

# The Queen of the Valley



## Philippa Peters



An "Adult Tv" Novel



## **Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers**

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Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder. This material is intended for persons over the age of 18 only.



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# THE QUEEN OF THE VALLEY

**By Philippa Peters**

“I told you he’d go ballistic,” I said to Jane as we scurried into the editorial conference at *The Queen of the Valley* offices.

The publisher was indeed red-faced as he held Jane’s columns in his hand. “What the hell is this?” he demanded of his niece and favorite reporter.

“It’s a factual news story,” said Jane Edwards as Dave Richardson, long and lean, and Tania Scott, small, busty and dressed in her usual ‘bohemian’ clothes, bustled in, each with copy they’d written for this month’s local issue of *The Queen*.

“Our readers don’t want scandal and certainly not scandal like this,” huffed the editor and publisher, Brian J Carpenter, of the Valley’s only newspaper. It was published weekly but was all re-prints of national stories. Only in the third issue each month was local news compiled in a summary for residents of the Valley.

“The Courthouse was packed last Wednesday,” said Jane Edwards forcefully.

“I can read,” said Brian Carpenter. “It’s the opening line of your column. We can’t put this on page one. What do you have?” The question was directed at Dave Richardson who sighed.

“Council went into an all-night session last night,” Dave said with a yawn. “It was all they talked about, ‘civic rights’, repealing the Morality Code, and the motion by Councillor Jara.”

“Everyone’s talking about it,” giggled Tania Scott, the ‘entertainment’ reporter, and known for her flightiness. “It’s the number one news item of the month! It isn’t every day that the only doctor in the Valley is arrested for violating the Morality Code!”

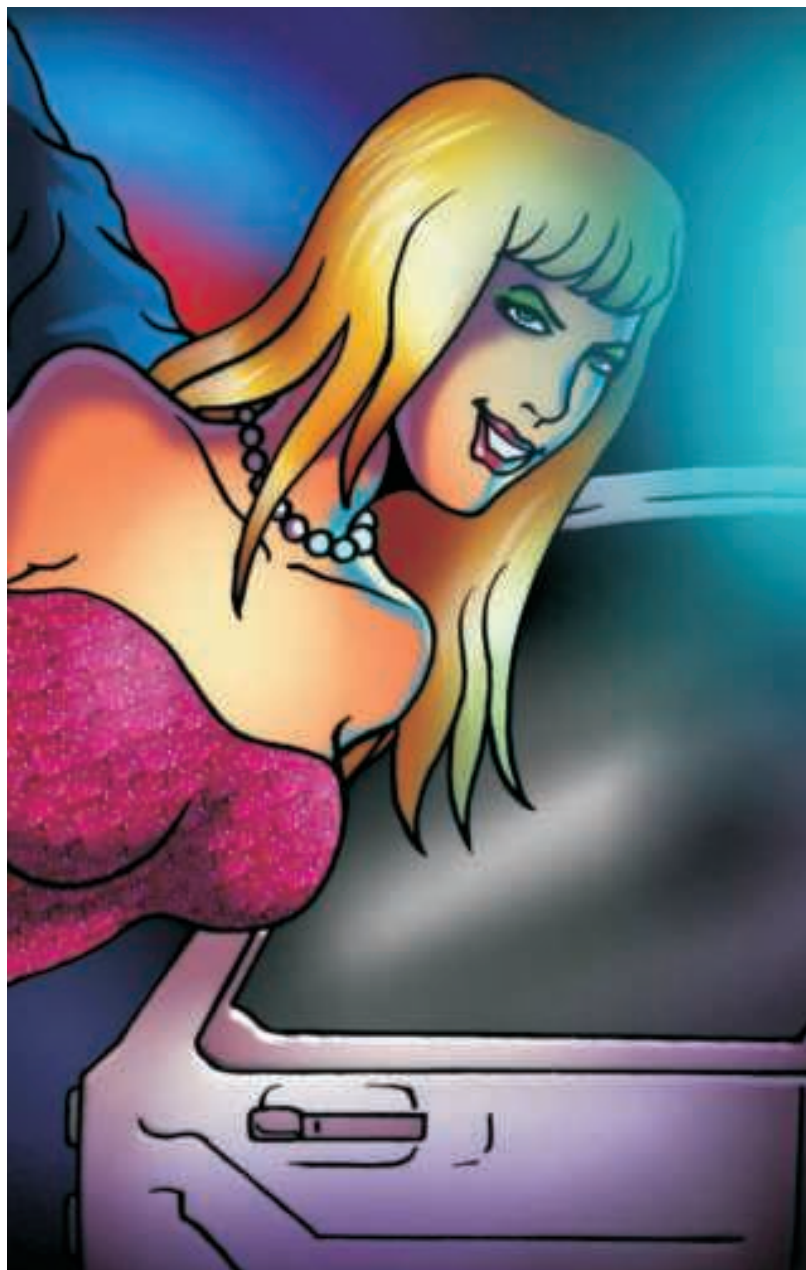
“We have to have it on the front page,” said Dave Richardson, his whole demeanor urging Brian to do that.

“That means both stories and the editorial,” groaned Brian Carpenter. “All devoted to a deviate who thinks he can waltz around Raybold in woman’s clothing.”

Tania Scott tittered and the others looked at her in varying degrees of surprise. “He isn’t the only one,” she said. “Jane and I do it all the time!”

I was always the quiet one in the editorial conferences. It kept me out of trouble with the boss. But even I had to smile as Brian got redder and redder. “Mike!” Brian Carpenter snapped suddenly. I wished I hadn’t smiled so broadly. “Write me an editorial on ‘Morality’. Keep it brief. A snap at the Council, a sneer at the doctor, you know the drill.

“Jane, the doctor’s arrest will be the backup story we’ll let run onto the back page. Sorry, Tania, less room for you because Dave has to write up the Council doings. Oh, you got it. Good man! Goshdarnit!” Brian had sworn a lot in his younger days but, with his niece to report back to his wife about him, he was careful now about what he said in front of his ‘young and corruptible’ staff. “This is going to take up most of the news section of the paper!



“Here, Mr Little,” that was me, “edit this stuff for me,” said Brian, getting up, signalling that the conference was over. We reporters had work to do.

“I’d better read what you wrote,” I said to Jane with a sigh, taking the copy from her. I smiled at the picture at the top of the page. Jane would have taken that herself. It showed a good-looking woman in a pearl necklace, dressed in a pink, two-piece suit, a blonde wig, surely, and pink, leather high heels. One of the Sheriff’s deputies was actually holding the door of a car open for ‘her’. She was smiling her thanks from a beautifully made-up, female-appearing face.

I whistled to alleviate the strange tension about me as I looked at the picture. Jane smiled at me and handed me the caption to go with the picture. ‘Doctor Joseph Linton leaves the Court House after the Guilty verdict,’ it read.

I scanned the article, glancing back at the woman in the picture several times. Under the heading, ‘Doctor Arrested’, I read Jane’s words back to her, “The Court House was packed on Wednesday last as Doctor Joseph Allan Linton appeared in Valley Court on charges laid under the five year old Morality Code. Perhaps the most sensational aspect of the case was the appearance of the twenty-eight year old doctor in the dock, dressed entirely in women’s clothing.

“So effective was Dr Linton’s disguise that Sheriff Hubert Cord felt that he had to assure Judge Emily Cortwright: ‘This is a male person’. Linton, dressed ...” I paused and omitted the detailed description and the stores which sold such lovely, feminine clothing, “... was expertly and femininely made up. Later, it was learned that a female employee of the Sheriff’s Department had assisted Linton in preparing for his court appearance as a woman.

“True?” I asked Jane, grimacing as she listened to me. When I was acting as the editor, which we all did, unattributed, for Brian, the ‘Editor and Publisher’, I always read copy back to writers. It was how we caught errors in expressions and altered or tightened up the prose we’d written. We were all used to working that way now.

“Oh yes,” Jane said. “And Sharon Thomas, the rancher’s daughter, it’s her car in the picture, was

there to meet Julia and escort her away from people shouting to her.”

“Hate stuff?” I asked.

“No,” said Jane. “That was what was so weird. They were telling her to hang in there and not quit. Most people, despite what my uncle says, seem to want a doctor in the Valley, a competent one, and don’t care if he dresses like a chipmunk, male or female, so long as he gets the job done.”

“Linton,” I read on, “who did not defend himself, was known at the Garth Tavern as ‘Julia Holmes’ and might have continued in his role as a woman in that place had it not been for a persistent drunk who ‘tried to pick her up,’ in the words of waitress, Claudine Phillips.

“Questioned on her attitude to Linton, on discovering that ‘she’ was a man, Phillips testified, ‘It doesn’t make any difference to me.’

“Noting the lack of a defence, Judge Cortwright found Linton guilty of impersonating a female in a public place and reserved sentencing for a month.

“They let him go?” I asked in astonishment. “As a woman, in women’s clothing, which he’d been arrested for and was on trial for, he was just allowed to waltz out of the courthouse?”

“Ironic, isn’t it?” said Jane, grinning like a school-girl.

Dave Richardson joined us as we looked at the picture of the blonde woman, entering her car. “Your picture, Jane,” he said pleasantly, “goes over your column and beside mine which has the headline under the masthead.”

Jane showed no emotion as she looked at the banner, ‘Valley Council in Bizarre Decision’. Dave’s by-line was right there, first on the local newspaper.

“In a nutshell,” said Dave pleasantly as I began to calculate the column inches that would be taken up with Dave’s writing, “it was ten to two to repeal the whole Morality Code.”

“Who was the most for doing that?” asked Jane.

"The usual suspects," said Dave. "Tom Beman, he's got the gay quarter in his ward after all, he said that the attire, that's the word he used, of any person was entirely the choice of that person. Lois Slayton, you know how she influences other women, felt that 'public opprobrium', whatever that is, would keep men like Julia off the streets. Personally, she said, she saw nothing wrong with a man dressed as a woman so long as it was tastefully done.

"Slayton proposed repealing the Morality Code completely. Beman called it 'barbaric' in seconding her. Main opponent was Greg Jara, he's got mayoralty ambitions, but only he and Tom Wayne voted against it in the end.

"There's a press release from Jara today, a first for the Valley, I think," said Dave with a grin at us, his fellow reporters. "I can agree," he read from a hand-out, "that the Valley can ill-afford to lose its only qualified doctor but condoning the sickness and depravity of Saturday's occurrence, of a man, dressed in women's clothing, wig and even undergarments, expecting to be treated in a place of business as a woman, all of this I can never condone."

"How long did the meeting go?" asked Jane, scribbling notes to herself. 'Must interview Julia', I read from her upside down writing.

"One a.m.," said Dave with a yawn, "But they'd started at six. Then, Jara made the motion, to uphold the Code. Grandstanding all the way. Lewis," John Lewis was the Councillor serving as Mayor as well, "called the vote and they had to take it again because it took them all by surprise. Council couldn't believe what they'd done. Lewis insisted that everyone be sure they understood what they were voting for and called the vote again. Only then did he order the vote recorded. As I say at the bottom of my article, the decision was applauded by the audience but there weren't that many left. Oh, Tom Beman gave me a letter for publication but we're publishing one from his wife, Ellen, this month, aren't we, so we may not use it."

I scanned Tom Beman's letter quickly. '...shocked in recent months by continual attacks on Valley Council ... Your sensational style of journalism doesn't suit the Valley ... You'll be surprised how liberal and tolerant we are here ...'

His wife's letter was praise for the changes of late. '... I like it. The whole family just rushes to see who can get *The Queen* first. And we love your editorials!'

"Oh yes," I grinned at Dave. "We have to use these in the same letter column this month. Oh yes!"

It took me a long time to put together an editorial that Brian would sign off on. It was horribly brief: "The Valley Council did it to us again. Just because some sick, young man wants to get dressed up and play girl in public, the Council has to repeal the Morality Code that protects us here in the Valley from the decadence of the big cities.

"Think about it for a while. We know we need doctors - and we couldn't get one for two months after Doctor Keith quit - but would you let your young son be attended to by some painted-up, bewigged feller in a skirt? If you would, you'd have to be queerer than he is.

"That's our opinion."

"You look glum," said Tania strolling by my desk with her column and a photo as well, professional, glossy, and black and white. I smiled at the heavily made-up, pouting woman in a strapless, black evening gown. Her long, black hair flowed down her back as she clutched her microphone, her lipsticked mouth open to reveal her lovely teeth as she began to sing.

"She looks good," I said. "Where's she working?"

Tania let loose a peal of laughter. "The Garth Tavern," she said. "It was why Julia Linton went there, I suppose, to hear your girl friend here sing. You should go yourself."

I grinned and wondered if I could persuade Jane to go with me. She was smiling pretty nicely at me lately. I'd suggested outings before. She'd always said that she would love to but something always stopped her in the end. I bundled the editorial and copy together, heading in to see Brian and discuss the local news edition with him. Whoever wrote the editorial had to do that.

"What's this?" asked Brian right away, turning to Tania's long column.

"It goes with the picture," I said, leaning over my boss's desk.

"Mr Jackie Ray at the Garth?" asked Brian reading the headline on Tania's work. "Mister? Have you read this, Mike?"

I felt my throat go dry. I seized the paper from Brian and read Tania's prose for the first time: "With the recent episode at the Garth fresh in mind, it hardly seems that a review of female impersonation should be complimentary.

"But you have to see the dazzling, delightful, Jackie Ray at Garth's before you make up your mind about not handing out compliments or slinging brickbats.

"Jackie is superb as Cher, Raquel, or any of the sexiest girls you've ever imagined you could be. After the first change, you even forget that Jackie is a man! We were actually disappointed when he took off his wig and broke the illusion to receive his well-deserved bows.

"The bands at the Ellis Ballroom and Franco's are tame after the sultry, sophisticated and feminine performances by Jackie Ray. Neither of the other shows has a lead singer, with, let's say it frankly, with Jackie's sex appeal as a woman."

"You're not going to print that, I guess," I said, looking once more at the picture of the gorgeous woman in the evening dress.

Brian tapped his pencil on his teeth. "Advertisizing, isn't it, in a way," he mused. "Leave it with me."

I hated Brian for what he was about to do, but Carpenter did pay good wages. I knew that my boss, the publisher of the only local news outlet, would be phoning the owners of the Garth who'd soon be paying ad rates for having the column run in *The Queen of the Valley*. I glanced back into the Editor's Office, the layout I'd done left with Brian. He was smiling as he spoke on the phone. He lifted up the picture of Jackie Ray to see 'her' more clearly as he spoke to whoever was on the other end of that call.

\*\*\*\*Volume 23 Issue No. 814 April\*\*\*\*

“Have you read any of the letters we’ve been getting this month?” I, cub reporter, asked Jane as we waited again for Brian to finish his phone call and start the editorial conference. That was the way I felt about myself and what I was doing at the paper. It was making me feel, well, very bitchy.

“Brian had me counting them,” said Jane sympathetically. “Over two hundred letters where we normally get between two and ten? How many will we publish, three, four? We should do a double column.”

I nodded to Jane’s uncle who was hanging up and waving us into his office. “And cut down on ad space and revenues?” I asked her quietly with a smile.

Tania and Dave joined us with coffees while Brian seemed in an expansive mood. “We sold out the whole local run last month,” whispered Tania mischievously to me. “Beats copy-writing Washington and New York articles, doesn’t it, Mike?”

“What do you have there?” asked Brian, seeing the photos in Tania’s hand. Tania smiled mischievously and spread the set over the desk so that we reporters could see what she’d brought in with her. The photos were of five young girls, in black mini-dresses, long hair, wild earrings, all long legs, dark stockings, high heels and high, prominent, young girl breasts.

“You’ve seen the classified ads the Garth Tavern’s been running for the last five months or so, for new waitresses,” said a sparkling, laughing Tania Scott. “Well, with Jackie Ray up there on stage doing female impersonations, what do you think a smart operator like Al Bass would do with a need for waitresses and a female impersonator pulling in the crowds? Can you spot which one of these girls isn’t a girl at all?”

Tania giggled as all of the others picked up photos and stared at them. “This one,” said Brian, pointing to the dark-haired girl on the right side of the photo. She had the shortest hair, even though it was curled and waved about her ears and neck. In silhouette, her figure, though, was impressive, her little skirt flaring out from her tush, her breasts partly obscured by her arm, but her dress definitely tented out in front of her.

“Must be the blonde next to her,” said Jane with a smile. The longhaired blonde faced the camera, legs wide apart, her makeup heavy and exquisite. She leaned forward to show off definite, female breasts. “She’s just showing them off too deliberately. They can’t be real, can they?”

Tania smiled and looked at us male reporters. “The second from the left,” said Dave Richardson. “Look at those legs! Look at the way she’s posing. And all that long, platinum-blond hair. It can’t be real, can it? I’d go for her for the same reason as you, Jane. She looks so real, the most real of the bunch. So, she must be the guy!”

“Mike?” asked Tania. “What do you think?”

I shivered more than a little as I looked at the girl on the left, taller than the girl on the right, which made me want to choose her. She regarded the camera seriously, just a slight smile on her face, demure and very pretty. The smallest girl was in the middle. She had bangs and a ponytail. Her eyelids were dark pools of makeup. She’d turned in silhouette, as well, so that her rounded tush was most evident. She had the most girlish of all the girls’ bodies.

I was about to choose the girl in the middle when I saw the gleam in Tania’s eyes. “This is a trick, isn’t it?” I said and suddenly knew what it was. “It’s all of them, isn’t it? All of these girls are really boys.”

Tania’s peal of laughter and the gasps from the others proved that I’d hit the nail on the head. “They loved posing for me!” Tania said in her excited, enthusiastic way of talking while Jane looked at her, mouth agape, as if Tania was crazy. “And it’s not against the law any more! From the left, that’s Debbie, Cindy, the blonde one, really gorgeous, Mary Lou, the small girl, Annette, with the boobs, and Helen, with the shortest hair.”

“Why do they do it?” asked a bemused Dave Richardson, still looking at Cindy, the ‘girl’ he’d chosen to be a boy.

“Cindy, the one you’re looking at,” said Tania, “is eighteen and in high school. Yes, right here in the only high school in the Valley. I asked her that question, Dave, and she said it was all for a giggle. She said that all the girls she serves, girls, notice, they all

want her phone number but they'll only go out with her if she's in drag. I gathered from her that, on her nights off, and after work, she never goes home alone.

"Helen on the right, confessed his real name is George. He told me he hasn't been out of girl's clothes in two weeks. He says his girl friend won't let him. She's even bought him a nightie to sleep in as well. Anyway, if you're interested, guys and girls, you can meet these pretty queens at the Garth where they're still hiring!"

"So that's your entertainment column this month?" asked Brian J Carpenter nastily. Tania nodded happily.

"Everybody will read it!" Tania said. "I wonder if we should run the picture as a contest. Which one is the boy? Answer next month!"

"How will you pay off the winner?" I asked. "Every answer will win the question you just asked."

"We're not doing a contest," snapped Brian.

"Would be fun," murmured Jane but her uncle ignored her.

"Dave," the publisher said. "You got the lead with Council again and Jara's latest stupidity. Can we background how such a motion ever got passed?"

"He grandstanded and they called him on it," said Dave Richardson bluntly.

"But it was a protest motion," snarled *The Queen's* publisher.

"That was what Jara said but the ladies of the Council ..." said Dave.

"And Tom Beman," put in Jane.

"... decided to teach him a lesson," Richardson went on. "It was seven to five. Effective this week, only female attire will be provided to all Council employees. It will also be compulsory to wear the so-called 'uniforms'."

"Why didn't Jara take back his motion?" asked Jane.

“He didn’t think for one minute it would pass,” said Dave with a grin. “He was just trying to show that, without the Morality Code, all sorts of stupid motions could be made and it would be awful if they passed. Those are his words, by the way. So, he proposed the stupidest motion he could, to embarrass his opponents, and show how clever he was, but it’s boomeranged on him. It actually passed Council and now it has to be a year and a day before it can be rescinded!”

“It applies to policemen as well?” I asked with a grin, thinking of some of the burly men I’d seen on the streets directing traffic and how they’d look in a skirt and woman’s uniform.

“Has to,” said Dave with a grin, clearly thinking what I was. “They’re Valley Council, county employees. It will be hilarious if they go along. But the spokesman for their association said there’s no way they’ll obey such a law.”

“I can’t believe what the Mayor said,” mused Jane.

“If any employee does not meet Council dress code rules,” said Carpenter, reading from the memo on his desk, “they won’t have a job with Council.’ And this with Valley unemployment for men at twenty percent.”

“The Ladies’ Auxiliary sent a congratulatory message on repealing the Morality Code,” said Jane, unable to hold back her smile. “That was quite a meeting. Everything but fisticuffs and hair-pulling between Donna Leslie and her Vice-Chairperson.”

“She sent us a letter, Donna Leslie,” said Brian Carpenter. “Edit out the name-calling and four letter words, Mike, and we’ll print it.”

“I’m on editorial and letters again?” I asked, ag-grieved at another task. I still had to finish the farming reports that I’d been stuck on all week.

