin handed him a short brown sweater dress with long sleeves.

"Put this on, but don't let it rub against your face. That's excellent."

The sweater dress fit perfectly and Danny noticed he had a bit of a girlish figure.

"Not bad," he thought.

Robin sat Danny down again at the makeup table to freshen up his makeup and apply a coat of gloss on his lips. She then placed brown and white clips on his ears.

"You're really looking good. You won't even recognize yourself when I'm done.

"Give me your hands," she said as she applied press on nails to each finger.

"Now we have to do something with your hair."

Robin opened a box and pulled out a blonde shoulder length wig.

"I bought this for you today. It will be perfect. Now, close your eyes and lean back."

Danny complied not sure what to expect when he looked in the mirror.

"Perfect," Robin decided, as she walked around her subject, fluffing out the wig with her fingers.

“Where’d you learn to do all this?”

“Practice, practice, more practice. Just like when you practice.”

Robin completed the transformation by slipping a pair of 3-inch strappy brown corked heeled sandals on Danny’s feet.

“Be careful when you stand up. I don’t want you to fall and break an ankle.”

“Neither do I,” said Danny, as he slowly lifted himself off the stool and took his first step as Dani.

“When can I look in the mirror?”

“Now,” Robin concluded. They walked into her parent’s bathroom which had a full length closet door mirror.

“Wowzah, that’s me? I can’t believe it. You’re right when you said makeup can make the difference. You’re amazing.”

“So are you,” Robin exclaimed as she walked around the new Dani and gave her a hug.

“Let me see you walk.”

Dani took a few successful steps and insisted, “This isn’t too hard to do,” until he

miss-stepped and tilted into the wall.

Robin laughed as Dani righted himself.

“Don’t laugh at me. I’m trying my best.”

“You’re great. You make a really cute girl. I’ll give you some walking lessons when we get downstairs. Let’s order a pizza.”

Dani removed her shoes and walked with Robin down the stairs. After ordering the pizza, Robin gave him a few hints about walking in heels.

“Let your nylons kiss on the inside of your knees. That will help you walk easier and lets your hips get involved. See, it’s easy.”



Dani caught on within minutes.

"This is great. What other hints can you give me?"

Robin continued to instruct Dani on female deportment. He seemed to enjoy it and learned fast.

The doorbell rang and Robin could see the Bantry's Pizza delivery truck outside.

"Answer the door, while I get the money," Robin asked Dani.

"I can't do that," Dani said in a panic.

"Come-on, you can do it."

"What if I know him?"

"There's no way he'll think you're anything but a girl," Robin insisted as the door bell chimed again.

"Just do it!"

Dani slowly opened the door and said "hello." He did not recognize the delivery man. He took the pizza box from the young man as Robin arrived with a \$20 bill.

"Keep the change, Larry," she replied, noting his name tag.

"Do you go to Cold River?" Larry inquired. "I've never seen you around school."

"No, we both attend a private school on Long Island. We're home for spring break."

"Well, I hope to see you around," he replied, as he turned and walked back to his truck.

"Whew," Dani said, as the door closed.

"What are you worried about?" Robin asked. "He didn't have the slightest idea about either one of us. I

bet he's going to tell the guys back at the pizza shop that there are two new girls in town."

After the girls enjoyed their pizza, Robin asked Dani to take a few pictures of her in different poses in front of the fire place and on the couch.

"I always take pictures so I can study how I look," she explained. Dani complied taking more than 30 pictures of his cute girl friend.

"Now, it's your turn!"

"No way!" Dani responded as Robin flicked the camera in rapid fire. Dani lunged for the camera but fell to the floor.

"Please delete them."

"Don't worry, nobody is going to see them. I want these for a computer scrap book I'm putting together."

"O.....K! As long as you don't blackmail me."

Robin laughed: "I would never ever do that to you or us."

Danny remained dressed for another few hours, at times, nervously fidgeting with his clothes, hair and shoes. Before he realized, it was almost 10 and time to go home. They admired the pictures as Robin downloaded them on her computer, before Robin helped Dani change back into Danny.

"How'd you like being Dani?"

"Pretty good. The pictures turned out great. I still can't believe that was me. I'd like to try it again. If I can fool the delivery guy, then I must be OK."

"My parents don't get home again until Sunday. Why don't we dress again on Friday or Saturday night?"

"We'll see," Danny replied as he washed off the last bit of makeup. "You promised to come to my game Friday, remember."

"I'll be there," Robin assured him, already mentally making plans for the weekend.

Danny slowly walked home 30 minutes later, looking pleased and supremely confident despite his efforts to appear nonchalant. He loved spending time with Robin and dressing as a girl for the first time was beyond anything he had ever experienced.

"Did you have a good time," his mother asked.

"The best," Danny replied with a grin.

"Robin's quite a young lady," his father added.

Danny said goodnight to his parents and hurried to his bedroom, reveling about the evening with Robin in more ways than one.

## 11

School dragged on for Danny the following day. He was focused on baseball, but unsure of which direction his relationship with Robin was headed.

"Is it too early to get serious?" he asked himself. "I have to remember, Robin is really a guy, so being more than friends may be a problem. What am I going to do? Maybe I can talk with her tonight?" He knew what he had to do.

Robin was out-and-about again. She was riding a wave that was not going to end.

She first had a manicure, hair cut, shampoo and style at a local salon, and then stopped at the grocery

store to restock the pantry at home. She planned to show off her culinary skills and prepare dinner for Danny. T-bone steak, potato, vegetable and salad were on the menu. A stop at the bank preceded a fill-up at the gas station, and a pass of the high school in hope of spotting Danny.

Once again a chill filled the air, so she sported the sweater dress Dani had worn the night before, along with a multi-brown colored scarf and a pair of knee high boots.

Baseball practice was held in the field house as the rain began to fall, leaving the game Friday in jeopardy.

"I hope Robin's home safe and warm," he thought.

"Hey, Danny, slow down," came a female voice as Danny was leaving the campus. It was Kelly, perky as ever.

"I've been trying to see you for two days. Have you been avoiding me?"

"No, I've been busy. Between baseball and homework I've had little time for anything else."

"You? Homework?" Kelly stated, as she walked side-by-side with her childhood friend.

"Yes, I do homework sometimes. Did I tell you I've received some letters from some colleges about playing baseball?"

"Congratulations. That must be exciting. I hope you can get a scholarship."

"So do I. I'd love to play college baseball."

"Are you going to the senior ball?" Kelly asked. "I'm still waiting for my invitation."

"I don't think so. It's really not me."

"I wish you would go with me."

"Oh, please. You could go with any guy at school. Why would you want to go with me?"

"Because you are my friend and we are perfect together."

Danny didn't want to hurt Kelly, so he kept his opinion to himself.

"I might have other plans. I might be visiting a couple of colleges that weekend."

"OK, be that way. I guess I'll just have to go with Jimmy Coleman."

"He's a lot of fun."

Kelly turned right at the next street, upset, and barely said good-bye.

"What's with her anyway?" Danny pondered. "I hope I didn't hurt her. She's so nice, but I have no interest in dating her. I wish she would understand we are just friends."

## 12

Danny stopped at home to inform his parents he was having dinner with Robin.

"She's cooking some steaks. And, I have something important to ask her."

"You two are really getting along together," his father replied as he folded the local newspaper in half. "We hardly see you any more except at the baseball games."

"Leave him alone," his mother insisted. "Remember when you were young..."

“Don’t go there,” interrupted his father. Danny laughed, said good-bye and jumped the fence into the Robinson’s front yard. Robin was waiting at the door in the brown dress.

“You look much better than I did,” Danny commented as Robin gave him a hug hello, which had become their way of showing affection.

“Dinner is just about ready. I hope you like it. The steaks are on the barbeque. Can I get you a Pepsi?”

Danny followed Robin to the kitchen, admiring her figure and movement with every step.

“Let’s go out in the back yard and check the steaks,” Robin requested as she handed Danny his drink. They walked under the patio cover and lifted the lid of the gas grill.

“They look perfect,” Danny said as he inspected the T-bones. “Just like you.”

“You are so sweet,” Robin responded as she rubbed his neck with her manicured fingers.

Danny turned off the barbeque, grabbed the steaks with tongs and placed them on the platter in Robin’s hands.

“Don’t burn yourself.”

“You really care about me, don’t you?” Robin commented as she looked in his eyes.

“Yes, I do. How could I not care about you? You’re everything I’ve ever wanted in a girl. However, you really aren’t a girl.”

“Yet,” replied Robin, who started to cry.

"I'm sorry," Danny said as he addressed Robin face-to-face. Robin set the platter on the picnic table and wrapped her arms around his shoulders.

"I'm still a bit confused," Danny confessed. "This is the first time I've ever been close with a girl. Sometimes, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I like you as Taylor and I love you as Robin. I don't know one guy who wouldn't want to have you as his girl friend."

Tears continued to flow as Robin feared rejection.

"I need to ask you a very important question."

"What is it?" Robin asked in a muffled voice.

Danny took an envelope out of his back pocket and handed it to Robin.

"Not a good-bye letter," she thought.

"Open it!"

Slowly, Robin opened the envelope. The anticipated letter was not inside, just an "Invitation" card.

"What is it?"

"Just read it!"

Robin examined the contents.

"You really want me to go with you?" she squealed. "I'd love to!"

Robin wrapped her arms around Danny's neck and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"I've never been to a Senior Ball, a prom, or anything like that! What am I going to wear?"

"You have two weeks from Saturday night to decide. That should be plenty of time. I already have my tuxedo rented. How would you like to go to dinner and the dance in a limo?"

"You're kidding me, I would love it," she screamed, tears still staining her face. "But can you afford it?"

"If I couldn't, I wouldn't be asking you," Danny replied, who had saved his earnings from shoveling snow during the winter months.

"Where's the dance?" Robin questioned.

"At the Crowne Plaza in Albany."

"Oh my gosh, that's a pretty fancy place. I've always wanted to go there."

"Well, now you are...and with me."

"You're the best boyfriend any girl could have," Robin flirted. "I will be honored to go with you. I can't wait to tell my parents."

"Why don't I put the food on the table and give you a few minutes to freshen up?" Danny insisted.

"You're too kind. Danny headed to the kitchen with the steaks while Robin grabbed her purse and exited to the bathroom.

"I did it!" Danny said to himself as he pumped his fist in the air. "Robin is going to be the belle of the ball."

Robin returned soon, looking as pretty and composed as ever. The tear stains were gone and the glow from her face and the excitement in her voice made a delicious dinner an afterthought.

"You can cook for me anytime," Danny exclaimed as he enjoyed his steak. "Where did you learn to cook?"

"Everyone has to take home economics at Hempstead. The girls at Harper must take a shop course and the boys at my school learn how to cook and sew."

"I wish we had classes like that. Forget the sewing, but I would love to learn to cook."

"It's easy and fun. I experiment as I go. I cook to my taste."

