

The Nanny



Simone Reynolds

A "New Woman" Novel



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Love,

Ms. Chrissie
Editor in Chief

The Nanny

By Simone Reynolds

Mark Holbrooke opened the door of the kitchen and walked in. There was no one there, most unusual. He looked around, no sign of Kay. He put his paper on the table, took off his coat and hung it on the hook in the hallway. All was as it should be, apart from the usual welcome that he had enjoyed since he married, now over ten years ago. Kay was home first most days as she was a school teacher and finished early in the afternoon, whereas Mark was very much 9-5 working in the NHS.

“I’m home,” he shouted.

“Down in a minute,” he heard a call from upstairs.

Soon Kay bounced into the room. Not quite literally, but he had never seen his wife quite so animated before. She was all smiles and bubbly.

“You haven’t been out to lunch with your friends, have you?” He sniffed her suspiciously for alcohol in an amused way.

“No, I haven’t!” she replied with mock annoyance. “I can only do that in half-term, the head wouldn’t approve of me being drunk in charge of a class.”

“Well then, why are you so sunny?” He was very suspicious.

“It must be the sight of my gorgeous husband, fresh home from working at the coalface with a pocket full of money for me.” Her face was full of smile showing her cute little dimples. With her short blond hair, cut round her face, she couldn’t look more excited. Added to this, she was bouncing up and down like a little dog.

“The nearest I’ve come to a coalface was bringing in the scuttle for my mother.”

“NHS management is your coalface. Anyway, you’ve been bringing home the bacon for your family.”

“My wife you mean.”

“Maybe not just your wife anymore.” She looked even more animated.

“What do you mean?”

“I’m pregnant!” she couldn’t hold it in any more. “I did a Boots test and I’m having a baby.”

“Kay, that’s fantastic.”

Kay and Mark were in their thirties and had been trying to have a child since they married and had made no progress. They had been to their GP who had found nothing wrong, there were no obstacles. They were on the point of trying IVF. Now this news was wonderful.

“So, what shall we do to celebrate?” Mark was now as animated as his wife.

“No champagne I’m afraid, but I’ve booked a meal out at the Black Sheep in the village.”

Mark took her in his arms and they held each other for fully five minutes. He couldn’t remember anything so exciting happening before. Even as he was thinking this, he knew there was a long way to go. Kay could only be a few weeks in at most and babies needed nine months in the womb. Such a long time to keep his fingers crossed. (Week 3)

The celebration took the form of the ‘Pub standard’ of beef and ale pie for him and fish and chips for Kay.

“Fish and chips is absolutely the safest food,” she said. “No risk of food poisoning, nothing can survive the heat.”

“Beef’s OK now I’m sure. That BSE has gone.”

“Well, our baby’s not risking it,” she smiled.

Celebration also took the form of some baby-making practice, but now it was all about fun. Up until today they had been thinking about positions, whether the semen running out mattered, was the time right? All sorts of distinctly un-erotic concerns. Today it was about pleasure.

He was delighted to find that Kay was in her wedding underwear when he helped her out of her blouse. He loved the white basque which presented her breasts in such a ripe and inviting fashion, her waist so smooth and sleek down to her legs, clad in white so silky to the touch. He inhaled her powerful odours, seemingly loaded today with extra pheromones. He took her in his arms for a long and tender embrace. Then he fell to his knees to gently ease down her white thong to reveal her neatly-trimmed hair.

“I wasn’t sure if I could really take us back 10 years,” she smiled.

“You’ll always be my blushing bride.”

“Can you remember our first night?” she queried.

“Of marriage or sex?” They certainly hadn’t been the same thing.

“Our wedding day of course,” she laughed.

“No, I suspect I was one over the eight.”

“You were but it didn’t matter, it was still perfect for me.” Kay always became soulful when she thought of her wedding day.

They slumped backward onto the bed and Mark slipped out of his trousers. She turned from him so that she could enjoy her neck being caressed and he spread his strokes slowly down to include her pert little bottom. His organ was rampant as he pressed against her cheeks. Then she turned over to take his penis in her hand, drawing it out of his pants and giving it a tentative nibble.

“Don’t, I want to save it for you,” he added urgently.

“You don’t need to now!”

She lay back and he mounted, pushing himself in as he felt her slaking juices. They came rapidly, he in spasmodic jerks, she in shattering chains of vibrations. They fell back exhausted, and after so little work.

“The lack of pressure improves things,” she said, smiling serenely.

“Yes, it wasn’t really a chore this time.”

“Is it usually?” she complained.

“Well, it has seemed that way at times.”

They both lay back mulling over this idea. Sarah realised that she had tended to nag him around her supposed time of ovulation; the lack of spontaneity had certainly made some sex acts seem more like drudgery. Making love, even when you have a headache. Most women would have made an excuse, not tried to egg their lover on. Now perhaps it would be 9 months of pleasure. Actually, she knew that was not terribly probable.

The next day saw Kay off to visit her GP. This was Dr. Wiley, an oldish man with short grey hair and glasses.

“All the signs fit, so you must be pregnant. We hardly need a lab test. We do need to send you off to maternity clinic to get your blood tests done and ensure you are booked somewhere for delivery. The Midwife will sort all that out with you.”

So the next stop was the Midwife. She took down all Kay’s details, including her shoe size, strangely. She had blood taken and blood pressure checked and also tested for Chlamydia and protein and glucose in her urine.

“You’re only a few weeks in yet, so there’s no need to hurry but you will need to think what kind of birth you want. Water birth would be an option and you have choices about consultant or Midwife service,” the woman intoned but Kay didn’t really hear too much.

Once she had left the doctor’s she headed into town to “Mothercare.” She wandered round the shops looking at all the things she could buy – or, ideally, get her parents to buy for them. Obviously there was the cot, and mattress, clothes of all sorts,

baby baths and a variety of toys. The pram would be a must to show off her child; take them to mother and baby group, display them to all the friends and relatives. How long she had yearned for this, having seen her sister produce. Her youngest must be eight or nine now. It had been so difficult with her mother continually asking questions. Then when she had realised that there were problems, wisely shutting-up. Kay had had many tearful nights, wondering what was wrong with her, or perhaps Mark.

Ultimately, the medical people hadn't found anything. Now after all that time, she had proved herself, or at least was on the way to doing so.

One thing she could buy now was maternity clothes. To be honest, they didn't look terribly exciting, all smocks and flounces – very staid. She would want to show off her bump when it arrived. So that people would know that there was a baby on the way.

She settled on some smocks, not exactly the height of fashion, but it was buying something to recognise her future motherhood.

Within a few weeks, Kay was enjoying the full effects of her pregnancy. She was sitting next to the lavatory, wondering whether she would be able to hold any food at all down. As the last wave of nausea passed, she staggered to her feet and made it the bedroom to lie down. Being an expectant Mum wasn't so wonderful today, she thought, as she patted her tummy.

Fortunately, the sickness didn't last for too many weeks and by the time a bulge was showing to her waistline, it seemed pretty much over. She had been booked with a Midwife at the hospital by this time – Jackie – who nodded sagely over all her changes and told her there was nothing to worry about. Jackie was in her 30s, blonde, round and bubbly, a match to Kay herself. She seemed to have all the answers for

Kay. Kay had no idea that everyone had asked her the same questions before.

“I’m not really worried Jackie, but this breast doesn’t seem quite right,” Kay informed her at one appointment.

“How do you mean?” Jackie responded.

“Well, they are a bit bigger but there seems to be a hard lump here on the left,” she showed Jackie from the outside.

“Let’s have a look.”

Kay raised her T-shirt and took off her bra. Jackie stood back and looked, there was nothing to see but when she put her hand on the left breast, she was able to discern a hard lump, a little more firm than she was used to in her customers.

“I don’t think it’s anything but perhaps your GP should have a look, no need to worry.” Her face said otherwise.

Kay was with Dr. Wiley the same afternoon. She was in tears and he was trying to reassure her as he started to feel her breasts. He had his nurse in to keep an eye on him and his glance revealed his feelings to her.

“Mrs. Colbrooke, Kay, I think we may have to take this a bit seriously. I am going to have to send you to the breast team at Nordale Trust.”

“You think its cancer, don’t you?” Kay leapt in straightaway.

“To be honest it may be, you can’t really tell until the mammography and biopsy are done.”

Kay started to well up with tears. All the joy of her pregnancy was disappearing. Dr. Wiley put an arm

round her shoulder, but he knew he couldn't really comfort her.

"Shall we call your husband to take you home?" asked the nurse.

"No. It's OK. I'll manage," Kay snuffled.

She made it to the car and spent ten minutes in floods of tears, before she could start the engine. She drove back to the house through a mist and collapsed in the chair, where Mark found her half an hour later, after he had rushed home. They sat clasped together for over half an hour not speaking until Kay was finally settled.

"I don't know what it will mean yet, do I? It might be cancer, it might not and even then we don't know what treatment will be needed." She was trying to smile.

"You're right, so let's not cross all the bridges in one go," replied Mark.

He could see that it was going to be a gruelling time waiting for the diagnosis, trying to keep Kay on an even keel, trying to keep himself going for her. Suddenly all their hopes of just a few weeks ago might be about to be dashed. If she had cancer, what would it mean for the baby? Both were thinking these thoughts, but were unable to express them to each other.

The call arrived from the hospital the very next day calling Kay for an appointment to the breast clinic on the Tuesday of the following week. They were been amazed how quick the appointment was. Even though Mark worked for the same Trust, he didn't know too much about that particular area, as his main interests were in finance and contracting.

They arrived hand-in-hand for the appointment to a corridor lined with similar couples of varying ages,

some younger, but most were older. There was a ten-minute wait before they were called into the consultant, a woman in her early forties. They were shown to seats beside a cluttered-looking desk and the surgeon started to speak.

“Hello Mrs. Colbrooke, I am Mrs. Baton. I am a breast surgeon. Tell me what has been happening to you.”

Kay gave a brief account of her experiences to date, outlining the symptoms of her pregnancy and her health in general. In response to questioning she revealed that her mother had had breast cancer when she was younger, but now seemed to be cured.

After hearing the account, asking some questions and making a few notes, Mrs. Baton got up from her chair.

“Would you like to come the couch and I can take a look?”

Kay took her top clothes off and Mrs. Baton looked at her breasts before gently examining each with her hands and fingers.

“I can feel what Dr. Wiley has noticed. It’s not likely to be cancer on a pure odds basis, but we need to look further. Do a mammogram.”

“Will that be safe for the baby?” Kay queried.

“It seems to be OK, but we could do ultrasound first. Either way you may end up with a biopsy. I’ll send you down to Radiology and they will decide.” She was very matter-of-fact, which to Kay seemed a little cold.

The couple were soon ushered out and directed to the Radiology queue.

A new doctor welcomed them into the diagnostic room.

“Hi, I’m Mike Jones, I’m a breast radiologist.” He seemed to be as bouncy as a Tigger. Everyone seemed to want to be upbeat. It was ridiculous to Kay.

“We want to do a mammogram. It will be fine for baby if we put some lead shielding across. It’s pretty low dose.”

Kay acquiesced and was immediately led to the machine to have her breast squashed between the plates.

“That’s it,” said Mike after the technicians had finished. “I’ll call you back in ten minutes.”

The ten minutes went slowly, but then they were ushered back in.

“Well, there is something there and we need to do a biopsy. If that’s OK, I’ll do it now.” Somehow he now seemed less light-hearted.

Kay was guided through to a new room and marked up for the biopsy. She was given some local anaesthetic and then Dr. Jones plunged in his needle to remove a core of her tissue.

“We should know in a couple of days. We would like you to come back on Thursday afternoon. Please bring your husband.” He had a slight plea here.

Once outside in the car park, Kay was able to speak.

“He thinks its cancer, doesn’t he?” she said earnestly.

Mark could not contain himself as his eyes reddened. He drew up all his strength.

“We don’t know that yet,” he said with a forced smile that attempted reassurance.

The few days that they had to wait seemed interminable. Kay sat at home brooding or trying to find activities to take her mind off the subject. On the fourth day a call came through, inviting her back to see Mrs. Baton.

The next day they arrived in the outpatient’s clinic and took their place for the thankfully short wait.

“Well Mrs. Colbrooke, I am sorry to say that all was not well. You have a small tumour. The pathologist feels it might be spreading so we will need to remove part of your breast.”

“Oh,” Kay had still had a glimmer of hope and now it had been dashed. “When will you be able to operate?”

Mrs. Baton smiled, “I have a slot for you on my Tuesday list the week after next.”

“Will I need to stay in, do you think?”

“No, we don’t usually need to keep people more than a few hours. After you have had the operation and depending on what we find, we will need to look for signs of spread. We don’t want to do that first because of your baby, we want to take things carefully.”

Kay was relieved that she didn’t have to wait long, but there were so many questions that had no answer yet. Mrs. Baton was particularly unclear what additional treatment she would need.

“That depends a bit what we find at operation,” she said. “We want you to have a CT scan and positron tomography to help us decide.”

So for the next week Kay embarked on a round of visits to the hospital before her surgery. It left her in a

whirl of emotions as on top of it all she had her developing baby to worry about. This was happening in Mark's own hospital so he could accompany her for most of the sessions and did his best to help her, but even so she felt that she was facing this ordeal alone.

At the next meeting, Mrs. Baton told Kay of the findings. There were signs of spread and they wouldn't be able to give fully aggressive treatment until the baby was born. In any case, it didn't look as though that would make a great deal of difference.

Four days later Kay was being wheeled into the theatre where she met the team just before she went under the knife.

"Hello Kay," smiled Mrs. Baton. "We're all ready for you, we hope it's only going to be a small operation and we'll see you on the other side."

Kay felt the stab of the needle and the sense of the drug slipping into the back of her hand, then no more.

When she came round she was back in the recovery room, lying on a trolley.

"You awake now, dear?" a jolly round nurse enquired. "You look a bit ghastly at the moment but you'll soon be feeling better."

The next thing Kay was aware of was being on a ward bustling with staff, relatives, and fellow patients. She sat up to be sick into a conveniently placed papier maché bowl. She felt her chest, her left breast was covered by a dense dressing, concealing it from view. Was it there still, or had it all been removed? She hadn't been given any guarantees.

Soon her husband arrived together with her surgeon. Mark leant over and kissed her, taking her in his arms for a brief cuddle. Then he made way for Mrs. Baton.

“Kay, we’ve taken the lump and some of your lymph glands and the pathologists will be looking at them over the next week to see what’s been going on and what additional treatment you will need. We know your baby is fine. It’s just more wait and see, I’m afraid.”

Kay smiled weakly in assent and then Mrs. Baton was gone. Mark sat down beside her and they just gazed at each other as she relaxed back on to the pillow.

“As soon as they are happy with you we can go home apparently,” he smiled encouragingly.

A few hours later, Kay was in the car heading for home. (18 Weeks)

The team meeting was not a happy affair as they put up the slides of Kay’s operation, along of course, with a number of others.

