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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.

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About The Author

This is the fifth novel and sixth publication by **Carolyn 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!!!”

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Look Through Any Window

Part 2

By Carollyn Faith Olson

Prelude

If you did not read Part 1 of Look Through Any Window, here's what you missed.

Danny Mitchell and Taylor Robinson were next door neighbors in the small hamlet of Cold River, New York. One day, while closing an upstairs window, Danny spotted a blonde teenage girl through the Robinson's bedroom window. Realizing a girl did not live next door and that the Robinson's were out of town, Danny investigated. He

found Taylor unexpectedly home from his private New York City school, but not the blonde he was hoping to meet.

The boys, who had only met once, quickly became friends, but a second blonde sighting aroused Danny's interest even more. One evening, when rough-housing while playing a video game, Danny accidentally knocked the ever-present Mets baseball cap off Taylor's head, revealing long blonde locks. Taylor explained that he wore his hair long because he would be playing the roll of a girl in the annual play "Fannie" at his all-boy school. Taylor confirmed his participation on the school website and Danny attended the play a few weeks later.

Danny was suspicious that Taylor also could be Robin, but he did not get the confirmation he was hoping for until the Robinson's had a serious talk with the boys. Taylor had been born with a hormone imbalance and doctors said that by the time he was 18, he would have to decide if he wanted to live the rest of his life as a man or a woman. Taylor was already developing small breasts and his voice, instead of getting deeper with puberty, was higher.

After the revelation, Danny decided he would be Taylor's friend no matter what. Despite being an outstanding high school athlete, Danny had been a loner and his friendship with Taylor was helping to bring him out of his shell.

With high school graduation only a few months away and coupled with Taylor's tilt towards the feminine side, the Robinson's agreed to allow him to dress as a teen girl when home from school. Taylor's only friend in Cold River was Danny, so living as Robin would be very simple. Thus, Taylor became Robin.

Robin attended Danny's baseball games, went to church, shopped and did everything any red-blooded girl would do. Danny enjoyed Robin's friendship as well. Together every day during spring break, Danny's romantic feeling for Robin slowly evolved, and visa versa. Love was in the air as was Danny's first encounter with cross dressing.

One evening, after Danny had asked "what's it like to be a girl" Robin obliged to show him. Robin helped Danny dress in her clothes and a very cute, girlish, blonde Dani was born.

In the meanwhile, Danny rebuffed family friend Kelly's advances to invite her to the Senior Ball. Instead, Danny surprised Robin with an invitation. She quickly accepted.

Robin and Dani dressed on occasion and ventured out as cousins one day to the Albany mall. Following dinner they explored a formal dress shop and after modeling a number of dresses, were invited by the shop manager to participate in a spring fashion show. Robin quickly agreed and eventually convinced Dani to go along with the idea.

The fashion show was a huge success and Robin unrepentantly became the star. She did so well, she was offered an internship at the prestigious Cosmopolitan magazine.

The story continues...

Robin awoke Saturday morning with a Greetings e-card on her computer from Danny. The Senior Ball was only hours away. She immediately sent him a "thank

you” and a “love note” before her mother knocked on the door.

“Wake up, sleepy head,” her mother said from outside the room. “You better hurry. We have to be at the nail salon by 10 and your hair appointment is at 11:30.”

“I’m just about ready,” Robin replied. “I’ve already showered, shaved and I just have to find something to wear.”

Robin chose jeans, tucked inside short boots and a thin sweater from her closet. Within minutes, she was down the stairs for a quick breakfast.

“I’m so excited,” she proclaimed to her parents, who were reading the morning paper.

“I could barely sleep.”

“We must leave in a few minutes,” her mother said.

“Danny sent me the sweetest e-card this morning. I can’t wait for tonight.”

“You’ll be the prettiest girl there,” her father said with a grin over the top of the sports section.

“Thanks, Dad, but that’s not important to me. I’m going on my first date and it’s with my best friend and the guy I really like. Could it be any better?”

“Remember our first date, Linda?” Mark questioned. “It seems like yesterday. I can still see you in your lime green prom dress.”

“I remember,” uttered Linda. “I loved that dress. You know, that dress is now in style again. I wonder if I can still fit into it.”

“Do you still have the dress?” Robin inquired.

“Yes, it’s in my closet.”

“I’d love to see it.”

“When we get home. You know, it just might fit you too.”

The ladies departed for the nail and hair salons, while next door, Danny was shining his shoes and preparing to complete his Saturday chores. His father had picked up the black pinstriped tuxedo Friday night since Danny was at his game. Jimmy had also phoned to confirm “the car is running great”.

“Jimmy and Kelly will be here at 4:30,” Danny informed his parents. “I’ll go get Robin and we can come back here for pictures. Is that OK with you?”

“That would be so nice,” his mother responded. “Don’t forget to go to the flower shop and get Robin’s corsage when you are out.”

“I won’t forget. It’s on my list of things to do.”

Time seemed to fly faster than usual for Danny as he rushed to complete his list. He wanted to be home by 2 o’clock so he would have plenty of time to prepare for the dance.

Meanwhile, Robin and her mother were being pampered at the nail salon. Robin had French nail extensions applied to her fingers, covered with a light gloss, while her mother had a pedicure and manicure. At the hair salon, the stylist rolled Robin’s hair in an up-do and attached long ringlets, similar to how she wore her hair at the fashion show.

“Perfect,” Robin proclaimed as she looked into the salon mirror. Her mother nodded approval.

“You are so pretty,” the stylist, Cyndi remarked. “Please bring me a picture of you and your beau the next time you come in.”

“I will,” Robin answered as she and her mother walked out the door and to the car for the short trip home.

Hustle and bustle was in full form in the Robinson and Mitchell households. Danny spent little time getting dressed and was ready an hour early even though it was his first time wearing a tux.

"I'm glad I don't have to wear something like this every day," he told his father, who helped Danny adjust his light blue cummerbund and bow tie. "Robin will really be surprised when she sees we match."

Robin took her time while she chatted with her mother. She didn't want to ruin her nails or hair. She slowly slid on her first pair of Secrets In Lace nylons and attached them to her garter belt. Karyn had mailed her the Lace nylons as a "thank-you" for their newly-found friendship. "Panty hose are not appropriate tonight," she said to herself.

"Can you help me?" Robin asked her mother, who hooked the strapless bra together and positioned the cups over her hormone-enhanced breast. "Thanks, Mom."

Robin put on her figure fitting strapless dress and asked for her mother to pull up the zipper.

"I never thought I would have a daughter I could help get dressed for a dance. This is so much fun."

"Well, you do now," Robin beamed as she buckled her glittery strappy heels.

Mrs. Robinson called down the stairway for her husband to come to Robin's room.

"One last thing," her mother said with a tear in her eye as Mark entered the room.

Mrs. Robinson handed Robin a small box.

"We want you to have these for your special night," her father said.

Robin opened the box to discover a pair of silver blue dangling earrings.

"They're beautiful," Robin exclaimed as she hugged her parents. "Help me with them, Mom."

Mrs. Robinson slipped the posts through Robin's pierced ears. The earrings matched perfectly with the dress and the accompanying choker necklace.

"You look magnificent," her father complimented Robin. "Let's go take a few pictures in the living room before Danny gets here."

Jimmy and Kelly arrived at the Mitchell's on time. Jimmy's tuxedo almost matched Danny's and the guys joked about looking like a pair of penguins.

Danny had never seen Kelly look so pretty, but he knew she would not hold a candle to Robin. Kelly was wearing a spaghetti strap purple floor length gown and shawl.

"You both look fantastic," Mrs. Mitchell remarked as she entered the living room. Danny's father stuck his head around the corner from the family room and said "Hi!" He had been trying to adjust the lighting for pictures most of the afternoon. "I think I got it now," he decided.

"I'm going to get Robin and her parents," Danny proclaimed. "I'll be right back."

"Don't forget your corsage," Mrs. Mitchell reminded him.

Danny could see Robin through her living room window as he approached the door.

Robin opened the door before Danny could push the doorbell button.

"Look at you," she said with a whistle. "Belle (from the Disney classic "Beauty and The Beast") couldn't have

asked for a better date. Your cute little tie and vest match my dress. You really surprised me.”

Danny laughed and handed her the corsage.

“My mother thought it would be best for you to have a wrist corsage.”

“It’s beautiful. Will you put the flower on my wrist?”

“Talk about beautiful. You certainly are. I love your hair. You look like Cinderella.”

“I don’t know about Cinderella. I don’t want everything to disappear at midnight.”

“Are you ready to go?”

“They make a lovely couple,” Mrs. Robinson told her husband as they followed Danny and Robin to the Mitchell’s for pictures.

“Robin, you’re amazing!” Jimmy proclaimed as she entered the Mitchell’s home holding on to Danny’s arm, her jacket and purse.

“Thanks,” Robin replied, walking gingerly in her 4-½-inch heels.

“Aren’t you going to say anything about what I’m wearing, Danny,” Kelly demanded.

“You look great too. You’ve never looked prettier.”

“I love your dress,” Robin assured her.

“Thanks,” Kelly countered. “You both look sensational.”

“I hope she doesn’t ruin the evening,” Danny thought, trying not to laugh. He hoped he could quickly erase from his mind the vision of Kelly as a giant eggplant.

Thirty minutes later the cameras were spent and the teens were settled in the Rolls Royce for the trip to Albany and the Crowne Plaza.

"The car is fabulous," Danny said to Jimmy from the back seat, where Robin was holding on to his hand.

"Runs like a top," Jimmy replied. "Dad just had it serviced. The repairman said it could go another 100,000 miles."

"What was that noise?" Kelly asked.

"I didn't hear anything," Jimmy replied.

"I thought I heard a clanking noise," Danny added.

Suddenly the oil gauge peaked out and the engine seized. Jimmy guided the car to a stop at the side of Highway 20, exited the car and cautiously opened the hood.

"Get out of the car," he screamed as a small fire ignited under the engine. "Somebody get the fire extinguisher out of the trunk."

Danny grabbed the extinguisher and gave it to Jimmy who put out the flames.

"That was close," he said. "It must have been an oil leak."

"What are we going to do now?" Kelly pouted, who was standing with Robin at the side of the road as a light rain began to fall. "My dress is going to be ruined."

Jimmy pulled out his cell phone and dialed 911. An Albany police cruiser arrived within minutes. He also tried to reach his father, but could only leave a message on the home, work or special physicians number answering machines.

"What's the problem?" the officer asked as he approached the car.

"We were on our way to the Crowne Plaza for our Senior Ball," Jimmy told the officer. "I think the oil gasket blew."

"Is there anybody you can call?" the officer inquired. "It looks like you will need a tow."

"I can't reach my parents; I don't know where they are."

"Let me call my parents," Danny responded.

Jimmy handed Danny the phone and within seconds he was talking with his father.

"We broke down about five miles from the Plaza on Highway 20," Danny explained.

"We're all safe. A police officer is here and he's called for a tow truck."

Before Danny could continue his father replied: "I'll call Mark and we'll be on our way as quickly as we can. I'll try to find Dr. Coleman too. We'll bring two cars and you can take our car to the dance."

"Can you call the Plaza about our dinner reservations?" Danny asked.

"I'll have your mother do that. Keep the cell phone open. See you soon."

"Our father's are on the way," Danny explained, noting Robin's dad would be part of the rescue team. "They're bringing two cars and we can take one to the dance."

"What about dinner?" Kelly complained. "I'm starved. Our night is already ruined."

"Shut up," Jimmy proclaimed. Danny and Robin snickered as he wrapped his jacket around her shoulders.

"Once a bitch, always a bitch," Danny whispered. "All she thinks about is herself."

Thirty minutes passed and the tow truck was loading the Rolls on a flat bed carrier. Mark and Tim arrived with umbrellas in hand and had helped the girls in to the back seat of their BMW. Dr. Coleman finally contacted Jimmy and requested that the car be delivered to Gibbons' Auto Repair in Cold River. He would meet the truck there.

Jimmy signed the appropriate tow forms as Danny held one of the umbrellas. The rain fell even harder as the truck departed for the repair shop.

"Let's get somewhere where you can dry off," Mr. Mitchell recommended to the boys.

"There's a McDonald's at the next turnoff," replied the police officer as he completed his report. "You can use the restrooms there."

Tim drove one car and Mark the other the short distance to the next exit. The McDonald's was ahead.

"Your mother said the restaurant would hold the dinner reservations," Tim informed Danny. "You'll have to rush, though. It's almost 6:30. When does the dance start?"

"Eight," Danny replied as Jimmy used a towel to dry his hair in the back seat of Mr. Mitchell's car.

The boys rushed into the restaurant's men's room to use the electric hand dryers. The father's escorted the girls into the dining area, much to the delight of the customers.

"They mustn't see too many girls in formals," Robin joked to a frustrated Kelly. "Let's have some fun with this."

"You don't want to eat here, do you?" Kelly replied.

"Why not? We're already late for dinner and you said you were starving. Let's make the best of it."

Robin told Danny and Jimmy of her intentions. Kelly was peeved, but had to agree. Big Macs, Quarter Pounders, fries and root beer were on the menu.

“Our treat,” said Mr. Robinson, as Mr. Mitchell nodded in agreement. “This is the least we can do for you.”

“Let’s party,” Jimmy exclaimed as the father’s took orders.

The revelers were on the road 30 minutes later following their high calorie dinner. Danny was at the wheel with Robin at his side. Kelly continued to complain in the back seat. Jimmy sighed.

Danny stopped the BMW at the valet parking attendant in front of the Crowne Plaza.

“We made it!” he proclaimed. “Better late than never!”

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“We were starting to wonder where you were,” proclaimed their baseball pal Nikky, who greeted the two couples at the ballroom door.

“We had car trouble,” Jimmy explained. “We missed dinner, but we made it.”

Danny took Robin’s hand and followed Nikky and his date, Maryanne, to a “reserved” table not far from the dance floor.

“I saved the table for us,” Nikky informed his friends. The table was covered with party favors and appetizers. Jimmy and Kelly joined them as well.

Danny had not noticed the clamor he and Robin caused as they wound their way to the table. However, Robin overheard a couple of the comments.

"Danny's here and he brought a girl!" one surprised classmate said to his date in a voice loud enough for Robin to understand. She smiled.

Another told a friend: "Who's the babe with Danny? I've never seen her before. She's gorgeous. I wonder where he found her." Robin waved gracefully.

"This is a perfect table," Robin exclaimed, her confidence at an all-time high.

"It sure is," agreed Kelly, whose attitude seemed to have changed with the new scenery. "Look at all the goodies. I guess we didn't need to eat at McDonald's after all. But, that was fun."

"I'm sure you'll eat it by the end of the night," Jimmy replied.

"Can you dance, Danny?" Kelly sneered as Jimmy guided her on to the crowded dance floor.

"Just watch!" Robin replied with a big smile as she pushed Danny on to the parquet floor. "Now, let's see if you can remember what I taught you."

Danny did better than expected keeping up with Robin, who had kicked off her heels.

"My feet feel much better. Now I'm shorter than you."

The tempo dropped and Danny and Robin had their first formal slow dance together.

"Hold on to my waist and move with me," Robin insisted as she placed her hands on his shoulders. "Perfect."

Robin closed her eyes and pushed her breasts into Danny's chest.

"This is heavenly," Robin said. Danny didn't disagree as they swayed to the music.

"You're a great dancer," Kelly complemented Danny as the couples returned to their table.

"Thanks," Danny replied. "Do you want to dance?"

Danny and Jimmy exchanged partners and returned to the floor.

The teens danced and enjoyed the party favors and appetizers as the night rolled on.

"I've never had so much fun," Robin proclaimed to Danny after another dance. "Give me a couple of minutes. I need to use the ladies room."

Robin, Kelly and Maryanne departed to freshen up and Danny approached the disc jockey with a personal request.

"Sure, I can play that for you," the DJ agreed. "I have two requests ahead of yours."

"Can you wait until the blonde with the blue dress is back at our table?" Danny asked.

"Sure," he replied. "This must be a special night for you and her."

"It is! It sure is!"

The girls returned to the table looking prettier than ever. Robin's smile and the twinkle in her eyes made Danny's heart flutter.

"I hope this works," he muttered to himself.

"What are you mumbling about?" Robin questioned.

Danny didn't say a word. He took Robin by the arm and escorted her to the dance floor as the DJ dedicated the next song.

"To Robin from Danny," the DJ announced. "Firefall's 'You Are The Woman I've Always Dreamed Of.'"

Danny blushed and Robin smiled. Danny's classmates applauded and cleared the floor. The young couple was on its own.

"I really mean it!" Danny whispered in Robin's ear as they slowly danced cheek to cheek. "You're the best thing to ever happen to me."

A tear formed in Robin's left eye.

"You're going to make me cry and ruin my makeup," she softly replied. "I love you!"

"I love you too," Danny assured her.

Danny and Robin waived for their friends to return to the dance floor as the song ended and the beat picked up again with the Bee Gees disco hit "Staying Alive."

"What a night!" exclaimed Kelly, who left the ball-room wearing a tiara. Kelly and Jimmy had been selected Senior Ball Queen and King and she was sucking every second out of the honor.

Danny and Robin chuckled as Kelly strode through the hotel lobby proclaiming her title. Jimmy ignored her and waited with his friends for the valet to deliver Danny's car to the hotel entrance. A soft mist fell as the teens began the journey home.

Robin snuggled next to Danny, despite the semi-restrictive seat belt. She placed her hand on his leg as he drove and closed her eyes. She didn't want the evening to end. Kelly and Jimmy were "swapping spit" in the back seat. Danny resisted watching the "lovers" through the rear view mirror. He only had Robin on his mind.

Danny deposited Kelly and Jimmy at the Coleman's residence. Robin had fallen asleep and awoke just in time to say good-bye.

"Let's get together when you come back from school," Kelly asked Robin. "Remember, I want to see all the pictures you took tonight."

"I'd love to," she responded. "I'll e-mail you some pictures if you'll do the same for me."

"I will tomorrow," Kelly replied. "You should have them by the time you get back to school."

"Thanks," Robin said, as she gave Kelly a hug. "See you in a few weeks."

Danny pulled the BMW away from the curb and started home.

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"Please stop at the batting cages," Robin insisted.

"Is there something wrong?" Danny asked.

"No, nothing at all," she stated as she opened the car door. "Follow me."

Robin waited for Danny to lock the car and took his hand.

"Don't say a thing," she insisted. Danny complied.

The full moon filtered through the darkness and the clouds as Robin guided Danny to their favorite spot, cage 13. She put her index finger on his lips to indicate silence, placed his hands on her hips and wrapped her arms around his neck, clasping her hands.

"Would you like to kiss me?" Robin cooed as she licked her gloss covered pink lips.

Danny didn't waste any time with his response.

What started as a peck quickly expanded to a full mouth kiss and a tight embrace.

"Whew," Danny exclaimed, as their lips parted for a few seconds so he could catch his breath. Kiss two quickly followed, just as passionate as the first.

"Where'd you learn to kiss like that?" Danny asked Robin.



“I don’t know,” she replied with a smile. “I think it’s all because of how I feel for you.”

"I've never kissed a girl before," Danny explained, a bit embarrassed. "I hope it was OK."

"OK?" Robin exclaimed. "It was fabulous. Let's do it again."

Danny didn't hesitate. Robin's lips were soft and delicious. Their tongues met and swirled together. Danny felt a bulge form in his pants.