"It sure fits my taste and so do you," Danny beamed. Robin winked.

"Where are we going to go for dinner?" Robin inquired.

"That's for me to know and for you to find out," Danny fired back with a laugh. He already had the reservations, but he surely wasn't going to tell Robin.

"What about Kelly? Didn't she want to go with you?"

"She kinda invited me, but I kept putting her off," Danny said with a sigh of relief. "I think she's going to go with Jimmy Coleman. "I didn't want to go with her anyway. Only you!"

"Stop buttering me up."

"It's the truth."

"Do you know how to dance?" Robin asked.

"No, not really. I've never gone to a dance before."

"Well, I'm going to have to teach you. Tonight, after we finish the dishes."

Within minutes, the dishes had been washed and stored away, and Robin took Danny by the hand and guided him in to the family room. The music blared on the stereo and Robin began to teach Danny the latest dances. Danny eyed Robin and followed her instructions.

"You make this so easy," Danny proclaimed as he followed Robin's every move.

"You're good," she complimented her student. "It must be from playing all the sports."

Danny and Robin danced and danced until their feet and legs became sore. Robin programmed a slow CD and slid into Danny's arms.

"One last dance. It's getting late and you have a game tomorrow."

They held each other tight and slowly moved to the beat of the music.

"He's going to be a great dance partner," Robin thought as she snuggled her head against Danny's shoulder. "I couldn't be happier."

"Robin will be the perfect date," Danny decided.

The music stopped and Robin and Danny hugged a bit longer.

"I guess I'd better go. Are you still coming to the game tomorrow?"

"I'll be there. Should I wear my Mets cap?"

"Whatever you want. Just having you there will be so important to me. I can't wait."

"You just concentrate on the game and not me."

"I will," Danny said as he walked to the door. "Thanks for dinner, the dance lessons and for accepting my invitation. I can't wait to tell my friends."

"Please tell Kelly first. It's only right. Promise? I hope I can become her friend too."

"That's exactly what I thought too," Danny conceded. He gave Robin a hug and walked home completely unaware a light rain was falling.

"Robin said she will go to the senior ball with me," Danny exclaimed as he greeted his parents, who were preparing to turn out the lights.

"She what?" his mother asked.

"You didn't," his father followed.

"I asked Robin to the ball and she said yes. I'm so excited."

"Don't you think that could be a bit of a problem," his mother inquired. "She's still a boy."

"Nobody even knows Taylor, so how's anybody going to know about Robin unless one of us tells?" Danny countered. "I'm not going to tell and neither will you. She is so excited and can't wait to go. She even taught me how to dance tonight."

"So that was the music we heard," his father added.

"She coming to the game tomorrow, too," Danny reminded his parents.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" his mother asked.

"Why not?" Danny insisted. "It was her idea. She's been out around town the last two days and nobody has questioned who she is. You'll see when you see her tomorrow."

"OK," his father agreed. "But, let's take this one step at a time."

"That's what I told Robin too," he reminded his parents. "And that's what we are doing."

"What about Kelly?" his mother said.

"I'll take care of her in the morning. Jimmy Coleman is taking her. He's more her type."

## 13

Danny ran out to his shortstop position and scanned the small crowd for Robin without success. Danny's parents were in their regular seats and Kelly was in the next section to the left.

"Where is she?" he said to himself, obviously disappointed. A win over East Albany would all but assure the Beavers of a second straight league championship. However, the cold weather, wind and threat of rain could affect the final outcome.

Danny fumbled a routine ground ball, which allowed a run to score, and struck out his first time at bat. It was only his second error of the season. Obviously, Robin's absence was bothering him. Fortunately, Jimmy Coleman had picked up his teammate by smacking a two-run homer to give the Beavers a 2-1 lead after one inning.

"Jimmy seems to be picking me up recently," Danny said as he ran out to his position for the second inning. "He saved me with Kelly and now with a home run. Concentrate, Danny, concentrate."

Danny again skimmed the crowd without finding Robin. The second batter in the inning hit a high pop fly behind third base. Danny raced over towards the left field foul line and the fence surrounding the field. The ball carried further than he had expected due to the wind. He neared the fence, reached for the ball and made the catch as he crashed into the barrier. Woozy, he tossed the ball back into the field and heard a familiar voice.

“Way to go, Danny!” He looked over his right shoulder as he ran back to his position. It was Robin. His heart fluttered before he passed out.

“Are you OK?” Coach Wallace asked Danny as he applied smelling salts.

“Yeah, I’m OK,” Danny insisted.

“I’m going to have to take you out,” the coach insisted.

“Not today, coach. I’ll be OK. I just got dizzy for a second. This is an important game.”

“OK,” replied the coach. “But, I want to check you again when you get back to the dugout.”

The inning ended without any runs and Danny trotted slowly to the dugout. Coach Wallace and Dr. Coleman, Jimmy’s father, met him at the entrance. After a quick exam, Dr. Coleman announced him fit for the rest of the game.

“I want to check you after each inning,” the doctor insisted. “I want to make sure you didn’t get a concussion.”

The Beavers stretched their lead to 3-1 before Danny broke the game open with a bases-clearing triple to right center field. As he stood on third base, Robin, sitting next to the Mitchell’s, threw him a kiss.

“I hope Kelly didn’t see that,” the winded Danny said aloud.

“What are you talking about?” asked Coach Wallace, from the third base coaching box.

“Oh nothing,” Danny exclaimed, with a smile. “Nothing.”

Either Robin's gesture, or the sprint around the bases, made his heart beat faster. It didn't matter. Robin was there and the score was 6-1. Danny scored seconds later on a single by Jimmy. The rout was on and the championship grew near.

The rain started to fall in the fifth inning. Danny noted Robin was protected under an umbrella with his mother. She was dressed in a cream turtleneck sweater and blue jeans tucked inside her boots. A bulky jacket and matching scarf kept her warm. Taylor's Mets cap adorned her head.

"It looks like Robin, Mom and Dad are getting along together," he noted.

The inning ended quickly and Danny dodged raindrops on his way back to the dugout.

"Game over," declared the umpire. "Ten-run rule after five innings."

The Beavers raced on the field to celebrate the league championship. They had won nine straight games and owned a three game lead with one game to go.

The infield was turning muddy, but that didn't stop Danny and his teammates from sliding into the bases in celebration. Mud covered their white uniforms.

Some of the Beaver fans ran on the field including Robin and Kelly. Robin, dangerously trying to maneuver in her high-heel boots, fell on her backside after crossing the dirt baseline. Kelly wasn't much better. As she tried to reach Jimmy she stumbled on the pitcher's mound and fell face first in to the grass.

Danny ran to Robin's rescue and Jimmy did the same to aid Kelly.

The boys resembled a pair of horse race jockeys after a muddy trip around the track. The girls were wet from the rain but their egos were hurt even more.

Danny helped Robin to her feet as Jimmy assisted Kelly.

Danny laughed as he introduced Robin to Jimmy and Kelly.

"Nice to meet you, especially under these circumstances," Robin giggled. Kelly was not in a cordial mood. She was soaking wet, covered with dirt and grass and her usually perfect hair dangled like spaghetti.

"So, you're Danny's date," Kelly snarled with a frown. "Where'd you find her, under a rock?"

"That's not very nice," Danny said as he condemned Kelly for her un-Christian comments. "Let's go, Robin." Jimmy snickered under his breath.

Danny took Robin's left hand, turned and skipped over the puddles on the field to greet his parents.

"I can't believe we won the championship again," Danny said with glee, as he continued to hold Robin's hand. "Two years in a row and the state playoffs to come."

"And to think everyone picked the Beavers to finish last," his father replied.

"We sure showed them," Danny countered.

Coach Wallace treated the entire team and their parents and friends to dinner at Cold River Pizza. The bill came to over \$750 and some of the parents chipped in, but for everyone, it was well worth it. The party lasted into the early evening and by the time Danny

and Robin headed home it was too late to go to a movie.

“How about tomorrow night?” Danny asked as he walked Robin to her door.

“I’d love too,” Robin replied as she twice squeezed Danny’s hand. The double-squeeze was Robin’s way of saying “I Love You” even though Danny didn’t have a clue to its connotation. “Come over about 3 and we can go to the theatre at the Albany mall.”

“Why don’t we go to the movie here?” Danny asked.

“I’d like to do something special. It will be the last night before my parents get home. See you at 3?”

“OK,” Danny replied as Robin said good-night and closed the door.

## 14

Robin greeted Danny before he could knock on the door. She was excited to spend another day with him; however, he didn’t know what she had in store.

Robin was dressed and ready to go. She was wearing a swirling black and white wrap dress, jacket and strappy black three-inch sandal heels with matching pearl accessories. Her hair was perfect, slightly curled on the ends, which barely covered her ears.

“You look hot,” Danny confirmed.

“You will too, very soon,” Robin laughed.

“What are you talking about?” Danny questioned, a bit apprehensive about Robin’s leading comment.

“Just come with me,” she instructed as she wrapped her arms around Danny’s waist and snuggled close to his chest. “I would like the female Dani to go with me to the mall.”

“Robin!!! I can’t do that.”

“Come on. You know you enjoyed being Dani the other night and I know you’d like to do it again.”

“Yeah, but we didn’t go anywhere.”

“The pizza guy never knew the difference. Nobody will know us in Albany either.”

“I can’t,” Danny said in a more forceful voice.

“Why not?” Robin said as she continued to press the issue.

Danny knew he was losing again. He couldn’t think of any other objections.

“Come on,” Robin pressed on. I have everything ready to go upstairs.”

Danny didn’t say a thing. He followed Robin up the stairs.

Within two hours Danny was Dani once again.

“Not bad,” Dani said as she looked in the mirror at the final product.

“Not bad?” Robin questioned. “You look delicious.”

Robin had selected a brown flowery flowing knee length skirt along with a tan long-sleeve swooped neck sweater for her “big sister.” Robin had shaved off a few of Danny’s chest hairs and applied a dash of eye shadow to create a bit of cleavage which had been made evident by the low-cut sweater. Danny had a bit of a problem walking in the knee high brown boots, but other than that, he looked every bit a young lady.

Danny picked up the phone and dialed his home number. He left a message for his parents.

"Robin and I are going to the Albany mall," he said. "We'll be back about 10."

Robin did a quick touch-up on Dani's makeup and hair, straightened the tear-drop necklace to the right length above her breasts and applied a pair of dangling earring.

"Let's go Sis," Robin chided as she handed Dani a coordinating purse and jacket. "You're getting to wear one of my new outfits before I do."

"I'm honored," Dani replied as she checked her lipstick in the mirror.

"Come-on, girl, stop being so vain, Albany is waiting! They won't know what hit them."

That's what Dani was worried about.

During the drive to the mall, the girls discussed their strategy.

"Can we get something to eat first?" Dani asked. "I'm starved."

"Me too," Robin replied. "We can eat at the food court or at one of the restaurants."