“Until this thing blows over as it’s bound to very soon,” said Brian J Carpenter, ignoring me. “I give it another two months, tops, to be selling papers for us. Still, we might as well report it all, straight-faced and straight up, while it lasts. Did you get a new picture of Linton, Jane?”

“Definitely,” said his niece. “A hundred other people offered me their shots as well. I told them to send them in and, if we found a good one, we’d print it at usual rates. The ones we don’t choose we’ll send on to Julia Linton.”

“That’s what we’re calling the doctor now?” asked Dave Richardson in surprise.

“At least until my interview with him for next month’s issue,” said Jane Edwards with a nod. “Let’s be nice to him and not give Julia a reason to bale on me, right? We should do an extra print run next month, Uncle. It’s going to be a sell-out, no matter what I write, with the photos I’ll get of him.”

“Put a picture of Julia on the front page, Mr Little,” said Brian to me, “and, Jane, do a piece on the judge’s decision to free her.” He grimaced. “I can’t call someone who’s named Julia, ‘him’. Maybe we should keep on with Joseph and Joe for a while until you do your piece, Jane.” He shivered. “I don’t envy you. Sitting down with a guy who’s simpering all over you and pretending he’s a woman.”

“I’ll just think of him as one of my girl friends,” said Jane, rolling her eyes to me. “Or my sister. It’ll be all right.” She slipped a short column and a photo to me. I looked at it in surprise. ‘Linton Freed’ said the headline she was suggesting for the piece.

“Wearing an off-the shoulder, orange dress and with a new, waved hair style,” I read as I sat back at my desk, the meeting over, “Dr Joe Linton was released unconditionally by Judge Emily Cortwright at the sentencing part of his trial for breaking the Valley’s Morality Code.

“Smiling, the judge told ‘Julia’, the name that Linton prefers, and used throughout ‘his’ trial, that, in the light of the Valley Council’s decision to repeal the Morality Code, she, Julia Linton, was released.

“The courtroom, filled mainly with women, broke into applause which led Judge Cortwright to ask Linton if he-she enjoyed his new role, as a woman of the Valley.

“Dr Linton nodded and murmured a soft, ‘Yes’. The doctor has promised *The Queen of the Valley* an interview for next month’s issue.”

The letters were running 185 to fifteen in support of Julia Linton's right to dress as 'she' pleased, I noted in amazement, wondering why the same letter writers were also in favor of the compulsory new dress code for Council employees. It seemed inconsistent to me that Council employees shouldn't have the same 'rights' as Julia Linton in dressing as they pleased but I couldn't find a letter to match my opinion. Maybe I should put it in an editorial.

I had to print Donna Leslie's diatribe. Brian had told me to. I looked over Jane's account of the Ladies' Auxiliary meeting. It had obviously been a barn-burner. The Auxiliary was the main financial prop of the Clinic that Julia Linton worked for. The Chairperson, Donna Leslie, had called for the ouster of Doctor Joseph 'Julia' Linton but her Executive had refused to go along.

Instead, the group supported Lois Anderson's counter-proposal "to commend Dr Linton for the high quality of personal care he's brought to the Valley." Donna Leslie had then launched a scathing attack on the male doctor who'd dressed as a woman, claiming all sorts of perverted practices on his part, but the rebuttal to all that by Lois Anderson had been deemed 'highly effective' by Jane in her column.

Lois Anderson had made the point, which surprised me as I read it, that Julia's cross-dressing was well known to many women, and probably to many men, as well, in the Valley. Julia could not have maintained his deception without the help or tolerance of others. His forays in public had not impaired Julia's effectiveness as a doctor. On the contrary, most women thought him easily superior in care and attitude to the twenty or more male previous doctors the Valley had had to count on over the last ten years.

Even the Executive had supported Ruth Bentley's comment that the Valley would be foolish if they lost a doctor of Julia's obvious competence, Jane had written in her article.

At that point, the stormy resignation of Donna Leslie had brought about a screaming match. Amy Collins had taken over the chair. It was she who recommended that congratulations be sent to the Valley Council on repealing the Morality Code.

“What will they think of the new dress code when they meet next month?” I asked myself as I turned on Donna’s letter and edited it. It was still pretty vitriolic when I’d finished with it.

“Dear sir:” the letter now read. “How can any normal person state that they would like to be handled and examined by an effeminate pervert? How can we allow our children to be treated by a person like ‘dear Julia’, as Lois Anderson refers to Joe Linton? The effect of the Ladies’ Auxiliary decision not to support its leadership will soon be seen in the perversion of the Valley’s youth. Mark my words. Donna Leslie.”

I didn’t have far to read in the heap of mail before I found a rebuttal to Donna Leslie. “Just because someone likes to wear feminine clothing doesn’t make a man queer as you suggested in your March editorial. I know many men who wear feminine lingerie in private. It makes them feel good. Yet they are all fine fathers and husbands. You must learn to distinguish between innocent, harmless pastimes and the narrow, intolerant practices of some Councillors. Janet Knudsen.”

“Julia’s fan mail,” I chuckled to myself. “I wonder what this Janet and her husband get up to in bed. Panties, indeed. I bet that’s not all and not so innocent, dearie!”

“Talking to yourself again, Michelle!” said Jane Edwards as she whisked past, more copy in her hands for the other sections of the monthly we all had to correct and customize for the Valley.

I flushed at what she’d called me. No, don’t explain, I thought. I just had the editorial left to do and the display ads to mount. Hmm, I grinned as I looked at the pretty dress in the ad for Melanie’s, a boutique on Raybold Avenue itself. ‘Sale on all large-sizes’. ‘Discounts for Council Employees.’ Oh sure, always some enterprising entrepreneur ready to make a quick buck. Should have announced it as an early Halloween Sale, I thought with a chuckle.

Okay, the Linton Affair, I thought, roughing it out as a title. “It seems almost impossible for one man ...” No, Brian is supposed to be writing this, I thought, and scratched out ‘for one man’, and rewrote, “that the arrest of one pervert could so upset a sober, sensible community. The unbelievable response of the

Valley Council to the discovery that Julia Holmes was really Joseph Linton has brought about change in the ground rules for the sexes that have existed since time immemorial.”

I paused and shrugged. Yeah, forget about the five years of the Morality Code. Let's make gender rules sound like Commandments, shall we?

“Men are men,” I wrote on, laughing to myself again. “Women are women –except in the Valley, where Joe is a cool blonde in a miniskirt. Obviously the floodgates are wide open. Read Tania Scott's column, if you can, without throwing up.” I felt as if I should be giggling like Tania herself at that one.

“Yet Al Bass,” I scrawled, “reports that business at the Garth is booming. Now, Council, in fit of pique, has threatened to pervert all civic government with its silly dress code. All employees in female attire indeed!

“Luckily, we all know that it won't happen.

“That's our opinion.”

Brian Carpenter smiled smugly at the editorial. “You better be right, Mike,” he said. “I don't want to be stopped by some hairy-legged cop in a mini-skirt. I'd die laughing on the spot.”

It might be a better paper if you did, I thought, just nodding to my boss and going back to my proper work on agricultural pricing, particularly of pork. Hmm, but those girls from the Garth Tavern looked nice. I'd have time to slip out for lunch and the Tavern was just across the road, wasn't it?

**\*\*\*\* Volume 23 Issue No. 919 May\*\*\*\***

Jane Edwards' face was flushed and she looked ready to cry. The copy of her long interview, set out in column inches as Brian Carpenter demanded, was slashed with red ink and ‘Cut here’ markings, worse than what he'd done to my first draft of the editorial for the last edition.

“We aren't going to print all this,” said Brian testily to his niece.

“We promised and we got an exclusive interview,” said Jane Edwards while we looked around Brian’s office, anywhere but at her. We all knew how she was. Her icy quarrels with her uncle, with all of us reporters, were legendary.

“All this stuff about the underwear he fancies,” began Brian Carpenter.

“I think the women who read the interview would be fascinated by Julia’s choices of lingerie and why she chose the panties she did,” said Jane Edwards. I stared at her, a hard lump, again, in my stomach and abdomen as Jane went on about why she’d asked Julia the personal questions she had.

“I think it’s important that people understand that Julia isn’t a transsexual,” Jane went on in her usual dogged fashion, refusing to accept that her uncle had spoken and that we all had to bend our writing to what he wanted. “She doesn’t think that she’s a woman trapped in a man’s body. She is in fact a man who discovered, when she was a teenager, that she liked dressing in women’s clothing and loved the way she was treated by other people.”

Brian snorted at that. “All this stuff about her dressing in her stockings and her lavender colored garter belt ...”

“She let me into her apartment and allowed me to watch her dress and make up like a woman. We spoke about why she was doing it and the thrill she got out of doing it,” said Jane Edwards. “It was a fascinating experience because she really does everything I do every day to appear as I do. Julia does the same feminine things, well, save for the cache-sexe, gaffing business, that she has to do to disguise herself. She learned that from a female impersonator, she told me, and she’s delighted at the flat front she presents. When she walked in front of me in her panties and bra, she looked just like a woman. She has all the gestures ...”

“We’re not printing that!” raged Brian at his cool niece. We reporters looked anywhere again. Brian and Jane waged a fierce, silent battle of wills for a minute. “You can start the article with Julia at her desk in the Clinic.”

I thought Jane would stubbornly maintain her argument but she didn't. "All right," she said icily.

"And the only picture of Julia Linton," said Brian in distaste, "is going to be the one of her sitting in the desk in her office. None of these, these, cheesecake photos!"

"I'll give them back to Julia," said Jane simply, stacking the photos of Julia Linton in various dresses, wigs and poses, back into the large envelope she'd emptied on the desk. I stared nervously again at the one in front of me. It was of a blonde woman, smiling at the camera, kneeling on a blanket at a resort somewhere, her black swimming costume seeming to frame a stunning, female figure.

"She's been doing this for a long time," I murmured nervously to Jane, who nodded at me, glowering at the picture I was studying.

"The interview will go inside," said Brian. "Dave's news from the capital about the Brampton road still not being converted to blacktop gets the lead. About time we got back to regular stories in *The Queen*. You get the editorial, Dave," that meant layout and letters as well. "Play up the layoffs because of the road. Tania, with all the room Jane's interview takes up, you're cut to two short paragraphs as Mike has two stories this month."

The others looked at me. I felt embarrassed and a bit of a hog but, what could I do? I'd been the only reporter free to follow up on both stories when they broke. Really, Tania should have been on the student story and Dave was our man at the Council House. He should have done the police story.

"Can I add that at the Council meeting," asked Dave Richardson evenly, getting what he wanted through courtesy, I heard in admiration, "after the rants about the road were done, Mayor Lewis refused to re-open or set aside the Jara Motion? Female clothing it is for all employees. There'll be advertisements for replacements for all who resign, or are fired, for not following the new policy."

"Tack it on the end," said Brian grumpily. "It's news, I suppose. No men in dresses on the front page if you please. Mike, you got a picture of Sheriff Cord and his deputies talking about what they refused to

do? We'll use that. *The Queen* will start looking normal, for once."

"If you show me yours, I'll show you mine," said Jane Edwards quietly to me as we went back into the press room to finish up the tasks we'd been assigned.

"This is straightforward," I said, handing Jane the short report headed, 'We'll All Quit! – Sheriff'.

"There's no way that we're going to be the laughing stock of the Valley,' Hubert Cord stated categorically." Jane read it aloud as I did for her writings. "All seven deputies will quit rather than do what the Council wants us."

"I like you starting with a quote," said Jane, looking up from the opener. "That's what Brian has cut out of my writing."

Jane read on aloud as we did all the time, knowing, like me, that if our writing sounded well, it would also read well. "And what the Council has done, of course," she read as I'd written, "has been to back up Councillor Jara's pique-inspired motion to purchase only female clothing for Council employees. The Sheriff's Department, most obvious of all Council departments, appears ready to resign en masse rather than wear the black skirts, stockings, and two inch heels issued already to each man."

"Really?" Jane asked, a bright smile spreading over her face. I nodded, feeling itchy all over as Jane turned back to my last paragraphs. She sounded so happy about the chaos about to descend on the Valley.

"It's disgusting, sick, perverted,' said Al Davies, accompanying the Sheriff with a morose Deputy John Conan as well. Davies showed off the contents of the suitcase sent to him from Purchasing. Besides the skirt and blouses, there were also bras, dark panties, slips, corsets and a makeup case for each man.

"As of 31 May,' said Hubert Cord, 'this Valley will be without any kind of police protection.' He received shouts of support from all the members of the Department who crowded into the press conference room at the Council House."

“Wow,” said a smiling Jane Edwards. “Have these guys seen the latest unemployment figures for males in the Valley? The new pig farms cutting back and laying off butchers and laborers? Brian’s right in one way. That’s much bigger news than men wearing dresses. And lack of a decent road still leaves us as isolated as we’ve always been up here. What’s your other story?”

“Oh, a kid got sent home from school, a boy in twelfth grade,” I said with a shrug, trying to be calm about it, but Jane reached over and took that copy from me, handing me her carved-up columns that Brian Carpenter had attacked.

“You get the easy, straightforward stories, Mike,” Jane said enviously with a sigh; then her eyes began to pop as she read the story that had fallen in my lap.

“Principal Mike Teller,” I’d written, “says that he has never seen anything like it. The redhead was most stylishly dressed in a knitted, green mini-dress. Her shapely legs were clad in green hose and her green high heels matched most fittingly. Even the little bow in her permed, red hair was green. But the girl’s name was George. George Danson, eighteen, works at night at the Garth Tavern where he is a waitress known as Helen.

“‘He didn’t see anything wrong with coming to school like that,’ said the perplexed principal. ‘And neither did the bunch of girls he came in with. But we’re not having that kind of person in this school.’”

“George Danson was unavailable for comment after the incident but many students were seething. ‘It’s his right to come to school any way he pleases,’ said Student President, Linda Emerson. She promised action by Student Council to protect the ‘civil rights’ of the student.

“A demonstration is planned, *The Queen* has learned, for the first week of June when the Valley Police will also be protesting and not at work.”

“Did you see the Classified Ad for the Garth Tavern?” asked Jane Edwards handing back my columns with an approving nod and a warm smile. “Wanted: waitresses, male or female. Costumes supplied. Applicants should be young and femininely at-

tractive. Expansion of the Garth Tavern means that a waiting list is being prepared.”

“That Al Bass doesn’t miss a trick, does he?” I asked, returning Jane’s smile.

“Al Bass,” said a scowling Tania Scott as she passed us. “What has he done now?”

“Written your column for you?” asked Jane with a sly smile.

“He could have this month,” snarled Tania. “He’s got all the advertising he needs anyway with the display ads of Jackie Ray. You know that she, I mean, he, is leaving for a gig in San Francisco in June. He’s added a Marilyn Monroe impression that’s dazzling!” Tania was back to her enthusiastic way of talking. “You should see him as Marilyn! Pity, but it’s bigger money in Frisco for Jackie, or so she, he, says.”

“So no more female impersonators?” I asked, wondering why I felt relief at that.

“You wanna bet?” asked Tania. “You know Al Bass. He thinks he’s found a gold mine in this female impersonation stuff; so he’s bringing in these two brothers. Here, read about it in my paragraph.” She pronounced the last word sourly where normally she would have said ‘column’ and not ‘paragraph’. “They’re called the Foxy Sisters. Al told me their show is wild! Ooo, I did love Jackie’s show. I’m really going to miss her!”

“Her?” I asked in amusement as Tania stomped off.

“Read my interview, what’s left of it, Mike,” said Jane frowning after Tania, “and see where I can spice it up a little, will you? Uncle Brian’s carved the guts out of it. Let me pop over to the Garth for one of those French coffees you like. Who knows, I might bump into your favorite waitress and bring her back for a photo shoot. That would spruce up your story, and mine!”

I’d been reluctant, to tell the truth, to go hunting down Helen, or George Danson, gollywobbles in my stomach at the thought of interviewing a boy, dressed as a pretty girl, coming on very quickly. It was a sort of relief that Jane would do that, track

down Helen or George. Editing Jane's prose was less stressful, wasn't it?

'I'm Glad It Happened' was the headline that Jane had given her interview. All the red ink meant that I started half way through with: 'The blonde woman who sat opposite me nervously twitched her long, red-lacquered nails over her pearl necklace. They were a perfect match for her little, black dress and dark-tinted stockings. As she moved, the soft rustle of silky, feminine underthings made us both smile.

'Her soft face, eyes outlined in light blue eyeshadow above mascara'd lids, her lips a crimson to match her nails, was definitely female. Yet this was the infamous Dr Joe Linton. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised.

'How had he felt at the moment of discovery, I asked, when he knew that he would be arrested?

"Sick." The voice is now soft and throaty, not a man's voice at all. The way that the bartender looked at me – as if I was something that had crawled out from under a rock – it made me cringe. Yet, twenty minutes before, the same guy had tried to proposition me."

'How actually where you uncovered?

"There was another guy at the table next to me where I was waiting for my girl friend, Sharon. He was drunk, I think, though he wasn't charged at all. I was on my own for the first time in the Garth. And this drunk, he eventually grabbed me and tried to kiss my ear. That was when my wig came off."

I looked up at her blonde wave, curling about her neck. (I find it impossible to write of this person as 'him'.) "Yes," Julia said. "I'm wearing a wig now; more securely, you can believe. I intend to let my own hair grow and it should be long enough for a decent set by the end of summer."

'Did Dr Linton intend to continue dressing as a woman, then?

"But of course," Linton's face became serious for the first time. "Actually, I'm glad all of this happened. Now I can be honest with everyone about who and what I am."



‘Did he hope to become a woman in time?’

‘“Of course not.” Dr Linton was vehement about this point. “I’m a man, all the way. And I know it. I like to be feminine but I know that I am not a female.” He laughed, low and huskily. “You’d better ask my girl friends if you don’t believe me.”’

‘Girl friends? Don’t you mean boy friends?’

‘Dr Linton was shocked. He stood up on his high heels, his red lips quivering. “What do think I am?” he snapped at me. (I see I left ‘her’ on one side to come back to ‘him’ at this part.) “I’m a transvestite. I like to wear women’s clothes. That’s all. I’m as attracted to women as other men are.”’

‘We were interrupted at that point by a young girl unknown to this reporter. She spoke to the doctor about a woman’s problem, quite naturally. Julia, she called ‘her’, gave the girl advice I would have given her. She took the tampons Julia suggested would suit her from Julia’s sample box and thanked Julia for her considerate advice. She wanted to ask about other women’s things. I think she thought that I was a nurse. She left quickly, however, when Julia told her that she, Julia, was being interviewed.’

‘Did she think it normal, I asked, for a man to spend his life in women’s clothes?’

‘Julia smiled. “Perhaps not,” she said. ‘But I intend to find out.’

‘What has happened to her practice at the Clinic, since her arrest?’

‘“Nothing,” was the reply. “I’m treated as I was before by my nurses. Of course, people are curious. But, after I assure them that it’s what I want, they seem prepared to accept me. Women have all kinds of suggestions about makeup, clothes, sales and such. Everyone is very helpful.”’

‘Why would people be that way to a femininely attired man like yourself?’

‘“Well, of course, with the Valley so out-of-the-way, I know, on the part of some, they are willing to put up with what they consider a harmless peccadillo, so long as I stay on as doctor. But others,’

the pencil-thin brows knitted, "I think that they are just genuinely tolerant of others."

"Will you resume your former political career, then?"

"Julia threw back her head to give a deep bellow of a laugh, the first sign of masculinity since the interview began. Immediately, she apologized. "I doubt there's any way," she said, "though I must have received a dozen calls asking me to run next March. But I think that's asking too much of the Valley, don't you?"

The rest of my time I spent following Julia through her workday. I must say that her efficiency and ability seemed little impaired by the makeup and the miniskirt. She was treated as a woman by all the men we met. Apart from a few wondering stares, by men usually, Julia Linton seems to have a job in the Valley as long as she wants it. As one old greenhouseer said, "Not only did you cure me, doc, it really boosts my blood pressure just to look at you."

"Dr Julia looked at me and winked. "Now you know why I'm glad it happened," she whispered. "My bedside manner has really improved. At least, some people think so." And she winked at me again.'

"Reading Jane's interview?" asked Dave, heading to me with a bundle of letters in his hands.

"It's really good," I said, shivers down my back at all that I'd read so avidly. "A typo here and there and it will be fine, as is."

"Then, help me with these letters," said Dave with a sigh. "I just don't know which to choose."

"Take one of either side of the argument," I said with a laugh. "I bet most are about female impersonators and Julia Linton, right?"

"Yeah," said Dave with a grimace. "I don't know how you can wade through all this stuff. Look at this one from a Lee Rowney."

I took it gingerly. "Dear sir," I read. "All we've had in your paper the last two editions are men in dresses, boys in tights, wigs and makeup, female impersonators and a promise of an interview with 'the

queen of the valley'. Is your paper ever well named! Cancel my subscription immediately."

"This set," said Dave, "is four times as large and are the opposite of that one."

I took one of them and read, "Dear sir: has the paper ever improved since you took over, Mr Carpenter. I think that you've handled Julia just right. It's all a giggle, isn't it? Now I've got all my neighbors reading your crazy paper. I can hardly wait till my next illness. Duane Feller."

