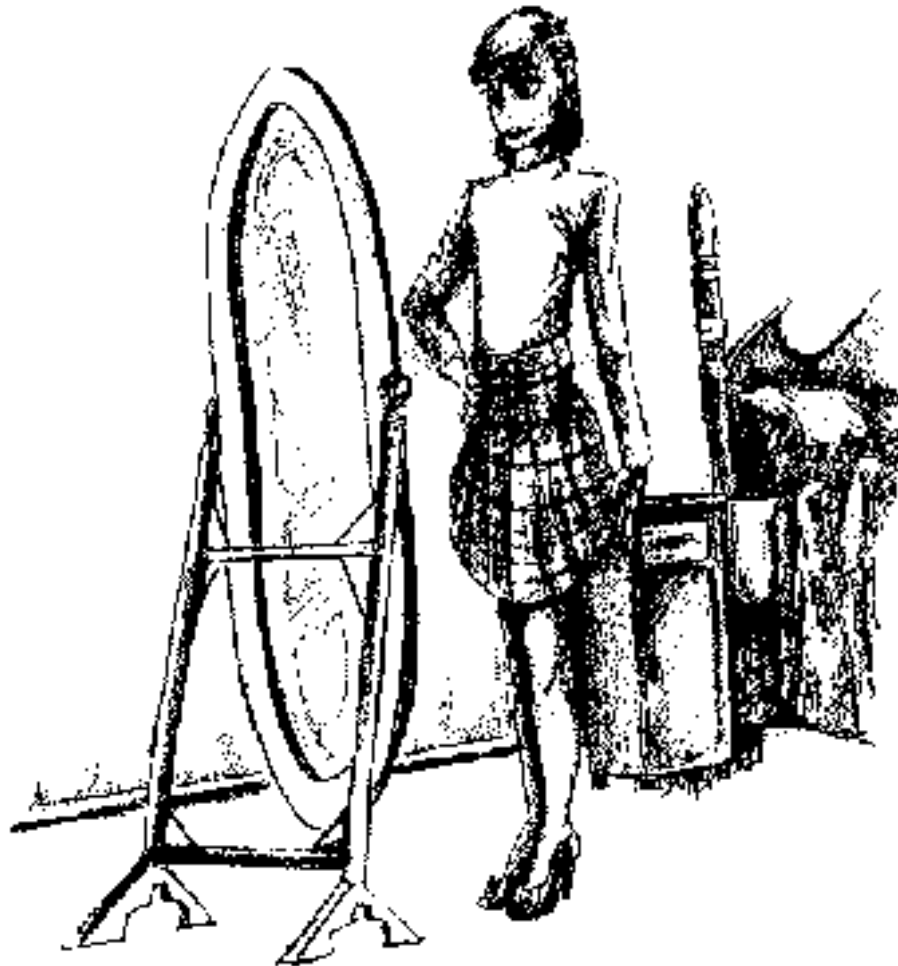


LOOKING GLASS GIRL

By Patricia Marie Allen



ILLUSTRATED BY C.Diamond

A 'YOUNG ADULT' NOVEL

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LOOKING GLASS GIRL

By Patricia Marie Allen

ALAN DISCOVERS

Alan's parents are divorced and he lives with his sister Maggie and his mother. He has an older sister Patty who was married last year and a brother Jim Jr. who decided to live with his father in Colorado when he was 13. When Jim was 12 he had become fascinated with girls and suggested to one of his friends that if Alan put on a girl's swim suit and swimming cap he could pass for a girl. Then all he would need is a little camera and he could go into the girls dressing room at the park swimming pool and take pictures of them getting undressed. Alan being not quite five at the time couldn't understand why they would want pictures of girls getting undressed.

Alan thought this was all very strange. But like he had been told many times about everything else, "When he was older he'd understand." So he put these things out of his Mind and went on living, waiting to get older. By and by he did, Jim went to live with his Dad and Patty got married and moved to California with her new husband. Then it was just Maggie, Mom and him. Mom worked, Maggie, who was five years older, went to junior high school and got home from school at least an hour after he did. Mom didn't get home from work for an hour after that. Alan was a latch key kid.

The house they lived in was pretty small and storage was a problem. Alan's bedroom had a big closet and the things that weren't needed were often stored there. They didn't have television so Alan was left to find ways to amuse himself. One day being bored, he started going through his closet and in one box he found some of his sisters old clothes. They were probably stored out of habit. Maggie had worn Patty's hand-me-downs. Mom must have put them away as usable clothing, too good to throw away. That didn't make much sense, since Maggie was the youngest girl. They should have been given away.

Just as he was about to close the box, a swimsuit caught his eye. "If he put on a girl's swim suit and swimming cap, he could pass for a girl." He took it out and held it up. It was about the right size. Was there a swimming cap? Digging around he found one. It was missing a strap. Without really deciding to do it, he took off his clothes and put on the swim suit and cap. He couldn't tell much by looking down at himself. There was big mirror in Maggie's room. Looking in the mirror, he decided Jim was right. He could pass for a girl. The suit was lined with nylon from the waist down. As he walked back from Maggie's room, he decided he liked the way it felt. And, it was kind of neat to see himself in the mirror looking like a girl.

The next day he had no more than taken off his coat after school then he thought about the swim suit. Going straight to his closet he got out the suit and put it on. Pulling on the swim cap, he went to Maggie's mirror. He turned this way and that. He was-

n't allowed to play outside or have friends in until after Maggie got home, and only then if Maggie said so. This was a way he could have someone in and nobody would know. It was only his own reflection, but it sure didn't look like him. He wore the swim suit not only in Maggie's room but all over the house. He got himself an after school snack and ate it at the kitchen table. Dancing through the living room, he somehow felt more alive. Even though he had never heard about anything like this, he knew this was something he had better not tell anyone.

The weekend was on them and he kind of forgot about the swimming suit. But on Wednesday, he remembered. He got out the suit and put it on as usual. Somehow after he looked in the mirror he felt a little let down. Even the nylon lining seemed a little boring. As he went to put the suit back, he began to wonder what else was really in the box. He dumped it out on the bed. There was a pair of pink panties with a small slit in the seam, a long nylon nightie, a skirt and a sweater. There were also some mismatched socks and a two piece swim suit that was too big for him.

Taking off the swim suit, he pulled on the panties. The seam pulled apart and threatened to unravel even more. Clutching the split seam in his left hand he went in search of a safety pin. He found one in the sewing machine drawer. Returning to his closet, he put on the skirt and sweater. He went to the mirror in Maggie's room. Well, ... it would be better if he couldn't see his short hair. Maybe, Maggie had a scarf. She sometimes wore a bandanna on her head.

He began to explore her dresser drawers. He found panties, bras, slippers, socks, nylon stockings, a couple of things he didn't understand (a lot of elastic and pads in different combinations), some shorts and some sweat shirts and nighties and pajamas. Turning to her vanity, he opened a couple of drawers and found what he was searching for. Using her brush, he brushed his hair over his forehead and tied the bandanna around his head. That was better. Studying himself in the mirror, he began to wonder, if the panties and the nylon in the swim suit felt so good, what would the slip feel like?

Stripping to the panties he tried on the slip. It didn't fit right. It bagged across the chest. Then he remembered his cousins and the bras. He took off the slip and put on a bra. It took quite a bit of concentration to hook it behind his back. He didn't want to go all the way to the bathroom for toilet paper, so he just took some socks out of Maggie's drawer. He put the slip back on and followed it with the skirt and sweater. After spending considerable time looking in the mirror he walked around the house in that outfit for some time. He almost panicked when he saw the time. Maggie could be home at any minute. He tore into her room pulled off the skirt and sweater. He hurriedly put the slip, bra and socks back where he got them. He almost forgot the scarf and at the last minute he dashed back and put it away. As he left Maggie's room for the second time, he heard the front door open. He knew it was Maggie.

He ran on tiptoes, carrying the skirt and sweater, to his room. Throwing them on his bed, he closed the door softly. He stuffed them along with the panties into the box and roughly shoved it inside his closet. Quickly putting on his clothes, he walked as casually as he could down stairs.

"I'm bored." He said, flopping down on the couch.

“Too bad, short stuff,” Maggie told him. “I’m supposed to keep an eye on you and start dinner.”

He went out to the back yard because his heart was beating too fast to just sit there. He had almost gotten caught.

After that, he went into Maggie’s room quite a bit. Then he discovered the laundry basket and “borrowed” some of her underwear. Including a bra that he wore to bed on the weekends, along with the nightgown in the box. Then he decided that they really needed washing so he put them back in the laundry.

A few weeks later he happened to be in the back yard when Mom was taking the laundry off the line. She asked him to take the basket inside for her while she went to the bathroom. Maggie’s underwear was on top of the pile. He was tempted to take them, but thought that perhaps Mom would remember what was on top... so he dug down a few layers and found some panties and a bra down there. Leaving the basket on the couch, he tucked his find inside his shirt and headed for his room. He hid them in the box with the other clothes, all the way to the bottom.

Every couple of weeks, he would see to it that they got back in the wash and then try to make sure he had opportunity snatch them back.

Sometimes he would wear the panties all weekend. He only did that when he was ready to put them back in the wash.

During the summer, this was about the only dressing he got to do. If he got to do anything more, usually it was when he came back early from a friend’s.

One time, knowing that Maggie wanted to go somewhere that day, he made up a story about going to a friend’s house. Instead of visiting with his friend, however, he went to the park where he could see the bus go by. When he saw Maggie in the bus, he went back home and for a whole day he dressed up in Maggie’s clothes.

He tried on her shoes and found while the length was about right, they were a little bit narrow. He then got the idea that the nylon stockings, if he put them on, would help his feet slide into the shoes easier. He put on the garter belt and pulled on the stockings using a technique he had seen in a movie once. It worked.

The shoes slipped right on. He wobbled around learning to walk in them. He watched himself in the mirror. It took the utmost concentration to walk in them without wobbling. He had to think about every step. After a couple of hours trying, he could step right... out as long as he didn’t forget to think about keeping his ankle straight. He noticed how shapely his legs looked in the mirror.

Not knowing exactly when Maggie was coming home, he carefully put everything back about 3:30 and went to the friend’s house where he was *supposed* to be.

ALAN RECEIVES

Eventually it came time to shop for school clothes. He really didn't like shopping so he didn't offer any advice as to what he needed. He thought last year's clothes were fine... besides, his mom never bought him what he wanted.

When they got home, Alan's mom realized that she had spent her entire clothes' budget and then some and had completely forgotten to get Alan any underwear. He really need underwear - only a few of them didn't have holes. After all, they had been hand-me-downs from Jim before he had gone to Colorado.

"Oh, now what am I going to do?" Alan's mom moaned. "I can just barely make ends meet as is. He really needs new underwear."

"Well," Maggie offered, "I just got plenty of new underwear, and I have lots of old. The only thing wrong with them is they are getting a little small. Nobody sees underwear, maybe he could wear my old ones."

Mom looked at her, then at Alan. Back at Maggie... and then at Alan again. She caught her lips between her teeth.

"Well... would that be all right, Alan? Just until I can get a little overtime? I'll get you some boys underwear then. Okay??"

Alan's heart beat quickened a little bit.

"Yeah, I guess so..." ...he tried not to sound eager.

Maggie went to her drawer and brought out eight pairs of panties.

"How will I tell his from yours in the laundry?" mom asked.

"I know," Maggie thought, "We'll use the laundry marker we used that one year for camp. It's still in the sewing machine." Opening the drawer, she rummaged a little and came up with it.

"For God's sakes, don't write his name in them, not even his initials," Alan's mom implored.

"I won't. I'll just put a little mark on the waist band on the inside by the left seam. When we see that, we'll know they're his. Anyone else who sees them will look right passed it."

"Good."

Now Alan had his own panties. *He wore them every day.*

He kept his usual bra. His new technique called for taking a clean one before giving up a dirty one. That way, he always had one. It was easy to get it in the laundry but not always to get it out.

Some time in late September, Maggie brought some clothes out of her room and put them in a big shopping bag... mostly was pajamas and nighties. There were some torn bed sheets and an old blanket that looked pretty thin.

"What are you going to do with that stuff?" Alan inquired.

“Oh, this winter the Boy Scouts will be collecting for Goodwill. I'm just cleaning out my closet and getting a head start for them,” she told him. “I'm going to keep it in the hall closet.”

That night, Alan put on his worst pair of pajamas for bed. Then he came down to kiss mom goodnight.

“Night sweetie,” Mom cooed.

“Mom,” Alan said looking down, “you know something else I didn't get when we went shopping?”

“What honey?”

“I didn't get any new pajamas.”

Mom looked him up and down. “I'm sorry, sweetie. I didn't remember them either. And you're right. The ones you have on are pretty bad.”

“Maggie's going to give some to Goodwill. Couldn't I have them instead?”

“Let's see them.”

He went to the bag and pulled out the plainest of them. Mom looked.

“Okay you go ahead, if they fit you.”

He took them to his room and put them on and bounced back to the living room.

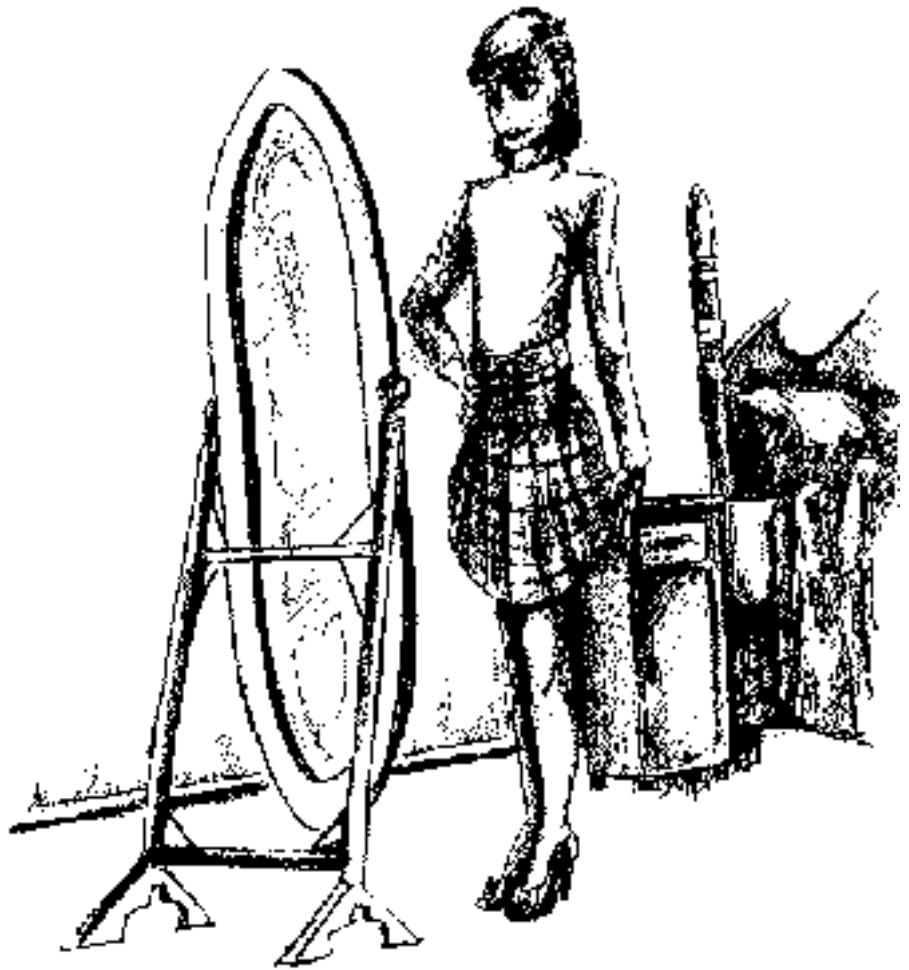
“See Mama, they fit just fine.”

“They sure do, sweetheart.”

“Can I have the others in there too?”

“Okay just get to bed quickly,” She said, heading for the kitchen to get a cup of coffee.

Alan quickly dumped the contents of the bag on the couch and separated the sheets and blankets - pushing them back in and placing the bag in the closet again. He hurriedly scooped up his loot and ran up stairs.



Counting what he was wearing, he netted two pairs of cotton pajamas, two pairs of nylon, three cotton nighties and two nylon nighties.

Alan began sleeping in the girls PJs exclusively... and sleeping in the nighties on the weekend when no one would be in to wake him in the morning and he could be assured of not being caught.

During the week, playing dress-up was even easier. Since he already had a bra and wore panties all the time, it was a simple matter of putting on his bra and walking into Maggie's room. He then put on a slip and opened the closet. If he knew that Maggie would be home late from school because of a basketball game or something, he might take time to put on nylons and high heels. What he liked most, next to watching himself in the mirror, – and he like that a *lot* – it was going out on the back porch.

Occasionally he would get careless and not change soon enough. When he heard Maggie's key in the lock he'd scurry to her room. He always left the drawers open and the closet door open, so when she would surprise him he could quickly put things away and slip across the hall still wearing the bra and panties. This happened only infrequently.

MOM DISCOVERS

By January, Alan was beginning to feel pretty confident about wearing nighties to bed.

One Saturday night he got up to go to the bathroom. He was in the habit of sitting on the toilet when he was fully dressed. He flushed when he got through and pulled up his panties and stepped out into the hall, almost running into Mom. He gave a start and hurried past her.

"I'm sorry, sweetie," she said sleepily.

His blood racing, he hurried to his room and climbed into bed - pretending to sleep. He couldn't *really* sleep, though, until long after he heard Mom flush the toilet. He expected, that at any moment, she would appear and demand to know why he was wearing a nightgown. Finally, he slept.

In the morning, Mom appeared. It was about nine...

"Alan, Alan, are you awake yet? I was hungry for scrambled eggs and ham. I know how much you like them, I thought you might like to get up and have some with me."

He was trapped. He did like scrambled eggs and ham. He should come out of bed like a shot. *Could this be a trap?* Had his mom remembered what she saw last night? Was she now trying to confirm it?. He hesitated, trying to think what to do.

"Okay I'll be down in a minute. I want to get dressed first. I'm supposed to go over to Dan's as soon as I get up this morning," He lied.

At breakfast he savored the eggs and ham. With just a little ketchup they were like heaven.

"Was that you last night in the bathroom?"

"Uh... yeah," he replied tentatively.

“At first I thought it was Maggie... but then I realized that she was taller.” She paused to take a bite of eggs. Sipping her coffee she continued. “I guess it was the nightwear. What *was* that you were wearing?”

“A... a nightgown,” he told her looking down at his plate.

“I see.”

“And why were you wearing a nightgown?”

“Uh... well, it was cold last night and a nightgown is warmer than pajamas,” he offered. “Just like mittens are warmer than gloves.” He had remembered her argument for getting him mittens instead of gloves.

“Oh. I didn't know that. Just how did you happen to have a nightgown to wear?”

“Well when I got the pajamas out of the bag that time, I happened to get a nightgown too.”

“Just one? Maggie tells me there were five in all. Three cotton and two nylon.”

“Well I guess I must have gotten them all. I didn't know they were nightgowns honest. I just took everything but the sheets and blankets,” he said, shading the truth.

“Be sure everything you sleep in gets in the wash. I don't want you to be wearing dirty things.” She had finished her breakfast and got up from the table to put her dish in the sink. The conversation was over.

Did she buy his explanation? She didn't hand out any punishment. She didn't tell him to give up the nightgowns or even tell him not to wear them again.

She didn't say another word about it. It was as if she intended to ignore it. He put that nightgown in the wash. It ended up back in his drawer. Maybe it was all right with Mom after all. Just the same, Alan didn't wear a nightgown again for a long time.

About a month later, he ran into Mom coming out of the bathroom again. This time he was wearing one of the nylon pajamas. *When he came to breakfast the next morning, she commented on how well the PJs had fit him.*

ALAN RECEIVES MORE

Finally, the call came for the Goodwill drive. They each made a pile on the living room floor. The idea was to bag it up for the Boy Scouts the next Saturday.

Alan only had a few pairs of jeans, some shirts and a jacket that was too small. That, along with a pair of dress shoes he didn't wear much, was all he was willing to give up. Mom had a couple of old dresses, three pairs of shoes and some coats that had really gone out of style years ago. Maggie had the most: Skirts, blouses, dresses, slippers, shoes, socks, sweaters and shorts. Alan felt a small sense of panic when he noticed that his favorite small bra was in the pile.