“Mrs. Holbrooke has a high-grade tumour, which is invading the surrounding tissues and I am afraid it hasn’t been fully removed. We’ve sent it for tumour markers, but I should think it would be worth another go,” intoned the histologist, a dumpy balding man with sweaty armpits – Dr. Martin Braithwaite.

“I am afraid the PET scans aren’t a lot more hopeful, she seems to have quite a few possible deposits – one for you, Sarah, I would have thought,” Dr. Mike Jones addressed Sarah Hughes, the Oncologist.

“I would like to crack on as soon as possible after we’ve given her some x-rays.” She was a tall youngish woman with spectacles which gave her an earnest look.

“And there, of course, is the problem,” Claire Baton finally made her entry into the discussion. “She’s 19 weeks pregnant.”

“Leaving it until the baby’s born will make the outcome less good. I suppose we could start something gentle, but radiation, anti-oestrogens and anything vigorous is out” added Sarah.

“So there we have it. What would our consensus be? Advise termination – which incidentally, I don’t see her accepting - or cross our fingers, knowing the outcome may be poor?” Claire went on.

“Well, as there is to be no radiation, you should proceed to a more radical approach on the breast, I suppose, but who knows, it doesn’t have a good feel about it,” Sarah summarised.

Kay had a difficult fourteen days to manage until she was due to see her surgeon again. She and Mark came to the clinic with a good deal of trepidation. By this time they had Googled Kay’s disease and realised that the options were not good. Kay had been in tears at the option of losing her baby and would not countenance it, much as Claire Baton had anticipated.

“Mrs. Holbrooke I am afraid that the tumour wasn’t all taken out and because we can’t give you any radiation, I rather feel we should have another go,” she announced, looking Kay clear in the eyes. (21 weeks)

Kay could feel the tears welling up as she sought a reply.

“I suppose you’ll have to,” she croaked out between sobs. Mark had put his arm round to hold her close and Mrs. Baton now sat close by.

“I’m afraid that it’s the best that we can offer, while you still have your baby inside,” she replied softly.

“I’ll have to give it a go then.” Kay was doing her best to pull herself together.

Now Mrs. Baton could turn away now and was a little relieved to return to the factual work of fixing dates and organising her list.

Soon the Colbrookes were dismissed and they staggered out holding hands and made their way to the coffee bar.

“I wasn’t expecting that,” Mark said when they were seated, “I thought all the surgery would be finished.”

Kay just looked fragile, on the point of more tears, nodding in ascent.

Back at home they couldn’t decide what to do, Kay rang her mother and her mother-in-law, both of whom expressed their dismay and sympathy but couldn’t do much else. To take their minds off things, they went out to the cinema. The Picture Palace was not the most comfortable of places, a traditional cinema that hadn’t been updated, even if its prices had been.

They sat on the back row cuddling in the double seat, just as they had done before they were married. Now Mark wasn’t inclined to slip his hand under Kay’s jumper to attempt breast fondling. It would have felt right in other circumstances – but not now. Actually Kay laughed when she realised what he was thinking. She gave him a playful little slap on the face and he felt for her thigh instead. That was well received. Heavy petting was a stage that they were well past, but was fun all the same. Mark was keen to show that he still loved Kay for her body and not just her mind.

Within 2 weeks Kay was back in hospital (23 weeks) and this time she was set to stay a few days so that a more radical operation could be carried out.

This removed all her breast tissue and quite a bit of skin, leaving her flat, with drains sticking out. She could feel movement inside her, though. She knew that her baby was safe and she could feel it for the first time. So as she came round, the sorrow of her loss was tinged with the excitement of her gain.

When Mark arrived with flowers she was able to guide his hand to her tummy and he could feel that tiny fluttering of the moving baby. They were both excited and clasped together in a warm embrace, leaving both breathless and in tears. For a moment they were able to squeeze thoughts of the cancer encroaching on Kay's body from their minds to think about the developing life within her.

Kay had to stay in hospital for a few days while the immediate effects of the operation wore off. Her pain subsided to a dull ache of the stitches pulling against her skin. When Mrs. Baton visited for an inspection of the damage she had caused, she spoke encouragingly of reconstruction after the baby was born. She didn't mention much of what had been discussed in her meeting with her fellow cancer consultants. At the moment, though Kay was very lopsided and she could see where her breast had been, she was fairly resigned to its loss and with it some of her femininity, but she was at least free of disease.

Back at home she set about recuperation. With 16 weeks to go now, she had a definite event to look forward to. If it hadn't been for her cancer, she might have been at work.

Mark, of course, was near at hand when she was in hospital as he only had to walk up from the contracts department to reach the wards. It was actually quite handy when Kay was inside and a little more awkward once she was back at home, but he was pleased to see his wife on the road to recovery.

In the following week he was standing in the canteen queue when he found himself listening in on a conversation between two nurses.

“... such a shame about that girl who’s expecting the baby,” said one rather plump woman.

“Yes,” replied her colleague. “It’s awful isn’t it? Pregnant and losing a breast. Mrs. Baton seems to think it’s a bit touch and go.”

“How do you mean?”

“The cancer may go too far to treat while we’re waiting for the baby to be born.”

“Do you mean she won’t make it?”

“Oh no. Not that, but it will be too late to give treatment that could cure her.”

Mark turned tail and ran from the room. He had to get some fresh air. Outside, he found a bench and collapsed in sobs.

The two women looked round.

“That’s a bit strange. Wonder why he charged off?”

“No idea. Do you know him?”

A person back further chipped in.

“That’s Mark Colbrooke, I think he works in contracts.” It was a tall porter who spoke.

Both nurses went bright red.

“Oh my God. What have we done?” the plump girl said.

Mark now had the true situation embedded in his brain but there was no way he could tell Kay. It would be devastating. He would just have to keep it to himself. He hoped he wouldn't betray his understanding of her real prospects, if that is what had just been revealed. Perhaps they hadn't been talking about Kay. But then there weren't likely to be too many women in the same position. It must be fairly uncommon to have cancer while pregnant – after all, cancer mostly affected older people.

After holding his head in his hands for some twenty minutes, he gradually recovered sufficiently to take control of himself. He needed to return to work. En route he stopped off at the 'gents' and looked at his face. It was red and blotchy. He washed it with cold water and hoped that he would recover fairly promptly.

No one in the office noticed and he took his place. He was distracted and couldn't concentrate on the Orthopaedic costings which he needed to work up for next week's discussion with the General Practitioners' consortium. He decided to call Mrs. Baton.

Her secretary Louise answered.

"Mrs. Baton is in theatre now but I'll get her to ring you back before five if possible. I am not sure how much she can tell you without your wife to be honest."

"I just want to ask," Mark was almost pleading.

It's just as well that Mark was fairly senior and not really supervised because he achieved nothing before his phone rang.

"Hello, its Claire Baton," came the answer when he picked it up.

Mark said what he had heard, without directly implicating the nurses, who if identified, he knew would be disciplined.

“Mrs. Baton, I don’t want to beat round the bush. My wife’s outlook isn’t very good, is it? Because she can’t be treated while she has the baby.”

“Mr. Colbrooke, Mark. Can I call you Mark? It’s not easy to say... Perhaps you can come to my office?” Claire feared this with someone who worked in the hospital it was always that extra bit difficult.

When Mark arrived he was already inwardly shaking, fearing what he might hear from the surgeon. He knocked and entered on hearing the response. The surgeon was standing up, gazing out of the window. No matter how much practise she had, these conversations never seemed to become any easier.

“Take a seat please,” she said as warmly as she could muster.

Mark started in straightaway, he couldn’t really hold himself together and just blurted out.

“How bad is it with Kay, Mrs. Baton?”

“I shouldn’t really talk without your wife here, behind her back so to speak. It’s not really very good practice and it creates a false atmosphere. I suppose I don’t need to tell you that not being able to start therapy is always a bit of a drawback. We don’t know if it really makes a difference. I shall be telling you both that the tumour isn’t all removed, so as soon as we can we would want to start radiotherapy and after that, anti-oestrogen drugs. We can’t do that until the baby’s born. Once it is, then off we go. But it’s still four months away. I don’t think it will make a lot of difference but it might and your wife is a bit more susceptible to other things such as clotting problems and so forth.”

Mark was a bit deflated. He didn't know what he expected to be told, but where should he go from here?

“Will she be alive a year from now, do you think?”

“Oh goodness yes! I can't see things moving that fast and once we start, your wife has a good chance of cure. Certainly much better than evens.”

Mark smiled, a little relieved.

Claire Baton was pleased with having fended him off, but really the outlook when put in the cold light of day was not so promising. She didn't want Mark to think too hard while he was still in her office.

“Look, any queries you have, just drop me an email. Anyway, I will be seeing you both in two weeks,” she smiled and Mark felt he was being dismissed.

He rose and shook her hand before departing. It was only when he started thinking again that he realised how bad the news had really been that had been conveyed to him. A good chance of cure, better than evens. Perhaps 51%. Maybe not lasting a year.

He was surprised by what a false atmosphere had been created, at least in his mind, when he returned home. He felt that he was in possession of privileged information, which he could not now share with Kay. She didn't seem to notice anything, but he sensed his renewed anxiety. He hoped it would dissipate quickly.

There was over a week to wait until the next surgery appointment, during which time Kay was recuperating in the house and making a few trips out. Her wound healed quite quickly and she tried to suppress her worries with thinking about the baby. She was sorry that she couldn't return to work but given the pressure of what she did, looking after a class of

rowdy junior school children, her head teacher insisted that she was off until the cancer was treated. The prospect of the baby only added an additional complication.

When they filed in to meet Mrs. Baton again, she was all smiles, thinking that her main work was already done. Kay revealed her absent breast, or rather its wound. The operation looked good, even if the outcome was heartbreaking for Kay. Contemplating the site under the surgeon's eye caused the welling up of tears. Mark put his arm round her and Mrs. Baton tried to make some cheery remarks.

“Mrs. Colbrooke, Kay, I am through with you now until baby is born. That's not too long away and I think you can rest easy till then. After that, it's on with the chemotherapy and radiotherapy”.

With little further explanation and handshakes, the Colbrookes were sent on their way. Claire Baton sat back in her chair and expelled a sigh of relief. She called for a calming coffee. That had proved less arduous than she had anticipated. She suspected that Mark didn't dare ask questions for fear of upsetting his wife and that she probably didn't want to upset him and was blocking her fears. That made things easier for her – all of them in denial together.

Over the next few weeks there was little time to discuss the breast cancer. All the time, Kay was swelling so the baby could maintain her focus. Her nest was being set up with a newly decorated room for her child. The cot was reserved at the shop and both mothers were busy producing woolly booties and hats. She knew that there would be nothing this child would lack after all these years of waiting. For Mark's parents, it would be the first grandchild. Kay's parents were more relaxed as they had 4 already. That had made it worse for Kay as she had had to put up with questions of her lack of success in comparison with her sister and sister-in-law. Eventually her mother had learned to keep quiet, realising

the pain that she was causing to her daughter, who was desperate to reproduce.

Mark's parents had been rather more considerate as his sister was a lesbian and had a partner and they weren't expecting too much from her. Equally, they didn't want the name of Holbrooke to die out. The urge to ensure the survival of your genes seems to be a powerful one. For this reason Mrs. Holbrooke senior, Anne, had been a frequent visitor.

It was a round trip of only 50 miles for Mark's parents, so they came most weekends bearing knick-knacks or cakes, now along with items for the impending birth. Anne had to make out that she was relaxed, even though she was clearly very excited. The news of the breast cancer had been hard to take but she was keen to support her daughter-in-law, so had taken on a lot of routine tasks, such as ironing, much to Kay's delight. Kay thought of her as a potential resource if "she didn't make it." Mark would have been very concerned if he had been able to read his wife's mind. She did her best to hide her doom-laden thoughts.

Time marched steadily on and it was in her 39th week that Kay started to feel contractions, not frequent and fairly mild. She had been getting smaller too, so it was clear that the baby was lining itself up. Friday night of the following week Kay lay awake, feeling a regular rhythm of tightening in her stomach. She became aware that things might be developing. She drifted off into sleep and was woken by the onset of pain and realised she was sweating. Mark was snoring. She prodded him until he stirred.

"It's started," she yelled animatedly, staggering from the bed.

"What?" he responded.

"You heard! Get your clothes on while I ring the hospital."

Within ten minutes they were both more or less clothed and heading towards the car. It was a grim 4.30 AM. Mark inwardly groaned.

Once in the car they could get underway, albeit that Kay was stiffening up every few minutes. Soon they were pulling into the Labour Ward car park and Mark leapt out to find a wheelchair to help Kay into the hospital. As soon as they rang the bell, they were admitted to the smell of antiseptic and hurried into the ward.

A midwife, whose badge proclaimed that she was Mary Dalby, helped her to a bed where Kay was to be assessed. Then Mark's role was over. Duty fulfilled.

Screens were brought round and Kay was kitted out with a nightgown and then examined.

"5cm and the membranes are bulging," she announced to Kay. You're well under way." With that fluid came rushing out as her waters burst.

Soon Kay was sat up in bed and the midwife was checking the baby's heart rate and Kay's blood pressure. Fortunately this was to be midwife-led so there were no technical items brought in and nature was left to take its course. Over the next 2 hours, Kay's pain rose blunted by Entonox but the baby was surging forward. As the clock moved to eight, Kay found that she was feeling the need to push. The midwife rushed in and revealed the signs of the head emerging. She helped Kay push against her intense pain. Slowly but surely, over twenty minutes, a tiny body emerged. It was the smoothest delivery that Mary had had all night.

She flopped the little body on to Kay's tummy.

"There you are, Kay, it's a lovely little boy. Completely perfect and beautiful," she smiled. Both Kay and Mark were in tears as they looked at the little ball of flesh and slime nestling on the naked Kay. The

baby attached to Kay's left nipple and quietly began to suckle.

Mark left for home to make all the phone calls and to get some sleep. Kay was left tucked up, with the baby in a fish tank cot that they used on the Labour Ward. By the time he had rung two sets of parents, he was exhausted and flopped into bed.

Later in the day, Mark picked up Kay and the baby from the hospital. They started to contemplate names, which they had done many times over the last few weeks. They decided on Peter as his first name, then Stuart after Granddad Holbrooke and Martin after Kay's father. Was that over the top? They weren't really sure, but no one would moan at least. P.S.M. Colbrooke. No immediate difficulties or embarrassment there.

So Kay was established during that first week happily feeding the baby from her one persisting breast, which rapidly swelled to meet Peter's need. Mark rang Mrs. Baton's office to let them know that the delivery had happened. The baby slept for long periods, waking just for feeding, but allowing Kay plenty of time for rest as well. As the time progressed, he seemed to be awake more and Kay could start to get to know him. Mark had some practice sessions with his nappies but he never achieved a very high standard. He didn't really have the incentive, but soon all that was due to change.

