

Savannah's Secret



Charlotte Mayo



A "Young Adult Tv" Novel



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Love,

Ms. Chrissie
Editor in Chief

SAVANNAH'S SECRET

BY CHARLOTTE MAYO

Preface - Friday, 24th July, 1953

Jamie got off the train and debated whether to use the red phone box by the entrance of the station and phone for Gibbs to come out and collect him or to tough it out and carry the heavy tan leather bag the two miles to his house. Jamie was of an age when the idea of giving himself physical challenges was appealing so he decided to walk. After all it was a lovely July day, the sun was out, bees were buzzing in the hedgerows, there was the soft smell of flower scent in the air and the thing that really put Jamie in a good mood – it was the first day of his long, school holidays.

So Jamie left the station and started to walk home along the country lane; he moved his bag from his left hand to his right and less than half a mile into the

journey he regretted the decision not to phone Gibbs. Still, there was no going back, he had committed himself to a course of action and, like the man he was rapidly becoming, he would stick to the task. Not that that there were any manly hairs on Jamie's fourteen-year-old chin and his voice had not broken and become croaky like some of the boys in the dorm.

Also, much to his chagrin, Jamie was of slight build which made him unfit to play rugby. Even so Jamie felt he was developing fast. He wanted to be a good athlete and a white handled, willow cricket back laid across the top of his leather bag.

One thing was certain, he was going to get some practice in over the holidays and make sure that, at the start of the next academic year, he would make the first team – he was already in the first team for cross country running as he was thin and carried no excess weight but that did not have the same kudos as cricket and rugby. Jamie placed his bag down and took a breather. He imagined the look of surprise on the faces of his parents when he arrived: he imagined Mrs. Gibbs, the cook and house keeper, saying,

“Oh, you are old enough to walk now, Jamie, George was expecting a phone call.”

Jamie smiled at the reflection – he really was becoming a man and was able to make his own decisions. He knew that one day he would marry and have to make decisions for his wife as well but for now he was content with the progress he was making into manhood.

With renewed vigour, Jamie picked up his bag and set off for home again. He didn't mind boarding school but he liked being home more. Home with his glamorous mother and his mild-mannered father who was some years older than his mother. Then,

there was Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs and the young maid, Nancy, who had just been taken on. Being home meant he was free from bells and homework and lessons and punishments and he could relax and do what he wanted to for the seven weeks of the summer holiday.

Mrs. Gibbs would see to his every need and, rather than being subservient to the masters and the prefects at the school, Jamie would be able to order the serving staff around – he liked that idea. It made him feel important - like a proper man. And, of course, there was his mother, Madeline. Jamie was close to Mother. She looked after him and protected him, and being the only child, he was spoilt rotten – he was at an age where he knew that.

His mother was affectionate to him in her letters and, when he was home, she often cuddled him. The letters had led to some gentle teasing at school and goading that he was a “mother’s boy” – a phrase Jamie hated. He was a man... or at least he was becoming one. And next academic year, when he reached the dizzy heights of a batsman for the school cricket team, he would prove it. That was his one ambition: then he would get kudos and adulation from his peers and, instead of being friendless, his classmates would look up to him.

Jamie was hot and flustered when he pushed open the large wrought iron gates of his family home and walked up the gravel drive to the wisteria-covered house. The two miles had seemed more like five carrying the big, heavy holdall and it had taken Jamie far longer than he had expected. Still, he had arrived and his parents would be impressed with his independence. He pulled the long, metal bell chain which hung reassuringly by the large oak front door. A minute later, the door was opened by Nancy in her starched black and white uniform.

“Oh, Master James,” she said. “We expected you to phone from the station.”

Jamie smiled broadly. “I walked,” he said.

“My, I can see that...” Nancy said.

Just at that moment there was a rustle of skirts and the sound of voices.

“Is that my Jamie?” His mother came rushing towards him, her arms out stretched, her full skirt billowing. Jamie stepped in and Nancy stepped to one side. In an instant, Jamie was grabbed and hugged and lifted by his mother who planted a series of kisses on his face which rather annoyed Jamie – could she not see he was a man and too old for such shows of affection?

“Oh Jamie, Jamie, it is so good to see you. You can’t believe how much we have missed you and you’ve not changed at all. Come, let’s have a proper look at you.”

And then his mother was on her knees. She was holding his hands and looking at him as if for the first time with tears in her eyes.

“Jamie, we have missed you so, so much,” she said softly. Then she seemed to recover herself and stood up.

“Gibbs, take Jamie’s bag upstairs to his bedroom,” she said to old Mr. Gibbs who was lurking by the kitchen door. “And tell Mrs. Gibbs to bring some tea and cake to the drawing room.”

“But Mother, I want to see my room!” Jamie protested (he also wanted a fresh change of clothes be-

cause he had perspired but thought he should not say that).

“All in good time,” Madeline said. “First, your father and I need to have a talk to you.”

Jamie was aware that his mother had not released his hand and actually held him quite tightly. He wondered what on earth he could have done wrong... or who had died... or what had happened which was so important he could not go to room first. Also, he wondered why his father was not at work. Still, he followed his mother to the drawing room. His father, Hugh, approached him and shook his hand.

“Hello Jamie, welcome home.”

Hugh was a tall and distinguished man, some fifteen years older than Madeline. He was quiet, reserved and serious: that particulate afternoon Jamie was only too aware of the earnest look on his father’s face. Madeline sat down on the chaise lounge and fanned out her dark silk skirts.

“Take a seat, Jamie,” Madeline said and patted the seat beside her. Jamie sat down next to his mother. There was an uncomfortable silence and then Mrs. Gibbs knocked on the door and entered with a tray of cakes, sandwiches and a pot of tea and some cups.

“Nice to see you home, Master James,” she said to Jamie. Jamie smiled in return.

“It’s good to be home,” he said but he was beginning to wonder if he should have stayed in the dorm like some of the foreign lads who had no homes to go to over the summer.

“Shall I pour the tea?” Mrs. Gibbs asked.

“No, no, I’ll do it,” Madeline said, “that will be all, thank you Mrs. Gibbs.”

When the door closed Hugh started to speak. He started to tell Jamie a story as Madeline sat on the chaise lounge staring at the full teapot.

An hour later Jamie ran to his room and lay in his bed and cried like he had never cried before. He sobbed like a baby and when, later that afternoon, his mother tried to comfort him, he threw a book at her. When his father tried to comfort him, he told him to go away. There was no consoling Jamie and he cried into the night and in the morning, he refused to get out of bed.... he had never been so unhappy in all his life. Never had he felt so, so sorry for himself.

Chapter One

To find the root cause of Jamie’s unhappiness we must turn the clock back some nineteen years to 1934. At that point Madeline Stringer was an aspiring actress who had studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) and was getting some stage roles. She was already noted as a beauty being blond and feminine and slim and was tipped to be a great actress either of stage or film (her dream was to be a Hollywood actress) – in fact, she was already being compared to the Hollywood starlet, Carole Lombard. One night, whilst appearing in a farce entitled *All Good Things* by Roy Pratchett, she was spotted by a young South African by the name of Oscar De Beer. De Beer was twenty-one and had been sent to London from his family home in Johannesburg to study mine engineering as his family owned a diamond mining business. Oscar was a wealthy young man with dark hair, delicate features and small, round

glasses. One of his party knew some of the cast of *All Good Things* so Oscar dutifully followed along to the after show party and that was where he met and fell in love with Madeline.

A whirlwind romance blossomed – the relationship was consummated and the pair lost their collective virginites – both being somewhat young and naïve. Madeline thought she had taken precautions but alas it was not the case and she found herself pregnant. Oscar was studying vigorously by then but promised to stick by her though he seemed less keen on a “shot gun” wedding, fearing the reaction from his parents back home in South Africa. Poor Madeline! Her parents disowned her and described her as a “trollop” and a “tart” but at least she was secure in the knowledge that Oscar would stick by her and would take care of her. Then disaster struck on that front too. One day Oscar received an urgent telegram from his mother.

“Father killed. STOP. Mining accident. STOP. Must come Home. STOP. Emergency. STOP.”

Oscar was in bits. He was in the middle of his thesis on geology, rock structure and boring techniques, he had a girlfriend who was pregnant and now this!

Still, family had to come first and Oscar took a plane from Croydon airport one misty day in March and started the long, arduous trek back to South Africa.

Madeline was left high and dry – her fiancé had deserted her (although he had never actually got around to proposing, she knew he would once he finished his thesis) and she was five months pregnant. Fortunately, a maiden aunt in Dorchester took pity on her and Madeline took the train to her house where she wrote long, loving letters to Oscar, saying

how much she missed him. They even discussed baby names – Savannah for a girl and Oscar junior for a boy.

“Whatever you do, darling Maddie,” Oscar said in one letter, “I beseech you not to give our child up for adoption. Please, please take care of him or her and I will look after you financially. I will take care of you and your child forever. You have my word on that as a true Afrikaan.”

Distance, Madeline considered, can make the heart forget for there was no mention in Oscar’s letters about a return to England and a resumption of their relationship – or indeed, any mention that Madeline should come to South Africa and join him. In fact, Oscar’s letters were filled with all the many responsibilities and commitments he now had “not only to his mother, sisters, grandparents and relations but the 150 employees of the De Beer Geo-Mining and Evacuation Company.”

Poor Madeline felt quite forlorn. It seemed Oscar had no space in his life for her. Eventually, Madeline did give birth to a baby girl. She registered the birth name as Savannah De Beer and, after much pressure from her maiden aunt and her parents, she gave her baby up for adoption and headed back to London to resume her acting career.

Chapter Two

One day she entered her lodgings, having returned from rehearsals for a show she was due to appear in, when she discovered a letter with a Johannesburg post mark. She quickly opened the envelope and discovered a letter from Oscar asking for details of how Savannah was fairing and what Madeline was now doing,

“Are you a full-time mother?” the letter asked naively.

Madeline sighed, money was short - the theatre didn't pay much and was irregular work; she had had to get another job as a waitress in a local café to help fund her career – there was no way she could have looked after a baby as well. Then she saw an object stuck in the envelope, she lifted it up and a large buff-coloured object fluttered to the ground.

Madeline bent down to pick it up. A beaming smile crossed her face for it was a cheque for £90 to be drawn from the Bank of Johannesburg, signed by Oscar De Beer.

“Here, find enclosed a little something to help keep mother and child together,” the letter read. “I promised you I would not let you and my baby go hungry and I will make regular payments to you. You have my word as a true Afrikaan.”

Madeline's heart skipped a beat. On the one hand she knew that, morally, she should not accept the money but on the other hand hadn't Oscar deserted her at her time of most need? Hadn't her parents deserted her too? Didn't she deserve a bit of luck? Anyway, she would pay him back when she was a famous actress – she would make that pledge to herself.

That night she composed a reply and enclosed a photograph of herself as a baby – stating that it was a photograph of Savannah. She wrote that Savannah was doing fine and that she had gone back to acting – Savannah was a bonny, beautiful baby. A few days later she paid the cheque, which conveniently been made out in pounds sterling, into her bank account.

Then, a few months later, another letter and cheque arrived and again Madeline replied and enclosed a photograph of herself as a baby. Then, when it was Savannah's birthday – 8th August - an even larger cheque arrived.