"Wow, you sure are giving a lot a way," Alan noticed out loud. "I feel bad because I'm only giving that little bit." He indicated his small pile. "Even at that, it leaves me with almost no play clothes. To bad I couldn't just take some of yours."

"Maybe you could," Maggie said. "There are some pullover tops and some shorts that don't look to much like girl's clothes."

"Could I, Mom? Since Jim left, I don't have very many clothes like I used to."

Mom felt guilty. Alan had taken the short end since the divorce. He was the youngest and even before the divorce he almost never had anything new. It was always hand-me-downs and now that Jim was gone, he didn't even get that.

"Well, okay... but don't wear them outside just here in the house."

Alan began sorting Maggie's old clothes into piles. Shorts, blouses, pants, dresses and skirts, slippers, socks and shoes. Then he stuffed them into two bags. The things he didn't like that much went into a bag for Goodwill. The rest ended up in his room, where he quickly sorted it again. The shorts, pullover tops, socks and a couple pair of tennis shoes went into general use and the rest went into the box in the closet.

ALAN GETS BOLD

There was a cold snap couple of weeks later while Maggie was staying the weekend with a friend. On Friday night Alan got up to go to the bathroom. When he got through he opened the door and Mom was waiting outside and saw him in his nightgown before he even turned off the light.

“Cold again?”

“Uh... yeah.”

The next night he was on his way up to get ready for bed and Mom called up after him. “Is it cold tonight too?”

His face reddened. “I guess.”

Embarrassed, he marched straight to his room. Sitting on the bed, he brooded... *If she knew he was wearing the nightgowns, he was going to just go ahead and wear them.*

Normally he brushed his teeth before he changed for bed but tonight, he put on the bra and nightgown first.

In the morning he woke up needing to go the bathroom. He looked out the window the sun was visible in the sky. He knew it was late, but Mom knew anyway and he had to go. He just marched right into the bathroom and back, daring Mom to catch him. She didn't.

He had worn some of his “play” clothes (Maggie's old clothes) before... but always one piece at a time. Today, he put on a pullover shirt and a pair of shorts, some socks and the tennis shoes.

Mom said nothing and fixed him a nice breakfast.

That night he put on a nightgown, knowing full well Mom would come in to wake him in the morning. After all, it was still cold. Sure enough, Mom came in at 7:00 a.m. sharp and gently shook his shoulder and called his name. He blinked, remembered he was wearing a nightgown, and then remembered why. He pulled the covers back and slowly climbed out of bed. His bladder was aching. He stumbled for the bathroom. As soon as he got out of the bathroom, Mom shooed him back to get dressed for school.

The next Saturday morning, Maggie got up early. One of her friends was coming over and they were going to a movie. Alan awoke as he heard the doorbell ring. A short time later he heard Maggie call out, “Bye Mom, I'll be home for dinner,” and the door shut.

He got up and went to the bathroom. When he came out he could smell pancakes and hot maple syrup. He was hungry. Hesitating, he finally decided to go down and see if there were any left. He peeked into the kitchen.

“There you are, Sweetie. You want some breakfast? I was just about to put the leftover hot cakes in the oven to keep them warm for you.”

He shook his head yes and climbed into the nearest chair. Mom dished him up, buttered them and put on the hot maple syrup. Then she poured him a big glass of milk.

When he was finished she wiped his face and told him to get dressed. He decided to go 'girl' again. This time he wore some shorts that fasten at the side, a sleeveless blouse and some socks and tennis shoes. Mom completely ignored it.

When Maggie came home, however, she noticed... "Well, I see you're really trying to get some use out of those clothes."

BOLDNESS REIGNS

He kept up his nighties at night and wearing all girls' clothes after school and on the weekends without any more comment. He even wore pedal pushers (knee length pants that had patch pockets in front and zipped up the back) a number of times.

Several weeks later, the weather warmed up some. The overnight lows were only in the mid fifties. Alan found cotton flannel a little warm so he switched to a nylon nightie... *and then it happened again...*

He ran into Mom as she was coming out of the bathroom on Friday night. The nightie was a slightly clingy and the little bit of stuffing in his bra was in evidence. Mom just looked at him for a moment, shook her head and patted him on his as she stepped aside.

In the morning, he awoke a little late and sat on the edge of the bed and ruminated on last night. Maggie was at a friend's for the weekend again. Today would be the day.

He got out the white blouse with long loose sleeves and a Peter Pan collar and the tennis shorts that zipped up the back. Taking off the nightgown, he put the blouse on over his bra followed by the shorts. ...*He was breathing a little heavy...*

He had never been this dressed while Mom was in the house, what with the bra and all. He got the box out and found some light cotton socks with lace around the cuffs and a pair of flats.

Alan went down stairs... his mom wasn't anywhere around. He went to the kitchen and poured a bowl of Cheerios and sat at the table. He heard the washing machine start up in the basement followed by foot steps coming up the steps. He busied himself in the cereal, purposely not looking up.

"Morning, Alan."

"Good morning."

"Sleep good last night?"

"Uh-huh."

"I noticed you switched from the cotton nightgown to something a little lighter weight."

"Yeah. It wasn't quite so cold last night."

"Nylon nighties cling more than cotton, don't they?"

"Uh-huh."

"I'm surprised how well Maggie's old clothes seem to fit you," she mused out loud as she went into the livingroom. "I would have thought that girls clothes wouldn't hang so well on a boy."

Alan lingered at the table after he finished, not so sure of himself. Had he gone too far? At any rate he was trapped. He couldn't change his mind now without Mom seeing him at least one more time. Finally, he put his bowl in the sink and started through

the livingroom thinking maybe he just go upstairs for a while and lose the bra and shoes and socks.

Mom was reading the paper when he came through the living room.... she looked up.

“Would you like me to read the funnies for you?” she asked.

“Yeah!”

“Come sit right here,” she said, patting couch next to her.

Alan obeyed. She read all the ones he liked best, as he looked on. She took time to point out things in the pictures and they both laughed. This was one of Alan's favorite times. When they were through, Mom got up and walked to the kitchen door, stopped, listened for moment.

“Alan, would come help me in the basement for a little bit?”

Alan followed her down. When they got there. She took some things out of the washer and asked Alan to put the next load in while she hung the clothes on the lines in the basement. After the clothes were in the washer, she stopped long enough to add the soap and start that load. Then she had him hold the clothes' pins for her. It was an old ritual. He had done this many times. By the time they were through, Alan had forgotten all about loosing the bra.

It was raining outside so Alan amused himself with coloring books and a horse and cowboy doll he had. Shortly Mom called to him to help her in the basement again. At 11:00 Mom knew a radio station that still ran the Lone Ranger. She came and tuned it in for him. After it was through she told him to wash up for lunch.

At the sink in the bathroom, he noticed that in this light, he could make out the bra straps as they went over his shoulders. He slipped into Maggie's room for a look in her big mirror. Sure enough, he could just make out the straps over his shoulders. He picked up her hand mirror and turned around. Holding up the mirror, he was horrified to see that from the back, the big strap was clearly visible. Even with just the light coming through the window. Maybe it was better with the room light like in the kitchen and living room. With the light on, another check revealed it was just as bad.

“Hurry up, up there. The soup will get cold.” Mom called from the bottom of the stairs.

Alan quickly put down the mirror and shut off the light on the way out.

“What's taking so long?” Came from the bottom of stairs.

He had no time to think again. Down he went. While he and Mom were eating, she stopped and just watched him a while. He began to feel uncomfortable and looked up at her.

After lunch, she had him stand on a chair and dry the dishes as she washed. Then, he helped hang the last load of wash. When they got through Mom invited him to get another chapter in the book she had been reading him, called “Treasure Island” about a boy who got mixed up with pirates. So he sat on the couch again and listened intently as she read.

In the afternoon, he busied himself with puzzles and sketch pad. Then came time for dinner. In the bathroom, he noticed the bra again. Well it was too late to worry about it now. He went down to dinner. Afterward, he helped with the dishes again.

It got dark about 7:30 and Mom suggested... "Why don't you go up get ready for bed and brush your teeth then I'll read another chapter in 'Treasure Island' for you."

He went up and took off the shoes, socks, blouse and shorts. He stood looking in his drawer at the nighties. It was too warm for the cotton. The one he had worn last night was so clingy that the bra showed right through. So he chose another one that was shorter and looser. It was yellow and sleeveless. It had a V neck line with a little lace at the bottom of the V. There was just a little ruffle at the hem line.

He went downstairs and waited on the couch. Mom brought the book and sat down and read. The next chapter she read was so short, she read a second after they had a nighttime snack. It was 9:30 and Mom told him it was time for bed.

"Be sure to rinse your mouth since you had that snack."

He stepped up to the sink to rinse his mouth out, he looked into the mirror. The nightie had not stayed straight. His bra strap was showing. It must have happened while Mom was reading. She liked to put her arm around him and have him turn the pages.

The next morning he found a white sleeveless blouse that buttoned up the front and had a really loose collar. He added a pair of baggy yellow pull up shorts. The legs were so loose that when he stood with his legs close together, they almost looked like a skirt. He topped that off with a pastel yellow pair of socks and the flats again.

The wash was dry and Mom had him help her take it off the line after breakfast. She concentrated on the ironing while he got out some games he could do by himself. Just before lunch, he listened to "The Shadow" on that radio station. After lunch Mom took a break from the ironing to read more out of the book.

He played some more with the cowboy and horse. When he tired of that, he played with his rubber Bozo the clown and Gumby and Poky. Maggie came home about 3:00 while Mom was upstairs putting away what she had ironed. When she came in, Alan was sitting on the floor with his back to the door bouncing a small ball against the wall. Maggie came over and rubbed her hand over his bra strap and said.

"You've been wearing that all day?"

"Yeah."

"Did Mom see it?"

"I guess so, I wore it yesterday too."

Maggie shook her head and took her stuff up to her room. Dinner was the same as last night only he helped Maggie with the dishes instead of Mom.

That night, he wore the clingy nightgown again, putting it on before brushing his teeth. Maggie saw him on the way back to his bedroom. Stopping in her tracks, she watched him, turning to keep him in view until his door closed behind him.

After that when Alan would come home, he continued to put on dresses as well as skirts and blouses. He was always careful to change to blouse and shorts before Maggie came home. However, he always spent time looking in the mirror. He never tired of seeing himself in the mirror wearing girls clothes.

He soon discovered that if he wore a half slip, it was easier to make the change. He just had to take off the skirt and half slip and put on a pair of shorts. He moved all the lacy socks and the pastel light cotton socks to his drawer. He also put the three pairs of flats under his bed. He wasn't about to 'fess up to having high heels. Mom had seemed to take no notice of the shoes last weekend.

BUSTED

The 1st of June arrived and with it the promise of summer. School would be out in another week. Alan thought since he didn't have very many friends that lived near him, he might spend several days at a time without wearing any boy's clothes.

He came home from school and put on his blouse and skirt and as usual he slipped into Maggie's room to spend some time in front of the mirror. Going downstairs, he was hungry and went to the kitchen to see what was in the frig. He found some left over canned pears and took them to table and began eating them. It was early and he had no reason expect anyone else to be in the house. But he heard a noise and looked up from the pears.

Mom was standing in the kitchen door. His heart stopped. Things seemed to be happening in slow motion. He had to swallow hard and almost choked on the lump of un-chewed pear. He began to shake, he had really crossed the line. He wasn't just wearing the authorized play clothes. He had on a skirt and a half slip. Then he began to cry and the shaking got so bad he dropped his spoon.

"I'm sorry," Mom said, rushing around the table and leaning over to give big hug. "Did I scare you?" She picked him up from the chair and began a sort of rocking back and forth. She cooed over him some, stroking his back and hair and rubbing his back. Alan was acutely aware of her hand passing over his bra strap. "You didn't think I was home, did you? I'm sorry Sweetie. I got sick at work and came home early. I must have been in bed asleep when you came in. I didn't mean to scare you." After a time he quit crying and she kissed him. "I'll tell you what. You sit down and finish your pears and I'll get you some cookies to go with them. Would you like that?"

He shook his head yes. Catching him under the arms, she let him down and turned to the cupboard. He hesitated and then sat down, scooting under the table as much as possible. Maybe she hadn't really realized he was wearing a skirt. After all she had been across the table from him and then she was preoccupied with his crying. Maybe she'd go back to bed and he could change to shorts without her knowing it. He watched her closely. She brought the cookies as promised and then got some iced tea out of the refrigerator. To his horror she sat next to him and gave him a little hug.

"Did you have fun in school today?"

Still too nervous to talk he just shook his head yes and took a big mouthful of pears. She stroked his hair as she talked. "It's kind of nice to be here when you get home from school. I wish I could do it all the time. But Mommy has to work."

He ate very slowly. He still held out hope she would go back to bed. Finally she did get up and take her tea to the living room. He waited and waited. He was through with his pears and cookies and he still waited. There was no sign of her going upstairs. She came back into the kitchen as he was picking up a crumb to put in his mouth.

"Oh, just in time, I see. Here let me put that in the sink for you." She said, taking his bowl. At the sink she turned on the water and rinsed the bowl. This was going to

be his best chance. He slowly slipped out of the chair without moving it or making any noise and crept toward the door. When he was just a step away he started running.

"I've gotta go potty." He said as he sped through the living room. He ran up stairs to his room. He closed the door breathing hard. He hadn't taken a breath since starting to run. The door had been open and the box had been on the floor next to his bed. Had Mom noticed the box? Standing with his back against the door he shuddered. Quickly he took off the half slip and skirt. Stuffing them in the box, he still shook and labored for breath. The box safely back in the closet, he got out the baggy shorts. They weren't the same material, but almost the same color as the skirt he had been wearing.

He took several deep breaths and willed himself to be calm. He had started down stairs before he remembered his excuse for going up was the bathroom. He went back up and flushed the toilet. Back in the living room, he got out his coloring book and crayons and began to color. He heard the refrigerator door close and Mom came in with another glass of tea.

"That took long enough. I thought maybe you fell in. You know, you really should close the door when you go to the bathroom."

He glanced at her and nodded and went back to his coloring. After a while, he noticed that Mom had laid down on the couch and was apparently sleeping. When he finished the picture he was coloring, he decided to get a drink. He put the glass down on the counter and turned around to see Mom coming into the kitchen herself. She picked him up and gave him a big hug.

"You know you are a special boy? And your Mommy loves you very much?" She said as she rubbed noses with him. "No matter what you do, you'll always be my special boy." Then she put him down again. "Did you change clothes or something? It didn't feel the same when I picked you up."

"Ah, yeah, I ah... spilled some pear juice when you scared me."

"Oh, I thought something looked different when you came back down. Be sure to put the dirty things in the laundry."

Maggie came home and was surprised to see Mom home. So Mom explained how she was sick. And asked Maggie to get dinner while she lay down again.

CONFRONTATION

Saturday came and Alan was in his usual weekend clothes. He almost never wore the tennis shoes that he started with and often wore the baggy shorts. (They felt most like a skirt.) Mom had him come and help her with the wash. After she sorted the wash and put the first load in, she turned to Alan...

“You don't have all the clothes you've worn this last week in the wash, do you?”

“Uh, I think so.”

“What about the pear juice? I don't see anything even the right color. And that's not all. You don't keep everything you got from Maggie in your dresser, do you?”

He started to protest.

“Don't try to deny it, I've never seen that brassiere you wear so much in your drawer. And I think now that you seem to want to wear it everyday it should go into the wash. Do you keep it in that box I saw in your room the other day when I came home sick?”

Alan looked down and shook his head.

“Alan, I know you feel deprived since Jim left and that you seem to get some enjoyment out of Maggie's old clothes. And really, I don't mind that much. Just be sure that the neighbors don't see you. You know, sometimes I look at you and you look so much like Maggie a few years ago, especially in those clothes... Well, I just feel nostalgic. It's almost like having a little girl around the house again.” She shook herself a little and continued. “But I think you had better go upstairs and take off that bra. You'll just have to go without it one day. And go through that box and bring down anything else that you've had on since you got them from Maggie. I don't care what it is, I don't want you wearing any dirty clothes. If there are things that might be confused with Maggie's, get the laundry marker and we'll put a little mark on the inside so I can tell the difference like we did with the panties. Okay?”

Alan shook his head yes and started up the stairs.

“Don't forget, I want to see that bra. You've been wearing it off and on for weeks.”

Up in his room, he got out the box and dumped it on his bed. He sorted through it. Just how much could he own up to all at once. There was a skirt that he had dropped jelly on and another that had suffered when he tried to make his own chocolate milk. Finally, he took off his bra and put every thing but four skirts back in the box.

“Is this all?”

“Everything that's dirty.”

“Is it everything that you've worn?”

“I don't remember everything I've worn. Some things I only wear for a little bit and change.”

“How long is a little bit?”

“I don't know. I change before Maggie gets home, most of the time.”

“Let's go look. I'd better see for myself. Sometimes you don't think things are dirty when they are,” she said and started up the stairs. “Come on. I want to show you how to tell.”

Alan reluctantly followed her up stairs. When they reached his room, she looked around. “Where do you keep the box?”

He pointed at the closet. She got it out and dumped it on his bed. Sorting through it she looked at Alan. “You have all these things?” Alan shook his head. “Have you worn them all?” Alan surveyed them all and again shook his head. “Alan, these are nice things. You should take better care of them than to just wad them up in a box.” She spread them out. Skirts, and dresses alike. She lifted one of the slips and sniffed it and held it out to him. “Smell.” She told him. He did. “That doesn't smell fresh. Things like that should be washed every other time you wear them. I think we had better wash everything.”

“I've never worn that two piece bathing suit. It's way too big.”

Leaving the high heeled shoes behind, they took everything else down to the basement. The slips and bras went in with the white load. All rest contributed enough to make another whole load of colors.

When, they got upstairs Mom took him by the shoulder. “I want you to promise me that you won't wear anything more than twice without putting it in the wash. Wearing dirty clothes isn't sanitary and makes them wear out sooner. Those things have a lot of wear left. Now promise?”

“Uh-huh,” Alan said, shaking his head ‘yes.’

It was about lunch time and Mom tuned in “The Lone Ranger” for him and started lunch. While the soup was heating, she went to the bottom of the stairs. “Maggie! I'm fixing lunch. Come down in about fifteen minutes, all right?”

“Okay Mom,” she called back.

At lunch, they all sat eating tuna fish sandwiches and soup.

“How are you coming on that report?” Mom asked Maggie.

“Real good. I should be done soon. I only have a little more to do. Can I go over to Mary's later? We want to plan the decorations for the party next weekend.”

“That'll be all right. Alan is here to help me with the laundry. Besides, I still have to read some of 'Treasure Island' for him. I know you don't care to hear that.”

“I'm surprised that he still likes it,” Maggie said, looking Alan up and down.

Mom made a face.

OUTSIDE

Maggie left shortly after lunch. Mom stepped out on the back porch for just a moment.

“I think I'll hang the white clothes outside today. Even if it rains a little later, they will dry better and smell nicer than in the basement. You want to help me with the clothes' pins, Alan?”

Alan stepped out on the back porch and felt excited. There was a little breeze... he wished he was wearing a skirt.

Maggie didn't come home until after dinner. Alan had just come down to kiss Mom good night wearing the short nylon nightie. Maggie eyed him. When he reached the top of the stairs, he heard her say, “Maybe I shouldn't have given all those clothes to Goodwill. I should have just given them to him.”

“You don't know it, but you did. He had a box full of skirts and dresses he purloined out of the Goodwill bags. But don't be too hard on him. After all, it was your idea to let him have some of your hand-me-downs. He just liked it better than you thought he would. Besides, he has so little that makes him happy in his life. As much as I'd rather he didn't, if wearing your old clothes pleases him, far be it from me to deny him that little bit of pleasure.”

“I suppose he has my old slippers too.”

“Yes, he does. I saw the box he kept them in when I came home sick. Just today, I made him put everything in the wash. I'm not going to make him feel guilty about it. He's just too sensitive a child. If that's what he wants to do, I'll do my best to put up with it. But I won't put up with him wearing dirty clothes.”

“But don't you think the bra is a bit much? I mean, girls his age don't have breasts.”

“Well yeah. But some are wearing training bras at that age. All of yours have gone to the Goodwill already. Those are the smallest bras we have.”