As a result of Kay being on sick leave, Mark had the chance to take paternity leave so he had booked two weeks off at the first opportunity. This gave him the chance to do all the domestic tasks of cooking and cleaning, all under Kay's command. It amused her to stand and give him instruction in using the vacuum cleaner and making the meals but after a time, he started to acquit himself quite well. It particularly amused her to see him doing the ironing, which she had always hated, but which he enjoyed out of novelty.

At the end of the second week, Kay received her appointment for the Oncology Clinic where she was to see Dr. Sarah Hughes. She arrived at the clinic with both Mark and Peter and they were all invited to take a seat in the little clinic room.

“Hello Kay, I’m pleased to see you after all this time as I’ve heard so much about your case,” started Dr. Hughes. “We want to start treatment on Monday that will be with intravenous drugs for 3 months. When that’s finished, we will give some radiotherapy to your breast. Does that sound OK?” She raised her eyebrows expecting a response.

“Does it mean that I will have to stop feeding Peter?” Kay enquired.

“I’m afraid so. The drugs wouldn’t do a growing baby much good,” the doctor replied, looking quite concerned as she had never been asked this before.

Kay looked quite deflated, but she had expected as much.

“What do you think my chances are?”

“Well, the tumour was quite aggressive and I am afraid we didn’t quite get it all out, but you should do OK. I can’t be sure really. We’ll have to see how it goes.” She knew she would sound evasive.

Kay sensed what that meant.

“How long have I got, do you think?” She tried to be her most matter-of-fact.

“Kay, it’s not quite like that. We think in terms of remission. I am sure we will stop progression. Then there is a 50:50 chance of return. If that happens we have a plan B and that has a good chance of success. I can only speak of the usual, I’m afraid. 50% would be cured normally. With you, perhaps not quite so good from here on in.”

“Can you give me a time, do you think?”

“No I don’t think that would be fair. We would expect you to be taking Peter to nursery school. Can I put it that way?”

“But not necessarily seeing him graduate,” Kay filled in. Sarah Hughes’ colour answered the question.

On the day the chemotherapy was due to start Mark, was to take command of Peter all by himself. Kay was satisfied that he could cope, make up bottles, and feed Peter. Mark was a little irritated by her patronising attitude but felt it best to keep quiet. He was relieved that his mother hadn’t been given the baby caring role instead. Fortunately she had been allocated to transport for Kay.

Kay left at nine o’clock with Peter fast asleep in his basket. Mark could relax with the paper. Up to now they had been “demand feeding,” so he had been told, so he would have to feed Peter when demanded. All was well until ten when he first heard grumblings and he went to the bedroom to pick his son up. He could see that food would be required so he set him down and went to make up a bottle according to the instructions. A chart had even been left in the kitchen to help him. He returned with a bottle of nicely warmed baby milk to his now-crying son.

He took him in his left arm, as he had been shown. This is so the baby is comforted by the mother’s heart, apparently. Mark introduced the teat and Peter sucked away. After a couple of minutes he pulled his head away and started squawking again. Mark’s heart started to pound. Now what? He pushed the teat back but Peter just wouldn’t take it.

The baby started to root around, turning in to Mark’s chest. He made a wet patch with his saliva and started to cry again. What could he want? Mark tried with the bottle again, but to no avail and it was



clear that Peter wanted his mother. In desperation, Mark pulled up his shirt to let Peter feel his skin and he turned on to his nipple. Mark didn't have much breast, but it seemed enough for Peter and he took in the nipple and started to suck.

Ouch, it hurt as Peter clamped on and sucked but he settled down, much to Mark's relief. Within a couple of minutes he was peaceful again. Once Mark had overcome the pain, he found it quite pleasurable feeling the little tongue teasing his nipple and he smiled with the sensation. Soon Peter released his grip and went suddenly bright red as he emptied his bowel contents. Mark laughed. Now there was a nappy to change. He knew how to do that but this time he had better do it properly. Once all was complete, he held Peter up for a cuddle and the baby was promptly sick over his shoulder.

Mark had to feed Peter twice more during the day and each time the baby wasn't happy until he had finished his feed by suckling on one or other of Mark's nipples. Mark was very amused by it and imagined it was an effect of breast feeding with Kay. It would take a little time for him to get used to a bottle, since obviously Mark's breasts provided no nutrition.

Kay arrived home at three o'clock exhausted from the tests and feeling sick from her first dose of treatment. She was pleased when Peter woke up so that she could forget her treatment and enjoy being a mother again. Mark handed him over and left Kay to take over while he made a cup of tea.

When he returned, Peter was crying.

"He just doesn't want to settle, I'm not sure what's wrong," complained Kay. "What's he been like today?"

"Mostly fine," Mark announced proudly. "He was sick down my back but that's about all. Shall I take him?"

“OK, it might be just because I’m tired.” Kay handed him over.

Immediately Peter turned his mouth to Mark’s shirt.

“He looks like he wants to suck you!” exclaimed Kay.

Mark could feel he was reddening.

“Well, I let him, and it worked. I’ll show you.”

He lifted his shirt and Peter latched on. Kay laughed.

“How sweet!”

“Do you think it matters?” Mark asked cautiously.

“I can’t see why and I can’t do it any more with these poisons on board.”

He could see Kay was highly amused and that alleviated his anxiety. Perhaps this was what to do for a while – work together. Unfortunately, that is not how Peter saw matters and at the end of each bottle feed he was not satisfied until he had had five or ten minutes with Mark.

Over the next few days, life settled into a steady routine with Mark’s mother calling for Kay, a day spent in the hospital and a return in the late afternoon, while Mark coped with the domestic life and the baby. Indeed, he was almost in sole charge of Peter as his wife was so miserable with sickness and feeling tired. As time went on, Mark became more used to the suckling and felt that maybe his breasts were responding as the nipples started to become more sensitive. He thought the veins on the surface had become more marked as well. He showed Kay.

She looked carefully.

“Maybe you’re right,” she agreed. “Let’s just see what happens.” Secretly she was highly amused.

After one bottle-feed the following week his breasts seemed to be alert and ready; there was a little damp patch on his shirt, on both sides, even before he lifted it up. Peter licked enthusiastically and Mark was aware of the breast being suckled squirting into the baby’s mouth. At the same time the opposite breast dripped a white sticky liquid.

By the time of the next feed he could sense his breasts starting to swell slightly; only with Peter feeding did it subside. Once the baby was finished, he ran his finger over the oozing fluid and tasted it. Quite sweet, more than cow’s milk. When he showed Kay, she seemed delighted.

Over the next few days, Peter suckled for longer and it was clear that he was getting more out of Mark, taking a portion from each breast at each feed. Slowly the amount he took from the bottle declined as he received greater quantities from Mark. By the end of another fortnight he wasn’t taking bottle milk at all. At the same time Mark’s breasts had swollen until they stood out from his chest prominently, quite firm and vascular, the areolae grew to an inch across, everything you would expect from a nursing mother. This meant that Mark had become fully in charge of Peter’s feeding and he had to wake in the nights to nurse him and couldn’t delegate to Kay, or anyone else. However, Peter seemed to be thriving on it.

When the midwife made her periodic calls, Mark did not reveal his feeding methods, but made a guess as to how much feed Peter was taking and as the baby was gaining weight, she was happy. Mark was developing problems with the weight of his breasts and although he was able to hide them under his clothes, he felt more support was needed.

Kay came up with her nursing bras; she was disappointed not to have needed them but they did the

job for Mark. They opened neatly for feeding and he was able to pad them to prevent the discharge from marking his clothes. The trouble for him was that his breasts were becoming very substantial and presumably would grow as Peter's needs increased.

"Mark, you're going to need to have a rethink on your wardrobe," said Kay.

Over the weekend Kay had a break from therapy so they were able to go out to the town with Peter in a sling to buy food and also look at some clothes. Kay felt that Mark needed clothes that allowed discretion for his breasts, but access for feeding. There were some loose tops in the shop which fitted the bill admirably but she didn't feel that she could ask Mark to try them on there and then so she had to make a stab at getting the right size. They also realised that they probably wouldn't work too well with his trousers so they bought some leggings and baggy elastic waisted trousers as well.

Back at home, Mark tried them on and found they fitted much more satisfactorily than his male clothing and so made a full wardrobe shift. He didn't look girly, more a little androgynous. Not embarrassing, but a good deal more comfortable. Now when he wanted to feed Peter, he just slipped up his top and opened his bra with the top falling back to conceal what was happening. Kay gave him big kiss.

"Mark that's brilliant," she purred, "you'll make a great replacement for me while I am going through this treatment!"

Mark was by no means as sure but it was difficult to argue with Kay while she had so many trials to face and he was just keen to keep her positive. Kay liked having Mark like this as she was freed from baby care and could slouch around the house, resting. With Mark on paternity leave, he could take the leave she was entitled to, while she took sick leave. She also

wanted to encourage him in this motherly role, so she took it on herself to make him appear correct.

Mark was not a hairy man, no real chest hair, so his breasts looked fine. As he hadn't been to the barbers in ages while looking after her and Peter, his hair was lengthening. When he had his maternity tops on, she brushed it into a neat bobbed style.

"You can't really just have your normal shoes with those leggings," she complained. "You need something more appropriate, maybe some flat ballet shoes or something. What size are you?"

"Eight, I think," he replied.

Next time she was out with her mother-in-law, she brought back some cute black shoes with a bow. Mark looked good in them with his leggings. So it went on, slowly but surely changing Mark's clothes to those of a young mother. Eventually he had enough jeans and leggings to look the part all the time. They were able to go out as a couple of women, which looked fine until, eventually, Peter needed feeding when they were in town.

"We need to head back to the car."

"Don't worry, you will be able to feed in the café if you're discreet," Kay reassured him.

They found a place in Lizzie's, a stylish teashop, and settled down. Mark sat down in a corner and hitched up his top so that Peter could gain access to his food supply. Mark looked hastily around, imagining everyone was gazing at him, but if they were it was only with sidelong glances. The waitress took their order and was a little surprised to see what was happening but cooed over the baby. She did think that the Mother looked a little masculine and needed to improve her makeup.



Then into the restaurant walked Tracy Peters, one of Kay's work colleagues. She settled into her seat with her husband who started to read the menu. Seeing Kay who she hadn't now worked with for some months, due to the illness, she came across to see her.

"My dear Kay, how are you?" she asked.

"Coming along, I'm well into my chemo and feeling a bit rough from that, but keeping my spirits up with Peter to look after." She nodded to the baby.

"What on earth is Mark doing?" She could see Mark but not the baby's head.

"Oh, Peter likes to nestle close when he's upset," Kay explained with a warm glow coming over her. Mark was curling up with embarrassment but smiled at Tracy.

"Hi, Tracy," he said, looking up and glowing a bright red.

"Well, good to see you're coming on," said Tracy, a little embarrassed herself. She headed back for her table and sat down.

"Steve, if I didn't know better, I would say Mark was breast feeding," she exclaimed as quietly as she could.

"Don't be ridiculous, dear," remarked Steve without looking up from the menu, where he was deciding among the merits of the various cakes.

Mark looked at Kay, who had a plaintive smile.

"God, I didn't enjoy that. What do you think she saw?"

"A man with a baby under his shirt," she replied accurately, but feeling for Mark.

By this stage Peter was finished. Mark turned his back on the room to correct his clothing. Not a pleasant experience but what could anyone make of it? It just looked too unbelievable and people do all sorts of things for babies, to keep them happy and quiet.

It was about this time that Kay's hair began to fall out from the chemotherapy and she had to think about going bald, wearing a scarf or getting a wig. She decided to have the wig, then she could wear a scarf if she preferred.

The hospital had a department that dealt just with this eventuality and she came in on one morning following her current dose of therapy. There was a bright young woman surrounded by polystyrene heads, each bearing a different hairpiece.

"Hello, what can I do for you?" she asked Kay, though it was fairly obvious.

"I've come to get something to keep my head warm," Kay said, somewhat sarcastically.

"Funny you should say that because keeping your head cool can help your hair last longer," she replied, ignoring Kay's tone.

"Anyway, I am having breast cancer treatment and I want something to replace my dying locks."

"Well, as you can see, you can have almost any style. What was your original hair like?"

"Mousy, I suppose. Can I have something with more class?" Kay was starting to be a bit more enthusiastic.

"You can have two, provided your consultant has provided a prescription. Then anything else you have to pay for, they start around £30."

Kay produced the relevant piece of paperwork which had been sitting in her bag for a couple of weeks.

“Yes, that’s what I need.” The woman took the document and started to fill in Kay’s details on a computer screen. “Please take a look.”

Kay tried every option from the ridiculous to the seriously vampish and settled on a long blond wig – she had always wanted to be a dizzy blond. She also picked out a brunette pageboy and a third, which more or less equated to her original appearance.

“Can I have these?” she asked.

“Yes, but you will need to pay an additional £50 I am afraid, if you want all three.”

Kay produced her credit card and the transaction was completed.

Once home Kay did a parade in each wig and they decided that the page boy cut looked best. It made Kay look younger and not so different from her normal self, albeit she was changed in colour.

“What would you look like in a wig?” she asked Mark. She plonked the blond one on his head. It didn’t really fit as he had quite a bit of hair but after some adjustment she stood back to admire her efforts. It was quite transformational on top of his maternity clothing. He now looked like a young mum, albeit one with a square jaw. She went and fetched a mirror to show him from the bedroom.

“I could almost fall for me,” he laughed.

“What about using it then when we go out?” she asked. “You’ll look a lot more feminine. It will go well with your tops and leggings.”

“I suppose I could,” he conceded.

So now Mark had the right hair, tops, and trousers for a nursing mother, all to match his breasts and baby. He wasn't sure about it all but Kay had him over an emotional barrel. He more or less did whatever she wanted and Peter was having the same effect. He was fully bonded with his baby. So even while Mark's hair was growing, he had a wig which had produced an instant full head of hair.

When Mark's mother came the next day, she too was pleased, feeling that it would be easier when they went out.

"Perhaps you should dress more like a man, dear?" she suggested to her daughter-in-law. "Then you will look like a couple. Or at least husband and wife, instead of two wives."

Kay took all this in, feeling that it had real promise. She had never felt like a boy but she loved the idea of dressing up to fool the world, just as she was working on Mark. She took herself in hand, becoming more androgynous. She could put it down to the anti-oestrogens if asked. Having acquired the wigs, perhaps she would go bald and hide as a man.

What she hadn't bought for Mark were any skirts. She felt that he would need a few to balance all the trousers and tops in his collection, now quite large. When she was on her way back from the hospital, she took in the charity shop to see what they had. She wasn't up to lashing out too much expense on what was, after all, only a temporary expedient for a few more months until Peter was weaned.

In the Oxfam shop she settled on a denim skirt, which she calculated would come just below the knee and another smart maroon one of a similar length. She couldn't resist a miniskirt and shorts as well. OK, they would be a bit of a laugh and he wouldn't need to wear them beyond the home.

For his part Mark spent most of his time at home looking after Peter's needs; he was a rapidly growing child of nearly three months. Mark did the housework while Kay was out at the hospital and between her courses of therapy when she actually seemed to feel fine, albeit bald and having lost quite a bit of weight. He was essentially a househusband and nurse. Kay meanwhile, when she felt OK, busied herself in dressing up and dressing him up.