"Food court's OK with me. We can shop or go to a movie after we eat."

"Do you mind if we look at a few dresses?" Robin asked. "The senior ball is only two weeks away."

"That could be fun. Maybe you can find me a dress too."

Robin slapped Dani on the shoulder as she drove.

“Stop that,” she shrugged. “But you do have a good idea. Since we wear the same size, we can both try on dresses and choose the one we like best.”

“Do you think I can get away with that,” Dani replied, feeling more comfortable with his new image, as Robin maneuvered her car into the mall parking lot. “You know, going in a ladies dressing room?”

“Trust me,” Robin demanded. “Nobody will even know.”

## 15

The girls stepped out of the car and walked the short distance to the entrance of the busy Crossgate Mall. Dani quickly mastered walking in boots and her hips swayed with every step.

“I didn’t know the mall would be this busy on a Saturday night,” Robin acknowledged as they walked past the stores and to the food court. “I’m sorry.”

“That’s OK,” Dani said with a smile. “If I can make it here as a woman, I can do it anywhere.”

“That’s the perfect attitude. Now if anybody asks, you are my cousin.”

“Only by a few months,” Dani reminded her.

“Why don’t we eat at Luigi’s instead of the food court?” Robin suggested, pointing at the restaurant’s sign 50-feet ahead to the right. “My treat. Let’s see what it is like to be waited on in a nice restaurant.”

Dani nodded her head in agreement.

The hostess welcomed Robin and Dani and led them to an open window table facing the mall.

"I love your dress," the young lady said to Robin. She turned to Dani and said: "Where'd you buy those cool boots?"

"I bought those for my cousin on the internet from Just Fab," Robin interrupted. "You should check out their site. It's amazing."

"I will," replied the peppy smiling hostess, who introduced herself as Tina Steir.

"That girl, Tina, goes to my school," a suddenly nervous Dani explained. "Can you believe it, she didn't even recognize me?"

"I told you not to worry."

"This is great!" Dani said, sweeping her long curly blonde hair out of her face. "I can't believe it."

"Believe it."

Dinner was scrumptious and the girls split a chocolate mousse dessert.

"How are we going to fit into dresses after all this food?" Dani exclaimed. Robin laughed as she paid the bill on her credit card.

"Are you ready for some serious shopping?" she asked.

"As ready as I will ever be," Dani said as she stood and adjusted her skirt.

Tina waived good-bye from across the dining room as Robin and Dani departed for Lisa's Bridal Boutique.

Lisa's Bridal was a girl's dream come true. Through the large plate glass window, Robin and Dani could see rack-after-rack and row-after-row of gorgeous dresses in every color of the rainbow.

"There's hardly anybody in the store," Robin remarked. "This will be perfect. Maybe we can get a personal sales lady to help us."

Dani, more confident every minute, led Robin into the store where they were greeted by the manager, Trisha Leigh.

"Are you the owner?" asked Robin.

"No, I'm the manager," Trisha lamented. "Lisa Harris, the famous author, is the owner of this and two other shops. Did you want to talk to her?"

"No," replied Robin. "I was just wondering..."

"We're looking for a senior ball dress for my cousin," Dani interrupted. Robin blushed.

"She's sure pushing the limit," Robin thought. "She must be really enjoying this."

"What size are you?" Trisha asked Robin.

"I think I'm a six or an eight," she replied, as Trisha eyed her clients.

"It looks like you both wear the same size."

"We do," the ever-confident Dani confirmed. "Maybe we can both try on dresses and put a few on hold until she can come back with her mother."

Robin gave Dani a dirty, yet flirty, look and exhaled. Dani was starting to get on her nerves, but she realized she was her "creation."

Robin explained the dance would be in two weeks and the style of dress she would prefer. She pulled a magazine out of her oversized purse and Trisha examined the photos Robin had highlighted.

“We have some of these dresses,” Trisha acknowledged. “Let me find them. Meet me by the dressing room.”

Within minutes, Trisha had four dresses hanging on a rolling cart and two more draped over her arm.

“This will get you started,” she said as she guided Robin to one stall and Dani to another across the dressing room walkway. “I’ll be right back with some matching shoes. Size nine?”

Robin nodded in agreement as she hung three dresses in her room and gave the other three to Dani.

The girls proceeded to change into one dress at a time.

Dani knocked on Robin’s door. “I don’t think I can zip up a couple of the dresses.”

Robin reached into her purse and handed Dani a “Zipper Magic”.

“Just attach it to the zipper and once you have the dress on, stand straight and pull the cord straight up your back. It’s easy.”

“You know all the tricks don’t you.”

“Anything for my dear cousin.”

Trisha had chosen two minis, two floor length dresses and a pair of mid-calf with fluffy hemlines. Everything fit perfectly. Robin and Dani modeled for Trisha and admired themselves in the dressing room walkway mirror.

The girls exchanged dresses on the second go-round.

“This is going to be tough,” Robin concluded. “I think I like the blue dress best.”

“So do I, but for me, not you!” Dani decried. The strapless dress had a dark blue thinly layered bust line and a netted skirting which dropped from the waist for a form-fitting bodice, which would emphasize Robin’s figure.

“Give me a break,” Robin declared, as she held up a dress with a big fluffy skirt. “This is more your style.”

The girls laughed hysterically.

“Did I miss something?” Trisha asked as she returned to the room with two more dresses.

“No, not at all,” Robin replied. “We were just having some fun. I thought Dani might like that dress (now hanging from the door).”

“I don’t think so,” Trisha remarked with a smile. “That’s definitely not her style. Have you decided on anything?”

“I love the dress Dani is wearing,” Robin responded.

“With light blue shoes, and a light blue neck chocker, it will be perfect,” Trisha agreed. “Do you want to take it today?”

“Can you hold it for me?” Robin asked. “My mother wants to see it first. Is that OK? We can come back on Wednesday.”

Trisha said she would put the dress on layaway, and then came up with an idea.

“How would you like to model the dress for the store?” she inquired.

“Wednesday night will be our Easter/Spring Break teen fashion show. I’d love to have you as one of the

models. If you participate, you get 50% off the price of the dress and any other accessories."

"I'd love to," Robin responded. "But, only if Dani can too."

Dani sneered at Robin. "Can't we talk about it first?"

"Will you give us a couple of minutes?" Robin requested. Trisha left the room.

"Thanks, Robin," an angry Dani lamented. "You're really putting me on the spot. I can't be a model. I may look like a girl right now, but I'm not like you."

"Come-on Dani," Robin emphasized with her hands on her hips. "There are a lot of transgender models. You don't have anything to do next week anyway."

"I have a baseball tournament," Dani said searching for an excuse.

"That's during the day. You have nothing to do at night. I'm going to do it whether you want to or not. It will be fun. Nobody will know it's you."

Dani stared at Robin, her mind swirling, as Trisha re-entered the room.

"We'll both do it," Robin declared. Dani sneered but reluctantly nodded her head.

"Excellent," Trisha proclaimed. Robin would wear the blue dress she had selected for the ball and Dani would wear a snug black and white diagonally striped glitter-party dress with matching heels.

"This is so exciting," Trisha remarked. "We just had two models cancel and then you walked in the door. Thank you so much! I need you to sign a couple of re-

lease forms since you are both under 21, right? Why don't you change and we can meet out front."

Trisha placed the two dresses on hangers and walked to her office. Robin and Dani squealed, hugged and jumped up and down, overly-excited about what lay ahead.

"This is like a dream come true," Robin squealed.

"Maybe for you," Dani pantomimed as if she were upset. "You could have asked me before opening your mouth."

"You'll be great! You only have to wear one dress and walk up and down the runway once or twice. It will be over before you know it."

"OK, I'll give it a try."

The girls changed back into their outfits, met Trisha at the front counter, signed the forms and walked back into the mall.

"We should have asked if we could take the dresses with us," Robin said to Dani. "We could practice at home."

"That's OK," Dani decided. "I'm going to have enough problems explaining to my parents I'm going to be a model."

"You don't have to say anything. I'll make sure my mother will keep it a secret. We don't have to tell your parents anything."

The girls strolled through the mall, stopping in a few stores and window shopping at others. Dani was still apprehensive about appearing in a fashion show, but Robin was on Cloud 9.

“Could it get any better?” she thought as the girls walked toward Robin’s car. “I’ve been invited to a senior ball, Danny’s team won the baseball championship and now we both will be in a fashion show. If this is what being a girl is all about, I love it!”



## 16

On the drive home from the mall, Danny had invited Robin to attend church with his family the next morning. She quickly accepted despite some apprehensive feelings regarding Kelly.

"I hope she treats me better than she did at the game and the pizza parlor," Robin responded.

"She'd better. I don't know what her problem was the other day. I'll do my best to protect you."

Robin met Danny at her front door and took his hand as they walked toward the Mitchell's car that was waiting next to the street. Robin was adorned in a stylish white, black and light green flowery dress with a black jacket and matching off-green open-toed heels. Danny was wearing his only suit, dark blue with light pinstripes.

As they approached the car, he whispered in her ear: "Thanks for last night. I wish I was still dressed as Dani." Robin giggled.

Kelly spotted Robin as the Mitchell's entered the historic early 19<sup>th</sup> century brick church and bell tower and gave her what appeared to be an unfavorable look from her pew.

"Who does she think she is?" Kelly said to herself. "How dare she come to my church?"

Robin ignored her and followed the Mitchell's to their seats, five rows behind Kelly and her family.

The Palm Sunday service was uplifting with special music and Pastor Espee's sermon, which was based on "Love One Another As Jesus Loved You."

"I hope Kelly was listening," Danny softly commented following the sermon as the offering plate was passed. Robin smiled and rolled her eyes.

Pastor Espee greeted the members in each pew following the service and was especially welcoming to Robin.

"Nice to have you here today," he greeted Robin after Danny's introduction. "Do you know my daughter, Kelly?"

"I met her the other day at Danny's game. She seems to be a very nice. I hope we can become friends."

"I will tell her. Please come again next week. We have a fabulous Easter service planned."

"I'd love to. Nice meeting you."

The Mitchell's filed out of the church and walked past Kelly as they stepped down the stairs to the adjourning Fellowship Hall where coffee and treats were being served.

Danny said hello to Kelly and Robin smiled. Kelly scowled, put her hands over her eyes as she began to cry, and ran off in the opposite direction.

"I guess the sermon went in one ear and out the other," Danny assumed of Kelly.

"I'm going to talk with her."

"Please, not today," Robin insisted. "She's really upset and you might make it worse."

"OK. But, if she says one thing negative about you, I'm going to let her have it."

The following Bible Class hour went without incident. Danny re-introduced Robin to a couple of his teammates who had originally met her at the team

party two nights earlier and who also attended the church. Kelly was not in sight.

"I feel so comfortable with your friends," Robin noted. "I wish Kelly would treat me the same way."

"Maybe she went home and had a tizzy fit," Danny thought.

The Mitchell's stopped at a local café for lunch before returning home.