"That's hardly a supporter," I said, taking another from the large pile. "Ah, here's what you want, Dave. 'Dear sir: your pillorying of a great public servant like Julia Linton is scandalous. I can live with the discovery that he's a closet queen. Why can't you? We'll still use the Clinic. Frieda Glassen.'"

"There, you've got your Letters column. Print those."

Dave Richardson pulled a face. "But she's not a closet queen any more, is our Julia?" he said. "She's more of a drag queen, now."

"Add a correction in an Editor's Note," I said with a smile. I was joking. But when I picked up the final edition of the local paper, there it was at the end of the Letters column, proclaiming Julia Linton to be a drag queen.

**\*\*\*\*\*Volume 23 Issue No. 1016 June\*\*\*\*\***

"I hate it, but it does have to be the lead story," said a frowning Brian J Carpenter. "It's all anybody is talking about in the Valley. How many have quit to date?"

"Ellen James Beman, Tom's wife, the City Clerk, told me that half the full-time staff has quit," said Dave Richardson easily, enjoying, I could see, being lead writer again.

"I heard they were going to modify the Jara Motion in Council," interjected Jane Edwards. "What went wrong?"

“Seven to five, the same as before,” said Dave with no trace of a grin. It wasn’t really a laughing matter any more. I shuddered, queasy about what I’d have done if I’d been in the shoes, high-heeled women’s shoes at that, of the employees who hadn’t quit, who’d obeyed the ordinances imposed on them. I hope that I, Mike Little, could have, would have, quit as some did. I shivered, thinking what I’d have done then, where to find any work.

I’d had to meet with Frank Cook, the Employment Services Director for the Valley Council. It had never occurred to me, past June first, that Frank, like all Council employees, would be dressed in a woman’s summer dress and low-heeled shoes.

I hadn’t dared to ask him what he was wearing beneath his dress, nor about his stockings or panty-hose. Well, Frank had looked at me aggressively as if daring me to ask. I, a supposed reporter, chickened out. I’d copied down the bad news he gave me. Unemployment was growing in the agribusinesses, the backbone of the Valley for so long. The cutbacks followed the decision to delay road-building into the Valley from our only real outlet to Brampton.

As a result, male Tyson High School students would have great difficulty finding summer jobs. Unemployment had reached twenty-five per cent for men which explained to me why I was looking at a man in a woman’s dress telling me that.

Yet, another irony, Council Departments had vacancies at every level if, when I asked Frank about that, you have the legs and stomach for it, he’d said, stalking away from me, his dress rustling and swishing, his high heels clattering on the marble floor of the Council House. He looked grotesque with his male face and balding head on the female-clad body.

“Not all the police quit?” asked Brian in surprise, looking over Dave’s lead story that we’d all heard about.

“I talked with Deputy John Conan,” said Dave, pointing to the passage in his article. “Gosh, he was embarrassed.” With Brian being on his anti-swearing campaign, all of us had to follow suit. “He was wearing regulation black stockings, pleated skirt and women’s hat. A few of the guys I’ve seen around the Council House, and one or two deputies, I hear, have

gone as far as wearing padded bras, makeup and wigs. They were provided, after all!”

Carpenter shuddered visibly in front of us. I felt like doing the same though Dave and the women seemed more interested than appalled at the pictures he had. There was a picture of John Conan, a picture I'd thought that I'd never see, of a man in a clearly, feminine hat, in a slim, black skirt and a blouse with police patches, giving out a traffic ticket, the people in the car laughing at him.

“This is a William Dennison,” said Dave, showing us a long-haired guy in a summer dress, the chest part really padded and making William have perky, female breasts. He hadn't done much with his face or hair but he was in high heels and stockings, anyone could see that.

“This is my favorite,” grinned Dave, picking up a picture of the female lifeguard, waving as she smiled to us from the diving board she was sitting on. Of course, she was in a bathing costume, but her figure was clearly female. She had permed her hair and must have shaved her legs really well. She must have because Dave was telling us that this was Richard Collins, although he was wearing a name tag that said, ‘Call me Pamela.’

“Some are getting into it much better than others,” said Jane.

“Oh,” said Dave with a grin. “May I use that as a caption for these pics? I think they'd look great on the first page.”

“Here we go again,” grunted Brian.

“Conan told me that he desperately needed the job,” said Dave as I felt a churning inside me as I looked at the range of photos he had. “John said he and his wife had talked it over. But with so many men having to wear dresses these days, they didn't feel it would be difficult.”

“Is it?” I asked, a little pounding in my head at discussing this openly with others, particularly these days with the way that our women reporters smiled at us men as the news rolled in.

“Conan said it’s terrible,” Dave said seriously. “People are laughing and giggling at him, a Deputy Sheriff, all day long. ‘If I wasn’t a cop ...’ he said as I wrote it down. Well, he didn’t finish that threat but I wouldn’t be laughing at a cop myself these days with the pressure they’re under.”

“Did you talk to these, these ...?” Brian had no idea what to call these men in dresses, particularly like Richard, call me Pamela, Collins.

“I talked to a Dick Shell in Accounting,” said Dave. “He turned up for work in a blonde wig, makeup, painted, polished nails, a padded bra and wearing everything underneath, he told me. He was laughing about it.”

“You’ve gotta be a girl to appreciate the treatment a girl gets,” Dick told me. “You’ve got to try it! I hope they never revoke this law. I’m going to enjoy this year!”

“Pervert!” stormed Brian but Dave shrugged.

“Gay, I think,” said Dave slowly, glancing nervously, I thought, around the office. “And ready to take advantage of the situation.”

“Real gays aren’t going to want this ordinance,” began Tania meaningfully, poking Dave. “They’re want their sexual objects to be men.”

“Some younger, cuter gays think that real men, whoever they are,” said Dave surprisingly, giving Tania a nervous glance as she rubbed his arm, “will be attracted to them if they make themselves into presentable women. They can do things with friends and lovers, just kissing on the street, for instance, that would have had them arrested days ago. But mainly, Tania, you’re right.”

“I finally got an interview with Lois Slayton,” said Jane, changing the subject and laying a photo, a head shot, of the Councillor we all knew was the leader of the opposition to repealing the Jara Motion.

“Read it to us, Jane,” said Brian grumpily.

“‘I really don’t see what all the hue and cry is about,’ said Councillor Lois Slayton, Monday night to the Ladies Auxiliary June Dinner,” read Jane most

forthrightly. “ ‘Half the Valley population has worn skirts all their lives. It’s no big thing!’”

“She felt there’d be no warping of masculinity by the Valley Council’s recent decisions. ‘Everyone does what they want to at home,’ she said. ‘It wouldn’t even have come to this if it hadn’t been for male pride and Councillor Jara.’”

“Everyone knows who and what they are, she told applauding women. Dress is purely arbitrary. The Valley in some ways has much to thank Julia Linton for. In just a short time, arbitrary distinctions between men and women and the jobs they perform could be alleviated for the better.”

There was silence as we all digested what Jane had written.

“The woman’s crazy!” said Brian Carpenter. “We have to make sure our readers know that in the editorial this week. Who’s turn is it to write it?”

All the others looked at me. “No!” I gasped.

“I’ve got the Tyson story to write and pictures to produce,” said Jane.

“It will be easier this month, Mike,” said Brian jovially. “I promised Greg Jara he could write a letter to us and explain himself. That will take up half a column, and we have a big display ad for *Jane Fisher’s* coming in, along with Quinlans and Melanie’s usual stuff.”

“*Jane Fisher’s*?” asked Tania eagerly. “They do all the wigs for the shows at the Garth and the strippers at the Roxy! Jackie Ray thought they were fabulous! They use real human hair wigs. They’re pricey but they’re great.”

We all looked at her dark hair closely and Tania burst out laughing. “Okay,” she said. “Yes, this is a *Jane Fisher* wig. But not one of you could tell before, could you?”

“Why all this interest in wigs?” began Dave Richardson. Then he stopped himself. “Oh yes, what am I saying? Same as the sudden influx of larger fitting garments at Melanie’s and Quinlans, isn’t it?”

“What are you writing about at Tyson?” asked Brian Carpenter of his niece but, if he expected to change the subject, he was mistaken.

“You know that there was a protest over a boy student being sent home for coming to school as a girl?” asked Jane. She put a large, glossy photo of a girl with a mass of blonde curls and waves in front of us.

The lovely girl was in a skimpy dress, so short that you could see the black panties she wore, peeping out over her mesh, fishnet stockings. She wore long black, evening gloves and huge, dangling earrings. She was heavily made up, her eyebrows thin, her eyelids dark, her mouth a soft, inviting pink.

“Well, this is George, in his working clothes at the Garth Tavern,” said Jane. “And this,” she showed three pretty co-eds, in short, mid-thigh skirts and sweaters, with pony tails and vivid earrings, waving at the camera for all the world like regular high school girls, “is George and his friends arriving at school for classes.”

“Sick!” burst out Brian Carpenter as he had once before.

“Tyson High School, the only one in the Valley,” said Jane, paraphrasing what she’d written, “has resembled any normal, all-girl high school this last month, save for one thing, half of the students are boys. Since it isn’t a crime any more for males to wear female clothing, the Student Council, led by President Linda Emerson, organized a protest to sending George Danson home because he went to school in a green mini-dress and with a bow in his long, permed hair.”

“That was in the last local edition,” said Brian, wrinkling his nose. “I thought that blew over!”

“It’s worse!” retorted Jane, shaking her head at me. I should have followed up that story but had passed it on to her. “Linda Emerson told me that Helen’s ‘civil rights’ were violated. Linda’s the one who dreamed up the protest in support of Helen, the name George uses at the Garth Tavern. Basically all the boys at Tyson protest by arriving at school in their sister’s or girl friend’s clothes. The real girls come in jeans and tee-shirts, leaving makeup, ear-

rings and bracelets, skirts and high heels, for the boys only.”

“They must look like a bunch of idiots!” snarled Brian Carpenter while the rest of us looked at Jane in shock.

“It took only an hour for the initial embarrassment to wear off, Linda claimed,” Jane went on with a smirk. “So, when George was kicked out again, they decided to keep the protest going. The boys are really getting into it, Linda says, and I agree. I went into a class. I couldn’t tell the girls from the boys unless I made a pretty girl talk. Then I could hear she was a boy.

“Poor Principal Teller! He’s got a school full of giggling, heavily made up, perfumed ‘girls’. Isn’t it amazing how the boys can imitate girls’ giggling?”

“What’s he doing about it?” asked Tania impishly. “Kicking all the pseudo-girls out of Tyson?”

“He can’t do that,” said Jane without saying why. “What he’s done is that he’s ended all male activities and replaced them with things like Beauty Care. The football tryout camp is Modelling and Cheerleading. Prom has been cancelled as the boys were all going to turn up in dresses. That’s got a lot of parents mad with him as you can guess. But the student protesters don’t seem to mind. They’re having fun on Raybold Avenue in the clubs, one girl told me. I think she was real but I couldn’t tell. Other girls agreed with her.

“Yes, Uncle Brian, the Tyson boys are calling Teller’s bluff! They turn up in dresses for classes. They’ve adopted feminine names and they’re co-operating in beautifying themselves. I didn’t see a hairy leg anywhere in that school when I was there!”

“That’s not a protest!” snapped an angry Brian Carpenter. “That’s a revolution! Close the school! Get the police to arrest the parents!”

We all looked at him, thinking what it would be like with some male, femininely dressed cop trying to get kids back to school in the clothes of the right gender.

“Teller refuses to back down,” Janet smirked even more. “Helen is still banned though she goes to

classes until someone on staff catches her and turfs her out. I think some teachers are sympathetic to her but I can't write it because I don't know for sure. Teller says this will all blow over! In September, everything at Tyson will be back to 'normal'. Linda Emerson told me to look around at the classes. That, she says, boys in dresses, is what the school is going to look like next year!"

"Wow!" said Dave Richardson. "Maybe that ought to be on page one, Brian!"

"No, no, no," said Brian Carpenter. "And don't use that heading, 'Tyson - An All-Girl School?'" he said to me. I thought it accurate and didn't have to look at Jane. She wanted that for her article. If Brian didn't see that headline and Jane's byline, he often missed what he'd forbidden, it would go as she'd written, as I'd edited the piece.

"Is the Garth Tavern putting in a display ad this month?" I asked Tania as it was all coming down on me again.

"You'd better believe it!" said Tania, sliding an advertisement across to me that featured two gorgeous women, one blonde and one red-haired. 'The Foxy Sisters' screamed a huge heading beneath the Garth Tavern sign. They had two shows nightly, at nine and at midnight, I noted. It was 'Great Entertainment' but nowhere in the ad did it mention that the women, big-breasted and female in shape and looks, one in a slitted dress that showed off lovely, women's legs, were female impersonators.

I had to take a deep breath to try and still the nervousness I felt looking at such gorgeous women. You just didn't see women like that, sorry Jane and Tania I thought, in the Valley. These 'Foxy Sisters' really put the women I knew to shame in looks and dress, or undress.

"Here's my column," said Tania, handing it to me, not to Brian. "Do with it what you will! You usually do!"

"We will," said Brian grimly. "Greg Jara's e-mailed me his letter, Mike. I'll run that off and give it to you. I'll want to see the editorial before you put anything out with my name on it. Oh, we're increasing our run by a thousand copies too," he added with a grimace

at us all. "We sold out the last issue and I expect we'll do it again. I've upped our rates for ad material. I'm starting to hope that all this foolishness doesn't end too quickly. All the fuss over female clothing is boosting our sales, our circulation and the value of the paper!"

I retreated, my face flushed, my heart beating heavily, from the 'editorial conference' with three tasks I'd hoped not to have to do for a while. I had to lay out this month's local edition. I had to proofread Tania's copy and I knew what she meant when she said what she had to Brian. It meant that she'd written a racy column and was about to fight tooth and nail to get it published as it was, without alterations. I sighed. Third, I had an editorial to write about men and boys in dresses and get it past Brian's red pen. I knew, this time, he wouldn't let anything slip by. Sorry, Jane.

"Well, the Foxy 'Sisters' moved into the Garth last week with a show that will, as they say, curl your hair!" Tania had written as an opening sentence. I looked at the heading she was using now. 'Entertainment by Tania' with Tania in a different font, size and boldface. Making herself out to be the star of the piece, I thought with a grin. As well she should. She did know the Valley's entertainment niches better than anyone else I knew.

"Perhaps the greatest difference between these two and the tasteful Jackie Ray," I read on in Tania's writing, "who left for the greener pastures in San Francisco last month, is that Jackie, no matter how graceful his movements and how feminine his disguise, never let you think that he was other than a man.

"The Foxy Sisters are quite different." I had to look at the pictures of them and note again that it really didn't say in their ads that they were female impersonators. If I wasn't reading it in Tania's copy, I wouldn't have known it at all. I'd have thought that they were female, exotic dancers if I'd looked at the display ad on the back of *The Queen of the Valley*.

"They never remove their wigs (if wigs they be)," I read with a tingle inside me as I looked at them. "They play constantly to the men in the audience. Both are vamps and coquettes, and spend more time sitting on the knees of men in the audience than on stage.

“With such close scrutiny, their true sex should be evident – but it isn’t. The Foxy Sisters pass as women on and ‘off’ stage. Their performance would be excellent as women – better than any to reach the Garth before – save for the nagging doubt that two guys just shouldn’t be so curved, so feminine and frilly, and so attracted to other men. They don’t let up once in their performance, singing all the familiar double entendre songs – *I Enjoy Being a Girl*, *A Boy Like You Deserves a Girl Like Me*, *It’s Raining Men*, etc etc. It’s a professional show – but disturbing!

“But I’d rather have a Foxy ‘Sister’ than the live entertainment at the Roxy. How do you review strip tease dancing? May it be enough to say that the guys who clambered up on the stage certainly enjoy being tantalized by Kelly Rogers, a rather cute brunette, who, though not phenomenally over-endowed, has a certain physical attraction in her well-planned routine. She’s at the new night club, the Roxy, this week.”

There was a display ad for the Roxy, I noted, but I didn’t see a picture of Kelly with it, though her name was printed there along with the ‘Sexciting’ message and the note that the Roxy was for ‘Discriminating Adults Only’.

I started to pick out letters for the *We Get Letters* column, remembering what Brian had said. I opened my e-mail. There was a long letter from Greg Jara, Valley Councillor. It just re-hashed what we’d already printed.

In the end, his letter read, “Your paper has given me a very bad press for my ‘pique-filled’ motion at Valley Council. On the contrary, I do not find the current situation the result of my motion. The economies of female uniforms over male, the ‘unisex’ trends of recent times, and the true desire of certain feminists and their allies to equalize the sexes in all respects (despite their lack of guts in presenting the motion that I contemptuously proposed for them) – these are the real causes of our present predicament. I intend once more to campaign for the position of Councillor – opposed to the degeneration and perversion of the Slayton-inspired Council.”

Wow, I wasn’t going to make that read better, that was a given. I skimmed through the mailbag, taking half the day. So many letters were really funny. But

one stood out, from a Lois Ray. It wasn't sent in for a laugh. Its subject was alarming.

"Dear sir," the letter read, "The events of the last two months just frighten me. My eighteen year old son looks like my nineteen year old daughter and dresses like her. My husband wears more expensive dresses than I do, courtesy of the Valley Council. My men are being turned into women by the government. Is it all a plot? I don't want to be married to another woman. I don't dare think what's happening to my son's sexual orientation. What can we do to put a stop to this madness? Sincerely, Lois Ray."

I had to add a note to that one. "Mrs Ray," I wrote in an Editor's Note. "The High School protest will soon be over and the Council has to be re-elected in March. Hang in there!"

"Wow," said Jane, coming over and looking to see how I'd arranged her follow-up story and the pictures of Helen and the new 'girls' at school.

"How'd you like to be in a household like that?" Jane asked me seriously. "One day, you're the perfect family, and the next, all four of you are vying for who can use the makeup mirror first. From the sound of it, if the son looks like a daughter, I'll bet it's because Daddy looks like Mommy. I bet he enjoys it."

"It won't last," I said shakily.

"You've been saying that for three months now, Mike," said Jane Edwards with a snort. "I don't think this cross-dressing phenomenon shows any sign of slowing down. You should have seen the girls at the High School who aren't real girls at all! You should really get on that in your editorial, Mike!"

"No one reads them, anyway," I said blithely to Jane. "All most people do is look at the pictures. I bet most will look at the Foxy Sisters and not even know that they're looking at men, at all. Same with your co-eds and Helen."

Jane made a face at me and I started work on the editorial. 'Female Clothing', I wrote as a title and felt a little queasy just looking at it. Well, I had to write about it and so I plunged in.

“So, Council did not back down,” I wrote quickly. “And neither did Sheriff Hubert Cord. With employment prospects so bleak in the Valley, it was almost certain that some men would break down and endure the ridicule of wearing women’s clothes in public.”

As I was writing that part, it occurred to me that there were men, transvestites, who must really be loving what was happening in the Valley. They had a society in Raybold, I’d heard of once, a long time ago, on a Halloween night. Someone had said, “There go the girls of the Maya Sorority,” as a bunch of large women in outlandish dress went clomping by.

I’d asked and been surprised that such a ‘sorority’ existed. I didn’t know who those men were but I did find out that those guys we’d just seen wouldn’t have been part of a transvestite sorority for sure. But at the time, I only laughed and said, “Sick!” to the girl I was with. The name came to me, however, and so I added that to the editorial I had to write.

“(But what a boon for the Maya Sorority!),” I wrote. “(That’s a group of transvestites who meet ‘secretly’ in certain Valley homes. You must be in heaven, girls!).” Brian actually laughed at this line when I read it to him.

“Surprisingly, however, as Acting Sheriff John Conan points out, people of the Valley have, since that first day, been very tolerant of their policemen-in-skirts. The shrug of the shoulder and attendance to one’s own business has always been a Valley tradition; it’s helped these men adjust to a totally unnecessary and stupid situation. Roll on the March elections!

“The sight of Council lifeguards, male of course, in pretty bikinis and pink, bathing hats, of police in dark stockings and clerks in cotton, printed summer dresses with red ribbon bows, hasn’t been pleasant but it has been understandable.

“The events at Tyson are altogether different.

“We can appreciate that George Danson broke no law in attending school in his green mini-dress – but standards are supposed to be set at school. Principal Teller is quite right. If the guys who are dressing in their girl friends’ clothes won’t conform, they should

be permanently assigned to Modelling and Baby care.

“That’s our opinion.”

“I didn’t know you agreed so much with me, Mike,” said Brian Carpenter as he approved the longest editorial I’d ever written. “Couldn’t have written or said it better myself!”

Jane laughed silently at me. We finally went to the Garth for a drink. Jane made a point at sitting at Helen’s table where the gorgeous blonde served us, her short, pretty dress with the small, puffy sleeves showing off her rounded neckline, smooth-skinned upper chest and padded, I hoped uneasily, womanly, breasts.