Mark spent most of his time dressed as a mum, for ease for feeding and for nipping to the shops. He occasionally needed to go to the shops and his parents and in-laws visited frequently, but he never went out much to socialise.

In the bedroom too, life was bit low key. Mark tended to wear a nursing bra to bed to support his breasts and have them ready for feeding. Kay wasn't particularly in the mood for sex as she was quite affected by her hormone therapy. This was also true for Mark; he had quite a low sex-drive now, which after Googling he discovered could be an effect of the milk production.

With his bra he tended to wear a nightdress in bed, which had a convenient opening. He had given up his own pyjamas as they weren't really suitable. Kay now wore them instead as part of her act.

One night a new approach came.

"We haven't had sex much," she announced. Mark nodded his agreement, as it was stating the obvious.

"I know it's been difficult for you and with your breasts and everything, I don't quite see you in the same way," she went on.

"That's hardly my fault. I am doing my best for Peter and you." Mark was a little peeved.

"Well, would you give up the feeding?"

Mark knew the answer. He couldn't, he enjoyed it and it made him feel wanted and close to his son. He just couldn't.

"No, I don't think so," he admitted.

"Well, as you're the mother, how about having sex as man and wife, only you be the wife?" She smiled triumphantly.

"What's that supposed to mean?" He was suspicious now.

"Well I penetrate you, instead of you coming into me."

"And how are you going to do that, may I ask?" His voice had a note of arrogance.

"Feel my groin."

He ran his hand up between her legs. Sure enough there was a protuberance that seemed for all the world like a penis. He pulled up the sheets to look and laughed.

"You've got a strap-on!"

"Yes and you are going to take it, as much like a woman as I can manage." She laughed with a degree of glee.

"OK, what do you want me to do?"

"You can give it a little lick for a start."

He put his head down and gave the dildo a cautious lick. Kay indicated that he was to go further. He slid his head up and down in mock fellatio.

"Now for the real thing. I've got some jelly, so we can lube you up. Turn on your tummy." He did and

she pressed some jelly into his anus as he tried to relax. She then put some on the dildo, a little uncertain how it was going to work.

“I think you’ll need to put a cushion under your stomach to offer up your buttocks nicely.”

They organised Mark’s position and he developed quite an erection. Once everything was in place, Kay sat between his legs and pressed the dildo to his little hole. It took quite a lot of manoeuvring but eventually she managed to penetrate. Mark felt the invasion commence as he tried to relax. Kay was very cautious as she recalled their past efforts at anal sex, which hadn’t all been terribly successful. When she felt Mark was fully used, she squeezed the bulb attached to the dildo and released some mock semen into his rectum. He laughed as she pulled out. He remembered his first attempts at entering Kay in this way; he had been so excited that he had come well before he had done anything more than touch her anus with the tip of his penis.

“That was fun. Good grief, I’m a queer.”

His cock was dripping; now Kay slipped off the dildo and was relaxed enough to take him inside. He came but she felt very little and was somewhat dismayed. Maybe when her therapy finished, her orgasms would return.

“Next time I fancy you, I want you to look the part as well,” she said in a determined voice.

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

It turned out that Kay wanted to subject him to some stereotypical roles. This meant shaving his legs and kitting him out with a black basque and stockings. Much like their wedding but with the roles reversed. The corseting pushed his substantial breasts up even more than normal and Mark viewed himself

as a stuffed turkey. When he said as much, Kay laughed.

“Now you know what women go through.”

She took him with her dildo as he lay with buttocks exposed and presented in a manner emphasised by the stricture on his waist. After she had finished, she collapsed into his arms, suppressing a little sob for her lost looks. Mark comforted her really indifferent to her body changes as he could look through to the girl he loved underneath.

As Kay practised with the dildo on Mark, she gained in proficiency and he gained in receptivity. He was able to take her quite easily and the butting against his prostate sent waves of pleasure through him until by the fifth attempt he came with a little gasp.

“Have you come?” asked Kay rather surprised at her ability.

“Err, yes,” Mark shyly admitted. They cuddled, laughing at their mutual success. The only way Mark could adequately repay was by improving his skill with his tongue and that provided some recompense to Kay, particularly as he had been completely hopeless in satisfying her needs in this way before.

Soon Kay had created a whore in the bedroom to go with the “mother” that Mark was elsewhere in his life. She had Mark properly washed and bathed, depilated and properly dressed from inside to out. This meant giving up his Y-fronts for some knickers, not too erotic, just standard cotton with specials when called for. Every day he was in tights or socks to match his other clothes; skirts, leggings and top and now also a few dresses. He hadn't worn a full set of male clothes since he started feeding. Soon he had his eyebrows plucked and even wore the odd trace of lipstick. Most mothers with babies would be struggling to achieve much more.

The part that Mark enjoyed most was the sensation of the tights on his legs; he loved the feel of the material in close contact with his skin. It felt better than trousers and the nylon created a pleasant stroking sensation. When he mentioned this to Kay, she couldn't really understand the appeal as she had never really enjoyed the hassle and the care needed to prevent laddering.

Their bedroom technique improved substantially with time. Kay insisted that Mark lay back over a firm cushion with his thighs lifted so that his anus was brought level. She could then use her dildo to penetrate him in a missionary position, which gave her a lot of psychological satisfaction and amusement. Mark enjoyed having her pressed to his front rather than behind.

During this time a new couple came to live next door. They were named Jo (short for Joanne) and Tony. She was a solicitor, working mainly in family law, so she later revealed, and he was a plumber, very much in demand at that time. They were slightly younger than Kay and Mark and were a welcome addition to the area. Jo spent a fair amount of time working from home as it was convenient for some aspects of case preparation. It was not surprising that eventually she would drop round on her neighbours.

When Mark opened the door to Jo he had just been doing some housework. As it was mid-morning, Kay was at the hospital again.

“Hi, I'm Jo, your new neighbour,” she announced brightly. “I've come to introduce myself to my nearest fellow residents,” she followed on in a mock-formal way.

“Hi, I'm Mark,” he replied with a welcoming smile and stood back to allow Jo to come in.

Jo gave him a quizzical look, but as she was fairly broad-minded she made nothing of his attire.

“Are you alone today?”

“Kay’s out and the baby, Peter, is asleep in his pram.”

“Yes, I’ve heard him crying a bit.”

“Not too disturbing, I hope?” he asked more as a formality.

“No, no. I am used to babies crying, I come from quite a big family.”

“Have you got any children?”

“None yet, but we are thinking of trying, now that we are getting more settled and Tony’s business is taking off.”

They settled down in the living room to a chat to fill in all their relevant background details. Mark learned all about Tony and Jo meeting over Jo’s blocked drain and eventually courting and marrying. He told her all about his life with Kay and her breast cancer and the new baby who was now 3 months. He was then able to regale Jo with all that Peter could do and how proud he was. As though he knew he was being talked about, there was crying emanating from the next room.

“Oh, it looks as though he’s waking up. I’ll go and see to him. Are you OK sitting there? When I come back, I’ll knock up a coffee.”

Jo sat for about five minutes and then got up to look around. She checked all the photos and toys and then wandered out into the hall. She could see Mark sitting in the next room. She wandered quietly in to see what he was up to. He had his back to her but she could see that a baby was lying across his arm, apparently suckling. She stood and watched in in fascinated silence.

Mark turned round as Peter turned his head away from the breast.

“How long have you been standing there?” Mark asked, reddening.

“Only a minute,” she replied with a degree of confusion.

“I’ve just been cuddling Peter.”

“And feeding him.”

“Yes. I breast feed him, because Kay can’t.” He had decided to be bold.

“I’ve never seen a man do it before. It looked...delightful.” She was genuinely impressed by what she had seen.

“It is a pleasure. Though it does seem, well at least, highly eccentric,” Mark explained.

“How on earth did you find that you could? I didn’t know that men could.”

“I didn’t either until it happened.”

Mark then went on to explain all that had taken place in the last three months to Peter, himself, and Kay. Jo was now able to understand his rather feminine appearance.

“That’s terrible for poor Kay but your bit is really strange. It’s like nature intended you to fill in for your wife, you were sort of destined for it.” Jo came across as very sympathetic.

“What’s remarkable is that you do look quite like a young mum in a certain light. You dress right and behave right. Do you think it’s all because of the need, or perhaps the hormones or something?”

“Perhaps it’s the reason men have nipples, so they can take over if needed too.” He laughed.

“I’m not sure if Tony would think it OK. He’s a bit, what shall I say, traditional.”

“How do you mean?”

“He doesn’t do much about the home and he likes beer and football.”

“But I bet he’s better in a crisis than I am,” defended Mark.

“Oh yes, no domestic appliance issues or DIY,” she conceded.

“I can barely put up a shelf.”

“He’s good in bed too,” she added thoughtfully.

“I’m a bit rubbish at the moment.”

All the while he was talking, they were keeping Peter amused with an array of toys on the rug. Mark was sitting back on his knees and Peter was lying, clapping his hands. He smiled up at Mark and Jo was very impressed by their rapport. She couldn’t imagine her father in this role. What would Tony be like?

After this, Jo came round quite often to see them. Sometimes Tony would drop by as well for a cup of coffee. He was a stocky man, good-looking in a rough way, but now running a little towards fat. He had a chin covered with stubble and sported a rugby shirt over jeans usually. When he saw Mark playing with Peter, he was a little contemptuous. He felt this was really a mother’s role. Mark didn’t reveal how far his mothering went.

“I would be at work if it wasn’t for Kay’s illness to be honest, Tony,” Mark conceded. “Just at the moment she can’t cope and I have to do this of neces-

sity.” Mark didn’t entirely believe what he was saying, but it was to gain a little of his lost masculinity.

Mark didn’t have much connection now with the world in general now and war could have broken out without him noticing whereas in the past he knew all about the latest political machinations and financial developments. When Tony asked about his football team he was completely clueless, though in the past he would have known the full Arsenal line-up at the very least.

“So will you be taking him to football or rugby, do you think? You know, when he gets older.”

“I don’t know really. My father never took me to any sport, but I was a great fan of cricket when I was at University. Though perhaps that was more about drinking beer all day in the sun.”

“Course, pubs weren’t open all the time then.”

“Yeah it’s not the same when everything is so easy. I always remember my first pint. Fifteen and passing myself off as eighteen. Once it was legal, it didn’t seem the same.”

“No thrill,” Tony laughed.

“Not just the booze and the walk home, pissing in the hedgerow.”

“So, why do you dress so girly then, Mark?”

“Well,” Mark made a bit of a pause, “because I am a bit.”

“How do you mean?”

“Because I am feeding Peter.” There he had let it out.

“You mean as in...breast?” Tony was incredulous.

“Well, yes. As in breast.”

“That’s disgusting.” Tony felt physically sickened at the thought.

“It may be, but it just happened.”

Tony asked no more for now, his inquisitiveness being temporarily overcome by an unexpected run of answers. It was all a tiny bit too much to comprehend how any “man” could do that sort of thing.

The next week, it was time for Peter’s first vaccinations and Mark needed to take him to the clinic. He regularly went shopping with Peter in his buggy or pram but now he needed to take him to the baby clinic. He dressed in his normal outfit with short brown wig today. There wasn’t too much space and he sat at the back of the clinic with Peter bouncing on his knee. He had quite a long time to wait before it was Peter’s turn and chatted away to the other mums, who took him for one of their number.

“Peter Colbrooke,” was called out over the intercom and Mark stood up with his baby and took him to the vaccination room. Unusually, the GP, Dr. Wiley, was carrying out the work. He explained that his Health Visitor had gone off sick.

“Sorry, Mrs. Colbrooke, I am not quite as proficient,” he apologised. “You’re not Kay!” he added. He knew her well from her regular attendances.

“No I’m Mark, Mr. Colbrooke.”

“Are you? You look a bit different.”

“I suppose I am, I’m dressed more like a mother.”

“Whatever, but you weren’t last time,” the doctor queried.

“No, but I wasn’t caring for a baby then.”

“You are now?”

“Yes.”

“That’s not really an answer, is it?” Dr. Wiley’s eyebrows were raised interrogatively.

“No, it’s because I have rather noticeable breasts.”

“Is that new?”

“Yes. Since Peter was born actually. I’ve been feeding him.” There, that wasn’t too bad.

“Good heavens! I had always supposed one could but I’ve not heard of it happening.” Dr. Wiley then added slyly, “Mind if I take a peek?”

“I suppose so.”

Mark went to the examination couch and pulled up his top while Peter sat happily in his pushchair. He was wearing a plum red nursing bra. Dr. Wiley came over and Mark released the front to reveal a breast, swollen with milk. After washing his hands, the doctor lightly palpated.

“That is remarkable,” he said delightedly.

“Is it OK, do you think?” Mark enquired.

“Oh, I should think so, if you don’t mind. There is just one issue, the prolactin.”

“How do you mean?”

“The fact that you can produce enough prolactin to make the milk. It’s the lactation hormone. It can be produced if you have a brain tumour. It’s made in a part of the brain called the hypothalamus and if en-

larges, it can affect your eyesight. In a woman who had a baby this would not be an issue, but it might be what has happened to you.”

“Should I be checked, do you think?”

“I can do a quick eye test on your fields of vision, if that’s OK. I shouldn’t worry but your Optician can always do a more formal check.”

“Do I just make a normal appointment for an eye test?” Mark queried.

“I’ll give you a referral letter to take with you. Now how about young Peter?”

Mark brought him over and they exposed his rump, ready for the vaccine. The crying wasn’t too bad, but he wasn’t very pleased.

On his way home, Mark dropped off the letter at the Optician’s and made an appointment for the following Saturday when Kay would be able to look after Peter for a few hours.

The Optician’s was an open front into the shopping centre and was a busy place with lots of assistants sorting out the many customers who were at various stages of spectacle selection. Mark gave his name and he was quickly taken upstairs to the test centre. He went to the optician first.

“Hello, Mrs. Holbrooke, I’m delighted to see you,” the Optician announced warmly. “We’ll do an ordinary assessment, check your discs and eyes, then you can have a field check? Sound alright?”

“I’m usually called Mr. Holbrooke actually,” Mark pointed out.

“Oh I’m sorry,” the Optician, a small balding man, replied, “I can see you’re more or less a chap from your records but Dr. Wiley says in his letter that you’re

transitioning. I believe that's the correct expression - to a woman."

Mark went red. He could see that was sort of true but he hadn't meant the GP to say so because he did visualise becoming Mark again as soon as the feeding finished. On the other hand, he was passing himself off as nursing mother, so he supposed that was a reasonable conclusion.

"I hadn't thought of it that way really, but OK then. Anyway, on with the tests I suppose."

The optician pressed on and completed his assessment.

"Your discs are fine, but actually you are short-sighted. I have made you a prescription for some glasses, I think you will find you can read better."

"Oh, I've not had glasses before but things aren't as clear as I remember."

"Take this through to Cheryl and she'll do the rest of your tests."