MORE FREEDOM

The next weekend was Maggie's end of the school year party. She stayed at Mary's for the weekend. Saturday, Alan woke early. After what he heard from the top of the stairs last weekend, he had decided to try out a skirt and blouse. The previous Sunday, when he went to bed, he had noticed that all those things that had been in the box were hung neatly in his closet. He selected a half slip and the skirt Mom had caught him in. He the white socks with the lace and patent leather flats. He'd not worn the patent leather shoes for Mom yet.

In the kitchen he poured a bowl of cereal. Mom wasn't up yet. As he ate, he heard the toilet flush. Mom soon appeared and put a pot of coffee on.

"You're up early," she told him as she kissed him on the head. "Would like some toast and jam?"

"Yes, please."

She put it on a plate next to him. He finished his cereal and started on the toast. As he was eating the last half piece, his fingers slipped and the toast tumbled, jam side down, on to his lap.

"Oh dear. Don't move." Mom jumped up and got a dish rag and took the toast off his lap and began to carefully wipe the jam off his skirt and blouse. "Well, these things have to be washed now. Good thing this is laundry day. Those stains won't have time to set. Run up and change."

He got up from the table. "It's going to be warm to day. Change into something lightweight," she called after him.

He went to his closet. The lightest thing he had was the dress with the cap sleeves and white collar. It was real loose and the hem went down to just below his knees. It was tempting, but he wasn't quite sure enough to actually wear that in front of Mom. He decided on another white blouse and the baggy shorts. He took the dirty clothes straight to the basement.

He busied himself in the livingroom. Mom worked crossword puzzles and periodically had him help with the wash. She had decided to hang things outside today as well. The first load went to the lines on the back porch. The second load had to go out on the lines in the back yard. Mom had him wait on the back porch while she carried the laundry out. She set it down and looked next door. The neighbor's car was gone. She motioned him to come down. The breeze was stronger in the yard and it even got strong enough that it was hard for Mom to hang some things. Once she even dropped a pair of shorts. Alan raced after them and brought them back.

So this was the way it was. He could wear what he wanted around Mom just so long as the neighbors didn't see. That was okay. He'd be satisfied with the back porch, most of the time. After all until today he had never ventured beyond it.

On Sunday he tried another skirt. He wore a full slip, a print blouse and a pleated skirt with another pair of lace cuffed socks and the patent leather flats. He had been nervous all morning, but when lunch came and went without comment from Mom one

way or the other, he relaxed. When Maggie came home, she looked at him as she went upstairs. In a little while she came back down. Alan was looking in a bureau drawer for his crayons and Mom was in the kitchen.

“It's snowing down south,” she said.

“What?” he replied, turning around.

“Your slip is showing. In back. Come here.” He went over to her and she unbuttoned the top button on his blouse. She reached in and pulled the strap from his slip up and adjusted it. Doing the other side, she said. “If you're going to wear girl's clothes, at least you should look decent. There. You should leave the second button undone. It looks better.”

SCHOOL'S OUT

Alan often wore skirts for Maggie, but usually changed before Mom came home. His excuse was he wanted to play outside. He'd put on a pair of his jeans and go out front and down the street a block and visit his one friend in the neighborhood. He didn't play much with her because her mother was over protective and she couldn't leave her yard.

Once in a while he would wear a dress, and when he worked up the courage he decided to test Mom's reaction. He had worn a skirt for her several times, but never a dress. When Mom came home he sat nervously on the couch, coloring. She just smiled and came over and kissed him on the forehead. After a while, he got off the couch and went into the kitchen for a drink. When he came back in, Mom saw him silhouetted in the doorway and called him over.

"Alan, dear, when you wear something that lightweight, you should always wear a full slip. When the light comes from behind, it shows right through. I know you have a nice slip, why don't you go up and put it on under that dress?"

Alan was shaking when he put the slip on. He couldn't tell if it was because of excitement or just nerves... *Mom had noticed him in a dress!* ...He went back down and took up his coloring again.

Maggie saw him in a skirt or a dress at least three or four times a week. So much, in fact, that she began to treat him like a little sister. She often fixed his hair, which was getting a little bit long. Finally, she even trimmed some bangs. She often sprayed him with some of her cologne, or painted his fingernails.

Mom seemed intent on not seeing his clothes while Maggie would fuss over him if he wasn't quite right - Instructing him in things like keeping his legs together when wearing a skirt or properly coordinating his outfit. ...Sometimes even accessorizing the outfit with a scarf or lending him a necklace or bracelet.



Alan began to have a certain 'comfort zone' in wearing whatever he wanted. Now he'd wear a dress for Mom on a regular basis... and Mom would care for his girl's clothes just as carefully as she did Maggie's.

Since Maggie was home, she helped Mom with the wash. On Sunday Maggie went to visit Mary again. When she came home she had a garbage bag full of clothes. It was almost too big for her to carry.

"What's this?" Mom asked.

"Oh Mary's family was cleaning out their basement. There were lots of clothes they were planing to give to St. Vincent de Paul. When I admired some of the dresses they told me to take what I wanted. Most of what I took will fit me, but I managed to snag some things that Alan will need since he seems to be wearing girls clothes every day.

"Oh, that's nice," Mom said, going back to the newspaper.

"What did you get me?" Alan demanded.

"Come up to my room and we'll sort it."

Alan followed her up. She dumped out the bag on her bed. She began separating clothes - Alan's to the left, hers on the right. When she was through, Alan had three more dresses, four blouses and five skirts and five bras. These bras were different then the ones he took from the Goodwill donation of Maggie's. They didn't really have much room in the cups and the cups were thick . When they lay on the bed, it looked like the as if there were little boobs already in them. ...Alan picked up one of the bras and studied it.

"It's called a training bra. I know you really don't have anything to train, but with the padding in them, it'll look more realistic then the ones you have."

Monday morning he tried on one of his new bras and a new dress. Slipping into Maggie's room, he studied himself in the mirror. It was the first dress he had worn that hadn't belonged to his sister first. He was still wearing the dress when Mom came home. She looked ...and immediately looked away, but said nothing. She was always the same to him no matter what he was wearing. It was as though his clothes were invisible. On Saturday she still would sit on the couch and read "Treasure Island" to him. She still picked him up and told him how special he was.

Until now the longest time Alan had spent in exclusively girl's clothes was two days, but he decided he was going to see just how long he could go without the need to put on boy's clothes. This came to him after spending a weekend wearing dresses. He looked in his closet and determined with his recent additions he had enough clothes to do it without stretching his wardrobe.

Alan spent the next week without wearing pants or even girl's shorts one time. It was a real thrill to be in a dress or skirt the whole time. Whenever he got the chance, he would look in the mirror. It was a habit from which he never tired. On Saturday, it was the usual routine. He had three dresses, four skirts and four blouses as well as panties, socks and four bras in the wash. Today he chose a pullover top that he had worn many times before Mom caught him in a skirt. The skirt he put with it was a very

long skirt with deep folds so that when he twirled around the skirt would almost go out flat. There were still two dresses, three skirts and 5 blouses left in the closet.

On the second Saturday, Maggie didn't feel well and wanted to stay in bed. That meant Alan would have to help Mom with the wash. They were in the kitchen doing the dishes. Mom was at the sink washing and Alan was at his usual post, standing on a chair to dry. While they were working the neighbors packed up their car and headed out. They all brought out suitcases and extra things as if to make an extended trip.

"They must be going out of town for the weekend," Mom said. "I think I heard they have a wedding to go to. When it came time to hang the wash, Mom boldly went out with Alan behind and hung up the wash. Alan was ecstatic. The breeze was just strong enough to really rustle his dress around his legs. This feeling was even better than looking at himself in the mirror.

On Sunday, Maggie was feeling better. She was surprised that Mom had Alan go out in his dress and help bring in the wash, but said nothing. She hadn't seen the neighbors leave for the weekend and they got back so late on Sunday night that she didn't even know they had been gone. So on Monday when Alan was bored, she suggested that he play in the back yard. Alan paused on the back porch and then tentatively walked out looking at the neighbor's house. At last he scurried to the far corner where their greenhouse would obscure the view.

That evening Maggie had gone over to Mary's and the garbage needed emptying. "Alan, would you empty the garbage for me?" Alan came and got the garbage. "Be sure to look and make sure that the neighbors aren't out." He did as he was told.

Weeks came and went and Alan spent less and less time in pants. Finally, only relenting and wearing boy's clothes when someone would insist he go out and get some exercise. Even then, it was only part days. A day never went by that he didn't wear girl's clothes sometime. There was something about girl's clothes that just made him feel more alive. It was exciting and satisfying at the same time.

MOVING

It was near the end of summer... Maggie had trimmed Alan's hair into a pretty reputable girls' hairdo. Some boys his age were wearing their hair longer so it didn't look bad when he went to his friend's house. It really looked like a girl when Maggie added barrettes or a hair band or maybe a ribbon with a bow in it.

Mom announced one Friday night at dinner, that they needed to move because their landlord was moving back. She had a lead on a new house just a few miles closer to work. It would mean that she could get to work by taking only one bus. Maggie could go to the same school. But Alan would have to change.

On Saturday, they all went to look at the house. It was a two story house like the one in which they were already living. It sat near the front of the lot. On one side was an alley with a tall hedge. On the other, a similar house,. The houses shared a double wide driveway, and a garage with two sides so it was like having separate garages. That left the backyard almost completely closed in. There was a big tree in the backyard with a swing. The lady who showed them the house explained that the neighbor didn't have a car so the shared driveway was never an issue. The house had three bedrooms upstairs and a basement. The basement had a separate entrance so you could go right out the back to the yard. Mom liked that because it would be easier to carry the wash out.

They made the move the last day in August. It was a Saturday and Mom had two guys from work come help. They each had pickup trucks and one had a trailer. The whole place was moved in three loads. Alan had to wear boy's clothes all day. Mom promised to fix dinner for the volunteers. They helped unpack everything and didn't leave until just before Alan's bed time. It was the longest stretch without girl's clothes since the end of June.

Sunday, Alan woke up early, aware of unfamiliar surroundings. He got up and looked out the window which faced the back yard. He quickly got dressed and went downstairs. Everyone else was still in bed. He slipped out the back door. Peeking around the side, he checked the neighbor's house. The shades were still drawn. He raced across the backyard and got into the swing.

He was wearing the lightweight dress that he had worn earlier. ...He really liked the way it felt as he swung back and forth. He watched and was pleased to see that no matter how high he went, the neighbors' house was not in view. After a short time, he let the swing come to a rest and hurried inside. He was back inside just in time... as he opened the refrigerator, Mom came down the stairs.

"If you'll get out the milk and eggs, I'll make French toast for breakfast," Mom said.

Mom and Alan washed the dishes after breakfast. Since they had moved on Saturday, Sunday became wash day. Mom went to the basement and started the wash. Alan got out his coloring book and crayons.

Soon Mom called from the basement. "Alan, please come help with the wash." Alan went downstairs. "Would you put the next load in for me? Just close the lid and push

the knob in when you're ready." It was neatly piled on a counter and the soap was pre-measured. While he put the load in and started it, Mom carried the wet wash and opened the door. She took a few steps, then looking around she motioned with her head to Alan to come on up.

"Take the clothes pins and go straight over to the clothes lines," she told him. The clothes lines ran from the garage to a pole near the swing. She followed right behind him and they hung the wash. Alan thought it was neat, since he was wearing a dress in the back yard with Mom. He could tell by looking at the top of the tree, that there was a slight wind blowing, but the back yard was so closed in that none of it reached him. Finishing, Mom patted him on the head and started for the basement door again.

Alan hesitated... "Mom, can I play on the swing for a while?"

"Well, I don't know if that's a good idea, Sweetie."

"You can't see into the back yard from here," Alan protested. "Nobody will see."

Mom turned and looked. "Well... for a little while. But don't come in until I call you, o.k.?"

Alan looked toward the neighbor's yard and play set... it was nice... it had two swings, a slide and a set of climbing bars. Kind of like a jungle gym, only smaller. He was tempted to go try it out but thought better of it.

He climbed into his swing for another session. He got back as far as he could and jumped up into the seat as it swung forward. Pumping hard, he finally got the swing going. Once it was going, it was no trick to keep it going. Soon Mom came out with another load of wash. He helped her hang it and went back in with her.

At lunch Alan spoke up, "It's nice having a private back yard."

Mom said, "Well, it's not completely private. The space between the house and garage is open to the neighbors yard."

"Yeah, but once I'm back past the garage, no one can see me."

"Well, you still need to be careful going from the house to the garage. It would be better for you to go out the basement and look to make sure that no one sees you."

The basement door opened at ground level behind the back porch. Alan could see that there would be a big measure of privacy. He could look over without anyone seeing what he was wearing, even if they were standing in the driveway.

When Maggie came home Alan was playing on the swing. All the wash was on the line and dinner was just about ready. Mom came out on the back porch. "Sweetheart," she called, "time for dinner." She looked over at the neighbor's yard and nodded. He jumped from the swing and ran in. "Wash up real good. I'll have it on the table when you get done."

SCHOOL SHOPPING — TIGHT MONEY

After the dinner dishes were done Mom got out some paperwork and spread it over the kitchen table. She studied it for some time, then getting up from the table, she went to each of their rooms, and then she came back to the kitchen and studied some more. Finally she came into the living room where Maggie was reading and Alan was building with some Lincoln Logs.

“Next week is school shopping week, and because of our moving expenses, we'll have to cut corners as much as we can. I want both of you to try on all of your clothes tomorrow morning and decide just what you really need for school. After that, be ready to go shopping.” She looked at Alan as though that remark was especially for him.

The next morning after trying everything on, Alan reported that all but two of his shirts still fit with some room to grow and he had three pair of jeans he could wear. Maggie reported that she would need some new underwear and a new coat. And if Mom could manage, she really would like some more sweaters.

Mom got everyone's jackets out and headed them out the door. It was a forty-five minute ride on the bus to town. They shopped for three hours. Alan got new shoes, two pair of jeans and two shirts; Maggie got new underwear, including two slippers and bras, also, two blouses and skirts. Then they went coat shopping and both got new coats. Mom stopped at a lunch counter and got them each a sandwich and a coke. While they ate, she counted her money and before they left for home, they picked up three sweaters for Maggie.

Finally back home with all their packages, Mom sat on the couch looking frazzled. She picked out things from the bags making two piles and handed one to Alan.

When school started, he reluctantly went back to his routine. The difference was that Maggie and Mom got home about the same time. Alan had no way of knowing which of them would be home first.

Friday morning he found himself day dreaming about the weekend. He wouldn't have to change clothes for two days. He would be able to wear the same clothes from the time he got up until he went to bed. On the way home he was mentally picking out what he'd wear when he got home, and was deep in thought when he walked by the neighbor's house.

“Hello!” a strange voice startled him out of his trance.

He stopped, blinked and looked around. There was a little girl sitting on the steps.

“My name's Diane, what's yours?”

“Uh... Alan.”

“I live here. Where do you live?”

“Next door,” he said, pointing.

“Diane, who are you talking to?” her mother asked as she stepped out of the door.

“My new friend, Alan. He lives next door.”

“Hello, Alan, nice to meet you. You moved in the first of the month, didn't you?”

“Yes, Ma'am.”

“I've been meaning to introduce myself to your mother. I'm Mrs. Jackson, and you've already met Diane. Do you go to Whitman School?”

“Yes Ma'am.”

“Diane goes to Fullerton. She trying the first grade this year.”

Alan was surprised...she looked older than he was.

“Diane, sweetheart, you haven't changed into your play clothes yet. Why don't you go do that now.” Diane quickly jumped up and went inside. “Diane is... slow... ah, special. That's the way they say it now. She's a very nice girl, very friendly. She likes everyone - even the kids who used to live next door. They teased her a lot. Thank God she didn't understand most of what they said. When they laughed, she just laughed with them. They were older, sixth grade and up. Diane really could use a friend. There aren't any other kids around, so if you get bored, feel free to come over and play. Nice meeting you.” Then Diane's mother stepped back inside.

Up until now, Alan hadn't given much thought to who lived next door. It didn't take very many days to get bored. Mrs. Jackson was right, there weren't any kids in the neighborhood. The few neighbors he saw were old enough to be his grandparents. The only exception was the young couple who lived on the corner near the bus stop who had a little baby. Alan had seen her putting the baby into a car seat one day after school.

About three weeks after school started, he had changed to his dress and was outside on his swing when he heard a noise from next door. He stopped his swing as quickly as possible and listened. It had to be Diane and her mother on the play set in her backyard. He slipped behind the garage and peeked through the bushes. He watched for a while. She seemed to be having fun with her mother. He really wanted to try out that slide.

He quickly slipped back to his yard and made a dash for the basement door which he had left open. Changing to an old pair of jeans that really didn't fit him that well, he walked out the back and up to their fence.

“Hello Alan!” Diane shouted.

“Oh, hi Alan,” her mother said turning. “Would you like to come and play?”

“Yes!”

Alan played with Diane and her mother for almost an hour.

“Well, I have to start dinner, but you can stay and play with Diane if you like,” Mrs. Jackson told Alan.

“I think I should go home. My Mom doesn't know I'm here. If she gets home and I'm not there, she might be upset.”

“Okay, dear, but come and play again - maybe after dinner?”

Alan nodded and headed home. He went to his room to change, but as he started to unbutton his shirt, Mom called out. "Alan, where are you?"

"Up here."

"Come down. I have a surprise for you." Alan went down and Mom handed him a baseball glove. "You remember Tim? the blonde haired man who helped us move?" Alan nodded. "Well he sent you this. He said it had been just gathering dust around his place, and he remembered that you told him you liked baseball but didn't have a mitt. Wasn't that nice of him?"

"It sure was!" Alan agreed, putting on the glove and finding a baseball in the pocket. He went out to the back yard and began throwing the ball against the garage and catching the rebound until Mom called him in for dinner.

Sitting at the table, Alan spoke. "I met the next door neighbors the other day."

"Oh?" Mom said.

"Yeah, the lady's name is Mrs. Jackson. She has a daughter named Diane. She's a year older and goes to Fullerton school."

"That's the school for the retards. Marcie has a cousin who goes there," Maggie put in.

"Mrs. Jackson says they're called 'special'." Alan told her.

"How did you meet them?"

"They were out front when I was on my way home one day. Diane spoke right up and said 'Hi'. Mrs. Jackson was nice. She told me I could come over and play any time.

"Are you going to play with her?"

"Yeah, I did today after school. Diane has a really neat play set in her back yard. It has two swings, slide and a jungle gym, sort of. It's lots of fun."

"I'll have to meet Mrs. Jackson sometime."

"She said she had been meaning to introduce herself to you. Can I go and play again after dinner?"

"O,k, I'll walk over with you and meet them."

After the dishes were done, Alan and Mom went to the Jackson's front door and knocked. Mrs. Jackson came to the door

"Well, hello Alan. You must be Alan's mother."

"Yes, I'm Mrs. Peterson, but you can call me Gwen."

"Nice to meet you, Gwen. I'm Fay Jackson. Come in won't you?" She said. Stepping back from the door. "Diane, Alan is here." Diane came and stood by her mother and smiled at Alan. "Diane has so little company and Alan seems like such a nice boy." Mrs. Jackson told his mother. Then turning to Diane, "Diane, why don't you take Alan out and play in the back yard?"

"O.k." She said grabbing him by the hand and leading the way.

"I told Alan to come over any time." Fay said leading the way into the kitchen. "Would you like some coffee? Diane's only friends are at school and they all live so far away. I'm afraid she's pretty lonely for someone her own age. She has some cousins on her father's side but we seldom see them." They sat at the kitchen table so that Fay could watch out back as was her habit when Diane was out there.

"Alan is really impressed with the play set in your back yard. I hope he isn't being friendly just because of that."

"Well, something has to attract you if you're going to make friends. All I care is that he's nice to Diane. The people who lived there before had children who weren't. I'm just glad that Diane didn't understand most of their remarks."

"Well if Alan says anything rude, or if he becomes a pest in anyway, you be sure to tell me right away. I won't put up with any of that behavior."

"I understand you work and can't be there when Alan gets home. If you'd like, I'd be glad to check up on him."

"Ah, oh Alan is quite used to being home before anyone else. But it would be nice to know he could call you if he had an emergency."

"Oh sure, let me give you my telephone number." Fay took a piece of paper from a desk and wrote on it.

"Thank you. I'll tell Alan to call you if he needs anything. I should excuse myself. I have housework to do, but I did want to meet you. Alan is supposed to go to bed when it gets dark. So send him home then or any time before that if you like. It was nice to meet you."