“Here's hoping you can put something aside for Savannah so that she has some money when she becomes a lady,” the letter said.

After a while Madeline accepted the cheques as a kind of payment for her suffering and, although she initially had some qualms about taking them, she started to look forward to the envelopes from Johannesburg as she knew they contained cheques from Oscar. One advantage of his money was that it meant she did not need a second job as a waitress and could concentrate on her acting career. As she suspected, the frequency of the letter (and cheques!) from Oscar lessened as time went on but Madeline was still grateful and being frugal she was able to save a not inconsiderable sum of money.

However, the truth was that although she had moderate acting ability she was not cut out to be an actress; in many ways the affair with Oscar had knocked the stuffing out of her. She toiled on the boards for a while longer and then she met Hugh. The circumstances of the meeting were very similar to the meeting with Oscar – a friend introduced them at an after-show party. Hugh was debonair, some fifteen years Madeline's elder and a stockbroker. They

started dating and love blossomed. Then, one day, sitting on a bench in Regent's Park, Madeline made a confession.

“Hugh, I have done the most awful thing...”

She went on to make a tearful confession about Oscar and Savannah and how she had had to give the “poor mite” up for adoption. Hugh rubbed her back and comforted her and in that moment his love for her grew even stronger – he was not a naive man and knew it was very difficult for a single mother in 1930's Britain and she had taken the only course of action available to her. A few days later, he proposed.

So, as it was reported in *The Times* newspaper, on 16th July, 1938, Madeline Stringer, 23, married Hugh Queensbury, 38, at St. David's Church, Haversham. Madeline, it was reported, had decided to give up the stage and concentrate on starting a family.

To that end, twelve months later, James Alfred Queensbury was born. It was a difficult birth and Madeline was warned that further pregnancies may result in “health complications.” Hugh was a mild man who accepted the situation with sanguinity. After all, he had a son and heir and his family was complete.

Then in 1939, the war intervened and Hugh “done his bit” for the country as a bomber pilot whilst Madeline bought Jamie up alone at home – hence the strong bond between Mother and Son. Hugh survived the war and returned to marital bliss for, indeed, the Queensburys were a happy family unit.

Madeline found a quiet contentment in being a housewife and lady of leisure and excelled at giving parties. Of course, she had updated Oscar of her

change of circumstances (but not the fact she now had a son) and her new address and was somewhat delighted that the Johannesburg letters (and cheques) kept coming - particularly through the war years when money was tight and there was a very high risk that she would be widowed.

After the war Madeline discovered that Hugh was a thrifty individual who, she felt, sometimes did not let her have as much money as she would have liked so the knowledge that she had a secret account with Oscar's money in it as a reserve was very re-assuring. Then Hugh discovered a Jo'berg letter in Madeline's drawer and questioned her about it. Madeline once again made a tearful confession – this time that Oscar had continued to pay for Savannah, not realising she had been given her up for adoption.

Hugh, an upstanding man, was not pleased by this confession; it caused a rift between the pair which lasted a number of days but he eventually realised that it was too late for Madeline to come clean. He checked out the stock price of De Beer's engineering company – it was riding high and Oscar was a very rich young man. Therefore, Hugh decided that discretion was the better part of valour and that there was no harm in continuing to accept the cheques. Indeed, maybe there was some merit in Madeline's argument that he "owed" it to her for the hurt he had caused. Still, Hugh doubted the police would see it like that – she had taken money under false pretences which was fraud - plan and simple. But then who would ever know?

As Madeline so rightly pointed out, Oscar was a very eligible bachelor and was sure to marry and have a family of his own at which point he would forget about Madeline and Savannah - then the "Jo'burg letters" as they were dubbed, would dry up as Oscar would "forget" about the fling he had had in England.

Hugh made one stipulation – Madeline’s account had to close. The money needed to go into his account and he would pay her more housekeeping.

Reluctantly, Madeline agreed. Hugh was as good as his word and Madeline found she had a lot more money for clothes and décor around the house. The Queensbury household resumed normality and happiness. Jamie was sent to boarding school at the end of the war and returned to the family home in the holidays.

Chapter Three

Over time, Madeline and Hugh became blasé about the “Jo’burg letters” which started to arrive twice yearly – at Christmas and on Savannah’s birthday – so much so that although Madeline was aware that 8th August was Savannah’s birthday she had no idea that it was Savannah’s *eighteenth* birthday on Saturday, 8th August, 1953. Unfortunately, for her Oscar did. He wrote to say he had a beautiful topaz necklace for “his darling daughter” and he was coming to the U.K. to place it on her eighteen-year-old neck in person a few days after her birthday as he had business to conduct in London. Can you imagine the upset that was caused in the household? Madeline was sent into an almighty panic.

“He is not going to be to bloody happy when he finds out you gave Savannah up for adoption!” Hugh shouted when he heard the news. “I told you not to continue with this deceit. It was bound to end in tears!”

“What do you think will happen when he finds out?” Madeline sobbed.

“He will call the police,” Hugh said. “You have committed a fraud and I am a party to it too. We will both go to prison. Our lives and reputations will be ruined!”

All Madeline could do was cry. At night she dreamt of burly prison warders with hundreds of keys locking her in the cell for the night. She dreamt of rough prisoners mocking her for her posh accent and refined ways. Prison was not meant for the likes of her. She hadn't meant to commit a crime – it was an accident but she knew it was wrong. But what could she do?

“We must write to Oscar and put him off!” Madeline pleaded. “It is just coincidence that Savannah's birthday coincides with a business trip to London.”

“We can't,” Hugh said. “By the tone of his letter he is clearly determined to see Savannah even if it means making a special trip later in the year. Look, the letter reads: *I know the 12th August may not be convenient for my visit but I can extend my trip to London as I wish to see Savannah in her eighteenth year and can be available anytime in August to give her my special gift. If that is not convenient, I am prepared to make a special trip to England to see her.*”

“We could get an actress to play the part of Savannah?” Madeline suggested. Through the tears she tried to come up with a plan.

“Too risky,” Hugh said. “We would then be at risk of blackmail from the actress as she would have to know the full story. Anyway, how will we get the right person in such a short space of time?”

“Why don't we just offer to pay all the money back?” Madeline proffered.

Hugh sighed. “Do you know how much he has given you over the years for Savannah?”

Madeline shook her head. “No, I never kept records.”

Hugh continued. “It is likely to be a substantial sum and would not be money we would have readily available to us without re-mortgaging the house. Anyway, there’s still no saying that Oscar would not want to take it further. It would just be an admission of guilt.”

Hugh knew from the business world that rich, powerful men never liked to lose face and feel belittled and if Oscar felt Madeline had been dishonest for eighteen years he would call in his lawyers. There was no doubt about it, a man like Oscar De Beer who ran a highly successful mining company would want his pound of flesh.

The couple argued, they talked, they debated, they blamed each other - both knowing they were complicit in the other’s guilt.

“It’s a fucking mess,” Hugh said one day. He was not prone to swearing but the situation was impossible. There seemed no way out.

Then one day over breakfast, Madeline, who had hardly slept at all since the letter from Oscar had arrived, spoke to Hugh in a more conciliatory tone. For the first time she seemed a little brighter.

“Hugh, darling,” she said. “Last night I had an idea.”

Hugh was about to dip a bread soldier into his egg. He paused. He loved his wife passionately and hated to see her so distraught. He just wished she had not

been so reckless as to take Oscar's money – but had he not, as Head of the Household, condoned the action by not sending the cheques back as soon as he had realised the deceit? If Madeline was convicted of fraud, then he would be convicted as a co-conspirator. Anything they could do to stop such a situation had to be tried, *anything, anything, anything, anything...*

Madeline paused. "It concerns Jamie."

Hugh was puzzled.

Madeline took a deep breath. "I've been thinking. Jamie is fourteen and of slight build and he has not yet matured into a man. Indeed, when he was at home at Christmas, his voice had not broken and there was no hair on his face."

Hugh really was bewildered.

Madeline continued. "Darling, I know we would be asking a lot of him but before you reply, just think about it. I never told Oscar we had a son. In fact, in my letters back to him I have told him very little about my family life apart from the fact you are a stockbroker and we live very nicely and we both love Savannah like a daughter."

Hugh had dropped his soldier onto his side plate and was staring at Madeline, *What on earth is she thinking? Has she finally lost her mind?*

"Well," Madeline said, "Everyone says how much Jamie takes after me – in looks and personality. He has the same blond hair and blue eyes and delicate features and you know what? The photos I sent to Oscar of Savannah, well, they were all of me as a baby and a young child. Darling Hugh, I know it is asking a lot but every night I think of the prison cell

and the scandal and I know I have done wrong... and listen, darling. I didn't send many photos of myself to Oscar over the age of ten when you came back from the war and discovered the Johannesburg letters as I was scared you would question where the photos were. So he has not seen her, not at all, do you see? Yet he knows she looks like me as that is what I have told him.

"So darling, we could dress Jamie up as Savannah and pass him off as her. It would only be for one afternoon when Oscar comes for tea to give her the topaz necklace. He would present her with her eighteenth birthday present. We would all have lunch together and then we would have a nice cup of tea and cake and we would make him most welcome. Then he would go back to London to do his business as he says he has business there. Then he would fly home to Johannesburg. *He would fly back to Johannesburg.* Don't you see, darling? He would be happy. He would have seen Savannah! And, if he ever wanted to see her again, we would say she had left home and become a nun or gone to some out-of-the-way place so the situation would not arise again. He would have seen her the once so why would he doubt us?"

"Dress my son as a girl? NEVER." Hugh banged the table. "Oscar would see straight through it for one thing. You can't pass a boy off as a girl. It can't be done."

"But Hugh, it *can* be done!" Madeline came over to Hugh and bent down at his chair, she was feeling excited and alive. She took his hands. "Hugh darling, I was an actress, I still have friends in London theatres who would provide wigs and things. I just know I could do it if you allowed me this one chance. I know if we could get Jamie to agree I could make him look like a girl. Please Hugh, please, it is our only chance. We can't find Savannah as I think she was adopted

by an Irish couple but I have no names. We can't get an actress to play the part and yet in less than three weeks Oscar will be here with a present for his eighteen-year-old daughter."

Hugh was resolute. "Passing a boy off as a woman can't be done. It is not possible."

Madeline held Hugh's hands more firmly. "Oh but it can, Hugh. Just give me a chance to show you. We won't say anything to Jamie until he returns from school. Then, whilst you are at work, I will prepare him. I have a friend in London who has a wig shop. I will call her up and she can come down. I will start getting things organised. We will get Jamie prepared and we will have dinner. Just the three of us. That will be like a practice run but Jamie will be a thousand times better before Oscar arrives as I will practice with him every day. I just know it will work. Jamie is a dear, sweet boy and he will help us. Oh damn, we are in such a pickle. I know he will do his best for his mummy. If you feel it won't work, then I will ditch the whole crazy idea and prepare myself for prison." Madeline sobbed her heart out as Hugh comforted her and stroked her back. It wasn't just his wife that faced prison – it was him too. He didn't like the idea of his son dressing up as a girl but if there was a chance it could work. If there was a chance...

"All right," he said. "Let's see what you can do with the boy and then I will make my decision. But we will have to be careful, we don't want to make a bad situation worse. If Oscar was to suspect anything..."