“Thank you,” Helen said, with a smile on her glossy, red lips. “You’ve said such nice things about me in *The Queen of the Valley*. I get such fantastic tips now! I was able to buy this new dress and some new lingerie after what I made just last night!”

“How, how did you learn how to talk like that?” I asked her, my throat dry just looking at ‘her’. Jane gave me the oddest smile as if she could read my mind.

“Delmonte’s,” Helen said seriously. “The modelling academy. It has ads all the time in *The Queen*. They do voice lessons. A lot of girls like me are in the classes. Girls go for other lessons, too. I’d love to be a model. Madame Delmonte says I could be if I put my mind to it. Oh, but the training is so expensive! I’ve so many things I have to buy! Being a girl is so much more costly than being a boy!”

“You should get yourself a sugar daddy,” said Jane, teasing her.

Helen flushed. “That’s what everyone tells me,” she said. “Do you guys know anyone like that?” She batted her eyes at me and Jane laughed out loud at her.

“Not this one, darling,” Jane said to Helen-George, tantalizing me. “He’s taken.”

\*\*\*\*\**Volume 23 Issue No. 1114 July*\*\*\*\*\*

“It’s true that a resort is actually going to be built?” Jane asked Dave as we waited to meet again as the ‘editorial board’ of *The Queen of the Valley*.

“Absolutely,” said Dave Richardson. “Biggest news story to hit the Valley in years. The man is coming in to visit with us, too, but, I have to warn you,” he gave us a charming smile that made Jane and me groan, “I get to be the one who writes it up!”

“With a by-line on the front page again?” I asked sourly. Brian was going to have to do something about that. All the ‘extra’ work in editing, compressing, arranging display ads, re-writing classifieds, and layout work, was done without attribution. I rarely had my name in the paper in the last six months; yet I’d written more than anyone else.

Brian came sweeping in with a tall, distinguished looking man and an older, greyer, balding man, Mayor John Lewis.

“I’d like to introduce you all,” said Brian Carpenter, “to Earl Davies, the chairman of Davies-Valley Resorts Ltd. These are the people who cover local news here in the Valley, Earl.” Earl Davies smiled as he was introduced to each of us in turn. His handshake was strong, very masculine. A slim, blonde woman came into the office and sat at the back, a briefcase of papers beside her as well as a laptop that she began to use right away.

“You people have quite a fun newspaper,” Earl Davies said with a frown, unrolling the last issue, from June, staring at the front page and the photos of the cop in a straight skirt and the boy in the girl’s padded bathing suit.

“Welcome to the Valley,” I said. Davies looked at me without a smile. I shivered and sank down in my seat. I hoped the guy was playing with me. If he wasn’t, this could be a very awkward interview.

“How many chalets do you plan to build, Mr Davies?” Jane asked smoothly.

“Two hundred and fifty to begin with,” said Earl Davies, making all of us sit up and take notice. We

got the sales pitch as Jane and Dave scribbled furiously. It was a brand new industry Davies was proposing for the Raybold River, just outside of town.

Davies' aide passed us plans for the development of the site, complete with artists' drawings of how it would all look. Davies did all the talking. He was enthusiastic about tourism as a new industry in the Valley. He showed us plans for swimming pools, tennis courts and stables along the river with a restaurant, nightclub, casino and bar in the first stage of building.

"There's so much unspoiled country hereabouts," Davies said. I had to raise my eyebrows at that. If the private agribusinesses had their way, we'd be overrun with pig and chicken farms. The ranches also had their feed lots. The Valley floor where we lived and worked was pretty spoiled in my opinion.

"There's all kinds of space for ATV and off-road exploration," Davies went on. "I have little doubt that we will be hiring out our resort for targeted groups in the very first year, beginning in April-May next year."

Mayor Lewis, of course, was enthusiastic about jobs and such. I was distracted by the slim woman in the business suit whose name I hadn't heard yet. She sat back and crossed her legs and caught me looking at her. She smiled and winked at me, as she turned a page. I realized that all that Davies was telling us was according to script.

"Hmm," grunted Brian. "About the dress code we're currently living with."

Both Earl Davies and his assistant smiled genuinely in amusement for the first time. "We're not going to be open for nearly a year," said Earl Davies. "I expect the absurd situation which now exists in the Valley will be resolved by then. I'm moving here as well," Davies said, putting on the charm and reminding me of Dave Richardson. "Renee, my wife, is over at the house we've bought ..."

"Larry Hobden's," put in a beaming Mayor Lewis.

"... on Raybold Avenue," said a smiling Earl Davies. "I have twin boys, sixteen years old, who'll be at Tyson in the Fall. Yes, I've been here many times before. I've hunted over the Gaynor Ranches and in

the Forestry Reserve. I want to bring back fishing and rafting on the river as I recall it when I was first here as a boy."

"What did he mean, targeted groups?" asked Tania as Brian led Mayor Lewis and the businessman off to the 'famous' Garth Tavern, as Brian called it.

"Probably a group of transvestites or transsexuals," I murmured, flashing my eyes at her. "Drag queen camps. They'd fit in so well with the Valley, wouldn't they, with what's going on here right now?"

The blonde assistant to Earl Davies had her hands on her hips and was staring at me as I finished speaking.

"Uh oh, Mike," said Jane in her teasing voice. "You just blew it for all of us, you louse. This lady ..."

"Eloise Waters," said 'this lady' in a lilting soprano.

"... is going to tell her boss what you proposed and he's going to pick up his money, his wife and twin boys and be gone from here!"

"She tells her boss just what he needs to hear," said Eloise Waters with a pretty smile. "He'd laugh if I told him what group Mr Little suggests we target. Renee, my boss's wife, really wants to get back to the country. She wanted Earl to buy a ranch which he's promised to do once the resort is built."

"It will be a pleasure," said Dave as the smug blonde left us, a pronounced sway in her walk as she went away, "to write this week's editorial. No drag queens in it!"

"If Brian says so," said Jane testily. "He might want comment on Julia Linton. She's back in the news again."

"What?" asked Dave Richardson, puzzled. "I hadn't heard ..."

Jane turned her computer to face the rest of us. It was the page for announcements and classifieds. "Just came in today," she said as Tania leaned over her shoulder to read.

"Announcement," said Tania, reading Jane's screen. "Sharon Thomas, of Gaynor Ranches, an-

nounces her engagement to Dr Joseph Linton, also known as Julia Linton, of the Valley Clinic. The happy couple intends to marry, 10 August, at the Council House Registry, Raybold Avenue. Judge Emily Cortwright will preside at the ceremony.

“Oh heavens, can you believe it? Sharon Thomas! She’s loaded with money and she’s going to be marrying a drag queen, the queen of the valley. I wonder what she’ll wear to the ceremony. I wonder what Julia will wear? Whatever can the Thomas’s be thinking?”

“That’s next month’s story,” said Dave.

“There’s Quinlans, ‘The Store with Everything’, too” said Jane with a smirk, stating the slogan that Quinlans had made theirs. “Now it does. Florence Payne confirmed it to me. Since June, Quinlans has been hiring boys as ‘shopgirls’, and with remarkable results, she claims.”

“She’s the Personnel Manager there,” I said to Dave and Tania who were looking puzzled. Jane tossed her column to Dave to read.

“‘We had to do something,’ Florence Payne said,” Dave read aloud. “‘We needed girls desperately but such is the taboo on working women in the Valley that we’re always understaffed.’ Taboo?”

“First I heard of it,” laughed Jane.

“There are at least eight boys,” Dave read on, “in the staff of thirty girls on Quinlans main floor. It was impossible to find out which was which and Mrs Payne explained why.

“‘We chose only the ones we knew could look and act like girls,’ she said. ‘They love their jobs and we help them in choosing their makeup and dresses, of course; but many of them knew quite a bit about wearing dresses femininely after the last weeks of school.’

“Marilyn, a pert blonde, the typical girl next door, is one of these boy-shopgirls. ‘I couldn’t get any job but this one for the summer,’ she told me. ‘My girl friend helps me to be convincing and no-one has tumbled to me yet.’

“Marilyn, not his real, female name, was met by his blonde, pony-tailed girl friend after work. ‘There’s nothing wrong with him,’ she said aggressively to me. ‘He’s just doing what any man would do, providing for his family. Besides, I really like him dressed up. I wish he’d stay this way all next year, too.’”

“That’s Quinlans, the biggest store in town?” I asked as Dave finished reading Jane’s article. “The trendsetters?”

“Which is why Brian might want to comment in his editorial,” said Jane to me, standing and heading for the door. “Want a French coffee, Michelle?” she asked me with a feminine pout. All this talk about female impersonators and Julia Linton made me the butt of remarks and jokes by Tania and her. Funnily enough, they never made jokes about Dave. Of course, he was much taller, good-looking and athletic.

Funny, though, Dave reciprocated in that he didn’t make passes at the girls as I did. Jane would go out with me, casually, after work even though it wasn’t a date, not yet. We hugged when I walked her home and had had a peck on the lips from her once.

“No!” I said as Dave came out of Brian’s office with the mailbag, striding purposefully towards me.

“You do a much better job at this than me,” said Dave. “You have the knack of pulling out just the right part of the message the letter writer wants to impart.” He flashed his charming smile at me as if I was a teenaged girl messenger. I’d seen them all go off dreamy-eyed when Dave smiled at them and signed for packages addressed to the newsroom at *The Queen of the Valley*.

“Flattery,” I said to Dave as Jane disappeared.

“Gets me everywhere,” said a grinning Dave, depositing the mail on my desk.

I had filler about jobs, pork butchers, greenhouse gardening, prospects for employment (very bleak) but I took the bag anyway.

As I expected, none of the letters were about any of the topics I had to write about as we got back to being a ‘normal’ newspaper. A hundred letters and all of

them were about boys in dresses! Just look at the one I'd set aside first.

"Dear sir," Cathy Melstrom had written. She was the daughter of a neighbor of mine, a popular girl with lots of girl friends, I thought. "After the last month at Tyson as an 'all-girl' high school, did you know that crime and vandalism disappeared? I already told my boy friend that I want him to stay in skirts. He's never been out of trouble before, been so kind to me, or been so hard-working. 'Janet' and I look good together as well in our matching mini-skirts. I hope others will follow Janet's and my example."

"They might," I said to myself and then looked around hastily. There was no-one in the office, though. Still, I had to contrast that with another letter but the only negative I could find was a note from John F Rennie. The Rennies were a well-known family in the Valley with several branches; there were Police deputies named Rennie and several High School 'stars'.

"Dear sir," John Rennie had written. "I'm out of a job because of the sick Council we've got here in the Valley. You'll never get me into women's clothes like the other perverts on City staff."

I felt like an editorial comment about the clothes not making the man but I resisted. Rennie seemed angry enough as it was without my piling it on me.

"Don't knock it till you've tried it!" said several letters. I chose one by Ed (Cindy) Rose from that group. It would agree with a fifth of the letter writers this month. "You wouldn't believe what it does to chicks when I put a little lippy on," Cindy wrote. "Mascara turns them wild and my miniskirt kills them. When I wore pantyhose, well, what a line-up! I'm not complaining."

Idiot, I thought. I had to choose a more literate letter to end with. Anne Jenkinson was something in politics. She'd run for Council, I think, and been defeated. She wrote a nice letter.

"Dear sir," Anne wrote. "How could you print such a negative letter as the one that you did from Mrs Ray? She'll find her husband softer, yes! But isn't that what we women of the Valley have always

wanted? My husband works for the Council and he looks just great in cotton prints. Of course, he won't do anything feminine after work, but I'm hoping that he'll read this and realize how much women's clothes have done to sensitive him to my needs. Julia has my vote in March!"

I arranged display ads for Quinlans and Melanie's, each featuring dresses and cryptic messages like 'Private Fittings' and 'Special Rates for all Council Employees on all lingerie and nightwear items'. I was grinning and getting a little hot as I thought of that when Jane came rushing in, a huge smile on her face.

"What?" I asked.

"You won't believe it," Jane said. "Forget all that pork and greenhouse stuff, Mike. Get ready for a hot news item! It's just happening. I saw the police cruiser outside the Roxy and, lo and behold, that stripper we have pictures of, that Kelly Rogers? She's being arrested with Joe Gibson, the owner of the Roxy!"

"You should have heard the screaming and shouting. I've sketched out some to start you off. Find the most salacious picture you can of that Kelly thing, Mike, and hold the fort. I'll call you with the rest of the story as soon as I can."

"We have a four o'clock deadline," I told her, looking around but there was no sign of Brian, Dave or Tania. Jane tossed computer disks to me.

"See you, love," she said, dashing off. "Thanks for making my work look great!"

I didn't even get coffee, I said to myself. The file on the Roxy had many salacious pictures of Kelly Rogers and other strippers. I wondered who'd taken such bump and grind pictures. I chose a frontal of the woman, in a g-string and long, dark tights that made her legs look good, the garters and bows really cute. Her makeup was excessive but she looked gorgeous, with small, elfin features.

I liked a woman with smaller, rounded breasts as well. Kelly's cute, rounded tush was attractive as well in the thong she was wearing. Other photos from the same shoot showed the tassels from her pasties

whirling as she held her arms provocatively, increasing the size of her breasts. I didn't find one of her completely nude and wondered why, not that we'd have printed it anyway, even with a black square over the vital part on display.

I put in Jane's second disk and began to transcribe her recorded voice to column inches. "The Roxy Theater," she said, "has become notorious for nude girls.

"Right here today, 14 July, Acting Sheriff John Conan with Deputies Cook and Laing have moved in to stop what Mayor John Lewis told me were 'lewd and lascivious' performances at the club.

"The stripper, Kelly Rogers, clad in g-string and fishnet stockings, was arrested here at the lunchtime show, along with Joe Gibson, owner of the Roxy.

"And then the fun began. Because, although it is still illegal for female strippers to give lewd performances, Kelly Rogers is not a female, her defence lawyer, Josephine Wyatt, told me, astonishing the female-dressed deputies who'd arrested 'her', stunning the owner of the Roxy."

Kelly Rogers not a female? I gaped at the ad I'd chosen from the Roxy file. There she was in a tinier picture, a thigh raised to strategically show off her garter belt, panties and stockings, her breasts in a low-cut bra. Kelly was smiling coyly at the camera as a caption read, 'You've never seen a girl like Kelly before!' Oh man, I thought in disbelief, was that ever true!

Just above the cryptic ad about Kelly was a picture of two sexy women in slit dresses that showed off their garter belts and stockings. Yes, the Foxy Sisters drew the eyes to them, their hair long and wild, their breasts being shown off, everything about them sexy and female. And they weren't women, either, even though the display ad didn't say anything about them other than 'Held Over for a Second Month'.

The phone rang. It was Jane.

"Now listen up, Mike," she laughed into the phone. "It's confirmed. Josephine Wyatt just made the argument in court. I think everyone here is blown out of their tiny minds! You should see Kelly with her

blonde hair all loose and looking so frightened. She keeps saying she's never been arrested before.

"But here's how the article should end," Jane went on. "Got it, Mike? I trust you to get this the way I'm telling it to you."

"I'm recording this," I told her.

"Good girl!" Jane said and laughed at herself. "Oops, sorry, Michelle, a slip. Good man, I meant to say."

Yeah, right, I thought. "Fire away," I said, a little huffily.

"Josephine Wyatt, defence lawyer," Jane went on, "told the court, in response to the arrest, that Kelly Rogers could not be charged under any Valley law. Wyatt argued successfully – you got that, Mike – successfully, to Judge Emily Cortwright, who agreed, ordering the release of both Rogers and Gibson.

"In earlier testimony, Acting Sheriff Conan stated that, in the performance he watched, he was very uncomfortable when Rogers sprayed whipping cream on her breasts and invited men in the audience to lick it off, she gyrating while they did so.

"Uncomfortable!" snorted Jane. "And he in a skirt and makeup, as pretty as me! Well, Judge Cortwright ruled out of order questions by Wyatt about whether Sheriff Conan's female attire was of more discomfort to him than Kelly's performance as a woman, ruling in favor of the motion to dismiss.

"I asked Joe Gibson if he knew about Rogers' masculinity, and Joe said, 'Absolutely no.' I asked him if Rogers would continue performing at the Roxy. Joe laughed and said, 'Absolutely yes.'

"That's all, Michelle. I'll try to talk to Kelly but she looks pretty shook up. Josephine is protecting her like a mother hen in any case."

"Hey" I shouted as Tania swept by, dropping copy on me. "Hey! Dave's the man for this month!"

Tania just waved to me and left. Well, her stuff wouldn't take long, I thought. As usual, she'd tailored her column to the display ads we had. Franco's Revuebar, featuring 'go-go' dancers, was opening on

Lower Glass Street. I sighed. Tame, in comparison to what I'd just heard. Franco's was having a 'Gala' opening with a cabaret at ten and midnight. Good luck to you, I thought.

The Ellis Ballroom was also advertising with us. Tania had written about that. "Went to the Ellis Ballroom this week, first in a long time," she'd written in the chatty way she did. "In contrast to the crowds jamming the Garth and the Roxy, the audience was quite sparse.

"Vic Perrone's orchestra had a new girl singer, a real girl to boot, Angela, who can belt out a hot number. The crowd at the Ellis is different from the Roxy or Garth Tavern. Here, boys are boys and wear pants and girls wear dresses. I heard one girl call it 'square' but the music is good. 'Straight' is a better word.

"At the Garth, it isn't unusual to see girls dancing with girls, such is the shortage of male figures in the place. Not only girls go to see the Foxy Sisters, of course. It's just so hard to tell, what with wigs, minis, false eyelashes, and feminine names who are the boys.

"Certainly, I've never been asked before, by so many pretty 'girls', to dance with them. I've given up asking 'What are you?' in the Garth. It doesn't seem to matter!"

\*\*\*\*\**Volume 23 Issue No. 1218 August*\*\*\*\*\*

The caption for the two white-dressed brides said it all. Both of them were beautiful as brides should be. Their hair was long and permed; maybe they were wigs but they looked good. Their dresses were identical. Each clutched bouquets of white roses in their similarly manicured hands, their nail polishes seeming to match. Each was exquisitely made up. I supposed that one of them at least was wearing padding and a shaping corset beneath her dress because they both looked so womanly in every respect on their wedding day.

'The former Sharon Thomas, left,' the caption read, 'and her husband, Dr Joseph Linton, right, after the marriage ceremony.' Since there were only the two of

them in the picture, it was clear that one of the brides was indeed a man.

“Would you dress like that on your wedding day, Michelle?” asked Jane Edwards, teasing me as she usually did.

“If you were my bride,” I said flippantly. “Well, I couldn’t let you outshine me, could I, Jane? It’s my big day as well. Who wants to wear black as if you’re going to your own funeral?”

Tania Scott, the entertainment writer for *The Queen*, laughed at the pair of us. “Just imagine,” she giggled. “If you were married in this dress, you could be lain out in your coffin in it as well. It would be the only time Dave and I get to kiss you, Michelle.”

“If it happens,” I muttered, my insides churning as I tried to be a good sport to their teasing, “don’t let your uncle kiss my dead body, Jane. It’d bring me back for sure and I’d have to marry you all over again!”

The girls laughed at that. The picture was to go on the front page. It would detract from the story about Tyson High School that was really important. Yes, there was prurient interest in the story of Sharon and Julia Linton’s wedding but it was a blip really to the growing ‘gender protests’ that were perplexing our Valley.

The bigger story was that Principal Teller and the male teaching staff of Tyson High School refused to be in their classrooms on the first teaching day in September as their contracts demanded. Who on *The Queen* had that story now? Why Dave Richardson, of course. I’d been the one to write the first story about Tyson and Jane had horned in on that. Now, Dave moved in on her. I was the one left out in the cold again.

Another month would go by and nothing with the by-line of Mike Little would be published. I thought of quitting but what would I do? The unemployment picture was frightening. I had nothing really to show for my time on *The Queen of the Valley* but unattributed writing or layout work.

I gloomily looked over Dave’s copy. He wrote factually. ‘Cause of the dispute is the Council Employees

Dress Code'. Everyone called that the Jara Motion. I inserted clarification in his stilted prose. Hmm, this was interesting, something I didn't know. Ellen James, the Council Clerk and Councillor Tom Beman's wife, was the source for the information that the teachers had received dress allowances to comply with the Motion. They'd pocketed the money, not required to wear female dress until school started in September.

I grinned. Like the rest of us, they'd probably thought all this crazy stuff was going to be over after the long break. But what I saw in the letters I edited was that the Student Council was gung-ho. So were the students, the girls for sure, to continue with the protest they'd started in support of George (Helen) Danson and 'her' right to wear female clothing to school if she wished to. It had nothing to do with what the teachers had to do, dress in female clothing themselves as they were Council employees, but it was going to make this year's school opening a real drag, heh, heh, heh!

Councillor Lois Slayton was the one spearheading the attack on the teachers, according to Dave's writing. 'There's no reason at all,' Dave had quoted her as saying at the last Council Meeting, 'why these employees should be treated differently to others in Valley Council employment, particularly since they've been receiving clothing allowances for three months when school starts.'

Tom Beman had supported her; he 'hoped there wouldn't be rigid enforcement of Policy' so that there was some ground for compromise. But a testy Mayor John Lewis had stated that 'a policy is a policy', no exceptions.