After that Alan spent less time in a dress. Mom never showed it but she was glad of that. It seemed to her that Alan was too enamored with the idea of girl's clothes and needed to spend more time being a boy. He did continue to wear nightgowns to bed and he still liked to help Mom with the wash on Saturday morning, so he always put on his dress and helped her do that. Sometimes he would change and go over to Diane's after laundry. He went to play at Diane's two or three times a week.

On Halloween Mom vetoed Alan's idea to go as a girl. "No. If anyone sees you in the back yard just by accident I don't want them to remember you at their front door on Halloween. I'm hoping they'll just think we have company." He settled for a home made ghost costume with a dress underneath. No one could tell what he was wearing under his costume, so in his mind he was a girl ghost.

At Thanksgiving business picked up at Mom's job and she had to go in later and stay later. To top that off, Maggie's drama club at school was doing a Christmas special and she had practice every day after school. That meant that Alan would be home alone until six or after every night. "Alan, I want you to go to Mrs. Jackson's house after school. Four hours is too long for you to be at home alone. I've already talked to her about it and she'll be glad to have you. She said she'd see that you get dinner." You'll have plenty of time to play at home on the weekends.

STAYING THE NIGHT

It wasn't so bad. At least Diane had TV On rainy days, they could watch cartoons. Then Mom had to work weekends. That meant that if Maggie wanted to go anywhere, he had to go over to Diane's all day. One weekend Maggie wanted to go to Mary's all day Saturday and spend the night, because she was having a big Christmas Party. Mom made Maggie ask Mrs. Jackson to watch Alan Saturday and again Sunday after Mom went to work.

She sent him over around 10:00. He and Diane played with her toys, of which she seemed to have many - mostly girl's stuff. She had a toy kitchen, and lots of dolls and a doll house.

After dinner the phone rang and Mrs. Jackson came into the bedroom where they were playing. "Alan, that was your mother. She has to stay and close up the store, so I told her you could stay the night. That way you don't have to go home until Maggie gets home tomorrow.

At bed time Mrs. Jackson showed Alan a spare bedroom. "I'm afraid the only pajamas I have to offer you are some of Diane's. You could sleep in your underwear, if it would embarrass you to wear girls pajamas."

"Oh, no, I think I'd rather wear the pajamas. I'd be embarrassed if I had to go to the bathroom at night and someone saw me in my underwear."

She brought him a pair of cotton pajamas that had a pullover top and elastic at the wrist. The fabric extended about an inch and a half beyond the elastic to form a little ruffle. The pants had elastic at the waist and at the ankles with a ruffle that matched the sleeves. The top was white with purple trim and the bottoms were purple with white trim. In the morning, he and Diane still weren't dressed when it came time for lunch. They had been busy playing in their pajamas. After lunch they settled down to watch television. About 2:00 Maggie called and said Alan could come home. So he got dressed and went home where he promptly changed into a dress. He had avoided changing in the morning at Diane's because those old jeans were too tight to be comfortable. The night manager had quit where Mom worked, so they offered her the job. It would mean a raise and a permanent job with the possibility of more promotions later; however, she would have to work from 1:00 to 9:00 p.m. That would include weekends until after Christmas.

Maggie's Christmas play was Friday night that next week. With Mom working late hours and Maggie gone, Alan had to stay the night at Diane's again. So Friday after school he went straight to Diane's. After dinner he and Diane played in her room with the doll house. Bedtime came before he knew it.

"Time for bed, kids," Mrs. Jackson chimed at the door. "You two wash up for bed." As they were drying their hands, Mrs. Jackson came into the bathroom and said "Alan, I'm sorry, I didn't plan too well, both pair of Diane's pajamas are in the wash. I'm afraid you'll have to sleep in your underwear or a nightgown."

Alan looked down. "I guess I'll have to wear a nightgown."

“Okay, it's your choice.” Mrs. Jackson told him. “Come in and choose one you'll be comfortable in.”

He chose a brushed cotton one that struck him about mid-calf. It was sleeveless and had ruffles around the neckline and slits up the side that went up about mid-thigh. He held it out to Mrs. Jackson.

“This one is okay.”

“Are you sure? Wouldn't you rather have one of the flannel ones?”

“No, they're too long. I'm afraid I might trip getting out of bed.”

“All right, you're the one who has to wear it. Oh, I almost forgot, I promised you two some ice cream. Do you want a small dish before you go to bed?”

“Yes!” They exclaimed together.

“You get ready for bed and I'll dish up the ice cream.”

Alan and Diane came downstairs in their nightgowns and sat at the kitchen table. After they finished Alan put their bowls in the sink and followed Diane upstairs. Mrs. Jackson was seated so she could see into the kitchen. She was in the habit of keeping a close eye on Diane. She watched Alan at the sink and as he came back into the living room on the way to bed. She came up to tuck them in, first Diane, and then Alan.

“Alan, do you know that when the light is bright behind you, your underwear can be seen right through that nightgown?” He shook his head no. “Does your mother know you're wearing girl's underwear?”

“Yes,” he said, “we don't seem to have much money any more. The last few years I've had to take some hand-me-downs from my sister.” He was shaking because nobody was supposed to know.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. If you ever looked at our clothesline, you'd see there are no boy's underwear and a lot of girls. The ones that are too small for Maggie are what I wear.”

DRESS-UP

In the morning, they were watching cartoons when the telephone rang about 10:00. Mrs. Jackson put the telephone down and told Alan. "That was your sister. Your mother had to go to work early so she's doing the wash and then is going to back to the school to help store away the costumes and sets from her play. So you're stuck here for a while. She said she'll call when she gets home."

Diane was giggling about him wearing a nightgown. She whispered in his ear. "I've never seen a boy wear one of my nightgowns before."

He cupped his hand over her ear and whispered. "So..., maybe I should wear one of your dresses."

She giggled. Then at his ear... "I'd like to see that."

"Do you ever play dress-up?"

She nodded her head yes.

"Tell your Mom you want to play dress-up, you want to be the mother and I can be the little girl." He whispered again.

She started to go to the kitchen where her mother was, but Alan stopped her. "Wait until cartoons are over," he hissed.

When cartoons were over he waited until he saw Diane's mother look away. Leaning toward Diane he whispered, "ask about dress-up."

She jumped up and ran to her mother. "Mama, can Alan and me play dress-up? I could be the mother and he could be the little girl. It'll be really fun."

She looked at Alan then back at Diane. "Do you really think Alan wants to be a little girl?" Without waiting for an answer, she turned to Alan. "How about it, Alan, what do you think? Would you like to play a little girl to Diane's being the mother?"

Alan got nervous and stammered a little. "Well... I, ah... I... did once before when my sister played dress-up."

"See it's okay with him. Can we Mama?"

"Okay. I guess it will be all right, but you have to stop as soon as Alan want's to."

Alan followed Diane as she went to her mother's room and got out one of her mother's dresses and put it on. She slipped her feet into a pair of her mothers' shoes and said. "Now I want to see you wear one of my dresses." She led him to her room and opened the closet. He took out a plain dress with a full skirt that would strike him about the knee. He also took a slip.

"I'll change in the other room," he said, heading for the spare bedroom. He changed quickly and came back.

"You need shoes and socks." They found a pair of sandals he could get on and a pair of thin cotton socks for him to wear. Alan wanted to see how they looked, so they went out in the hall and spent quite some time in front of the mirror at the end of the hall. They giggled and laughed as Alan twirled his skirt. They went to the hall where

Mrs. Jackson had a full length mirror. They giggled and laughed again looking at Alan in a dress. Then they played in her room for a time and finally went down to the living room. The television was advertising an afternoon movie just for kids that started at noon.

Mrs. Jackson looked in from the kitchen. "Lunch will be ready soon, are you two ready?"

"I know," Diane said, looking at her mother, "we can pretend to go out to lunch and a movie." They arranged the chairs like a movie theater and went to the kitchen where her mother pretended to be a waitress and served them lunch.

"You have a very pretty daughter." She told Diane.

"Thank you. She's special. I'm taking her to a movie after lunch."

"There's special movie showing next door," Mrs. Jackson told her, pointing at the living room. "I know my daughter would like to see it." After they ate, they went into the living room and sat in the chairs. Mrs. Jackson made some popcorn. They pulled the shades to make the room darker like a real theater. During the movie, Mrs. Jackson brought them some popcorn.

After the movie they moved the chairs back and Mrs. Jackson called Alan into the kitchen. "Alan, you can tell Diane that you're tired of playing dress-up anytime you want, you know."

"Oh that's okay, I'm really having fun."

"I'm not sure that your mother would approve of you wearing that dress. I really don't want her to be angry with me."

"I'm sure she won't be." He really wanted to stay in the dress. "She knows I've played dress-up before. My sister likes to fix my hair to look like a girl and spray me with her cologne when I have to wear her hand-me-downs to play in at home." He'd be sorry for that. He hadn't meant to say anything like that. It just sort of popped out.

"Is that really true?"

He had to back up his words. "We could go over and look at the clothesline in the back yard and you could see what's there." But where would it all stop, he thought.

Mrs. Jackson thought maybe he was bluffing. "All right, let's go look." Alan started for the back door. "Diane, go get your clothes changed, we are going to go to Alan's for a minute." Diane went to comply. "Are you sure you don't want to change your mind?" He shook his head no. "I won't say anything to your mother if you have to admit to me you're not telling the truth."

"But I am telling the truth."

"All right but now's the time to change your mind. If you're not, I'll have to tell your mother what you told me."

Diane came in wearing pants and a T-shirt. Mrs. Jackson looked at Alan. He had to convince her because he was sure that his mother would be angry with him for telling the truth. He really didn't want the two of them to talk this over."

Turning, he led the way. He marched right across the driveway, still wearing Diane's dress, and into the back yard."See, the only boy's clothes on the line are my school pants and shirts. No underwear."

"Where are the hand-me-down play clothes?"

He walked to the wash. "Here, these pants, these two tops, those shorts over there and the tops at the end of the line." He said pointing out the least feminine of the things.

"I'm not sure. Those could still be Maggie's."

"Those are mine. I can show you the same in my dresser, up in my bedroom."

"Okay let's look. Lead the way."

He led them to the basement door hoping it was unlocked. He tried the door and it opened. He crossed to the stairway and turned on the light.

They went up to Alan's room and Alan opened the drawer with the shorts in it. Mrs. Jackson looked inside and then opened another drawer. This one held his panties. It also had his bras. Mrs. Jackson shifted her position to block Diane's view of its contents. She then reached in and lifted a training bra slightly and looked at Alan. She paused for a moment.

Closing the drawer, she quickly stepped to the closet. Opening the door she saw his shirts and pants on one side of the closet and dresses, blouses and skirts on the other. She reached in and slid the girl's clothes over one at a time. When she reached the end, she pushed them all back.

"Well, I'm satisfied. You really do wear your sisters hand-me-downs."

Diane stood wide eyed at the girl's clothes in his closet. They went back to Diane's house. Alan and Diane went upstairs and played with her doll house until dinner time.

"Isn't this fun playing with my doll house?," Diane asked.

"I like it more when I'm pretending to be a girl." Alan told her.

"Maybe you could do it every time and we could both have a lot fun when we play with the dolls."

When they came down for dinner, Alan was still wearing the dress. Mrs. Jackson looked at him as he came into the kitchen. He realized that it had been a long time since Diane had quit playing dress-up and he was still wearing a dress.

"I see you're still playing dress-up."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I kind of forgot to change. Diane wanted to play with the doll house and I was going to change when we got through but we're still playing with the doll house."

"Well, after seeing your closet I can see how it might slip your mind. Don't worry about it, sit down and eat."

While they were eating, the telephone rang and Mrs. Jackson went to answer it. She came back and sat down. And said, "That was your sister, Alan. I told her you were eating dinner and would be home later."

After dinner the “girls” watched television for about an hour. Alan noticed that Mrs. Jackson looked at him often. He kind of felt uncomfortable and made an excuse to go home. As he came down wearing his own clothes again Diane stopped him.

“Are you going to come back tomorrow?”

“If it's o.k.,” said Alan, looking at Mrs. Jackson.

“Oh sure, Alan, you know you're welcome here any time.”

“Come early so we can have a long time to play.” Diane told him.

“O.k., see you tomorrow,” he said as he went out the back door.

In the morning, Alan got up just in time to have breakfast before Mom left for work. She was putting in 10 hour days until Christmas. As she left, he remembered that he had promised Diane that he would come over early.

Maggie was listening to music on the radio and doing some homework on the couch when he came down from getting dressed. She looked up.

“No dress today?”

“No, I'm going to play at Diane's today.”

“Good. You can stay there all day. I have to get this report done before Christmas break or I won't pass history this term. I might have a chance without you here to bug me all day.”

When he knocked on Diane's door, she opened it right a way.

“I was waiting for you, she said. Wanna watch cartoons?”

“O.k.”

They went in and sat on the couch. Alan watched Mrs. Jackson to see if she would give any sign of disapproval. He had let on a lot more than he had intended to yesterday, but she seemed to be the same as she was on any other day. Cartoons were over in about a half an hour.

“Let's go upstairs and play,” Diane suggested.

“All right,” Alan replied, getting up from the couch.

They raced each other up the stairs and into Diane's room and threw themselves on the bed, giggling. Diane got out the doll house and began setting it up.

“Oh, you said that you had more fun with the dolls when you were pretending to be a girl. You want to put on a dress?”

“I think your mother would think it was pretty strange if I just put on your dress.”

“We can both play dress-up again.”

“Well, I don't know,” he said, still not sure about yesterday. “Your mother might not think that's such a great idea.”

“I'll ask her,” she said, racing into the hall before Alan could stop her.

“Mom! Is it all right if Alan and I play dress-up?”

After a long silence, she replied, “Yes, dear, if Alan really wants to.”

"See," she said stopping at the door, "I knew it would be o.k. You put on one of my dresses and I'll go get one of Mom's." Diane turned toward her mother's room. With Diane gone, Alan quickly changed to her dress and a satiny slip underneath and he helped himself to Diane's socks and sandals. She came back wearing one of her mother's dresses and a big floppy hat. Instead of the doll house, they played with the toy kitchen. Diane pretended to fix lunch for her daughter.

"You can play with the doll house while I wash the dishes," she told him.

He sat down and set up the doll house, then got up. "I've got to go to the bathroom," he said.

Coming out of the bathroom he took some time to look at himself in the mirror. When he got back, Diane pretended to be through with the dishes and pretended to be the mother encouraging her daughter to be creative with the dolls.

"Would you like Mommy to play with you?," she asked.

"Yes please," Alan said, playing along.

When Mrs. Jackson called them for lunch, Alan was a little nervous about coming down in Diane's dress. "Shouldn't we change before we go down?"

"No, we can play dress-up after lunch too."

"Well I see it's mother and daughter in my kitchen again," Mrs. Jackson said cheerily as they came in.

They had tuna sandwiches and cream of tomato soup... Alan liked lots of crackers in his soup. It was good. After lunch they watched television for a while and then they went back upstairs. Diane nearly tripped going up the stairs.

"Maybe you'd better take that dress off now Diane, before you hurt yourself," her mother suggested.

While Diane put her mother's dress away, Alan started to pull his pants on under the dress. When Diane came in, she said, "You don't have to change if you don't want to. You said that you had more fun playing with the dolls when you were pretending to be a girl."

"Well I thought that when you quit playing dress-up, I should too."

"You didn't yesterday."

"I know but I think your mother thought I should. Did she say anything to you yesterday after I left, I mean about me wearing a dress?"

"No. Alls she said was did I have fun yesterday. I told her yes. And that it was fun having you to play dress-up with."

"She didn't say that it wasn't a good idea or anything?"

"No she just wanted to know if I had a good time. It's okay if you leave your dress on and have fun playing with the dolls."

"Well, o.k., but I'm going to change before we go down stairs again."

They played with the dolls for over an hour. Alan was startled when he noticed Mrs. Jackson standing in the doorway.

“Well, I see you two are having fun.” She said.

Alan jumped up and began stammering, “I... I... I was going to change but I forgot. I'm sorry.”

“What? Oh well, don't let me interrupt your fun. I'm just on my way to the bathroom,” she said, walking on down the hall.

“Come on Alan, we're not through playing dolls yet.”

Alan looked at her and then walked to the door and looked after Mrs. Jackson. She was just closing the bathroom door.

“Come on Alan.”

“Don't you think I should change?”

“No she said she didn't want to interrupt our fun. If you change, that'll interrupt.”

Alan sat down and began to play again, but he kept a wary eye on the door. A short time after the toilet flushed, Mrs. Jackson walked back by with only the slightest glance in.

Later, Mrs. Jackson called up the stairs, “Alan, would you like to stay for dinner?”

“Yes ma'am.” He replied.

“Fine, I'll call your sister and tell her.”

About an hour later Alan heard the bathroom sink running, then she was at the doorway again. You girls better get washed up for dinner. I'm about to set it on the table,” she told them. Diane jumped up and headed for the bathroom.

“Come on Alan, I'm hungry,” she called after him.

Mrs. Jackson motioned him to follow her. They had dinner and watched the Sunday night movie. After the movie Alan decided to go home.

“Come again real soon Alan,” Mrs. Jackson told him as he left.

After that he was more at ease about playing in his back yard in a dress. When he heard Diane's back door open he would immediately quit swinging and go toward his back door so she could see him in his own dress. He even went so far as to go over to her back yard wearing his dress one nice day when she was already out playing. He only stayed a little while... not even long enough to talk to Mrs. Jackson, although she very likely could see him through the back door.

One day Maggie was not feeling well when she got up.

“Oho I'm sick,” she said. “I think I have the flu. I'm going to turn the radio to some soft music and rest on the couch.” She turned on the radio and spread a sleeping bag on the couch and climbed in.

“Alan, I won't be fit to be around. Why don't you go over to Diane's today?”

“All right,” Alan said.

It was about 40 degrees out, but he just headed over in his shirt sleeves. Diane answered his knock.

“Hi Alan, I was wondering if you would come over sometime.”

“Maggie's sick so I came over to get out of her way.”

“I was just going up to play in my room. Come on.”

“Hello Alan,” Mrs. Jackson said as they went upstairs.

“Hello.”

“What do you want to do?,” Diane asked when they got to her room.

“I don't know. What do you want to do?”

“My mother told me that you're the guest and we should do what you want to do.”

“Well, we could play dress-up if you want.”

“O.k., you put on a dress while I get one of Mama's.”

“All right.”

Alan pulled off his shirt and had a slip on before Diane went through the door. Before she came back he had finished dressing and was in the hall admiring himself in the mirror.

They played mother and daughter all morning. Mrs. Jackson called them down for lunch.

OUTSIDE AGAIN

The “girls” came down. Diane was still wearing her mothers dress. As they ate lunch Diane looked outside. “It sure is sunny out. Can we play on the swings after we eat?”

“Okay, I'll see if you have a warm jacket that Alan can wear since he didn't wear a coat over here.”

After they finished she led them to the coat closet. Took out two jackets. Handing them to Alan, she turned her attention to Diane.

“Here let me help you out of that.” She said, pulling her dress over Diane's head. Laying it on the couch, she took a jacket from Alan and put it on Diane. Taking the other jacket from him she helped him into it. “Out you go, be careful and don't hurt yourselves.”

Diane led the way. Alan paused at the back porch, glancing at his house. Maggie was probably still in the living room and even if she came into the kitchen while they were at the play set, she couldn't see them. It was just between here and there that he'd have worry. He ran to the swings. They played until about 2:00 when Mrs. Jackson called them in for hot chocolate.

Mrs. Johnson was baking a chocolate cake and the kitchen smelled good.

“Mommy, are you baking a cake for dessert tonight?”

“Uh-huh, chocolate layer cake. I'm making chocolate frosting with real maraschino cherry bits mixed in.”

“Oh yum. I really like chocolate cake, don't you Alan?”

“I sure do, and I like cherries too.”

“Are you trying to wrangle an invitation to dinner, Alan?”

“Well... Ah... ”

“It's okay. We'd be glad to have you for dinner. I'll call your house and see if it's all right.”

Alan and Diane went to her room and played with the doll house until dinner time. After dinner, they all watched television until about 8:00.

“Well Alan, I promised your sister that I would send some leftovers home so your Mom would have something to eat when she got home. Your sister wasn't up to cooking anyway. So why don't you change clothes I while fix up a couple of doggie bags?”

Alan put his pants back on and came down to the kitchen. Mrs. Jackson gave him two sacks.