"I know, Hugh, but it is our only chance, our only chance." And she sobbed again, sobbed for all she was worth.

Chapter Four

Madeline felt as if an executioner had just given her a reprieve. She started to prepare for Jamie's arrival home in less than a week, knowing that she would be presenting him to Oscar as his daughter – there was no way she was going to let such a golden opportunity slip from her grasp. The first thing she did was meet with Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs and Nancy. She told them about Oscar and the fact that she had had a child out of wedlock and that Oscar thought the child was still living with them – of course, she did not mention that she had taken money from Oscar under false pretences. Inevitably the three servants had gleaned as much from the heated exchanges between Madeline and Hugh and knew that a secret in Madeline's past had come back to haunt her.

“Don't say anything to Hugh at present, as he is still not completely on board with the plan,” she said. “But my idea is to pass Jamie off as Savannah. There will be a consideration amount in cash for your support and silence.”

Nancy fairly beamed with delight. “A very good idea, Madam, if I might say so. I think it will work a treat and I will give you any help you need.”

“Thank you, Nancy,” Madeline said. “I was hoping you would say that. I am going to start by boxing up all Jamie's possessions and turning that bedroom of his into a girl's room. To be believable he must think he *is* the part he is playing. When I was an actress, I was very taken with the idea that to play a part you must *believe* you are the character – it is what they call Method acting nowadays but it was similar in my day. The actor must *believe* they are the part. I can

assure you Jamie will believe he is Savannah by the time I have finished with him.”

So for the next few days Jamie’s room was cleared of his boyish toys and filled with flowers and feminine décor. Madeline even added some of her lingerie to the drawers and a couple of her old dresses to the wardrobe. She wanted Jamie to really believe he was Savannah for that one afternoon. When the time came, she would buy him new clothes... clothes that fitted him properly.

So our story takes us back to Jamie’s return home for the school holidays towards the end of July. Madeline, as was her wont, had kept feeding Hugh with the line that “Jamie will play the part of Savannah” so that he had almost forgotten about his original decision that there was to be a “trial” first. In fact, seeing his wife in such a good temper and happy again had made him resigned to the fact that Madeline was going to have her way.

“After all,” Hugh thought, “what harm can it possibly do? If it all goes wrong, we are in the same place we were before she thought of the daft idea... in a fine old mess.”

The evening before Jamie’s return from school, Nancy and Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs were summoned to the drawing room and Hugh announced the grand plan.

“Now I am sure you all have some idea of what has been going on but it is very important to us that our visitor from South Africa leaves this house believing that Jamie is, in fact, Savannah who was a child born out of wedlock whom Maddy was forced to give up for adoption. It would break Oscar’s heart if he knew that was the case so we are entering into a kindly subterfuge which will mean Jamie is passed off as

Savannah. Oscar will leave this house none the wiser. I know you have helped assist Maddy with some of the arrangements and once Jamie is home there will be an awful lot more to prepare. I will thank you for not saying anything about this adventure outside of the house and I will see to it that you all receive a one-off payment of £100 once Oscar has left the house.”

Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs and Nancy were stunned at Hugh’s generosity (£100 being a lot of money in the 1950’s). Mrs. Gibbs said to her husband, once they returned to their duties,

“There is more to this than meets the eye. They have some reason for not wanting Oscar to know the truth.”

“But it is not ours to worry about, Grace. His master is being very generous and we just need to keep quiet and carry on – like in the war.”

So, on his return from school, Jamie had been summoned to the study and duly informed by his father that there would be no cricket or outside play for the next two and a half weeks as his mother was going to prepare him to act like an eighteen-year-old girl so he could be passed off as a child his mother had had outside of wedlock. There was so much new information that Jamie was left bemused, befuddled and confused. He knew nothing of Savannah or Oscar or the money that had been sent for her upkeep (Madeleine and Hugh had decided they would need to tell Jamie the full story so he was aware of the seriousness of the situation and accepted, with an Englishman’s stoicism, the role he had to play).

Hugh ended his statement by saying, “Jamie, I know we are expecting a lot of you, perhaps too much, but your mother made a terrible mistake

when she was very young. Since then she has re-built her life and lived without sin or reproach. We are a happy family. This man, Oscar, threatens, albeit unwittingly, to ruin that. He could send the family into turmoil. If he accuses Madeline of fraud, she will be arrested and, I suspect, charged. There will be a trial.” (At this Madeline released a little shriek and started to cry). “Whatever the verdict, the family would be ruined and you would be deprived of a private education and a career. You yearn to go into law – which is very laudable. But what law firm, what university will take you with the Queensbury name so besmirched?”

Jamie glanced at his crying mother. He had tears in his own eyes. It was too much to take in.

“You want me to agree to be a *girl*?” he said, unable to grasp what was being asked of him. “You want me to dress as a *girl*? To act like a *girl*?”

“Yes,” Hugh said. “That is exactly what we are saying. There will be practice sessions for two and a half weeks when Madeline will dress you and teach you how to act as a girl. You will have dinner in the evening dressed as a girl when I come home from work. At all other times you can go back to being dressed as a boy and, of course, once you have played the part of Savannah and Oscar has gone away satisfied, things will return to normal and you can forget about the whole thing.”

“But I can’t, I won’t do it!” Jamie protested. “I’m a man.”

Hugh’s faced reddened with anger. He hated disobedience. He tried to calm himself. He took a deep breath.

“Jamie, I don’t think you quite understand the seriousness of the situation. We are not *asking* you to dress as a girl and play the part of Savannah. We are *telling* you that this is what is going to happen. I have gone into quite some detail about a mistake your poor mother made when she was young; she had a baby with this Oscar who then deserted her and went back to South Africa. She took the initial cheque because she had no money and she felt it was owed to her. From then on, it was hard not to carry on with the deceit. For that she could face imprisonment and the family could face ruin. One way, the only way, out of this pickle is for Oscar to be convinced that *you* are Savannah and leave the house happy. Hopefully, once he has seen the daughter he deserted, we won’t have to see him again. That means you will play the part of Savannah. DO YOU HEAR?”

Jamie burst into tears. “But Dad, I don’t want to, I don’t want to dress up as a girl.”

Hugh’s patience was tested to the limit. “You will do as you are told, young man!”

Madeline started sobbing, she took Jamie’s hand.

“Please, Jamie, for me, you don’t want to have to visit your poor mother in prison, do you?”

It was all too much - Jamie left the room in a flood of tears and ran for the sanctuary of his room. He was so distressed that he did not see the changes that had been made to his bedroom. He collapsed on the bed and cried and cried and cried.

Chapter Five

He hoped that on Saturday morning his parents would have had a change of heart – after all they could see how distressed he was. In fact, Madeline let him have a nice, long lie in and Nancy even brought him breakfast in bed.

“It’s a lovely morning, Master James,” Nancy said as she drew the curtains back to let in the sunlight.

“I hope so,” James said. He was aware of how red and blotchy his face must look.

After breakfast, he got up, washed and pulled on his trousers and shirt. He came downstairs. His parents were having their breakfast together. His father addressed him.

“Jamie, I know all this has been a shock for you and we will say no more about it over the weekend. We have church tomorrow and whilst you are in church I want you to think about sinners and redemption and how you might do a good deed to help your mother. Hopefully, you will come to the right conclusions and see things through the eyes of God rather than your own selfish perspective. Then on Monday your mother will start to take you in hand.”

“Yes Dad,” was all Jamie could say. Jamie’s mind was in turmoil, his parents seemed determined to go through with the plan.

The weekend passed reasonably peacefully with no more mention of Jamie being dressed as a girl or young woman. Even so, Jamie was morose and moody. He could not believe he had a half-sister and that his mother wanted to pass him off as her! When Jamie got up on Monday morning, he hoped the

whole stupid matter had been forgotten. Once again, Nancy brought him breakfast in bed, then he dressed and went down stairs. He was pleased his dad had already left for work.

“Oh, you have decided to join us, Jamie,” Madeline joked. “I hope you rested well and are feeling in a happier frame of mind this morning?”

Jamie shrugged. “I feel alright.”

“Good,” Madeline said. “A lady is going to come this morning and we are going to try various blonde wigs on you – I used to know her from my theatrical days – she has some wonderful stories...”

Jamie’s heart started to race. He felt as if he was going to burst into tears again.

“But Mum, you are not really going to dress me as a girl, are you? I can’t do it! I can’t! I can’t!”

“Listen Jamie, I thought we had gone through all this on Friday. You are not a little boy; you are old enough to understand the seriousness of the situation. On Friday, I accept, it was all a big shock to you and you had your tears, which is quite understandable. Your father and I appreciate it is not something you want to do but we have agreed that it is the only way out of an almighty predicament which could ruin this family. Unfortunately, you are just going to have to toe the line. It won’t be as bad as all that. Yesterday, your father said to me that he would take you to see England against Australia in The Ashes cricket match – he will get tickets for Lords. You know you would love that, wouldn’t you?”

Jamie nodded. “But I don’t want to dress as a girl,” Jamie said. “I don’t want to.”

Madeline caught Jamie by the shoulders. “Look Jamie, in life we all have to do things we don’t want to do. Your dad did not want to be a bomber pilot during the war. I had to stay at home and look after you. I would stand in the garden looking up at the formations of Lancaster’s going off to bomb Germany; I knew your father was in one of those aircraft and that he may not return. Do you know what the death rate was? Over half didn’t return and now we have a quiet, cosy family and we are well-off. Would you like to ruin all that? Would you? We provide a lovely house for you, Jamie, and a private education and now your father and I are asking for some payback, some consideration.”

“But Mum.... Please don’t do this to me...”

“Now look, Jamie. Your father and I have given you time. We allowed you to think about things over the weekend but at the end of the day we’ve told you what is going to happen. We don’t have much time to get this right. The lady from the theatre, Stella her name is, comes today and we will choose a wig. Then we will practice for a couple of hours a day and the rest of the time is yours. Then in the evening we will dress you for dinner with your father so you can get used to being at a table and speaking like a young lady. Obviously, Oscar is going to take a close interest in you and you need to feel confident and self-assured.”

Tears started to roll down Jamie’s face. “But Mum, I can’t do it...”

“You can, Jamie, and you will. I will see to that. Now, no more histrionics.”

Jamie ran off to his room, leaving Madeline to shake her head.

I can't understand that boy, she said to herself. He knows how precarious the situation is and yet still he behaves like a spoilt two-year-old. I'm not going to stand any more tantrums.

When Stella arrived, Jamie was a bit more compliant. Madeline had decided against trying to get him to dress – the wig would just have to be sourced with Jamie in male guise. Perhaps that would get him used to the idea. As Stella brought in boxes of wigs and set them up on stands in Madeline's and Hugh's bedroom, Madeline made her way to Jamie's bedroom where he was lying on the bed reading.

“Stella's here,” she said. “It is time to have your wig fitting.”

Jamie continued to read.

“I'm sorry, Jamie, your father and I have been very clear with you about what is at stake here and what we expect you to do – if this defiance continues, we may have to resort to the hair brush or the cane.”

Jamie placed the book down and looked at his mother, tears glistening in his eyes.

“Mother.... *Please* don't make me do it...”

“I'm sorry, Jamie, it has to be done. Now jump to it.”

Reluctantly, the fourteen-year-old got off the bed and followed his mother to her bedroom. He sat on the stool by the dressing table. Stella registered her surprise.