"This isn't supposed to happen," he thought as their lips parted.

"I wanted to make tonight extra special," Robin stated. "This is where we had our first date. It was the first time we held hands. It's the same place you first put your arms around me. I wanted it to be the first place we really kissed."

Robin took Danny's right hand and placed it on her left breast and over her heart on the outside of her dress and snuggled tight against his chest. The rain began to fall as they passionately kissed again and again.

"We'd better go," Danny considered as the wind kicked up and the rain fell even harder. "I don't want to stop, but it's almost 3 o'clock and we're getting wet. Our parents could be worried."

"You're right," Robin reluctantly agreed.

They slowly walked arm-in-arm to the car and drove home. More kisses followed on the Robinson's doorstep. Robin's dream had come true. The night had been perfect in every way and more.

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Neither Danny nor Robin made it to church the following day. By the time Danny awoke, Robin had already left with her parents for the return to school. He looked

out of his bedroom window but the Robinson's home was dark and quiet.

Heartbroken, he sat at his desk and turned on his computer with the hope that Robin had written. Nothing! He walked down the stairs to a silent kitchen. His parents obviously had left for church. He stepped out of the backdoor to assure himself Robin was gone. Danny turned to re-enter the house and discovered an envelope taped to the door. His heart skipped a beat. It was from Robin. He held the envelope against his chest.

Danny poured himself a glass of orange juice, sat at the kitchen table and carefully opened the surprise. Not only was there a "love" letter, but a dozen pictures from the night before. Danny smiled and read the letter three times. The photos were fabulous and the letter was even better.

Robin spilled almost all her emotions "to my love and soul mate." Danny could see the tear stains on the soft pink paper. Robin had spent much of the early morning writing what was in her heart.

She told Danny how much he meant to her; how thrilled she was that they would attend St. John's together; how excited she was they could spend the summer together in New York; how the kisses solidified her love for him, and finally her decision to have the sexual reassignment surgery before the end of the year. She concluded by asking Danny for his continued support and above all things, his love.

Danny wiped the tears from his eyes. He knew he was in love, but it was much more than he could have ever expected. Danny realized from the start Robin was physically a boy, but it never mattered once he was told of Taylor's true identity. And, now, with Robin's heart-rending revelation, she definitely would be the girl for him.

Danny ran up the stairs to his room to send Robin his first love letter. He wanted the letter to be on her computer when she reached Hempstead. This was all new for him so he prayed for God's assistance to say the right words in his e-mail. Forty five minutes later, he hit "Send." His feelings for Robin were transmitted through cyber space.

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The last four weeks of school were important for Taylor as he prepared for finals exams. He had never received anything other than an A-grade and didn't want to ruin his perfect record. As Robin, he was in continuous contact with Bridgett Sommers and Robyn Michaels at Cosmo since Robin would begin her intern program at the same time Danny was to report to the Long Island Storm.

Danny had to mix baseball and his finals, of which he wasn't too concerned. Cold River rolled into the State small school playoffs and behind the pitching of Nikky Black, who had accepted a baseball scholarship to the Arizona State University, and the hitting of Danny and Jimmy, didn't slow down.

Despite being seeded sixth among eight teams, the Beavers whipped East Rochester, 7-1, in the opening round and clipped Plainedge of Massapequa, 4-3, in the second game on Jimmy's last inning home run, to set the stage for the showdown with unbeaten and top-rated Sutherland from Pittsford.

Nikky threw a two-hitter in the win over East Rochester and came back for a one-inning save in the win over Plainedge. On two day rest, the left-hander returned to the mound to face Sutherland in the finals. He didn't disappoint.

Jimmy doubled home two runs, including Danny, who had singled, to give Nikky all the runs he needed in the

first inning. Nikky used his 90-plus mile per hour fastball and wicked curve to baffle the Sutherland hitter.

“One more out,” shouted Danny from shortstop in the bottom of the seven and last inning. Nikky obliged by striking out his 12th batter to complete a three-hitter and give the surprising Beavers the State Championship, 5-0.

As the Cold River players piled on each other near the pitcher’s mound in celebration of the school’s first ever state crown, Danny could only think of Robin, who was unable to attend.

“We did it!” he shouted into his father’s cell phone as he contacted Robin.

Robin cooed her congratulations and a kiss.

“I can’t believe it!” he exclaimed. “Nobody gave us a chance. Everyone thought we wouldn’t be any good. I was even thinking of quitting. Now, we’re the state champs and I’m headed to St. John’s with you. I’m so excited.”

Danny asked Robin if he could call her later and re-joined the awards festivities.

“I’m so proud of you,” Robin replied. “Call me when you can.”

Nikky, Danny and Jimmy, who would later receive a baseball scholarship to Albany State, were tabbed to the all-state team. Coach Wallace was selected Coach of the Year. Danny lifted the championship trophy high over his head as he and his teammates paraded around the bases. The players took turns hoisting the trophy skyward among shouts of joy and accomplishment.

The Albany newspaper described the surprising Cold River championship as the “Immaculate Season.”

The end of the school year and graduation would be anti-climactic for Danny.

Taylor graduated on the Tuesday evening prior to the Memorial Day weekend and Danny two nights later. Taylor had cleaned out his room the night before his ceremony and gave all his male clothes, except for a suit he would wear under his graduation gown and one change for the trip home, to the Salvation Army. "I won't need these things after today anyway," he realized. Living fulltime as Robin was only hours away.

Robin attended Danny's ceremonies and the Cold River all-night graduation trip to Six Flags Great Escape and Splashwater Kingdom in Lake George.

Following graduation, Danny and Robin had little time for their respective moves to New York.

"We're ready to go," exclaimed Danny to his parents after stuffing the last of Robin's items into the bulging trunk of his not-so-new Subaru Outback, a graduation gift to the teens from their parents.

Robin ran to the car from her house ahead of her parents with a few last minute items.

"Where am I supposed to put these things?" he asked.

"Just shove them in the back seat," Robin cajoled.

"I hardly have any room for my things," Danny noted, who had only two duffle bags, one of which included his baseball equipment. "How many things can one girl have?"

"Danny," Robin said as she placed her right hand on his cheek. "I just want to look nice for you."

Danny laughed as the Mitchell's and Robinson's gathered to say good-bye.

"Don't worry about us," Danny proclaimed as he and Robin hugged their parents. "We'll call you when we get to New York."

Mrs. Robinson broke into tears.

"I'm sorry," she said as she wiped her eyes. "I promised I wouldn't get emotional..."

"Don't worry, Mom, we'll see you next weekend anyway," Robin reminded her mother, who was being comforted by a near teary-eyed Mrs. Mitchell. "We'll be fine."

Danny opened the passenger door for Robin, ran around the back of the car to check the back hatch, opened his door, jumped behind the steering wheel and revved the motor.

"See you Saturday," Danny stated as he put the car in gear and waved farewell.

"We love you," shouted Robin as the car pulled away from the curb.

Danny and Robin clutched hands and remained silent for a few minutes. Robin held her great-grandmother's embroidered handkerchief, a gift from her mother, as tears filled her eyes.

Danny finally spoke: "That was tougher than I thought it would be."

"I never cried when I went off to school before," Robin lamented. "I just couldn't control myself this time. Our parents love us so much and only want the best for us. My mother is my best friend."

"I thought I was your best friend," Danny snickered. Robin slapped him on the shoulder.

"Just drive," she demanded as she managed a smile among her tears. "I'll be OK in a few minutes."

Danny didn't say a word and let the music on the radio speak for itself.

As the Subaru merged on to the interstate south of Albany, Danny smiled at Robin.

"This is like we are going on our honeymoon," Robin said with a giggle.

"Do you want to elope?" Danny questioned which resulted in another slap on the shoulder from Robin.

"With you?" she laughed. "You must be kidding. You aren't even in my Top Ten."

Robin gave Danny a kiss on his hand and settled back in to her seat for the three-plus hour drive to the Big Apple.

"New York City, here we come!" Danny proclaimed.

34

Danny maneuvered through New York, across the bridge to Long Island and followed the directions to what would be his summer home. As a member of the wooden-bat league team, he would be staying at the home of his "host and adopted" baseball parents, John and Sheri Zenor.

Danny had phoned ahead and informed Mrs. Zenor that he and Robin were close to their destination. She watched for his greenish Outback through her living room window. The Zenor's nephew, Joe Panik, had been the St. John's starting shortstop and was the first round draft pick of the San Francisco Giants. His signing with the Giants opened the scholarship spot for Danny.

"Welcome," she said while standing on the front porch of the modest 1940-ish home and waited for Danny and Robin to exit the car. "My husband and I have been looking forward to meeting you."

"My pleasure," Danny answered as he shook Mrs. Zenor's hand. He proceeded to introduce Robin.

"John will be home soon," she continued. "He plans to take you to the ball park to meet your coach and some of your teammates. I'm sure you know that practice starts tomorrow night."

"Yes, I do," Danny replied. "I can't wait."

"Your home is so cute," Robin proclaimed.

"So are you, my dear," replied Mrs. Zenor. Robin turned on her toes and blushed.

"Come on in. I have some ice tea ready. Are you hungry?"

"Not really," Danny said, as he tried to be polite. Robin nudged him in the ribs.

"Maybe you aren't hungry, but I am," Robin exclaimed.

"Leave your things in the car," Mrs. Zenor instructed. "We can get them later. I have some snacks in the kitchen."

The Zenor's were retired and spent a lot of time following St. John's sports, especially the baseball program. Their home, a short distance from the university, was a home-away-from-home for many of the St. John's athletes. Danny was fortunate to be selected to live at the Zenor's for the summer before moving into the athletic dorm once school begins.

Danny and Robin settled in to their new surroundings. Robin would spend the night at the Zenor's before moving into the Cosmo complex the following day.

"Where's the next St. John's superstar?" John exclaimed in a booming voice as he entered the front door and clasped Danny's hand. "I'm so happy to meet you. You're going to love it here."

"Calm down John," demanded Mrs. Zenor, who at 5-foot-9, towered over her stocky, often over-bearing, cigar-chewing husband. "Let the young man relax. Danny and Robin just got here."

"I've heard so much about you from Coach Ray," John continued, as if he didn't hear a word Sheri had said. "And, who's your friend?"

Danny introduced Robin, who got up from the couch to shake hands and was promptly engulfed in a bear hug.

"John, stop that!" decried Sheri. "You're going to hurt somebody. Apologize to Robin! Now, have something to eat. Danny doesn't have to be at the ball park yet."

Mr. Zenor exited to the kitchen to wash his hands as Robin caught her breath.

"It's OK Mrs. Zenor," Robin replied.

"No it's not!" she countered. "He's just too excited. Since he retired he lives for baseball 24 hours a day. You thought he had died and gone to heaven the day Joe was chosen by the Giants in the first round. He told everybody and handed out cigars as if Joe was his son. But, I can't blame him, as Joe just about lived here for three years. He was like a son. Now, Danny, you may be Joe's heir-apparent. I hope he doesn't put too much pressure on you."

"Don't worry, Mrs. Zenor," Danny responded. "I'm just going to take things one day at a time."

The remainder of the afternoon went well. Robin stayed with Mrs. Zenor, while John took Danny to the ball park to register and get in a few batting practice swings. This would be Danny's first time to hit with a wooden, not an aluminum, bat and history had shown many high school players could never make the adjustment. Danny met a few of his new teammates then stepped in to the batting cage.

“Way to go,” proclaimed Coach Ray after he threw 25 pitches and watched Danny rip the ball to all parts of the perfectly manicured field. “I don’t think you’ll have any problems with a woodie.”

“That sure felt good to me, too,” Danny proclaimed, proud of his accomplishment.

John and Danny talked all the way home where a traditional spaghetti dinner, which Robin had helped Mrs. Zenor prepare, was waiting.

“You already remind me so much of Joe,” John told Danny. “He’s a little bit bigger than you, but you both swing the bat with authority. You both came from small towns, made the all-state team as a senior and won a championship.”

“Have you been checking up on me?” Danny said with a smile.

“You bet,” John replied as he turned into the driveway. “If you’re living in my home, I want to know all about you.”

Danny laughed as he unloaded his equipment bag and carried it into the house. Dinner was waiting.

“They’re such a cute couple,” Mrs. Zenor whispered into John’s ear as they washed the dinner dishes.

“I really like that boy,” John proclaimed. “He reminds me so much of Joe at that age. Nothing seems to bother him. You should have seen him hit. He’s going to be a star.”

“Robin’s really a lovely young lady too,” Mrs. Zenor reported. “She can talk about just any subject. They’re so fortunate to go to St. John’s together. She has that sparkle in her eye for Danny too.”

The Zenor's made sure Danny and Robin were comfortable and went to bed shortly after 10, leaving their company alone in the living room to watch television.

"They are so nice," Robin said in a soft voice as they cuddled on the couch. "You couldn't ask for anyone better to be your host parents."

"John's a little over anxious, but I'd rather he is that way than not care," Danny remarked. "We get along fine, as long as he doesn't light up that cigar. He did today and it really stinks."

"The problem of a super-star," Robin kidded and she tightly held Danny's hand.

"I think we'd better get some sleep too," Danny concluded. "Tomorrow is your big day."

"Mrs. Zenor said we should leave about 10," Robin stated. "New York traffic is terrible. She said she would be willing to drive us."

"That's so nice of her," Danny replied. "Maybe it would be good that we take her up on the offer. That way we won't get lost."

Danny would bunk on the couch for one night so Robin could use the Zenor's extra bedroom, which was a shrine to St. John's sports. "It's like a museum in there," Robin explained. "Red and silver is everywhere. It's kinda spooky. I've never seen so much stuff in such a small space."

"That's what I thought when we were packing your things in the car," Danny chided. Robin tried to give him a push, but Danny grabbed her hands and drew her near. "I love you." They kissed goodnight, not once, but twice.

"I love you too," Robin replied as she walked to the bedroom.

Mrs. Zenor drove the GMC Yukon down the ramp and in to the secure Cosmo parking garage. What should have been a short trip had taken over 90 minutes.

"Typical New York City traffic," she declared and offered one piece of advice. "Never try to get anywhere in a hurry."

The Cosmo office was on the 38th floor of a skyscraper on the corner of West 57th Street, two blocks from Central Park and not far from Times Square.

"Leave everything in the car," Mrs. Zenor insisted. "Let's see what they want Robin to do first."

The three rode the elevator to the 38th floor and the doors opened to a massive reception and waiting area. Every seat seemed to be taken by aspiring models or wannabees.

Robin heard her name called as she stepped off the elevator, trying not to trip in her platform heels. As she surveyed the room, she was blindsided and literally swept off her feet by Karyn Ashe's' bear hug.

"I'm so happy to see you," she squealed, wrapping her arms around Robin and lifting her off the ground. "We're going to be roommates."

Robin straightened her brown jacket and pencil skirt and gave Karyn a hug.

"We are!" she exclaimed to her new roommate. "This is going to be great."

Karyn and Robin had communicated via e-mail since the fashion show and had developed a close friendship.

Robin introduced Danny and Mrs. Zenor to her Canadian friend, who directed her to the receptionist for check-in. After a few minutes, a valet appeared to pick up

Robin's baggage and show her to the building where she would share a room with Karyn for the next three months.

"There are eight of us," Karyn informed Robin. "We start training tomorrow. I talked with Bridgett earlier this morning and she said she will stop by to see you later today. It looks like our first modeling assignment will be for Toby Burch."

"Tory Burch?" Robin shouted. "I love her clothes. She's from New York, right?"

"Manhattan," Karyn responded as she swiped her hand through her brown shoulder length hair. "Let's get your luggage. We have so much to talk about."

Danny and Mrs. Zenor looked at each other and laughed.

"Girls will be girls," she said. "I think they forgot we are here."

The valet followed Mrs. Zenor to her car and loaded Robin's suitcases and accessories on to a cart. Karyn had taken Robin and Danny to their room in a four story building adjacent to the Cosmo office.

"Room 3A," the valet remarked to Mrs. Zenor.

The condo/apartment was small but tastefully decorated.

"This is perfect," Robin said as she entered her new home. The apartment included two bedrooms with attached bath rooms, a kitchen, living area and a view of W. 57th Street.

"I love it too," Karyn assured her as she gave Robin the grand tour.

The phone rang and Karyn handed the receiver to Robin. "It's Bridgett," she whispered.

"Welcome," Bridgett said to Robin. "I hope your room is OK."

"It's wonderful," Robin replied. "I was expecting a dorm room like I will have at college."

"Nothing but the best for our girls," Bridgett responded. "I'll be over to see you in about an hour. Make yourself at home. The refrigerator should have everything you need. If you need anything, just call room service."

"Sounds great," Robin bustled. "See you soon."

"We have to go," Mrs. Zenor explained. "Danny has to get back home for his first practice tonight and you know how traffic can be."

Danny carried one final suitcase in to Robin's room.

"Where are you going to keep everything?" he asked upon surveying the limited closet space.

"I'll work it out," she concluded as she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and plunged her breasts into Danny's chest. Robin kicked the door closed with her leg and pulled Danny on to the freshly made bed.

"Robin!" he proclaimed regarding her aggressiveness. "Mrs. Zenor is in the other room."

"Shut up and kiss me," Robin insisted. "Karyn will keep her company for a few minutes."

Danny complied. He would not see Robin until Saturday when the Mitchell's and Robinson's would pay their children a visit and a trip to a Broadway play.

36

The summer went fast for both Danny and Robin.

At first Danny didn't play regularly for the Brooklyn Storm. Coach Ray decided to "bring him along slowly"

since he was the only high school grad on the team. An injury to another infielder thrust Danny into the starting lineup earlier than expected. He responded with a respectable .273 average despite batting in the ninth spot in the order. The Storm finished the 32-game schedule in the middle of the eight team league, qualified for the playoffs, but lost in the first round. All-in-all, his first taste of wooden-bat baseball was a success.

Robin was fortunate to see most of Danny's home games by balancing her modeling classes and assignments. They celebrated their 18th birthdays together with their parents on a dinner cruise in the New York harbor.

Robin's modeling career skyrocketed. She was named "Best of Her Class" by Bridgett and Robyn and was chosen, along with Karyn, to participate in Tory Burch's annual New York Fashion Spectacular prior to the start of school in September. She also modeled for the world renowned Tim Drake agency as one of his "Drake Girls." Robin had yet to grace the pages of Cosmo despite a number of magazine photo shoots.

"Most models don't get into Cosmo until their second or third year of training," Ms. Michaels reminded the interns time and time again. "Just keep working hard and your day will come." Robin's would sooner than later.

As summer came to a close, Robin continued to live in the Cosmo condo with Karyn, while Danny stayed with the Zenors. Danny and Joe attended a number of Met games and talked baseball every chance they got. Mrs. Zenor would make regular trips to the city to escort Robin, and often Karyn, back to their home on the weekends.

"Nothing like having great young kids in our home," she always reflected.

Danny moved into the St. John's athletic dorm two weeks before school was to start in mid-September, but he was not allowed to practice with the baseball team until school officially opened.

"One of the NCAA quirks," Head coach Marv Morash lamented, who announced the team had accepted a Thanksgiving break junket for a series of exhibition games in Australia and New Zealand.

Robin had been assigned to one of the freshman required women's dorm, but received an "exemption" and would stay with the Zenors. The Robinson's, due to Robin's yet-to-be-completed sexual reassignment, has asked for the waiver after meeting with the Zenors and explaining the situation.