"See you in about an hour," Danny informed Robin as they parted in her front yard. He again hopped over the short fence separating their properties.

"Don't do that in your suit," Danny's mother insisted. It was too late. The bottom of his pant cuff caught the top of the picket fence and he fell head first on to the grass.

Robin and his mother ran to help Danny, laughing hysterically. The cuff was still imperiled by the point of one of the pickets.

"You klutz," Robin jeered as Mrs. Mitchell separated the cuff from the fence.

"You are so funny. Are you OK?"

"I'll be fine," Danny lamented in a timid voice as he righted himself. "See you soon."

Danny went to his bedroom and turned on his computer. He needed to check the time for Monday's Easter baseball tournament in Albany. The small school Beavers had been invited to participate in a tournament with the big boys, which included the number one team in the state. Luckily, they were in the opposite bracket.

“One o’clock against Rochester North,” Danny noted after reading the message from Coach Wallace. As he prepared to sign off, an e-mail from Kelly flashed across the screen.

Danny hesitated for a minute and opened the e-mail.

“Dear Danny,” the e-mail began. “I’m sorry I’ve been such a bitch recently. You have always been my best friend and I’m having a tough time sharing you with somebody else. Please forgive me for these feelings, but I was hoping we could go to the senior ball together. I guess it’s not in the cards.”

“I didn’t mean to hurt Robin the other day. She is so pretty and seems to be so nice. You make such a cute couple. I’m just envious that she is going to the dance with you. She is a lucky girl and you’re a lucky guy.”

“I would like to make a peace offering to you and Robin. I have talked with Jimmy and we would like you to accompany us to dinner and the dance. Jimmy’s parents will loan him their antique Rolls and we have dinner reservations at the Crowne Plaza before the dance. At least we can all be together on such a special night. Please say yes.”

“I dropped off a note and a small gift at Robin’s house today after church. I hope she found it. It’s the least I can do to apologize.”

“Your friend, forever, Kelly.”

Danny wiped a tear from his eye and phoned Robin who answered on the first ring.

“You won’t believe it,” Robin responded before Danny could say anything but hello.

“Kelly left me the nicest note and a small stuffed Beaver-mascot holding a bottle of my favorite perfume. She’s sorry for everything and wants to be friends.”

“Yeah,” Danny finally responded. “I got an e-mail from her too. She said she was sorry and invited us to join Jimmy and her for the senior ball. What do you think?”

“Do you think she’s sincere?”

“I do. She is one of the nicest girls I know. I’ll show you the e-mail. Why don’t you come over when you can?”

“I’ll come over after I change my clothes,” Robin stated. “Why don’t we go to the batting cage? I’d like to try to hit a few balls again.”

“Softballs or lob balls?”

## 17

Robin surprised Danny with a knock on his bedroom door. She looked as cute as a bug wearing her Mets cap, light blue short shorts and tank top combination and tennis shoes. Her blonde hair stuck out the back of the cap in a pony tail.

“Your Mom told me to just go up the stairs, and knock on the door. I hope that’s OK.”

“I’ve been re-reading Kelly’s e-mail and waiting for you. Our game is at one tomorrow, can you go with me?”

“Not tomorrow. My parents will be home tonight and they want to spend some time with me. I just got off the phone with my mother and told her about the fashion show. She is so excited.”

"I hope you didn't tell her about me?"

"I sure did. Every little detail. She can't wait to see us in the show."

"Great!" Danny sarcastically countered.

Danny had been having second thoughts about appearing as Dani on Wednesday night but didn't want to disappoint Robin. If the Beavers made it to the finals of the tournament, he would have an excuse to miss the show.

"Let me see Kelly's e-mail," Robin requested.

Danny clicked Kelly's message and stood silent as Robin eyed the computer screen.

"Very interesting. Let me show you what she gave me."

Robin opened her purse and sprayed Danny with the perfume.

"Stop that," he insisted, waving the mist out of the air.

"Now you smell as good as I do."

"It's actually a very nice smell. That was very nice of her. So, do you think we should double date?"

"Yes. I think it would be fun."

The senior ball conversation continued as Danny and Robin began the walk to the batting cages. The discussion centered on Kelly's change in attitude and the possibility of her "making a scene" at the dinner or the dance.

"I've know Kelly for years and I don't think she would do anything like that," Danny assured Robin.

"I just don't want her to ruin the party. Going with you to the senior ball will be the highlight of my life."

"I'll call Jimmy tonight and confirm the invitation. Then, I'll call Kelly and do the same before I agree with anything. You can sit in on the calls if you wish?"

"I'll think about it," Robin concluded, as they reached the batting cages. "You can hit first."

Danny used his pre-paid card and the first rack of balls settled into the machine. Robin stood outside the cage and watched Danny stroke line drive after line drive into the netting.

"Way to go," she exclaimed over and over. "You just keep getting better and better."

"So do you," Danny responded with a smile. Now it was Robin's turn.

"Softball or baseball speed."

"Set it at 80!" Robin answered knowing it was five miles per hour faster than the prior session.

"Are you sure?"

Robin swung and missed the first five offerings before Danny stopped the machine.

"Let me help you."

"Maybe it is to fast."

Danny moved behind Robin and placed his hands on her waist and slowly moved his hands down to her hips. He could feel the natural shape of her body, which was very unlike any boy he knew.

"Don't get fresh," Robin demanded with a giggle.

Danny's face turned red as he attempted to get Robin to twist her waist and hips and to stride into the ball.

"Let's try one or two together." The machine delivered the next pitch. Danny used his hands to turn Robin's waist as she stepped in to the ball and swung.

"Whack!" The bat slammed into the ball and disappeared into the mesh.

"That's the way to go. Remember to turn your waist as you meet the ball."

Robin was thrilled. Not only did Danny have his hands on her hips, but she had hit the ball with authority.

"Let's try it again," she insisted. Danny complied and the same result occurred. Robin turned her head toward his and kissed him on the cheek.

"Now you try it without my help," Danny ordered as he wiped off the pink lipstick and walked out of the cage to restart the machine.

"Whack, whack, whack" was the sound of the bat meeting the ball. Danny's lesson had Robin smacking each and every pitch without a miss, even at 80 miles per hour.

"Let me try 85."

"Are you sure? Five miles an hour higher is much harder."

The difference didn't seem to deter Robin's approach. Line drives continued to come off her bat, even though not as consistently, much to their surprise.

"Can we do 90?"

“Let me hit first,” Danny requested. He set the machine to 90 and stepped in the batter’s box. He hit 20 of the 25 pitches, but not with as much power as at the typical high school speed.

Robin anxiously re-entered the cage for her last session.

“Be ready. The ball’s coming much faster.”

Robin whiffed the first two pitches before connecting with a weak bouncer. The fourth pitch was slammed squarely into the pitching machine.

“Base hit to center field.” Robin smiled and eyed the next pitch, which she pulled into what would have been left field. “You’re really getting the hang of this.”

Danny reentered the cage and an extremely excited Robin jumped into his arms.

“I did it. I did it.”

“You sure did,” Danny proclaimed, as he set Robin back down on the ground. “You can play on my team any day. You could be our designated hitter.”

“Let’s go get a sundae to celebrate,” Robin decried, pointing at the ice cream shop across the street. Danny agreed as he stuffed his batting helmet, glove and bat in his duffle bag.

They walked hand-in-hand to the treat shop with the overwhelmed Robin occasionally brushing up against Danny’s arm and doing a little pirouette. Danny loved ice cream, but in reality, Robin was the only treat he needed. Meeting her had changed his life. Robin felt the same way. However, the teens were afraid too commit to each other.

“Good morning,” Danny greeted Robin as she answered the phone.

“I’m leaving for the game in a few minutes but wanted to tell you about my conversation with Kelly.”

“How was she?” Robin said with a yawn. “Sorry, I just woke up.”

“She was very penitent. She was so sorry and wants to be your friend. I bet her father had a talk with her yesterday. I did tell her that you appreciated the gift.”

“I’m thinking of sending her a thank-you e-mail this morning. She gave me her address on the card.”

“Just be nice.”

“You don’t have to worry about me. I don’t have an evil bone in my body.”

“I will talk with Jimmy at the game today and if all goes well, I’ll tell him OK about the double date. Is that OK with you?”

“Perfect!”

“I gotta go. I’ll call you after the game.”

“Wait! I need to tell you something.”

“What is it?”

“My parents agreed that I should continue to live as Robin as long as I’m home. That means Taylor is no longer a member of our household.”

“That’s great. But what about when you go back to school?”

“That will be only for a few more weeks,” she reminded him as the school year was drawing to an end.

"You'll never see Taylor again except at my graduation. I can't wait to be a girl full time. And, I only have you to thank."

"Does that mean your going to have the surgery?"

"I haven't decided yet. Only time will tell. Now get going to your game. Get a couple of hits for me. Call me when you get home."

Danny had three hits and raised his average to .600; however, the small school Class-A Beavers lost their first game of the season to Class-AAAA Rochester North, 7-5, to fall into the Albany tournament loser's bracket.

"Good game," Coach Wallace declared as he talked to his team after the loss. "We held our own against one of the best teams in the state. We have nothing to be ashamed of."

The Beavers, because they had won the league championship the prior season, had been invited to the prestigious tournament by the Albany High coach. Wallace quickly accepted. He was a strong believer that playing larger schools would be a benefit not a detriment to his team and he was right. It also gave players like Danny, Jimmy and their star pitcher Nicholas (Nikky) Black, the chance to show off their talents to the baseball scouts.

"We lost our first game," Danny said when he called his parents. He left a similar message on the Robinson's answering machine.

"We play again at 7 against Glen Falls," he told his mother. "I did get three hits and talked with a couple of college coaches. One of the coaches is very interested in me.

"Which school?" asked his mother.

“St. John’s. He said he would be here for all our games and would be contacting me soon. Please don’t say anything to Robin.”

Little did Danny know that Robin and his father were en route to Albany for the night game.

Glen Falls didn’t stand a chance against the Beavers. Danny spotted Robin and his father in the crowd before his first at bat and clubbed a home run over the left field fence for a 1-0 lead. As he crossed the plate, Robin threw him a kiss. When he entered the dugout, his teammates razzed him for his unexpected power.

The Beavers rapped out 12 hits before the game was called for the 10-run rule after five innings. Danny also singled and walked in the 11-1 rout.

“We’re playing for the consolation championship tomorrow at 7,” Coach Wallace reminded his team of the third and final tournament game. “It will be either Erie or Island Central. I’m so proud of all of you. Be here at 5 tomorrow.”

Robin and Danny’s father were waiting by the concession stand.

“What a surprise,” Danny exclaimed. “I’m so happy you came. I saw you as I walked to the plate. I hit the home run for both of you.”

“Maybe Robin, but not me,” cracked his father with a big laugh.

“It must have been the extra batting practice on Sunday,” Robin stated.