Giving his thanks, Mark took the card and went to locate Cheryl.

She was a young lady with a short skirt who herself wore larger glasses, in common with nearly of the people working in the shop. Apparently the staff wore glasses even when their eyesight was perfect.

Mark had to watch some lights appearing as dots in a sky, first with one eye and then with the other, whilst pressing a button each time he saw the light come on.

"The fields look fine but I will pass it on to Mr. Samuels to check and if anything is wrong, we will call you back."

The next stage was choosing glasses. First Mark was measured up, then taken to see the various designs. He was taken to see those for women.

“We have an offer on at the moment – buy one get one free. You can have two standard or get one tinted,” the new assistant explained.

Mark was helped to select two relatively trendy designs and then had to choose the type of lenses. Plastic or glass, tinted, coated, etc. Finally, he had to pay.

“That will be £185. You can leave a 10% deposit and pay the rest when you collect.”

Mark agreed, then headed off back home.

The following week he took possession of two pairs of spectacles, which was quite an experience for him as he had never worn them before. As a result of their design, it gave him an enhanced female appearance so his image was more or less complete as a young and studious mum. Kay definitely thought they improved him such that she suggested that it was time to give him a new name. After much trial and error they arrived at Marion. Kay was all for announcing it on Facebook but Mark drew the line at that. He felt daft enough at times but he appreciated that he was quite privileged to have this role with his son and family, particularly supporting Kay through her treatment.

The next step for Peter was the introduction of solids. Mark spent a few days swatting this up and decided he would start with dried bread and spread on from there, introducing a new item once a week. When given his first stick, Peter was very excited and sat waving it around for some time before it followed the route of all things – into his mouth. It was a great success and Mark felt very pleased with his mothering work.

Kay for her part was rather jealous of her husband's success at motherhood and was saddened by her reduced role. When feeding and changing wasn't needed and she wasn't immune suppressed, she made as much effort as she could to play with Peter but she also found herself becoming more "husbandly," which was rather bizarre.

This particularly involved their sex life when she was well enough, that is not feeling nauseated. She became more demanding of Mark in terms of penetrational sex, her upon him and "forcing" him into prolonged cunnilingus, which was the best he could offer in return. The more highly dressed Mark was, the better. She liked to have a meal out first and then come home for a pleasant finish.

This meant Mark improving his wardrobe from his largely casual attire to dresses, stockings, and high heels. She sent him to buy his own things if possible now as she thought it might embarrass him. Actually once he had his glasses, Mark hid behind them and was more confident in making quite exuberant choices of clothing, with long and short revealing dresses. Kay also coached him in wearing lipstick and mascara. At the same time, she dressed in an ever more masculine fashion, which helped her not worry about her own female body image to some extent. It was all really a game of dressing-up but with a more sexual motive.

Mark and Kay were feeling a bit isolated with the baby. When Kay was better from her chemotherapy, which took a few days after each cycle, she needed to get out and about. Mark for his part felt a lack of friends and Kay felt Peter needed to see other babies. So they decided to start attending one of the mother and baby groups. How to go about it? Mark was distinctly motherly, but Kay was the actual mother. They decided after much discussion to tone down Mark's attire and he could go as Mark and she as Kay. As they got better acquainted, they might reveal more.

The first session was in a room off the church hall (St. Michael's). When they arrived, there was an organiser that they introduced themselves to and they then joined the rest of the mothers with their children of all ages. The co-ordinator, Julie, introduced the group, then Kay introduced Mark and Peter along with herself. She explained that Mark was doing a lot of childcare as she was being treated for cancer, which immediately brought out the sympathies of all those present.

Soon they felt quite at home, the mothers chatting and the children fending for themselves. Peter was parked on the floor by Mark's legs and sat, as he now could, staring out at all around him. He was supplied with some toys and settled to play.

Soon a toddler came up and grabbed Peter's car from his hands, which started a bit of a row, but that soon settled down again. After that, a slightly older baby came into his view and he sat and smiled at her. Her mother moved her closer and that was an immediate hit.

When the hour and a half was up all three felt positive from the experience, though Peter couldn't give very direct feedback.

The next meeting was in the home of one of the other women and Peter and Mark went without Kay, as she was off to a clinic appointment. All went well until half-way through when Peter started to cry. Nothing would appease him and Mark knew what the answer was – food – more particularly, milk.

“He needs a feed,” the woman next to him stated the obvious.

“Yes,” Mark nodded.

“Have you brought a bottle?” she enquired.

“Err, no, he's breast fed.”

“Has Kay left you any?”

“Yes, I’ll just nip out and find it.”

He scooped Peter up and headed for the door. He carefully sneaked up the stairs and slipped into an empty bedroom. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he soon released his supply to Peter’s eager lips. They settled calmly.

After a couple of minutes, Mark became aware that he had an audience. He glanced round and saw two of the women, Jackie and Sue, looking at him. Their jaws were hanging down.

“Yes, I do the feeding,” he said quietly.

“Good grief!” Jackie cried out.

“Girls, you must see this!” Sue called out. Very soon there was an audience standing round a very red Mark.

“How can you do it?” Sarah enquired.

“I have since Kay can’t.” The explanation allowed him to relax. “I have breasts which produce milk and have been feeding him since Kay started her chemotherapy.”

They were all astounded and he found himself obliged to reveal his breasts in their nursing bra for their examination and gratification. Sally pulled out her mobile phone.

“Please no,” he said before she could catch him. The rest of the group frowned at Sally.

“You wouldn’t want your tits on Facebook would you, Sal?” Jackie chided.



“They already have been, thanks to that bastard Steve,” she riposted.

“Two wrongs don’t make a right,” Sue chipped in.

“So under all this, you’re really dressed as a woman,” she added to Mark.

“To be honest, I spend most of time in women’s clothing these days so I don’t stick out too much.”

“You mean because you do stick out too much,” Sue pointed out to much glee.

“Well, don’t mind us. Now you’re out, you’re out. Come as a girly next time if it would help,” Jackie put in.

After a straw poll of acceptability, it was agreed that Mark could come however he chose; it seemed that dressed like a woman might help with feeding and everything else. Thus started a new stage of companionship both for Mark and Peter, which would prove of great benefit as time went by.

Each week he turned up more or less as he felt – generally in jeans and jumper, but often in a short skirt with tights. By the time he had left each week he had been given a short course in some aspect of being a young mother; a lot of this was about clothes, hair advice and makeup. He wasn’t sure what they made of him really; they could have been laughing behind his back, but it all seemed very genuine.

Kay came too when she wasn’t at the hospital or getting over a dose of chemotherapy. She too found the group supportive and many could empathise with her condition.

When Peter was six months old and after many cycles of chemotherapy, it was time for Kay’s radiotherapy. This meant being measured up for the dosage, having the radiation calculated, then attending for

the periods of exposure to the source. It all ran very smoothly at the specialist hospital with help in transport from her mother and mother-in-law. Once it was all finished, it was just time to wait and see what the results had been.

The whole family came to the appointment hoping to hear that Kay was in the clear, but when they came to face the surgeon Mrs. Baton and the Oncologist Sarah Hughes, their faces gave away that not all was well. Sarah began.

“I’m sorry, Kay, we’ve looked at your films together and I am afraid the cancer is still there. It hasn’t behaved as we expected. We are going to have to offer you some more therapy, perhaps with a monoclonal antibody.”

Kay was flattened by this. Mark put his arm round her and held her tight as he felt her gently sobbing. She had been so confident of pulling through and now that seemed to be much more difficult. She was brought a cup of tea which helped. When she had calmed, she heard about what they hoped to do and what it would mean, starting in a week.

The journey home was a miserable one, only made bearable by Peter who carried on in his own happy world burbling away to whoever would listen. He had a biscuit to wave around and gradually turn to sludge between his fingers. While Mark drove, Kay was able to play with her son, strapped in his seat in the back of the car.

While Peter was progressing forward with his life, now eight months old, Kay felt that she was slipping backwards. She spent much time with him as though this week might be her last. Mark continually reassured, telling her about the good prospects from the Antibody/Chemotherapy regime, which he had researched on the internet. She calmed during the course of the week and by the Monday following, she

was ready to face up to the new challenge that was to be thrust upon her.

Mark, meanwhile, was playing the strong husband for Kay, supporting her emotionally and at the same time playing a mother for Peter. Even he appreciated the curious mix of roles. His breasts were starting to decline a little now as Peter's dependence on milk was a lot less, but the intention was not to fully stop feeding him until twelve months, or until the breast was rejected, whichever came first.

Peter was able to crawl about now and was getting into all sorts of scrapes, but playing with him gave Kay a break from her dismal thought processes. She was very pleased to witness him standing for the first time and trying to take a tentative first step, all the while feeling sick and drained from her therapy.

With the new course of therapy, a returned burden of visits ensued, with Mrs. Holbrooke senior again supervising the transport. She was aware of her son looking pretty much like a woman and caring for the beloved grandson as a mother. While she had been amused at first, she was less enthusiastic now. She didn't feel that she could interfere with the family while Kay was so ill and Peter clearly thriving.

Mark at the same time could feel his time as a nursing mother nearing an end as his son was increasingly less dependent from a nutritional point of view. He was not really sure how he felt about this. OK, he wasn't much of a husband but he had taken to mothering very well. He had really enjoyed having a little life growing before his eyes and their close relationship. He felt very privileged and he wasn't too sure how that would continue if he reverted to being a proper man.

It was all about Kay, really. He desperately hoped she would pull through but he knew in his heart that he would want to be a full-time mother if she didn't. With that in mind, he went to see Dr. Wiley.

Mark told the doctor how he felt and awaited a response.

“Mark, I see where you are coming from. Tell you what I will do. I will prescribe you hormones now and if Kay makes it, then the deal is off. It will phase you into a new role and you won’t return to being a man until you are ready.”

“I guess that could be the answer.” Mark seemed pleased with the bargain that he had made, but it could be with the devil. Who was he doing this for? Peter, Kay or himself?

One morning Jo knocked at the door and came in, without having been invited.

“Hi Mark. Hi Pete.” It was Peter who acknowledged her first, rushing up, - or perhaps staggering up would be a more accurate description - to grab her legs, while smiling and laughing.

“Hi Jo,” Mark called from the front room where he was tidying.

“I’ve got some news. I’m going to have a baby,” Jo announced triumphantly.

Mark came through and gave her a warm hug.

“Oh Jo, that’s fantastic!” he responded.

Jo was all beams and rosy cheeks.

“Is Tony pleased?” he went on.

“Yes, I think so. What man isn’t pleased to be able to prove their manhood? Well, obviously not *all* men have to be manly,” she added, looking at Mark.

He laughed.

“I was pleased to have Kay pregnant, the best nine months of our lives.”

Soon he was thinking how it proceeded since then and his mood subsided but he didn't want to dampen Jo's enthusiasm.

“How far on are you?”

“Three months, I reckon by checking my dates and so forth.”

“What does that mean? Due after Christmas? New Year's baby. Oh, I'm so pleased for you, for you both.”

After a cup of coffee and further chat, Jo rushed off so that she could get back to work.

When Kay returned with his mother, she looked very drawn and it was clear that this course of therapy was taking quite a toll. That night she woke up, shaking with a high fever and Mark had to call the hospital. An ambulance was sent to pick her up and Mark called Jo to see if she would stay with Peter, while he went to the hospital.

When he arrived she was propped up in bed in the Oncology ward, having been filled with antibiotics and sporting an oxygen mask. The doctors thought that she had an infection from having a low blood count. She had quickly recovered and by the time that Mark had arrived, she was over the worst.

Mark had then to make the journey home. He found Jo asleep on the sofa in the front room, looking very peaceful. He woke her and after a brief explanation and a supportive cuddle, she headed for home.

This episode was repeated twice more as Kay moved to the twelve month mark, now on her third course of drugs and visibly in decline. In their hearts

they didn't have much belief but they pretended that there was still a prospect of recovery. Then there was a final episode of the shakes. Although Kay was admitted, her body gave up in the ward as this time the antibiotics had no effect.

Mark arrived on the ward to be shown her body. The nurses and young doctors were very sympathetic but Mark collapsed into the chair beside her corpse and wept. The love of his life was now gone. She had tried hard for him and for Peter, but all to no avail.

He called Kay's mother on his mobile and took in her long wail and tears. He gave his best explanation and eventually she let him go so that he could ring his own mother, who was better prepared. In-between her own sobs she tried to provide some comfort for him.

The preparations for the funeral progressed in a whirl, largely performed by the undertakers and just leaving him to pay and look after Peter.

The day arrived cold and miserable. Mark woke early and organised Peter. After much agonising, he decided that it would be best to take him to the funeral as it would make other arrangements easier – he wouldn't have to do lots of fetching and carrying. His parents were staying at a hotel nearby along with Kay's family and they would be arriving at 10 so that they could all go together in the undertaker's cars.

Once he was through breakfast Mark washed himself and Peter, then set to deciding on his clothes. He had a loose black jacket which covered his shape well and had his hair tied back and smoothed well down. Today was definitely one for no makeup. Of all days, today he must look like a husband, not a wife.

The families were soon pouring in the through the door, expressing condolence, fixing tea and making themselves at home. Talking about anything other than Kay. When the cars arrived, they all packed in.

Kay's family was in one, a group of Mark's in a second, along with him and Peter. A third was a mixed grouping and the one with Kay led the way.

In the chapel there was a mass of Kay's colleagues, their friends and many others from round about. Mark couldn't really take it all in.

Her favourite tunes were played. Mark gave a solid eulogy expressing his delight in his wife, the hope that Peter had given them and the wish that we would all remember the good things about Kay. He just managed to complete the piece before breaking down. Everyone else was in a similar state of misery.

The food afterwards was a relief for everyone as they could chat and reminisce and take their minds to some degree from the tragedy which they had seen unfold.

Finally, only Mark and Peter were left at home with the gap that Kay had filled in their lives.

Two months later, it was about 10 pm when he heard a knock at the door and roused himself from dozing on the sofa to answer the door. He found a haggard looking Tony.

"Can I come in, mate? I've had to leave - Jo's chucked me out. Or at least I've left her."

"I guess so," Mark was a little doubtful but acquiesced.

Tony was soon settling on the sofa, nursing a whisky while Mark was sat opposite, with a cocoa.

"Tell me about it," Mark quietly demanded.

“Well, it’s all been going wrong. We’ve been falling out and rowing, mostly about money. I’ve not been getting contracts since I made a bit of all balls up a few weeks ago and she’s wanting to stop work soon; because of the baby, she’s got blood pressure or something. We won’t have enough money. Well it all went a bit wrong and, well, I hit her, just a bit of a slap. I realised what I had done. But tonight she wanted me out. She had an injunction and, well, I’ve had to leave. So here I am.”

“I suppose it’s OK,” said Mark in response.

“I only need tonight, then I’ll be gone,” Tony promised.

They sat and chatted for an hour, then Mark went to check on Peter and gave him a feed to settle him for the night. Tony came up behind and watched him feed Peter before putting him back in the cot.