"I would have never known," Mrs. Zenor said to Mrs. Robinson after the revelation. "Your daughter is one of the sweetest girls I have ever known. John and I will do anything and everything possible to be Robin's billet parents and to help her achieve her goal. You can count on us!"

Robin would be meeting with Dr. Leis prior to the start of school and the Burch fashion show. Her goal continued to be "a real girl by Christmas."

37

"Mom, what's it like to make love with a man?" Robin inquired and caught her mother off guard as she drove the Pennsylvania turnpike between New York and Bala Cynwyd. Robin had earned her first three day weekend from the rigors at Cosmo and used the opportunity to visit Dr. Leis.

"It's the most wonderful experience you'll ever have," Mrs. Robinson responded. "I can only guess why you are asking."

"I was just wondering," a blushing Robin said with a giggle.

"Are you planning something you haven't told me about?" her mother asked.

"No, just looking ahead," Robin assured her.

"With Danny?" her mother inquired.

"Oh Mom!!! We haven't even broached the subject. That's why I love him so much. He is the most considerate and caring person I know. However, after I have my surgery, there's going to be so much for me to learn. Will you help me?"

"It would be an honor," Mrs. Robinson affirmed.

"We'll take everything one step at a time. I found a couple of books you might be interested in reading."

"Thanks Mom, you're the best!"

Dr. Leis' office was in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood in the Philadelphia suburb, hardly a place for a transgender surgery center. Robin had a 10 a.m. appointment and she and her mother arrived on time after the two-hour-plus drive. Robin was wearing a fashionable crPme sleeveless baby doll dress, one of the many wardrobe benefits from her intern program.

"Welcome," said Jaye Marie Carolan, Dr. Leis' long-time secretary and assistant, as they entered the office. "It's so nice to see you again."

"Thanks," replied a nervous Robin. "It's nice to be here too."

Jaye Marie reviewed the insurance forms with Mrs. Robinson and confirmed that their insurance carrier had

approved Robin's future male-to-female procedures. Meanwhile, Robin was escorted to a waiting room for an exam with Dr. Leis.

Dr. Leis smiled as he entered the room. Robin wore only her bra and panties as she sat on the exam table.

"Hello, Miss Robin," he proclaimed. "I'm sure today will be a perfect day."

"Thanks and good morning," Robin responded, as she took a breath and tried to relax.

After a brief examination of Robin's hormonally-enhanced breasts, groin area and buttocks, Dr. Leis asked her to dress and return to the waiting room.

Dr. Leis re-entered the reception area and invited Robin and her mother to his private office. Although he was familiar with Robin's case, he remained silent as he scanned through the paperwork.

Dr. Leis lifted his head, smiled and replied: "Everything looks great. Your breasts have developed round and firm. Your groin area is ready for surgery. I don't think we will have to do anything with your face or buttocks since the hormones are doing what they are intended to do. You have developed a very girlish figure.

"You've also scored very high on all the psychological tests and have been successful living as a woman for more than three months. You have passed all the requirements.

"We can schedule your vaginoplasty during your Thanksgiving break. Is that OK?"

"Yes, it is," Robin bubbled. "Danny is going to be in Australia, so that will work." Mrs. Robinson nodded her head in agreement. "When can you do my breast augmentation?"

"That's what I wanted to talk with you about," Dr. Leis remarked. "I had a couple of cancellations today and

still have my surgery staff available. So, would you like to do it today?"

"Today?" Robin beamed. "Yes!"

"Hold on," Dr. Leis continued, attempting to control Robin's enthusiasm.

"I don't know about today," Mrs. Robinson cautioned Robin before she was interrupted by Dr. Leis.

"Let me explain your situation in a little more detail. Right now you're just about perfect between a 34C and a 36B. Overall your hormones have been working well the last two years, but this may be the maximum result. Our goal was for you to be a 36C, which would be proportionate to your height and weight. However, I'm pleased with how you look now. But, it is up to you if you would like to go up another size."

"I do like the way I look, but then again, I'd like to be a bit bigger," Robin responded. "Don't most girls?"

"Yes, that's true," Dr. Leis responded. "How do you feel, Linda?"

"I think Robin looks great, but I can understand her vanity too," she replied with a slight laugh. "It's up to her. If we did the surgery today, how long would it take?"

"About three hours, including recovery," Dr. Leis explained. "The surgery is very simple and will take less than an hour. I've been using a new tissue-based technique and the limited amount of tissue I would be augmenting during surgery would be very minor. You would need to wear a special bra, similar to a sports bra, for about four weeks."

"I want to do it, Mom," Robin announced. "I want to be the best I can be. Is it OK?"

"You've come this far, we might as well go all the way."

Robin gave her mother a hug.

"What do I do next?" Robin asked.

Dr. Leis summoned his surgical assistant, Angela Borges, who guided Robin back to the examination room.

"Take good care of her," Mrs. Robinson requested.

"You know I will," Dr. Leis replied. "She's one of my prize patients. You can stay here or in the waiting area. I'll be back when the surgery is complete. Don't worry about a thing. She's in good hands."

Three hours later, Robin and her mother were on their way back to the Zenor's. Robin was a bit sore from the surgery but had what appeared to be a continual smile on her face as she slept across the back seat of the car.

Mrs. Zenor had been anxiously waiting and had dinner warming in the oven when Robin and her mother arrived after their long day. Mrs. Robinson had phoned from the doctor's office and explained the delay.

"Don't worry one bit," Mrs. Zenor had responded. "I'll make sure Robin does what the doctor ordered."

Robin walked confidently from the car and greeted Mrs. Zenor with a slight hug.

"Hugging is out for a while," Robin quipped. "Even with Danny!"

"Even with Danny?" Mrs. Zenor asked with a smile as she guided Robin in to the house.

"Did Danny call today?" Robin inquired.

"Yes," Mrs. Zenor replied. "He came by twice between practices and called too. He was worried about you and your mother."

"Did you tell him anything?" Robin asked impatiently. "He knew I was going to the doctors..."

"Not a thing," Mrs. Zenor interrupted. "He said he will see you tomorrow."

"It's up to you when and what you tell him," Mrs. Robinson interjected.

Robin had already decided to wait until the right moment.

38

As the leaves started to turn colors, Robin balanced school with her busy Cosmo schedule. Danny loved attending St. John's, sharing classes with Robin and living in New York. Danny had decided to major in communications and Robin was considering theatre arts. Danny had baseball practice every afternoon since the team would be touring Australia for two weeks in November. Robin had been a hit in the Burch Fashion Spectacular and was selected for a January mini-spread in Cosmo.

Robin continued to live with the Zenors, who were fast becoming her "second parents." Danny was becoming their "son."

In early October, the Zenors were asked to accompany the Panik's to Arizona to watch Joe play a few games in the Fall League. They would be gone for 10 days and asked Robin and Danny to watch their home.

"No company, no parties and no sex," John said to the housekeepers, much to the surprise of Sheri.

"John, stop it," she demanded in a loud voice. "Remember, John, you were young once too. Please, kids, just no parties."

"Don't worry about us," Robin replied. "We need some quiet time to study. We both have a big project to work on. We'll take care of the house."

"I'll even mow the lawn, if that's OK," Danny added. John nodded his head in approval.

"There should be plenty of food," Mrs. Zenor concluded. "And if you need anything, our itinerary and phone numbers are on the bulletin board in the kitchen.

The shuttle arrived to take the Zenors to the airport where they would meet the Panik's.

Danny helped John carry the suitcases to the van and good-bye hugs, kisses and waves were exchanged as the van pulled away from the curb.

"What would you like to do?" Danny asked Robin as they walked back in to the house. It already seemed lonely without the Zenors, who had not been on a real vacation for years.

"I have a surprise for you," she replied as she bowed her head. "I never bought you a birthday present. So, I saved up my money and got us two tickets for "Wicked" at the matinee tomorrow. Do you want to go?"

"Of course. I'll go anywhere and everywhere with you. I heard the play is great."

"There is one stipulation."

"What's that?"

"Would you go as Dani?"

Danny was surprised, yet pleased. Since the fashion show, he had cross dressed only once and that in the privacy of Robin's home. He was happy she had not forgotten Dani and had dreamed about going out with Robin as a girl in New York City, but he didn't expect it to occur this soon.

"I don't know if I can do it. Dani hasn't been active for about three months."

"Come on, Danny, you can do it. You're so good."

“OK, I’ll do it. What am I going to wear?”

“Let’s go look in my closet.”

Danny figured Robin must have planned for the weekend as her closet was full of clothes perfect for a Broadway show.

Since the following day was Sunday and rain was in the forecast, Robin proposed they attend a church near Broadway, and walk to the show, as girls. Danny agreed.

Robin insisted that Danny wear the brown sweater dress outfit with boots for their day on the town because “it fits you so well.” She would wear her black leather mini-skirt suit, diagonally striped sweater and boots. “We will look fantastic,” she said.

“I have something else to show you too,” Robin added. “Have you noticed anything different with me?”

Danny eyed her from head to toe and didn’t notice any changes.

Robin took her slim, long finger and began to unbutton her waist-length red sweater. Danny stood at arms length, not sure what to do or say. As the last button was released, Danny noticed Robin was braless and her cleavage was more apparent than before. She slowly opened her sweater to reveal two perfectly shaped breasts.

“They’re for you,” Robin said as she nestled up to Danny. “When I went to Pennsylvania to see Dr. Leis, I got mini-implants. Do you want to touch?”

Robin took Danny’s right hand and traced the outline of her left breast with his index finger.

“Don’t be afraid. They won’t bite.”

Robin’s pinkish nipples quickly grew hard with the softness of Danny touch. For the first time, Danny felt a definite tingle between his legs. In the back of his mind,

Robin had always been “one of the guys” but this was definitely different.

“Be careful. They’re still a bit tender,” she softly moaned.



Danny tongue-kissed Robin as they fell on the clothes-covered bed. Danny explored, caressed and kissed her breasts. Robin rolled on her back and enjoyed every touch.

A knock on the front door startled Danny and Robin. Danny jumped up from the bed and Robin quickly buttoned her sweater.

"Who do you think it is?" Danny whispered.

"Go answer the door," Robin said softly.

Danny opened the door to find Karyn and Nikky semi-wrestling with each other on the front porch.

"What are you doing here?" Danny questioned his friend.

"I came home for a few days to see Karyn and thought it would be fun to drop by and see if you and Robin were here," Nikky replied. Nikky had been introduced to Karyn by Robin prior to leaving for college. They had corresponded via e-mail and were becoming an "item."

"What a pleasant surprise," Robin said as she stuck her head around the door. "Come on in."

The friends chatted and enjoyed snacks for the balance of the afternoon, then went to the local pizza parlor for dinner before Nikky and Karyn returned to the big city.

"They seem to be in love," Robin noted as they walked in to the Zenors home.

"They can't be in love any more than we are," Danny concluded before getting a slap on the right arm from Robin.

"What was that for?" he asked.

"Just because we kiss once in a while, we're virtually living together and you got to feel my breasts doesn't exactly qualify for 'being in love,' " she said with a laugh.

“Karyn told me they had sex last night. She’s not a virgin any more and they’ve been dating for less than a month.”

“Nikky always was a fast mover, just like his fastball,” Danny recalled.

“We’ll what’s your problem?” Robin chided.

“You!” Danny countered. He took Robin’s face in his hands before she could say another word and applied a big kiss on her lips. In the process, he slipped his hand under her sweater and began to massage her instantly firm breasts. Robin backed up to the couch and pulled Danny down on top of her.

“We can’t make love yet, but we can have some fun,” Robin whispered, as she unbuttoned her sweater to give Danny complete access.

“May I?” Robin requested, between hot and wet kisses. Danny wasn’t sure what she meant as he was more than caught up in the moment.

Robin unbuckled Danny’s belt and unzipped his jeans. She slipped her hand under the waistband and found what she was looking for.

“Robin!” he decried, never having had a girl touch his private area.

“Don’t worry,” she replied. “I’m just exploring. I wanted to see if you have the same thing I do. You can touch mine if you want.”

Danny declined and laughter followed. The ice was broken.

Danny arrived at the Zenor's at 7 a.m. to find Robin already dressed and ready to go.

"You look spectacular," Danny complimented Robin in her mini-suit and boots.

"Time's a wasting," Robin insisted. "We need to get to the subway by 10."

Dani quickly changed in to the appropriate undergarments, hose and sweater dress. Robin spent about 45 minutes applying Dani's makeup before finishing with jewelry, nails and hair. By 9, the girls were in the car and en route to Broadway.

Dani was a bit leery about riding the subway, but it was early in the morning and only two transfers would be needed to get to their destinations. As Danny, he had ridden the subway to meet Robin since the parking prices in NYC with astronomical, but taking the train as Dani was another experience.

The subway car was not crowded, but two lovely girls dressed for a show could not help but draw attention. Passengers nodded and smiled as the girls boarded the train. Others stared, obviously admiring their beauty. Dani and Robin relaxed as the train headed in to the city. First stop, St. Peter's Church not far from Broadway for 11 o'clock mass.

The girls took the elevator to street level and saw St. Peter's was within walking distance. Dani had no problem walking in the boots despite the three month hiatus. The girls entered the church where they were greeted by the young, good looking priest.

"He's hot," Robin commented to Dani as they walked to the middle of the church.

"I think he had the same opinion of you," Dani conceded. "He wouldn't let go of your hand."

“He did the same with you. I hope God forgives me, but what a waste. I bet he would be great in bed.”

“Robin, what’s gotten in to you?” Dani smirked as the organ began to play.

Following the service, the girls walked back to the subway and took the final short ride to Broadway and the famous Gershwin Theatre on West 51st Street.

The day could not have been nicer. Although it was cooler than usual for an October day, the sun shone and the girls were able to eat lunch at a small outdoor café in the theatre district.

“This is fantastic,” Dani said to Robin as the waiter presented the check. “What a beautiful day. Here we are, two girls, riding the subway, going to church, eating lunch and now going to a Broadway show. Could it get any better?”

“I don’t think so,” said the waiter, who overheard the comments.

“Is this your first time in the city?” he asked.

“No, not for me,” Robin replied, noting his name was Robert. “I work at Cosmo.”

“Are you a model?” he inquired.

“Yes. I’m in the intern program.”

“Has your picture been in the magazine?”

“Not yet, but it could be after the first of the year.”

“How exciting!”

Dani kicked Robin under the table.

“Ouch,” she said. Dani snickered.

“What’s your name?” Robert inquired. “I’ll have to watch for you in the magazine.”

"I'm Robin and this is my cousin, Dani."

"It's nice to meet both of you. Are you both models?"

Dani smiled and said "No, Robin's the star in the family."

"Well, you're both very pretty and stylish," Robert added. "I'm not trying to rush you, but you'd better get going. The theatre doors opened 10 minutes ago. I'm sorry I have taken up your time."

"No problem," Dani responded with a flirty tone. "I'll take complements any day over a silly show."

"Say good-bye," Robin insisted as the girls stood at the table.

"Good-bye," Dani replied.

Robin didn't say a word as the girls walked to the theatre. Dani could imagine steam coming from her ears.

"What's wrong with you?" Dani inquired. "I was just having a little fun."

"You were coming on to him," Robin interjected in a spiteful tone.

"Are you jealous?"

"Yes. You're mine and not anyone else's!!! Remember that!!!"

"Well, forgive me for just being a girl."

Robin smiled and Dani laughed as they entered the theatre and were escorted to their premium seats, 10 rows behind the orchestra pit.

"Great seats," Dani proclaimed as she gave Robin a hug of thanks.

"Nothing but the best for my slutty girl friend."

The girls enjoyed the first half of the play and during the intermission they both used the ladies room, although Dani hesitated at first.

“Just be yourself,” Robin insisted as they stood in line. “Just wait for a stall and do your thing. Nobody will notice. Then, we’ll check our makeup in the lounge.”

The experience went smoothly and nobody had a hint that Dani was physically in the wrong rest room.

Dani could easily see why *Wicked* was a big hit. The show, the costumes, the music and the characters were fabulous. At times he could envision Robin on stage playing the part of Glinda, the Good Witch.

The storyline is about the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch from *Oz* and a reminder for the audience to “not judge a book by its cover.”

The Wicked Witch (Effie) had always gone out of her way to try and do the right things, but because of the way she looked, people had already made up their minds regarding her personality. And the Good Witch (Glinda) wasn’t always a goody two shoes! She had done things that by today’s standards would be considered very mean to Effie. In the end they became very close friends. (Editor’s note: I will not tell the entire story in the event you have yet to see the play).

“That was great,” Dani said to Robin as they exited the theatre. “Thank you so much. I really enjoyed the play. I guess we better head back to the subway.”

“Not so fast,” Robin countered. “Follow me.”

The girls walked out from under the marquee and a short distance to “21” the restaurant adjacent to the Gershwin.

“We’re having dinner here!” Robin said, pointing to the sign.

“How can you afford this?” Dani exclaimed looking at the menu. Theatre ticket holder discount meals began at \$40.

“Don’t worry. I got a bonus from Bridgett for my work. I’ve saved it for this evening.”

“A bonus?” Dani asked.

“I didn’t want to tell you until tonight. Modeling can bring in big money. I got a \$5,000 check last month.”

“Oh my goodness,” Dani as she faked being faint and grabbed the door handle to the restaurant. “I guess we should celebrate.”

“I couldn’t think of a better person than you to celebrate with. Let’s go eat.”

The girls were fortunate to be seated by the plate glass window overlooking West 51st Street. Many eyes followed the two young ladies as they walked between the restaurant, filled to capacity with theatre goers from the matinee and the upcoming evening performance.

“Did you see all the people looking at us?” Dani asked Robin as they settled into their chairs.

“How could I miss it? They must think we are special or something.”

“Well, we are, aren’t we? How did you get a window table?”

“I know the maître’d. He works part time at Cosmo. It helps to have friends in the right places.”

The dinner was scrumptious and the bill topped \$125. During the meal, Robin and Dani were approached by two admiring teens.

“Are you movie stars?” one nervous young lady asked Robin. “I know I’ve seen your face somewhere before.”

"I do some modeling," Robin responded, attempting to be modest. "I was in the recent Tory Burch show and the spring fling at Lisa's Bridal in Albany."

"That's where I saw you, in Albany," she replied. "You were both there. Right? You were fantastic. I bought a dress just like the one you were wearing. You're both so pretty. Can I have your autographs?"

Dani blushed as she and Robin signed a paper napkin for both of the young ladies. "I can't believe I'm signing an autograph for an admirer," Dani thought. She winked at Robin, who winked back.

The entire day reassured Dani that he was more of a girl than he every expected to have become.

40

October turned in to November and Danny and Robin would be apart for more than a day for the first time since summer. Danny would embark to Australia with the Red Storm baseball team and Robin would face her life-changing surgery. Being apart for two weeks would be trying.

"I'm going to miss you so much," a nervous and emotional Danny said to Robin as he kissed her good night on the Zenor's porch the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving. The team was leaving for Australia in the morning. "I really wish I could stay here with you."

"Don't worry about me. I want you to go and beat those Aussies. If you play well, you'll be the starting second baseman. I want that for you and us."

"Thanks, but you and your surgery are going to be on my mind the whole time."