“I thought he would be dressed and made-up.”

“It’s one step at a time I’m afraid, Stella. Jamie’s proving remarkably childish and obstinate.”

Stella gave him a disapproving look. She took a wig off a stand and placed it on Jamie’s head.

“It’s not so bad is it?” she said.

“I feel stupid,” he said. It was long and blonde and curly. Stella brushed it through, ignoring the remark.

“It’s too long,” Madeline said.

Another wig was tried and another. Jamie made negative comments but the two women ignored him. Eventually they found a blonde bob wig which looked like Jamie’s own hair. The both agreed that that was the right one. Madeline paid for the wig and for Stella’s time and Jamie was allowed to go back to his room.

Madeline gave Stella a lift back to the station, then stopped in town to do some shopping.

That evening, Hugh was also surprised that Jamie wasn’t dressed when he returned from work. Hugh asked Madeline how things had gone.

“He’s proving very resistant,” Madeline said. “But don’t worry. I managed to get him to try on some wigs and tomorrow I will dress him for the first time. My patience is wearing thin and I won’t be quite so nice if he resists again tomorrow.”

“Shall I cane him?” Hugh asked.

“No, not yet,” Madeline said. “Let me see how things go tomorrow. He is our only hope and we need



to get him to see things from our point of view. At present he is wrapped up in himself and how he feels.”

That evening Jamie sat down to the evening meal with his mother and father. The atmosphere was frosty and he knew he had done wrong. He didn't want to dress as a girl but then he didn't want his mother to go to prison either. Neither parent spoke much to him and he knew he was in their “bad books” – since he had been home he had done nothing but cry and he felt himself welling up again.

After dinner he went to his room. He had realised it had been changed around and there was nothing familiar in it – all he had were a few reading books he had brought home with him from school. He felt bored, lonely, and deeply unhappy about the events taking place. He didn't say “good night” to his parents, instead he washed and went to bed. He lay in bed thinking about the request to dress as a girl and wondering what other boys in the dorm would do in such a crazy situation. Of course, he would not tell them. There was a soft knock on the door and his mother came in.

“James,” she said. “How are you?”

“I'm alright, Mum.”

His mother bent down beside his bed, her full skirt rustling as she did so. Her sweet scent encompassed him and made him feel secure. She took his hand which was resting on the eider down.

“Jamie, tomorrow we really must start practising for the role you are going to play – we have just sixteen days left before Oscar arrives and we must make sure everything is right. Your father and I have agreed that you can have the weekends off as per-

haps it is not fair to dress you all the time. We will do family things over the weekend to make sure we make up to you a bit but that means there are only eleven days of practice before Oscar arrives. I went shopping this afternoon and I bought you some lingerie.

“Tomorrow morning, I want you to be a good boy and put it on. You may need some help with the stockings and suspenders and the bra so Nancy will be on hand to assist you. She will serve you breakfast in bed again, then she will stay in the room and help you dress. I have also put one of my old dresses in the wardrobe which you can wear for the time being. It won’t fit properly but it is just to get a feel for things. Remember, you don’t want your poor old mother going to prison with all the roughnecks, do you?”

Jamie shook his head.

“Your mother is far too sophisticated for that, isn’t she?” Madeline said. Then she scooped Jamie in her arms and gave him a big kiss on the cheek.

“Please Jamie,” she whispered. “Be mature about this and help your mother out of this awful fix.”

Jamie sighed. There was no escape.

The next morning, Nancy again delivered Jamie breakfast in bed on a tray. He really was being spoilt but on this occasion, having drawn the curtains, she fussed about, getting things out of drawers and bags and placing them on a chair.

Jamie ate his breakfast like a condemned man. No one would listen to him – see things from his point of view. He was a man – he should not have to dress as a girl. When he had finished, he placed the tray on the floor.

“Is Master James ready?” Nancy asked.

Nancy was tall and willowy and James knew she was only twenty-two – she had not been with the family for very long. Slowly, James got out of bed. He put on his dressing gown and went to the bathroom to wash. On his return, Nancy handed him a pair of silky, purple French knickers.

“Do you want me to leave the room whilst you put them on?”

Jamie nodded. Nancy left the room and he took off his pyjama jacket and trousers and – for the first time in his life - slipped on female lingerie. The elastic felt tight around his waist. He looked at his skinny form in the mirror. It just didn't seem right and he felt he was going to cry. He knew he would be teased if the boys in the dorm found out. He swallowed, took a deep breath, then he called to Nancy who came back into the room. Immediately, she picked up a large pointed bra and strapped it around Jamie's chest. The thing was grotesque, it hurt his chest and made him look like a clown. Nancy gathered up some socks which she stuffed inside the pouches.

“There, they'll do for now.”

Next she took up a girdle which she wrapped around Jamie's thin waist. She pulled it as tight as she could and began to fasten the hook and eye fastening at the back. Jamie kept yelping in pain but Nancy was enjoying herself. It was so more entertaining than her normal duties of scrubbing floors and doing the laundry. Whilst she liked Mr. and Mrs. Queensbury, she found Jamie rude, arrogant and self-obsessed – a period dressed as a girl would do him good.

“Now, now, Master James,” she said. “Let’s not be a big baby.”

But once again Jamie was crying.

“I don’t want to do this,” he protested. “I don’t want to! I don’t want to! I don’t want to!”

Nancy ignored him. She finished doing the girdle up. “Now sit on the bed,” she said.

“Why?” Jamie asked.

“Because, Master James, those four white things that are hanging down from your girdle are suspender straps and we now need to attach them to stockings.”

Jamie reluctantly sat on the bed. Nancy rolled up a stocking and placed it on Jamie’s foot. She rolled it up gently. His legs were smooth and shapely. She attached the suspenders and then she did the same to the other leg.

“Right, that wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Jamie stood up and looked at himself in the mirror. He looked hideous, like a freak. Couldn’t they understand he was a man? Nancy went to the wardrobe and got out a full-skirted blue dress with a tight bodice.

“This dress was one of your mum’s. It was going to go the Woman’s Institute charity but Mrs. Queensbury though you could wear it just until she buys you some new clothes.”

“No!” Jamie said. “I am not wearing mother’s dress. I am not doing it – you can fucking leave me alone!!!”

Jamie started behaving like a demented banshee, flaying out at Nancy. The poor servant gripped his wrists.

“Mrs. Queensbury, Mrs. Queensbury,” Nancy called. “Help! Help!”

In seconds Jamie’s mother was at the door, hairbrush in hand. She was determined to put a stop to such nonsense. She sat down on the corner of Jamie’s bed and, with Nancy’s aid, the teenager was steered around and placed over her knee.

“You did well getting this far,” Madeline said, looking at the underwear. “It’s just such a shame the French knickers are going to have to come down again.”

Jamie was kicking out and flailing his arms but Madeline had a firm grip on him. Nancy tugged down the knickers to reveal his bare backside, then Madeline went to work. It was something she had not wanted to do but Jamie had resisted for too long and needed to know he had to do as he was told. She brought the flat of the hairbrush down on his backside. Jamie yelped in pain, his arms flailing around but Madeline was used to spanking him and gripped his wrists tightly. She brought the hairbrush down on his backside again and again and again. Jamie cried with pain and begged her to stop but Madeline was not going to give up and until she had really belaboured him and made him realise the error of his ways. She walloped him until her arm ached. Then she pulled up his knickers and told him to stand up and “stop being so stupid.”

“Come Nancy, let’s leave the spoilt brat alone for a while.”

They both left the room and closed the door. Jamie flung himself on the bed and sobbed. Then, after having had a cup of tea, Madeline went and looked in on her son.

“Will you comply now?” she asked.

Jamie nodded. In fact, the spanking with the hair-brush had a remarkably sobering effect on Jamie as, for the rest of the day, he was very compliant. He said very little but just did as he was told. First, he slipped into the blue dress and allowed Nancy to zip it up. The dress was too big but it at least made Jamie look like a girl which was what Madeline had wanted. Then, Nancy was dismissed and Madeline took Jamie to her bedroom where she proceeded to make up his face, powdering it, adding rouge, mascara and lipstick. The last item added was the wig. Then she sprayed on some perfume and added some jewellery. Lastly, she gave Jamie some low-heeled shoes to wear. When she had finished, Madeline took Jamie downstairs to show Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs and Nancy. They all said how “pretty” Jamie looked and how he would “easy pass as Savannah”.

Madeline was not so sure. There was more to being a woman than just looking like one. Madeline knew she needed to teach Jamie how to sit and how to eat and how to be gracious. Also, the look was not perfected. She took Jamie into the drawing room and asked Nancy to serve tea. She then gave Jamie a few instructions on how he should always hold back, not taking food until he was offered it and how he needed to sit on the edge of the chair with his legs together. She was surprised at how well Jamie responded. Once the obstinacy was removed, he was actually quite obedient and she was very pleased with his

progress – for the first time she felt the plan just might work.

“Right, Jamie,” Madeline said. “That completes your lesson for today. You can go upstairs now and get changed. It wasn’t so hard, was it?”

Jamie was surprised. It was only mid-day and he was free to get back into his male clothes.

“Thanks Mum!” Jamie said, beaming from ear to ear. “Do you mind if I cycle into town and buy some sweets and a comic?”

Madeline smiled. “Not at all. Get my handbag and I will give you some money. I told you it wasn’t so awful, didn’t I?”

“Yes,” Jamie said.

“And you have done well today – it’s just a pity I had to spank you.”

“My backside is still sore.”

“Well, remember that tomorrow. And don’t run, walk like a lady.” Madeline said but in a flash of blue material Jamie had gone – rushing to his bedroom to get out of the awful clothes and make-up.

When Nancy came in to collect the sandwich plates and tea tray, she said, “You let him go early.”

“Softly... softly... catchee monkey,” Madeline replied with a wink. “I want to him to feel that it is not such an arduous ordeal. Tomorrow I will take him to London to see some of my old theatrical friends after which we might finally be ready for a meal with Hugh

and then hopefully Oscar but there is still work to do, plenty of work.”

Chapter Six

Wednesday, 29th July, 1953

Jamie was pleased about a day out in London to see his mum’s old theatrical friends. He always liked travelling on the train, although he was not so keen on the wearing of French knickers, a girdle, stockings and suspenders which he had had to put on under his male clothes. He knew the visit to London was all to do with his masquerade and he would be dressed again. Jamie sighed – he knew he had to accept his Fate – the last thing he wanted was his mother to go to prison due a simple mistake she had made in the past.

They got off the train at Kings Cross and took a taxi to Shaftesbury Avenue. Madeline pointed out different theatres to Jamie and told him about the ones she had performed at before the war. Then they found a small dress shop. The owner, a portly woman, greeted Madeline warmly.

“Lovely to see you again, Madeline,” she said.

“And you too, Joan,” Madeline replied. “It has been a long time.”

“This is the young man you want me to make a couple of costumes for?” Joan asked.

“Yes,” Madeline said. “I need some dresses made for him. One will be a tea dress and the other an eve-

ning dressing. They need to be a style an eighteen-year-old girl would wear.”

“I see, is it a production you can tell me about?” Joan asked suspiciously.

Madeline smiled. “Not really, Jamie’s my son. An ex-lover has contacted me from South Africa and he thinks I have a daughter who is eighteen and... oh...” Madeline sighed. “It is a bit complicated.”