“This one has the left over roast and mashed potatoes and this one has cake. Now you be real careful taking them home. You can bring the dishes back tomorrow.”

After that, anytime Alan was going to be at Diane's for any length of time, he'd prompt a dress-up session early in the stay. Then he wouldn't change out of the dress

until he was ready to leave, even when Diane would give up the game. As a matter of fact, he liked it when she would get tired of the game and leave him alone in it. Several times he came over right after breakfast and got the dress-up game going early. He was careful not to make it every day. But by Christmas, he had played the game five times in only eight days.

Mom got to work daytime hours on Christmas Eve. The store closed at 6:00 and she got all day off on Christmas Day. Mrs. Jackson invited them to consolidate the Christmas cooking and have Christmas dinner at her house. Mrs. Jackson did the turkey and dressing. Mom did the pies and candied sweet potatoes. She also brought vegetables, rolls and cranberry sauce.

They had a great Christmas dinner. They sang Christmas carols and watched a special TV show. Diane and Alan showed off Christmas presents they had received. Alan did have some misgivings about how much he had played dress-up at Diane's. He thought that Mrs. Jackson might mention something about it to Mom. His fears were unfounded. The only problem came when he and Diane went up to her room to play with the doll house. He usually didn't want to play with the dolls until after they played dress-up. Some times, if Diane wanted to play with the dolls, he'd say, "We can't play with the dolls, we haven't played dress-up yet." Then after, when he wanted her to get out of her mothers dress to leave him alone in the dress-up, he'd say to her. "Since I'm pretending to be a girl, I can play with girl's toys."

"Oh," Diane said, when they reached the top of the stairs, "You're not pretending to be a girl. Don't you want to play dress-up before we play with the dolls?"

Alan quickly looked around to see if anyone was in earshot. "Ah... no not today. Today is a special day." He said hurrying her down the hall. "It's kind of like a Christmas present to you. Just today, we don't have to play dress-up first." he continued.

"It's okay, I like it when you play dress-up. It's like having two friends instead of one. I have a boy for a friend and I have a girl for a friend. You're both of them. Only it's kind of confusing. If you're two friends, you should have two names. I know. When you're playing dress-up, I'll call you Alice."

Maggie was still a little under the weather after Christmas. The weather outside was really rainy and cold. Alan stayed around the house a lot. Because of Mom's promotion and all of the overtime she got him many nice toys for Christmas. He spent a lot of time playing with them. It was the first time, in a long time that most of his presents hadn't been practical.

OPEN INVITATION

Four days after Christmas the phone rang about 10:00. Mom answered. "Hello. (pause) I don't know. He's right here. I'll put him on the phone and you can ask him."

Alan took the phone. It was Mrs. Jackson. "Hi Alan, Diane was wondering if you'd like to come over and spend the day today. She said to tell you that you can play dress-up when you come over. ... What's that dear?... All right ... She also says you can keep playing it all day if you want. She said she won't call you Alice if you don't want her too."

"Oh, o.k.," Alan said, "I'll be right over."

Alan went up and put on a tee shirt and a pair of jeans and his old tennis shoes. He left on his light cotton socks with the lacy cuffs. He just pulled the lace part up under his jeans, so it didn't show. When he got to Diane's, they went straight up stairs. Diane opened her closet for him.

"Which dress do you want to wear?"

Alan shrugged. "This one." he said taking out a blue checked one with a wide white yoke type collar. Then he picked out a slip. "Aren't you going to get something from your mother's closet?" he asked, when she just sat on her bed.

"Aw, I really don't want to play dress-up, but you go ahead. Mommy said that you really liked playing dress-up. You can play dress-up here every time you come over, I don't care. I'm sorry I said I'd call you Alice. My mother said that was teasing and I don't like teasing."

"It's all right if you call me Alice when I'm playing dress-up, but won't your Mom think it's kind of funny if I play dress-up and you don't?"

"I don't think so. When I asked her why you hadn't come over since Christmas she told me that maybe you were playing dress-up with your sister. She thought that you must play it at home a lot, because you had all those girls clothes in your closet. I asked why couldn't you just play dress-up here and she said you could. When I told her I wanted to call you Alice, she said maybe you didn't want to be called Alice and that's why you didn't come over."

Alan took off his shirt and put the slip on over his jeans and then the dress over that. After the dress was in place he slipped off his shoes. Turning his back, he pulled up the dress and slip and undid his jeans. He pulled them off and adjusted his socks so that the lace was down the way it belonged. He got out the sandals that he could wear and put them on.

After Alan went out to the hall to check himself in the mirror, they sat down and began playing with the doll house. Alan made up funny things for the dolls to say and do. Diane laughed and giggled a lot. They had a very good time. Finally, Mrs. Jackson called up from the bottom of the stairs.

"Lunch is ready, you two. If you can quit laughing long enough to eat it."

Diane went to the bathroom and began to wash her hands. Alan joined her.

“Are you sure that your mother won't think that you should be playing dress-up too?”

“I don't think so.” She said hurrying for the stairs.

Alan dried his hands and followed cautiously. Twice he almost turned and went to put his pants back on. Once when he went past Diane's room and again after taking two steps down. As he was contemplating this last time Mrs. Jackson called out.

“You'd better get down here or Diane is going to eat it all.”

Alan went down and sat at the table. Mrs. Jackson turned from the stove with a pan of soup and set it in the middle of the table and dished each of them a bowl-full. She had made tuna fish sandwiches and they each had a helping of potato chips.

“It sure is nice to hear Diane having so much fun,” Mrs. Jackson said. “She has been moping around the house like someone who lost their last friend.”

All through lunch, Alan waited for some reaction from Mrs. Jackson that would tell him she didn't like him wearing Diane's dress. He got none. After lunch, Alan and Diane watched some television while Mrs. Jackson did the dishes. They got out some board games and played “Sorry”, then “Chutes and Ladders.” When they tired of board games, they got out some puzzles and had fun putting them together.

“You kids go watch cartoons now. I have to get dinner ready. Alan, are you going to stay for dinner?”

“I guess so.” He said.

“We can call him Alice if we want. He said so.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. It's o.k., if I'm pretending to be a girl, I can have a girl's name.”

“Okay Alice, you and Diane clear the table and go watch TV.” Mrs. Jackson said. “And call your sister so she'll know you're staying for dinner.”

At dinner, Alan announced. “I have to come home before nine.”

After dinner, they watched “Leave It To Beaver,” then, Alan and Diane went up to her room. At 8:30 Mrs. Jackson called from downstairs. “Alan it's 8:30, you'd better get ready to go home.”

Turning his back to Diane, Alan pulled his pants on under the dress and then finished taking the rest of Diane's clothes off. He almost forgot to change his shoes. Remembering only when Diane laughed and pointed at his shoes.

Down stairs Mrs. Jackson checked his jacket to see that it was zipped all the way up.

“You come over any time. Diane and I talked it over, and she really likes to have you, Alice, over to play with,” she told him.

After that, Alan went to Diane's three or four times a week. He only stayed for dinner once or twice a week. Mom didn't want him sponging off them. After New Years Day, he went back to the after school routine. Sometimes he wouldn't decide to go over to Diane's until after he had dressed. Then he would have fun going over to Diane's af-

ter school while wearing a dress. One night, he had to refuse the dinner invitation so he could get home before Maggie got home. After that, he always took a change of clothes to the basement so he could stay for dinner and then slip into the basement and change.

Weekends were a different story. Mom was likely home. While Maggie pretty much confined herself to the living room or her bed room after dinner, and didn't mind not having to cook for Alan, Mom liked him home for dinner. Usually he had to go to Diane's as Alan and he could always change to Alice as soon as he got there. But he had to keep up the illusion of it being okay to come over in a dress when Mom was home as well as when Maggie was home. To that end, some Fridays, he would take a dress and shoes out to the garage. Then on Saturday, he would wait until Mom was reading on the couch and tell her that he was going to Diane's and ask what time he should be back.

Assured that Mom would be on the couch he'd go to the garage and change.

SPRING BREAK

One weekend, they were all home for dinner. Mom had done fried chicken and mashed potatoes with country gravy. It was Alan's favorite dinner. Maggie liked it a lot too.

“It looks like I'm going to have to go to Chicago the last week in March.”

“What for?” Maggie wanted to know.

“Well, all the managers have to go for training.”

“Will Alan and I go to?”

“No, that's the problem. I'll be in training all day and the evenings will be planned so that we get to know regional managers and district supervisors. I'll be pretty busy.”

“What are we supposed to do? That's spring break. I don't want to be stuck here looking after Alan when I should be doing things with my friends.”

“Well, I don't feel comfortable with you being here alone all week either. So I've made arrangements with Mrs. Jackson to take Alan all week. I was hoping that maybe you could stay at Mary's that week. You spent much more time than that over there two years ago, when you were going berry picking with her. Do think it would be possible?”

“I sure hope so. I sure don't want to stay at Diane's. Her mother is nice, but I wouldn't feel comfortable over there that long. I'll ask Mary at school on Monday.”

Mom was scheduled to fly out early Saturday morning and get back the following Sunday afternoon. She had Friday evening off to get packed and finalize the plans. Maggie packed up a suit case and dropped it off at Mary's, on the way to school Friday and went straight there after. Alan convinced Mom that since he was going to be right next door, he could come get anything he needed. So all he took was a pair of his old pajamas. ...This was at Mom's insistence. On the way over, he tossed them in the garage. He knew he could wear one of Diane's nightgowns.

That week was heaven. He went to Diane's shortly after dinner. As soon as he got there, he went up and changed into Diane's dress. The whole week, he never wore any pants of any kind and he must have spent hours in front of that mirror. The weather was mostly sunny and Mrs. Jackson let them play outside a lot. He went to his house and brought a few of his dresses over and his training bra. Mrs. Jackson made a point of calling him Alice. He thought that was neat. It took a little getting used to but he soon learned to answer to it. Saturday was a bright and sunny day out. In the afternoon it was actually warm. Over seventy degrees.

They were out in the back yard, playing. They were laughing loudly and playing tag. Mrs. Jackson came to the back door.

“Alice, you're wanted on the phone. It's your mother.”

Mom had called Wednesday night and promised she'd call again before Sunday. Alan ran inside and took the phone.

“Hi Mom. Are you coming home soon?”

“Actually, I'm home now.”

Alan got quiet... “You are?”

“Yes. I just got in. The house was stuffy so I went to the kitchen and opened some windows. (she was silent for a few breaths.) I heard my boy playing in the back yard so I went out to see him. When I looked around the garage, do you know what I saw?”

“No,” Alan said weakly.

“I think you do. I saw my girl. Where did you get that dress you're wearing?”

“Diane.”

“Why are you wearing it?”

“We're playing dress-up.”

“Playing dress-up?”

“Yes.”

“Whose idea was that?”

“Diane's,” he lied.

“Have you played dress-up there before?”

“Yes.”

“What does Mrs. Jackson think about it?”

“I can do it any time I want to,” Alan began to squirm. He thought he might be sick. He had to blink back tears. He turned to face the window so that no one would see.

“How much does she know about your playing dress-up?”

“Everything.”

Mom was silent for a while. “Let me talk to Mrs. Jackson.”

Alan handed over the phone and retreated to the top of the stairs. Diane followed.

“Why are we stopping here?” Diane asked.

“Shh. I want to hear,” he told her quietly.

Mrs. Jackson listened a while and said, “Well yes, I do have dinner started.

“I was planning on that and for at least breakfast tomorrow, so it will be no problem.

“Why don't you get unpacked and relax? You're welcome to come for dinner tonight if you like.”

“Are you sure? I have plenty. I'll just throw another potato in the pot. It wouldn't be any trouble.

“Okay, but if you change you mind, just come on over. Dinner will be about 5:00. You'll have to come over and tell me all about Chicago some time. Bye now.”

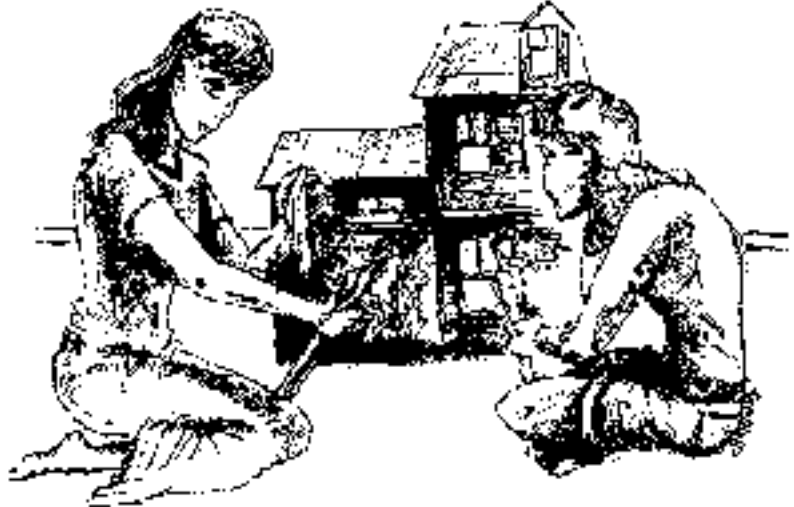
Mrs. Jackson put down the phone and started for the stairs. Alan grabbed Diane's hand and retreated once more. He stopped just inside Diane's door. From the bottom of the stairs.



“Alice, your mother said that she was tired and if you wanted you could stay the night and go home in the morning.”

“Okay,” he answered shakily.

Alan was quiet at dinner. ...He was still wearing the dress. No one had suggested that he take it off. He was afraid that this might be the last time he would get to wear a dress so he didn't intend to take it off until he had too. Only he was afraid that at any moment Mom would appear at the back door and demand that he do so and drag him off to be punished. Why did she come home early? Sunday, he would have been sure to wear pants.



Sunday, Alan stayed in his nightgown until lunch. He couldn't take it anymore. As he was getting up from the table, he said. “I think I'll get dressed and go home.”

He went to the spare bedroom and put on boy's clothes. Taking the three dresses and the slip he had brought from home he said good-bye and headed out the back door. He studied the kitchen windows. Mom wasn't in the kitchen. He stopped off in the garage. He tucked the dresses, slip and shoes into a cupboard under the work bench. He thought maybe, after things cooled down, he could slip out to the garage and spend a little time in a dress out there. Picking up his pajamas in the sack, he went inside, walking like a man going to his execution.

“Hello Sweetie,” Mom said, meeting him in the kitchen. “Did you have fun at Diane's last week?” Alan just nodded. “What did you do all week?”

Alan sat at the table. He couldn't stand up anymore. “We played with her toys a lot.”

“Did you play outside when it was nice?”

“Yes.” Alan was having trouble talking. His throat was dry.

“How many times did you play dress-up?”

The question he had been waiting for. He tried to swallow and couldn't. Under the table his hands began to shake. No sense lying, she could and probably would ask Mrs. Jackson.

"Every day," he squeaked.

"That must have put a strain on Diane's wardrobe. Did you play outside when you played dress-up?" He shook his head yes. "What did you do for underwear, you didn't wear hers, did you?"

"No, I came over and changed my underwear here every day."

"Did you do that while playing dress-up?"

"Yes."

"What did you mean on the phone when I asked you how much they knew about you playing dress-up? You said everything."

"I told them that I played dress-up with my sister and that because we didn't have much money I had to take hand-me-downs from my sister for play clothes," Alan was looking down at the table. "And that I liked it."

"I guess the cat's out of the bag now. Mrs. Jackson isn't the least bit upset?"

"No. During Christmas vacation, she told me that because Diane liked have me over as Alice, that's what they call me when I play dress-up, that I could play dress-up any time I wanted."

"During Christmas vacation! How long have you been playing dress-up over there?"

"Since the second time I spent the night."

"Whose idea was that?"

He was sure she wouldn't ask Diane and Mrs. Jackson thought it was her idea. So he lied again. "Diane's."

"What did her mother say about that?"

"Well she thought maybe I wouldn't want to. That's when I told them that I had done it before with Maggie."

"So she let you put on Diane's dress?" Alan nodded. "Does she know that you've been wearing your sisters old underwear?"

"Yes. I had to tell her. The first time I spent the night she loaned me some of Diane's pajamas, but the second time, they were all in the wash and I had to wear one of her nightgowns. That's when she noticed my underwear. So I had to tell her. It was after that, Diane wanted to play dress-up."

"No sense worrying about what she thinks now. Well I guess you can quit using the basement when you go play on the swing," Mom said, obviously exasperated, and walked out of the room.

Alan sat at the table shaking for a long time. She hadn't told him he could never wear dresses again. Things were as usual only now Mom knew almost everything.

After a time Alan got up and went to his room. He lay down on his bed. He occasionally would start shaking. It had been too much. Where could he go from here?

“Alan, dinner's ready.”

He sat up with a start. He had gone to sleep, but didn't feel rested. As a matter of fact, he felt as if he had been working hard. His clothes seemed damp.

“Alan! Did you hear me? Dinner's ready,” Mom called.

Yes it had been Mom that called.

“I, I'll be down in a minute,” he called back.

His knees were weak but he got up and changed into a pair of shorts and a simple pull over top. He decided on plain socks and tennis shoes. He really didn't have anything to wear except school clothes and he didn't think that going all out feminine would be that great an idea.

Maggie had come home while he was napping. Maggie talked about what she had done with Mary and all the places they went. Mom was very interested. Alan was quite and just ate dinner, but not much. His appetite was not what it might have been. He went to his room right after dinner.

Just before 9:00 Mom knocked on the door and peeked in. Alan was sitting on his bed looking at a Daffy Duck comic book.

“Time to get ready for bed, Sweetheart,” she told him.

He got up and went to brush his teeth. When he came back, he put on the pair of cotton pajamas that he picked out to convince Mom in the first place.

Alan, went to his room and opened his dresser. He really wanted to wear a dress or a skirt but decided against that idea without really even considering it. He settled on a white terry cloth top. It had blue trim around the Vee neck and a patch of red and white striped material that looked like a tee shirt in the bottom of the Vee. He combined that with a pair of Bermuda shorts with a front fly. He looked very boyish, except that the shorts had no hip pockets and the fly was backwards. He put on a pair of white tennis shoes that could have passed for deck shoes. He left off his bra. He was trying very hard to keep a low profile.

After dinner he just played in the corner of the living room. At bed time, he brushed his teeth and put on the plain pajamas again. Still no bra. This kept up for almost a week. But he plain ran out of shorts and tops that were boyish. On Friday, Mom came home and he was still in his bedroom trying to figure out what to wear.

“Alan, are you home?”

“I'm in my room,” he called back.

Mom came up and into his room. “What are you doing Sweetie?”

“I'm trying to figure out what to wear to play in.”

“Is that all you've done since you got home? Just stand there and look at your play clothes?” He nodded. “Well, you've never had any trouble before. You've got a whole closet full of things that Maggie gave you. And there's all the stuff she brought home

from Mary's sister." She opened the closet door and indicated the dress, skirts and blouses hanging there. "Look, Maggie even brought some more things from Mary's sister last Sunday." Alan walked over to the closet and looked in. *Could she really mean to put on one of the dresses?* "I'm going to start dinner soon. I hope you get changed before it's done." Mom said walking out.

Alan studied the offerings in the closet. He really did want to wear those things. Finally he decided it was time to put things to the test.

He stripped down and put on his bra and added a little stuffing. Putting on his slip he took out his most feminine dress. It had really puffy cap sleeves that had lace trim and a little silk ribbon laced around the cuff that made a little bow on the out side of the sleeve. The hem had a little wider matching ribbon laced in it that made a bow just off center to the right. It buttoned up the back and had a lacy yoke collar and a belt that tied in the back. He put on a pair of white knee socks and his black patent leather Mary Jane flats. He went to the bathroom and fixed his hair with a hair band and doused himself with Maggie's cologne. He carefully put on fingernail polish and went to his room to wait for it to dry.

While he was waiting he worried about being so brazenly girl. What if Mom was just waiting for a chance to vent her anger? At last, he determined that if it was going to happen, it might as well happen now as later. He started downstairs but decide to detour through Maggie's bedroom and spend some time in front of the mirror. He gathered his courage again and headed for the stairs. Stopping in the living room to take a few deep breaths, he went on into the kitchen.

"I'm going to play on the swing until dinner," he said weakly, sure that Mom would stop him before he hit the door.

Mom looked up from the stove and said, "Okay, Sweetie."