“Dr. Coleman called after the Rochester game and told me about the night game. Your mother couldn’t come, so I asked Robin if she would like to tag along.”

“Dad, the college scouts are all over the place,” Danny said, pointing at the group of men comparing notes behind home plate. “I talked with the assistant coach from St. John’s. He said he would be at all our games and would be contacting me soon.”

“That’s fabulous,” responded his father, of what would be the first of many college inquiries. Robin congratulated Danny for his accomplishment and his first contact with a major college coach.

The thought of attending college together ran through Robin’s mind. She had already been accepted at New York City-based St. John’s and two other schools, but she had not told Danny. She did not want to burst his bubble.

“Did you talk with Jimmy,” Robin asked, changing the subject.

“I had a long talk with him during batting practice. He said ‘yes’, so we’re going together.”

Robin grabbed Danny’s arm and held on tight as they walked to the car.

“I’m so happy. I wrote Kelly today and she sent me back the nicest note. Then she wrote me again, and I wrote her back, and finally we talked on the phone. We are going to meet for lunch Wednesday at the ice cream shop before the fashion show. We want to coordinate everything. You know girl stuff. You’re right, she is a sweetheart. We’re friends already.”

Danny was pleased. Everything was falling into place. The last tournament game was to be played on Tuesday so there was no way out of the fashion show the following night. In a way, Danny was excited on both accounts. He was proud of his team’s baseball accomplishments, he was falling in love with Robin, and

he looked forward to being Dani again, this time on the "big stage".

## 19

The Beavers won the consolation championship with a 3-1 victory over North Island, the best team on Long Island. Danny had a double and two walks and stabbed a game-ending grounder which he converted into a double play to stop a last inning rally. Jimmy Coleman's two-run homer proved to be the difference. Nikky pitched a three-hitter. All three were named to the all-tournament team.

Robin had accompanied Danny to Albany and before the game they stopped at Lisa's Bridal Boutique.

"It's so good to see you," greeted Trisha as Robin entered the store. "Who's your friend?"

This is my boyfriend, Jimmy," Robin lied, not willing to give away any clues of Danny and Dani. "We're in town for the baseball tournament."

"It's nice to meet you. How's your cousin, Dani? She's still coming tomorrow night isn't she?"

"Yes. She'll be here. What time should we be here?"

"Makeup starts at 4," the semi-frazzled Trisha responded. "On second thought, we're going to have so many girls here and the dressing rooms will be packed. Would you and your cousin be willing to dress at home if I gave you your dresses now?"

"Anything you wish," Robin agreed. Danny took a big sigh of relief. Dressing among a group of girls could be too revealing.

"Thanks," Danny said as Trisha went to get the dresses.

"I thought it would be much easier for both of us. I don't want you watching a bunch of half-nude girls dressing anyway."

Danny laughed, prompting Trisha to ask what was so funny.

"Robin saw a dress she thought might look good on me," he replied. "I told her 'are you kidding me'. Never!!!"

Trisha laughed too as she handed the bagged dresses to Danny/Jimmy to carry.

"All the accessories are in the bags," Trisha explained. "Oh yeah, I've put you down to model another dress too. Is that OK?"

"Sure," Robin responded. "Which one?"

"This one!", Trisha said as she unzipped the bag.

"Oooh, that's pretty."

"It should fit. If not, we'll have time to find one that does. See you tomorrow night."

"I can't believe it," Robin burst out. "Now I get to model two dresses."

"You get what you deserve," Danny replied, as he carried the heavy bags to the car.

## 20

Wednesday was a big day for Robin, Kelly, Danny and Dani.

Robin met Kelly at the ice cream parlor precisely at the agreed time of 11:30. The girls exchanged hugs and kisses and traded senior ball ideas. Kelly showed Robin a picture of her dress and Robin did likewise.

"It's beautiful," Kelly complimented Robin's choice, as she nibbled on a salad.

"So is yours. Where'd you buy it?"

"At Lisa's in Albany," Kelly replied. "They're the best around."

Robin gagged on her French dip sandwich but kept her composure. She didn't dare mention the fashion show.

"So did I," Robin replied once she could clear her throat. "We both like so many of the same things."

The girls chatted about the upcoming dinner and dance, the Coleman's Rolls, their favorite dance music, high school graduation and college plans. Much of what Robin told Kelly was untrue. She didn't dare reveal her past.

"I really enjoyed getting to know you today," Kelly confirmed after lunch. "I hope we can be friends for years to come."

"Me too," Robin responded with a hug. "Maybe I will see you at church on Sunday."

"We can sit together if Danny doesn't mind," Kelly insisted. "Is that OK with you?"

"Not a problem with me, but I'll ask Danny first."

The girls hugged again and went their separate ways. It was 1:30 when Robin steered her mother's car into the driveway. Danny was waiting.

“How was lunch?” he inquired as Robin stepped out of the car. She was wearing jeans, low boots and a sweater.

“It was great. I’ll tell you all about it as we dress.”

Robin’s mother assisted with their preparation and makeup.

“You won’t tell my parents, will you?” Danny asked.

“Never,” Mrs. Robinson replied. “This is between us girls. I told your mother we were going to Albany to buy Robin a dress for the senior ball and have dinner. All she said was to have fun.”

“Thanks. I owe you.”

“You don’t owe me anything. Just seeing Robin and you happy is all I ask.”

Danny had to shave his legs, chest and under arms due to the slinky spaghetti strap dress he was to wear. He had a bit of a problem adjusting a strapless bra, but with Mrs. Robinson’s assistance, coupled with the tightness of the dress, he could slip a pair of small breast forms into perfect position.

Danny was quickly becoming Dani much to the amazement of Mrs. Robinson.

“I don’t know if Robin told you, but I’m a breast cancer survivor. The forms you are wearing are an extra pair of mine. Please wear them in memory of all the women who have lost their lives.”

“I’m honored,” Danny replied.

“I have another request for you,” she continued, as she handed a shoe-sized box to Dani. “Would you

please wear my wig too? It will go perfect with your dress. I wore it while I was going through chemo."

Danny could not turn down the offer and took the brunette wig, closed his eyes and placed it on his head. When he opened his eyes, a new Dani stared back in the mirror.

"I love it."

"So do I," Robin confirmed as she stuck her head out of the adjoining bathroom. "That wig is your crowning glory."

"Magnifico!" responded Mrs. Robinson, as she placed her fingers on her lips and flung her right hand skyward imitating a chef in celebration of cooking the perfect dish.

Mrs. Robinson placed a layered necklace around Dani's neck and tear drop earrings on her lobes. French nails once again adorned her fingers.

"My goodness, Robin said you were cute, but you are gorgeous."

"Thanks," Dani replied as she spun around in front of the mirror. Robin, who had finished primping, walked out of the bathroom in her thin strapped skinny knee length red party dress.

"Could you zip me up?" she asked her mother as she slipped into a pair of 4-inch red heels.

"You girls are going to be the hit of the show." Little did she know what was to come.

## 21

The Robinson's car cruised on the freeway toward Albany with its precious cargo.

"How do you feel?" Robin asked Dani, who was sitting in the backseat.

"I'm a little nervous."

"You'll do fine," Mrs. Robinson concluded.

"Yeah, but nobody knows we are guys. What if they find out?"

"I don't think you're going to have to worry one bit," she analyzed. "Most of the people will be looking at the dresses. So, just try to be natural."

"I hope we can get a chance to practice," Robin replied.

"We're getting there early enough, so hopefully you can," Mrs. Robinson concluded.

Robin and Dani had practiced walking at home, but on a runway it would certainly be different. She assured Dani that they could practice again once they arrived at the store.

The girls reached the mall as a trace of rain began to fall. Fortunately, Mrs. Robinson had insisted the girls wear a couple of her rain coats to protect their dresses and to not stand out when walking through the mall.

As they approached the bridal shop Dani was in for a big shock. As they turned the corner and entered the center of the mall, the girls noted a long run-way surrounded by chairs.

“Oh, my goodness!” Dani decried as she stopped in her tracks. “Look at that stage. I thought the show would be inside the store. I don’t think I can do this.”

“Come on,” Robin insisted as she tugged on Dani’s arm. “Take a deep breath. Relax. This will be a piece of cake. If you can walk from shortstop to the pitchers mound in front of a couple thousand people, you can certainly do this.”

“But, but, but, I’ve never done that in heels and a dress.”

Robin laughed. “Come on, let’s find Ms. Leigh and see if we can practice.”

A surprisingly calm Trisha greeted the girls as they entered the store.

“This must be your mother?” Trisha asked as she reached out her hand. “Now I see where Robin gets all her beauty.” Mrs. Robinson blushed. “And, Dani, what did you do to your hair? It’s so cute.”

“I decided to get it cut and go back to my natural color.”

“Take off your coats. I want to see how you both look.”

The girls complied and Trisha’s eyes lit up with approval.

“You look marvelous,” she added as she glanced at her watch and program schedule.

“Can we practice on the runway?” Robin asked. “We’ve never done this before.”

“We’ll do a walk-through about 5, when all the girls are here. You two will be with the first set of girls modeling party dresses. Robin, you will return later in the

formal dresses preview. That will be after the casual collection models. It should give you plenty of time to change. Is that OK?"

The girls shook their heads in agreement.

"Is there anything I can do?" asked Mrs. Robinson.

"Yes there is. After the rehearsal, could you help get the girls back to the dressing area to refresh their makeup?"

"It will be a privilege to help in any way I can."

"You are a sweetheart," Trisha said with a hug and a smile.

Most of the 40 or so models, in all shapes and sizes, had arrived by the 5 p.m. rehearsal and Trisha guided the girls step-by-step through the schedule.

Dani discovered her fears of walking on the runway were unneeded. Following Trisha's instructions and a pep-talk from Robin, she maneuvered up and down the elevated walkway like a veteran. Dani even skipped a few strides, she was so excited.

"It's actually very simple," she said to Robin, following the rehearsal. "All I have to do is walk to the end, curtsy, and turn and walk back to the start."

"Never mind 500 people are watching," Robin chided with a smile.

"I'll just block everything else out, just like I do when I'm batting."

"Just remember to smile too," Mrs. Robinson interjected. "You have a beautiful smile. Let them see it."

The girls relaxed in the store's temporary lounge until their group was called for final makeup. A touch

up here and a touch up there by the professional staff had them perfectly coiffed and ready for the show.

“You look fabulous,” Mrs. Robinson said as she took a few pictures. “You both did very well on the runway. Want to see the pictures?”

Mrs. Robinson pushed a couple of buttons on her digital camera and both Robin and Dani were amazed how natural they looked on the elevated red carpet. One picture showed Dani with both feet off the ground as she turned at the end of the runway.

“Perfect,” Trisha said as she looked over Dani’s shoulder.

“Mrs. Robinson?” she asked.

“Oh, please call me Linda.”

“Linda, I really need your help,” Trisha stuttered. “What size are you?”