“I won’t pry, dear, you know me. Discretion is the better side of valour,” Joan said.

“I knew I could trust you.”

“Do you know, I think I am going to enjoy this, it is an usual request,” Joan said. “Now Jamie, go out the back and you will find a small dressing room. Take off your male clothes and place them on the chair there.”

Madeline gave him a few moments to take off his clothes, then she went to the back of the shop too. She took a bra from her bag which she attached to his chest. Joan, who had followed her, added some foam padding. Jamie was told to place his arms in the air and Joan went over him with a tape measure.

“He is nice and slim and has small hands and feet. I feel sure we can make a girl out of him. He has quite feminine features.”

“My thoughts exactly,” Madeline said.

“If you go back through you may want to look at materials and styles, Madeline.”

Madeline went back to the front of the shop and looked at dresses in a book and wads of materials.

When she had selected the style and material she wanted, she said, "Let's see Jamie in a dress, just so I can gauge a style."

Joan went to a rack of dresses and took down a lovely red dress with a full skirt and a tight bodice. A netted underskirt was attached to his waist and the dress pulled over his head. All the while Jamie had been quiet - almost as if he were a mannequin. Madeline sensed him getting distressed and realised that it was the loss of his male identity which was the issue. She placed a hand on his shoulder.

"It is alright, Jamie, you are an actor and you are playing the part of a girl - it doesn't change who or what you are."

Jamie seemed pleased to hear his mother's words and visibly relaxed. Meanwhile Joan was fussing about him and pulling the dress down.

"I think this style with the full skirt really suits him," she said. "He has nice legs and trim ankles and it makes him look feminine - tight skirts would not suit."

"Yes, I agree," Madeline said. "We will take two dresses like this." She wrote something on a pad. "This is my address."

"They will be ready in a week and sent to your house," Joan said. She handed Madeline a list of measurements. "That will help you buy some more clothes."

Madeline thanked Joan and when Jamie had changed back into his male clothes, they set off again. Jamie left the shop feeling confused and bewildered. He had been amazed at the matter-of-fact way in which Joan had measured him and how his

mother had treated his dressing as a girl as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Maybe he was making too much of it, maybe other people didn't feel he was being asked to do too much. Even so, he still felt uneasy. They walked along the sunlit pavement to another shop. The bell jingled as Madeline pushed the door open.

"I have booked an appointment here," she said as they went into a theatrical makeup shop.

"Mrs. Queensbury, have you come for your 2.30 PM appointment?" the lady behind the counter asked.

Madeline said she had. They were shown to a back room and another lady came out.

"I want to make my fourteen-year-old son look like an eighteen-year-old woman; what techniques could you advise?" Madeline said without preamble.

"Well, his skin is nice and soft with no hair which is the main thing. I think it is just a question of makeup."

Jamie was told to sit in front of a mirror. A barber's cap was placed around Jamie's neck. The woman stood behind him, looking at his reflection in the mirror. She held his shoulders.

"Basically, you could make his face look like a woman's without any trouble but I will show you a few techniques."

Madeline pulled up a chair and sat beside him. Jamie observed that she got a notebook out. The woman worked away with her brushes, first powdering his face, then adding rouge, lipstick and mas-

cara. When she had finished, Jamie was amazed at the transformation.

“Now for the wigs,” the lady said.

She pulled a blonde wig onto Jamie’s head. There was no doubt Jamie looked like a woman - even in his male clothes.

“There, what do you think?”

“Perfect,” Madeline said. “It is actually easier than I thought. Basically his skin is like a girl’s skin as he has not started puberty yet so it will be quite straightforward. I just wanted to be sure.” Madeline gave off a little laugh. “I’ve not done anything like this before.”

The lady smiled. “It is best to make sure. Is it for a school production?”

“Yes, yes, something like that,” Madeline said hurriedly. “Shall I go back into the shop to purchase the makeup items I need?”

“You can do that or just use your own ones. It makes no difference, though buying the powder would be good as it is slightly darker.”

“Thank you,” Madeline said and went back into the shop to purchase the powder whilst Jamie cleaned his face. They left the shop and walked down the street a bit further. Madeline pressed open the door of a small shoe shop. The assistant approached.

“My son is appearing in a play in which he plays the part of an eighteen-year-old woman. I need some shoes to fit him. I want some high-heeled stilettos that look elegant and also some lower heels in which

he can practice – I may take three pairs as it always nice to have a very high-heeled pair of court shoes.”

The woman agreed that it was.

Jamie’s feet were measured and the woman went out the back and got boxes of shoes. Jamie was told to try on each pair in turn. They hurt his feet and he was surprised anyone could walk in even the lowest heeled ones. Madeline looked at each pair in turn and made Jamie walk up and down the shop. Other customers were watching and Jamie felt embarrassed but no one said a word. Soon, Jamie was the proud owner of three pairs of ladies shoes. The shopping trip had not finished though. Armed with the measurements from the first shop, Madeline bought some clothes off the shelf in a department store. She also bought some jewellery, some handbags, belts and gloves, perfume, nylons and more lingerie and nail varnish. Most of the packages were to be delivered to her home.

“Oscar sent money for Savannah and I have certainly spent a fair bit on her today,” Madeline mused as they sat on the train home.

Jamie had been quiet throughout the trip. His mother had a determination about her that he had not seen before and he realised, for the first time, that he was not to be involved in some “prank” but a serious act of deception. Yet it was his mother who was planning it and only because she had inadvertently taken money from this man Oscar when she had been poor. But hadn’t Oscar scurried back to South Africa when he had discovered his mother was pregnant? Had she not deserved the pay cheques? Jamie knew his mother would not do anything wrong intentionally and when he saw how seriously she was taking the matter and how grave the situation had become, he resolved to try his best to carry off the

subterfuge. After all, he had been dressed the first morning and then had been allowed to ride to town to buy comics and sweets, in many ways it was no big deal and hadn't his dad promised to take him to the see England play Australia in The Ashes series? And his mother had promised him a shiny new bike to boot! On the train home, Jamie decided he would he would try to do his best. He hated dressing as a girl, hated every minute of it, but if it kept his mother out of jail and meant the Queensbury family were not ruined, then it was worth it. As they walked back from the station, Jamie decided he had something to say.

“Mother, I have been thinking. I have seen how much money you have spent on me...or rather Savannah today...and seen how grim the whole thing is with you and this Oscar and how you need me to be a girl to keep you out of trouble. I just did not realise before how important it all was. I know you and Dad kept telling me but all I could think about was how I had to dress as a girl and that was so repulsive. I could not think of anything else. But now the scales have fallen from my eyes. I see a lot of time and trouble has gone into this and that's because if it doesn't work then you and maybe Dad are in a lot of trouble. Well, I have decided I will do my best from now on. As you said earlier, it wasn't so hard yesterday once I was dressed and been made-up and all. It was only a little lesson and I guess I could stand that each day, then hopefully fool this cad Oscar. Mother, I will be different in future.”

Had Madeline ever heard a song so sweet as those words? She hugged Jamie in the street, picked him up and kissed him. When they arrived home, the items she had bought were already in the hall.

“Tonight we unpack and tomorrow we start in earnest,” Madeline said to Jamie. That night everyone in the household went to bed happy and with a new

sense of optimism that Jamie really would co-operate and help them out of their terrible dilemma.

The next day when Nancy came into his room and Jamie had had his breakfast he got dressed in the clothes that had been set out for him. Firstly, he pulled on silky camisole knickers, then Nancy attached a girdle around his waist and fastened it so it was nice and tight. Then she rolled up stockings while Jamie sat on the bed and pulled them on. She attached the stockings to the girdle and affixed a bra around his chest, filling the pouches with padding that Madeline had acquired the day before.

“No childish tantrums today then, Master James?” Nancy said.

“No,” Jamie said. “Mother taking me to London yesterday made me realise what a terrible stew she must be in if she is prepared to spend so much money on transforming me into this Savannah girl. I suppose I hadn’t realised before. I hate the clothes and hate being dressed as a girl but if it helps Mother, I am prepared to do it.”

Nancy smiled. “That’s the spirit – I am sure your mother will transform you into a fine-looking woman and you may find wearing the clothes is to your liking.”

“Never!” Jamie said.

Nancy smiled. There was something about dressing a boy as a girl, and removing his masculinity, which was appealing to her – especially as Jamie could be a “mite too cock sure” as Mrs. Bates put it.

When he was ready, Jamie was taken to his mother’s room and Madeline started to dust his face with the powder she had purchased the day before.

This time she took longer and practised some of the techniques she had learnt the previous day. It took her nearly two hours to get the makeup right. When she had finished she placed the blonde wig on Jamie's head and there before her sat her imaginary daughter! Even in lingerie, Jamie looked quite girlish and Madeline began to believe that her great scheme could be successful. Jamie was told to stand up. Madeline attached some netted skirts around his waist and tied them up with ribbon.

"I think a nice, full-skirted dress will be in order today, young lady," Madeline said.

Jamie did not answer for now he was submissively compiling to her demands without question. Madeline found she actually enjoyed the transformation, it was quite exciting and took her back to her theatrical days when she would make herself up as another character – she always enjoyed dressing and make-up. Jamie wondered about the length of time the whole thing was taking – his mum had promised him that it would only be a few hours a day...

"Mother, will I have any time to play in boy's clothes?" he asked.

"Not today, Jamie. Unfortunately, we have wasted a large amount of time and today I need you to remain dressed so we can practice. We bought a lot of things yesterday and I want you to try them on. Then I have some lessons for you."

"But Mum!" Jamie protested.

"Shhhh," Madeline said. "I will not have any more tantrums! The hairbrush is on the side and I am quite prepared to let your father cane you if you continue to be disobedient. Yesterday, on the way back from London, you showed great understanding and

maturity of the predicament your father and I were in – now don't spoil it.”

Jamie stood quietly. His face was made-up, his body was clad in women's lingerie, there was a blonde wig on his head – it was all so awful! The netting which formed the underskirt itched his skin, he felt so uncomfortable he wanted to curl up and die. He looked like a girl but he wanted to look like a man. He began to well up.

Madeline returned from her wardrobe with a full skirted, silky white and blue dress which she had purchased the day before. She told Jamie to lift his arms up, then she pulled the dress down over his body and over the net skirts. She pulled out the material until it sat nicely, then she edged up the zip. Jamie felt the bodice tightening on his chest. He took a deep breath, he felt a bit dizzy. Earlier in the week the dress had not fitted well but this was his size and fitted perfectly. His mother done up the hook at the top and adjusted the straps.

“Sit back down on the dressing table stool,” Madeline said.

Again, Jamie did as he was told. His mother went to some packages and got out some rings, a bracelet, a pearl necklace and matching pearl clip-on earrings. She also gave Jamie one of her watches to wear.

“These finishing touches make all the difference,” she said.

Jamie saw his face in the mirror but it wasn't *his* face at all – no, what he saw was the face of a blonde girl. Jamie was told to stand up and slip into a pair of blue, slingback sandals which were edged with white trim; they had a high heel and been purchased in a department store. The shoes felt uncomfortable and



there was an immediate ache in Jamie's ankle. He brushed his hand against the voluminous skirt, feeling the silk and the softness of the underskirt which was like a cushion. He so wanted to cry. He felt trapped, caged in by the clothes. He didn't want to do it. He didn't want to go through with it. He took some deep breaths. His mother was on her hands and knees doing up the slim straps on the shoes.