Alan casually walked to the back door, half expecting a negative reaction. Getting none, he opened the door and went out on the porch. He looked back in and Mom was busy with dinner. He went to the swing and jumped in and started swinging. He stayed at it until he was called in for dinner. As he was heading up the back steps he heard another voice.

"Hello Alice."

He turned and saw Diane coming out back door. Mrs. Jackson leaned out and waved at him.

Dinner went fine. Mom asked about school. Maggie talked about the baseball team. No one seemed to notice just how feminine he was. In the morning he got up early and put on another dress and went down for breakfast. Maggie was going over to Mary's after breakfast so it was up to Alan to help with the wash.

Mom apparently threw caution to the wind and didn't even hesitate or look toward the Jackson's on the way to the clothes' line. Alan helped with the clothes pins as usual. On the way back in from hanging the second load, Diane was just coming out to play.

“Hi Alice.” she called. “I got some new play shoes. Wanna see?” she continued, running out her gate and over to his fence. He went to look. She had a pair of new tennis shoes with cartoon characters on them.

Mrs. Jackson leaned out and called to Diane. “You leave Alice alone. She's helping her mother with the chores.” Alan and Mom looked over. Mrs. Jackson waved. Alan and Mom waved back and went inside.

Alan waited for Mom to react to the exposure. But nothing seemed to change. The routine stayed the same. More wash, the Lone Ranger on the radio, lunch, more wash, a chapter out of Treasure Island, more wash and finally dinner.

Alan went back to wearing nightgowns to sleep in and skirts and blouses or dresses after school. It was next Friday that the phone was ringing as soon as Alan came in the door. It was Diane.

“Hi Alan. My Mom dialed the phone for me. Can you come over here and play dress-up?”

“Well, I could come over for a little while. But I'll have to be home before 5:00. My Mom doesn't know I'm coming over, so I have to be here when she comes back.”

“Okay, but hurry.”

“I'll change and be right over.”

Quickly changing into a dress, he went over. He told Mrs. Jackson that he had to go home at 4:45. It was warm out and he and Diane played on her play set until her Mom told him it was 4:45. Diane went inside and Alan went over to his backyard to play on his swing until he saw Mom look out the kitchen window.

At dinner Alan said. “Diane was playing in her back yard and wanted me to come over there. But I didn't know if it would be all right so I stayed in my yard.”

“You've gone over to Diane's after school before. You should have gone. You haven't been over there since Spring Break. She'll think you don't like her or something.”

“Maybe I'll play with her tomorrow.”

After dinner, he overheard Maggie talking with Mom in the kitchen. “Did Alan mean that he saw Diane while he was in the backyard?”

“I suppose, I don't know how else he would know she was playing in her back yard and wanted him to come over.”

“He had a dress on out there. Does that mean she knows he wears dresses?”

“Oh, I'm sure she knows and her mother too. I guess he plays dress-up over there on a regular basis. Last Saturday, they said 'Hi' to us as we came back in from hanging wash. Diane called him 'Alice.’”

“He was wearing a dress then?”

“Yeah, I'm afraid so.”

The next morning Alan came down to breakfast before getting dressed. At the breakfast table, they talked about the weekend.

“I'm going to a movie with Mary and Marcie on Sunday,” Maggie announced.

“What are you going to see?” Mom asked.

“Dr. Zhivago.”

“Be sure to tell me all about it. It's supposed to be a really good movie.”

“Marcie's big sister saw it and said she really liked it.”

Turning to Alan.... “Are you going to go over to Diane's today?”

“I guess.”

“Are you going to play dress-up?”

“Probably.”

“Well just make sure that if you do, that it's because Diane want's you to. Don't just go over and demand to wear her dress.”

“I won't.”

After breakfast Alan went up to get dressed. He left on his bra and put on the terry clothe top and a pair jeans that were really too tight. He had on a pair of lace cuff socks and a pair of moccasin toe flats. As soon as he got to Diane's they went up to her room.

“You going to play dress-up today?” she asked.

“If you want me to,” he said, being sure to put the decision in her hands so he wouldn't have to lie to Mom later.

“I always want you to play dress-up.”

Alan took off his top and put on one of her slips and dresses and took off his jeans and folded the cuffs on his socks down. Alan made an excuse to go out in the hall and look at himself. They played with her dolls for a while and then they played house and pretended to cook a big dinner with her kitchen. After a time Mrs. Jackson called them down for lunch.

The “girls” ate lunch and then watched television for a while.

About 3:00 Mrs. Jackson suggested that maybe they should get some sunshine since it was warm out. They went out and played on Diane's play set until it began to sprinkle on them. They quickly ran inside. As they were going up the back steps, Alan glanced at his kitchen windows. Maggie was at the sink and looking straight at him.

Inside they spent the rest of the afternoon playing board games. When Mrs. Jackson started to get dinner, Alan thought maybe he should go home. When Diane won the next game of Sorry, he got up to go change.

“Alice, will you be staying for dinner?”

“I'd better call my Mom.”

He went to the phone in the living room and called home.

“Hello, Mom?”

“Hello Alan, or should I say Alice?” Maggie answered.

“Alice. Let me talk to Mom.”

“Just a minute... Mom, it's your son, Alice.”

The phone was quiet for a while then Mom answered.

“Alice?... Are you playing dress-up again?” she asked, carrying the phone to the window so she could look out. Alan saw the movement as she pulled the curtain aside to get a better look. He knew she could see him through the window.

“Yes,” he said bravely.

“It wasn't your idea was it?”

“No Diane asked me to.”

“I'm a little concerned about you wearing her clothes. I'm afraid you might do something to ruin something of hers.”

“I only wear her old clothes,” he told her in hushed tones. Then louder, “Mrs. Jackson wants to know if I can stay for dinner.”

“Not tonight, I've already got dinner started. You should come home in a half an hour anyway.”

“I'll come home as soon as I change. Good-bye.”

“Bye, I'll see you soon.”

“My Mom said no,” he told Mrs. Jackson. “She already has dinner started and I'm supposed to come home.”

He went up and changed back in to his jeans and top and went home. Once there, he went straight to his room and put on a skirt and blouse.

Sunday was warm out by 10:00. Alan went out to play on his swing. After a short time, he heard Diane's back door shut. He stopped swinging and listened he heard the creaking of her swing. Getting down, he crept behind the garage and peeked at her. She was swing by herself. He waited until she decided to go down the slide and spoke to her.

“Hi, Diane,” he said stepping from behind the garage.

“Oh, Hi Alice, you scared me.”

“I'm sorry, I was on my swing and thought I heard you come out. So I came around behind the garage to see if I was right.”

“Wanna play on my swings?”

“Sure,” He climbed on a swing and started pumping.

“I'm glad you came over. It's more fun with a friend.”

“I really like wearing a dress when I swing. I like the way the dress whips around my legs.”

They played for about an hour and a half.

“Alan where are you? I need some help bringing the wash in,” his Mom called.

“Bye,” Alan whispered and ran behind the garage. He popped out the other side as Mom was crossing the lawn.

“Where were you?” his mother asked.

“Playing behind the garage.”

Mom handed him the laundry basket. Alan held it as she took down the wash. She deposited the clothes' pins in the pouch that she had hung on the side of the basket. On the way back in to the house, Diane was at her fence.

“Hi, Alice.”

“Hi,” Alan said, waving.

A VISIT FROM A FRIEND

On Monday, Alan had to stay after school because he got in a fight trying to defend one of the girls some other guys were picking on. She wasn't one of the popular girls so the popular boys thought it was okay to pick on her. The teacher didn't care why he was fighting. They all had to stay after.

As a result, he got home just minutes before Mom. As a matter of fact, he was on the phone with Diane when she came in.

"My Mom said if it was okay with your Mom I could come over and play at your house. Wouldn't that be fun?"

"Yeah, sure."

"Hi Alan, who are you talking to?" Mom asked as she came in.

"Diane. She wants to come over here. Is it okay?"

"I guess so, she's never been over here. Goodness knows, you've been over there often enough."

"My Mom said it was okay."

"I'll come right over. Meet me at the back door."

In a few minutes, Diane was at the back door. Alan let her in.

"Hi!" she said, coming in.

"Well hello Diane." His mother said. "We're glad to have you over."

Just then Maggie came in. "Well hello Diane. This is a surprise. You haven't been over here before."

"I just wanted to play with Ali... Alan, so I came over."

"I think that's just great," Alan's mom said. "Alan, why don't you get out your toys and play with Diane in the livingroom? I think I'll call Diane's mother and see if Diane can stay to dinner."

Alan opened up the cabinet where he kept his toys and got out Poky and Gumby. After a little while, Mom came into the room.

"I talked with your mother, Diane. She said you could stay for dinner."

"Oh goody!" she said ...then turning to Alan. "Can we go out and play on your swing until dinner? I've never played on your swing."

"I guess so," he said, getting up and starting for the door.

"Don't you want to change first?" ...Alan stopped and looked at her. "I mean, you know. Play dress-up?" she continued.

Alan looked up at his mother. She just shrugged her shoulders. "Well you haven't changed out of your school clothes." She said and went into the kitchen. Alan went up and put on a dress. As he came out of his room, he met Maggie in the hall.

"Does Mom know you've changed into that?" she asked

“Un huh.”

She herded him into the bathroom. “If you're going to dress the part, you should at least fix your hair.” She took a brush and brushed it all back, put some of her barrettes in it and brushed some bangs down over his forehead. She got out some scissors and trimmed them straight. To top things off she put a little cologne on him. She pointed him toward the door, swatted him playfully on the behind, and said. “Go get 'em Sis.” They came down the stairs almost at the same time.

Alan and Diane went out and took turns on his swing.

Mom looked out the back door and said to Maggie, “Alan has some of your barrettes in his hair.”

“I know. I put them there. I figured if he was going to dress like a girl he ought to have hair to match. I also squirted a little cologne on him so he would smell the part.”

After dinner the “girls” played in the livingroom. About 8:30 the phone rang. Alan’s mother answered it.

“Diane, that was your mother. She said it's time for you to come home.”

“Can Alice walk me home?”

Mom looked at Alan for a moment. “Okay, but come right back.”

The next day after school, Alan went to Diane's wearing his dress. He left a note that read “At Diane's” and hid his usual change of clothes in the basement making sure to leave the basement door unlocked. That day, he declined the usual dinner invitation, but waited until the last moment to leave and slipped into the basement and slipped into his pants and shirt before coming into the house. On Thursday, he was out in his backyard playing when he heard Diane outside. He knew Mom would be home any time. He quickly slipped behind the garage and called Diane over to him.

“My Mom is coming home soon. Go in and pretend to go to the bathroom. When you're through, watch TV until you see my Mom go by your house. Then ask your Mom if you can come over to my house and then call my Mom and ask her if it's okay.”

“Okay,” Diane agreed, as if it were some kind of game and ran into her house.

Alan went back to the swing. A short time later, Diane appeared in the back yard. They took turns on the swing until Mom called them into dinner.

The “girls” went up to wash. While Diane was at the sink, Maggie came in. She looked at Alan and just shook her head.

“Here let me fix your hair,” she told him. She combed it back put the barrettes in it. Diane watched and thought it was neat when she put the cologne on him. Maggie put some cologne on Diane too.

They played in the living room after dinner. Alan walked Diane home again.

NO MORE SECRETS

Friday, he secreted a dress and shoes in the basement and unlocked the door. When Mom got home he went to Diane's. He went out the back door and back into the basement. He quickly stripped off his shirt and pulled out the slip he had on underneath and put on the dress. He took off his pants and changed shoes. Exiting the basement, he slipped quickly around the steps and ran for Diane's back porch.

Diane answered his knock. "Hi Alice. Come on in." Turning around, "Mom, Alice is here." Then to Alan again. "You're just in time. Mickey Mouse Club is just starting."

While the "girls" were watching TV Mrs. Jackson came in. "Would you like to stay to dinner, Alice?"

"Yes Ma'am," Alan replied.

"I'll call your mother."

After dinner they went up and played with Diane's dolls and doll house. About 7:45, Mrs. Jackson called up the stairs.

"Girls, the Friday night movie is going to start soon. Why don't you come down and watch it? It's a children's special."

They put away the dolls and raced down the stairs giggling and laughing. When the movie was getting over, about 9:00, Mrs. Jackson asked. "Are you going to spend the night to night, Alice?"

"I don't think so. My mom wants me to start planning those kind of things in advance."

"Well, why don't you plan on tomorrow then? I know Diane would love to have you. Wouldn't you, Diane?"

"I sure would. It's been a long time since you spent the night."

"I'll ask my mom as soon as I get home. My mom sure likes it when Diane comes over to play. Maybe she could come over in the morning."

"What time is a good time for her to come over?"

"I'm out of bed by 9:00. I had better get going, see you tomorrow," he said going out the door.

In morning, Alan went to breakfast wearing his most feminine nightgown. Mom fixed pancakes and had home made orange juice. Alan took his time over breakfast. He kind of hoped that Diane might get there before he finished. It was almost 9:20 when he eventually got up from the table. He went to the living room and sat on the couch and worked the dot-to-dot puzzle in his weekly reader from school. Having finished that he just sat there looking at the magazine, pretending to be doing something.

It was 10:00 before he heard the knock on the back door.

"Alan, Diane is here," Mom called from the kitchen.

"Hi Diane." Alan said coming into the kitchen.

“Hi Alice. Did I come too early?” she asked, looking at Alan's nightgown.

“Diane, would you like a cup of hot chocolate while Alan gets dressed?” Alan’s mom interjected, looking at Alan.

Alan went up and got dressed in a real summer like dress. There was something about summer dresses that made him feel real good. He wore bobby socks and a pair of flats. In the bathroom, he put in the barrettes from the other day.

In the kitchen, Diane was sitting at the table sipping her hot chocolate. There was a cup across the table for him. When they were through with their hot chocolate, they went out and played on the swing until lunch time. After lunch, Mom suggested that they do something quiet for a while, so they got out one of Alan's board game and set it up on the kitchen table.

When Mom got through with the dishes she went into the living room. After a while she looked in on them and said. “I'm going up to take a bath. You two be good, okay?”

“We will,” Alan said.

Just as they were about to exchange that game for another, the phone rang. It was Mrs. Jackson. “Hi Alice. I just baked some chocolate chip cookies and thought you and Diane might want to come and have some while they are still warm.”

“We sure would.”

“If it's all right for you to spend the night, why don't you just bring your things over when you come.”

“We'll be right there as soon as I tell my mother we're going.”

Alan had an overnight bag already packed. He ran up and got it. He stopped by the bathroom door.

“Mom?” he called through the door.

“Yes, dear?”

“Mrs. Jackson called. She just made some chocolate chip cookies and wants Diane and me to come and have some while they are still warm. Is it okay?”

“Yes, it's okay.”

“Oh, I forgot to tell you last night, they want me to spend the night tonight, is that okay too?”

“Oh all right. Can I just relax in my bath?”

“Sure bye, see you tomorrow.”

When they came in the back door, Mrs. Jackson had two little plates of cookies and two glasses of milk on the table waiting. Alan put his over night bag just inside the living room door and they sat at the table and enjoyed the cookies and milk.

They played on Diane's swing set until dinner time and then spent the evening watching television. At bed time Alan put on his nightgown and went to brush his teeth. Mrs. Jackson came in to supervise the proceedings.

“That's a nice nightgown, Alice. It looks real good on you,” she told him.

“Thank you, it's one of my favorites.”

In the morning the “girls” came to breakfast in their nightgowns and watched cartoons after. They got dressed about 10:00. Alan put on his clean panties and socks and put on his other dress. Then they went out to play on the swings. It was a warm spring day and they stayed out until lunch. After lunch it was more TV for an hour, to let their lunch settle. They played outside again until dinner.

Mrs. Jackson made them stay in after dinner, because it was starting to get chilly. About 8:30 the phone rang. It was Alan's mother. It was time to come home. Alan went up and packed his over night bag and bid farewell.

Mom was in the kitchen when he came in the backdoor.

“Alan. Did you go over there dressed like that?”

“Well,... yes. I was wearing that yellow dress with the white collar. This one is the spare I packed so I wouldn't wear the same outfit two days in a row. That's what Maggie does when she spends the night at Mary's.”

“I wasn't thinking when you told me that you wanted to go to Diane's and spend the night. I guess I'm so used to you in a dress that it seemed normal.”

“Well, you said you were a little concerned about me wearing her clothes when I played dress-up over there. Because you were afraid I might ruin something of hers. I wore my own dress when we played dress-up so you didn't have to worry.”

“You've got a point there. Anyway, it's done and over with now. It's not like they never saw you in a dress. I guess it doesn't matter now what you wear, here or there.”

All the following week Alan hurried home from school and put on a dress and went straight to Diane's. Some nights he would stay for dinner and others he would come home. But always, he made sure to let everyone know that he had been to Diane's wearing a dress.

AN OVERNIGHT GUEST

June rolled around and Maggie planned the big end of school party at Mary's. Alan asked if Diane could spend the night and sleep in Maggie's room that night. Maggie said she didn't mind. So arrangements were made.

Friday after school, Alan put on dress as usual and went straight to Diane's. They watched television until they noticed Alan's mother coming down the street.

They gathered up Diane's things and went to his house through the back door. Alan's mother was just coming into the kitchen when the "girls" came in.

"Hi. I see you're all ready to spend the night," she said to Diane.

"Un Huh. I've got my tooth brush, my nightgown and a change of clothes."

"Well, I guess you are ready. Alan, help her take her things to Maggie's room while I start dinner."

Alan and Diane went to Maggie's room and put her things on the bed. Alan showed her all of Maggie's clothes. He told her that he had tried on almost everything in her closet. Then swearing her to secrecy he told her the truth about how he came to play dress-up. She swore that she would never talk about it to any one but him.

"Hey you two! Dinner's ready," Mom called from below.

They bounded down the stairs. The evening was uneventful. The next morning they lounged around in their nightgowns. It was almost like being at Diane's except there was no television. They got dressed about 11:00 and helped Mrs. Peterson with the wash and played outside after.

Alan was pushing Diane on his swing and was taken with the uniqueness of it all. He found it very exciting.

After dinner, the "girls" stayed inside. About seven Alan walked Diane over to her house and stayed for a while. Mrs. Jackson had some cherry pie and they all had a piece. Alan went home about 8:30.

He ran into the livingroom and hugged his mother tightly.

"What's this all about?" she asked.

"Thank you for letting Diane stay the night. We had lots of fun."

"You're welcome, sweetie. You know if you wouldn't mind sleeping on the couch, she could spend the night some other time."

"Do you mean it, really?"

"I sure do. She's a very nice girl, and I'm glad you're her friend."

DIANE'S FOR THE SUMMER

When Maggie came home the next day, she was excited. She ran into the kitchen where Mom was fixing dinner...

"Mom," she almost shouted. "The neatest thing happened. You remember the summer camp that Mary, Marcie and I went to the year before Dad left? They want Junior counselors and Mary and I called them and because we were campers there, we get first choice at the jobs. It pays \$100 a month and we get free room and board. Please say I can do it. Mary's folks have already given her permission and Marcie's going too."

"Well, I don't know, what would we do with Alan during the day?"

"Couldn't Mrs. Jackson watch him? He practically lives there anyway."

"I guess you could ask her. But wait until you calm down. If she hesitates the least bit, I don't want her to do it. You understand? I'll not have her taken advantage of, just because she's our neighbor."

"Yes, Mama," Maggie sighed. She didn't relish the idea of having to ask Mrs. Jackson herself. She had hoped that if Mom asked that would carry more weight and she'd be more likely to get a 'yes' from her. After dinner she went to Mrs. Jackson's to ask in person. Mrs. Jackson answered her knock.

"Well hello Maggie. What brings you over her?" she said, letting her in.

"I, I... ah... I need a favor, a really, really big favor."

"What sort of favor do you need?"

"Well, you see, I have a terrific opportunity this summer. The camp I went to a few years ago wants junior counselors. They said I could be one, but I need to commit for all of July and all of August. They would like me to come as soon as possible to start training."

"That's wonderful dear, but what is the favor you need from me?"

"Well, my mom counts on me to keep an eye on Alan while she's at work during the summer. If I go to camp... could you watch Alan Monday through Friday from 7:30 in the morning to 6:30 at night? I could pay you at the end of summer. I'll get two hundred dollars. You can have it all."

"Why, I'd be glad to watch Alice, and you keep your money. I'm sure you'll want it for some really nice school clothes."

"You mean it? You'll really watch Alan every day?"