After that, I thought, what could a 'white-faced and shaken' Mike Teller, fifteen years principal at Tyson, do but resign. Now twenty-three of twenty-nine male staff had followed him, handing in resignations fast and furiously. No wonder the Classifieds advertised for teachers in all disciplines.

Ellen James confirmed that there were applicants for jobs at Tyson but whether male or female she refused to say. We should put the whole column in boldface, I thought. It was a real crisis. I wondered what our new entrepreneur would think of the whole thing, especially since Earl Davies had twin sixteen

year old boys heading into Tyson. I wouldn't have liked to be a boy coming up from Grammar School, either. I'd be under pressure to dress like a girl, apparently. I'd have squeaking, queenie teachers aping women in the way they dressed in the classroom. I couldn't have withstood that pressure on me when I was fourteen, fifteen. I think I'd have had to quit school!

On top of all that, what was the main news story of *The Queen* this month? Why Jane's interview with Kelly Rogers under the headline, *I Want To Be A Girl*, in huge boldface capital letters.

There were three pictures with the story, one of Kelly in the skimpiest of g-strings. I just don't know where 'she' could have hidden her male equipment in a device like that. In her apartment, she was dressed just like any normal girl, in a skirt and frilled top, her hair long and loose about her shoulders. There was a portrait of her, in makeup and with her hair styled, looking quite beautiful, her small features accentuating 'her' femininity.

"She came on stage," Jane had written, "in a backless, black evening gown. The musicians played a slow waltz and the stripper, a cascade of blonde hair caressing her bare shoulders, began to peel off her long gloves. The audience, half male and half female, applauded frequently as the dress, the slip, the heels, the garter belt, and the stockings were discarded with feminine grace and style. Then she removed her bra.

"It's always a shocker,' said Joe Gibson, manager of the Roxy, 'when the audience realizes that there's something inside the bra.'

"Kelly took off her bra to show her small, rounded breasts covered with tiny, star-shaped pasties. 'I hate wearing them,' said Kelly afterward. 'I feel it's cheating the audience.'

"The removal of her panties seems to take forever, the revelation of the g-string below a disappointment. But the act doesn't quite end there. Just in the second before the lights flash out into total darkness, she removes her g-string to prove that, yes, she, Kelly Rogers, is indeed a man.

“I’ve always wanted to be a girl,” says Kelly, looking cool and feminine in a straight, black skirt and green, silk blouse. That’s how I got started in this business. I’ve been practising at being a girl since I was five, at least. I used to sneak into my mother’s bedroom and dress up in her clothes till she caught me.

“When I could, I left home with nothing more than a couple of miniskirts, a blouse, a pair of panties and high heels. Things didn’t really pick up for me until I met Mel.’ Mel Jones is Kelly’s manager. ‘Mel was so good to me. He bought me everything a girl could want. He even bought me estrogen so I could start to fill out the bras he bought for me.

“Last year, I was developed enough for some people to start doubting I was a man. So Mel put me on the stage as a real stripper. I was really scared at first. But no-one caught on. Guys like me even more, which is a relief.

“The whipping cream trick I got from a real girl in Miami. I don’t like doing it. It makes me feel real funny, especially if a nice guy wants to lick it off but Mel likes me to do it.

“Now, the audience is calling for it even when I start my routine. So, I have to do it.’

“The second show, with the whipping cream trick, is about to begin. Kelly is dressed this time in an exotic costume, loosely based upon a bridal dress, a train of white satin from her hair, a veil, white stockings, white garter belt, frilled garters at her thighs, and white high heeled sandals. The skirt is short, however, and surrounds her with a mass of petticoats. She glosses over her lips, pouts, arranges her body in arch-like femininity and flounces off. The crowd cheers. It’s what they came for.

“Mel Jones is hard to find, but eventually I run into him in Kelly’s apartment. He emerged from her bedroom in a short, dressing gown. ‘Yeah, I live with Kelly,’ he says, watching my reporter’s eyes. ‘She’s not a bad chick.’

“It was Mel’s idea that Kelly should strip. She’s on hormones. When there’s enough money, she’ll have a radical operation. ‘We’ll probably get married,’ says Jones casually. ‘We’ve been hanging out since she

was eighteen,' he grins. 'She's been through some changes, that kid, and she'll go through more.'

"Kelly arrives home, flushed and ill-at-ease on seeing this reporter talking to Mel Jones. She's tired after all her shows and wants to go to bed. Jones tells her to go ahead and not to wait for him. She flounces off, returning in a fetching, see-through, short, black nightie with pink ribbons. She's the one to see the reporter out.

"With Jones' arm casually about her waist, Kelly bids a husky, 'Good night,' before closing the door firmly on any further enquiry about her."

I finished planning out Jane's work and went into the publisher's office where she was busy on the phone. "You know, Jane," I said carefully. "I don't think that your uncle will like this whole article on Kelly Rogers. For one thing, it's so long and takes up ...

"Then he shouldn't take off on a holiday and leave me in charge, should he?" Jane snapped at me. "And here's the editorial which I wrote all by myself, Mike. There are some more display ads for Jane Fisher's wigs, discounts for Council employees, and Melanie's Summer Sale. Hey, there's fifty percent off on all sales to males, Michelle. Interested? And Quinlans is having Fall Fashion shows from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 27<sup>th</sup> August. I should assign you those, shouldn't I, Mike? You could go as Michelle! I'd go with you if she'd come with me!"

"Thanks, but I'm taking my holiday," I told her with a shudder. "I don't want to be here when your uncle comes back and reads what you've written."

Jane laughed. "Perhaps he'll fire me and I can work for a real newspaper," she said, leaning back and putting her legs up on the desk as her uncle often did. I stared, fascinated. She had much nicer legs than her uncle.

"I've got to cram Classifieds, Letters, Tania's columns and the entertainment displays all on the back page," I complained. "There's too much on Kelly Rogers, Jane, really. We have to cut it down."

“It’s Kelly who’s going for the cut, not us,” said Jane wickedly. “Would you rather I cut the Linton marriage story?”

“We could move it from the front page,” I said but that went over like a lead balloon.

“No,” said Jane. “My editorial is about the school fiasco. Tell me what you think of this. Council Strikes Again!

“One could hardly believe that the Valley Council could do it again, but it did! How could a group of sane-minded men and women propose that other men, of all physical types and ages, dress up in front of children in women’s dresses?”

“Councillor Tom Beman’s remarks that they ‘pretend it’s Halloween,’ is of such cynical frivolity that it bears no comment. May we suggest that Councillor Beman has yet to show that dress ‘means nothing to me’ by appearing at Council in feminine dress himself. It’s easy to do unto others, isn’t it, Thomasina?”

“Your uncle will like one thing that you wrote,” I said diplomatically to Jane.

“Yeah,” said Jane with a frown. “I think we should keep sneering if all this stuff carries on as it is. It will fizzle out, the protest at Tyson. Making the teachers behave like clerks and cops, and hop into mini-skirts and shave their legs, is what will do it.”

“I’ve been saying that to Brian for months,” I said. Jane grinned at me.

“Yes,” she said. “I read the editorials. Bring me the back page when you’ve done it. If we have to, I’ll cut the article on Kelly Rogers. Most of it, when I read it again, is me describing her and what she does as a stripper. She didn’t really open up to me. I’ve no idea, for instance, what she does in bed with that manager of hers.”

“You really want to know that?” I asked her in alarm and, yes, a little embarrassment. “W-We couldn’t print that even if you found out!”

“This month we could have,” laughed Jane. “I’m pencilling you in for the Fashion Shows at Quinlans, Mike. You or Michelle is needed!”

“Since your uncle will be back,” I said with a tremble still in my voice, “I’ll pass. You don’t want my unemployment reports? Or stories about pig farms and the greenhouses, how they’re suffering!”

“Too gloomy, Michelle,” said Jane, winking at me. “All this other stuff about guys as brides is fun. It’s titillating!”

I retreated. She’d been in the thesaurus again, I thought sourly. We’d hear that word all the time now. I sat at my desk and tried to squeeze a quart into a pint pot.

I cut back Classifieds to Ellen James’s advertising for teachers and Quinlans looking for anyone to train as a salesgirl. There were four display ads for entertainment centers. Franco’s Revuebar had survived a month and was still presenting ‘Go-go’ dancers.

The Roxy had cropped its shot of Kelly Rogers to just show her head. The ad kept the slogan they’d used before when she was a ‘real’ girl stripper. ‘You’ve Never Seen A Girl Like Kelly Before!’ their ad declared.

It was the Garth Tavern that had really changed. The Foxy Sisters were gone. Now they were advertising ‘The Garth Revue’, Seven Local Lovelies. The picture with it showed girls dancing, singing and in bikinis.

I had to read Tania’s short column to confirm that what I was seeing was what I thought I was seeing. “The Garth Revue at the Tavern,” I read from what Tania had left me, “is a home-grown production. The ‘waitresses’ first employed in April of this year have now been converted to stage performers – with surprising results.

“Helen, who caused all the fuss at Tyson High, has a pleasant contralto voice and projects a good, feminine image without the dubious sexuality of the Foxy Sisters. Cindy and Annette are excellent dancers, while the other girls, who serve at table, assist in a compelling finale, a parody of a fashion show.

“Several of the boys take their parts as models very well, so that, since no explanations are offered, the production can be taken for the slick, female revue

that it pretends to be. Apart from this quibble, the Revue is well performed.”

I squeezed the column, omitting paragraph markers, but I had room for only two letters. One stood out to me, from Kate Schultz, a lady I knew well. She and her husband had several businesses about town.

“Dear sir,” Kate wrote, “With all the controversy about women’s clothing, isn’t it about time someone spoke up with a little sense? Is it possible that the wearing of women’s clothes will feminize a man so much that he wants to be a woman? So far, it seems the opposite. The ‘girlie’ boys of Tyson seem even more attracted and attractive to girls. Personally, I think this will all die away in time, just like ‘glitter rock!’”

I had to smile at that. Yes, Kate, this will keep people talking, I thought, about how little sense you have. I had to come up with the opposing viewpoint as well, something really short.

Donna Leslie’s letter I chopped unmercifully but it really had only the one point to make. Her prose read, “Congratulations on having a paper which lives up absolutely to its masthead.”

Next time I’d be writing, school would be in, I thought. Or would it?

\*\*\*\*\**Volume 24 Issue No. 1 15 September*\*\*\*\*\*

I didn’t stick around at the end of August to get between Jane and her uncle. Higher up the Valley, there are some really nice hikes to several falls of water. There are little villages like the one on Slayton Lake, with a main street and several rows of houses. I took a room at the Slayton Rapids Motel which rented out kayaks for those brave enough to ‘shoot the falls’.

I didn’t expect that Councillor Lois Slayton would be there in a town hall meeting at the Assembly Hall. I hesitated about doing my duty by *The Queen*. Duty won out. I was part of a fascinated audience that inevitably turned its questions onto the Jara Motion and the Council Dress Code.

“I have advice for those Raybold and Council employees who have difficulty doing their jobs while appearing before others in feminine dress,” Councillor Slayton said to the older lady who put the question to her. “It’s the same advice I give to women who work for the Council and hear disparaging remarks.” There were a lot of grins and nods in the audience, mainly women.

“Let’s face it,” Councillor Slayton said with a smile to her constituents of Slayton Village and Slayton Lake. “Most men do look terrible and ridiculous in women’s clothes. So do some women. So my advice is always to be more feminine. Don’t be embarrassed by your appearance. A good-looking woman, a smartly dressed woman, will always be accorded respect.

“Get your wife or girl friend to assist you in beautifying yourself. I tell women to get their friends to help them. We women love to help each other, don’t we?” There was a shriek of laughter at that which bewildered me. I’d have to ask Jane about that.

“Women have to change their outward appearance for customers and for men,” Slayton went on. “So should you, I’d tell our employees. We are giving you a dress allowance to aid the process. Wear a wig or have your hair done in a salon. For sure, always wear makeup and paint your nails. Acrylic nails are so easy to obtain and do wonders for ugly hands, don’t they, girls?” There was more laughter at that.

“And always, of course,” Slayton went on, “be feminine, be female, from top to bottom, inside and out. Successful Council employees at this point in time,” she went on while the women in the audience were giving her a standing ovation, “are those who make the effort to be women completely.”

To a later question about how far to encourage a husband to go if he was lucky enough to land a job with Council, Lois Slayton recommended that employees wear female dress at all times, even at home and at night. There was no danger of losing masculinity, she assured a rapt audience. In bed, there are no secrets and everyone knows what the other one is. And men, in the Valley, for a little while, at least, would learn what it was like to be a woman, a good thing.

When I got back to Raybold, I expected the schools to be closed but they weren't. A school bus was joining a line heading up Glass Street to the High School but all I could see on it were girls, with white ribbons in their hair, filling every seat in the six buses I saw easing through the blacktopped roads inside the town.

"Hello, Mike," said the waitress at the Garth where I stopped for coffee. I had a lump in my throat as I answered her. She looked like a girl and, when she leaned over me, she smelled like a girl. She went away with a wiggle in her walk but I shivered as I looked at her.

A blonde woman sitting by herself laughed at me. "She's pretty cute," she said to me as I flushed and looked after the waitress.

"But is she a boy or a girl?" I asked.

"Does it matter?" the blonde asked. "She's pretty to look at and gives excellent," she hesitated with just the right amount of smiling intent, "service."

"Yes," I said with another shiver.

"Bobbi Jones," she said, pointing to a poster on the wall that had her name mis-spelled as 'Bobby', she pointed out to me. "I sing here this month."

"Oh," I said, swallowing fast. A blonde singer at the Garth? I looked at her surreptitiously and couldn't tell. I couldn't tell if she was a man, that is. She looked like a perfect female to me.

Bobbi caught me studying her and laughed. "What is it with you men here?" she asked. "What you see is what you get," she added lightly, picking up her coffee, uncrossing her lovely legs. She rolled up the last month's local edition of *The Queen of the Valley*, and left me. I felt like the boob of the month.

I staggered back to the office where a sullen-looking Jane meant that her uncle was back. Tania shook her head to me and waved me over to her desk where she was compiling the back page of *The Queen* on her computer, a job I normally did.

There she was. The Garth Tavern was advertizing a blonde singer, in a bikini top and a long skirt. Her

earrings were long and draped on her neck as she was in the act of singing but still looking as pretty as she had in the Garth's coffee shop. 'New Singing Sensation', it said, with no word about whether 'Bobby' was a female impersonator or not.

"Is she?" I asked Tania who was looking over at the sullen Jane. Tania got up and went over to Jane with a box of tissues. I was able to swing the column she'd written for the September issue of *The Queen* to face me.

"At the Garth," I read in Tania's Entertainment column, "Bobby Jones," she had it mis-spelled, I should point out to her, "finally checked in. He," there it was and my stomach turned over and my head pounded as I read that, "sings quite naturally in a husky contralto. Better on country western and slow numbers than on quick, flashy tunes, he does little to exploit his role as a female impersonator."

I was right, I thought angrily, wondering why Bobbi had been so short with me. I shivered. I'd been sitting with a female impersonator. I could have talked to her as she'd seemed to want me to do. I could have flirted with her. I shuddered and thought of the near miss I'd undergone.

I couldn't understand why I felt so disappointed I hadn't talked to Bobbi. It wasn't as if she was a Council employee being forced to do something for a job. She was actually a professional, dressing like a woman. I felt as if I'd missed a big opportunity. But an opportunity for what, I didn't know. And why was I calling him, 'she'?

"He dresses, looks and sings like a woman," Tania's review went on, "his stage performance backing up this image. He simply interprets the song as a girl singer would. As a girl, he's quite straight, quite a change from recent shows. The Garth Revue supplies the legwork and feminine frippery to round out a professional show."

Since I'd read half of her article, I finished of the rest of Tania's column. "Kelly, of course, has now developed a line of admirers." Its display opposite just screamed 'Kelly!' at the world in huge letters with the black silhouette of a woman and the usual slogan. 'You've never seen a girl like this before!'

“The Roxy ‘chorus line’, of five young fellows, bears little resemblance to the Garth ‘Lovelies’,” I read on. “Apart from their feminine figures, and skimpy though their costumes are, these ‘dancers’ give the show have an amateur tone.

“Franco’s has suddenly become the ‘in’ place to be in town. The revelation of the true sex of the ‘go-go’ dancers does little to diminish the applause. Here the lack of talent is made up for with great amounts of energy.”

I’d noted the posed girl on Franco’s Revuebar ad, the tassels on her bra and panties. She leant forward, swinging suggestively, as she was caught in mid-dance. The only words in the ad said, ‘Cutest Girls in Town!’ I was going to ask Tania what she’d meant by the ‘true sex’ words, in her review, but she and Jane had gone off to the Ladies’ bathroom.

Dave Richardson came bustling in. “Hi, stranger,” he said with a smile to me.

“The schools are open,” I said to him, feeling a little irritated that he had the lead story again in the monthly local news.

“Yes,” said Dave. “I just got a picture from one of the classes at Tyson.” He showed me one of a dozen girls, white ribbons and bows in their hair, all sitting prettily in and on the desks, waiting for their new teachers to appear. There wasn’t a boy in view.

“Don Gardner is acting principal,” said Dave. “You remember him, don’t you, head Counsellor last year?” A pretty inept counsellor, if it was him, I recalled, when I went to Tyson years ago. “He’s brought in his wife, Jane’s sister by the way, and several parents, mothers in the main, to ensure the school opened on time.

“You should see him, her,” laughed Dave Richardson.

“Bad?” I asked, thinking what an ugly woman the man I remembered would make.

“The opposite,” said Dave Richardson. “Look at this!” He passed me a photo of a good-looking, older woman in huge, button earrings. “That’s Acting Principal Don Gardner,” Dave chuckled, “with painted

nails, plucked eyebrows, in makeup, and a soft, brown wig, a dark skirt and pink, silk blouse.”

“This is a guy?” I asked, stunned as I looked at her’.

“Yeah,” said Dave. “I said that she was phlegmatic about her ‘change’ but I really think she’s enjoying coming out, I really do. She said that clothes are only personal appendages,” said Dave, his tone raised, trying to sound like a woman. I shivered as I realized he must be trying to sound like Don Gardner.

“ ‘An obviously masculine male,’ Dave went on in his mocking tones, ‘would look terribly incongruous in a skirt. If you have to wear a dress to keep a job, as Vic, Leonard and we others need to, you have to be as feminine as possible. I find this approach has helped to ease the initial embarrassment of our predicament. No one has mentioned our dresses in days now.’ ”

“Too stunned to know what to say,” I murmured. Dave nodded in agreement. “How is the student protest about Helen or George, whatever, going?”

“Oh, it’s still on,” said Dave, shaking his head. “Any poor shmuck who goes to Tyson in jeans and a tee-shirt is subject to choruses of scorn and jeers from the girls of both sexes. They quickly learn to change. They have to if they want to survive. There’s just a few on the football team who are toughing it out.”

“So, if Council doesn’t bend,” I began.

“It will be a long, awful year at school,” said Dave. “Here’s the editorial I wrote for Brian.” He rolled his eyes. “The man is still illiterate, Mike. Can’t write a thing. I’m supposed to edit this month’s issue as well.”

“Good,” I said, handing him the article I’d written on Lois Slayton’s remarks. I had entitled it ‘Be More Feminine’. It actually made the front page with Dave’s story. I had a by-line at last! I carefully kept my notes and the original to attach to my resumé.

Dave had called his editorial, ‘Making the Best of it’. “How can the present year for Seniors at Tyson possibly be salvaged?” he’d written as an opener

which made me raise my eyebrows. I hadn't thought of Dave as having that much compassion for others.

"We have to applaud the dedication of Don Gardner," Dave had written as I got a queasy feeling inside me. What Dave was writing and what he'd just said to me didn't match at all, "and the five other male teachers who've stuck to their posts despite the obviously degrading position they find themselves in. Would that fifteen others had felt the same way!

"The students themselves, continuing their protest on behalf of George (Helen) Danson's right to dress as she wishes, won't extend their protest to include their male teachers. Helen, by the way, has now graduated, right into the chorus line at the Garth as part of the girlie 'Revue'!

"Ridiculing normal boys who happen to like wearing the clothes of their own sex is a sad comment on all the girls of Tyson, of whatever gender. The sooner these boys get out of their skirts and panties, the sooner things at school can return to near normal. It's time for everyone to start making the best of it.

"That's our opinion."

"Pretty good," I said to Dave. "Hope Brian will agree. What happened with Jane and him?"

Dave looked around secretively and leant into me. "He called her a pervert for the article on Kelly Rogers, and this," Dave said in a whisper though there were only Dave and I in the deserted Press Room.

"It's about the go-go dancers at Franco's," Dave said as well, handing me Jane's column and the picture that went with it. Dave tapped the picture of the blonde girl on the tiny cage floor, gyrating in a short dress mini-mini-dress if such a thing existed. Her makeup was very heavy and she was smiling, clearly enjoying herself. There was another, dark-haired girl in a doorway, behind her, waiting her turn, I supposed. The caption read, 'Penny dances while Pauline waits her turn.'