"There now," Madeline said. "We have finished. Come and look."

She stood up and led him across the room to the mirrored wardrobe and, for the first time, Jamie could see his whole body. He examined himself. But it wasn't him. He saw a tallish, slim girl with blonde bobbed hair, pearl earrings and bracelet and pearl beads around her slim neck. She had maturing breasts which pushed against the tight bodice and a large skirt which billowed out around her legs which were slender legs; "her" slim ankles were emphasised by the high-heeled shoes.

"Place your hands in front of you and rest them on your skirt," Madeline said. "Remain there."

"Nancy," Madeline called.

Soon the maid was knocking on the door.

"You called, Madam?" Nancy said.

"Yes, come in, Jamie. Turn around."

Nancy placed a hand to her mouth. "Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! How you have transformed him! Is it really him?"

"I said yesterday he still looked like a boy. Well, today, with proper fitting shoes and clothes and jewel-

lery and few make-up techniques he really looks the part, doesn't he?"

"Yes, he does!" Nancy exclaimed. "Yes, he does!"

"Walk towards Nancy, Jamie," Madeline ordered.

Jamie took uneasy steps towards Nancy.

"Hands by your sides, don't march like a soldier."

Jamie approached Nancy who was staring, awe-struck.

"Turn and walk back towards me," Madeline said. "Keep your hands together in front of you."

Jamie reached his mother. "You need to practice walking in heels. Turn and walk back to Nancy."

Jamie did as he was told.

"And back," Madeline said.

Jamie turned on his heel again.

"And again," Madeline said.

"And back again," Nancy said when he reached her. "He may need practice in the heels but he is not bad, considering he has not worn them before."

"No, he is not - there are things we will iron out," Madeline said. "We are going to go downstairs and have tea in the drawing room. Will you bring it in, Nancy?"

"Of course, Madam," Nancy said and she nearly skipped as she left the room. Seeing Master James

dressed as a woman and duly humiliated by his mother – well, that was one of the best things she had ever witnessed since she had come to work at the Queensbury household. Madeline and Hugh seemed so absorbed in their own issues they seemed oblivious to what they were doing to the boy – and as far as Nancy was concerned that was all to the good.

When she brought the tea in, Jamie was sitting with his legs together on the edge of the sofa with his pretty dress splayed out. He lifted the cup daintily with his thumb and forefinger and stuck his little finger out. He took small sips as his mother directed. Later she would have him walking back and forth in the drawing room with a heavy book on his head. As it was a nice day, she even took him outside in the garden. Nancy could sense Jamie's uneasy and unhappiness. He appeared constantly on the verge of tears but his mother seemed wrapped up in her own world and did not appear to notice how distraught her son was.

Poor Jamie! There was just no escape; that night he was taken to his mother's room and dressed in a lovely evening dress which his mother had worn – Nancy even made a few alterations so it fitted perfectly.

“We need to impress your father,” Madeline said, although she knew that Hugh had long since forgotten his initial idea that Jamie should have a trial before they decided to dress him for Oscar. Madeline zipped Jamie into the long flowing gown.

“It's not quite the right thing for an evening meal but it will give you father some idea about how good you will look.”

“Yes, Mum,” Jamie said weakly – all the fight seemed to have gone out of him.

His shoes were replaced with court shoes with a higher heel and he was given a small silver bag to carry. After he was dressed, Madeline refreshed his makeup and sprayed on some scent from a bottle with a puffer. Then she told him to stand in front of the mirror again. A smile of satisfaction eased across Madeline's face. There was little doubt Jamie would pass as Savannah and, because his voice had not broken, there was no need for him to change the way he spoke.

"Just talk slowly and enunciate your words," was Madeline's only advice.

Jamie felt embarrassed about seeing his father dressed as a girl but even so, he made the slow journey downstairs and into the living room where he awaited his father's return from work. When Hugh came in, he gave his case and umbrella to Nancy and went to find Madeline and Jamie. On his entry into the room, Madeline indicated to Jamie that he should stand up. Hugh raised his eyebrows, unable to believe the transformation.

"It's incredible!" he said. "I would never have believed it was a boy, yet alone Jamie."

"You see, Hugh, I told you we could pull this off. There's not much difference between a boy who is pre-puberty and a young woman and, with the aid of make-up and clothing, I am sure Jamie will be able to pass as Savannah. We have only just started his training and there is still a lot to learn."

"I think you are right, Madeline," Hugh said. "Come here, you clever girl, let me give you a big hug."

And Hugh took his wife in his arms and hugged her and kissed her whilst Jamie looked on.

When dinner was served, the three went forward to the dining room. This time there was no negative atmosphere and both Hugh and Madeline engaged Jamie in conversation - sometimes reminding him to talk slowly and smile at the end of a sentence.

“You must act demurely,” Madeline said.

“Yes Mother,” Jamie replied. His waist hurt as he had been wearing the girdle all day.

“From now until Oscar has been, to get you in character, we will call you Savannah when you are dressed. You will see I have left a nightdress on your bed and I expect you to wear it. You have done very well but we need to practice, practice, practice to ensure Oscar is completely taken in.”

“You must do as your mother says,” Hugh agreed. “She has done well to get you this far but she knows that it will take a lot more to get you to a stage where Oscar really believes you are Savannah. For that to happen, you must believe it too.”

“Yes, Father,” Jamie said as he picked over his food. Had he ever felt so unhappy? He just could not believe what was happening to him and he certainly did not want to be dressed as a girl every day for the next eight days. He felt like crying. He wanted to cry. Why were they doing this to him? How could he go through with it? Eight days of being dressed as a girl!

But that was what happened. For the next eight days, Jamie was dressed and drilled in the ways of feminine behaviours and every night he ate with his parents so dressed. The only time he had “off” was the weekends and his mother was as good as her word. One Saturday they went to the seaside and the following weekend they went for a picnic. Jamie felt relaxed at the weekends and closer to his Mum and

Dad but he still hated every moment of the experience of being dressed as a girl and he became quiet and morose. He hated Sunday night when he would awake to find ladies lingerie had been left out for him.

To make things worse, he was called “Savannah” by all the servants and his parents when dressed. His mother took a meticulous care in ensuring every detail was correct – she even took to carrying a notepad with her and making notes so that next day she could refer to it and make changes – like a football manager coaching a team. She even made Jamie learn by rote a back story about his school days, his friends and what he liked doing. By so doing, Madeline created the character of Savannah, driven by the thought that if he son let her down or a detail lead to discovery, she could face imprisonment for fraud. Jamie resigned himself to his fate. On one occasion he threw another tantrum in the morning and refused to get dressed unless his mother guaranteed he could have some time in the afternoon to wear boy’s clothes and to play rather than being dressed as a girl all day. Madeline would give no such guarantee and so Jamie would not get out of bed. He went on strike.

When his father came home from work Jamie was duly ordered to go down to the study where he was caned. Hard. Then he was sent straight back to bed with no tea. Madeline was distraught that a day’s training had been wasted but the next day Jamie was again compliant and obedient and he made good progress. In fact, after that episode of insubordination, Jamie was dressed every day, all day.

“He has got to learn,” Madeline said to Nancy, “and we don’t have much time to lose.”

“I agree,” Nancy said. “He is a wilful young man.”

“But he will be a woman,” Madeline said with a wink. “He *will* be a woman – I will make sure of that.”

And Madeline was right. By the time of Oscar’s arrival a few days after Savannah’s eighteenth birthday, Jamie was ready to face the world as his own half-sister. There was nothing about him which was the slightest bit “male.” Madeline knew that as long as Oscar thought Jamie was a woman, he would believe she was Savannah as he had not previously met her.

Chapter Seven

Wednesday, 12th August, 1953

On the morning of Oscar’s visit, the whole house was silent. Everyone, including the staff, was nervous and anxious. Although they had not been formally told of Madeline’s fraud, Nancy had gleaned enough to know that prison was a possibility if it all went wrong and had given the dire news to Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs. They viewed such an occurrence with considerable trepidation, knowing that such an outcome could result in them losing their jobs.

“And how we would get new jobs at our ages?” Mrs. Gibbs had said.

To that end, everyone was on board with the plan: Jamie had to be able to impersonate an eighteen-year-old girl and pretend he was Savannah. The staff would give every possible help to the scheme. In fact, they had arranged a big bouquet of flowers in the dining room which were addressed to “Savannah”

and written eighteenth birthday cards for the mysterious lady which were placed on the side board. Hugh and Madeline had also placed a large card alongside which read "To our darling daughter on your eighteenth birthday."

Madeline and Hugh had even gone through a list of gifts that Savannah might have wanted from her parents and friends in anticipation that Oscar may ask what presents his daughter had received. Madeline found herself to be quite adept at deceit and had told Jamie to say that Savannah loved horse riding and had wanted money to buy a horse (here Madeline had an eye to Oscar possibly funding such an expensive gift).

Jamie had not slept well since he had come home – such was the stress the whole situation had induced. He woke up on the morning of the 12th with both a sense of relief that soon the ordeal would be over but also of anxiety about the day before him. As had become customary, Nancy brought him breakfast in bed, then Jamie was told to get up and take a bath which Nancy had prepared. He lay amongst the rich soap suds thinking about the day and wishing it could be over so he go back to being himself.

Jamie felt tearful, in fact he had cried intermittently ever since he had returned from school, especially at night when he had been alone with the thought of the enormity of what his parents had asked him to do. Gradually, he had become used to dressing as a girl, walking like a girl, eating like a girl and generally behaving like a girl but he had never yet tried it in front of someone who did not already know he was male – this would be a blind test - could he fool Oscar De Beer and keep his mother out of prison?

After his bath he wrapped a gown around himself and wandered back to his bedroom where Nancy had set out his clothes for the day which consisted of a pair of silky knickers; a suspender belt; fine stockings; a conical bra; a slip and something Jamie had not seen before – a proper whaleboned waist clincher.

Jamie came into his room where Nancy was already waiting. He took off his gown and stood before the maid totally naked. There was a time when he would have found such a scenario embarrassing but he had become so used to Nancy seeing him naked, he no longer considered it that way. Firstly, he took up the silky, peach-coloured French knickers and slid them up his legs. Then Nancy placed the clincher around his waist.

“The dress is very tight so we have decided to pull you in a bit,” Nancy said. “Also, it will give you a womanly shape.”

She began to do up the fastening and, when she had finished, she started to tighten the laces. Jamie felt a slight tugging on his waist as the restrictive implement pulled him tighter and tighter. Tears welled up in his eyes. Would there be no end to the torture?

Nancy pulled the waist clincher even tighter and soon Jamie could see that he had an “hour-glass” figure. When she had finished, Nancy secured the suspender belt around his waist and told him to sit on the bed and draw up the stockings. He did this and even attached the spender belt straps to the stockings without being asked to do so – he was becoming accustomed to lingerie and how to wear it. Oh, to be in simple male clothes, Jamie thought. He could not believe that women’s clothing was so complicated and fussy and took so long to put on.