“A 10 or a 12 depending on what I ate for breakfast,” she giggled. “Why?”

“I just found out one of our brides is sick and can’t participate. Would you be willing to take her place? She’s the same size.”

“I don’t know,” Mrs. Robinson replied.

“Com’on, Mom,” Robin insisted. “You can do it. It will be great. Mother and daughter in our first fashion show together.”

“Yeah, Mrs. Robinson, please say yes,” Dani declared.

“I guess you have my answer,” Mrs. Robinson told Trisha.

“Great. You’ll be in the last part of the show, after intermission. You’ll have plenty of time to get ready. Let me show you your dress.”

A relieved Trisha guided Mrs. Robinson to the dressing area with Robin in tow. Dani remained seated in the lounge and enjoyed a sandwich and soft drink, while she talked with a few of the other models who were all attending high school or community college in the Albany area. For most of the girls, the fashion show was their first. They were nervous and didn’t feel like eating the delicious spread of food supplied by Trisha’s store. Dani was in her element, friendly, confident and acting like any other teenage girl.

Trisha called the girls backstage shortly before 7. The mall staff had to arrange more chairs for the overflow audience. Loud music could be heard over the public address system. After last minute instructions, the girls were introduced to the Mistress of Ceremonies, Michele Popkov.

“Please stay in order and watch me for your queue,” Michelle reminded the models. “When the girl in front of you starts down the runway, the next girl should come to the top of the ramp. When your name is called, start walking. I will describe your dress as you go. When you get back to the start, turn around again, wave or smile and walk back down the ramp. Don’t rush when you walk. I’ll give you plenty of time. If the crowd appears to be pleased, I may ask you back for an encore, so listen for your name.”

“Sounds simple to me,” Dani whispered to Robin, who was to be the third girl on the stage. Dani would be fifth out of six.

“Now, straighten your dresses,” Michelle requested. “Perfect. You all look so pretty. Are you ready?”

Michelle walked on to the stage for her opening comments. It was show time.

## 22

LaBelle’s driving rocker “Lady Marmalade” belled over the sound system as the first model climbed the ramp. She almost tripped when taking her initial step, but caught herself before falling.

“Just be careful,” Dani reminded herself. Robin looked over her shoulder at Dani and gave her a thumbs up. Dani threw her a kiss.

Dani prayed as Robin took to the Crossgate stage.

“Next we have Robin, modeling a...” Dani could barely hear Michelle over the music. She watched Robin disappear down the runway.

“Dear God, help me do my best,” Dani silently said. Another girl departed for the runway. Dani was next.

She climbed to the top of the ramp and saw a smiling Robin walking, as if she was a movie star, back toward the podium. The audience was clapping in appreciation.

“Now, we have Dani,” Michelle said. “Isn’t she a doll in her black and silver dress...”

Dani took a deep breath, blocked out the crowd and stared down the runway. Ironically, the music changed to the Isley Brother’s “Who’s That Lady?”

The first step was easier than expected. Dani strolled down the red carpet, keeping beat to the music as if she was a veteran. She reached the end of the runway, slightly bowed to the cheering crowd, turned and retraced her steps back to Michelle. She turned again, waved to the audience and stepped back stage.

"You did it," cried Robin as she greeted Dani at the bottom of the steps. "I'm so proud of you."

"That was fantastic," Dani agreed as the girls did a little dance.

The last model completed her walk and Dani, Robin and another girl, Karyn, were summoned by Michelle to return to the stage.

"I love it," Dani proclaimed as the three girls held hands and walked up the ramp.

Michelle made a few comments about the girls and the dresses as the audience cheered. The three sa-shayed down the runway together and bowed twice to the crowd on both sides of the stage.

"I'm Robin. I go to school on Long Island," she replied when questioned by Michelle. "Thanks for your support. I'll see you again in a few minutes."

Karyn Ashe, who was visiting her uncle, Marvin Evans, from Nova Scotia during spring break, was next, and then Michelle came to Dani.

"You look like you're having so much fun," Michelle noted as Dani turned on her toes as if she was shy. "Tell me about yourself."

"I'm Robin's cousin," Dani said in a soft voice. "I live near Altamont. This is my first time doing something like this and I want to thank Trisha for asking me."

“Will you be coming back tonight?” Michelle asked.

“For the finale, maybe, but this is my five-minutes of fame,” Dani joked. The crowd hooted for more.

“Maybe I’d better talk to Trisha,” Michelle remarked. “Thank you, girls! Please take one more stroll together.” The girls complied and received more cheers and applause for their encore from the predominantly female audience before they disappeared down the ramp.

“That was a dream come true,” Dani said as she bounced up-and-down again with Robin. Mrs. Robinson, now wearing a glowing beaded white off-the-shoulder hip-hugging wedding dress with a long train, cheered. She was so proud of her girls.

Trisha congratulated the first group and hustled those who would be modeling again into the dressing area. The next set of models, featuring a more casual look, approached the backstage area, and slapped the hands of those exiting the stage.

“You were more than great,” Mrs. Robinson said as she greeted the girls. “I’m so proud of both of you.”

“Mom!!! Forget us, you look gorgeous. Dad would flip if he saw you.”

“You look beautiful,” Dani said validating Robin’s response.

“Thanks. I wish Mark was here to see me.”

“I’m sure there will be plenty of pictures,” Dani emphasized, while shaking her head. She was still trying to adjust her vision after being near-blinded by the flash of the cameras in the audience.

“If I can do half as well as you and Robin, I’ll be happy.”

"You'll do just fine," Dani stated. "If I can do it, anybody can."

"I have to go change," Robin reminded her mother. "I've only have a short time to get ready for my next session."

"Go, go, go," Mrs. Robinson ordered.

The casually dressed girls were followed by a group of contemporary male models, before the lingerie and swim suit female models concluded the first half of the show. Men's suits, ladies formal wear, tuxedos and wedding attire were the theme after a short intermission.

Dani planned to watch the second half of the show from the secure models area near the stage until she spotted Kelly and her mother standing behind the rope line separating the audience from the regular mall traffic.

"Oh my goodness, I'll have to warn Robin," she exclaimed as she ran in her heels to find her friend in the dressing area.

"Kelly's here!" screamed Dani upon approaching Robin, who was wearing her blue senior ball dress and adjusting a strap on her light-colored heel. "I can't let her see me."

"She didn't tell me she was coming," Robin decried, recalling their lunch together earlier in the day.

"I can't go out there," Dani insisted. "What if she sees me?"

"She'll never recognize you. You don't have to go on stage again except for the finale. You'll just have to lay low."

"I can't do it!" Dani continued as tears welled up in her eyes.

"Let me see if I can find her," Robin concluded. "I can explain my participation. She doesn't have to even see you. Where was she?"

Dani led Robin to the store entrance and pointed toward the end of the stage. Kelly was gone.

"Maybe she was just passing by. I'll be right back."

Robin took off her heels and walked nylon-footed around the circumference of the show area and past a few stores. Dani nervously chewed on a plastic finger nail.

"I don't see them anywhere," Robin reported to Dani. "I think they left."

Dani collapsed on a chair in the lounge. "I think I'll just stay here until the finale."

"And miss me?" No way Jose! If I'm going to be out there so are you. If you see Kelly again, just walk back in to the store. You'll be safe. I'll be back in a minute. I have to get my makeup and hair finished."

The sounds of Connie Francis' "Where The Boys Are" echoed through the mall as the stage lights slowly brightened and the spot light beam swirled through the air to signal the start of the second half of the show.

The male models were first on the stage to present the latest in office wear, including three piece suits for summer.

"My, oh my, you guys look sharp," Michelle commented as the models walked the runway to the cat-calls from some of the female members of the audience.

Robin's group was next.

“What did you do to your hair?” Dani exclaimed.

“How would you like me to wear it like this for the ball?” Her shag had been pulled back into a bun and covered with a curly hairpiece that fell to her shoulders.

“It’s sensational. I love it. And the chocker is perfect with the dress. You will be the prettiest girl of all.”

Robin smiled and followed her team backstage. The male models departed the stage. It was show time again for the girls.

The Flamingos ballad “I Only Have Eyes For You” started and Michelle continued her commentary. Robin would be the last of the models.

“Last, but not least, is Robin, one of the stars of our first session,” Michelle announced over an enthusiastic round of applause.

Robin waived to the audience and started again down the runway. The lights reflected off her blue dress and her eyes twinkled. As she reached the end of the runway, she stopped, turned and curtsied to Michelle. She again waived to the audience, picked up the beat of the music and literally combined waltz and fox trot steps into a twirling display back to the start. She was unintentionally stealing the show.

The crowd stood and roared its approval. Robin received a standing ovation.

Trisha greeted her with a big smile as she walked down the ramp.

“Maybe I shouldn’t have done that,” Robin wondered.

“You were fabulous!” Trisha commended. “Your little dance was fantastic. Why didn’t I think of something like that?”

“I hope I didn’t upstage anybody. I just got carried away. This has been so much fun.”



“Didn’t you hear the crowd?” Trisha asked, as the other models gathered around. “They loved it.”

“Thanks,” Robin blushed, as she received congratulations from the other girls. Dani rushed the area and jumped into Robin’s arms.

“When did you think of your little dance?” Dani asked. “It was great. You were so graceful.”

“It just came to me. I was thinking of dancing with you at the ball. I felt like I was about ten feet above the stage.”

The crowd was applauding for an encore. Michelle asked Robin to take a bow.

“I can’t,” she said to Trisha, waiting for approval.

“They love you, so get out there.”

Robin climbed the ramp again to even louder applause and waived again as the music started once more. As if on queue, Robin repeated her little dance halfway down the runway turned, threw kisses to the crowd, and skipped back to the podium. She waived one last time and disappeared down the ramp.

Mrs. Robinson and five other ladies followed the tuxedo session, but after Robin’s performance, everything else was anti-climactic.

Robin’s mother walked down the runway as if she had been a model for her entire life. She didn’t appear to be nervous at all as Pachelbel’s “Canon In D” slowly lured the audience.

Mrs. Robinson took small steps, due to the 12-foot train attached to the waist of her dress, and met her male escort a short way down the path, who led her to the other five models to form a wedding party. The audience applauded and whistled in appreciation.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," Linda whispered to her escort.

"Your husband is a lucky man," he replied with a smile.

The wedding party exited the stage to a standing ovation as the music turned silent.

"Are you ready for the grand finale?" Michelle asked the now-standing crowd.

The music started again with Kool and The Gangs' "Celebration".

Like the Olympic closing ceremony, the models returned to the stage in no defined order. Robin and Dani were in the middle of the pack. Michelle presented Trisha with a bouquet of flowers as everyone applauded. The music stopped as Trisha thanked everyone for attending and the models for "a great showcase of fashion and style."

The music started again and the models formed two lines on both sides of the runway and proceeded to hand red roses wrapped with discount coupons to the admirers. As the music continued, they joined hands and bowed once or twice. Robin put her arms around Dani's and Karyn's waists and started kicking her legs one at a time. The other models saw what was happening and joined in. Within seconds, they had formed an impromptu chorus line as if they were part of the world famous Radio City Music Hall Rock-ettes.