"Oh sure, he's over here a lot anyway. What's a few more hours a day? He's no trouble at all."

"Oh thank you. Thank you, thank you. I didn't think you'd do it. I've got to tell Mom. Thank you!" Maggie blurted as she backed out the door.

Maggie left for training on the 15th of June. It was just Mom and Alan at home for the rest of the summer. A regular routine developed. Alan got up about 7:30 every

morning and dressed in a nice dress, ate the breakfast Mom sat out for him and by 8:30, he was over at Diane's.

Diane was delighted by this turn of events. They spent a lot of time on her swing set and even a little time in Alan's backyard on his swing. Alan often spent the night, especially if his mother had to work late for any reason. He'd just pop over and get a nightgown and a change of clothes whenever she would call to say she would be late.

If she was going to be just a little late Mrs. Jackson would invite her to dinner. Alan really liked that. He thought it was neat that he would be having dinner at a friend's house dressed as a girl and his mother was there with him.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

On one such occasion, Mrs. Jackson brought up the Fourth of July.

"I though I would like to take Diane to the beach for the weekend on the Fourth of July," she told Alan's mother.

"Do you need me to get someone to watch Alan on Friday?"

"Well, he's welcome to come along if you don't mind. I know Diane would enjoy the company."

"What do you think Alan, would like to go to the beach over the fourth? I know I will have to work that day."

"Yeah, I like going to the beach."

"I was planning to leave on the bus about 10:00 a.m. on the third. You needn't do anything. I'll come over and pack a bag for him the afternoon before and he can stay the night. We'll get a taxi to the bus depot in the morning. I was planning on staying an extra night and coming back Monday morning."

The "girls" were ecstatic. They both began jumping up and down and clapping their hands.

The big day arrived. Alan got up as usual on Wednesday and went to Diane's after breakfast. The "girls" played outside in the morning. Lunch was peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with milk and carrot sticks.

"As soon as I get the lunch dishes washed, we'll be going to Alice's to pack his suitcase. So why don't you girl's watch TV until then?"

Mrs. Jackson was done quickly and they were soon in Alan's room.

"Where is your suitcase, Alice?"

He went to his mother's room and got one from her closet. Putting in on the bed, Mrs. Jackson opened it up and began putting panties and socks inside.

"Do you have a swim suit, Sweetie?" she asked Alan.

"In the bottom drawer," he replied.

He watched as Mrs. Jackson moved his old boys' trunks and got out the girls suit that he first tried on. She studied it carefully. Holding it up to him, she said. "Are you sure it fits? It looks a little small."

"I wore it last year."

"Go into the bathroom and try it on and let me see."

Alan did as he was told. He was surprised that it was so tight. When he came back in, Mrs. Jackson was folding some plainer dresses into his suitcase. She looked up when he came into the room.

"Alice, you look like a sausage. I'd better pack an extra one of Diane's. Go take that off before you cut off the circulation in your legs."

When Alan came back his suitcase was nearly full.

“Is there anything you particularly want to take that I haven't already packed?”

Alan carefully looked through the suitcase. There were three dresses and both of his slippers, six pair of panties, three training bras, a sun suit (that Diane had given him because she outgrew it), three pair of shoes (one pair of flats, a pair of sandals and a pair of tennis shoes), three pairs of shorts and three blouses.

“Not really, you've got everything.”

They closed the suitcase and headed for the door.

“Oh, Alice, I almost forgot. You should get another dress to wear tomorrow. Make it a nice one for the bus ride.”

Alan went to the closet and chose the yellow one with the white yoke collar and the ruffles around the hem and the ribbons in the cap sleeves. Carrying it by the hanger, he caught up with them on the stairs.

OUT OF THE BACK YARD

In the morning Mrs. Jackson roused them at 7:30. It seemed really early. Probably because they had been so excited they both had a hard time sleeping. They had breakfast in their nightgowns. As soon as they were done Mrs. Jackson shoed them upstairs to get dressed.

Alan put on his yellow dress that he picked out yesterday. He decided to wear some white tights and a pair of patent leather flats with a little bit of a raised heel. It made him feel really special to look so feminine. In the bathroom, he brushed his hair and put in some barrettes. Then he borrowed some of Mrs. Jackson's cologne. He used it very sparingly. He didn't have permission and didn't want her to notice.

Diane wore a blue dress and white shoes. She had lace cuff socks. When they came downstairs, Mrs. Jackson had their bags by the front door.

"You girls look very nice," she told them. "The taxi will be here very soon. Why don't you sit down and watch television until it gets here."

It wasn't long until the taxi arrived. As they were going out, Mrs. Jackson stopped them just inside the door.

"Now, I want you two girls to be on your very best behavior in the taxi, at the bus station and on the bus. I don't want any undue attention. okay?"

They both shook their heads yes. The taxi driver came and took the bags from Mrs. Jackson and put them in the trunk while the "girls" got in the back seat. He drove them directly to the bus station. Once at the station, Mrs. Jackson kept them close to her as she stood in line to get their tickets.

The "girls" played Tic Tac Toe while they waited for the bus. It wasn't long until their bus was called. They sat toward the back of the bus. At first it was exciting. It was the first time that Alan had been on a bus that went out of town. He was used to being on the bus to and from school, but this bus was going somewhere.

The "girls" spent quite a bit of time looking out the window at first. But after about an hour, they began to tire of that and they fell asleep.

"Wake up girls. This is our stop," Mrs. Jackson said, shaking them gently. They had been asleep for over an hour. Still sleepy and blinking they got off the bus. The driver got off and unloaded their bags from under the bus. Looking around, Alan could smell the salt water in the air and see sea gulls flying. He could almost hear the ocean. Mrs. Jackson had him and Diane carry the lighter of the three bags and she took the other two. They walked a few blocks west and came to a motel on the ocean. The girls waited outside with the luggage while Mrs. Jackson went into the office and registered.

Soon they were settled in their rooms. It was very nice. The "girls" shared a room with twin beds and Mrs. Jackson had another room with double bed. There was a little kitchen and livingroom that looked right out on the ocean.

Mrs. Jackson unpacked and brought out some cans of soup and some sandwiches that she had packed at home.

“You girls change into some play clothes while I get this soup heated for lunch. I want you to keep your dresses nice for the trip home. Alice, you can change in my room.”

Soon, they were seated at the table eating lunch and watching the ocean. After lunch they walked back to the bus stop and another block past. There was grocery store there. Mrs. Jackson bought some groceries and the three of them carried them back to the motel.

“Would girls like to go see the ocean?”

“Yes!” they said in unison.

“Well you had better get your swimsuits on. I know that you will want to play in the surf. Alice the suit I packed for you is in my bag right on top.”

Alan went in and opened her suitcase which was laying on the bed. There, right on top was a yellow two piece suit the top was like bra only there were no shoulder straps. Instead, there were two skinny straps that came from between the cups and tied behind his neck. The bottoms were like a short skirt with panties inside. The top had some kind of stiffener under the cups and they were lightly padded, almost like his training bra. He changed in Mrs. Jackson's room again. It seemed to him to be the right thing to do. After all he was pretending to be a girl. If someone saw him naked, it would ruin the illusion.

They all went to the ocean. The tide was coming in so Alan and Diane could jump waves.

“You girls don't go out past your knees.”

They played in the ocean for a while and then began making sand castles. Alan had never been anywhere dressed as a girl. He was concerned at first that without the dress and fancy shoes that people might see that he was a boy in a girls swim suit, but no one really even looked at them.

Finally, Mrs. Jackson started picking up their stuff.

“Come on girls, it's time to go get dinner.”

After dinner they went for a walk on the beach. The next day was the Fourth of July. The beach was really crowded. There were people everywhere. It was good that their motel was right on the beach. That way, they could stake out their spot on the beach early. Mrs. Jackson had packed a lunch so that they didn't have to come back to the motel for lunch. She knew that if they did, they might not get another space. Alan and Diane spent the whole day in the sun.

When they finally came back, Mrs. Jackson noticed that they had a little sunburn. She rubbed them with baby oil to ease the effect and make it not so bad. That night after dinner, they set out on the deck at the motel and watched the fireworks over the ocean.

On Saturday they waited until the afternoon to go down to the beach. Mrs. Jackson rubbed their backs with baby oil all the time they were in the sun to help prevent more sunburn.

Sunday was the same... The girls had a really good time at the beach. Alan got really used to lots of people around and they even made friends with two girls in the next unit at the motel. *They never knew that Alan wasn't a girl.*

Monday, they got up early and waited out on the highway for the bus back home. The girls were exhausted and almost immediately fell asleep when they got on the bus. Back at the bus station, they got in a taxi that was waiting outside and went home.

When they got home Mrs. Jackson had each of them take bubble bath. Diane went first while Alan took his suitcase home and picked up a clean dress and underwear. Diane was out of the tub when he came back and Mrs. Jackson was drawing a new set of bubbles for him.

"Alice your bath is ready. I made sure that it's not too hot," she told him when he came upstairs.

Diane was there in a bathrobe as he came into the bathroom.

"Why don't you get in and enjoy the bubbles while I get Diane dressed?" she suggested, taking Diane out of the bathroom.

Alan stripped and climbed in and settled in to the bubbles. In a little while Mrs. Jackson checked on him.

"How are you doing?"

"Fine, thanks."

"Would you like to have me wash your back? Diane likes me to do that for her."

"Okay."

Mrs. Jackson picked up the soap and began to lather his back.

"Oh dear. Your sunburn is worse than Diane's. Does it hurt?"

"Well just a little. It feels a little warm, but it doesn't really hurt until it touches something."

"Well, I won't rub too hard. You let me know if it hurts."

After a bit she was through.

"I think that's enough, you can do the rest yourself. When you're through, feel free to use some of my dusting powder by the sink. Just put some on the inside of your legs and under your arms. I'll have lunch ready soon, so don't take too long," she told him, and left.

After he dried himself off, he tried Mrs. Jackson's dusting powder. It smelled good... It was the same scent as her cologne. So after he use it, he put on a little of that too. He really smelled feminine.

MOM'S REVELATION

Wednesday night Alan wore his yellow, sleeveless nightgown with the Vee neck to bed. As he was brushing his teeth Mom came in.

“All ready for bed, Alan?”

“Yes,” he replied.

“Alan, did you get a sunburn at the beach?”

“Yeah, a little bit but it's better now.”

“Well, it's starting to peel. You'd better let me take a look at it.” She pulled his nightie away from his neck and looked down his back. She look up at him in the mirror and pulled his nightgown up to his shoulders exposing the line of white skin across his back. “Were you Alan at the beach, or Alice?”

“Alice.”

“I didn't think that Mrs. Jackson would take you to the beach as Alice. I thought you would be Alan. Where did you get the girls swimming suit?”

“It was one of Diane's extra suits.”

“Was there any trouble? I mean did anyone know you were a boy?”

“No, the girls in the next unit at the motel played with us and never once acted like I was anything but a girl. Even their mother complimented Mrs. Jackson on how cute Diane and I were. She thought we were sisters.”

“You mean you spent three days at the beach and no one suspected that you weren't a girl?”

“I guess not.”

“I never thought for a moment that Mrs. Jackson would take you as a girl. Well I guess that's done and over with now.”

ALICE FOR SURE

One afternoon a few days later, the “girls” were watching afternoon cartoons when the phone rang. Mrs. Jackson answered it.

“Hello?”

“Oh hi, Gwen.”

“Sure that won't be a problem. We'll expect you for dinner about 6:00.”

“No, no, I insist. You have to eat too. It won't hurt us to have dinner a little late. I'll just give the girls some fruit about five. That'll take the edge of their appetite until you get here.”

“Fine, we'll expect you then.”

“Alice, that was your mother. You'll be having dinner here tonight.”

After dinner Gwen and Fay joined forces to wash dishes while Diane and Alan watched TV. Alan could hear their mothers talking as they worked.

“You know I really appreciate you taking care of Alan for us,” Gwen said.

“He's no trouble at all.”

“Well just the same I appreciate it. You do more than just take care of him. You've almost adopted him. It's like he has two mothers.”

“It's true that I'm very fond of him.”

“I wonder if maybe I don't spoil him a little.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it's bad enough that I indulge his dress-up hobby at home, but I've allowed him to inflict that same indulgence on you. You know, he *does* have boy's clothes. He doesn't have to go around in dresses all the time. He could wear pants over here.”

“If he did, I think Diane would be disappointed. She told me once that Alice is more fun than Alan. All Alan wanted to do was watch TV and play outside. Alice likes to play with her dolls and toy kitchen.”

“She really liked having Alice at the beach. She thinks that the girls next door probably wouldn't have played with just her. Most kids her age don't. And I don't think they would have played with Alan along either. I heard their mother tell them that they probably shouldn't play with the boys across the court yard.”

“With Alice along, they didn't shun Diane because Alice would modify the games to something that Diane could keep up in. Alice brings out the best in Diane.”

“You really like him as 'Alice'?”

“Oh yes. Alice is very nice to Diane. Far nicer than any other child. Even nicer than the kids at Diane's school.”

“And speaking of Diane's school. Her teachers say that Diane is progressing better than most of her classmates. They credit Diane having a friend who isn't... special(?)”

They say that causes Diane to try harder just so she can interact with her friend. Whenever she's asked tell about something at home, she always tells a story about Alice. Her teacher told me I should do everything I can to encourage the friendship."

"Well I guess that 'Alice' is a positive influence on Diane. I can see why you don't mind his playing dress-up all the time."

"I do have to keep reminding myself that in spite of the clothes, he is a little boy."

"I know what you mean. I've seen him in a dress so often, I think of it as normal. When I walk through the girl's clothing section at work and see a cute dress I sometimes wonder if they have it in Alan's size."

"Do you have any idea how strange this is? Here I am talking with my neighbor about my son's habit of wearing dresses."

"I admit that I wouldn't have even thought a conversation like this could have taken place before you guys moved in next door."

"I dreaded the very idea of anyone finding out about Alan's dress-up hobby. You have no idea how relieved I am that you aren't totally freaked out by it. I mean I thought that if you ever found out, you would forbid Diane to have any further contact with him. And I don't know what else. I thought... I don't know, something terrible I'm sure."

"At first I thought that Alan was hiding it from you. Then, I was a little concerned. But after he convinced me that you knew and I saw the way Diane liked Alice, I thought; if you're okay with it and Diane is okay with it; I could be okay with it too. I am relieved that Diane calls him Alice. I'm sure that some of the things she talks about at school would raise some eyebrows if it were Alan in the story."

There was a commercial on television for "One Hundred and One Dalmatians." Diane ran into the kitchen.

"Mommy, Mommy there's a new movie about Dalmatian puppies. Can we go see it?"

"Well maybe. I'll have to check our budget to see when we can afford it. You remember we just got back from a big trip to the beach."

"Alice, Alice, we're going to the movie. We're gonna see "One Hundred and One Dalmatians."

The very next week, the girls got on their very best dresses and Mrs. Jackson took them off to the movies.

VACATION

On Saturday, Mrs. Jackson called.

“Hi Gwen, it me Fay. Say I just called to confirm my reservation at the beach for vacation. We're going to the same motel as on the Fourth of July. They asked me if I was bringing Alice. I told them yes. I hope that's okay. I know you don't have anyone else to watch him.”

“Well, a whole week. I'm not sure about Alice. Maybe Alan.”

“I'm afraid that might be a problem. The managers have already seen Alice. If Alan shows up, they might put two and two together.”

“Oh, that's right... Well, I guess it has to be okay. I don't have any idea where I could get anyone to watch Alan for a week. When will you be going?”

“Week after next. We'll be leaving on Friday and returning the following Sunday.”

“Okay I'll be sure to have plenty of clothes for him. What do you recommend?”

“Well... for that long, I usually see that Diane has two or three old dresses to play in and at least five blouses and five pair of shorts and maybe a sun dress. For shoes pack a couple of pairs. Tennis shoes or sandals will do. And of course I dress her in a nice outfit for the bus ride.”

“I hope everything will be all right for a week. You think he can really go a whole week without anyone noticing?”

“Oh sure, Alice seems quite comfortable around other people. As a matter of fact, both times I've had him with us, I've received compliments on what a nice girl he is.”

“Well, I hope you're right.”

So it was back to the beach. The day before they were to leave, Mom called Alan to the bathroom.

“Sit down here,” she said, indicating a chair she had placed in the center of the room.

Alan sat with his back to the sink and she tied a sheet around his neck.

“If you're going to spend a week at the beach playing dress-up right out where everyone can see you, you'd better have a good looking girl's hair cut.”

With that she began to shape the back of his hair. It was well over his collar by now. When she was satisfied with that, she went to work on his bangs. First she combed them over his forehead and established a length and then pulled them up and trimmed them between her fingers. She picked up a hand mirror to show Alan what he looked like.

“There what do you think?” she said.

Alan took the mirror and looked first this way and then that. He thought Maggie had made his hair look like a girls, but this was great. Maggie had just combed his bangs over his forehead and trimmed them straight. Mom had them all puffy and had

somehow made the part, between his bangs and the rest of his hair, disappear. Using the little mirror to look in the big mirror, he could see that the back followed a gentle curve from one shoulder to the other. He never realized it before but his hair had a slight curl to it.

“Thanks Mom. It looks real good, like a real girl.”

The next day was departure day. It was lots of fun at the beach. Days spent on the sand, splashing in the surf or playing on the swings at the motel in dresses or shorts, in a sun dress or swim suit, but always as a girl. There were many days on the beach in Diane's old swim suit. By the time they went back Alan had a noticeable tan line.

Alice was indeed comfortable and convincing as a girl. While they were at the beach Mrs. Jackson had even taken them to the local movie theater to see “Swiss Family Robinson.” They stopped for Ice Cream at the A & W on the way back.

LABOR DAY

Sunday night, Mrs. Peterson had dinner waiting for them.

"I'm going back to the beach for Labor Day," she told Gwen over dinner. "I assume we can count on Alice to go with us."

"Oh that won't be necessary. I worked on The Fourth so I get Labor Day off. I can keep him here."

"Why don't you come with us? If I call right away, I think we could get their three bedroom unit. It's right on the end and has a terrific view."

"Well, I don't know."

"Oh come on. When was the last time you got away?"

"Well, it has been a long time."

"Even if we split all the costs it wouldn't be more than... about \$75.00 each. That's with the bus ride included. What do you say?"

"Well... I don't get off until 5:00."

"The last bus leaves at 5:30. We'll get there while it's still light. It's only an hour and a half."

"That would mean I would have to leave right from work. What about my suitcase?"

"We'll take it with us. You could meet us at the bus station."

"Oh I don't want to make you wait for me. You go ahead. I'll catch the late bus and meet you at the beach. Oh no that won't work. There will be too many bags for you to carry to motel."

"I know! You take the taxi downtown with us. You come in and check your bag in a locker at the bus station and then take the taxi on to work. When you get off you can get your bag when you come to the bus station."

"I have to be to work by 8:30.."

"That's okay. The bus leaves at 10:00. We can get there at 8:00 you'll even have time to buy your ticket in advance. The girls and I can go across the street and have breakfast while we wait for the bus."

"I guess that would work."

"It's settled. I'm going to call the motel right now. Can I use your phone? I'll reimburse you for the call," Fay said getting up.

"Are you really coming with us, Mom?" Alan asked.

"I guess so. Your sister won't be back from camp until the Tuesday evening after Labor Day, so I guess there's no reason for me to hang around here by myself."

"No problem," Fay announced, coming back into the room. "They just switched us with the couple from Idaho that had it reserved. They only needed a two bedroom, so

they were glad to get full price for the unit. Since the other people didn't know what unit they had, it won't make any difference to anyone.”

It was three weeks till Labor Day. Alan found himself more and more excited about the prospect of going to the beach to play dress-up with his mother.

The big day came. Everyone got up early. Mom was the earliest. She had a light breakfast and then got Alan up.

“Alan, time to wake up,” she cooed, shaking his shoulder gently.

Alan rubbed his eyes and struggled out of bed. It was 6:00 a.m.

“There's a tub of water in the bathroom. I want you to go in and take a bath while I pack your bag.”

Alan went in and slipped into the tub and began scrubbing. After a while Mom came in and washed his back and hair.

“You're still showing marked tan line. You must have spent the whole time in the sun while you were on vacation,” she told him as he rinsed his hair. He got out of the tub and she wrapped a towel under his arms and tucked it back in on itself. Then she took another towel and began thoroughly drying his hair.