"It will be a piece of cake. I'll be full of Thanksgiving turkey, my parents will be with me and I have complete faith in Dr. Leis. It's actually a simple surgery. All I have to do is lie on a table; spread my legs and go to sleep.

When I awake, I'll be quite sore and swollen, but I will be 100-percent Robin."

Danny laughed between his tears. Robin wrapped her arms around him and put her head on his chest. She would miss Danny more than he could imagine, but she realized his chance to play regularly as a freshman in a major baseball program was just as important.

"We can text each other and I will have Skype hooked up on my computer too," Robin added.

"That will help," Danny countered, "But it won't make up for being here."

"Please, Danny, don't worry about me. Now get out of here. You haven't even packed. I'll be fine."

Robin placed her hands on Danny's face and squeezed his cheeks together before giving him one last lengthy kiss. She tried to remain strong and wanted to get the "good-byes" over before she broke down in tears.

"I love you," he murmured.

"I love you too. Now scoot." She slapped him on the backside and he walked down the steps.

Danny hopped on his mountain bike and started his short ride back to campus. He continually turned to wave to Robin, who had walked from the porch to the sidewalk to get a better view. During one wave, Danny fell off his bike, but was unhurt, although embarrassed. Robin laughed then broke into tears as she ran back in to the house and fell on to her bed.

Danny and the Storm arrived safely in Sydney after a day-long flight across the International dateline. They were to play seven games in 12 days against college all-star teams from Australia and New Zealand.

Thanksgiving Day would be the last full day for Robin as a biological male. Early the next morning she would

travel again to Dr. Leis' office in Bala Cynwyd for her vaginoplasty. Surgery was scheduled for 10 o'clock.

41

Robin's surgery was a big success, as was Danny's first step in to college baseball.

Despite the time difference, the two texted daily. The day following the operation, Robin wrote: "The surgery turned out to be more than I could have hoped for and I have very little pain. I will have to be careful and follow the doctor's orders for about three months. My dream of being a woman is now complete. I feel as if I have been this way all my life. I can't wait for you to come home."

Danny smiled, gave out a sigh of relief and pumped his fist in the air when he read Robin's message. He had played very well in the first three games of the tour, all wins for the Storm. He had collected five hits in 9 at bats and played flawlessly at second base. However, the news from Robin was better than hitting a grand slam.

Robin returned home following a week-long stay under Dr. Leis' care. She was to continue her pain medication, dilate at least three times a day and continue the special instructions of what she could and couldn't do.

Danny won the second base position and he would be the lone freshman in the starting lineup when the official baseball season began in March.

The long trip from sunny Australia back to snowy New York seemed like an eternity for Danny. He wanted to see the blue-eyed blonde Robin as soon as possible. As the plane landed at LaGuardia Airport, Danny dialed Robin on his cell phone. No answer, not even a voice message. He tried again. No answer.

Discouraged, he collected his luggage and walked with his teammates down the ramp to the terminal. As he

rode down the escalator to the baggage area, he could see his parents and the Zenor's waving for his attention.

"I hope nothing happened to Robin," he said to himself.

"Is there something wrong; is Robin OK?" Danny asked his parents before he stepped off the escalator.

"She's fine," his mother responded as she gave him a welcome home hug. Danny greeted his father and the Zenor's as well.

"I want to see Robin," Danny demanded. "Is she at home?"

"No," his father replied. "Turn around."

There in her glory stood Robin, wearing the same black leather mini-suit and boots she had worn to Wicked. Tears were ruining her makeup, but Danny didn't care. The welcome home kiss must have lasted a minute as Danny and Robin didn't want to stop the moment.

"Welcome home, honey," Robin said between deep breaths.

"What are you doing here?" Danny asked. "You said you had to stay home and relax."

"I felt so good; I just had to be here for you. Dr. Leis said it would be OK as long as I was careful and used a wheel chair. I didn't want to miss this moment."

"I'm so happy you were here waiting for me. I thought something bad had happened when I saw Dad and Mom and the Zenors."

"We thought we would do something special for you. You deserve it. You're going to be the starting second baseman. And, you have been my supporter, confidant and best friend for the last six months. Without you, I would be nothing."

Danny gave Robin another hug and gingerly walked her to her wheelchair.

“This is the best early Christmas gift you could give me,” Danny said with a smile as he rolled Robin out of the airport. He still had other Christmas plans on his mind.

“Let’s go get something to eat,” Danny insisted. “We need to celebrate.”

42

Danny’s first fore into college baseball was a success as he settled in as the St. John’s starting second baseman. Although the Red Storm did not win the Big East championship, they did qualify for the regional playoffs before losing the best-of-three series to national power Louisiana State. Danny batted in the eight spot in the order and had a respectable .282 average, best among Big East freshman.

Meanwhile, Robin returned to school in February and continued to model and work at Cosmo. She had officially changed her name and gender identification through the New York court system two weeks after her operation. She decided to remain at the Zenor’s instead of living in college housing until the start of the next semester. Mrs. Zenor was more than happy to have her “daughter” at home for at least two more months.

Christmas was always a major holiday at the Mitchell, Robinson and Zenor households. All three homes were decorated within days of Thanksgiving and the center of the St. John’s campus was adorned with the largest tree Danny and Robin had ever seen.

“What are you going to get me for Christmas?” Robin chided as they slowly walked hand-in-hand around the brightly lighted and superbly decorated tree in the school

quad. Dr. Leis had removed most of the restrictions on Robin's daily activities, although sex was a no-no, and had instructed her to be careful until the end of the month.

"Nothing much," Danny responded. "I don't make the big bucks like you do. Can I take out a loan?"

Robin tightened her neck scarf and put her head on his shoulder: "If you play your cards right..." She didn't elaborate.

Danny did have a few gifts in mind, including one he had been saving for some time, but he wasn't going to give Robin any clues.

"Women!"

"What about women?" Robin queried.

"You can't live with them and you can't live without them," Danny agonized.

"You better remember that!!!"

"I will, but not until after my finals."

Danny earned straight A's in his five undergraduate courses and with the Christmas break at both school and Cosmo, he and Robin returned home for the holidays.

"I hope we can do something with Kelly and Jimmy," Robin said as Danny drove the Outback through the rain en route to Cold River.

"I talked to Kelly last night," Danny responded. "I've been invited to her New Years Eve party."

"What about me?"

"I don't know. She didn't say anything about inviting you. Maybe she's still hot for me and wants me for a night. We have a lot to catch up on."

A seemingly irate Robin grabbed the cell phone off the car console and began to dial Kelly's number.

"What are you doing?" Danny asked as he took the phone from Robin's hand.

"Danny Mitchell," Robin yelled. "You and I are a team. If you're going to the party, I'm going to the party. I'm not going to let Kelly kiss you at midnight. Your lips belong to me."

Danny could not stay serious any longer and let out a loud laugh.

"You are so jealous, aren't you? I got you that time. Of course you are invited."

Robin slammed her hand against Danny's driving leg and said "You're the last man I'm ever going to have sex with."

She put her head against the passenger window and did not talk to Danny for 15 minutes, which at that time might have been a world record.

Danny continued to laugh under his breath, ignored Robin's false pouting and turned up the radio. He and Jimmy had planned a number of surprises and activities for the two couples during the holidays. Robin and Kelly would have to wait to learn what was on the schedule.

Movies, dinners and family time would highlight the pre-Christmas activities. The highlight for Danny and Robin was strolling downtown Cold River as two lovebirds, enjoying the Christmas lights on the store fronts and the 30-foot Christmas tree glistening in front of City Hall.

"Let's sit over there and enjoy the lights," Danny said as he pointed at a rare empty bench near the tree.

"We're lucky to get a place to sit," Robin acknowledged as she cuddled up to Danny. The Cold River

schools had been out for a week and with Christmas only a few days away, the area was bustling with shoppers and sight-seers despite temperatures in the 20s and snow in the forecast.

Danny's baseball laurels had caused him to remain as a town hero. He greeted a number of the friends, some he had known since he was a child. He politely introduced Robin to those who did not know her.

"Let's go get a hot chocolate," Robin requested. "I'm getting cold."

"Sounds good to me," Danny replied as he looked over his shoulder to see Jimmy and Kelly hiding behind a Christmas decoration as planned. The time had come.

Danny took Robin by her gloved hand and walked to the front of the brightly lit Christmas tree, removed the woolen cap from her head and stared into her soft blue eyes.

"Robin?" said a suddenly nervous Danny.

"Are you OK?" Robin asked as a smidgen of snow began to fall on her blonde locks. He did not answer the question.

"I have loved you since the day I first saw Robin through my bedroom window. I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

Danny took a hold of Robin's hands, dropped down to a knee on the snow-covered path, and looked into her suddenly curious face.

"Will you marry me?" A distant light flashed.

Robin's answer was quick: "Yes, yes, a thousand times yes." The light flashed again.

Robin wiped a tear from her eyes, leaned over and gave Danny a confirming kiss just as Jimmy and Kelly came yelling, screaming and running in their direction.

"She said 'Yes'" shouted Danny as he stood. "We're getting married!"

"Did you ever doubt it?" Jimmy yelled as he tackled Danny and drove him into a snow bank. Kelly gave Robin a hug and a kiss.

"Congratulations," Kelly bellowed. "Can I be in the wedding?"

"Of course," Robin replied trying to clear her suddenly plugged left ear a result of Kelly's piercing scream.

The four joined together and jumped up-and-down much to the delight and applause of those within shouting distance in the square.

"Did you guys know all about this?" Robin asked Jimmy and Kelly.

"Of course we did!" Kelly responded. "We would not have missed this for the world."

"Look at the pictures," Jimmy instructed.

The foursome studied the time-lapsed pictures on Jimmy's digital camera which captured the entire proposal.

"Wait!" Danny proclaimed. "I forgot something."

Danny again went down to knee and held Robin's left hand. He took a small box out of his coat pocket and asked: "May I?"

Jimmy continued to shoot pictures as Danny opened the box and slipped a stunning diamond ring on Robin's finger.

“Danny, it’s gorgeous,” Robin exclaimed. “It must have cost a fortune.” Kelly leaned over Robin’s shoulder for a look and a picture.

“Don’t worry about it,” Danny replied. “I got a below prime rate loan from a good friend. I hope she will consider it an investment in the future.”

Robin threw her arms around Danny’s neck and gave him another passionate kiss. The two twirled in a circle as the growing number of spectators again applauded.

“Hot chocolate for everyone,” Danny shouted.

As they walked to the confectionary store for chocolate Robin dialed her parents on her cell phone.

“We’re getting married,” she screamed before her mother could say hello.

“Mark,” Linda yelled to her husband in the other room. “Danny asked Robin to get married.”

“I hope she said ‘yes’”, he answered.

“Of course she did,” Linda continued still holding the phone and listening to Robin play-by-play of the proposal.

“Can you and Dad call the Mitchell’s? We’d love you to join us for chocolate at McCarthy’s. Hurry!!! Jimmy and Kelly are here too.”

“We’re on our way,” her mother stated. “I’ll call the Mitchell’s right now. We are so excited.”

Linda immediately phoned the Mitchell’s, who seemed to be awaiting the call.

“Danny told us he had something planned tonight,” Marla shared with Linda. “Yes, we’ll meet you at McCarthy’s.”

Danny and Robin, sat at a table with their approving parents, sipped hot chocolate and enjoyed the tasty scones

which were the McCarthy house-specialty. They received congratulatory hugs and kisses from their friends and many of those who witnessed the proposal by the tree.

Danny and Robin quickly decided to wait to set a date for their wedding noting they still had three years of college to go.

"How about a year from today?" Kelly interrupted. "A Christmas wedding would be so special. I'm sure my father could find a spot on his schedule."

"Maybe we could have a double wedding!" Jimmy chided.

"Are you asking me?" Kelly beamed.

"No," Jimmy laughed. "I just wanted to see your response."

Kelly didn't laugh. She slugged Jimmy on the shoulder and raced into the ladies' bathroom in tears.

"That Kelly, she's always over reacting!" Jimmy concluded.

"That wasn't very nice," Robin said with a frown. "You know she loves you and you love her."

"It just slipped out," Jimmy replied. "Can you go get her to come out of the bathroom? Tell her I'm sorry."

"I will, but you better apologize."

Jimmy followed Robin's lead to the restroom.

"Wait, Robin," he demanded. "I have to tell you something. Can you keep a secret?"

"You can trust me," Robin replied.

Jimmy whispered in her ear. "I was planning to ask Kelly on New Year's Eve. I hope I didn't blow it."

“Your secret is safe with me. I don’t know what I’m going to say, but I’ll make sure Kelly is OK. You better have a sincere apology.”

“I will. I’ll tell her I love her and that I will never do that again unless I really mean it. I don’t want to lose her.”

“I hope that works,” Robin replied as she walked semi-upset and semi-pleased into the ladies room. Jimmy had acted like a jerk and Kelly had reacted in her usual fashion. However, she was thrilled that her friends may get engaged as well. Robin figured they deserved each other.

43

Jimmy and Kelly always had a tumultuous relationship from the time they began dating prior to the Senior Ball.

Sports had brought Jimmy and Danny together and he was arguably Danny’s closest friend in high school. Jimmy stood 6-foot-2 and weighed between 190 and 200 pounds. His build was perfect for a wide receiver and defensive back on the football team, a forward on the basketball squad and a first baseman for the state champion baseball team.

Jimmy was born with a “silver spoon in his mouth” but seldom flaunted his status. His father was head surgeon at Albany General Hospital and one would never realize he had a lofty position by his actions. He was also one of the biggest supporters of the Cold River athletic department, to the extent that he secretly purchased portable standards which could be used for lighting either the football or baseball fields.

Jimmy had the grades and talent, and his family had the money, for him to attend any college he desired. How-

ever, he accepted a baseball scholarship at Albany State so he could stay close to home and to Kelly, who worked part time for her father and was waiting to be accepted to the Albany State dental hygienist program.

Even though Kelly knew Jimmy since grade school, she always had her eyes set on Danny. The Mitchell's and Espee's had been long-time friends, hitting it off the first time Tim and Marla walked in to Cold River Community Church. Pastor Espee had the personality and preaching style that few people could resist. He was the ultimate evangelist.

Every one who knew the younger Danny and Kelly thought they would be an item by the time they reached high school. As Danny grew older, he became more shy and introverted, while Kelly was out going and personable. She was also a wiener when she didn't get her way. While Danny was named Athlete of the Year as a senior, Kelly was the yearbook "Gossip Queen".

Danny always had a warm feeling in his heart and mind for Kelly, but she wanted more. All that ended when Robin entered the scene. Once rejected by Danny, Jimmy became the "man of her dreams" and eventually, despite Kelly's mood swings, they fell in love.

"I guess they're going to be OK," Robin informed Danny as they departed McCarthy's for the short walk home. Their parents had offered them a ride, but Danny insisted on walking.

The snow was lightly falling as Danny and Robin walked past the batting cages. Icicles had formed on the screening and netting around the cages.

"Do you want to take a few swings," Danny kidded Robin. The thermometer on the bank across the street noted 21 degrees.

"This is our special place," Robin responded. "But it is a little too cold."

"Hitting a ball would probably sting your hands anyway," Danny said seriously. "And, if you kissed the aluminum bat like you did once before, your lips might stick."

"I'd rather kiss you," Robin giggled as their feet created a cracking noise from walking on the icy path. She held his hand tightly as they negotiated the slippery sidewalk.

"Do you want to come in?" Robin asked Danny as she opened the door to her home.

Danny didn't hesitate. He didn't want the night to end. He had proposed to the "girl of my dreams" and she accepted. He wanted to spend every minute with her.

Robin told her parents "we're home" and settled on the couch next to Danny.

"The ring is beautiful...something I would have picked out," she said, moving the ring in the light to highlight the diamond.

"In a way, you did pick it out. Remember when we went to see Wicked and we looked at rings through the window of that jewelry shop?"

"Yes, I do."

"I went back the next week and took a picture of the ring, then took it to Phox Jewelry and Heidi made the ring for me."

"I love it. It could not be prettier."

Robin wrapped her arms around Danny's shoulders and gave him a big kiss.

"Thank you," Danny responded as he took her ring finger in his hand. "Thank you for saying 'yes' and thank you for making this the best day of my life."

"It's just the beginning," Robin echoed as she kissed Danny again.

44

Danny and Robin attended Christmas Eve service with Jimmy and Kelly and exchanged gifts on Christmas day, but nothing could match the proposal and diamond ring. Danny received a blue sweater and Mets cap from Robin, while he gave her a photo album and few CDs. He had blown his budget on the ring.

"I have something for Dani too," she whispered. "Let's go up to my room."

Danny followed Robin up the stairs and was presented with a thin rectangular box.

"Open it," she insisted. Danny complied. Inside he found a black Secrets In Lace garter belt.

"This is so thoughtful," Danny replied. "It's wonderful, but when will I use it?"

"Soon," she said. "It will go with your good nylons. It will be perfect with some of the short dresses. I'd love to do something with Dani after the first of the year."

"We'll see," he replied hoping the chance to again be Dani would be sooner rather than later.

With a wedding in the future, the Mitchell and Robinson families shared Christmas dinner together with family and friends. Danny and Robin were presented a toast by their fathers, but a formal engagement party would wait.

As New Year's Eve approached, Danny and Robin wondered if Jimmy was going to "pop the question" to Kelly.

"I don't know if Jimmy can pull it off," Danny remarked as Robin showed him a shimmery black and silver highlighted dress that she planned to wear to Kelly's party.

"They seemed to have patched everything up, at least when we saw them on Christmas Eve," Robin concluded.

"If he's half as nervous as I was, he will be a wreck. I don't know if he can go through it. I still don't know how I got up the courage to ask you."

"Well, you did, and I couldn't be happier."

"Me too. I know God answered my prayers."

"He answered my prayers and dreams too. What do you think of my dress?"

Danny smiled and took the dress off the hanger and sized it up. "It's beautiful and sexy at the same time. You will make it look even better. Do you think it would look good on me? I think I could wear it don't you?"

"Danny!!! I'm wearing it not you." At least Robin would on New Years Eve. Dani's opportunity would have to wait.

"You take all the fun out of everything," Danny proclaimed.

Cold River Community Church had never had as such a nattily dressed number of young adults in the pews for the 7 o'clock New Years Eve service. Most of the college aged ladies wore coats over their strapless and stylish dresses not only due to the 10 degree weather outside, but in modesty and respect for God and the other church goers. Kelly's party would begin about an hour after the worship.

“Karyn’s here with Nikky,” Robin whispered to Danny during the opening hymn. She had turned to look for Danny’s parents when she noticed Karyn.

“What a surprise,” Danny softly said. “Nikky told me last week that he was staying in Arizona and that his parents were coming to visit. Something must have changed.”

“Maybe they can come to the party,” Robin added. “I’ll ask Kelly after the service.”

“Wait until we talk to them and find out what their plans are,” Danny concluded.

“OK,” Robin agreed. “I can’t wait to tell her our good news.”

Danny squeezed Robin’s hand twice as Pastor Espee began the liturgy.

The New Year’s service concluded shortly after 8:15 and the worshipers slowly departed to the various New Years Eve celebrations around town.

Robin waved hello to Karyn and pointed to the large entry door in the narthex as the congregation was ushered row-by-row out of the church.

“I can’t believe they’re here,” Robin exclaimed.

“I’m really surprised too,” Danny added.