“Mark, you don’t know how sexy that looks, a woman feeding a child.”

“But Tony, you know I’m not.”

“Do I? Do *you*, Mark?” Tony questioned.

Mark flushed; they both knew that Mark was really seeing himself as a woman, maybe Tony was too. He came up to Mark and kissed him on the cheek.

When they went back to the sitting room, Tony came and sat next to Mark and put his arm round his shoulder. Mark cringed but he couldn’t immediately move, as he was trapped by Tony’s weight. Eventually he shifted enough to make his escape.

“How about I make some more cocoa or something?” Mark enquired.

He made it to the kitchen and took his time over preparing the drink. He returned with the two cups to find Tony seated with a second glass of whisky.

“I hope you don’t mind. I thought it would help settle my nerves.” He looked slightly guilty.

They sat and chatted for an hour during which time Tony had three more doubles. He told Mark of his marital troubles, how despite the impending birth, he had gradually cooled to Jo. He felt she was continually criticising him and he felt her inferior. He was a plumber whereas she was a solicitor. It was quite a tale of woe and Tony was clearly feeling very sorry for himself. Tony was getting drunk, telling the same story of being misunderstood several times over.

Eventually, Mark proposed going to bed. He showed Tony the guest room and provided some py-jamas and toothbrush, then left him to it.

Mark had been sleeping soundly for an hour when he was disturbed. He turned over in bed and clunked into another body.

“What are you doing here?” he asked angrily.

“I needed to be with someone, I couldn’t sleep. Thinking of you.”

Mark was in his long nightdress. Naked underneath. Tony was in the pyjamas. He put his arm round Mark and took him in an embrace, almost smothering him.

“Hold me, Mark,” he pleaded.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Mark responded laughing, outraged, but he was forced into a clinch. Tony’s hands were all over his body, feeling his breasts and groin. Tony was stroking his bottom and pulling him

close. Soon a kiss was planted square on Mark's lips and held until they gave way to a tongue invasion.

Mark pulled back.

"Christ, Tony, what are you doing?" He was quite alarmed.

"I need you, Mark, I need your body." Tony was clearly quite excited. Mark was growing increasingly alarmed.

"You're not having it."

"Feel my cock. It needs you." Tony had an erection, which was protruding from his pyjamas.

"Good grief," Mark made a nervous laugh.

"Stroke it for me," Tony demanded.

Mark gave way and gave the member a cautious feel. That elicited a groan. Slowly he continued, rather against his better judgement.

"Suck it for me," Tony demanded, rolling on to his back. Mark, still attached by his hand, declined.

"Do as I say." With that, Tony grabbed Mark's long hair tightly and shoved him to his groin.

"Take it and if you bite, I will kill you."

Mark was forced to open his mouth and take the enormous cock inside. Tony jerked Mark's head back and forth in a rhythm to match his own, like a human sex toy. Suddenly he jerked off, filling Mark's mouth with his fluid. He relaxed his grip and Mark fell back.

Mark rose as Tony subsided and spat the contents of his mouth full into Tony's face.

“You bastard. Get out.” With all his strength, Mark propelled Tony from the room.

“Get dressed and get out,” he called after him.

Eventually he heard the door bang as Tony had complied. In fact, Tony was pretty pleased with himself. He laughed internally as he made his way down the road and rang for a taxi. He had beaten his wife and fucked his neighbour, albeit a man, all in one night. Perhaps life wasn't so bad after all?

The next day at nine o'clock Jo arrived. She looked terrible; her bouncing enthusiasm was gone, she had dishevelled hair and sported a black eye. She was also red in the cheeks from having been sobbing. Mark welcomed her into his arms with a cuddle, then brought her in to sit down on the sofa.

“Oh Jo, you look in quite a state,” he empathised, putting his hand round her shoulder.

“Tony's gone and he left me a parting gift,” she burst into tears. This continued for a while during which time Mark patted her on the back. A very worried little Peter joined them, lumbering in on still uncertain feet. That brought some resolution as he was irresistible and Jo picked him up.

“Don't worry, Peter. I'll be all right.” She now tried to sooth him in her turn.

“I guess I know what's happened, because Tony came round here,” said Mark.

“Yes, we fell out. Money, babies, and my lack of respect for him apparently. He wanted sex, rape really, and when he made no progress, he hit me and left.”

“He tried it on with me too,” Mark added and Jo looked incredulous.

“Good grief! What did he do?”

“Well, he forced me into oral sex after getting into bed while I was asleep. He made out that he fancied me,” Mark explained.

“But, Mark, I think he does, in his own weird way. He keeps on saying how feminine you look and how he hopes I will be feeding our baby. He even said that he fantasised having sex with you. I just thought he was tormenting me.”

“Until yesterday, I imagined he just thought me rather creepy,” Mark smiled in an uncertain way.

“But you see, half-man half-woman can be rather appealing. Having sex with a woman with a penis,” she elaborated.

“I only went through this for Kay and Peter.”

“That’s not really true, now is it? You didn’t have to feed for a year and dress more and more as a woman.”

Mark flushed. He knew she was right, but he didn’t like admitting it to anyone else.

“I have got stuck in the role. I have sort of decided to stay for the time being. I have been moving from the casual women’s wear to a wider range.”

“You look more than a half-way house now,” Jo smiled and took him in her arms.

“Since you are obviously in the know, I might as well admit that I have been taking hormones as well,” Mark was letting all his secrets out.

“Oh Mark, you really are going the whole hog. What about going back to work?” She was now more than curious.

“Well, my Paternity Leave is nearly at the end, so I will have to go back. All I have to do is convince them to take the new me.”

“The NHS is usually pretty broadminded, isn’t it?”

“You’re the lawyer, I am sure you know the Trust has no choice. But my colleagues, they’re quite another matter.” Mark now showed the concern he had been feeling inside.

“Our job is to make you look as much a woman as we can, then they’ll all be convinced,” Jo laughed.

“I’m glad you’ve cheered up, nothing like the woes of others to help.” Mark laughed and they hugged again.

“We are sharing a nasty assault experience from my husband aren’t we?” Jo mused.

This domestic upset set the neighbours on a new course. While Jo was pursuing her husband in the courts, she was pleased to have Mark and Peter for support. Mark was pleased to have Jo in his life as a friend to help him in his quest for a new gender. She gave him the push to write to the Trust to organise his return, not now as Mark but as Marion. When he received a positive response from his employer, she also started about helping to find a business wardrobe for his return to work.

For work Mark/Marion would need smart skirts and blouses, jackets, tights over smooth legs and shoes with a heel to replace his leggings, tops and trainers. He would also need to up his game on makeup so that he could look the part – not a tarty clubber, and not too young for his mid-thirty years.

By the time a week had gone by, Mark was ready to meet his old colleagues. He had shoulder-length hair, an open blouse under a jacket, which covered a white bra. This was tucked into a pleated skirt worn over



tights and some black court shoes with a medium heel. He had had lots of practice walking and driving, until he could manage. He had a new mackintosh and, with practice, he had managed to accurately apply lipstick and nail varnish and also just a touch of colour to his cheeks. Completing this was a pendant round his neck. He looked very much the professional woman, having departed as a man and spent over a year somewhere in between.

In the Contracts Department they were somewhat on edge as to what they might find with Mark. Simon, his immediate colleague, was pretty nervous and the Director of Finance, Jane Snelling had given them a pep talk about the equal opportunities policy. The juniors were making a few jokes but had been warned how to behave. It was decided that everyone was “cool” about Mark using the women’s toilet.

Mark slipped in about 11 AM and went to meet Jane.

“Hi Mark,” she took his hand. “What are we to call you?”

“Mrs. Holbrooke or Marion, if you could. I dare say it will be a bit of a strain and I won’t mind a few jokes and laughter.” The start hadn’t been too difficult.

Jane guided him through to the office. Everyone sitting at the desks turned as she entered.

“This is Mrs. Colbrooke. She is new to us, but underneath it’s our old friend Mark. Now to be known as Marion,” she announced.

There were quite a few suppressed giggles, which Mark noted, but he couldn’t expect much less.

Simon came up and shook his hand. He could almost have kissed him, but couldn’t quite manage it.

“Hi mate, it’s great to see you again. Sorry to hear about Kay.”

“Hello Simon,” and turning round, “Hello everyone.” Mark smiled and then went on to make an announcement of his own.

“I don’t mind what you all think really but I’ll tell you why I have changed.” He had decided to make a clean breast (pun intended) to start off.

“I’ve spent a year as a Mum, bringing up a new baby. I mean a Mum in literarily all ways. At the end of that time I had to make a choice; be a father or be a mother and I found I was more a mother now than a father. I knew I was meant to be a mother and so I’ve decided to be one full-time. That means I am going to have to be a woman here and I hope that’s going to work. I don’t really mind if you laugh a bit, but I hope that you grow to accept me.”

“We’re going to try anyway,” said Lisa, one of the secretaries. She came up and planted a kiss on his cheek.

After that, everyone came to shake his hand or kiss him on the cheek and soon after he settled back to his desk to try to re-familiarise himself with the work.

It took a full week before he had much clue, because after an absence of a year so much had moved on, enough for a complete upheaval in the NHS. However, the process of making contracts for their various supplies had remained much the same and his legal eye was soon back on track as he set to examining the various clauses needed to make sure everything was watertight.

Face-to-face meetings with suppliers were a bit of a challenge; they had known him as Mark and were now expected to call him Marion. This was used to some advantage as it wrong footed the contractors

somewhat and also the Health Authority, as they in particular were expected to behave immaculately with people of different genders, particularly transgender. Inwardly Mark enjoyed the discomfort, which he knew was as strong as his own. For him, however, each situation negotiated was a small hurdle in his developing life, mind and body.

Overall, Mark reckoned that the curiosity of his business “opponents,” if such could be used of his non-NHS colleagues, probably worked to the Trust’s favour in nearly every case and Jane Snelling was delighted with his achievements.

“If I thought it would help, and I could get your colleagues to do it, I would get them all to wear short skirts for the negotiations,” she laughed.

“My curiosity value won’t last much longer, I am pleased to say,” Mark noted. “On the other hand I might as well exploit it while it lasts.”

Of course he had to fit his work in with childcare which meant making it all fit into 9 to 5 so he was in time to pick up Peter from the crèche and return home to make the tea. He now realised what a treadmill his parent-colleagues had had and appreciated their problems a little more, now that he shared them.

While he was working, Peter was developing learning to improve his walking and socialise with the other children. He was making rapid progress during his second year of life, no longer needing his father’s dietary input. At the same time Mark was now taking oestrogens and spironolactone, which was helping to develop him as Peter’s mother. Being an improving woman on the outside, he was also adjusting evermore inside.

Jo was progressing through her pregnancy by now and had reached eight months. As she lived nearby, she liked to pop in to see her neighbours as she be-

came rather lonely of an evening. It was inevitable that she became more and more intimate with them, sharing meals and ultimately helping out with Peter's care. Mark became pleased to see her and often cooked her an evening meal as she often came home quite late from her office.

When she had only 2 weeks to go, she finally stopped work and was immediately worried about when she could start back. She decided to ask Mark what he thought.

"Mark, I have the biggest favour I have asked of anyone to ask you," she was bright red in the face.

"Would you be prepared to look after my new baby when she or he is born?"

"I don't think I can, I am back at work now."

"I thought maybe you might be able to take leave of absence and I would pay you. I just don't want to pass up my career now it's reaching a critical peak. Originally Tony had planned to reduce his hours, but he's gone now."

Mark was in a cleft stick. He hated not being able to enjoy looking after Peter in the same way; he had always wanted Kay to be a stay-at-home mother. He would need some sort of security.

"I would do it, but I would need to have security, a contract." He was a little uncertain.

"That would be OK, I'm sure. I would easily be able to do that."

"It would need to be £25,000 to meet my current needs."

"OK, I could live with that," she smiled.

Mark now smiled too.

“It’s a deal. I’ll speak to Jean.”

Thus it was that Mark/Marion became a mum, this time with two children. Secretly he wondered if he would be able to feed this one; it had been such an erotic experience. He planned to ask Dr. Wiley.

“Well, Marion, it should be. You’ve done it once. I can actually help, by giving you some prolactin injections. With your oestrogen and spironolactone, you are better primed this time. I must say I can’t personally see the appeal.” He laughed, intrigued at the possibility.

Mark was all primed by the time Jo went into labour, not that he revealed his intentions to her. He wanted to see if it worked. When she went into labour, Jo was accompanied by her mother into the Labour ward and had a relatively easy time producing a gorgeous little girl called Flora. As soon as she was allowed home, within one day in the modern NHS, she came round to Mark’s.

“Here she is,” she proudly announced.

Mark was overwhelmed. It was nearly as good as having his own.

“Oh, Jo, she’s lovely, I’m so pleased it went well.”

“I’m a bit wobbly and leaky, but she is perfect.” Jo was all beams with maternal pride.

They had decided that Jo and the baby should have a room in their house for a few days and then, when she was settled, would go back home and bring Flora each morning. However, that’s not quite what transpired.

As soon as Jo and Flora were settled in, it all began to work very differently. Within a few days they seemed like a little family, albeit with two mums. Mark showed Jo all the ropes of child care and how to

feed her daughter and it was soon clear that they all had a real bond as a unit. That included Peter who seemed to enjoy having the additional people in the household.

Eventually, Mark couldn't resist asking Jo if he could put the baby to his breasts. Jo thought it was a rather sweet idea and she saw how the baby relished the care which Mark took. She realised that his breasts were responding much as hers were.

"Mark, you're producing, aren't you?"

"Well just a little, I haven't lost the knack."

"I don't know whether to be amused or annoyed," she laughed.

For the next week while Jo was recovering, Mark gave Flora half her feeds. Then as thoughts of return to work started to play on Jo's mind she realised that Mark would be taking over this duty fully.

"I shall be able to tell people that I am employing a wet nurse," she laughed.

"It does seem a little archaic but I guess that's the gist of it."

With their contract drawn up and Mark settled into his role, it became a somewhat mixed relationship. Jo was definitely the employer and she made that clear to Mark in a variety of subtle ways, letting him know if things were not being done correctly. She didn't anticipate doing much nappy changing and expected Mark to organise baths etc., so she could walk in and take over for the fun bit of playing with Flora. Actually, Mark didn't mind being bossed around too much as he was having what he felt was the best of it as a kept man. He decided he would prefer to be Marion to Jo and eventually that's how she referred to him.

One evening they were sitting together after Jo had arrived home late. She drank a couple of glasses of whisky, then settled on the sofa to watch a gameshow.

“Marion could you massage my neck do you think, it’s very stiff from being in the car for so long.”

“OK, I suppose it might help.”

Mark started over the back of the sofa feeling her neck and soothing the muscles. Suddenly his hands were grabbed and directed to her breasts.

“Feel these for me too,” she commanded.

“OK,” he responded uncertainly.

After a while, Mark could see she was quite aroused and pulled his hands away.

“Not so fast, Marion. I would rather like my money’s worth tonight.” She stood up and pulled him to her, in a warm hug.