“I've got your clothes laid out on your bed for the trip,” she told him. “Go in and get dressed. Then come back in here. I'll work with your hair more then. It'll do better when it dries a little.

In his room he found clean panties, a training bra, a full slip, white knee socks and his blue dress with the white trim on his bed. On the floor in front of the bed were his patent leather Mary Jane flats.

He got dressed and went back into the bathroom. Mom was right it was better when his hair dried a little. The brush could make his bangs work better.

“Let's get over to Fay's. It's after 7:00 already.”

Mom led the way down the stairs and right out the front door. Mom never used the back door to go over to the Jackson's. Most of the time she would use the back door to go home. But always the front door when she went over. This, however, was the first time Alan had gone over with her wearing a dress.

Mom knocked on the door.

“Good morning,” Mrs. Jackson said cheerily as she let them in.

“I'll just leave our bags on the porch. I'm sure they'll be all right,” Alan's mom said as she came in.

“Alice, you look nice. I always liked that dress on you,” Mrs. Jackson said.

“Thank you,” Alan said, smiling.

Diane came bouncing down the stairs.

“We're all going to the beach,” she giggled.

“I've called the taxi already. He should be here any minute. I have to go and bring our bags down.”

Diane had on a yellow dress with a full skirt that showed white lace underneath. She wore white tights and some very grown up looking white flats with a little bow on the toe.

Mrs. Jackson came down with their bags and set them by the door. Mom squatted down and took a comb and touched up Alan's hair. Just as she got done, the taxi pulled up out front. The driver helped load the bags in the trunk. Diane and Alan got in the back with Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Jackson got in front. They were at the bus depot in about fifteen minutes.

Mrs. Jackson paid him. "Wait right here, my friend will be right back out and need a ride to work," she told him.

Inside, Mom checked her bag in a locker and joined them at the ticket counter. The line was short and they got their tickets quickly. The taxi was waiting just like he was supposed to... Mom got in.

"We'll be out to meet you when you come," Mrs. Jackson told her.

"Bye, Mom," Alan said.

Mom leaned out the open door and gave him a big hug.

"Bye bye Al... Alice," she said and smiled a little smile. "Good-bye Fay, thanks. Bye bye Diane. I'll see you all tonight."

She closed the door and the taxi pulled away. They watched until the taxi went around the corner. They walked to the crosswalk and went across to the restaurant for breakfast.

"Now you girls be careful not to spill anything on yourselves. Those dresses have to be in good shape for the trip back and we don't have any way to wash them," Mrs. Jackson cautioned.

They were back in the bus depot by 9:45. They repeated the trip that was now so familiar the them. Only this time they were asleep before the bus cleared town. Alan woke up first. He had the window seat. As the bus left a stop it rocked just enough for him to lightly bump his head against the window. He lifted his head and rubbed the spot that hit the window. Mrs. Jackson was sitting behind him. She leaned forward.

"Have a nice nap?" she asked softly.

Alan turned to look at her and shook his head yes. He started to say something but Mrs. Jackson held a finger in front of her lips and then pointed at Diane. She was still sleeping.

"How much farther?" Alan whispered.

"About fifteen miles. Ours is the next stop." She whispered back.

Alan watched the scenery. The coast highway followed beach line about a mile in from the actual sand. One time it crossed a cape and he could see way down the beach as it turned and angled down the other side. There was a town a few miles down the coast line. He figured it must be their destination. He could see a row of motels stretching along the sand line. He couldn't quite tell which one was theirs. There were two that looked similar from this distance. Either could have been the one.

The bus bumped along the road for a while. Each time it went over a little rise or crossed a stream, he was afforded another peek at the ocean. Shortly, they came to the town. Alan recognized several businesses along the highway. The bus pulled to a stop in front of the service station. Mrs. Jackson leaned forward again.

“Diane, wake up. We're here.”

Diane blinked and smiled at Alan. Then she turned and grinned at her mother.

They got off and took their bags from the driver and began the walk to the motel. The girls knew the way and walked a little ahead of Mrs. Jackson. At the motel, Mrs. Jackson registered again and then led the way to their room. This one was much bigger than they had before. The living room was big and had windows on three sides. They could see both ways up and down the beach as well as straight out. There were three bedrooms. Two had double beds and one had a double bed and a single bed. There were two bathrooms. One was at the end of the hall and had everything. The other one was off the room with the two beds. It had just a toilet and a sink. Mrs. Jackson produced some sandwiches and two cans of soup out of one of her bags again.

“You girls change clothes while I get lunch ready. Alice, you and your mother can have the room with the private bath,” she told them.

They had lunch and went to play on the swings. While Mrs. Jackson unpacked their bags and hung dresses in closets. She had become comfortable with Diane being out of sight for short periods so long as Alice was with her. That was another reason she liked to have Alice around. Alice was responsible and made sure that Diane didn't wonder off or do anything dangerous. When she was though unpacking, she sat on the deck and watched the girls on the swings.

“Look Mommy, see how high I'm going?” called Diane.

“Yes dear. You be careful sweetheart.”

About 5:00 she called them in.

“Come on in girls,” she called to them. “We have to go grocery shopping before Alice's mother gets here and I want you girls to have a snack. Dinner will be late tonight.”

They came in and she washed each face and tied a loose shoelace. The girls sat down to eat a banana, have a chocolate chip cookie and drink a glass of Kool-Aid. Mrs. Jackson washed faces and hands and checked them over again.

When all was in order they marched off to the grocery store. It was 6:30 when they got to the checkout counter. They walked to the bus stop and waited for the bus that would carry Alan's mother. Diane spotted it first.

“There's the bus!” She cried out.

Alan turned and watched the bus approach. There was a light wind rustling his dress around his legs. It felt delicious. This was a red letter day. Here he was standing with the neighbors on a highway in a beach town, wearing a dress, waiting for his mother. Just two years ago he had hoped she would never find out he liked to wear dresses. A year ago, his mother knew and hoped that the neighbors would never even

see him in a dress. Now she had gone with them to take him downtown in a dress and had gone with him in to a public building so he could come and be here to meet her.

The bus pulled up with the hissing of air brakes and rush of wind carrying dust. They turned their faces away and closed their eyes until the dust settled. The driver got out and opened the luggage compartment. Alan's mother followed. Alan ran to her and she picked him up.

“How's my special b... girl?” she asked.

“Fine,” he replied as she rubbed noses with him. She put him down and picked up her suitcase.

“Well I made it. I hope you didn't wait dinner on me,” she said as the bus pulled off.

“We did but it's okay the girls had a snack about 5:00 and I got some canned stew for dinner tonight. It will heat up quick.”

Mrs. Peterson looked around. “Which way to the motel?”

“Right this way,” Mrs. Jackson told her, gesturing toward the beach.

As they climbed up to the deck... Mrs. Peterson stood still at the top of the stairs.

“This is our room, here on the end? It does have a great view.”

“Come on in, you and Alice have the big room. Unless you'd rather the girls share a room and you have a private room,” Mrs. Jackson told her.

Alice took her hand and led her to the room. “This one's ours, Mommy. See it has a little bathroom.”

Mom put down her bag and looked around the room. Mrs. Jackson appeared at the door.

“Well, what do you think?”

“This will be fine. But are you sure you don't want the private bath?”

“No thanks, I thought with Alice... I thought it would be better for you.”

“Well... thanks.”

“Why don't you change while I get dinner?” she said, heading for the kitchen. “Alice, you and Diane can give me a hand setting the table.”

After dinner they sat in the living room and watch a spectacular sunset. They only got one channel on television, but the programs were good. Bedtime came early just like the morning had.

Alan woke and looked around. Mom had gotten up already. He got up and went to the bathroom. He found Mom in the kitchen talking with Mrs. Jackson.

“I'm really going to have to watch myself. I've never been around anyone who didn't know Alan ah.. Alice was a boy. When I got in the taxi yesterday, I almost called him Alan. Then when you met me at the bus stop, I nearly called him a boy. That's okay at home when no one is around. But here, I wouldn't want anyone to hear me.”

“Well if you slip, don't get flustered. Just go right on and if someone asks you about it, just say 'What, no I said Alice didn't I?' You could precondition yourself by practic-

ing saying Alice to him even when you don't need to use his name. That's what I did. Of course I never have to call him Alan. He's always Alice when I see him."

"I'll do that." With that Alan walked into the room. "There's my little girl now. Come here Alice I want to give you a hug."

Alan came over and climbed into her lap.

"How's my special girl this morning?"

"Fine," he said, wrapping his arms around her.

"Diane isn't up yet but if you're hungry, I could get you some cereal," Mrs. Jackson said.

He shook his head.

"I think h... she got up too early."

"Well just the same, I think I'll start breakfast anyway. Maybe the smell of scrambled eggs and ham will wake Diane up. I checked on her and left her door ajar so the smell should make it in there okay."

"Alice did you hear that? Scrambled eggs and ham. That's your favorite."

He shook his head.

"I don't know about Diane, but Alice will be awake by the time you're done."

The ham crackled as it hit the skillet. Soon the smell of cooking ham filled the room. When the ham was ready Mrs. Jackson took it out of the skillet and cracked in a dozen eggs. As she began to scramble them Diane appeared in the door.

"Hi sweetheart," Mrs. Jackson said looking up from the stove. "I thought the smell would get you out of bed. Are you hungry?"

"Un-huh," she nodded sleepily.

Mrs. Peterson put Alan down and went to the stove. "Why don't I finish that?" she said, taking the fork. Mrs. Jackson picked up Diane and gave her a big hug.

"Breakfast will be ready in a few minutes. Here you sit right here and Alice can sit next to you while I set the table."

Soon there were steaming plates of scrambled eggs and ham, toast and glasses of orange juice on the table and everyone was eating. After breakfast the girls watched cartoons on television. The grown ups took coffee out on the deck until about 10:00.

"Who wants to go for a walk on the beach?" Mrs. Jackson asked, coming in the door.

"I do, I do!" they both exclaimed, jumping up.

"Well you had better get dressed. No nightgowns allowed on the beach," Mrs. Peterson said, coming in behind her.

"Mom!" Alan called from the bedroom.

"What is it Alice?" She responded, heading toward the bedroom.

"I can't find my underwear."

“What oh no, don't tell me I forgot to pack underwear?” she said, heading for the bedroom. She crossed to his suitcase and began searching the pockets.

“I don't know what to do now Sweetie. I guess you'll just have to wear yesterday's underwear over and I'll wash it out tonight.”

Mrs. Jackson came to the open door.

“What's the matter?”

“Oh I packed in too much of a hurry. I should have packed his suitcase last night like I did mine. I can't believe I could forget underwear of all things.”

“No problem. I always pack extra for Diane. Alice can just borrow some. Wait right here I'll get some.” She came back in a moment with two pair of underwear.

“Are you sure this isn't a problem? Diane won't need these?”

“No, it's an old habit. It's been almost two years ago we came out like this and two days running she managed to do something to ruin her underwear. She ended up wearing her swim suit for underwear for two days. Ever since then I've always packed two pair per day. We have never needed it since.”

“Well thank you. I feel so stupid. Here Al... Alice, put these on.”

Alan put on his sun suit and sandals. Diane put on a halter top and shorts and her sandals. When they got to the water, the girls took off their shoes and waded in the shallow water as they walked along.

SINGLE MOM BONDING

They stopped to rest near a pile of driftwood and the girls climbed in and out of the wood finding cubbyholes they called forts. The adults enjoyed the breeze and watched the waves and talked about all kinds of things.

“You know, when Alice's dad left I thought it was the end of the world. I mean, I was devastated. I had never worked before. Unless you count berry picking in high school. I had no marketable skills. But I'm amazed at how well I'm doing after just five years. This is the first time I've had any kind of break since the divorce. I worked all my vacations and every holiday. I needed the money. Really the only reason I took this holiday off is because I'm management now and I get paid the same whether I work or not.”

“I think I know what you mean. When Mike was in the accident I went into shock. The first thing the doctor told me was my husband wasn't expected to make it through the night and my four year old only had a fifty/fifty chance to make it at all. Even then there was sure to be severe brain damage. Well Mike died and the only thing that kept me going was Diane needed so much from me. If she had died too, I would have had to be institutionalized.”

“Fay, Can I ask a personal question?”

“I guess, you're as close to a best friend as I have. I'm afraid that I haven't had much time to get to know anyone since the accident. I've been too busy being super mom for Diane.”

“How do you get along? You seem to have no money problems.”

“I have our attorney to thank. I'm just thankful he was a good one. He managed a settlement that's held in trust for Diane. The way it's set up it will take care of me and Diane as long as we both live. I get a salary as Trustee that takes care of my personal needs even a donation into a retirement fund and life insurance. And then there's the monthly budget to take care of Diane. A portion of that is mine because I provide the physical care for her. The house is legally Diane's and I'm just the caretaker as her legal guardian, so all the operating expenses like electricity, water and maintenance come out of that budget too. It's kind of funny, I'm my daughters employee and I'm the one in charge.

“My only concern is finding another trustee to take over when I'm no longer able to take care of her. The doctors say that there is no physical problem with Diane. Physically she will out live me by as much as all children should out live their parents. But the brain damage will certainly keep her from ever being able to care completely for herself. She will always need someone to manage for her.”

“I'm sure you will find someone you can trust. Don't spend too much time brooding over it just yet. You should have thirty or forty years before you have to worry about it.”

"You're right. How did we get on this depressing subject anyway. You know, we had better get back. It's long past lunch time. The girls will be whining anytime now about being hungry."

"True, how true. Come on girls. Time to go start back," Gwen said, getting up and brushing the sand off herself.

Back at the motel they had lunch on quickly. The girls watched TV for an hour. When the program got over, Diane went out on the deck where her mother was drinking coffee.

"Can we go play in the ocean?"

"Let me check the tide table to make sure the tide is coming in first."

She went in with Diane at her heels.

"Good news, the tide will be coming in until 6:00.."

"We can go play in the ocean," Diane told Alan.

"Get your swim suits on girls."

In five minutes they were knees deep in salt water jumping waves. Gwen and Fay sat on the beach near by keeping a watchful eye on them. About 5:00 they gathered in the girls and went back to fix dinner.

As they worked Gwen began to muse on how easily Alan passed as a girl.

"I'm amazed how everyone who sees Alan thinks he's a girl. I would have thought someone would guess the truth."

"Who would expect a grown woman would be wondering around with a boy dresses up to look like a girl? And what with the way you've trimmed his hair, he looks like a girl."

"That's all true and for nearly the last four years he's had a pretty feminine influence in his life. For two years, he's been practicing being a girl. I don't know how long before that he secretly pretended to be a girl. I guess I should quit worrying every time I see someone coming our way."

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday with a session of swinging thrown in. Both girls deepened their tan. Some people had a community bon fire Sunday night. An older couple were handing out marshmallows to all the kids and giving roasting lessons. The girls got to roast marshmallows.

In morning they went for one last walk on the beach after breakfast and then dressed for the trip home. As usual the girls slept most of the way home.

At home Mrs. Jackson had spaghetti sauce waiting in the frig and put on a pot of noodles when they got home dinner was ready in fifteen minutes. At dinner, they talked about their fun times at the beach.

As Alan got ready for bed he looked at the panties he had borrowed from Diane. One of them was blue with an embroidered flower on it and the other was pink with lace. His were boring. Just plain white.

“Mom,” he said when he went in to brush his teeth. “I really like Diane's panties. They are colored and have flowers and lace and things.”

“Yes they were nice weren't they.”

Maggie came home the next day and spent the next two days telling stories about being a camp counselor. She wanted to do it again next year. That would suit Alan just fine. He could spend another summer like this one.

Thursday morning Alan was wearing his sun suit and Maggie came into the kitchen as he was eating lunch.

“Where did you get that tan line?” she asked, pulling the back of his sun suit out to see the line from the strap.

“At the beach.”

“You were at the beach wearing a girls swim suit? Where did you get the suit?”

“From Diane. I went with her and her mother on Fourth of July and again for vacation in August.”

“Does Mom know you wore a girls swim suit?”

“Yes. She went with us on Labor Day.”

“Wow, I guess you have some stories to tell of your own. You mean Mom went with you to the beach and while you were there, she let you wear a girl swim suit outside long enough to get a tan?”

“By the time Mom went to the beach I pretty much had a tan.”

“Oh yeah, you said you went on the Fourth of July and vacation with Diane. Did Mom know you were going to play dress-up at the beach?”

“No, not on the Fourth of July. Mrs. Jackson packed my suitcase for that trip. She found out when I came home with a sunburn.”

“Was she mad?”

“No, I think she was afraid someone might have guessed I was a boy or something, but she didn't act mad. Surprised maybe, but not mad.”

“What about vacation?”

“Mom packed for me.”

“And she put in Diane's old swim suit?”

“She put in everything.”

“Everything?”

“Yeah, the swim suit, dresses, shorts, bras - everything.”

“No boy's clothes?”

“None. She even cut my hair before we went.”

“You mean you went there while you played dress-up?” Alan nodded “How did you get there?”

“We took a bus.”

“Tell me about when Mom went. She let you go out a few times right?”

“No I played dress-up the whole time.”

“She was on the bus with you playing dress-up?”

“Not on the way there, but she was in the taxi when we went to the bus station. And she called me Alice the whole time we were there. She came back on the bus with us.”

“So how much time did you spend outside when Mom was there?”

“A lot. We went for walks on the beach, Diane and me jumped waves and played on the swings at the motel. We even roasted marshmallows with a bunch of other people on Sunday.”

“Did Mom hide out in the motel room while you did this?”

“No, she was with us every time we went out. Her and Mrs. Jackson became good friends I think. They sure talked a lot.”

“But she must have made you wear boy's clothes on the bus home.”

“No I wore that blue dress with white trim that you brought from Mary's. She picked it out for me as the outfit I should wear on the bus.”

“She rode with you on the bus like that?”

“Yes,” he said with a self-satisfied grin.

“Well, I guess Mom has really decided it's okay for you to be a girl whenever you want.”

SCHOOL SHOPPING WITH ABUNDANCE

Saturday was shopping day. Alan put on boy's clothes for the first time since school let out. They trekked downtown. As usual, he was bored with the whole thing. Mom dragged him through the store. He tried on pants and shirts and coats. They went to the girl's department. It was the "Junior Miss" section and Maggie got all kinds of things because she had \$ 200.00 of her own money to spend. That was good, sort of, because it was the first time Maggie and Mom didn't have big long drawn out discussion about whether they could afford something or not. That got them home earlier. If Maggie wanted it and Mom didn't have it in her budget, Maggie bought it herself. But that meant more boys' clothes for Alan. That didn't excite him too much.

When they got home Alan couldn't wait to get his dress on again. He didn't wait for the loot to be divided. He went right up to change. As he came out of his room, Maggie was carrying things to hers.

"You better get back down there, short stuff. Mom wants you to put your things away."

"I have to go to the bathroom," he said.

When he finally got downstairs, Mom had his things in a two piles on the couch. Maggie had some things still on the couch. She got so much that she couldn't take it all in one load. Alan put one pile on top of the other and scrunched them together and carried them up to his room and dumped them on his bed.

"Alice!" Mom called from the bottom of the stairs. It was the first time she had called him "Alice" at home. Alan went to the top of the stairs. "You forgot these," Mom said, holding out three cellophane wrapped packages. Alan went to retrieve them.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Look and see."

It was three packages of panties. They were pastel colors, blue, pink, and yellow. Some had embroidered flowers and some had lace. Alan looked with disbelief. Mom bought him his own panties, just like Diane's.

"I thought my special girl deserved new panties."

Alan gave her a big hug and they dropped the panties on the floor.

EPILOGUE

Maggie went on to college and met a nice young man. She got married before they graduated. And then he got a job offer in Texas so they moved there.

Mom did well at work. She eventually became district manager. And when their landlord died, she bought the house they were living in from his estate.

Diane did much better in her school than anyone could have guessed. Her mental age ended up about 12 years old. Still not quite good enough to live on her own. But good enough to function with a money manager.

Alan went to college too. He was the first man at the local school to study nursing. He got his LPN. and Mrs. Jackson who suffered a little from arthritis hired him as personal nurse for Diane.

Alice and Diane were married in a private ceremony at her house. For Diane, it was really fun. They both played dress-up. She wore a man's suit and Alice wore a beautiful wedding dress. Both mothers were in attendance. Alice and Diane went to the beach for their Honeymoon. Mrs. Jackson remained as trustee for Diane's trust until she died, when by pre-arrangement, Alan became trustee.

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