Once the clincher was in place, Nancy placed the bra around Jamie's chest and done it up. She placed padding in the pouches and took time to make sure the straps were tight enough. One thing Jamie had realised about Nancy was that she was very patient and looked upon the transformation as a work of art. Jamie was told to place a silky slip over his head and Nancy again fiddled with the fussy straps. The slip stretched to his thigh, and, like the knickers and bra was peach-coloured. Jamie realised all the underwear was new and guessed his mother had kept it for him to wear on this auspicious day. Once ready, Nancy took him by the hand and lead him to his mother's bedroom. She was already waiting for him with her makeup laid out on the dressing table and jewellery on the bed. Jamie's heart thundered in his chest and he started to feel nervous and anxious.

"Come, Jamie," Madeline said. "Let the magic begin. You can stay and watch if you wish, Nancy."

Nancy knew that although Madeline presented as being very cool and calm, underneath she was deeply fearful about the future. In fact, Nancy suspected that she wanted her present in the room so she was not alone with Jamie and could talk to another adult. That suspicion seemed correct as Madeline chatted endlessly to Nancy and talked her through the procedures.

"First apply foundation, dab it on with a sponge; then we dust his face with powder; then a little rouge on the cheeks; then the eyes – mascara of course and eye pencil. You see how long his lashes are?"

Nancy did not know why but there was something deeply satisfying about seeing Jamie made up as a girl. Each day she had enjoyed the transformation and had been anticipating the 12th August with a growing sense of excitement as she knew Jamie

would receive the “full treatment” as Madeline had often described it.

When Madeline had finished Jamie’s face she then painted his nails which she had not done before. After, she added some rings to his fingers and clip-on earrings to his ears. So made up, Madeline placed the blonde wig on Jamie’s head. Instantly, Jamie’s appearance was changed into that of a beautiful young woman. She pulled the wig into place and combed the hairpiece to ensure that it looked like real hair. When she had finished, she asked Jamie to get off the stool. He was told to stand in front of the mirror. Nancy and Madeline stood behind him, looking at his reflection.

“He looks good, doesn’t he?” Madeline said.

Nancy agreed that he did.

“Get me the net underskirt,” Madeline asked.

Nancy left the room but returned a few minutes later with the item.

Jamie was told to step inside it and the two women pulled it up to his waist and attached it with a back fastening. All the time Nancy watched Jamie’s face in the mirror. He frowned and looked very uncomfortable. Nancy was aware that he was sweating and tearful – she knew it was a terrible ordeal for him but she took an almost sadistic enjoyment in seeing him so distressed. Oh, how nice it was to turn the tables on your employers and make them taste some of the humiliation she faced daily. The Queensburys were not a rich family but certainly upper middle class and well-to-do. Although Nancy enjoyed working for them, she found Jamie’s constant demands when he was home from school a tad irksome. Now she had had twelve days of ordering Jamie about and things

would not be the same again – she would make sure of that. For one thing, she would remind Jamie of the time his mother had dressed him as a girl whenever he got out of hand.

With the underskirt positioned around his waist, Nancy was ordered to go and get the dress which Madeline had stored in the box on top of her wardrobe ever since it had been sent to the house from the dressmaker. Nancy placed a big, white box on Madeline's bed and picked out the tissue to reveal a glorious silver and black chiffon and satin gown.

“It truly is glorious,” Nancy said.

“No expense spared,” Madeline replied.

Nancy knew Jamie, as a fourteen-year-old boy, would not appreciate such feminine luxury but all he was was a conduit, a vessel by which to pass off the utmost subterfuge. Again Nancy had a glint in her eye and a pleasant feeling inside her because wasn't it also true that neither Madeline or Hugh had given a thought about Jamie's feelings, how such an enterprise may affect him in the future? They expected things to go back to normal – but things wouldn't – Nancy was sure of that.

Jamie stood, his hands clasped in front of him. Had Nancy ever seen a boy look so forlorn? The white net around his waist which had been inched in with a clincher, the conical shaped bra on his chest, the face heavy with makeup, the blonde wig upon his head. Jamie looked as if he was to go to the gallows. There was no escaping the fact he had, by hook and by crook, resigned himself to his fate. Of course, it had taken punishments and promises but it was the certain knowledge that he was helping his mother out of a tremendously difficult situation which had made the difference. Jamie loved his mother and

Nancy knew it was her predicament that had persuaded Jamie to be dressed in such way. Madeline placed some net over Jamie's head as if a veil.

"That is to protect the dress from makeup," she explained.

Then Nancy walked towards him, holding the dress like a trophy. She placed it above Jamie's head and, with Madeline's help, they started to manoeuvre it into position. The satin made a swishing sound as they lifted it into place.

"Lift up your arms, Jamie," Madeline said.

Jamie did as he was told. Nancy took one arm, then the other and pulled them through the sleeves.. Then she held the full tulle underskirt and Madeline pulled the material of the skirt over the netting. When they had completed their task, Madeline walked behind Jamie. She took the hook and eye fastenings and connected them, pulling the material tight. Nancy found the end of the zip which was buried in the body of the skirt and edged it up slowly. The material was brought together.

"Fits like an absolute glove," Madeline said when the zip had been brought up to the top fastening. The material was almost like a second skin on his body.

Jamie would have had a different expression for the dress seemed tight and restricting, practically around the chest where the bodice pushed his false breasts in. Madeline and Nancy fussed around, smoothing down the skirt and bodice.

"The bodice is lovely," Nancy said. "And the skirt is so full and feminine."

“There’s no doubt Mrs. Landsdown has made a wonderful job,” Madeline said. “You can really see the difference between a bespoke garment and one off the shelf.”

Jamie was transfixed for reflected back in the mirror was the vision of a beautiful young woman. Whilst his mother and Nancy fussed around him adding jewellery and a puff of perfume, Jamie stood, mesmerised by his reflection – had he not, like Narcissus, fallen in love with himself? He could hardly believe it was him and all the time he heard his mother and Nancy referring to him as “Savannah”. He took a deep breath which was actually shallow due to the constrictions around his chest. Was he really Jamie?

It was hard to believe. Under the dress was a boy and yet his mother and father had trained him and caned him, spanked him, urged and cajoled him into becoming a girl – becoming this mysterious Savannah - and now Jamie was confused. Confused by the vision of femininity which looked back at him from the reflected image. Perplexed by the fact that he knew the image was him but at the same time the image was of the most beautiful woman he had ever seen in his life.

He was puzzled, lost and bewildered. All he had done since he had been home from school was cry and he felt his eyes welling up again. His mum and Nancy kept saying how “pretty” he was and how “enchanted” Oscar would be and how no one in a million years would believe he was a boy.

In contrast, it is fair to say Madeline felt very pleased with herself – looking at her son she knew, if he did as he had been instructed, and kept calm, Oscar would be convinced he was Savannah and leave the house satisfied that he had seen his eigh-

teen-year-old daughter. Not for the first time, Madeline, who had an eye for money and liked being “well to do,” thought about the necklace Oscar had promised to give to Savannah and wondered how much she could make by selling it.

So, from total abject despair and a feeling that her life was ending, Madeline felt that things were turning to her advantage. Rather than winding up in prison for fraud, her and Hugh may, in fact, make a handsome profit out of Oscar’s visit. In a sisterly act, she took Nancy’s hand. She was delighted with the help her maid had given her and how she had been “firm but fair” with Jamie – she would see to it that she received an extra recompense when the necklace was duly sold.

As for Jamie? Well, had he not been a little too wilful and full of himself? He had, admittedly, become compliant after a lot of cajoling but Madeleine was still aware of his blasted tears and his occasional outbursts. Hugh had promised to take him to Lords to see the England versus Australia Ashes Test Match and she had promised to buy him a new push bike. That should have been enough reward for him but the selfish boy had tested both her and Hugh to the limit with his tantrums and outbursts.

“You wait up here with Nancy,” Madeline said to Jamie. “I need to get dressed now and then Hugh and I will be downstairs awaiting Oscar’s visit. I will call you down and you need to descend slowly. Keep your hands clasped in front of you. Allow Oscar to hug you and kiss you – he will probably be emotional. And remember he is your *father*. You are seeing your father for the first time- that is your motivation.”

Jamie nodded. He started to feel his eyes welling up.

“Don’t cry yet,” Madeline said. “You can turn on the water works when you see Oscar. It would seem rather odd if you did not cry. God, you have cried enough over these last twelve days to fill a hundred buckets. Now this is the opening night. Let the show commence.”

“I’ll wait at the top of the stairs, Madam,” Nancy said, “and descend when you are all in the drawing room. Mrs. Gibbs is preparing the food in the kitchen. You can all go forward to the dining room and I will come collect it when you are settled there.”

“Excellent, Nancy,” Madeline said. “You have been a tremendous help and really gone the extra mile for us.”

Nancy smiled with satisfaction. She knew she now had a “job for life.” She liked working for the Queensburys and had, in fact, gained enormous enjoyment out of the whole process of feminising Jamie.

Madeline left the room to get changed, leaving Nancy alone with Jamie. What was it about seeing him in a dress that excited her? She could not explain it for she had never thought of such things before and knew her fiancé would find the whole thing ridiculous – not that she had breathed a word to anyone. No, seeing Jamie so disempowered and vulnerable made her feel important and powerful – she felt as though the person who would inherit the house and who, of late, was the keenest on impressing everyone with his social standing had been taken down a well-deserved peg or two. What was more, he had been spanked and caned into the bargain.

“The best thing is to remain standing, Savannah. You don’t want to get your frock creased, do you?” Nancy said. She enjoyed that – calling him “Savannah” and talking about his “frock.”

Jamie stood still, looking at his reflection in the mirror, his hands clasped in front of him. His ankles ached and his waist hurt. He felt numb. Since the morning he had barely said a word. Nancy knew he was lost in thought, lost in own world. Then the tears started to come, little drips down his cheek. He made no attempt to wipe his eyes and Nancy did nothing to stop him crying. Surely there could be nothing more convincing than Savannah crying at the thought of meeting her father?

Nancy heard doors slam and a scurrying of feet and Madeline made her way downstairs to be with Hugh. Fortunately she had started to get changed whilst Nancy had been preparing Jamie so she only had to put on a new dress which she had done in the spare room. Nancy was aware that in some ways she was like a prison warder as Madeline did not want Jamie let out of her sight. For all his protestations that he had changed, Nancy knew that Madeline still feared that he might do something stupid and risk the whole venture – after all, his father had had to cane him when had once again been obstinate and had refused to dress one morning. How Nancy had enjoyed that! Jamie being summonsed to his father's study and being given six of the best for refusing to do what his mother had told him.

It wasn't long before there was a chime of the doorbell. Nancy listened to the panicked voices down stairs. Mrs. Gibbs waddled to the front door and opened it and Madeline greeted Oscar in gushing terms. She looked at Jamie who stood in front of the mirror, the tears forming little rivers on his cheeks. His little heart beating fast under the bodice of the dress. Had ever a fourteen-year-old had to suffer such an ordeal?

“The show will begin soon, Miss Savannah, the show will begin soon,” she said. “And you are to take a starring role.”

Chapter Eight

Madeline had a plan, of course, and that plan was to get Oscar settled, provide him with a drink and let Hugh entertain him, then call up to Savannah. She would tell Oscar that Savannah had, as he could well imagine, been very nervous about meeting him and wanted to look her best. So, after about ten minutes Madeline came to the foot of the stairs and called up to Savannah who was still standing in his mother’s bedroom.