"Look what you started!" Karyn exclaimed in glee over the cheers from the crowd.

"I love it!" Dani shrieked, holding tight to her partners, afraid she might lose her balance and fall in her tight dress. Robin laughed and laughed.

The models slowly exited the stage and returned to the dressing rooms as the music subsided, the spot light was darkened and the mall lights were brightened.

Robin and Dani found Mrs. Robinson back stage, still wearing her bridal attire.

"You stole the show," she said as she hugged Robin.

"You did, Mom. Nobody was prettier than you."

"There's a lady who would like to meet you," Trisha interrupted. She introduced Robin and Dani to Robyn Michaels, the talent manager and associate editor for Cosmopolitan Magazine, who had attended the show.

"Nice to meet you," Robin said extending her hand.

"Give me a hug," Robyn insisted. "We share the same name; let's be less formal."

Robin giggled and faked being embarrassed.

"Young lady, you were fantastic," Robyn stated with a big smile. "Where did you learn how to model like you did?"

Robin shrugged her shoulders and said: "From my mother and cousin. This is the first time I've ever done anything like this."

"You're kidding me! You must be joking."

"I've done a little bit of acting at high school, but that's it." Mrs. Robinson shook her head in agreement.

"The reason I'm here is to find new talent," Robyn explained. "You could be a star, if you wanted to get serious."

“Really?” Robin exclaimed, unsure where the conversation was leading.

“How would you like to work for me?”

“You mean, come to New York?”

“Of course I would!” Dani stood near by and began to sulk. She didn’t want to lose her best friend to New York City.

Ms. Michaels quickly explained Cosmo’s intern modeling program to Robin and her mother.

“The first part of the program is for two weeks, and then it could be more, depending on what is planned. We would be working on fashions for winter and next spring. You would stay with the other intern’s at the company condo.”

“Wow!!!” Robin exclaimed.

“We’d better talk about this with your father,” Mrs. Robinson interjected.

“Take your time,” Ms. Michaels’ insisted. “The program won’t begin until early June and your Robin is the first of 10 girls who will be chosen from around the area. Here’s my card. Give me a call next week.”

“I will,” Robin squealed as she jumped for joy before they departed.

“And, Dani, you’re welcome to come too,” Robyn added. Dani’s mood turned from depression to shock.

“Me?” Dani felt light headed and grabbed Mrs. Robinson for support. She almost fainted.

“Yes and why not?” Robyn insisted. “When you two were on the stage, you just lit up the room. We’ll talk next week. I have to run. Do you know where Karyn went?”

"We have some big decisions to make," Mrs. Robinson concluded. "It's getting late. Let's get changed and we can talk more in the car. We have some time to make a decision."

The girls collected their items while Mrs. Robinson changed out of her gown. Danny phoned his parents to say "Robin bought a beautiful dress and we'll be home soon." His father told him "a certified letter arrived in the mail today from St. John's University."

"Open it!" Danny insisted.

"I already did," his father declared. "It's from Coach Terry Ray. He wants you to play for his summer NBC team."

"Don't kid me, Dad." Dressing as a woman and being part of the fashion show was enough for one night. Playing baseball for the Red Storm's assistant coach would be a dream come true.

"I'm serious," he replied. Coach Ray wants you to call him as soon as possible."

"I can't believe it."

"Believe it! You should be proud of yourself."

The journey home was full of conversation regarding the improbable evening. Danny decided not to tell Robin about the conversation with his father until he had more details. The night belonged to Robin and Dani.

"I had such a great time!" Robin exclaimed as she snuggled next to Dani in the back seat.

"I totally agree. I totally agree."

Danny didn't get to bed until 3 a.m. He was floating on clouds. First, the success of the fashion show, and

after reading and re-reading the letter and examining the packet from St. John's, it appeared the major collegiate baseball power had offered him a scholarship.

He scanned the internet to read all he could about the historic St. John's baseball program. The Red Storm had won the Big East championship the year before and had qualified for the College World Series in Omaha, NE, where they were eliminated in the semi-finals. This year, they were once again leading the standings and had a good chance to return to Omaha.

Danny lay in his bed thinking about the future.

"If I can play baseball and Robin decides to model, we can spend the summer together in New York City," he figured as he fell asleep.

Robin also could not sleep. She tossed and turned and worried about losing Danny to the bright lights of New York. She desperately wanted to accept the Cosmo offer but she also understood it would be impossible for Dani to join the intern program. Having Danny participate as a female model in a local fashion show was one thing, but he could never pass the rigors at Cosmo. She was in a quandary. What was a girl to do?

Two phone calls would determine their futures.

## 23

Danny awoke early the following morning.

"Did you read the entire letter?" Danny asked his father.

“You mean about the scholarship? Yes, I did, but it didn’t seem completely clear to me. Look at the final paragraph.”

“I did. I read it over and over again. See?”

Danny pointed at the most important sentence on the last page of the letter.

“St. John’s University is offering you, Daniel Mitchell, a full four-year baseball scholarship, provided you meet the NCAA and University requirements.”

“You’re right. But, you better confirm everything with Coach Ray first.”

“I will. Do you think it’s too early to call him?”

“Why don’t you wait until 9,” his father insisted, looking at his watch. “It’s only eight now. I don’t think Coach Ray would be at work yet. Would you like me to stay home until you talk with the coach?”

“Would you, Dad? I’m a bit nervous and not too sure what to say.”

“Didn’t you talk with Coach Ray at the tournament?”

“Yeah, I did, but this is different.”

Next door, Robin stepped out of bed after a terrible night’s sleep.

“What am I going to do?” she asked herself as a knock was heard on her bedroom door.

“Good morning, Mom,” Robin said as she opened the door.

“You look like you’ve been through a tornado,” her mother said with a laugh.

“I had a real bad night. Can we talk?”

Robin and her mother sat on the bed and tears flowed.

"Mom, I have so many decisions to make. I don't know what to do. I love Danny and I think he loves me, but I'm still a guy. And, I haven't told him about college. And, I don't know about having surgery. And, I want to go to New York and work at Cosmo. But, I don't want to lose him. He's my best friend."

"What we need to do is take one step at a time," Mrs. Robinson said in a comforting voice. "The first thing to do is to phone Danny later this morning, once you have pulled yourself together. Tell him how you feel. See what he says. He just might open a window for you."

"I don't know what to say," Robin replied with tears staining her face. "This is so hard."

Mrs. Robinson hugged her daughter as the tears continued to drop on the bed.

"Would you like me to be here when you talk with Danny?"

"I think I can do it. I just don't know where to start."

"Start with how you feel about Danny and let it flow from there. You might be surprised with the results."

Danny phoned Coach Ray precisely at 9. He answered on the first ring. Within 15 minutes, Danny learned St. John's had indeed offered him a scholarship and the summer baseball program was an addition to the package. Coach Ray wanted Danny to be the second baseman, and the only high school recruit, to play for the non-St. John's affiliated NBC team. The summer

schedule would start in June and run until mid-August.

"The team will be composed of many of the returning St. John's players," Coach Ray stated. "We'll play 32 games, most of them at the home of the minor league Brooklyn Cyclones. The team will be named the Brooklyn Strom. We'll be an expansion team in the Perfect Game Collegiate Baseball League."

"It sounds great to me," Danny replied. "I'm so honored to have been chosen."

"We're happy to have you," the coach continued.

"You'll be living with some of the other players and their parents. We can't use the college dorms or baseball field as it would conflict with NCAA policies. However, you do get a weekly stipend for expenses."

"When will practice begin?" Danny inquired.

"The first of June. You'll need to report that day. Our first game is June 10 against Nassau. Can I get a commitment from you?"

"Where do I sign? How could anybody turn down your offer?"

"Will you be home today?" Coach Ray asked. "I would like to bring you the scholarship form and summer baseball information."

"Yes, I don't have anything planned until church tonight."

"That's right, today is Maundy Thursday. Will you be home about 1?"

"Perfect," Danny exclaimed. "See you then."

## 24

"Everything is true," Danny told his father, as his mother walked into the room.

"Is it OK if I go to St. John's?"

"You bet," his father responded as the three family members hugged each other.

"I'm so excited. I can't wait to tell Robin."

Danny returned to his bedroom with great expectations for his future. Then his thoughts turned to Robin.

"I hope she will be happy for me. I hope she accepts the Cosmo offer too. We wouldn't be too far from each other. I've never asked her about college. I wonder where she is going to go. I'd hate to leave her behind."

Little did he know.

Robin's phone call to Robyn at Cosmo was just as eventful and successful.

"Yes, we'd love to have you," Robyn stated. "I showed your video from last night to our publisher, Bridgett Sommers, and she is in awe of you. She also enjoyed watching Dani and Karyn."

"When would we start?" Robyn asked, who explained she currently attends school at Hempstead, not far from the Cosmo office.

"The first week of June," Robyn responded. "Right after you graduate. I will be back in your area tomorrow. Could I bring you the information packet? I would need to meet with your parents since you are still 17."

"I'll be 18 soon."

"We still need to get your parent's OK," Robyn insisted. "How about 11 o'clock?"

"We had planned to go to Good Friday mass at noon," Robin reported.

"That's wonderful," Robyn replied. "What if I'm there at 10 instead and we can all go to mass together. I haven't been to Good Friday mass in years."

"I'd love it if you could come with us," Robin insisted.

"It's a date," Robyn confirmed.

"I'm going to New York," Robin concluded. "Is it OK, Mom?"

"Of course it is. But, you should talk with Danny first."

The phone rang instantly. It was Danny.

"She's taking a shower," Mrs. Robinson said as Robyn waived her arms in the air as if water was running down her head. "I'll have her call you when she is done."

"I have a big surprise for her," Danny remarked trying to hold his enthusiasm.

"I'll have her call you when she is done," Mrs. Robinson said before turning off the phone.

"You kids need to talk TODAY," she insisted.

## 25

Robin phoned Danny after she had showered and dressed in a sporty pair of jeans, a baby doll blouse and flats. She wanted to look her best for the occasion.

Danny arrived within minutes. Robin had never seen him so animated.

"What got into you today?" Robin asked Danny as she met him at the door.

"I have so much to tell you since last night. I'm going to New York with you."

"You can't be a model."

"I know that. I just phoned Ms. Michaels and told her I had other commitments. She was so nice and understanding. She told me you have accepted the internship."

"You still can't go with me."

"Oh yes I can."

"How?"

Danny had Robin sit down on the living room couch before making his announcement.

"I was so worried when you got the modeling offer," Danny said as he recounted the prior evening. "Remember when I called home after the show? My father told me a very important letter had come in the mail."

"What was it?" Robin inquired.

"I've been invited to play summer baseball with the team from St. John's. In Brooklyn!"