Within minutes Danny and Robin greeted their friends with hugs and kisses in the narthex.

“What are you doing here?” Danny asked Nikky.

“It was a last minute decision,” Nikky replied. “My grandmother fell and broke her hip, so my parents had to go up to Syracuse to be with her. I decided to come with them. I got home last night and Karyn came up from the city to be with me. I don’t know when my parents will get home.”

"I thought you were going to Peggy's Cove," Robin remarked regarding Karyn's home town in Nova Scotia.

"I was home for a few days," Karyn explained. "But my Uncle Marvin couldn't come up to Penny's Cove for Christmas because of the snow, so we brought Christmas to him. Christmas is never complete without my uncle."

"That's so special," Robin concluded.

"Yes, and he's special too," Karyn confirmed.

"Look what I got for an early Christmas gift," Robin beamed, showing off her ring, in an unusual moment of vanity.

"Are you getting married?" Karyn shrieked, drawing attention of those in the narthex.

"We sure are," Robin responded. "We haven't set a date but I want you in the wedding. Will you?"

"It would be an honor! Look at her ring, Nikky."

Nikky shrugged it off as a girl thing and asked: "Where's Jimmy?"

"He's here somewhere," Danny said, scanning the crowd. "He's over there with Kelly's family."

"What are you doing tonight?" Robin asked.

"Nothing, just hanging out I guess," Karyn answered.

"We're going to Kelly's party. Wanta come along? I can ask her."

"I don't want to impose. We hardly know her and were not dressed for a party."

Karyn was wearing a turtleneck sweater, boots and jeans under her long overcoat and Nikky was attired in a shirt, jeans and leather jacket. They appeared more likely to have ridden a motorcycle to church, but Robin knew Nikky did not have a two-wheeler.

"Don't worry. Let me go ask her. The worst she can say is no."

Robin departed to search for Kelly as Jimmy stopped to say hello.

"Are you coming to the party tonight?" Jimmy asked Nikky.

"What party?"

"Kelly's having one at her house tonight. It starts around 9. You have to come so we can catch up on things. How's Arizona?"

"Robin went to ask Kelly," Karyn interrupted the conversation between Jimmy and Nikky.

"She said yes," Robin exclaimed upon returning to the narthex. "She would love to have you come. I told her we would be a little late. We can go to our house and you can wear one of my dresses."

Robin took Karyn by the arm and escorted her out of the church.

"We'll meet you and Nikky at my house in 30 minutes," Robin told Danny as they walked down the church steps to the car.

"Are you going to ask her tonight?" Danny asked Jimmy.

"Ask who?" Nikky questioned.

"I'm going to ask Kelly to get married tonight at midnight," Jimmy responded in a bit of a stutter.

"Congratulations," Nikky replied as he slugged Jimmy on the shoulder. "Way to go man. I hope she accepts."

"Me too!!!"

The Espe's home was festive for New Years Eve. Kelly had worked on the decorations for two days. Her parents had given her free reign as they would be attending another party at the home of a parishioner.



Balloons appeared everywhere and stringers hung from the ceiling. Three small tables, enough for 12 guests, graced the dining room and music blared from the CD player. The food was ready and only the guests were missing.

Kelly looked stunning in a soft gold knee-length dress and 4-inch color coordinated heels. She had spent four hours earlier in the day at the beauty salon in anticipation of the big night. She had a feeling a life-changing event might be on the agenda.

"Am I pretty enough?" she cooed to Jimmy, who was filling the large drink bowl with champagne punch.

"You've never looked prettier," Jimmy replied as they exchanged a kiss. "You look gorgeous. The only problem is that you are taller than me."

Kelly blushed, laughed and kicked off her heels.

"No, no, wear your heels. I don't care if you're taller. I was just kidding you. I want you to look your best."

Jimmy gave Kelly a second kiss as a knock was heard on the front door. The guests were beginning to arrive.

Robin hustled Karyn to her house and the guys followed in short order.

"Stay down stairs," Robin demanded. "I asked you to wait 30 minutes. You didn't have to be on time for once."

Danny laughed as he and Nikky caught up on baseball and each other's lives.

Nikky enjoyed Arizona State, played on the Sun Devils' fall team and earned a rare spot in the starting pitching rotation as a freshman.

"I do miss Cold River and it's been hard keeping a long distance relationship with Karyn," Nikky reflected.

“You are so lucky to go to school with Robin and live in the city. I think you see more of Karyn than I do.”

“We always ask her about you,” Danny mentioned. “Robin and Karyn have really grown close too. So, we try to keep up on what you are doing. That’s fabulous you’re going to be one of the starting pitchers.”

“Well if it wasn’t for Robin, I would have never met Karyn. She means the world to me.”

“I’m sure the feeling is mutual.”

“We’re ready,” Robin announced over the sound of footsteps on the Robinson’s stairway.

Robin appeared first in her thin strapped mini black and silver dress and sparkly silver heels.

“Wow!!!” Nikky remarked.

“Awe, that’s nothing,” Danny chided. “You should see her when she is really dressed up.”

Robin ignored the comment and said: “Gentlemen, may I introduce Miss Karyn.”

Karyn came around the corner to greet a surprised Nikky.

“Wow again,” he enthusiastically proclaimed.

Karyn was adorned in a Robin’s blue senior ball dress and heels. Her hair was curled and her makeup was perfect.

“I don’t look like a biker chick any more,” Karyn chided Nikky.

“You never did in the first place,” he replied with a big smile.

“Let’s go,” Danny reminded the foursome. “We’re already late.”

The drive to Kelly's took only 10 minutes. The party was in full bloom when Robin rang the doorbell.

"Welcome to our humble abode," Kelly said when she answered the door.

"Better late than never," Jimmy joked.

"We had to wait for the women, again," Danny spouted, which resulted in a light slap on the cheek from Robin.

"What did I tell you Karyn? We always get the blame."

The young adults ate, drank and danced as the clock approached midnight and the New Year.

Danny noticed Jimmy had disappeared and searched the house for his friend.

"Are you in there?" he asked as he knocked on the upstairs bathroom door.

"I can't do it," Jimmy said from inside the bathroom. "I just threw up. I'm a mess."

"Let me in," Danny demanded. The door slowly opened. Jimmy looked like he had seen a ghost.

"Pull yourself together, Jimmy."

"If you remember, I get this way before games too. I always seem to throw up."

"Yeah, but look at how things always turn out to the positive."

"I know, but I just can't do this."

"If I can ask Robin to get married in the town square, you can do something as simple here among your closest friends."

"I know, but what if she says 'No?'"

"I don't think that will be her answer. Now pull yourself together. You have about 15 minutes."

"Give me a couple of minutes to clean up. I'll be down soon."

Danny returned downstairs and donned a green New Year's hat. Robin handed him a noise maker as he quietly explained Jimmy's condition.

"I don't think he's going to make it," Danny said to Robin over the loud television, which was set to the Times' Square ball drop, minutes away.

"Oh well, if it doesn't work out, he can always ask her privately tomorrow."

Down the stairs bounded Jimmy as if nothing had happened. He looked confident and ready.

"Get your camera ready," Danny instructed Robin.

"Did he tell you when is he going to ask her?" Robin queried.

"No, but be ready."

The one-minute to New Year countdown began and the ball began to drop in New York City. As the ball reached its destination and the clock showed "0:00" on the TV, the partiers exchanged kisses, blew their horns and made all the noise they could muster.

Lost in the excitement was Jimmy, holding Kelly tightly in his arms, kissing her as if they had never kissed before. Just as the clock struck midnight, he whispered "will you marry me" in Kelly's left ear. She whispered back her acceptance and was instantly wearing a diamond laden gold band on her finger. Robin and Danny had missed the exchange as had all the other friends.

"Champagne anyone?" Jimmy asked. "I have an announcement to make."

Robin started taking pictures as Jimmy, with a bottle of bubbly in his left hand and a giddy Kelly at his side, began his announcement.

"I think he did it, but I don't know when," Danny said to Robin, Karyn and Nikky.

"Did what?" Karyn asked.

"He asked Kelly to get married..." and before Danny could continue Jimmy interrupted.

"I have asked Kelly to marry me," Jimmy announced.

"And I said yes," Kelly interrupted.

"How come I didn't know anything about this?" Karyn asked Robin. "I must really be out of the loop."

"Don't worry about it, we didn't expect it either," Robin replied with the wink of an eye.

Everyone applauded, glasses were raised and party horns tooted as Jimmy and Kelly kissed again.

"What's all the commotion?" Pastor Espee remarked as he and his wife, Vicki, entered the room.

"How was your party?" Kelly asked her parents as she rushed up to greet them. "It was very nice, a lot quieter than here. Looks like you're all having fun."

"Please join us, Mom and Dad," Kelly insisted, holding out her left hand "Look what I have!"

The Espee's examined the ring and were caught off guard to say the least.

"Oh my goodness," Mrs. Espee screamed. "Did Jimmy ask you to get married?"

"Who else would?" Kelly assured her parents. "He asked me just before midnight. Isn't that romantic? Dad, would you have a Saturday open in June or July?"

Pastor Espee laughed and opened his always handy appointment book.

"I think I can fit it in somewhere."

Pastor and Mrs. Espee gave Kelly and Jimmy congratulatory hugs and kisses.

"I'm sorry I didn't get the chance to ask you first," Jimmy said to the Espees. "I have wanted to ask Kelly for a long time. But, I was so nervous. I just couldn't get myself to say the words. I hope you don't mind."

"Never," Pastor Espee assured Jimmy. "We will be so proud and happy to have you in our family."

"Thank you," Jimmy concluded as he shook his future father-in-law's hand.

"How about a toast?" Pastor Espee announced.

The New Years' and now the engagement celebration would continue into the wee hours of the morning.

46

New Year's Day was a day to recover, watch college football games and just hang out. Nikky had spent the night at the Mitchell's and Karyn had stayed with Robin. Since the party ran into the early morning, nobody stirred until around noon.

"What a night," Danny said to a half-awake Nikky, who had slept on the bedroom floor.

"Jimmy really surprised me," Nikky stated. "I didn't know he and Kelly were that serious. I know they had been dating, but..."

"He almost blew it right before Christmas," Danny informed him.

"What happened?"

“The night I proposed to Robin, Kelly and Jimmy helped take a bunch of pictures. After Robin accepted, we all went to McCarthy’s to celebrate. Jimmy was teasing Kelly about a double wedding and she took him serious. When Jimmy said he was just kidding, she stormed off in tears to the bathroom. Robin had to play peacemaker.”

“Well, she does have a bit of a temper.”

“I think what he said hit a nerve. She has always had an eye out for me and I think it hurt that I asked Robin, even though she encouraged me to do so.”

“A reality thing?”

“I guess. Anyway, Jimmy was so scared to ask her. I found him throwing up in the bathroom just before midnight. But, he came through, just like I knew he would. He surprised us all by calmly whispering in Kelly’s ear while they dance just before midnight. I like how he asked her. It was very classy. I was waiting for him to get down on a knee like I did.”

“Well, Karyn and I were surprised.”

“What about you and Karyn?”

“We’re really happy when we are together and very sad when we are apart.”

“What are you waiting for?”

“We have talked about spending more time together, but we are so far apart. Her modeling and my baseball make it even harder. That’s why I was so happy we could spend Christmas together. We both have a lot of responsibilities to fulfill. I have met her Uncle Marvin and he’s a great guy. I still haven’t met her parents but I will in about 30 hours. We are flying to Halifax tomorrow.”

“That’s great.”

"I love Karyn and she loves me, but we aren't pushing the marriage idea right now. Too bad you couldn't come to Halifax with us."

"Maybe this summer, if everything can be worked out."

"That would be a lot of fun. Maybe we could go after summer baseball and before school starts? I understand it's beautiful there in September. Let me see how it goes tomorrow. Her parents might hate me."

"I doubt it."

The guys stumbled down stairs for breakfast and were greeted by the Mitchell's.

"Syracuse is up by 10 points over Michigan," Mr. Mitchell announced, regarding the bowl game on television.

"What quarter?" Danny asked.

"Third."

"It's still early, they'll probably blow it," Nikky chided.

"Bet you a buck," Danny responded.

"You're on."

At the Robinson's home, Robin and Karyn were deep into fashion. Cosmo was planning a 50th anniversary edition in the fall and both girls were hoping to be a part of the special publication.

"I wish Bridgett would say something to one of us," Robin remarked. "Every time I see her and bring up the subject, she just smiles."

"Maybe that's a sign," Karyn countered. "You deserve to be in the magazine. I'd be happy for just one little picture."

"Thanks for the compliment, but there are so many Cosmo girls more qualified than me. Heck, Bridgett and Robyn have almost 50 years of girls to choose from."

"Well, I'm not going to worry about it," Robin concluded.

"Neither will I. I just enjoy working there. It's a great way to make a living."

The phone rang and it was Danny. He invited the girls over to watch football.

"Maybe in a little while," Robin decided. "Karyn and I have to get ready and Mom asked me to get a few groceries. Do you know they are leaving tomorrow?"

"Yeah, I do," Danny replied. "They're going to see Karyn's parents. Nikky has never met them."

"That's what I understand too."

"That was some party last night," Danny said, changing the conversation.

"The way Jimmy asked Kelly really surprised me," Robin said. "It was so subtle and classy, but nothing compared to what you did for me. They appear to be really happy."

Danny smiled and continued: "I hope they're still happy this morning. You know how moody Kelly is."

"I'm sure she is."

"And you won't have to worry about her any more," Danny assured Robin. "She has a ring on her finger and Jimmy has one in his nose."

"Danny!" Robin shrieked. "Now that wasn't very nice...but it's true. I'll call you when we get home...about 3 or so."

"Love you!"

“Love you too!”

47

Danny and Robin returned to NYC the second week of January, even though school would not begin until the end of the month.

Danny rejoined his baseball teammates for indoor practices and Robin resumed her position at Cosmo. The St. John’s baseball season would begin in early February with weekend trips to Texas and Arizona. Danny would connect with Nikky, however St. John’s and ASU would not be playing in the same tournament.

Cosmo was gearing up for the December 50th anniversary edition. Even though the publication was 11 months away, the magazine must be completed by late August for November newsstand release.

Robin checked her e-mails and began to make plans for her up-coming talent scout search. She would be attending various spring fashion shows up-and-down the East Coast seeking young models and interns, just as she had been a year before.

The phone rang. It was Bridgett.

“Robin? Could you meet me in my office? Five minutes?”

Robin’s mind raced: “Could this be the phone call I’ve been waiting for?”

“I’ll be right there.”

Bridgett and Robin talked at least once a day, even when her boss was out of the office, so she wasn’t going to get her hopes up too high.

Robin pulled on her red sweater, straightened her black pencil skirt, and cinched her black belt. She always

looked poised and polished, much to the envy of her co-workers, but this time she wanted to be perfect. She caught one of the heels on her boots on the carpet and briefly stumbled as she walked a bit too fast to Bridgett's office.

"I'm here to see Ms. Sommers," Robin said to Bridgett's executive secretary, sitting at the front desk.

"You have the greatest name," Robin stated. "Lowla Valentine."

"Thanks. It's always Valentine's Day around my house."

Robin had to wait a couple of minutes before Lowla, a tall, statuesque brunette in her mid 40s, escorted her to Bridgett's office.

"Come in," her boss stated, as she stood up at her desk. "How was your Christmas and New Year's?"

Robin extended her hand for Bridgett's inspection.

"It's beautiful. Danny?"

"You bet. He asked me in front of our hometown Christmas tree. It was so exciting."

"Have you set a date?"

"No, not yet, maybe next Christmas, or the year after that."

"Christmas is my favorite time of the year and would be such a beautiful time for a wedding."

"Mine too."

"I know you are very aware that our 50th anniversary will be in December and we are planning a super-sized special edition."

"Yes, I'm so excited about just being a part of it by working here."

“Well, Robyn and I have been exchanging ideas and have come to a conclusion. We have decided to do something we have never done before. We have decided to create a front cover collage and feature many of the models who have posed over the last 50 years.”

“It sounds so exciting.”

“The most exciting part is that we want you to be on the cover as our 50th anniversary cover girl.”

“Me!!!”

“Yes, you.”

“You must be kidding me. I’m not in the same class as all those girls.”

“You will be.”

Robin sat shaking with excitement and listened to Bridgett explain her plan. There would be five cover girls from the past, each representing a decade. Robin would be the sixth and represent the future.

“But, I’ve never had my picture in the magazine.”

“We are going to feature you in June when we feature the newest fall fashions. So, we need to start shooting pictures next week for both editions.”

“I can’t wait to tell Danny.”

“That’s another thing I wanted to talk with you about. I would like at least one picture of you with your cousin.”

“You mean Dani?”

“Yes!”

“Oh my goodness. I can’t do that.”

“Why not? Wouldn’t she be interested? We pay very well.”

Robin rubbed her now tear-stained eyes and said: "We need to talk about Dani."

For the next 30 minutes, Robin told Bridgett everything about Danny and his cross-dressing adventures.

"Well, you sure fooled me," Bridgett lamented. "And to think, Robyn offered her an internship too. Let me think about this for a minute or two."

Bridgett tapped her lengthy fingers nails at the side of her temple and contemplated the situation.

"Let's do it!" she finally replied.

"Do what?" Robin inquired.

"Would you ask Danny to meet with me tomorrow?"

"I'll call him when I get back to my desk. We aren't in school yet so he's free except for baseball practice."

Bridgett tossed Robin her cell phone and Danny was summoned.

"No answer," Robin replied, before leaving a message.

"Here's my idea," Bridgett proposed. "We would only want Danny in a couple of pictures with you. With our makeup people and our assortment of wigs, nobody would know he was a guy. We might do an outdoor session since it would be for fall. We're already on the look out for a location that isn't covered with snow. It would take at least one day, probably two. However, we could complete Danny's part in one day. And, the pay is good."

Robin was holding Bridgett's phone when it chimed.

"Hi honey. Guess what? Bridgett just asked me to be one of the cover girls for the anniversary edition."

"That's fantastic," Danny responded as Robin rambled on.

"She wants to feature me in the July edition too. I can't believe it."

"Wow!!! That's unbelievable."

"Bridgett wants to talk with you too."

Robin handed her boss the phone.

"Hey, Danny. I would like to run an idea past you. Could you stop past the office either today or tomorrow?"

"I have practice in an hour, but I could be there this afternoon or tomorrow morning."

"Let's do it tomorrow morning. Will that fit your schedule?"

"I could come in with Robin."

"How about meeting at 9 in my office?"

"I'll have Lowla put it on my calendar. See you tomorrow."

"I love you," Robin shouted, loud enough for Danny to hear before Bridgett disconnected the phone.

"This is unbelievable," Robin proclaimed. "I'm going to be a cover girl."

"Yes you are. Congratulations."

"But I don't think Danny will do it."

"He will when I get done with him," Bridgett threatened, followed by a laugh and a smile.

48

Robin was asked not to say anything to Danny about the reason for the appointment with Bridgett. Danny assumed the meeting was in regards to Robin and the special edition. He was not too sure where he fit in to the equation.

"You're right on time," Lowla commended Danny as he walked in to the executive office.

"I just left Robin in her office," he said.

"Bridgett will be right with you."

Bridgett and Robyn greeted Danny at the interior office door.

"Come on in," Bridgett said offering her right hand. Danny hugged Bridgett and Robyn instead.