My mouth was dry as I read Jane's text. "Just like the Roxy and the Garth," she'd begun, "Franco's Revuebar has joined the ranks of boys-employed-as-girls. In the case of Franco's, with its

'beautiful go-go dancers', there's no promise that the beautiful ones are girls and they aren't.

"No-one would have found out about it, either, but for local union organizer, Joe Pettit, who tried to bring the 'girls' into his union.

"Accosting the performers with his suspicions, seeing only boys leaving after the club closed, Pettit received several entreaties to say nothing. An angry Joe Pettit, however, revealed to the Valley Labor Council the true state of affairs at Franco's.

"Since the revelation, says Franco Gianelli, owner of the Revuebar, business has been phenomenal, tripling over its former state. 'We just couldn't find enough girls in the Valley to dance,' Franco said, 'but the boys think it's a real giggle. I only wish we had advertised the fact before. Think of all the business we've missed!'"

"I like the title," I had to say as Jane came back, grim-faced, with a worried Tania. " 'Go-Go Girls A Bust!' In fact, I love it!"

"Who cares what you think, Michelle?" snarled Jane. "It's what Brian thinks when he's slept off his lunch."

"Wow," was all I could say, disconcerted again, as she and Tania picked up their purses and headed out.

I noticed a display ad for Delmonte School attached to her article as well. It promised buzz words, Charm, Etiquette, Femininity, Fashion Sense, Modelling with a silhouette of a woman in a long dress above the 'Enroll Now' sign on the ad.

"Another big ad?" I said to Dave who nodded.

"Look at the one for *Jane Fisher's*," Dave said, passing me an inside page for the next issue of the paper.

'Wigs. Wigs. Wigs,' the ad proclaimed in big letters, with special rates for council employees, which included male teachers. The same idea was prevalent in Melanie's ad as well.

Then I noticed that one of the Classifieds was for carpenters and all kind of trades people to work on the construction of chalets at Davies-Valley Resorts.

“So, the resort is definitely a go,” I said in surprise and Dave nodded.

“If we lose our jobs here,” Dave said cheerfully, “we can always go there as waitresses!”

I ignored the way Dave looked at me as he said it. “What else is there to do?” I asked him, coloring as I do.

“Brian gave me these to run,” Dave said, showing me the letters we were to publish. “One is from John Conan’s wife and the other from Lois Anderson. You know, the Ladies’ Auxiliary Lois Anderson.”

Mary Lou Conan’s letter could have been written by Jane, I saw. “Dear sir,” Mary Lou wrote. “Your editorial suggestion {18 August} is most apt. These friends of Councillor Slayton who’ve supported her ridiculous campaign of sexual equality through equality of dress, women’s dress, have not themselves shown the courage that they demand of other men. Let Councillor Beman and Councillor-Mayor John Lewis wear feminine dress in council and in public. After meeting the scorn and ridicule of normal men, perhaps they’d understand what they are doing to their employees.”

“This is the Acting Sheriff’s wife?” I asked in surprise. “She seems really miffed!”

“I wouldn’t like to be at the dinner table in that house, would you?” asked Dave.

The second letter was a little more in tune with Dave’s editorial. “Dear sir,” Lois Anderson wrote. “I hope you will ignore some of the carping criticisms levelled at your paper by such as the former Chairperson of the Ladies Auxiliary. You are reporting the news fairly, as it happens, despite your rather perverse editorials. It seems to me that you have not fully grasped just how much ‘the times, they are a-changin’.”

“So high minded,” Dave laughed. “I’d love to have run a bunch of these others which are from go-go dancers, waitresses, shopgirls, and co-eds, all of

them boys, wanting to tell us how fantastic it is to be a girl on Raybold Avenue at night. There's one from this girl, Roxanne, she calls herself, she's really a guy, telling how to have sex with a boy in such a way he never knows what you really are. Imagine the explosion if I put that one on Brian's desk! I'd really have to head for work at the Resort then!"

I agreed with that. I slipped out of the office but Bobbi wasn't in the Garth. My attempt to get her to meet me for a newspaper interview was in vain. New entertainers had taken her place with the Garth Revue.

\*\*\*\*\**Volume 24 Issue No. 213 October*\*\*\*\*\*

I couldn't believe it myself. I had to keep looking at the pictures that Dave had taken to make sure it was true. The banner headline across the whole page that Brian had agreed to said it all. 'Beman Accepts Challenge' covered both stories which were all about Tom Beman.

The lead photos were of Tom Beman, but not a Tom Beman I'd have recognized. In one picture, a head shot, Councillor Beman was completely transformed into a woman. His hair was a mass of curls, surely a wig. His eyebrows were thin, a woman's eyebrows, his eyelids were shadowed, his lips were glossed and pink, his eyelashes were thick and prominent. His face was whitish, clear, soft and glowing, a womanish creation by an expert beautician, his wife, Ellen James-Beman, she told us later.

I jogged Dave when Tom Beman entered the Council House with the most feminine-looking of the deputies, Ray Smith and Greg Wyatt, both looking for all the world like real policewomen. Dave took the picture of three women without realizing what he was taking. He should have been more alert since Ellen and John Stevens, the manager of Tom's political campaigns, had phoned *The Queen* and told us that Tom was accepting the challenge Jane had thrown at him.

"That was Tom Beman?" Dave asked, clicking away. Ray Smith and Greg Wyatt, fixed smiles on their lipsticked mouths, allowed us to admire their stuffed female uniforms, the mounds on their chests

completing the female look that their long hair and makeup gave to them. Each had really nice legs as well in the black stockings that they wore with their high-heeled shoes.

Of course, they weren't the only men dressed as women at the Council House as several employees who had reports to make were there. They had a room assigned to them where, as I understood it, a beautician assisted them to look their feminine best when they had to appear before Council.

"This is crazy," murmured Dave as we filed into Council past the attractive policewomen. The councillors were aghast at the 'new' woman in their midst. No, we at *The Queen* had not tipped them off on what was about to happen. The chance of a real fight was far too real! It would make such good copy. It would give us a chance at selling out the newspaper for the seventh time in a row! Our circulation was up by over four thousand, I heard Brian telling someone buying ads.

"Disquieting, but not revolting," said Tom Beman softly. He usually talks like that. I hadn't realized how girlish he sounded before now. A shaken Mayor Lewis had asked him how he felt to be present in such revolting dress.

The other Councillors behaved in the way that their previous votes in Council predicted. Gregory Jara thought that Beman's cross-dressing was 'an insult to Council ... degrading ... obscene ... an affront to all right-minded citizens.' I was frantically taking notes but I'm sure I missed some shouted insults from Donna Leslie in a public seat at Council. Jara said that the reason why Beman had backed Julia Linton in April was now obvious. Tom Beman was 'as queer as Julia Linton'.

An outraged Lois Slayton sprang to Beman's defence. I saw his wife, Ellen James, the Council Clerk. She was furious, glaring at Jara and shaking her head at him. Slayton called Greg Jara 'an out and out bigot'. That created an uproar that went on for over half an hour.

When order was finally restored, Mayor John Lewis commented that whatever Beman's motives, "he sure has shown the Council a lot of guts."

That started the shouting again. A break was called before any Council business was actually done. Dave and I wanted to talk to Beman, who fled from us but was unable to get into the Men's Lounge where Councillor Tom Wayne and Greg Jara barred the door to him. So, Tom Beman went off in his dress and high heels to the Ladies' Salon where he was admitted and spent the recess to the obvious amusement of the ladies present.

I had to drag Dave to where Ellen James, Ellen Beman that is, was holding forth to an audience. She was laughing at suggestions that her husband was wearing her clothes without her permission.

"Of course, I agreed to his borrowing my clothes," Ellen Beman said. I have that on tape. "It was the only way to stop all this talk about Tom not having any guts."

Guts, yes, I thought, but political savvy, no. How could he possibly expect to be re-elected in March next year after pulling a stunt like this? I didn't get to ask it as Dave pushed in front of me. He's bigger than I am. Does Mrs Beman, Dave shouted to her, approve of her husband appearing in a dress and like a woman in public.

"In effect, being treated as a woman?" I managed to yell past my partner.

"How can I not approve?" asked a smiling Ellen Beman. "I'm a woman, aren't I?" Ellen is a very attractive brunette. "Now we both know what it's like to be a woman. I think he'll be a better man for the experience."

It was a riotous night. I was so glad to be there, part of what I thought was history. I was feeling so good I didn't even mind lending my notes and tapes to Dave to write up his version of what had happened. I knew we'd share the by-line on both stories, about Tom, and the interview with his wife.

But when the paper came out, the stories only had Dave's name on them which really ticked me. But that's another story.

The second biggest story in the paper happened at the Court House. Dave got that as well. Joe Gibson, owner of the Roxy, was arrested again. It wasn't that

he was employing boys as girls in his strip club. "No," said Acting Sheriff John Conan in court. "He's in court because Joe Gibson is employing under-age minors in his club."

The dark-haired girl, known as Debbie Rennie, had first been an usherette, then a waitress, and finally a dancer in the chorus line at the Roxy. Sheriff Conan stood in the court, his own silhouette showing a female shape with pronounced breasts, as femmy as Debbie's in fact. Conan's hair, probably a wig, and his makeup would lead any casual observer, like me, to believe that our Sheriff is a woman. Conan had clearly been practicing with his voice as well as it is now a lilting, definitely female, contralto.

All the time Debbie worked at the Roxy, claimed Sheriff Conan, Joe Gibson had known that 'she', Debbie, was really fourteen year old Daniel Rennie, a resident of the Valley.

Daniel, his hair long and almost down to the middle of his back, was pictured in the article Dave showed me, not thinking how I'd feel seeing his writing over half *The Queen* while I got no mention at all. The picture showed 'Debbie' in tears, her makeup starting to run. Fourteen, I thought? It made me shiver as I thought what Debbie might be like when she was eighteen. She looked like an older, teenaged girl in her bare-armed top and tight skirt.

Daniel wept when confronted by his angry father, John F Rennie, a former Council employee. There was almost a fight in court as the boy was slapped by his father who promised to have his son's hair cut and his dresses burned. Judge Emily Cortwright then ordered 'Debbie' to be held in the juvenile detention center pending a medical examination. And he was allowed to stay in his mini-skirt and panties!

Joe Gibson pleaded not guilty through his lawyer, Josephine Wyatt. She told Dave that Joe really believed that Rennie was an eighteen year old girl named Debbie.

I did get to write about cheerleaders being chosen at Tyson High School and, yes, my name was on the piece. I went out to the field where these eight girls were warming up. I had my queasy feeling again as I watched them waving their pom-poms and wearing skimpy little outfits.



I had to ask Myrna Jessop if any 'girl-boys' were in the group. She just gave me a strange look, shrugged and said, "How should I know?"

I knew a lot about different girls at Tyson. I was sure that two at least weren't girls at all, the gollywobbles really bad in me. I talked to them, pretending that they were what they said they were. I tried again with Jessop. She told me that she'd asked for assurances of femaleness herself but Linda Emerson, the Student President, had got into the act. She'd prevented such declarations from applicants for various cheerleading squads.

"But, anyway," Ms Jessop told me, "we have the shapeliest and loveliest cheerleaders this year than we've had for years."

When the girls lined up and did their high kicking routine, all those there to watch cheered and applauded them. I really did think that Myrna was right.

I got a by-line but my page of work was cut to two paragraphs on the back page, basically filler for Tania's shorter than usual column. I'm just not getting anywhere with this newspaper, I'm not. In the New Year, I decided, I'd be gone.

The rest of Tania's review and the display ads on the back page were frankly an embarrassment I didn't know Brian Carpenter would condone. Four long display ads, all featuring 'girls' in skimpy dresses, all of whom weren't girls at all, drew the eyes to lovely, feminine legs, styled feminine hair and breasts.

Franco's Revuebar had a dancing Janet, waving. Jackie Ray had returned from San Francisco and was performing at Sylvester's with a trio. Kelly had the Kelly Rogers Show at the Garth complete with chorus line of high kickers, looking very feminine and sexy in the dance they were doing, and 'Gary and Pete' were at the Garth.

Gary and Pete sounds like a comedy act and in a way it was. As Tania put it, "Gary and Pete demonstrate considerable talent at presenting themselves as females. Their natural long hair, large, feminine breasts, and curvaceous figures assist in the 'deception', if such it is. Gary supplies the singing while Pete does the dancing." The Garth ad had Pete falling

out of his bikini and Gary in silhouette to better show off his figure in the long evening dress he wore.

“There is little to say about either,” Tania had gone on. No wonder the column was so short! “Pete does an excellent strip tease while Gary looks gorgeous.

“Jackie Ray makes a quiet return to the Sylvester with a trio. Jackie’s helped along by the femininely clad trio who play an energized brand of light jazz. Comparing Jackie’s professional, prepared song renditions and impersonations with those of say, Angela, with Vic Perrone’s orchestra at the Ellis Ballroom, one realizes how incredible Jackie’s singing range is. It’s as if Streisand, Garland, or Cher was actually here in town at the Sylvester, which is the finest illusion of all.”

I only got to see the other pages of *The Queen* after the October edition was published. The editorial was entitled ‘Councillor Tom Beman’ and I didn’t know who had written it, Dave or Jane.

“Well, our challenge was accepted in a rather surprising way,” I read. “We had expected that Councillor Beman might reconsider his approval of the Valley Council’s ridiculous policy on men dressing as women. We never expected that Councillor Beman would rather be a woman - than a man. His ridiculous and farcical posturing in front of Council is more that we should put up with.

“At one time, Tom Beman was thought of as a ‘liberal’ and certain to remain in office for years. Now, a promising political career has been washed away by a silly and unsupportable attempt to show ‘courage’! All Tom Beman has shown is an abysmal lack of judgment. That’s our opinion.”

I shuddered. Poor Tom, I thought, though I didn’t really know the guy except to nod to him. My eyes strayed down the page to Melanie’s ad, featuring two women sitting side by side, legs crossed, one in a police woman’s uniform and the other in a sleeveless, summer dress.

At least, I thought they were models by the way that they were posed and made up, their hair professionally styled. But the sidebar declaring, ‘Specialists in Outfitting Council Employees’, the women

were identified as Joe Lyon, of the Sheriff's Department, and one Andy May, from Utilities.

I stared at them and couldn't believe it. Every part of the paper, even in the ads, seemed now devoted to promoting men in dresses!

The letters were on the same topic as they had been for the last eight months. Josephine Karlsen wrote in support of your anti-Council campaign'.

"I haven't seen my son," Mrs Karlsen wrote, "in anything but a skirt since last June. He's primping and preening his hair and his makeup every chance he gets. He even wants us to call him, 'Sally'. How can Council say that dress doesn't hurt? I am really worried about my son but his girl friends keep telling me that he's all right. How can I know for sure?"

You can't, I thought, a stirring inside me as I thought about Sally Karlsen and what she was going through, delighting in going through.

The second letter was about something Tania had written in her last column. "I disagree entirely with Tania Scott who called the Roxy chorus line, talentless," wrote a Mary Cogan. "That's a cheap shot at new, young performers who do their best to put on a zesty program of dances and skits. I enjoyed it."

Tania had replied: "So you like young guys making like young ladies! I think a show has to be more than just changing from one set of undies to another, which is what the chorus at the Roxy do. Where's the talent in that?"

I was smiling at that when I looked at the last letter. I sighed. Donna Leslie wrote, "After reading the letter from the Past Chairman of the Ladies Auxiliary, I challenge her to place herself in the running for Council in March. Then she will know how much her views are loathed by the rest of the Valley."

And thank you, Brian, I thought, as I tried to reckon just how many Donna Leslie articles and letters we'd published of late.

I scanned the Classifieds. Yes, teachers, hairdressers and salesgirls were still wanted while the Sylvester, that epitome of class and good taste, or so

Tania had touted it, was advertizing for waitresses of either sex. Costumes and training supplied to the right applicants, Al Bass was offering. Maybe I should apply when I was fired, I thought. That thought had me shivering all over.

It was amazing how lively Raybold Avenue was now in the evening. The junction around Raybold and Glass was filled with teenaged girls, apparently, and, of course, wherever the girls congregated, there were the boys, in smaller groups, watching them and the outrageous female behaviour that the girls were trying out.

There was a huge lineup at Franco's which had a non-alcoholic bar where the kids could watch girls just like them, Penny, Pauline and Janet, gyrate in cages. Franco was having one constructed overlooking Lower Glass Street. I wondered sourly how many volunteers he had for that already and how many of them would be boys. Franco seemed to favor boys as 'go-go' girls.

**\*\*\*\*Volume 24 Issue No. 317 November\*\*\*\***

"Bobby Jones is back," said Tania with a sly smile as she showed me the display ad of a really pretty blonde woman, her hair even lighter and longer than I remembered. It was for the Ellis Ballroom, 'Bobby Jones with the Vic Perrone Orchestra'.

"I'm going tonight," smiled Tania, "and I need a dancing partner. Wanna come, Mikey darling?"

"What, what about Ken?" I croaked, referring to Tania's husband.

Tania wrinkled her nose. "He's in Brampton on business," she said. "Took him two hours to get past the new construction they've started at Riverbend for the new resort, and an hour or more to get down the track. With traffic backed up to the Brampton gate," that was where decent roads started, "Ken reckoned it would take him four or five hours to get back; so, he's staying overnight. I have to get around the clubs or I'll never get my column written on time!"

"I guess I can go," I agreed diffidently but that didn't fool Tania for a minute.

“That’s a new picture of her,” Tania said, smiling at me. “I’ll try to arrange an interview with her and introduce you.”

“I have met her,” I said, a little panic setting in as Tania seemed to have sensed my real interest in Bobby Jones. “She told me that her name is mis-spelled. It should have an I at the end, not a Y.”

“And this was on a date with her?” teased Tania.

“She was sitting at a table next to me when I stopped in the Garth for coffee,” I said. “We talked for what, sixty seconds?”

“You got a lot out of her in sixty seconds,” laughed Tania.

There was no way of besting Tania when she was going as she was. I had to wear a good suit, she informed me, to make a good impression on my future girl friend, and because the Ellis Ballroom insisted.

“Never thought the Ellis would succumb to the successes of female mimics in the Valley, did you?” asked Tania of me as we circled the floor, me trying not to step on her toes. The blonde singer was doing a good Ella Fitzgerald impersonation. She flicked her long, blonde hair over her shoulders as she finished and accepted the plaudits of the large crowd. I hadn’t realized how many people still came to the Ellis for swing and ballroom, formal dancing, in the main.

“It’s not always as full as this,” said Tania as we sat down and listened to ‘Peggy Lee’ from Bobbi’s lovely mouth. “She’s got great talent, doesn’t she?” she asked me with a smile. I felt a shiver coming over me as Bobbi looked our way and waved a little, to Tania probably, but I felt she was waving at me.

“I prefer, though,” said Tania, “that guys let you know that they’re guys when they entertain as well as when they’re in bed.”

“You don’t think ...” I began angrily.

“Bobbi isn’t letting on what she is, is she?” asked Tania. “I bet half the folks here tonight don’t know yet that Vic’s new girl singer isn’t a girl. She’s good. Her masculinity doesn’t show at all.”

In a break, Bobbi came and sat with us. Everything about her was lovely. I couldn't believe that I was this close to her, a female impersonator. It was just like being with a glamorous woman.

"This is Mike Little, a reporter with *The Queen*," said Tania.

"Just what is the Queen of the Valley?" asked Bobbi, a genuine smile on her red lips, her teeth so white and level, so feminine.

"It's a variety of rose," I said to her as Tania indicated for me to go ahead. "It's the name of a rose developed here. There are greenhouses devoted to supplying varieties of it to florists everywhere. That's what's in a lot of the refrigerated trucks leaving the Valley."

"That's wonderful," said Bobbi. "You work with a Dave Richardson, do you," she asked me, "at the newspaper? What's he like?"

"He's a ch-charming guy," I said.

"Is he really gay?" Bobbi asked me. I spluttered in the coffee I was drinking.

Tania laughed. "How did you find that out?" she asked, handing me a napkin to clean myself up. "No-one's supposed to know that!"

"But you do," said Bobbi with a smile. "I met him at a party last night. You know the kind, a gay party. He left his boy friend and made a move on me. He was really charming. One thing led to another, you know. He says he swings both ways but I doubt it. I think I know what it is about me that attracts him. He's picking me up tonight when we finish here. He's a nice guy, isn't he?"

"Of course," said Tania, smiling at me. "But Mike here is nicer."

Bobbi wasn't interested in me at all. She was polite but soon she stood up, femininely re-arranged her dress and shimmied off to sing again.

My face showed my chagrin. "Don't worry, Mike," said a sympathetic Tania. "It's show business. She's seduced by big muscles, a tall frame and a charming smile. It's the same but opposite for guys, isn't it?"

What kind of guy would be interested in a female impersonator like Bobbi Jones, I thought, wondering why I felt the way I did. Dave Richardson was gay? Well, I thought bitterly, I must think about that and figure some way I could use it to my advantage at *The Queen of the Valley*.