“This isn’t in the contract,” he laughed.

“I think you’ll find it is. Clause 20b. The employee will satisfy all reasonable demands.”

“And this is a reasonable demand?”

“The maid should serve her mistress and that’s you, buster. Or Marion. Hey that fits, Maid Marion.” She laughed.

Needless to say, Mark was now a little excited himself, despite the quelling effects of his hormone replacements.

Jo dragged him to her bedroom and plonked him unceremoniously on the bed while she removed her tights and knickers. She hitched up her skirt.

“Lick,” she commanded.

With an order, how many employees dare refuse! Mark was familiar with this work but not with the demanding approach, Kay had been altogether more reticent. Jo stood over him while he set to work, teasing gently round her inner labia and gradually caressing the tip of her clitoris until she was experiencing waves of pleasure and becoming weak at the knees. She pushed him back on the bed and mounted astride his face so that he could finish his work.

“That’ll do nicely, now go and check on the kids.”

“How about satisfying me first?” Mark complained.

“And how is that best achieved?” Jo responded with genuine interest.

Mark had missed out on sex for quite a time and his penis was now a poorish specimen. Jo coaxed it into life and with caressing his body, he achieved a reasonable erection, helped by a little attention from her lips. She mounted him again, sliding up and down as she held him inside. Gradually she was aware that he was reaching climax and the fluid made her juicier inside. She slipped off and held herself apart over his face so their combined juices ran out.

Mark agreed that he felt better for that and they fell asleep only to be awoken by the inevitable cries.

Mark still needed the money to maintain his household and lifestyle. For that reason Jo took over the Marion Project where Kay had left off. She gradually improved Mark’s appearance and feminine look, working on his hair, clothes, skin, nails and so forth.

She particularly like the idea of him wearing a uniform for looking after her daughter and came up with an outfit not unlike a Norland Nanny, without the hat. She rather liked the look as it made Mark incredibly sexy, at least in her eyes. Actually, it wasn't just in her eyes as he received quite a few stares when he was out with the children, from men in particular.

The absence of a hat didn't last long as Jo felt that he needed it to look her proper nanny. Soon she found one that was just right for him. It was not unlike that which she had worn for school. So the full outfit was a white bra and knickers, plain and sensible. There were brown tights and over that a dress coming down to just below his knee, with the skirt full enough for him to perform all necessary tasks in child and general domestic care. He was also equipped with a substantial coat for wearing outside. With the hat, he gave a perfect image of domestic servitude. The dress unbuttoned to allow him to feed Laura, which is rather more than one would expect of the average nanny, but nevertheless it was definitely a part of his domestic role. It wasn't long before she was just taking feeds at night in any case.

Mark saw himself more and more as a nanny and always referred to himself as Marion, almost forgetting that anatomically he was still a man. His son referred to him as "Mummy" as he began to talk. Mark made it clear that he was a working mum and that being a nanny for Flora was his job. He wasn't too sure if Peter knew that he was a man underneath, so eventually he decided that the last vestiges would go and he only ever referred to himself as female.

Once he was in uniform, Jo stopped seeing him as her equal and essentially treated him fully as an employee. She did abuse that relationship, if that is the right expression, by calling on his skills in the bedroom, largely when she was bored. She was starting to develop new relationships with other men, so it was distinctly irregular.

Finally she said to him one day, “Marion, have you thought of going the final bit and having a sex change?”

“I’m not sure I have really, but one day I will have to sort things out with Peter. He’s going to ask about his Mum.” He had thought of this over and over again in the last twelve months.

“Well, if you did, I would help pay. I can’t see you wanting to go back, after all this time and with all those hormones.”

“I know, but having your cock cut off is quite a big step. I am essentially a woman in all other respects, but even so.”

“I would feel more confident of you as my nanny and I would put your pay up by £5,000 per year.” Jo often saw things in purely monetary terms, because she was a lawyer.

“Not many men would part with their penis for money you know, welcome though it would be,” Mark/Marion laughed.

“Well, you’re getting worse at performing for me, your dick isn’t exactly functional,” Jo added with a degree of intentional scorn.

He flushed at the thought of the last embarrassing episode. In his heart he knew this was probably the way to proceed. An event happened in the following week which pushed him in that final direction.

Mark/Marion had pushed the children to the park and while he played with Flora, Peter explored the sandpit and the sit-on toys. There was a man there with a small child just a little older than Peter. He came to sit next to Mark.

“Hello,” he said. “I see you here quite a bit.”

He was tall with smart casual clothes. He sat quite close to Mark so that he could feel his warmth.

“Yes, I’m Flora’s nanny,” he said indicating the little girl. “That one’s my boy, Peter.”

“Is that OK? Looking after one of your own and being paid for one?”

“I have to, there is only me and I need to work.”

“Why as a nanny?” He seemed very curious. Indeed he was, as he was very taken with the uniform, particularly with the legs that protruded from the skirt and the hat, covering the neatly tied hair. Very sexy.

“Well, I had child skills and my neighbour employs me.”

“That’s very official having you in a uniform,” he laughed.

“It does her ego good. She’s single now her husband’s left, and fairly well-heeled, I suppose.”

“It keeps you in your place, I guess,” he smiled.

“I am sure that us is the way she sees it,” Mark laughed.

Every day thereafter that they came to the park the same man was about and usually sidled up to join the little group.

Eventually he asked for a name.

“I’m Marion,” Mark announced. “And you?”

“I’m Simon, Simon Fairbrother.” He shook Marion’s hand, holding a little too long. He then kissed the fingers. Marion flushed very sweetly.

“I’m a nanny, but what do you do?”

“Well, I’m a writer, which is how I can spend so much time sitting in the park. I have no wife and Tom there, he has no Mum; she died in a car crash last year.”

“Oh dear, I’m so sorry,” Marion replied.

“I’m pulling through. I have to for Tom. Now that I have a steady income from film rights, money has stopped being a problem,”

“What do you write?” Marion enquired.

“Violent spy stuff, something a nanny wouldn’t approve of, I don’t suppose.”

Marion laughed.

“Well, I don’t suppose I will want to read it to the children. Tell me what it’s called.”

“Which Side Are We On Today?” he replied.

“I don’t remember that one.” Marion was genuinely puzzled.

“Well, plenty have people have bought it and the others. The film’s called “My Enemy’s Enemy,” Have you heard of that?” He was a little tetchy.

“Oh yes.” Marion was pleased this time. “I haven’t seen it but I read the reviews and the actors look very handsome,” she laughed.

“Women like a bit of bare chest and muscle, I dare say.”

“Is that crucial to the story?”

“No, the director added it. Most of it’s about electronic techniques for listening and then military manoeuvres. If it wasn’t for the eye candy, lads wouldn’t be able to get their girlfriends to go.”

Over the course of a few weeks, Simon sought to develop the relationship. He bought ice creams for Marion and the children one day and then brought some flowers for Marion another time. Slowly he was starting to woo Marion in a way that started to be rather disconcerting. Eventually, he asked if they would like to come for afternoon tea the next day. Marion agreed and brought the two children to his house.

It was a large mansion-like property, which she had seen for many years and wondered who lived there. She pushed the buggy to halt and pressed the bell. Simon opened up moments later and welcomed them in. He took them through to a small dining room where he and Tom normally ate and Tom was there to welcome them. He sat at an ordinary chair but there were a high chair for Flora and a selection for Peter, who choose one nearest his parent. Marion took charge of feeding Flora and soon they were working their way through sandwiches, cakes and jellies provided by Simon’s housekeeper.

After the food, the children had a play in the sitting room while Simon sat down next to Mark.

“Marion, I’ve been attracted to you since the first day,” he started in a way that suggested preparation. “Would you do me the honour of coming out on a date with me?”

This took Mark completely by surprise but an observer of the recent park meetings, would not have been the least shocked. Mark, however, had not been out on a date for many years and never with a man.

“Well, I have these children to organise,” he floundered a little.

“I could ask my sister if she would babysit. Would she do?”

“Apart from that I’ve never met her you mean,” Mark complained.

“Wouldn’t your employer look after them both for a night too?”

“Oh she would look after Flora, I guess she might watch Peter too.”

“That’s it then. No real problem.” Simon was clearly delighted.

Mark could see lots of problems but he pushed these to the back of his mind. He did rather like Simon. That was something he would never have thought feasible in the past.

“Do I have to come in my uniform?” Mark laughed

“Much as I like it, no, come however you want. Anyway I will pick you up.”

Mark had actually taken Peter to his own mother’s house to stay and wangled some time off from Jo so that he could properly enjoy himself with Simon. They agreed to meet in a small bistro near the centre of town. Mark was clad in the best outfit that he could imagine suitable. A tight black skirt with black court shoes over seamed holdups and a white blouse open at the neck with one of Fay’s chains. He had a black jacket over the top and his hair tied back with a low bow securing a pony tail at his neck. He took particular care of his nails and lips tonight, something he couldn’t really do for work. He was pleased with the red sheen on his nails.

Simon was in a sports jacket with open neck shirt, he had thought about his cravat, but had eventually decided that it somehow looked wrong.

Mark had given quite a lot of thought to his back story, so that he could hold it together under the anticipated scrutiny. He decided to talk of himself as Kay, making out that his husband had died of cancer, rather than the other way round. He hoped it would not lead to too many complications.

Simon gave him a welcoming peck on the cheek which he knew caused a blush, fortunately one that wouldn't show in the crepuscular lighting of the bar.

"Marion, you look wonderful, even if you aren't in uniform," Simon declared as he offered to buy a drink.

"Just a 'slimline' tonic for me, please," Mark requested.

Simon bought himself a dry white wine and they perched on a couple of the bar stools. It was a major exercise for Mark to maintain his poise in the relatively tight skirt and he was conscious of it starting to rise, much to Simon's unadmitted delight.

They gave their food orders and when they arrived, were shown to a table. Mark had chosen mussels, which had always been a favourite, while Simon had a steak.

The seafood is, of course, eaten with fingers and Mark soon found himself sucking off the juices as he used his bread to mop the plate. He had no concept of the illicit pleasure this gave to Simon as he watched his date. They accompanied the food with a Shiraz, light enough for the mussels, but red enough for the

steak. The dessert was cheesecake for Simon and a fondant chocolate pudding for Mark.

“Do you often eat out, Marion?” Simon enquired.

“Not since my husband died.”

“How long ago is that now?”

“Two years.” He fixed on Kay’s death date. “He had testicular cancer, which didn’t respond to chemotherapy. It was all a bit sudden at the end.”

“Sorry. I didn’t really want to start on that,” Simon apologised.

“Oh, it’s OK now, I am used to it, mostly.”

“What do you miss most?”

Mark couldn’t quite bring himself to say “the sex,” although he betrayed himself with a smile.

“Companionship, I suppose. A son is one thing but not much of a substitute, you can’t really discuss things.” He had no problem telling the truth here.

“It’s the same for me, except that I can admit to the sex too!” They both laughed with relief.

“Have you met anyone else since your wife died? Actually I don’t think you told me her name.”

“Hannah. My wife was Hannah. Tall, with long dark hair, tied back on her collar, much like yours is now.” Mark felt himself reddening again. “No, you are my first. I was taken with you in the park and I have built up my courage. Fortunately, the children enabled me to approach you.”

“I’ve not been out on a date with a man since my marriage either.” Absolutely no lies there.

“No, it takes time, doesn’t it,” Simon smiled. He leant across the table and kissed Mark’s cheek and took his hand at the same time.

“Let’s have some coffee,” Mark suggested before things got too out of hand.

They ordered and had a light conversation about the children until it arrived, along with the bill. Simon then moved his chair round the table to be next to Mark rather than opposite him/her. This gave him an opportunity to bring his body into close proximity. He carefully place his hand on Mark’s thigh. That was a move which was gently stopped, with a giggle the first time, but when repeated, Mark acquiesced. Simon received a kiss in return.

All too soon the evening came to an end and Simon ordered a taxi to take them home. When it arrived at Mark’s, he got out with him for a kiss. He took Mark in his arms and pressed his body close as he kissed Mark on the lips. He saw Mark into the house, then returned to the taxi for the onward journey to his home.

The following Monday saw Simon in the town library where he was doing some research for a new novel, looking at local crime stories. The local newspaper was a mine of trivial information that filled in the colour in his stories. He particularly like the obituary section; not just the death notices but little pieces which gave an insight on a life. It was in fact a death notice in an old copy that caught his eye.

“Colbrooke, Kay. Kay the loving wife of Mark and mother of Peter, died on after a long fight with illness. The funeral will be at 2 PM Friday at St. Joseph’s and afterwards at the Crematorium. All are welcome to the reception.”

That was odd. Marion was Colbrooke, the dates matched for her husband’s death, yet this seems to be a wife. Mark was pretty close to Marion. What did

it mean? He would need to ask Marion. Either Marion was Mark or something else equally strange had happened. He could see a story forming already.

Simon was early with Tom when Mark arrived with his two charges in his nanny uniform. He waved to Simon, who responded and he came over to sit next to him on the bench.

“Do I get a kiss today?” Simon queried.

“I’m in uniform,” was the response, but he gave Simon a peck on the cheek even so.

Once they were settled, Simon asked about his day and how the children had been and so on. This invited a similar enquiry from Marion.

“Well, I’ve been doing some research into recent crimes, background for the new novel. I also caught up with the obituaries. There was death notice which I found interesting.”

“Oh,” wavered Mark with some second sight.

“You know what I’ve found, don’t you?”

Mark was bright red and gave a slow nod.

“Kay was your wife, wasn’t she?”

Mark nodded.

“You’ve taken over in her place as Marion,” Simon spoke quite quietly here.

“It’s not quite that.” Mark was deeply embarrassed about the discovery. “I’ve been out as a woman for some time, at work and so forth.”

“Why did you start?”

“I spent a lot of time with Peter, because of Kay’s illness. I was mothering him for her and then, it got a bit deeper. I started to feed him.”

“I guess that’s the main thing you do with babies.”

“Breastfed him,” Mark added with some degree of drama.

“Good heavens,” Simon was suitably surprised. “How on earth did you do that?”

“It just started after I offered my nipple to help settle him down. One thing led to another and I fed him for a year. I was quite a woman by the end and Kay had me dressing as a woman. Frankly, once everyone had seen me, there was no going back.”

“So how on earth did you get to be a nanny?”

“I had a job and was even a woman at work, then my neighbour Jo was pregnant and her husband left her. She needed someone to look after her baby and I fitted the role.”

“What about the money?” he was very curious.

“She pays the going rate and gave me more to wear the uniform.”

“It makes you look like a servant, rather than a friend,” he complained.

“Well, you seem to like it!”

“Touché,” Simon laughed.

“You are right, though. I am an employee and I think that’s how Jo wants it to be.”

“So am I the first that you have fooled?”

“I suppose those that know me, know. Those that don’t probably don’t look very closely,” Mark explained. “I don’t really like to think of having fooled you so much as I couldn’t really say out straight away. As far as I am concerned, I am a woman.”