"What's up?" he asked.

"How would you like to make \$7,500 for one or two days of work?" Robyn inquired.

"You're kidding me," Danny replied in awe. "What do I have to do?"

"We would like the female Dani to be part of Robin's photo shoot and layout," Bridgett replied as she opened what appeared to be a photo book on her desk.

"No way!" proclaimed a red-faced Danny as he stood up from his chair. "How did you find out about Dani?"

"Before you get to upset, let me explain," Bridgett requested. "Please sit down."

"Yesterday, after Robin accepted the opportunity to be the July cover girl, I asked her about her cousin. I told her I would be interested in having one or two pictures of the two of them together in the magazine as well."

"OK," Danny mumbled, running the thoughts of being Dani again through his mind.

Bridgett continued: "She started to cry when she told me about the real Dani. She really didn't want to, but felt it was time. She had to tell somebody. Don't be mad at her. She had protected you and still wants to protect you. That's why this conversation will not go outside my office no matter what you decide."

"No wonder Robin was distracted last night," Danny said. "I thought it was about being a cover girl. Now, I know it was both. Don't worry; I won't be mad at her. I just don't think I can accept your offer. "

Robyn picked up the photo album and sat down next to Danny.

"I want you to see something," Robyn said as she opened the book.

"Where'd you get those pictures?" Danny asked. "Those are from the fashion show."

"Yes, those are you. Our photographer took them. You were so cute and a perfect model. Why do you think we offered you an internship?"

"I still think this is way over my head. Somebody is sure to recognize me."

"Not when our makeup people work with you. You won't even recognize yourself."

"I don't think I can accept any payment due to NCAA rules. I don't want to lose my baseball scholarship."

"We have already checked with the NCAA," Bridgett interrupted. "It's perfectly legal as long as you do not receive payment for your baseball talents. We could always make the check out to Robin."

"Hey, there's an idea...a World Series baseball theme since we will be featuring fall fashions. Maybe we could use the Yankees and Mets stadiums."

"Not a bad idea," replied Robyn. "Let me work on it. I know people at both stadiums."

"I don't know about that," Danny concluded. "It might be getting too close to home."

"Let me worry about that," Robyn explained.

"I still don't know," Danny said.

"I have another possibility," Bridgett stated. "Here's the deal. You can come here and we will get you all made up and you can try on the clothes you would wear in the photo session. We will take a few pictures and you can see what you look like. If you don't want to go any further that's fine with us. If you wish to work with Robin and be a part of what could be a fabulous time, we can work out the details."

"Let me talk with Robin," Danny requested. "Can I let you know tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow would be perfect," Bridgett affirmed. "We know we've thrown a lot at you this morning. Talk with Robin and let us know. We would love to have you."

"I don't think we've ever had a transgender model, at least if we did we didn't know it," Bridgett recounted. "This would be so special."

Danny thanked the ladies, left the executive office and stormed back to Robin's desk.

"We need to talk!" he demanded in a way Robin had never seen or anticipated.

"We can go to the cafeteria," Robin said.

"No, some place private."

Robin ran her hand through her hair and said: "Come with me." She tried to take his hand, but Danny refused.

Robin motioned Danny in to a private interview room down the hall from her desk and closed the door.

"I hope you didn't tell them," Danny scowled, before Robin could sit down in one of the two chairs separated by a table.

"Tell them what?"

"That you were once a guy?"

"Oh Danny, I would never do that. That's our secret."

Danny slammed his left hand down on the table.

"Then why did they ask me to do a photo shoot as Dani for the magazine? Why didn't you tell me you told them about Dani? Can I ever trust you again?"

"They asked me not to tell you in the event they changed their minds. I guess they didn't. Don't be so angry."

"I'm sorry, but my first thought was that you told them who you really are."

"I would never tell anybody. I'm a woman now. Taylor is dead. Robin is very much alive and in love with you."

"Then why did you tell them about Dani?"

Bridgett asked me about my cousin and the desire for her to share a bit of my cover girl feature. She thought Dani was a doll and the two of us being together would be fun."

Danny's temper calmed as Robin elaborated on the conversation with her boss.

"I couldn't hide Dani forever. They'd eventually wonder why she wouldn't be a part of our wedding. I thought it was the right thing to do. Both Bridgett and Robyn were happy I told them. It cleared the air. Look, they're offering Dani an opportunity that would never have happened if I had kept silent."

"OK, OK. OK. Let's talk about this."

A much calmer Danny took a deep breath and held Robin's hand across the table.

"What I'm concerned about is if somebody connects me with you," he said.

“How could they? Bridgett said they will use a fictitious name. Many of the models don’t use their real names. You can do the same thing.”

Danny was silent for a few seconds and stared at the ceiling.

“Well, I could use the money and I don’t want to cause any problems that would reflect on you.”

Danny analyzed Bridgett’s offer for an in studio trial run as Robin nodded her head in agreement.

“What do you have to lose?” Robin questioned. “If it doesn’t work, you can back out gracefully. If it works, I will love working with my cousin and my best friend.”

“OK, let’s do it,” Danny confirmed. “Let’s go tell Bridgett.”

Danny and Robin locked arms as they rushed in to Bridgett’s office, innocently ignoring Lowla’s stop sign.

“I’ll do it,” Danny declared as he surprised Bridgett, who was on the phone. She quickly ended her call and gave both Danny and Robin a hug.

“This will be the best shoot ever,” Bridgett proclaimed. “I’m so happy you accepted. Please sit down for a few minutes.”

When Bridgett regained her composure, she continued.

“When can you come for the practice shoot?”

“I have two-a-day baseball practices starting tomorrow. I’m free after 4.”

“How about doing an evening shoot?”

“That would work for me.”

Bridgett made a couple of calls as Robin and Danny quietly talked.

“OK,” Bridgett finally said. “We’ll do it next Monday night. Be here by 5. Makeup will take about two hours. We will have the entire evening open. You’re a size 8-10 and 9 for shoes? Right? I will need you to sign a release for the tryout. If everything works out, as I expect it will, we can sign a formal contract on Tuesday.”

“Yes,” Danny replied. “Do I need to bring anything?”

“No, just bring the same Dani I met at the fashion show.”

The three exchanged hugs before Danny and Robin departed.

“Let’s go get some lunch,” Robin insisted. “It’s been a long morning.”

“It sure has,” Danny noted. “An interesting morning as well.”

49

The studio lights were bright and hot as world renowned makeup artist Amanda Richards dabbed Dani’s forehead with powder.

“We’re just about done,” photographer Vickie Collins informed Dani as she was positioned for another pose during the first of three sessions.

“Lean back just a bit more and smile,” Vickie instructed, as Dani sat on a bench, in front of a tree-laden background with her feet crossed at the ankles. She was wearing a light brown sweater, covered by a sheer multi-harvest colored shawl, with dark brown knee-length gauchos, and 4-inch heeled suede boots. Her curly brownish-blond flowing locks touched just below her shoulders.

“Keep smiling, tilt your head, close your eyes, open your eyes, put your hands on your knees, cross your legs, turn to your left, turn to your right,” Vickie requested as her digital camera took rapid fire pictures.

“What a workout,” Dani exclaimed to Robin, who had been standing in the darkness behind Vickie.

“You did great,” Robin complemented.

“Want to see a couple of pictures?” Vickie asked as she slipped the disc into a computer.

“Wow!” Robin proclaimed as the pictures rolled on the computer screen.

“Sensational!” Vickie added. “You’ve got it all going, girl.”

Dani peered at the images and smiled. “I really do look good, don’t I?”

“You’re great,” Vickie continued. “Nobody would know you’re a guy.”

“I’m starting to think that too,” Dani responded.

“Don’t get too cocky,” Robin replied with a laugh. “Even though I must agree with Vickie, the pictures are fabulous.”

“They’ll even look better when I finish with the touch ups.”

Bridgett, who had been delayed, arrived and looked at the first batch of photos.

“Fem-sational,” she decried. “I think we have a star in the making.”

“Let’s go Dani,” Amanda demanded. “You have to change outfits and I need to redo your makeup.”

“Fifteen minutes?” Vickie questioned.

"Maybe 20 to 25," Amanda requested as she and Dani left for the dressing room.

"She's great," Bridgett said to Robin as they looked at the slideshow. "I really like that one, and that one, and that one..."

"You really surprised me," Amanda said to Dani, who was in front of a makeup mirror after changing into a flowery brown and tan skirt, a solid brown jacket and two-toned open-toed platform heels.

"Thanks," Dani replied. "I'm pooped already."

"Sit still," Amanda declared. "We only have a few minutes."

Amanda applied the appropriate makeup to Dani's eyes, cheeks and lips to enhance the conversion from a sporty look to a young office girl. Cosmo air stylist Silke arrived with a short brown wig.

"Let me comb this out a bit," Silke said in a German accent. "Bridgett wants you looking conservative, but sassy."

Silke worked the comb and hair pick as Amanda pressed tan colored nails on Dani's fingers.

"Let me look at you," Amanda said as Dani stood and twirled. "Perfect. You're really in to this aren't you?"

"Its fun," Dani concurred as Amanda and Silke followed her back to the studio.

Bridgett and Vickie gave Dani the instructions and the pose ideas for the second session of photos. The background had been changed to an office motif and a desk had been rolled in to place.

Vickie positioned Dani in various poses and took another 200 pictures. Another clothes, makeup and hair change followed. Dani reappeared in a crPme sweater

dress with matching accessories, short boots, and a medium length blondish wig, a perfect outfit for a happy hour or an after work casual dinner. The photo shoot continued for another 200 pictures or so.

“Congratulations Dani and thank-you,” Bridgett said with a hug. “You were sensational. How do you feel about the session?”

“I still can’t believe I did this,” Dani replied. “Are the pictures that good?”

“You bet they are,” Bridgett declared. “I will look at all the pictures in the next couple of days and pick out the best to be used in your portfolio. I hope you will agree to do the shoot with Robin.”

“I will,” Dani said, surprising Bridgett and Robin with his quick response.

“OK then, you can sign the contract tomorrow at my office. Let’s go celebrate.”

“I have to change first.”

“No you don’t,” Bridgett instructed. “Wear what you have on. I want to see how you react when you are out and about.”

“You want me to go out as Dani?”

“Why not? We’re only going to dinner.”

With that, Bridgett escorted Robin, Dani, Amanda, Vickie, Silke and the support staff, to an all-night Italian restaurant for a late dinner.

“Dinner’s on me,” she announced.

50

When Bridgett and Robyn viewed Vickie’s pictures the following morning they realized they had a budding star.

"When I look at the pictures, I have a problem realizing Dani is really a guy," Bridgett said to Robyn, her desk covered with photos. "She has all the moves, the style, the grace and the smile that would make any model envy. She's better than half of the girls on the payroll now. She's almost as good as Robin."

"I agree," Robyn noted. "But, let's not take anything away from Robin. She is extra special."

"I know we told Danny that the pictures were for our eyes only, but they are too good not to use in the magazine. Maybe we are going to have to expand the fall layout."

"You're absolutely right," Robin agreed. "When is Danny coming in to sign the contract?"

"Some time this afternoon. I think we are going to have to revise our offer."

Vickie, standing behind Bridgett continued to re-arrange the pictures, and nodded her head in agreement.

"Amanda told me Dani had the smoothest and softest complexion she had worked on in a long time," Vickie recalled. "The lighting just seemed to be enveloped by her appearance. I hardly had to make a lighting change."

"You can see it in the pictures," Bridgett said as she examined another set of photos.

"I think I like the first set best, but they are all great."

"I like this one," Robyn stated, holding a picture of Dani in the sweater dress up for inspection. "This is perfect and after seeing Dani at the restaurant and her almost natural female deportment, I'm convinced he is more confident as a girl than a guy."

"That's quite a compliment," Bridgett agreed with a smile. "Let's see what we can work out."

Danny and Robin arrived minutes after 4. Danny was wearing his St. John's baseball cap, practice uniform and tennis shoes.

"Sorry, but I rushed over here between practices," Danny stated as he was greeted by Bridgett. "Thank goodness the traffic wasn't too bad."

"Why didn't you take the subway?" Bridgett wondered aloud.

"In my baseball uniform?"

"Why not?"

"I didn't want to change since I have practice again tonight."

"Are you sure you're the same glamorous young lady I took to dinner at the restaurant last night? You sure opened a few people's eyes."

"I'm the same guy," Danny laughed. Robin nudged him with her elbow.

"Well, we'd better get started," Bridgett announced. "Let me get Robyn to bring in the contract."

Robyn appeared from the adjourning office with a two binders in her arms.

"Take a look at this," she said, handing the first binder to Danny and Robin who were now sitting at a small conference table.

Danny opened the binder as Robyn softly chatted with Bridgett.

"Oh my goodness," Danny yelled. "That's me?"

"I can't believe it is you either," Robin proclaimed, as they scanned the pages.

"Well, it is," Robyn affirmed. "These are some of the best pictures Vickie has ever produced, and she has photographed women all around the world."

"We've decided to make a couple changes," Bridgett added as she glanced over the contract language."

"Changes?" Robin asked.

"Yes, changes for the better, at least as far as we're concerned." Robyn nodded her head in agreement. "I think you will agree."

Bridgett explained that since Dani's pictures were so girlish and convincing, the center layout for the fall magazine would be a threefold.

"We will do one layout with Robin, one with Dani, and a combination of the two," Bridgett explained. Instead of the usual four to six pages, it will be eight to 12. We want to make this extra special.

"We plan to do Robin's interior shoot tomorrow night and wait until the end of March to complete the layout with an outdoor session at Yankee Stadium. The Yankees and the Mets will be playing their annual three-game Big Apple exhibition series and we'll do outdoor pictures at the ball park on that Saturday and Sunday."

"I don't know if I can do it that weekend," Danny stated. "I think we play Rutgers."

"I already checked your schedule and confirmed it with the St. John's athletic department," Robyn informed the group. "You have a bye that weekend, so you won't be playing. You play Rutgers the next week. It will work out perfectly. The games are at night, so we can schedule around any practices."

"This is really falling in to place," Danny thought.

Bridgett slid the contract in front of Danny and Robin.

"If you don't want to read it all, I can give you the details," Bridgett said. Danny and Robin began examining the pages.

Bridgett quickly explained the confidentiality, personal indemnity and privacy clauses and exclusiveness of the contract.

"We basically own you and the pictures," Robyn laughed. "Our competitors are always trying to find out what we have planned. They have spies everywhere. You are bound by this contract to keep silent. When the time comes, we will let you know, since there will be a great deal of publicity and possibly some personal appearances. If you violate the contract, you lose all compensation."

"Personal appearances?" Danny asked.

"Yes, it's very possible," Bridgett stated. "Newspapers, TV, radio..."

"I can't do that," Danny interrupted.

"Let's worry about that when the time comes," Bridgett said. "Robin could be our spokesperson. Don't worry about that right now."

Danny took a deep breath and fingered through the contract. When he scanned the final page his eyes literally bugged out of his head.

"Oh...my...God! Robin, they want to pay me \$20,000."

Robin leaped out of her chair and gave Danny a big hug and a kiss.

"This is unbelievable," she screamed as she jumped up and down in her heels.

"It's true," Bridgett proclaimed.

"Where do I sign?"

Bridgett pointed at the signature line before hesitating.

“Do I sign as Danny or Dani?” Everyone laughed as Danny signed his name.

Robin’s session the following night took half as much time as Danny’s, who was absent due to practice. Robin was photographed in a two-piece low cut brown wool two-piece mini suit, accented with a scarf, and boots; a layered spaghetti strap chiffon soft purple “after nine” evening dress with matching heels, and a black and silver sweater dress with textured tights and black gladiator shoes.

“Fabulous!” Vickie exclaimed after the final click of her camera. “Robin, you are in class of your own. Congratulations.”

When Bridgett viewed the pictures proofs the next day she agreed. Cosmo had found its next starlet.

51

The St. John’s baseball team got off to a roaring start, sweeping six February games in Texas and Arizona and rolled in to March as the number 5 team in the nation behind Nikky’s ASU top-ranked team. Danny, now a sophomore, was promoted to the second spot in the batting order and responded with an early season .571 batting average. He also led the team in stolen bases and had not committed an error at second base.

Robin continued to take limited classes at St. John’s and travel to the various fashion colleges and fashion shows searching for future Cosmo talent. She still lived with the Zenor’s since she was a part time student and was no longer required to live in the dorms.

As the Yankee Stadium photo date got closer and closer, Bridgett and Robyn scurried to have everything in place. The Cosmo “Beauty Bus” would be parked at Yan-

kee Stadium for three days prior to the shoot to house the pre-session staff and production crew. Robin and Danny would be prepped in the bus's state-of-the-art dressing room, which would give them easy access for costume changes during their two days of activity. Vickie would also use the bus as a mini-photo lab.

"I can't wait for Saturday, can you?" Robin said to Danny as they relaxed on the couch at the Zenor's three days before the big shoot. Danny had brought Robin a fast-food pasta dinner after the Red Storm had improved its record to 17-2 with a non-league victory over Columbia. The Zenor's were again vacationing at Spring Training in Arizona and Robin was house-sitting.

"I hope it all goes OK," Danny replied, trying to cover his growing nervousness.

"Oh it will," Robin insisted. "Just leave it all up to Bridgett, Robyn and Vickie. They are the pros."

"I can't believe I'll be having my pictures taken at Yankee Stadium and getting paid for doing it. I always dreamed of playing baseball there. Instead I'm going to be a female model for Cosmo."

"Believe it. It's a thrill for me too."

"Vickie told me that we will not only have our pictures taken while mingling with the crowd, but by the monuments in center field before the stadium is opened. I almost feel a bit sacrilegious doing that. But it will be an honor too. The monuments are a shrine to the baseball Gods. Gosh, Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Joe DiMaggio, Mickey Mantle..."

"Believe it! And enjoy it too. It will be over before we know it."

"I hope I don't embarrass myself."

"You won't. Trust me."

"I always do, don't I?"

"But, I don't know if I can trust you. Remember the batting cages? Ninety miles per hour when I asked for 75?"

Danny grabbed Robin and wrestled her on to the carpeted floor.

"Stop that," she insisted.

"Not until you kiss me," Danny chided.

"Never!!! And get your dirty baseball hands off me."

Danny pinned Robin by her wrists and put his lips on hers. She resisted for only a few seconds before succumbing to his kiss.

52

Yankee Stadium was decorated as if it were for the World Series, not another "Dog Days" exhibition game as the pre-season schedule concluded. Flags, World Series championship placards and red, white and blue bunting hung from the famous façade and lined the lower level box seats even though the official opening day was still two days away.

The Mets had won the Friday night game 5-3 at CitiField as the cross-town series moved to "The House Babe Ruth Built" for two games.

Danny slowly drove the Subaru up to the Yankee Stadium parking security station and presented his and Robin's credentials to the burly guard. The small parking lot was nearly empty as Robin pointed out the Cosmo bus in the distance. The first photos would be taken at 4 PM. Batting practice would commence at 5:30 with game time set for 7:05. Danny and Robin had three hours to get ready and they would probably need every second.

Amanda and Silke greeted Danny and Robin at the trailer door and the rush was on. Every second would count. Bridgett and Vickie were already in the stadium perfecting the last minute details.

"Let me know when Robin and Dani are ready," Bridgett instructed Amanda via her two-way phone.