Brian Carpenter came charging out of the publisher's office in the morning and threw me a note. "Get on up to Tyson," he said gruffly. "One of the Davies twins is going to give you an interview with what it's like to be at Tyson with all the girlie boys. Dave is chasing down the bank robbery from this morning in Slayton and Jane's in court with the Joe Gibson case. Do this now before the Davies' parents change their minds!"

Tom Davies had a spare at eleven, Brian's note said. I met him in the cafeteria, a slight, dark guy, sort of handsome. It surprised me that no-one came to talk to him. He was alone when we started talking and no-one interrupted us even to say 'Hi!' when they dropped in for drinks.

The protest on behalf of Helen Danson was still going on, of course. We were surrounded by girls, I noted. He and I were the only males in the place, well the only ones dressed like men. A few tall, muscular guys went by which got the girls in a twitter when the men strutted away, basking in feminine attention.

"I find Tyson very difficult," Tom said, giving me the title for the article I would write for the inner page of *The Queen*. "I went out with this really cute chick," the son of the new resort owner in the Valley told me. "She was beautiful, long golden hair, blue eyes and nice legs. Even Dad liked her. It wasn't till I had taken Debbie out three, four times that I found out that she was a guy!"

Tom laughed as he shook his head. He had longish hair, styled by some expensive barber, I could see. "Then I took out a cheerleader. I better not tell you which one," he added ruefully. "She was really popular with other girls and reluctant to go out with me. It was another girl who kept pushing her at me. Anyway, one of the other guys who dresses like a guy told me she was a running back on the football team last year. Imagine! Me, kissing and cuddling a running back!"

I talked to Principal Gardner about boys dating boys at Tyson. She, yes, I have to call him that as Don has really become Donna as all the kids call her. She's as much into being a woman as some of the boys are into being girls. She's really an attractive and modishly dressed woman. I was uncomfortable talking to 'her', her earrings gleaming so brightly at me.

"Everyone knows everyone else," Donna Gardner told me in a woman's voice. I'd never have known my old High School counsellor at all in 'her'. She didn't know me but he never had, either. "The newcomers are put straight by the veterans from last year in their classes. The girls are very good at that."

I thought of the girl pushing a cheerleader on to Tom Davies and encouraging them to be boy and girl friend. I don't think Donna had a clue what was going on in her school, I really don't. I did have to talk to Donna's wife though, who is now a phys ed instructor at Tyson. She was the one to arrange the interview for Jane.

"I thought a newcomer's perspective might interest your readers," said Estelle Edwards. I'd use my birth name, I thought, if I was married to someone like Donna Gardner. It did make a nice article. Jane made quite an editorial out of it. The two were run side by side.

"A disturbing story out of Tyson High School is carried in this edition," Jane wrote. "When Linda Emerson organized her protest against dress rules, little could she know (or did she?) that the affair would soon get out of hand.

"The boys who have dressed as girls for over six months now are getting jobs as girls, as waitresses, shopgirls, go-go dancers, and, of course, in every job taken with the Council. Estimates range as high as fifty per cent of all men now dressing as women in the Valley - with up to ninety per cent at Tyson.

"If this weren't bad enough, now comes the news that these 'boy-girls' like their roles so much that they are even dating the straight guys in school.

"How can we expect a principal like 'Donna' Gardner to crack down on this activity?" Jane had got that name from me but was the first to use it in

print. I was a little shocked that she'd use that name for her brother-in-law. I could see a family fight developing there with sister, Estelle.

"What an example he sets," Jane had ended, "with his outright admission of trying to be an attractive woman. With elections in March, a spring cleaning of Valley Council, and Tyson, is absolutely essential, along with every vestige of feminine boys!

"That's our opinion."

"What happened with Joe Gibson?" I asked Jane, pleased to see her back to her old self after the set-to with her uncle.

"Got a fine for using a minor in his bar," said Jane pulling a face. "It's on page one as a news story, but mostly because I got a picture of Kelly Rogers holding his hand outside court. I bet you didn't know that Joe and Kelly are an item, did you? Darn, I should have used them in my editorial. It's not just 'Boys Dating Boys', is it?" That was the title of her editorial. "It's men and men as well, isn't it?"

"Men and trannies," I said to Jane and she raised her eyebrows to me.

"Getting to know the lingo, are we, Michelle?" she asked me with a wicked smile.

"It's all over the Valley," I said.

Jane laughed. "Even our bank robbers are men dressed as women," she said. "You should read Dave's account of the robbery at Slayton. They were dressed as women and they had the nerve to criticize the way the bank tellers and manager were dressed. They were in women's clothes as well. Look at the photos on the front page! It's ludicrous!"

"I thought it was the JSGroup Bank," I said.

"It was," agreed Jane. "But John Stephens has a partnership arrangement with the Valley Council, which is getting out of the banking business. They consider the employees, for a while, to be Council employees, and you know what that means, dresses and panties for the boys!"

I tried to switch topics but it seems, in the Valley now, female impersonation is all we can write about.

Jane had another item for the paper about the Del Monte School. Jean Cranston-Delmonte said that she couldn't believe it when she found out but it's true nevertheless. The girls of the Valley have been entering their boy friends for charm and femininity lessons at the Del Monte School.

This year's top model, Karen, is, in fact, a seventeen-year old boy named Ken.

"I didn't know at all," said Jean Cranston's voice from Jane's recorder as we listened and laughed, "until we got to the ballroom lessons and brought in male tutors. The girls were embarrassed about dancing with men. One of the real girls told me why. Luckily, the models soon got over that and started enjoying dancing with men. They're probably the best, most feminine group of young ladies, I've ever graduated."

"And there she is, Karen," said Jane, flipping the paper to the ad for Rayburn Stores. It was opening a new boutique. So, it had to have a soft-skinned, dewy-eyed, ultra feminine model; and there was Karen, long chestnut-colored hair, in shorter skirt and top, her figure really feminized, showing off the wonderful feminine things that a woman, or a man I suppose, could buy at Rayburns.

"See our ads this month?" asked Jane with a smile as well. "Waitresses of either sex, electrolysis and hair removal, confidential treatments, a hairdressing Salon. Ooo, wouldn't want to have Jasper, looking so butch, do my hair! Special rates for men in the bikini and one piece sale at Melanie's, reduced rates at Jane Fisher's for men only, and another huge wig sale at Quinlans. Del Monte's model graduation and ad for new classes."

"You're editing this month," I said.

"Yes," smirked Jane Edwards. "Uncle Brian is ready to wash his hands of this newspaper. He thinks we shouldn't be reporting on all this stuff that's in the ads. Look at entertainment pics on the back page. They're all featuring female impersonators or drag queens or she-males."

"You chose the letters, as well?" I asked to distract her a little. I was looking at Bobbi's ad and thinking of her with Dave Richardson. I shuddered as I won-

dered if the two of them were having sex. From what Bobbi had said, they must be. And they deserved each other, I thought angrily, not knowing or wanting to think about why I was miserable.

"This Darlene Wicker is appalled at the idea that a boy can be a cheerleader," Jane said, showing me the letters she'd chosen to publish. "I didn't know but is she right that the leading cheerleader is also 'Miss Tyson' or something like that? We could have a boy as our beauty queen this year. Oh, that would be fantastic!"

"It'll never happen," I said with a shudder that Jane noticed and smiled at.

"This Maxine Collins agrees with Tania about Pete and Gary," said Jane. "She's fed up with finding only men in women's underclothing wherever you go in Raybold for entertainment. She's married to a Council employee and says she sees enough of that at home!"

"Tania's says there's just too much money in female impersonation so it isn't going away soon. The Garth and the Roxy are packed. Tania predicts we'll see more before we see less!"

I nodded. "Would you like to go out tonight?" I asked Jane seriously. "Would you like to see her," Bobbi in her blonde glory, "or her," Barbara at Franco's in a short dress that didn't cover the front of her panties at all, "or her," Gary in tights and corset with a fringed dress that exposed everything female about him, "or her", Pete in fishnet stockings, panties and just hands and long hair over his boobs, "or her," a new Kelly, in a long, slitted dress, posed for singing, "or her," Jackie Ray in a backless dress on a stool, another female-dressed man at the piano behind her as Jackie, her dress accentuating a female figure I didn't know she had, sang.

"Sylvester's and Jackie Ray," said Jane with a smile.

"It's a date," I said, sort of relieved. I'd be going out with a woman on a date. Well, Bobbi was going out with Dave, wasn't she? She didn't even know I existed.



\*\*\*\*\**Volume 24 Issue No. 415 December*\*\*\*\*\*

“Did you see the pictures of the bank robbers the police caught?” Dave Richardson asked me as soon as I entered the Press Room. “Look at these!”

The brunette with short hair and long earrings wore a halter type dress that showed a most impressive ‘rack’, while the other girl, hands behind her back was in a short dress that also left nothing to the imagination. She had long, reddish hair, falling over her shoulders, and, like her friend, was heavily made up.

“Monty Regulo,” laughed Dave Richardson, his finger on the dark girl, “and Johnny Ortega.” He ignored the pretty ‘policewomen’ in the background although the caption named the deputies as Frank New and Cliff Rennie

I was getting as used to it as Dave. The deputies wore skirts with pleats, stockings and black high heels. They each had long hair and little white hats with black ribbons stylishly around them. Each had ample breasts and as much makeup on their faces as the ‘girls’ in the chorus line at the Roxy. These were the policemen who were supposed to protect us, I thought with an inward sneer as bad as Dave’s. They looked really smart, actually, really stylish and sweet – if they had been real policewomen.

The robbers hadn’t just robbed one bank, they’d hit another in Raybold and had over \$70 000 when they were caught. A glance at Dave’s story of their arrest told me that Regulo, the brunette, had been an employee of the Valley Council in June, a waitress at Franco’s, and had worn women’s clothing all the time in that period.

His landlady had known Monty on and off for ten years and she blamed the Council for Monty’s predicament. “They made such fun of him, his friends, when he had to wear a dress. I kind of helped him to look better, like a real girl, because I was sorry for him. I thought the other one, Marilyn, was actually his girl friend.”

Sheriff John Conan, looking just like one of the robbers in his short dress and long hair, said that the

robberies were done to get money for Ortega's sex change which he desperately wanted.

I watched Dave showing the pictures to Jane, to Tania, even to some salesmen who came into the Press Room. "Hey, Dave," I said into a lull in all the traffic in and out of our offices. "Are you still going out with Bobbi Jones?"

Dave went quite still and looked at me uncertainly.

"I was with Tania when she interviewed Bobbi last month," I said with what I knew was a fake smile. Well, I knew definitely that Dave was gay now since Bobbi had sort of confided in us that she was in a sexual relationship with Dave.

Dave relaxed. "Not to Uncle Brian, okay?" he asked. "But you've got to be seriously gay not to be attracted to Bobbi, don't you?"

"So you're not serious about being gay?" I asked Dave. Oh, how I disliked him.

Dave struggled with what he was going to say. "Nothing wrong in what I am," he finally said. "But if I come out, in the Valley, people won't talk to me unless they're gay as well. You understand that, don't you, Mike?"

"I know Bobbi's a guy," I told Dave as his eyes opened like saucers. "I just don't see what a guy like you, attracted to other guys, would see in her."

"I do go out with girls, Mike," Dave said firmly, glancing around as if we could be heard over the sound of several machines working full blast in our office. "I like girls, kissing them, being friendly. It's just at the end that I can't, as you'd say, consummate the relationship. With Bobbi, that's not a problem. The panties and stuff don't turn me on, nor the little boobies she's growing. But once her panties are off, well, she's just what I want in bed, Mike, and she's still enough of a guy to really like gay sex. And Mike," he was smiling as he joked with me, "don't knock it till you've tried it, man. Has Jane talked to you yet about the special articles she wants one of us guys to do?"

There was a look on Dave's face that said that something was up. I didn't want him to say it.

“With all this men in dresses stuff going on in the Valley,” smirked Dave, “she’s suggesting to Brian that one of us go undercover, become a girl for a time and report back for *The Queen*. She says it will boost the rise in sales over the seven thousand mark. I told her I’m too big, too muscular, but you, Michelle, you’re puny as a guy, aren’t you? But as a girl ...?”

“I am not puny!” I snarled in horror at Dave who was laughing. I had to escape to get some fresh air. I couldn’t speak to a man like Dave, a gay man.

“I shock you?” asked a fake surprised Dave Richardson. “You’re always the last to know around here, Mike aren’t you? I kind of liked having a straight friend. Can we still get that beer we’ve been talking about?”

We’d talked about going out for a few beers and picking up chicks since I’d joined *The Queen*. How everyone must have been laughing at how naïve I was. Certainly, Jane must have been if she was talking about me being a woman for a day, as Dave hinted she was.

“Maybe later,” I said as I always did. “I have to go to the Council House. Greg Jara has called a news conference.” And I had to talk to Jane and let her know that what she planned was not going to happen.

“But we’re the only paper in town,” laughed Dave Richardson, seeming to become less tense as I didn’t discuss his sexuality any more.

“He’s got representatives from the Labour Council, Ladies’ Auxiliary, the Growers’ Association, the PTA, and every nutcase in the Valley,” I told him, my teeth clenched, “to be at his conference. I think he’s lining up a ticket for the next election.”

“Let’s go,” snickered Dave, laughing at me all through the founding meeting of the Morality Party. John Lewis was there, Donna Leslie of course, former Sheriff Hubert Cord, Councillor Tom Wayne and former School Principal Mike Teller.

It wasn’t much to report but it was an article under my name. Jara spouted that the current situation of men and youths wearing female clothes had to come an end. His Motion must be seen as what it was, a protest, a joke.

Donna Leslie promised all present that the new party in the March elections 'will not be a joke'.

Jane was still out on assignment when Dave and I got back. Jane was at Tyson High School for the Fall Dance. She got to see all the lovelies in their bathing suits. She came in next day with lots of girlie pictures that she pinned up on her notice board. The dance had ended with one girl being given the sash as 'Miss Tyson'.

Debbie Allen, a cheerleader, and as cute as a button, won and so is Queen of Tyson for a year. The other cheerleaders looked so gorgeous. Any of them could have served, I'm sure. I could hear Tom Davies' voice in my ear as he told me about the cheerleader, Debbie, he'd dated, who'd turned out to be a guy. One look at Debbie Allen and I knew that this Debbie wasn't her. There were after all, six Debbies who were cheerleaders on various squads in Tyson.

Besides, the blue-eyed, blonde Debbie Allen admitted to, Jane's words, a 36-21-36 figure. Can you imagine a boy with a real figure like that? I couldn't, either. Jane wrote that Debbie was a business major, finishing a modelling course at Del Monte who she didn't think she'd be a model. She's working in Quinlans on its New Fashions floor and doesn't have a boy friend just now.

Jane put me off when I tried to talk to her. She'd written the editorial with only a nod to the Morality Party, writing that it was only formed to correct 'crackpot' decisions made by Council. Jane had returned to School as a topic to editorialize about.

"In March," Jane had written, "we should at last be rid of the craziness affecting us for nine months. It's crazy to have no football team or ice hockey team at school but to have girls' teams, on which no-one is sure that these aren't boys in skirts, which Athletic Director Estelle Gardner refuses to correct. (I usually love it when one sister slags another in public. Estelle is after all Jane Edwards' sister! Jane didn't acknowledge, perhaps because she didn't know, that Estelle was using the Edwards name at school and not Gardner.)

"At least, Ms Gardner has the acumen not to enter 'girls' teams' in contests outside the Valley. All sports for teenagers are now intra-mural. 'Anyone who

wishes, can play,' says Estelle Gardner, wife of 'Donna' Gardner, acting school principal. The skirts and ribbons all wear in contests were proposed and adopted in Student Council. Our cheerleaders are at every game and every student is cheered for and supported.'

"Luckily, some boys haven't accepted the loony tunes going on at Tyson. The twenty per cent of the boys not in dresses have formed a Men's Club. Their first objective is to restore football at Tyson.

"Cheerleader Britney Smith welcomes that because 'All of us girls do like to cheer for the boys,' she says.

"After the Morality Party takes office in March, Britney will be able to wave her pom-poms again in support of the boys of Tyson."

Jane caught me reading her editorial. "You sound like your uncle," I told her and she smiled at me.

"It's the party line, baby," she said, looking over her shoulder just as Dave had done earlier. "The more ridiculous it sounds, the better he likes it. So pile it on, Mike, and start the backlash. Did you see the letters I put into this month's edition?"

I hadn't. Jane had selected letters on the outrageous side of this conflict.

"You won't like this letter," the first writer had written. "My boy friend and I signed up for the Pink Ladies basketball team at Tyson and it's been so much fun! We've dyed our hair pink and done our lips and nails the same. It's so-o-o great to do girlish stuff together like shaping our eyebrows, perming our hair and shaving our legs. My parents don't even know that the girl who comes over to my house is really my boy friend. As for basketball, the boys really take it easy, letting me score all the points! This year is so much fun since the boys became girls like us!!! Name withheld by consent of *The Queen*."

Jane had put in an Editor's Note: You're right! We don't like your letter at all.

The second letter asked, "Since the cops and Council employees are all in dresses, why do we have to call them Bruce and Cliff? A pretty cop like the one

who gave me a ticket for turning illegally (I was busy looking at her lovely, long legs) shouldn't be signing a ticket, 'Frank!' The waitresses along Raybold's restaurant block are guys but they sign as Gloria, Darlene, Roberta, etc. It would take the sting out of the ticket if I could thank 'Francesca' and ask her for a date! Ronald Emney."

"What an idiot!" I laughed at Jane. "You're going to print this?"

"Oh yes," said Jane, smiling at me. I felt a tremble inside me. I knew Dave was right about what she'd ask me. "We got Tom Beman into a dress, didn't we? We can do a lot better than calling him Thomasina. What would be a good female name for him? Michelle? Oh, that's already taken, isn't it?"

I'd dated Jane on more than one occasion in the last month. We'd visited the hot spots and seen 'girls' in their skimpy, pretty dresses. Jane and I kissed on a couple of nights when I got her home. But still she was standoffish save for teasing me as Michelle.

"I was talking to Dave ..." I said to Jane.

"Joe Gibson got off on the charge of corrupting a minor," said Jane, ignoring me. "Debbie testified she'd deliberately misled him. Oh, the resort construction is in trouble. Earl Davies won't accept cross-dressers on his worksite. He thinks it's all crazy. Anyway, he's having troubles getting workers.

"We have a problem as well, Michelle. We do need something to boost the sales of our little rag. I said to Dave ..."

"You called me Michelle!" I said, striving to contain the flushing that came to my face. No, I didn't want her to propose that I dress up like a girl and write about it in *The Queen!* I wouldn't do it! Not even if I was fired! I turned the paper over to the back page. Nine women were shown. No, that's not true. Nine feminine figures were shown but not one of them was a woman.

"Think about a new challenge, Mike," said Jane. "I bet a series of articles on what it's like to try to change into a girl would sell thousands of extra copies in the Valley. You'd have a permanent job here, Mike!"

As Michelle, I quivered. I couldn't talk. I stared at the Garth's ad for the Gary Davies Show. A slinky brunette in a white dress sang while blonde-wigged bimbos in bathing suit costumes and black tights wiggled their tushes suggestively.

"What was the last picture of a real woman published in our paper?" I croaked at Jane.

"Lois Slayton," said Jane promptly. "You took her picture. Hey, that would make a good story, wouldn't it? The last, real woman ... If I edit next month, it'll be in!"

I felt sick as I picked up Tania's column about new entertainments in the Valley.

"Tania's still writing only about drag queens," said Jane, sighing. "That woman must be a drag hag."

"A what?" I asked her.

"A woman who likes going out with fags and drags," Jane smirked. "Fag hag, drag hag, it's all the same. It's like me going out with you, Michelle."

"Please," I said to Jane feverishly, looking at how pretty Bobbi was in the ads that still had her name with a 'Y'. I read Tania's piece and Jane was right. It was all about drag queens. "I'm not going to do what you want me to do, Jane!"

"You don't know what I want," murmured Jane, stroking my arm. "So we won't talk about it now. How do you like Gary Davies in that dress? He's certainly prettier than me, isn't he?" The awesomely feminine Gary Davies had a great review by Tania, making me shiver.

"This month," Tania had written as well, "Kelly Rogers will do her last strip at the Roxy. If you haven't caught the show, you should. Kelly's impersonation of a woman is perfect! The changes she's undergone in face and body are impressive. She's definitely worth looking at in the buff! My husband enjoyed her bellydance strip. Really, you've never seen a girl like Kelly!"

"Want to see Kelly for the last time?" I asked Jane, who was studying what Tania had written. She smiled and nodded.

“I should introduce you two,” Jane said. “Kelly’s really cute, you know, and she loves to dance with members of her audience. She puts her arms about a guy’s neck and is so clingy and kissy. You’d love her, Mike.”

“Sure,” I said, trying to be blasé; but Jane was right. Kelly loved dancing with me. She said so several times when Jane called her over. She loved kissing me as well.

Jane had to spoil it all when I dreamily took her home from the Garth. “How did you like kissing your first man?” she asked me with a wicked smile as she slipped away from me and went in. “Was it just like kissing a woman?”