“So, how much of a woman are you?” Simon enquired.

“I have been on hormones for quite a while now, I still have balls, but they are pretty small. I have breasts and a bottom and so on. I am to all intents a woman all the time.”

“Until Monday I thought of you as a woman, and I guess I still do,” Simon admitted. He still felt that Marion, although not quite the person he had supposed, was a female.

“Are we back to just being friends?” Mark said with beseeching eyes.

“No, I don’t think so,” Simon laughed, “I would actually like to keep dating you, if you don’t mind.”

“What, so you can write a novel about me?”

It was Simon’s turn to blush.

“I have to admit that is part of it, but only if you agree. I couldn’t if you didn’t.”

“Shall we see how it goes?” Mark was almost relieved as he had real affection for Simon and didn’t want it all to end too quickly.

Simon put his arm round Mark and pulled him close as the watched the children.

“Have you thought of reassignment surgery?” Simon asked with genuine interest.

“Yes and Jo suggested it too. I am pretty sure that I will, if I’m honest.”

“Tell me if you decide because I can certainly help with the money.”

“I’ll let you know.” At that stage they had to get up to supervise the children.

So began a tentative romance. Like young teenagers, the two got to know each other little by little, going out on regular dates, with and without the children. Mostly Mark was off-duty, sometimes it was tea time as a nanny. Eventually they had the chance for a night together, when Jo and Flora were on holiday, without their nanny and Peter was staying with Mark’s mother.

They started off at a restaurant eating entrees of oysters, followed by pork loin, then crème brulée to finish, all Mark’s choices. There was a Cabernet Sauvignon to accompany. Then they retired to Simon’s to have coffee; Mark wasn’t sure if tonight he would be taken home.

They sat close on Simon’s settee sipping at their drinks with Simon wondering how to proceed, and Mark wondering if he would. He kissed Simon on the cheek and suddenly they were embracing on the lips. Mark soon felt Simon’s hand on his stockinged thigh, running up to the top and taking his skirt along with it. It didn’t seem long before Mark’s blouse was coming undone to reveal his white plunge bra.

Simon was clearly impressed by his breasts.

“They are bigger than my wife’s ever were,” he laughed.

“And functional too,” Mark reminded him.

“Marion, shall we retire?” Simon enquired.

“I think we can,” Mark replied.

They stood and mounted the stairs to Simon’s room, Mark in his state of slight dishevelment.

Simon helped him out of his skirt, which he lay across a chair. Mark stood revealed in his thong and bra, today with the added suspenders, all in purest white. The knickers were enough to contain his little penis but he was in no hurry to reveal this. Simon unclipped his bra to leave his breasts free. They were now reduced in size from their peak, but were a “C” cup with substantial areolae, the result of his episodes of breast feeding. Simon cupped each, then gave each nipple a kiss. Mark freed Simon’s trousers and he stood in his shirt and pants. Soon they were lying together on the bed, with Mark working on Simon’s growing organ, surprised at how easy he found it.

“Simon, I would rather keep my knickers on. I don’t want to spoil the mystique,” he asked quietly. Not that there was too much mystery about his small white thong.

“Marion, it’s all fine to me,” he answered accurately.

“Would you like me to suck you?”

“What kind of question is that?” Simon nodded eagerly as Mark took his penis in hand.

Mark had no experience beyond the less-than-satisfactory encounter with Tony and that had been very demeaning. This time he acted from affection, possibly from love. He wanted Simon to want him. Simon, for his part, had been celibate for a long time and was enjoying the experience, even more than he anticipated. From what he remembered, his wife had never been an enthusiast.

Mark was able to play Simon quite accurately, keeping him turgid but unfulfilled for quite a time, before he finally brought him to climax. A spurt of hot fluid filled his mouth and he swallowed it straight down. He was so pleased to have given pleasure to Simon and have his living cells swimming inside.

Simon lay back and relaxed.

“Marion, that was wonderful,” he said in a bleary-eyed fashion.

Simon pulled up the quilt and they lay cuddled together enjoying the warmth and sensuality of each other’s bodies. Mark lay on his side against Simon’s body. Soon he felt fingers playing up and down his spine and stroking his neck. It caused shivers of pleasure, even more so when he felt a hand against his bottom sliding a finger over his little hole. It was teased and pulled apart.

“Is this the sort of thing you might enjoy, do you think?” Simon tentatively enquired.

“I have had anal sex in the past, albeit with a dildo,” Mark replied in a matter-of-fact way.

“Oh Marion, you really are a romantic,” Simon smiled and licked Mark’s nose.

Simon turned Mark away from him so he could caress his back and squeeze his buttocks, gently pulling them apart. He looked at the thin band of the thong lying in the crevice and pulled it aside to reveal the little hole fully. Eventually, he nestled his penis in the space between the buttocks and started teasing Mark’s anus. After some minutes of this preparatory work, he reached on to the table beside his bed where a tube of lubricant lay covered by a cloth. He applied some to his penis and worked some into Mark with a finger.

He applied his swelling organ again, this time nudging it gently forward so that it started to widen Mark's orifice, who relaxed as much as he could to facilitate the process. Of course he was quite experienced in entry by this route, thanks to Kay.

Within a minute Simon had progressed an inch, so that the muscles started to grip his flesh. He waited for Mark to relax a little and slowly slipped further inside so that the whole of his glans was beyond the canal. They were locked together in a glorious feral union. Simon pulled Mark against him as he worked his thrusts, in and out, realising that a response was starting to mount in his partner. All too soon he reached a crescendo and made a second deposit in Mark.

Mark was pleased to be the receptacle for Simon's semen. He was sorry that had to be in his anus and not in a vagina and at that moment he decided that he would have a full sex change, if it could be achieved.

"Could I see you naked now?" asked Simon.

Mark rolled over to show his little penis and little lost balls. More suitable for a seven-year-old, he thought.

"I want them gone and a cunt in their place," he declared.

"I say, Marion, that's very dramatic," Simon laughed and they cuddled.

"Well, it's the effect of your cock in me," Mark declared.

Simon looked at Mark's balls as they lay there side by side.

"Marion, if you do go ahead with this, can I have your balls?"

“What!” Mark exclaimed.

“I would like to keep your balls, possess your manhood,” Simon was quite serious and the thought seemed to be making his cock grow again.

“I’m not sure if that counts as romance, fetishism, or possessiveness,” Mark laughed. “OK, but you’re not allowed to raffle them.” He was quite shocked but impressed by what Simon had said.

He kissed Simon and held him close, the act of pressing against Simon and the rubbing caused Simon to climax yet again, leaving Mark’s legs sticky with the fluids.

Mark/Marion left the next morning to return home and take charge of the children. Simon was left to ponder the night before and think about Marion. Now he had seen the male organs, he knew the woman that he thought he had met was really a man. Funny enough he didn’t really see her as a man, or as a woman with balls. He still felt in love, or perhaps in infatuation, or was it just intrigue? He had also gone quite a way to pressing Marion to lose her balls and have a sex change – or reassignment surgery, since Marion would say she was a woman already, in all but structure.

He then set to wondering did he want Marion to lose her testes for reasons of completing his story as he saw it unfolding, because he knew that is what she wanted or because he wanted her as a full woman? This was all really up to Marion, but he might tip the balance in her mind – tip it to the irreversible.

Simon need not have concerned himself since Mark had come to a decision. If he was to enjoy this intimate relationship, he wanted it as a woman. For him, that would ultimately mean surgery. He even announced it dramatically to Jo when he reached her house.

“Oh Marion, that’s definitely the right thing to do,” Jo wanted no going back from her nanny and she had pushed already for the change, “I’m sure you won’t regret it.”

“Hmm, I’m not sure that I can be confident yet. I will have to meet the shrinks first.”

Nevertheless, Jo gave him a hug and added, “I think you will find the final journey to womanhood worthwhile.”

So over the next few months he had to fit in trips to the doctors. Dr. Wiley was very supportive.

“You know, I’ve never had someone who wanted a sex change before, I felt that I was missing out.” The doctor was very pleased to be able to coordinate the whole process.

“It’s not about you, it’s about me,” laughed Mark. Nevertheless it was helpful to have sound backing as he went through the process.

The psychiatrists felt that he had made a head start, due to the length of time he had spent as a woman and because he was settled in the gender. The process of preparation of his skin with electrolysis was quite another matter. He hated that, but he didn’t want a hairy vagina. Soon everything was resolved and he was booked for surgery privately in a London Clinic.

Simon, Jo, and the three children all came to see him during his stay, Mark’s mother came too. She was only too pleased to be looking after Peter.

He wasn’t in long. Soon he was back at home with Jo, trying to maintain and develop his new canal with a series of dildos (they would have preferred to call them dilators) given to him by the hospital. It took quite a few months before he was fully stretched, but then he knew he was a “she” at last.

Mark spent a lot of time thinking how to present his new vagina for Simon and decided that he would have the vintage look. There was a nearby shop which specialised in retro clothing and he bought a full set of lingerie, complete with the emphasising bullet bra and closely fitting knickers, topped off with a suspender belt to attach his seamed stockings. He had a lovely full skirt and blouse, his hair done in the full style of the era, and red lipstick. His fingernails matched and he had some new heels in red to match. Naturally all was finished by long gloves.

They were to meet at their favourite bistro, pretending they were a new couple. Simon was intentionally early so he could catch Mark's arrival. He was delighted when his date stepped out of the taxi in her fur coat and came inside. They rushed to embrace and although Mark had been a woman for some time, the expectation which followed their warm embrace was something new and he felt himself glowing from within.

"Well, what can I say but wow!" Simon stood back impressed. He was taken by the full bosom he saw heaving beneath the blouse and the full skirt covering a figure-eight body, with a bottom that invited the pat that it received. Mark giggled delightedly.

Tonight was mussels so that the juices covered their fingers – how often had this been a prelude? They stuck with single glasses of champagne, not wanting to be inebriated by overindulgence. The lemon soufflés were perfect and they finished their meal with coffee and a liqueur. Mark had Kummel and a Drambuie for Simon.

Soon they were back at Simon's house where flowers had been laid out. They sat for a while on the sofa, cuddling before they realised they couldn't contain themselves longer.

"You look very chic tonight," Simon announced as he started to unbutton Mark's blouse. Once it was re-

moved, Mark put his arms around Simon's neck for a deep kiss, which left a satisfactory smear of red. His bra made his breasts appear even more impressive than usual, an effect which Simon had been admiring all evening. As it was removed, they cascaded free. Mark had touched up the areolae just slightly, to make their colour more prominent. The skirt fell away too and he was left with knickers and stockings.

"Shall I help you divest before the great reveal?" asked Mark.

"Why Marion, I thought you would never ask!"

Soon Simon felt his chest being caressed and his nipples accepted a gentle tonguing. Soon he was in his pants, black silky shorts, Mark's favourites for Simon. She loved the way he could push through the front.

"Well, I think the time has come," Mark announced.

Simon knelt in front and slowly eased his knickers down over his hips until they dropped to the floor. He looked at what was revealed. It was very well finished, with hair trimmed neatly to perfection.

"Can I?" he asked. There was a nod of acceptance and he started to stroke gently with his fingers, just introducing one into the introitus. He gave the outside a kiss and licked the little clitoris at the top. He could see that the nerve supply was intact and working, by the trembles in Mark's body.

They lay on the bed and with careful foreplay, Mark judged he should be ready to receive Simon's bulk, which seemed dauntingly large today. Simon was soon between his open legs, pressing carefully at the stretched entrance. They were both pleased at his first thrust which produced a little gasp from Mark. They both laughed.

“This is the first time I have had a virgin,” chuckled Simon.

“I have but it was so different then,” Mark replied.

Soon Simon was fully in and was working back and forth with steady thrusts. Mark, amazed at the response in himself, felt excitement mounting as Simon grew more urgent. Suddenly he felt a release, coincident with a sense of warm fluid flooding inside him.

After they had relaxed back on the sheets, Mark felt he could comment.

“That was certainly better than I expected.”

“Have you been practicing?” Simon queried.

“I suppose I have as I have been expanding the passage, It was not really pleasurable, but not unpleasant. I wasn’t really expecting to be wet either.”

“So, marks for performance and artistic impression then.”

“Oh, I think 8 and 8,” he smiled.

“Not perfect then,” Simon complained.

“Leaves room for improvement.”

They both laughed and cuddled. Mark was gratified to see a small amount of blood on the sheet beneath. He really had been deflowered.

Mark stepped onto the floor and walked over to the chest of drawers. He opened the top drawer and spent some time delving inside until he was able to pull out a small box, neatly wrapped in red foil and tied with a bow. He brought the box over to Simon.

“Here,” he proffered, “this is for you.”

Simon pulled off the string and opened the paper to reveal a black box. Opening it revealed a tube. It was made of glass and filled with water sealed tightly at the top with a cap. Inside floated two fleshy objects. Simon burst out into laughter.

“How wonderful!”

He took hold of Mark and cuddled him tightly, his erection revealed his excitement as he now possessed Mark’s manhood.

He threw Mark back across the bed and mounted between his legs. Lining up his organ, he thrust, in causing Mark to make a sharp intake of breath as he was not in the least prepared for this. He experienced quite a sharp pain, before he was able to accommodate Simon.

“God, I wasn’t expecting that!”

“No? Well, you will have a lot of new things to discover about womanhood, now that there is no going back,” Simon remarked almost sternly. Then he broke into a smile and kissed Mark on the lips as he continued his thrusts.

Simon kept Mark’s testes in his top drawer, covered over. He liked to look at them quite often and each time they gave him an erotic charge. He recognised the power he had over Mark, turning him into Marion. Completely unmanning him in a totally irrevocable way. Every time he looked at them, he started to become erect and realised the importance of this power aspect to their relationship.

So they stepped forward in life as a couple. Marion/Mark kept on as a daytime nanny for Flora. Simon always loved her in her uniform with hair tied back and Marion also liked to keep working with Flora and Peter. Mark officially became Marion as he

was able to have his birth certificate changed. They considered proper marriage but neither was sure that they were ready for that. Not the lack of commitment so much as the anxiety that it might not work out.

A few months later when they were sharing their lives, Jo was on holiday with Flora, so Mark's services were not needed. He lay in the bed alone as Simon had left early for a meeting in London. Peter was playing with Tom elsewhere in the house. It left Mark alone in the bed and he decided, in the way a wife does, to look at Simon's possessions. He/she was curious to see what kind of man he was. He opened his chest of drawers and looked at the rows of shirts, many now ironed by him. He checked out the ranks of pants in the next drawer with socks all neatly bundled. Before he arrived it had been such a mess.

In the bottom drawer were all sorts of belongings. There was a brown box, which he had not seen before. He took it to the bed and opened it. In it was his jar – the one that contained his testes. There was a second package, which he unwrapped carefully so there was no betrayal of his curiosity.

Inside was a jar similar to his own with identical contents – another set of balls. He re-wrapped the jar and put it away. He closed the drawer so that all looked untouched.

What did it mean? How was he to find out?

THE END