"No way," Robin responded as she bounced from the couch and gave Danny a hug.

"That's just part of it," he continued. "I also received a full-ride to St. John's to play baseball. Can you believe it?"

“Oh my God,” shrieked Robin. “We can go to college together.”

“What are you talking about?” Danny replied after composing himself. “You’re going to St. John’s too?”

“That’s what I wanted to talk with you about. I haven’t accepted anything. I know we haven’t talked about any of this because I wanted to see what you were planning to do next year. Now I know. I have scholarship offers from St. John’s, Syracuse and Rutgers. I’ve been leaning towards St. John’s because it’s down the street from Hempstead. Now, I’m going there for sure.”

“You were waiting for me before deciding on your future?” Danny asked. “Why?”

“Because I didn’t want to lose you. I didn’t want us to be apart. If you were to stay in town and go to community college, I would have stayed home and gone with you. You’re that important to me.”

“You would give up a college scholarship for me?”

“Yes, it’s that simple,” Robin sniffled with a tear forming in her right eye. “But that’s not important now. We’re both going to New York this summer and to college together. Can it get any better?”

Robin yelled for her mother who was in the other room.

“Danny is going to New York too. He got a baseball scholarship to St. John’s. We are going to go to school together.”

Robin and Danny explained their summer plans to Mrs. Robinson.

“You’d better call St. John’s today,” her mother insisted. “They’ll want to know you’re accepting their scholarship.”

“I will this afternoon. This is going to be so exciting.”

## 26

Easter Sunday was full of joy, celebration and sadness. The joy came with the resurrection of Jesus Christ; the celebration was a result of Danny and Robin accepting scholarships to St. John’s, and the sadness was the end of Spring Break and Robin’s transformation back to Taylor and his return to Hempstead for the final month of school.

The last three days had been a whirlwind of activity for the teens.

Coach Ray arrived at Danny’s home on Thursday and verified the baseball scholarship. Since the national signing date had passed, Danny put his signature on the offer immediately.

“We’re very fortunate to have you,” Coach Ray had told Danny. “We had a scholarship open up last week and you sure put on a show at the tournament. It made my job easy.”

Coach Ray also verified Danny’s participation on the summer league team.

Robin also contacted St. John’s and verbally accepted the academic scholarship. The college admissions office would overnight the needed forms. With a 4.45 grade point average, she could have attended most any college in America. Danny’s signing made her decision simple.

Cosmo's Robyn and Bridgett met Robin as promised and went over the intern contract with her parents. After inking the approval contract, the ladies joined the Robinson's at Good Friday mass before they embarked to Northern New York to visit family.

Robin was on Danny's arm at the Good Friday evening church service but did not talk with Kelly and Jimmy. As is tradition, worshipers are asked to arrive and leave the church in silence.

Saturday was a free day for Danny and Robin, who began packing for school.

"We've had a great two weeks," Robin reflected.

"The best ever," Danny agreed.

"Tomorrow will be a sad day for me because I have to become Taylor again and return to school," Robin lamented.

"You're going to church with me first?" Danny reminded her regarding the Easter celebration.

"Yes, of course," Robin replied. "I'll go to sunrise mass with my parents and be home in time to go with you. I have a new dress to wear. After church, I will have to return to being Taylor, so I don't want you to see me, OK? I want you to remember Robin, not Taylor."

"I understand," Danny stated. "I can't wait until next Saturday night."

"What's next Saturday?" Robin chided with a laugh.

"The Senior Ball, stupid," Danny replied, jabbing Robin on the shoulder.

"Is that any way to treat your date?" Robin responded.

"I talked with Jim at practice this morning," Danny said. "He said everything is set for dinner and the dance. He can't believe we are going to go to college together."

"I can't wait," Robin replied.

"Neither can I," Danny reaffirmed.

Easter Sunday was sunny and warm. Robin met Danny at his home right after 9, an hour before the church service.

"You are adorable," Mrs. Mitchell praised Robin as she opened the door. Robin was wearing a white sun dress with streaks of pink and yellow and matching jacket and sandals. Her hair was sassy, softly curled and almost touched her shoulders.

Danny rushed down the stairs to greet Robin. "WOW!!!" was his first reaction as his eyes bugged out of their sockets. "You look sensational."

"Thanks," Robin blushed, as she handed Danny an Easter gift. "This is for you! Open it."

Danny carefully opened the little box and discovered Robin's girlish-styled high school ring.

"I want you to wear it and remember me," Robin instructed. "Will you do it for me?"

"Of course," Danny proclaimed as he slipped the ring on to his little finger of his left hand. "But, I don't have anything for you."

"Your friendship and understanding is all I need," Robin stated. She put her hands on his shoulders and kissed him on the cheek.

“Are you two ready to go,” Danny’s father said as he walked in from the kitchen. “Robin, you look spectacular.”

“Thanks,” she blushed again.

The church was near capacity when the Mitchell’s arrived. Kelly and Jim spotted Danny and Robin and waived for them to sit in their pew.

“Do you mind?” Danny asked his parents, who didn’t object. “We’ll meet you outside after the service.”

Danny and Robin joined their classmates as the opening hymn “Christ The Lord Is Risen Today” began. Pastor Espee’s uplifting sermon was based on Christ’s resurrection from the dead. Danny and Robin held hands through out most of the service, as did Jimmy and Kelly.

“Thank you Lord for giving me Robin as my best friend and my girl friend, and for making Kelly and Jim happy too,” Danny said to himself during the silent prayer portion of the service. “May the four of us have a fun time at the Senior Ball on Saturday and continue to be good friends in the future. Amen.”

Danny and Robin chatted with Kelly and Jimmy after the service. They sat under a tree in the church courtyard enjoying a plate of finger food as they finalized the plans for the Senior Ball.

Kelly and Robin talked as if they had been friends all their lives. The main topic was their gowns for the ball. Jimmy once again congratulated Danny on his scholarship from St. John’s and the two discussed their team’s possible opponents for the upcoming state playoffs. Danny noticed Kelly was watching his every move.

"I know she still likes me, but she's worse than a mother hen," he conceded. "Maybe she's still a bit uncomfortable with the situation?"

The Mitchell's invited Robin for Sunday brunch; however, she had to ask for a "rain check."

"I'd love to go, but I have to get home," she replied. "My parents are waiting to take me back to school."

Danny slowly walked Robin to the door of her home. Tears began to flow as they exchanged good-byes.

"It will only be five days," Danny reminded her.

"It will seem like an eternity to me," Robin replied as she buried her head into his chest.

"It will go by so fast," Danny comforted her. "I can't wait to see you again."

Robin pulled back and looked Danny in the eyes. Her blue eyes were full of tears.

"I hate good-byes," she stated. A choked up Danny nodded his head in agreement.

Robin pulled closer again and wrapped her arms around Danny's shirt collar. She stroked his neck with her fingers.

"You can kiss me, if you wish," she said softly.

"Really?" a surprised Danny replied. "I thought we had an agreement."

"Not any more as far as I'm concerned," Robin informed him.

"I'd love to, but I can't," Danny whispered in her ear.

"Why not?" questioned a disappointed Robin.

“Because your mother is watching us through the window,” Danny proclaimed.

Robin’s mother tapped the window and said: “It’s time to go.”

“Mom!” exclaimed Robin.

“Don’t worry, we’ll have plenty of time for that,” Danny concluded, as he pecked her on the cheek. “See you Friday.”

“Please, don’t be standing at your window waiting for me to come home,” Robin reminded. “I don’t want you to see Taylor ever again.”

“I won’t,” Danny agreed. “I have a night game Friday anyway. I won’t be home until late.”

Robin blew him a kiss as Danny turned and walked away.

## 27

The week flew by for both Danny and Taylor. They talked each night on the phone and exchanged e-mails in to the wee hours of the morning.

Taylor was chided by a couple of his classmates for his ponytail, but he could care less. In his mind, he wasn’t Taylor any more and in less than four weeks he could be Robin on a full-time basis. He would probably never see his classmates again anyway unless he returned for a future class reunion as Robin and blew their minds.

Taylor’s classes were secondary. He was on cruise control with graduation quickly approaching. The female circuit was running full time and all he could think about was Saturday’s Senior Ball, the Cosmo in-

ternship and college down the street at St. John's. Taylor's mother had made arrangements for Robin to have a manicure and a soft perm Saturday morning. The frilly blue dress was waiting, hanging from the bedroom closet door.

Danny's baseball team pushed its league record to 9-0 by winning its Tuesday matchup, before losing the season finale on Friday, 6-5. Coach Wallace had decided to rest Danny, Jimmy and a few of the regulars to allow the underclassmen to gain some experience before the state playoffs.

Danny finished the regular season with a .525 batting average, three home runs and 22 runs-batted-in as the Beavers rolled to a 13-2 record and the league championship in a rain-shortened season. He committed only one error at shortstop. Danny and Jimmy were among the four Cold Springs players named to the all-league team. Danny was honored as the league's Most Valuable Player and would later be named to the small schools All-State team.

The playoffs would commence the next weekend at Albany State College.

Taylor arrived home early Friday afternoon as he skipped his afternoon classes to meet with his father who was in NYC on business. He quickly transformed into Robin and tried on her dress and heels to the approval of her mother.

"I want everything to be perfect," she told her mother as she spun around on her toes.

"It's the biggest night of my life."

"It will be. You really like being a girl, don't you?"

"Oh yes!" Robin confided as she leaned over to hug her mother, who was sitting on the edge of the bed.

“You and Dad have been so supportive and I love Danny so much. Do you like me as a girl?”

“I’d love you either way. But, it’s fun having another woman in the house. And, when it comes to Danny, you two have meshed perfectly together since you met.”

“We really have. I never thought I would be so happy.”

“You have a sparkle in your eyes your father and I have never seen before. Danny must really be something special.”

“He is, Mom. He has really come out of his shell. When we kissed the first time on Easter, he made me feel like the woman I was intended to be. It was heavenly! I didn’t want to stop.”

“I noticed,” her mother laughed as Robin blushed.

“I’ve decided I want to have the complete surgery. And, the sooner the better.”

“Are you sure?” her mother asked, although not surprised by the answer. “It will be a very big step in your life.”

“Yes, I’m sure. I’ve been praying for God to help me make the right decision for a long time and I finally have an answer. I have never been so happy with who I am.”

“Can you wait until the end of the school year? We’ll have to contact Dr. Leis and re-confirm with the insurance company that everything is covered. Your father and I don’t want you to rush. We want you to enjoy the Senior Ball, the internship at Cosmo and your first year at St. John’s.”

“I was looking at the school calendar and there’s a six-week break between quarters,” Robin responded. “The break starts right after Thanksgiving. I could do it then. I would love to be Robin by Christmas.”

“I’ll talk to your father tomorrow night. Let’s just let the pieces fall into place.”

“That’s fine with me. Please don’t say a thing to Danny. I’ll tell him when I feel the time is right.”

*To be continued...*