\*\*\*\*\**Volume 24 Issue No. 512 January*\*\*\*\*\*

Oh my god! I did it! Yes, I actually did it, just as Jane had planned. Jane gave me this voucher for Christmas, a voucher to a new store on Raybold, a glitzy, glittering store with all kinds of sultry mannequins in the front windows. We’d seen a lot of kids gathering there to stare at the staged images within.

The store was *Transformers*. Our mail girl, Susan Brown, kept using the slogan they had across the entrance to the store, “Try it and you’ll like it!” Susan, daughter of Dee Brown, manager and owner of the place, gave us, Dave and me as well as Tania and Jane, coupons to use there.

The little coupons were nothing to the voucher for two thousand dollars that Jane gave me.

“What?” I asked her, frowning at the *Transformers* logo on the voucher.

“I’ve got this fantastic idea for a story,” Jane told me. She’d invited me in to get my Christmas present when I’d walked her back from the office party. We were a little merry but not as bad as Brian who was really in his cups.

Jane kissed me. I mean, she really kissed me. “It’s like this,” she said between kisses, finally laying it on to me as I tried to kiss her to keep her from talking. “We need a story from the inside, what it’s like to be transformed, as this Council is making guys be

transformed. We only report the stories now. You know, so and so is cross-dressing, like Tom Beman, for instance, but what's it really like inside, as a real man, to slip into a girl's pair of panties, lose all your body hair, go out on the street in female undies and a dress, and try and pass as a woman. That's the story we need to print."

I shuddered in fear as I looked at the voucher and card Jane had given me. "All my love at Christmas, Michelle," it read, "Love, Jane." There were kisses, made by her lips and lipstick on the card.

"You think I ...!" I began, terror rising inside me. She'd actually addressed the card to 'Michelle'.

Jane cut off that rush of emotion with a kiss. "We'll do it together," she whispered, stroking my hair and pressing against me. I'd wanted Jane to do that to me for a long time, getting a little frenzied as I kissed her.

"Oh, I like that," Jane whispered lovingly. "I love how talk of dressing in women's clothes always makes you embarrassed, Michelle. You don't know how pretty you look when you flush like a girl."

"I don't do that!" I said indignantly, panic rising in me, Jane pressing me down on her couch.

"You have to try it before you criticize it," said Jane with a smile, as I shook when she kissed me again and again. All the 'girls' at Tyson High School said that when you asked them why they were still dressing like co-eds. "Transformers is having a Grand Opening, Mike. They asked us, I got the letter before Brian, if we'd like to have one of our reporters go through a transformation. They want us to write a story about them. I volunteered you."

"Me?" I yelled at her. "Why not Dave? He's the one who's gay, not me!"

"That's why it has to be you," said Jane, caressing my shoulders, kissing me passionately. My trembling wasn't because of her kisses. No, I just had this vision of me, putting on girls' clothes. No, I couldn't do it!

It was the first time I slept with Jane, two nights before Christmas. She wouldn't talk about my transformation at all in the following week. I thought that

she'd given it up as we were locked together each night as a man and woman should. I was in love with my melting ice queen. Jane made love to me in ways I didn't know a woman would. We made love all through Christmas right up to New Year. When we went out for a walk, I was actually happy to walk with her openly as her boy friend; until she walked me right in the front door of *Transformers*, right into the eager arms of Dee Brown.

Jane wrote that we were co-authors of the article. We weren't. She wrote it all! "I, Mike Little, macho newspaper reporter," (those were Jane's descriptors of me), "was very nervous," I'd have written stunned, shocked, terrified, anything that expressed the horror of what I was led to, like a sacrificial, little lamb, all trusting.

Yes, I knew I was going to do it, be transformed into a woman. I'd sort of known I was going to do it, that Jane wanted me to. And I felt so weird, as I had since all this cross-dressing had begun in the Valley, often thinking, dreaming, about what it would be like. In the back of my mind, the idea had percolated. What would it be like if ... I shuddered at the thought ... I'd say 'No' if she asked me. But Jane knew me too well. She didn't in the final analysis actually ask me anything.

Jane shushed me constantly, "We'll talk about that when the time comes," she'd said when I anxiously mentioned the voucher. The time came on that silly walk downtown 'to see the lights'. Panic seized me but still I numbly walked into *Transformers* with Jane, and there was no time to talk at all.

I was greeted by three stunning young ladies, Nicole, Vicki and Audrey, "who totally ignored my protests and gave me the *Transformers* treatment."

Don't think that I didn't struggle but that's why there were three of them, and Dee Brown to supervise me being pushed into a bathroom, saying, "You men all like that at first, darling Michelle. We're quite used to it, dear!"

The girls took away all my male clothes and into a scented bath tub I was dumped! I protested, hands over my manhood! Jane stood there, smiling, as I was creamed from head to toe by the giggling girls, or,

rather, my body hair was creamed. I lost the hair on my legs and most intimate parts.

Nicole applied makeup to my face, explaining which colors would suit me because of the dark wig she'd put on my head. She was treating me, Dee Brown said to Jane, as if I was really a transvestite, and liked all the things they were doing to me. The way that Dee smiled at me wasn't as innocent as Jane made that read in the paper. I was blushing, protesting, wondering how to find a way out of the women's clutches and get back to being Mike. I'd even have run out naked into the street.

"I love you, Mike, for doing this," Jane said, leaning over me to kiss the lipsticked mouth Nicole had given me. Jane was scolded by the young boy-girl beautician. Yes, I'd figured it out that these girls were all too strong to be girls. Oh, that was sexist of me, but it was true!

"She's Michelle," Dee insisted as if I wanted to be referred to in the feminine.

"If I'd been a transvestite," 'our' written report went on as Jane put words in my mouth, "I'd love doing the things I learned to make me the girl of my dreams."

I had to put on panties, as I was called Michelle, after the horrible thing, called taping. Well, I didn't want to show, I was told. I don't know why I put up with it! But I did! I couldn't walk in front of women naked, I was told, trembling all over as I tried to describe how I felt to Jane's recorder. I had to sit in front of a mirror in frilled panties as makeup was applied to me as if I was in a woman's dressing room.

Nicole showed me how to put on stockings and a garter belt. Oh, that was so enervating, so strange, so feminizing! I had to put them on myself and attach the nylon stockings to a garter belt. How the girls giggled as they put a padded bra about my chest, taping again making a little hint of realness appear. I wasn't just blushing then. I was red-hot in embarrassment!

"How does that feel?" Jane wanted to know at each step of my transformation. I must say, putting on stockings and a garter belt was one of the most excruciating moments of my life. My legs were so bare and so sensitive. I fumbled with the fasteners the women watching me with professional interest. That

was when I knew I was going to be completely transformed. And I wanted to see the finished product, me as a woman!

I spent hours with the three young women. Other guys came into the store and went off, being willingly transformed. I wasn't willing, I kept telling myself. That's what I wanted to write. I kept telling myself that I could do this for a day, give Jane a story, write about it and it would be over.

Stupid me! I was tugged and padded and primed into a tight corset. I had to put on a light, airy ballgown that brought on an attack of the shivers as it shook around me, my stockinged legs itching continually. The girls made me twirl as they adjusted the corset and fitted me in a woman's dress. It was such a weird, different feeling. Yes, it was girlish! When I said that, Jane said that meant 'pleasant', didn't it!

I quivered as I was sprayed with cologne, perfumed behind my ears, and on my neck and chest like a woman. My nails were done and my ears clipped with earrings. The wig was put on me, dark hair, darker than my own which suited the definite makeup on my face. I was allowed to look at myself in a mirror for the first time and felt so crazy as I saw a woman, yes, I was a real woman, in a lovely, swishing dress, looking back at me.

Jane came and kissed me, as did all my helpers and Dee Brown. Jane praised them for the wonderful job they'd done. They made such a fuss of me, Michelle, as they put high heels on my feet and taught me how to walk in them. They danced with me in turn. They took the men's part while I stumbled and got embarrassed at what we were doing, frightened at what I was seeing all the time, me as a woman. And yet, it wasn't unpleasant to feel the dress swirl about me, to feel long hair on my bare shoulders, nor to feel the tightness about my waist and chest.

My day, however, wasn't over just with dressing up. No! I'd been made to look and smell just like a woman. Dee insisted it was part of the 'free' voucher that I do what all her customers do. I had to report on a night on the town as Michelle.

I was terrified as we walked with a feminine sway, all of us, down to the Ellis Ballroom, a group of gor-

geous girls, everyone applauding us on the streets. I was only allowed to whisper because my voice wasn't trained to be a woman's. At the ballroom, before you could say 'garter belt', I was whirled onto the dance floor, not by the women who'd brought me, but by one young man after another, all of whom told me, Michelle, as they called me, how pretty I was.

I shuddered all through that but the girls, and Jane, were urging me on, telling me to be girlie. How could I be anything else with the dress flowing about me, a man's hand on my bare back, my earrings swinging against my scented neck and madeup face?

It's the custom of the Ellis for men to hold a girl about her waist and to present her to her next dance partner with a little hug and kiss. I knew it should be on the cheek but my dance partners all kissed me on the lips, deliberately, I guessed, to send the weirdest of sensations through me. I shivered as I was kissed on the lips by a man, trying to shrink from him but that only made the men kiss me harder, making me feel so weird!

Then I was swirled away by another man, my dress swishing about me seductively, in a proper dance in which I had to behave as the woman. Gosh, and there 'she' was, me, in every mirror, a shapely, beautifully dressed woman being hugged by a male partner.

I was really unsettled when it appeared I was abandoned by Jane and the others. I was a woman, I thought in panic, among all the men, eager to dance with me. I should have known it was all a set-up by Dee and Jane. Ed Beatty took me for a break, he said, and really began kissing me, in a nook behind the curtains.

I protested but I lost all my lipstick anyway as I couldn't cause a huge fuss amid all the young women doing what I was doing with their boy friends as well. They'd have laughed at me, revealed as a guy, doing what all the girls were doing.

I was totally flummoxed when Ed asked me for a date, my lips tingling. He'd swung me back to the dance floor before he kissed me as passionately as Jane did. My insides were churning when she rescued me. I begged her to get me out of there, but Jane was cool, saying Ed should call me, giving him my number! Jane handed me off then to another guy! I

had to dance with all these older men who treated me as if I was a woman.

“Did you feel like one?” Jane wanted to know as we finally got a taxi back to her place. I felt enough different emotions that night in being a woman that I did understand a little bit why so many young men in the Valley have stayed in dresses throughout the so-called ‘Protest’.

“I, I wouldn’t have minded so much,” I whispered, “if you’d danced with me!”

“But did you ever feel you were a woman?” Jane persisted, hugging me and kissing my cheek softly as we snuggled in the back seat of the taxi.

Well, some of the emotions were more pleasurable than others, was all I could admit to Jane. I couldn’t say that I did feel feminine as we entered her house, two girls in lovely dresses coming home together. She stopped me under the doorlight. The cabbie was bipping us as she put her arms about me and kissed me with love and desire, or so I thought.

Jane laughed at my embarrassment and shame at myself as we went in. She wouldn’t let me change. She wanted me to enjoy my transformation, she said, she’d paid enough for it. She made love to me on her couch and called me, “my sweet Michelle”. I didn’t get to take my wig off as Jane changed to a nightie and insisted that I wear one as well. Well I was so hairless that it made me shudder and shiver.

It was quite a night. I forgot all about Bobbi and other girls I’d seen at the Ellis. It was so nice to snuggle up to Jane in bed, even if I had to wear panties and a nightie and my wig to do it. Jane said she liked it, especially, when I let her go on top which she loved to do with a man like me.

When I rolled over in bed in the morning, there she was typing the article that became, ‘Mike is a Little Transformer’. “You didn’t get pictures of me, did you?” I asked anxiously as I struggled out of her bed in a nightie and messed-up wig. I cringed when I saw myself in the mirror. Oh no! My eyebrows had virtually disappeared while my eyes were still dark and lined, my mouth having a female outline as well.

“Oh yes,” said Jane with a smile. “Michelle in her makeup and panties, Michelle dancing with Ed Beatty, Michellé with her eyes closed as she was kissing him. We should call that one Michelle in Rapture. Oh, and here’s a head shot that will go into *Transformers* first display ad. There’s Mike in the ‘Before’ picture and Michelle in the ‘After’.”

“You can’t print or write this!” I screamed in distress. I stood up and my nightie floated airily all about me as I pleaded with Jane, my mind in agony and turmoil even as I glanced at the mirror and a dark-haired girl looked back at me in terror. “Think what will happen to me after this article comes out! And the pictures! I’ll have to leave town!”

“You’re wrong, Michelle,” said Jane equably, smiling and putting out her hands to beckon me to come and hug her in the nightie and panties and wig I was still wearing. “If you really feel that bad, go and talk to Brian. Tell him it’s my fault. But to get out of here today, you’re going to have to wear a skirt, Michelle. I don’t have any of your other clothes. We could pop down to *Transformers*, actually, and use up some more of that voucher I gave you. I really want to see you as a blonde, Michelle, and, oh, we have dates tonight, at Franco’s and then at the Garth. I told Ed Beatty that you’d be there!”

That’s the way it was for Stupid Me. It wasn’t a one day thing. I was Jane’s girl friend! She said so. I was totally outmaneuvered and in total agony as there didn’t seem to be anything that I could do about it. No-one would help me. Not Jane or Tania. Jane called me ‘Michelle’ all the time as did Tania when she saw me, hiding, trembling, in agony, in the back of the office, unable to go anywhere in the skirt and female stuff that Jane had had me wear.

“Jasper’s Hairdressing Salon is running an ad like *Transformers*,” said Tania, ignoring all my pleas to help me and get me men’s jeans, runners and a tee-shirt. “Look, Michelle. That’s Jasper in the AM,” a guy with a mustache and sideburns, “and this is Jasper in the PM,” a woman with long hair, makeup and a halter topped dress. “See Ron in the morning and Veronica in the evening,” added Tania. “Nice ad! I know her as well. I’ve seen her in the Ellis with a bunch of different guys.”

“Probably the Maya Sorority,” said Jane, joining us, as if it was a natural thing to do, with me looking like her girl friend, feeling like her girl friend in my stockings and straight skirt, never mind the mounds on my chest, my makeup and wig. “Veronica is in that crowd.”

“Who’s the girl in the wig for Jane Fisher’s?” asked Tania with a frown.

Jane looked over as I edged nervously over to my desk, not wanting Tania to see my stockings and the high heels that Jane had said that I had to wear as they fitted me right. I’d danced all night with them on but now they hurt.

“That’s Karen Holcomb, model of the year,” said Jane, smiling at me and miming that I should cross my legs.

“You have to get Michelle enrolled at Del Monte’s,” said Tania, looking at me, trying to sit in my straight skirt. “They do wonder with voices there. Not that it will bother Dave. How long do you give him till he makes a pass at lovely Michelle here?”

“Over a week,” said Jane. “I’m keeping Dave out on assignment until Michelle gets used to what she is.”

“What she is?” I asked wildly, distraught about being in women’s clothing, and in front of Tania. And a week?! I loved making love to Jane at her house, in her bed, but a week like this? I couldn’t possibly do it!

“Didn’t you see the end of the column?” said Jane smugly. “More from Michelle in the next issue. We’re going to document everything you do, my lovely, over the next month that you spend entirely as a woman. And Dave is going to get you alone and try it on, you know. He’s done it to us. He’s a real good kisser but with women he doesn’t come through in the end.”

“Too right!” said Tania.

“Maybe he’ll have more luck with you, Michelle,” said Jane slyly.

Most of the work on *The Queen* passed me by as I was in a desperate panic about being dressed as a woman, day after day, and about having to act like a woman. Jane didn’t ask me at all. I was just taken

down to the Del Monte School in the evening. I and twenty other young men were taught how to be women. I had voice lessons, dance lessons, femininity lessons. I modelled a fashionable line of dresses and meekly went to a fashion show with Jane as her girl friend.

My mind was a wreck as I wore sexy, female underwear, all the time. Women came up to me to introduce themselves to me, Michelle. They all wanted to give me advice on being a woman. They all thought that I was so brave and so pretty. They loved the article about me, yes, it had been published, and were dying to read more about my wonderful adventures in womanhood.

I squirmed and wanted to throw up as Jane smacked my tush to remind me to wiggle as they taught me in class. I couldn't go anywhere without her as she had my money and ID somewhere which she wouldn't give back. "In a month's time, pretty Michelle," was all she would say when I begged her for anything that would lead me back into being Mike Little again.

I had to be a newsman as well. I had to copy, edit, and revise stories with hands that were manicured and had a girl's dress ring on one finger, all my fingernails long and shaped and painted a gleaming pink.

I shuddered as my feminine hands copied the story of the riot on New Year's Day when Antonia Taylor, nineteen, had been assaulted by a Gary Miller when she revealed that she was a guy when he propositioned her. They both wrote to *The Queen* about it and so did witnesses to the whole attack. Her picture on the front page showed her as a frightened girl being hauled off by a feminized Deputy, Frank New.

I shivered as I sat, legs crossed, to type that the bank robbers were terrified of being assaulted in the Council jail where they were being kept. Drunks and Saturday Night fighters had assaulted 'Jenny' and 'Marilyn' many times, it seemed, kissing and fondling them as if they were real women. Some deputies, they claimed, just looked on and encouraged the men.

I thought how it would be if I was held in such a cell as I was now a man in a dress as well. I had much

more sympathetic feelings towards transsexuals as I was dressed so like them. The court had laughed when prosecutor Anne McKenzie asked 'Jenny' Ortega if she didn't love being the center of attention. Jenny had been furious and made it worse by saying that it depended on how cute the guy was. Luckily, Judge Emily Cortwright was sympathetic and ordered that transvestites and transsexuals be kept in cells away from the other men's cells in jail.

I didn't see *The Queen* until it was printed up. Pete Smith, stunning in a bikini, so slim and shapely, 'You've never seen a dancer like Pete before', dominated the back page as Kelly Rogers' replacement.

A new display ad showed a classical quartet, four good-looking girls, in a show at the Auditorium. I had to read Tania's column to find out that the 'girls' were known as 'The Amadeus Appreciation Society'. Two years before, as four guys, they'd performed as the Mozart Quartet. They couldn't fill a church pew. Now, in cocktail dresses, makeup and their attempts to be women, introduced as Mandy, Julia, Ashley and Felicity, they filled the City Auditorium for over a week with SRO audiences to hear them play.

There were no letters in *The Queen* this month. The editorial was a rant about the New Year's Day riot and how it was all the fault of pretty Antonia Taylor. She had no business going out in an evening dress and tempting men to dance with her when she was a man. I knew now that men didn't have to be tempted very much. Going everywhere with Jane, I was accosted all the time. In the clubs, guys just thought that they could dance with me at any time, any way, as I was in a dress.

Jane was trying to teach me how to be a 'strong, attractive woman', fending off guys who saw me as a weak, pretty, little thing, according to Jane. It was how I felt, if she did but know. She'd made me like this, I said to myself. A confident woman? I couldn't even keep Dave Richardson off me.

The girls were right. I think he deliberately waited till they weren't there. He popped up on my desk, calling me 'gorgeous', having his hands all over me. I didn't know how to fend Dave off, not in the tight skirt I was wearing. I was so scared! He pinned my arms easily behind my back so he could kiss me. I'd always known that he was stronger than me but that

was ridiculous. I couldn't fight back when he kissed me!

It was so terrible. I was terrified of a laughing Jane or Tania catching me. Dave forced me into the stock room. That first time was enough to change the relationship between us. The way he kissed me, pressing me against the wall so tightly, my head held so stiffly, made me shiver all over and cling to him as he stroked me so delightfully.

I'd never felt so aroused, or so much like a girl, as I did with Dave hugging me, a hand behind my head so that I couldn't get free. His tongue was in my mouth, his lips crushing mine so wonderfully. For the umpteenth time, I really did feel like a woman! But that wasn't going into the paper!

Tania and Jane were right. Dave could really kiss. I felt him down at the tips of my stockings and in my aroused panties and padded bra. I had these stupid feelings, at one time, that I was a woman kissing her man. I couldn't keep them out of my mind. Dave stroked my arms, put them about his neck and made me kiss him as much as he French-kissed me. He soon knew that Michelle loved kissing him.

When he came in, later in the week, and no-one was there, he just motioned to the stock room. I went with him, trembling meekly, swearing to myself that I wasn't gay! I had Jane, didn't I, my girl friend! I swore when I was alone that I wouldn't go with Dave again but my body trembled with femininity and longing and I always went. He liked me to raise a stockinged leg about his, so that he could caress it, and my stocking and garter belt, as we clung together in a kiss.

Dave told me I was better than Jane, far better than Tania, and a lot better than Bobbi in kissing a man. He told me that, soon, we were going to have to do a lot more than kissing. That was when Brian caught us in the stock room, Dave's hand caressing my panties. My breathing was so heavy and impassioned as I thrust myself against him that it was no wonder that Brian cursed me while he sneered about rescuing me, the 'damsel in distress', yes, me, Mike, no, me, Michelle Little.

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