"They should be ready in about 90 minutes," Amanda reported. "Robin's basic makeup is done and she's in wardrobe. Dani is taking a little bit longer because he had to shave again. However, you still should be able to start a bit early."

Robin and Danny would have two wardrobe changes, both in sporty apparel. Robin's first session would be in jeans, tennis shoes and a blue sweater, which would be near the batting cage, situated at home plate. Dani would also wear jeans, which would be tucked in to boots with a long flowing blue sweater for pictures near the monuments.

"Robin's all ready," Silke called out to Bridgett on the phone as Amanda applied the final touches. "Should I ask security to bring her into the stadium?"

"Yes," was Bridgett's response. "Meet us at home plate. How long before Dani is ready?"

"30 minutes," Silke reported after checking with Amanda. "She's dressing right now. They both look sensational."

"I hope so," Bridgett replied.

Robin was awestruck as she walked into the stadium after the short ride on a team golf cart. She had attended Yankee games before, but sitting in the stands was not comparable to standing on the field. Robin skipped across the specially developed Yankee Turf grass with the wind blowing slightly through her hair. Unbeknownst to Robin,

Vickie had already started taking pictures from a distance using a zoom lens.

“We’ll put everything on film,” Vickie said to Bridgett, using a familiar photographer phrase despite the use of a digital disc instead of film, as Robin approached.

“This is so cool,” Robin said. “The stadium is massive. Where do I start?”

Vickie stepped closer and began shooting more pictures. “Just have fun and let me take care of everything.”

Robin sat on the grass and tied her shoe, completed a few somersaults, ran the bases and sat in the Yankees dugout. All the time, the Yankee batboys and ball boys were taking a few sings in the batting cage and fielding grounder. The camera clicked at a rapid pace, capturing every move.

Robin grabbed a baseball bat and asked one of the guys to “pitch me a few.”

“This is great,” Vickie stated as a member of Amanda’s staff freshened Robin’s makeup.

Robin clubbed the first pitch in to left field and the second to center.

“You can really hit,” the bat boy pitcher exclaimed. “Have you played before?”

“No, but my boyfriend does. He taught me how to hit.”

“He must be pretty good.”

“He is... the best.”

Robin took a few more swings before Vickie conferred with Bridgett. They examined the camera screen before Vickie announced, “We have enough.”

“Can I do one more thing?” Robin requested. “I think it would be a fun picture.”

"What is it?" Bridgett inquired.

Without saying a word, Robin borrowed the bat boys' glove and walked to the pitcher's mound.

"Let me throw a few from here," she requested. Vickie started taking pictures again as Robin hurled a few balls toward home plate.

"She can throw too," the bat boy lamented. "It's a good thing Mr. Steinbrenner isn't here watching. I might lose my job."

"Don't worry," Robin laughed. "I'm happy with my modeling."

The bat boy asked Robin to autograph his mitt and she quickly complied.

"Time to change for tonight," Bridgett said. Robin began the walk back to the security area as Dani entered the stadium in another golf cart near the right field bull pen area.

"You should have seen me hit and pitch," Robin shouted as Dani neared.

"You what?"

"I hit and pitched and ran the bases."

"That's what I should be doing."

"I beat you too it."

Robin asked Bridgett if she could watch Dani's session and was given the thumbs up.

"Maybe you will have a couple of idea for poses we can use," Bridgett concurred.

Monument Park was more impressive than ever. The plaques had been cleaned and polished for the start of the season and the grass and marble walking areas were pristine. Dani was in awe and grew uncomfortable when she

stepped out of the cart and took one step after another on “hallowed ground.”

Vickie was again taking pictures as Dani approached the monuments. She stopped briefly and bowed her head in recognizing the sacredness of the spot. Even though she favored her beloved Mets over the hated Yankees, she had respect for baseball history.

“OK, I’m ready,” Dani said, taking a deep breath.

“Are you OK,” asked Robin.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Just a little overwhelmed.”

Vickie instructed Dani in various poses. “Perfect, beautiful, lovely...”

What took over 30 minutes seemed like seconds to Dani. She was trying to enjoy the experience, but everything was going too fast.

“That’s it,” Vickie said. “I’ve got everything we need here.”

“Wait!” Robin demanded. “I have an idea.”

Bridgett listened as Robin presented her scheme.

“We still have about 15 minutes before the players come out for batting practice and we have to be off the field. Let’s give Robin’s idea a try.”

Bridgett told Vickie of her idea and asked her to take over. For the next 10 minutes, Robin and Dani took turns popping their heads and bodies out from behind the monuments in respectful poses.

“This is great,” Vickie said as her camera kept clicking.

Dani and Robin approached the special monument area where Ruth, Gehrig, DiMaggio, Mantle and Miller Huggins are memorialized.

Dani solemnly knelt down on one knee as Robin pointed at Ruth's memorial.

"Perfect," Vickie proclaimed. "That's a wrap."

The Yankees' batting practice was about to begin and the security team was anxious to get the models off the field.

"Time to go," Bridgett said as Dani and Robin once again surveyed the monuments.

"Thanks for giving us a little more time," Dani expressed to one of the security guards.

"My privilege, young lady," he replied. Dani blushed.

The Cosmo group returned to the trailer 100-percent pleased with the first session. A small buffet dinner was waiting.

"How'd it go?" Robyn asked as the team entered the bus.

"Fantastic," Bridgett replied. "Robin and Dani did some things we hadn't even planned."

"Let's take a look at a few of the pictures," Vickie requested as she slipped a disc into the overhead screen terminal.

"Wow!!!" proclaimed Robyn as the pictures of Robin rolled across the screen. Dani's followed, much to the delight of the Cosmo crew.

"They are wonderful," Robyn agreed. "Now please have something to eat. The next session will be in 90 minutes."

Dani and Robin nibbled on a few appetizers and split a Pepsi before returning to makeup and wardrobe for the next shoot. Dani changed into the brown gaucho outfit, minus the shawl she had worn in the studio trial. Instead, she wore a long sweater with a fur collar and sash. Robin

switched into the sweater dress, tights and short boots from her earlier studio shoot. Both girls carried knee length coats since a cold evening was in the forecast.

The evening shoot went just as well. The girls sat in the first row of the box seats behind the Yankees dugout where Vickie was able to shoot pictures from the stands and the field. Very little modeling was required although the girls were caught on camera more than once walking up and down the aisles to their seats.

“I just want you to enjoy the game and be yourselves,” Vickie had insisted. “Let me do my work.” And they all did.

The pictures from the Saturday session were so good that the scheduled Sunday shoot was cancelled.

“Everybody, please enjoy the rest of the weekend,” Bridgett announced in the trailer after the game, which the Yankees won 3-1. “Today could not have been more perfect. We’ll meet tomorrow night at 7 to review the day. Can you make it Dani?”

“I’ll be there. I can’t wait to see the pictures.”

53

The Yankees Stadium photos were stunning, fun and exactly what Bridgett had envisioned when she convinced Dani to be a part of the layout. It made Robin’s cover girl session and pictures almost anticlimactic.

Robin was in the studio one week later and completed a “black and white out” in one afternoon. Robin was adorned in an array of black and white dresses, sweaters, skirts, heels, boots, lingerie and gartered hose in front of a white background and props.

“Perfect,” Vickie proclaimed to Robin who was lying on a white bed in a modest, yet provocative pose. Bridgett and her staff watched as Vickie finished the shoot by positioning Robin on her back with her legs elevated against the back wall. “Wonderful, now give me that big smile. Outstanding!!!”

“Robin, you and Dani were spectacular. You’re both so radiant and beautiful. I could not have asked for better models. This may be the best week of pictures I have ever had the privilege to do.”

“This was so exciting,” Robin concluded, still in the final pose. “Do we have to stop?”

“Do you want to do more?” Bridgett asked.

“One more?” Robin responded. “I have a little red dress I found in wardrobe that I would love to wear. Could I? It would be perfect for Christmas and with the white background...”

“OK,” Bridgett replied. “But hurry.”

The ever-present Amanda quickly refreshed Robin’s makeup as she slipped out of the lingerie ensemble and into a very revealing red dress with strappy heels and dangling jewelry. Silke brushed out Robin’s semi-curly hair as they returned to the set.

“You don’t leave very much to the imagination,” Vicki squealed, examining her subject from head to toe. The front of Robin’s spaghetti strapped dress barely covered her breasts and the slit up the right side went to the top of her thigh.

“My goodness, you are a sex pot,” Vickie laughed in admiration. “I didn’t know you had it in you.”

“I’d like to have a few pictures to give Danny for next Christmas,” Robin stated, as she sat on a white bench

Vickie had moved into place. "I really don't think they would be appropriate for the magazine."

"I think this will work," Vickie replied. After a few pictures, in various poses, the day ended.

"Thank you," Robin proclaimed.

"My thanks to you for making this easy," Vickie responded.

"I believe this may be our best magazine ever," Bridgett added. "Now it's up to me, Robyn, Vickie and my staff to put this all together. This is going to be fun."

54

Danny's modeling career went into hiatus as he returned to school and baseball. Robin went back to her desk for a few days before she hit the road again in search of talent.

The Red Storm baseball squad continued to be rated among the top 10 teams in the nation and easily won the Big East championship and conference tournament. They advanced to the NCAA playoffs and swept the regional and sectional qualifying rounds on their way to the College World Series.

Danny led the team in hits, stolen bases, walks and batting with a .400 average. He only made three errors on defense in 56 games, which led the nation among second basemen. The season, however, ended on a losing note as the Red Storm was eliminated in the semifinal round of the CWS by Nikky and his Arizona State teammates.

"At least I got a hit off you," Danny said to Nikky as they shook hands following the 5-2 ASU victory.

"I let you do it," laughed Nikky, who worked the first six innings and was the winning pitcher. "I put it right down the middle. If you hadn't hit it..."

"Right," Danny rebutted. "I could always hit you."

ASU went on to defeat Texas for the NCAA championship with Nikky getting the final out and save in the final game. Nikky, a high Tampa Bay draft choice, concluded his two year college stint by signing a lucrative baseball contract with the American League Rays. He was sent to their Gulf Coast Rookie League team in Charlotte, Florida which was routine for most first year players.

Danny's summer included a second season with the Brooklyn Storm, which won the Perfect Game League pennant with a schedule-shortened 24-6 record. Danny was selected to the all-league team with a .417 average.

At Cosmo, Bridgett and her staff put the October edition "to bed" under intense security in late July and started to work on the December 50th anniversary edition. The October edition would hit the news stand in mid-August and even Robin and Danny were not privy to a sneak peak.

As July rolled into August, Robin received an e-mail from Karyn and phoned Danny.

"Hey hon," Robin said as Danny answered. "Are we doing anything over the Labor Day weekend?"

"Not that I know of," he responded. "Baseball's over and nobody is hanging out at the dorm. I don't really have anything to do but hang out with you. Why? Is something wrong?"

"No, not at all. Karyn just e-mailed me and invited us to come for a visit in Nova Scotia. She said Nikky is going to be there too."

"Wow!!! Nova Scotia. I've never been there."

“She lives south of Nova Scotia at Peggy’s Cove. Remember?”

“Yeah, I do now. It sounds like fun.”

“We can stay at her house. Her parents will be there, but Karyn said they would stay in the cottage house.”

“Will Bridgett let you take off a few days?”

“I already asked and she said ‘yes’. Karyn said she would like us to stay five days.”

“Do you think Nikky’s going to pop the question?”

“She said he’s never met her parents, so it could be the first step in that direction.”

“Let’s do it. Should we fly or drive?”

Robin was already a step ahead and had checked the airline schedule and costs from NYC to Halifax.

“Fly,” Robin stated. “I have the info on my computer right now. Round trip is about \$600 each. If we had the time, we could take the cruise from downtown to Halifax.”

“Now that sounds romantic. Maybe we can do that for our honeymoon.”

Robin laughed and said “Should I book the flight? We can leave from LaGuardia on a Thursday and come home the following Tuesday. Is that OK?”

“Yes, let’s do it.”

“Great!!! Book it Dano!” Robin laughed as she filled out the Air Canada reservation forms.

“I’ll have to get my passport from my parents,” Danny added.

“So will I. Let’s go home this weekend. I miss my parents and Mom said we need to go over the guest list for the wedding.”

"We can leave tonight if you wish and beat the Friday traffic."

"Let me ask Bridgett. Hold on."

Bridgett "reluctantly" agreed since Robin had built up a great deal of comp time and had regularly put in extra hours without asking for a raise.

"Have a good time and say hello to your parents for me."

"I will," Robin replied as she reconnected with Danny.

"It's all set. I'll see you at the Zenor's about 6. I have a few more things to do here at work.

"OK. I'll bring a pizza and salad for dinner. See you then. Love you."

"I love you too. Kisses."

Danny balanced dinner in the carry-all on his bicycle and reached the Zenor's a little after 7. He set the table while waiting to hear the rumble of the Outback's engine, signaling Robin's arrival.

"That traffic is terrible," Robin lamented as she walked in the door. "It seems to get worse every day."

"Well, why didn't you take the subway today?"

"Don't you remember? I had to use the car to go to the dentist this morning and a couple of appointments for work. That's why I got behind."

"How was your checkup?"

"Dr. Christopher said everything is fine and brightened my teeth again. He said I have the prettiest smile."

"I agree," Danny confirmed as he gave Robin a kiss.

"Let's eat," she replied. "I'm starving."

Danny and Robin started to plan the quick trip home and the mini-vacation to Nova Scotia.

"I'm so excited to see Karyn again," Robin said as she munched on a slice of the combination pizza. "I've never been to Nova Scotia either."

"Didn't you see Karyn a few weeks ago at one of those fashion shows?"

"Yes, I did, but that was work. This will be play. I'm sure you and Nikky will have a lot to talk about too."

Danny and Robin finished dinner, loaded the back of the Outback with their overnight bags, locked the Zenor house doors, stopped for gas and headed home.

"It will be so nice to be home," Robin thought as Danny moved the car on to the freeway.

The visit home went well, if not too quickly. Robin and Danny secured their passport, visited Kelly and Jimmy, attended the Sunday church service and discussed their December 22 wedding plans with their parents.

"Everything is going smoothly," Mrs. Robinson said. "The invitations will be mailed soon, the church and the reception hall are reserved, the cake and flowers are ordered and the caterer is set. I still need Kelly and Karyn to try on their dresses. I talked with Kelly today, but I need you to ask Karyn to phone me?"

"My dress is all ready too," Robin reminded her mother. "Trisha said the alterations have already been made. I made an appointment for a final sizing when I get back from Canada."

"I have my tuxedo rented," Danny added, not wanting to be left out of the conversation. "Doesn't anybody care?" His question did not draw a response from the women.

All too soon Robin and Danny were back in New York, just in time for the much anticipated magazine release.

55

The October Cosmo hit the newsstands on Aug. 9 with little fanfare, but within hours was the buzz of the fashion industry.

A picture of Robin wearing a Yankee's cap while connecting with a batting practice pitch graced the unorthodox Cosmo cover. Never in the magazine's history had an action photo graced the front page. Inside were 12 pages featuring Robin and Dani, who used the stage name Holly Kaye. Coincidentally, the Yankees and Mets were both leading their divisions on the day of the Cosmo release.

During a small office party celebrating the monthly magazine release, Bridgett presented Danny and Robin a framed copy of the second magazine off the press. "We keep the first copy in the archives," Bridgett noted.

"It's been an honor to be your cover girl," Robin said, admiring the framed Cosmo with Danny at her side. "Thank you Bridgett and Robyn for the nice gift. You didn't have to do this."

"It was our privilege to have you as the cover girl," Robyn stated. "We could not have done such a fabulous layout without both of you."

"I hope it sells a lot of magazines," Robin noted.

"Oh, girl, it already has," Bridgett interjected. "I just checked. It's already No. 1 on Amazon and it's only been out since this morning. This just might be our biggest seller ever. I'm estimating one million copies will be sold. We've never had such a sales rush. You two have captured the hearts of the fashion industry."

"Wow!!!" Robin exclaimed.

"I don't want to burst your bubble, but that won't last long," Robyn interjected in jest. "I guarantee you the 50th anniversary edition will be even bigger. We've set the first press run at two million copies."

"I can't wait to see it," Robin proclaimed.

"We'll, you'll just have to wait like the rest of the world," Bridgett giggled. "We have to keep it under lock-and-key for a few more weeks."

Bridgett walked to her computer and checked the company Facebook and Twitter accounts. They were both at maximum capacity. The "You've Got Mail" audio from her computer wouldn't stop. When she checked her internet mail, she had over 1,000 messages and growing.

"This is too much," Bridgett said as she watched message after message land in her inbox. "I knew the magazine would be a big seller, but I never thought there would be this kind of a reaction."

"Can't you stop it?" Robyn asked as the computer screen continued to roll.

"I don't know how. Let me call IT."

Robyn phoned the IT department and followed their instructions. The messages stopped at 1,131.

"He's having all the messages directed to public relations," Robyn said as she wiped her hair back from her forehead. "He'll filter out your important messages and resend them to you."

Robin and Danny returned to her office and found her phone voice mail was full. Her computer e-mail had a small number of messages from her family, the Mitchell's, Kelly and Karyn.

"Thirty three phone messages," she informed Danny.

"Let's go to the cafeteria," Danny recommended. "You need a break before you get to them."

Thirty minutes later, after a small snack, Robin returned to her desk and noticed a sticky note attached to her computer screen.

"Bridgett wants to see us immediately," Robin said to Danny, who had planned to head home.

"I wonder what she wants," Danny questioned.

"Who knows?"

The short walk to Bridgett's office was filled with apprehension especially following the earlier excitement.

Lowla greeted Robin and Danny as they entered the executive office area.

"Congratulations on the magazine's success," Lowla said with a smile, not realizing Danny was Robin's photo partner.

"Thanks," said Robin, as they were guided into Bridgett's office.

"What's up?" Robin asked.

"Lots," was Bridgett's enthusiastic response. "Where do I start?"

"Since we celebrated this morning, Robyn and I have been swamped with e-mails, phone calls and requests. I have never seen anything like this before in all my years in the publishing business. Everybody wants a piece of you."

"What do you mean by that?" Robin inquired.

"Television, radio, newspapers... they all want to talk with you."

"Why me?"

"It's your pictures. Everybody's talking about them. All the network morning shows want interviews and so do The View and Fox and Friends. Even the Yankees and Mets want you to throw out the first pitch at an upcoming game."

"What about Dani?"

"They love her too," Robyn confirmed.

"I can't go on TV," Danny firmly stated.

"We already took care of that," Robyn affirmed. "We told them you were unavailable, so don't worry. I have talked with our PR department and they believe this will be a godsend. Robin can go on the shows with either Bridgett or me and we can promote the 50th anniversary magazine."

"How does that sound, Robin?"

"It would be a thrill. Whatever you can schedule is fine with me."

In the following days, the hub-bub over Robin and Dani barely cooled. Robin and Bridgett visited The Today Show, Good Morning America, CBS This Morning, Fox and Friends and The View with great success promoting the October and December publications. A press conference had to be held in the Cosmo conference room to handle all the interview requests. The magazine sales topped 1.5 million.

"The timing for your vacation is perfect," Bridgett said as she and Robin left The View studios. "Take the rest of the week off. When are you leaving to see Karyn?"

"On Thursday," Robin replied. "Today is Tuesday isn't it?"

Bridgett laughed. "You need a vacation. I think I will take one too."

The trip to Halifax was the perfect remedy for Robin and Danny. The three hour flight was a breeze compared to the press meat grinder Robin had experienced. Karyn met her friends at the small, but efficient Halifax International Airport. Nikky was to arrive the following day.

"Let me give you a little tour of the city before we go to Peggy's Cove," Karyn said as she started her families Ford SUV.

"I'd love that," Robin said. "We've never been to Halifax."

"OK, here we go."

Karyn explained that the twin cities of Halifax and Dartmouth are connected by two suspension bridges, each about one mile long, as well as two passenger ferries.

"Halifax is a very old city, just like Boston," Karyn said as she continued to play tour guide. "About 400,000 people live here.

"Halifax harbor, where we are heading right now, is a major port and during WWII hundreds of convoys to Europe sailed out into the North Atlantic, followed by German U-boats that waited just outside the harbor entrance. Many of the old waterfront fortifications are still open to the public and are a major tourist destination. We'll go there one night for dinner and walk on the boardwalk. It's really romantic."

Robin and Danny looked out of the car windows and appeared to be enjoying their new surroundings.

"The Citadel overlooks the harbor," Karyn continued. "It was built by the British to counteract Fortress Louisbourg, which was built by the French to protect the

St Laurence River. To this day they still fire the cannon at noon."

"Halifax is a beautiful city," Robin stated, sitting with Karyn in the front seat.

"The tour guide is pretty cute too," Danny replied. Robin turned around and slapped him on the leg.

"Smarty pants," she said with a frown.

Karyn continued to point out that Halifax is the home of three major universities, St Mary's, Mount St. Vincent and the largest, Dalhousie University, where her uncle Marvin had been a professor for many years.

Karyn stopped the SUV at Point Pleasant Park which over looks the mouth of the harbor.

"This is lands end," she said admiring the clear view and pointing east. "Isn't this a beautiful spot? You just missed the Busker Festival but the Tall Ship Festival is going on. Can you see the ships in the harbor? From here, the next stop east is Ireland."

"I don't think we are going there," Danny chuckled. "This is a fantastic view."

Karyn turned the SUV back in toward town, and the friends drove past the world famous 18-acre Public Gardens, a Victorian style park.

"That's so pretty," Robin proclaimed. "Can we go there too?"

"Probably," Karyn said. "I'd like Nikky to see everything I'm showing you."

"It appears to be pretty warm here," Danny noted. "I didn't think it would be this warm so far north."

"The temperature depends upon where you are," Karyn explained. "Close to the water it can only get to 70 degrees and colder when the fog rolls in, but tempera-

tures of 90 with high humidity are felt often in the summer months. The North Atlantic is Nova Scotia's built in air conditioner most of the time."

Karyn reached the highway to Peggy's Cove and headed south.

"We should be at my house in a few minutes," Karyn reported. "I bet you are tired."

"Not at all," Robin replied. "This is so exciting." In the back seat, Danny yawned.

Karyn's home was similar to a two story Victorian one would find in Boston or many other historic cities. The large living room bay window over looked the ocean.

"If we climbed up on the roof on a day like today and looked through a pair of high-powered binoculars, we could see the US," Karyn said as the visitors unloaded their suitcases from the SUV.

"Isn't this the place where a plane crashed a few years ago?" Danny asked.

"Sadly, yes," Karyn replied. "About ten years ago a Swiss Air 111 crashed a few miles off the coast of here. Over 200 people died. There are two monuments to the victims not far from here. There's also a monument and a cemetery to the Canadians who died in the Titanic too. We can go to all the places in one day if you wish."

Danny and Robin met Karyn's parents on the extended front porch where they had been relaxing in a double swing.

"We didn't hear you arrive," Mrs. Evans stated. She gave Robin and Danny a hug, while Mr. Evans shook hands with their visitors.

"Nice to meet you both," Mrs. Evans continued. "Karyn has told me so much about both of you. This is my husband Merle. You can call me Mary."

"So, you're the cover girl?" Mr. Evans asked.

"Dad, I thought we agreed not to say anything," Karyn reminded her father. "You're always embarrassing my friends."

"I was just kidding," he chided. "I think it's so nice. You are just as pretty in person as you are in the magazine. Congratulations!"

Robin accepted his compliments then followed Karyn and Danny into the house.

"Robin will stay with me and you and Nikky can bunk together."

"Rats, I thought I would be sleeping with you," Danny kidded Karyn, who blushed. Robin slugged him on his shoulder.

"Ouch," Danny responded as he mussed up Robin's already wind blown hair.

"Stop that," Robin countered. "You deserved it."

"Nice view," Danny replied, as he looked out at the ocean from the second story room.

"The only better view is the one from my window at home over to Robin's house." Robin slightly smiled and threw Danny a half-hearted kiss.

"You're going to pay for what you said to Karyn," Robin reminded him.

"I can't wait for my punishment."

The five days in Nova Scotia were relaxing and enjoyable. The girls did talk about the Cosmo layout as Karyn wanted to hear all about the details. Obviously, Robin didn't mention Danny, although Robin's connection with Holly was explained.

"Holly lives somewhere near Chicago," Robin noted. "I never met her until the photo shoot. She's real nice."

"She reminds me a bit of your cousin, Dani," Karyn mentioned during the conversation. "How is Dani, by the way?"

"She's doing well, I guess," Robin answered. "I haven't seen her for a while. I thought she might have contacted me after the magazine came out. She's kinda disappeared. I'll have to try to reach her when I get home."

Nikky arrived from Florida the following day and the couples renewed their friendships. They toured the tall ships, attended the annual waterfront jazz festival, visited many of the historic sites and spend every afternoon on the white sand beaches near Peggy's Cove. On two occasions they returned to the waterfront and the boardwalk for fresh fish and lobster dinners.

Danny had worried about Nikky questioning the Cosmo magazine spread, but nothing was said. Oddly enough, nobody in Nova Scotia appeared to recognize Robin.

"This is the life," Danny said one evening while enjoying a lobster buffet dinner.

"It sure is," Robin confirmed.

"I bet I've gained 10 pounds eating all the good food," Danny added.

"You're a pig," Robin reminded him. Karyn and Nikky tried not to laugh. "Is there anything you don't like to eat?"

"Nothing I can remember," he said, wiping his mouth with a napkin. "This was definitely a four napkin dinner."

"I wish you didn't have to leave tomorrow," Karyn lamented.

"Me too," Robin said. "But we'll see you two again soon. Remember, our wedding is only 10 weeks away."

"Are you still marrying that pig?" Nikky chided as the four waited for dessert.

"I'm having second thoughts," Robin said, stirring the pot.

"Your parents are paying beaucoup bucks for you to marry me." Danny chipped in. "You better."

"Why should I? Mr. Oink!"

"Let's take a vote," Karyn interjected. She stood in the center of the restaurant and announced to the crowd.

"Should my friend Robin marry Danny, who eats like a pig?"

A few of the patrons ignored Karyn's inquiry, but others began to join a chorus of cheers, jeers and boos.

"All those in favor of my pretty friend Robin marrying the uncouth Danny, raise their hand. All those against..."

Robin and Danny were so embarrassed they tried to hide under the table as Karyn polled the customers.

"OK, you're safe," Karyn announced. "It was pretty close, but the pig gets to marry the princess." Everybody cheered.

"A round of soft drinks for everybody. It's on me!!!" Nikky proclaimed. "Thank you everyone for joining in on the fun."

The flight home was smooth and anticlimactic. The four friends had shared so much fun together and now it had come to an end with the reality of school, work and the unveiling of the 50th anniversary magazine ahead.

"I guess Nikky didn't ask Karyn to get married," Robin said to Danny as their Air Canada plane leveled off 35,000 feet over the Atlantic Ocean.

"I don't think he wants to rush it," Danny responded. "He really loves her, but he told me he didn't think it was

the appropriate time. He has only met her parents. He didn't say it, but I don't think he wanted to upstage our wedding or that of Jimmy and Kelly."

"I think Karyn understands that," Robin replied. "She told me that she is ready and willing whenever he asks. She loves him too."

Robin cuddled up next to Danny and fell asleep with her head on his shoulder. The next two months would be hectic.

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Danny and Robin had returned to classes at St. John's in early October. Danny continued to reside in the athletic dorm while Robin again stayed with the Zenor's, who were spending more and more time in Arizona. Robin, who despite her October feature went almost unrecognized on campus, was unprepared for what was to occur with the release of the 50th anniversary magazine.

The much anticipated Cosmo hit the newsstand like a hurricane on Oct. 15. Despite an estimated initial 2.5 million copy press run, the magazine, with its spectacular pure white with red trimmed cover, was hard to find and forced Bridgett to rush order a second printing of an additional 1 million.

The October magazine had become an after thought even though it had sold close to 2 million copies and the November issue was forgotten when the anniversary issue was released. The entire fashion industry as well as the media went berserk.

Robin had not been privy to a preview edition as Bridgett and Robyn had kept the special under lock and key. On the day of the release, Robin took an extra early subway train to work in anticipation of a staff meeting. She greeted the guard at the security entrance and strolled

toward the elevator. When she walked in to the Cosmo buildings arched lobby, she was surprised, shocked and amazed.

There, in the semi-darkened but festively decorated lobby, stood a 20 by 12-foot 50th anniversary publicity cover placard. Robin, adorned in white, was positioned in the center of the cover, surrounded by the featured models from the prior five decades: the late Farrah Fawcett (60s); Natalie Cole (70s); Meg Ryan (80s); Reese Witherspoon (90s), Jessica Simpson (00s).

Other photos of Robin and the past cover girls dangled by thin wires from the vaulted ceiling.

“What the hell?” she questioned as she looked around the still closed public lobby. “That wasn’t here when I left on Friday. I’ve gotta find Bridgett and fast. This sure wasn’t what I expected.”

Robin ran to the elevator and pushed the button to the executive offices.

“I feel like I’m going to pass out,” Robin said to herself as she leaned against the elevator wall. “I can’t believe what I saw.”

Robin arrived at Bridgett’s office and found Lowla not at her desk and the door locked.

“Now what am I going to do,” she mumbled.

A puzzled Robin walked to her office cubicle and found it decorated with more than congratulatory balloons, an oversized card and a copy of the special magazine sitting in the middle her desk.

“Wow!!!” she proclaimed as she examined the empty office area. She leaned on her desk and took a deep breath.

“Do I dare open it,” she said peering at the magazine. “I love the cover. It’s beautiful. But, I don’t measure up to

the other ladies. Maybe, I should have never agreed to go along with this."

Robin read the card. It was from Danny offering congratulations and his love. "How sweet."

She started to turn the pages and almost fell out of her chair. In the middle of the magazine was a dramatic, yet stunning picture of Robin in the very revealing slinky red dress. The picture had obviously been air brushed to bring out Robin's finest qualities.

"Oh my God," Robin shrieked. "That picture was only for Danny's eyes." She started to cry, feeling she had been betrayed.

Suddenly, the office lights came on and the Cosmo staff, which had been so quiet in their hiding places, yelled "Surprise." Streamers flew through the air, horns blared and Bridgett approached carrying a tray of croissants and donuts. Robyn followed with pitchers of coffee and tea.

"Congratulations on a fabulous magazine," Bridgett said as she set down the tray and gave Robin a hug and tried to give her a kiss on the cheek. She turned her head.

Robin was stunned and angry, and for one of the first times in her life she was speechless.

"Is there something wrong," Bridgett asked. Robin's face was red and she was visibly upset.

"This!!!" Robin shouted, holding up the red dress picture. "Why did you print that? That was only for Danny."

Bridgett started to laugh.

"I'm sorry, Robin," she responded. "You're taking this all wrong..."

"I'm not taking anything wrong," Robin boldly interrupted. "We had a deal and you broke it..."

“Hold on. Let me explain. You’re holding one of three copies of the magazine with that picture. Robyn and I wanted to do something special. It was supposed to be a keepsake for you. Take a look at the street edition.”

Bridgett opened a magazine to the same page. Instead of Robin in the red dress was a full page advertisement for Secrets In Lace lingerie.

Robin’s temperament quickly changed from anger to embarrassment to glee. She grabbed a donut hole from the tray and playfully threw it at Bridgett.

“It’s a good thing you missed, young lady,” Bridgett mused. “I might have had to spank you.”

“This is so nice of you,” Robin replied between laughs and tears. “I’m so sorry I jumped to conclusions. I will cherish this forever. I assume you have one copy, and I have another, so who has the other?”

“I do.”

“Who said that?” Robin asked those crowded around her desk.

Danny worked his way through the group and around the corner of the cubicle clutching his copy and a dozen red roses. He wiped a tear from Robin’s eye and gave her a big kiss.

“This is beautiful,” he said looking at the picture. “The entire magazine is fantastic. Your layout is sensational. I’m so proud of you.”

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The next three weeks were a whirlwind for Robin and the other featured models. Once again Robin appeared on all the major television shows promoting the magazine with one or two of the other stars.

"I can't believe I'm getting to meet Natalie, Reese, Meg and Jessica," Robin said to Bridgett the afternoon of the magazine release.

"We'll you are," she replied. "They'll all be here tomorrow for the group photo shoot. You are going to love them all and they will love you as well.

"You will also be making public appearances with them as well. In most cases two or three of you will go to each interview. It's too hard to get everybody together at one time. However, all of you will appear at the big party Friday night at Times Square. We'll even have a 50th anniversary ball drop."

"Just like New Year's Eve?" Robin asked.

"You bet!" Bridgett answered. "Even better."

With all the media appointments, Robin missed many of her St. John's classes. Danny made arrangements with her professors to secure the necessary homework assignments so she could try to keep up with her classmates. For Robin, it was a battle to get everything completed, but she managed.

The media interviews went well and the 50th anniversary festivities produced the second biggest bash of the year at Times Square. Robin fit in well with the other models and became close friends with Reese.

"I thought all the other girls would be snobby or aloof," Robin told Bridgett. "But, they treated me like a long time friend. I love them all. This entire experience has been like a dream come true."

Bridgett gave Robin a week off as a thank you so she could attempt to catch up with her school work. The St. John's administration also honored Robin with "Robin Taylor Day" on campus and she presided as a special guest at "Midnight Madness" practice, the traditional

12:01 AM start for the Red Storm basketball team on November 1.

“My grades might have suffered a bit because of this, but it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” Robin told Danny one evening while working on a school project. “I wouldn’t want to miss a second. The only thing better will be marrying you.”

Danny squeezed Robin’s hand twice from across the table and smiled. The wedding was around the corner.

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The Cold River Community Church was filled with friends and family three days prior to Christmas. Pastor Espee was not set to deliver an early-Christmas sermon, but instead, he was preparing to perform a marriage ceremony.

Two years had passed since Robin had completed her reassignment surgery. She and Danny were midway through their junior year at St. John’s, even though Robin had cut down on her school load to accept a fulltime position with Cosmo working as an assistant to Bridgett and Robyn. The 50th anniversary edition had hit the newsstands in late October and was an instant sensation. Robin had become a star.

Danny had two successful seasons with the Red Storm under his belt. As the starting second baseman, he led the team in hitting his sophomore year and was named to the All-Big East team. He continued to play for the Storm’s summer team as well and was selected in a late round of the Major League Baseball draft by the Los Angeles Dodgers, but decided to remain in college. He realized his baseball limitations due to his size and valued the education and the commitment he had made to St. John’s.

However today, school, baseball and modeling had to wait. Danny and Robin were to be married. The wedding would be the biggest event of the year in Cold River.

Danny's baseball teammates stood outside the church steps and created a baseball bat arch for the guests to walk under as they entered the sanctuary. Bridgett and Robyn had donated the bride's wedding dress from the vast Cosmo collection.

"Are you ready," Pastor Espee asked the black and grey tuxedoed Danny as the clock approached two o'clock.

"Ready as I will ever be."

"You're marrying a wonderful girl. I'm so happy for both of you."

"Yes I am. The best. Thank you pastor."

Pastor Espee put his arm on Danny's shoulder and led him from the sacristy to his place in front of the altar. Danny watched as his father escorted Mrs. Zenor down the aisle as the organist played "Canon In D". Danny had asked his father to be his best man and Mrs. Zenor was Robin's matron of honor.

Jimmy followed with Kelly on his arm and Nikky ended the procession by guiding Karyn to her position to the left of the altar.

Robin was stunning in her white off the shoulder, body shaping, floor-length gown with a 15-foot rounded train. Her blue eyes glistened under her thin veil and her hair was rolled to the back of her head with ringlets dropping down the side of her face.

Danny's smile beamed as a small tear rolled down his cheek. He wanted this to be a day to remember, but in the back of his mind, he couldn't wait until the day was over and he and Robin would be husband-and-wife.

Danny watched Robin's every step towards him as if an angel was walking his way. He gave her father a hug and pat on the back before accepting Robin's hand. The ceremony lasted 30 minutes and included a sentimental sermonette by Pastor Espee combining God's love and loyalty to the church with Danny and Robin's love for one another.



A big, gushy kiss followed the wedding vows and cheers filled the church when Pastor Espee introduced "Mr. and Mrs. Danny Mitchell."

Danny and Robin squeezed their hands, rushed down the aisle and out the door. The next chapter in their lives was about to begin.

Epilogue

Danny had a fantastic four years at St. John's. He didn't miss a game and set a school record for career hits. The Red Storm won the College World Series during his junior season and were eliminated in the semi-finals his senior year. He was named second team All-America as a junior and senior, and was drafted again, this time by the Colorado Rockies. He turned down an offer to play with the Rockies' Class A team in the California League. He did however have a Bachelor's degree in communications which led to his first job as the play-by-play radio announcer for the Brooklyn Cyclones baseball and Brooklyn Aviators hockey teams. He eventually landed his dream job when he joined the New York Mets broadcast team.

Robin graduated with a degree in Theatre Arts in five years. She continued to model and work her way up to an administrative assistant for Cosmo. She never attended a Hempstead reunion. She did however perform on Broadway with a bit role in Annie.

After the wedding, Robin and Danny rented and eventually bought the Zenor's home. The Zenor's had officially retired to a senior condo development near Phoenix. They also purchased another home near their families in Cold River. "We could never leave the neighborhood where we met," Robin insisted.

Kelly would marry Jimmy the following spring and Karyn would eventually tie the knot with Nikky. Jimmy became a physician in Albany, specializing in sports med-

icine, while Nikky, a first round draft pick by the Rays, worked his way up to the major leagues in three years. He had a very successful career including a World Series ring. Karyn stopped working part time at Cosmo and moved with Nikky to Florida where they raised three children. The young couples would remain friends forever.

Since Robin could not bear children, she and Danny eventually adopted infant twins, a boy and a girl, Taylor and Danielle. "It's the least we could do," Danny proclaimed. "We have been given so much. We wanted to give something back."

Danny continued to occasionally dress as Dani and go out with Robin en femme, at times as a Cosmo representative. "Not only is he my husband, but she is my best girl friend too," Robin concluded.

Robin's secret would never be revealed.

Editor's Note: The last name of Pastor and Kelly Espee had a major significance in the story. Espee (pronounced S-P) was used to honor and in memory of my dear friend, Linda Holmes, who went to Heaven in 2011. Linda was a railroad buff and loved taking pictures of, and riding, Southern Pacific trains, thus the reference. Linda will be missed by me and all those whose lives she touched.