“Good luck,” Nancy said. “Just remember what we have taught you.”

Then she walked across the room and opened Madeline’s bedroom door and Savannah sashayed across the room in his high heels. Nancy took his arm as he passed.

“Remember, if anything goes wrong just keep calm, your mother will help you out. There is no way Oscar will believe you are a boy. No way. Do you hear me?”

“Thanks,” Jamie said softly. He sniffed. The tears really were coming now.

“Savannah, for goodness sake, hurry up. Your father has travelled all the way from South Africa to see

you!” Madeline called upstairs, pretending to be annoyed by how long Savannah was taking.

Savannah walked onto the landing. With slow, deliberate steps “she” placed a foot on the upper stair. At last he could see his mother smiling at him. She was wearing a lovely red dress which was tight-fitting and showed off her slender figure. It was in total contrast to the full-skirted dress Savannah was wearing.

“Come on, Savannah,” his mother called and this time she winked and smiled.

Slowly, Savannah made his way downstairs. Unhurriedly, he approached his mother and, as he did so, he saw a tall, thin, dark-haired man with round glasses and buck teeth sitting in the drawing room. Oscar glanced up; for a second the two held each other’s gaze and then he was on his feet. Running. Even before Savannah had reached the last stair, Oscar had his daughter in his arms and was crying.

“Savannah, Savannah, I have dreamed of this moment all my life, I have dreamed of seeing my dear, sweet, sweet girl again. My God, I have waited all my life for this moment.”

He hugged his daughter and he kissed Savannah and he picked Savannah up and all the time Madeline’s heart was in her mouth, fearing the hair-piece her son wore might come off or there might be some other thing that would draw Oscar’s attention to Savannah’s gender. At last, Oscar took his daughter by the hand and led “her” back to the drawing room, leaving Madeline much relieved.

“My daughter, Hugh,” Oscar cried. “My daughter.”



Hugh went a deep shade of crimson. Madeline sensed his unease about the whole situation. He did not really like the fact that his son had been dressed as a girl, as to his mind it smacked of homosexuality. Madeline knew he would be damned relieved when the whole charade was over.

“Sit on the sofa next to your mum, Savannah,” Hugh said.

“No, she’s my daughter and I insist she stays with me,” Oscar said and he sat down in an arm chair. Then he pulled Savannah onto his lap. Madeline had tried to predict every scenario but she had not have expected Oscar to be quite so informal.

At last Mrs. Gibbs came through and said lunch was ready in the dining room. Savannah slipped off Oscar’s knee and walked through to the dining room with his mum. The two men followed behind.

Madeline was amazed at how easily Jamie had taken to playing the part of Savannah. He held his hands in front of him and walked very elegantly, the dress swishing around his legs. They reached the dining room and Madeline pulled a chair back for Savannah (she was determined to help her “daughter” as much as she could). Savannah was positioned opposite Oscar. Once the gentlemen were seated as well, Madeline rang a bell and Nancy came through with the starters.

Savannah picked at her food whilst Oscar interrogated her. Often Madeline had to intervene to answer as Savannah seemed so uncommunicative and monosyllabic which Madeline put down to nerves. Madeline hoped Oscar put it down to nervousness as well due to the fact she had just met her father but she was not happy with her son’s performance at the dining table. She had told Jamie to make “polite con-

versation” and gone over a back story so he was well-rehearsed but he was behaving like a truculent teenager.

Then the main meal of grouse was served and Hugh poured wine.

“Can I have some please?” Savannah said. “After all, I am eighteen!”

Madeline laughed, there was no getting away from the boy’s cheek.

“No,” Hugh said. “You’re only just eighteen.”

Oscar sat back in his chair and sipped his own wine. “She’s my daughter, I say she can have a glass. She’s eighteen and needs to experience the ways of the world.”

Hugh was annoyed but could do nothing but concede the point and poured Savannah a glass of wine.

“A toast,” Oscar said. “To Savannah on her eighteenth birthday.”

Glasses clinked and the word “Savannah” echoed around the room.

“Now that I’m back, I will be taking more of an interest in you, Savannah,” Oscar said and raised his glass again.

Madeline became flustered. “What, what do you mean, Oscar? I thought you said this was only a flying visit? You had business to sort out in London and then you were heading back to Johannesburg.”

“Oh, it *is* only a flying visit, Madeline. I will soon be gone but a flying visit to us South Africans is a good couple of weeks. We can’t come all this way for a few nights, can we?”

“I, I, I guess not,” Madeline stuttered.

“Anyway, I intend to get to know Savannah a bit – take her around London and out to dinner and to the theatre. I love the theatre, Madeline, as you well know, that’s a passion of mine that has not left me. Whilst I am in London, I intend to take in a few productions. In South Africa,” Oscar shrugged. “our theatre is not good. Here you have some of the great actors like Laurence Olivier and John Gielgud.”

Around the table there was the inaudible sound of sinking hearts. Hugh was silently cussing his “stupid, stupid wife” for her folly in not being honest with Oscar from the very start. Savannah, aka Jamie, was wondering what the implications were for him of Oscar’s words. Surely he would not be expected to dress as a girl *again*, would he? And Madeline, well, Madeline felt like phoning the police and offering herself up for a stretch in Pentonville. The good feeling that had been in the house that morning and when Oscar had first arrived had vanished into thin air.

“Cheer up everyone,” Oscar said. “I know you are not keen on an Afrikaan like me and I probably did not do the best for Madeline at the time but I have come here to claim what is rightfully mine – my daughter. You can’t deny a man that, can you? And once I have got to know her a bit, I will leave her in your capable hands and never darken your door again.”

“Sorry, Oscar, we are pleased to see you, of course we are. It is just that Hugh was going to take us on holiday – we are driving down to the French Riviera

on Monday so it has come as a surprise to us that you want to see more of Savannah.”

Hugh was impressed by his wife’s ability to concoct stories – she was still very much an actress and could “think on her feet.”.

Oscar shrugged. “Well, I will just have to make the most of my limited time with my darling daughter – I can still take her to the theatre, can’t I? I will book something for Friday night and a meal as well. I will get my people to arrange it and after you can all have a nice holiday without worrying about seeing me again.”

At the end of dinner, they retired to the drawing room where sherry was served. Once again, Savannah took a glass and was feeling decidedly tipsy which may explain what happened later.

Once they were all settled, Oscar stood up and asked Savannah to do the same.

“Savannah, I know it was your eighteenth birthday on Saturday so one of the reasons I have come here is to hand you a present.”

He had come to the house with a light leather case and now he went to it and removed a small parcel.

He handed it to Savannah who opened it and saw the most beautiful blue, topaz necklace.

“It belonged to my grandmother and my mother and now it belongs to my darling daughter,” Oscar said.

He took the gems and placed them around Savannah’s neck and did up the clasp.

Madeline gasped and said how wonderful they were – she knew they were worth a huge amount of money.

“I can see you wondering how much they are worth,” Oscar said. “Let me say they are worth in the region of 250,000 Rand.”

“Gosh,” Hugh said, unsure of the exchange rate between the Rand and the Pound.

Savannah/Jamie fiddled with the necklace and straightened it. He smiled at Oscar. Jamie felt a strange kindred spirit with him; like him he had been hoodwinked and deceived by his parents. Savannah went back and sat on the edge of an arm chair, He wanted to avoid Oscar’s knee! Buoyed by the alcohol, he became chattier and started asking Oscar about his house in South Africa. Madeline was instantly impressed with her son and how he started to become more communicative.

“It sounds such an amazing country, I would love to visit,” he said as he splayed the skirts around him as he had been instructed to do.

Madeline was impressed by how Savannah had grown into the role and knew that Oscar would have no doubt at all that the person he was seeing was in fact his daughter. She was, in fact, quite taken by young Jamie’s performance over all and how mature and intelligent he could be. It was a side to him she had not seen before – he really did seem to embrace the role.

Oscar chatted idly, a glass of sherry in his hand. He said how emotional he felt and how it was just a “perfect dream” to see his daughter again.

It was late in the afternoon that he left. There were more cuddles and kisses and the promise to send a car around to collect Savannah on Friday to take her to the theatre and for a meal.

When the front door had closed, Hugh and Madeline embraced. Tears of joy rolled down their faces.

“You are just so clever, darling!” Hugh said to his wife, kissing her rapidly.

Madeline reached out a hand and drew Savannah into the family huddle.

“You were wonderful today, Savannah. A little reticence over dinner but I can forgive that.”

Jamie felt in control. He had done something to save his parents and he felt an enormous sense of achievement and power.

“Once I take these clothes off, I am never dressing as a girl again!” He boasted.

“But what about Friday?” Madeline asked.

“I am not doing it.”

“Oh, don’t spoil it, Savannah,” Madeline said. “You did fine today; you were a bit quiet but I think Oscar just put that down to shyness which is no bad trait in a girl. Now, all you have to do is get through Friday night and we are home and dry.”

“But Mother, you promised, you promised that after tonight I would never have to dress as a girl again! You promised!” Jamie raged. “And I am not putting myself through all this again!”

“Yes dear, but you heard Oscar! He wants to take you to the theatre and for a meal. It was only my quick thinking that avoided a whole season of dates with that odious little man with all his pretentious wealth.”

“Quite right,” Hugh said. “You really did do well there, Madeline. It’s just one more night for you as Savannah,” Hugh said. “And then this whole ridiculous affair will be over.”

And fuelled by drink and the nervous tension he had felt for over two weeks, Savannah/Jamie threw a tantrum the like of which he had never thrown before.

“I WILL NOT DO IT!” He shouted. “I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF DRESSING AS A GIRL!”

He pulled off his wig and threw it on the floor (Madeline was grateful that she had had the presence of mind to remove the necklace as soon as Oscar had left.) Then he smashed a vase and insulted his parents and Nancy and Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs and went on a rampage through the house until Hugh grabbed hold of him and pulled him back into the drawing room. His mother was waiting, sitting in an arm chair. Jamie was dragged over to her. Madeline pulled him over her knee, lifted up his skirts and pushed up the stiff net to expose his silky French knickers.

“It is such a shame it has had to end like this after you have been so good all day,” Madeline said calmly. Then she pulled down his knickers and started to belabour him. Hugh stood to the side watching his son being spanked. Madeline walloped him until her hand hurt. When the ordeal was over, Jamie ran to his room in a flood of tears. He slammed the door and stood rubbing his backside through the thick mate-

rial of the dress. No longer with the wig in place, he looked odd – like a fair ground freak.

Tears formed rivers on his cheeks, wiping away the makeup and the powder. After a while he sat on his bed. He knew he had “burnt his bridges” and no one would come to help him get changed. He was going to have to take off the wretched clothes and makeup himself. After a while, he laid down on his stomach with his head on his pillow.

“Stupid,” he said to himself. “The whole thing is stupid.”

He felt sorry for himself and miserable. When the tears had subsided, he got off the bed. For the first time he noticed how the material fell down around his legs and how soft it was. He felt vulnerable and submissive – not at all like a man should feel. His backside ached from the spanking he had received but the soft material of the skirt and French knickers eased even that pain. He walked to the mirror and looked at himself. He had to admit, he DID look like a woman and hadn’t Oscar been completely fooled? He regretted the fact he had pulled off the wig because he would have liked to have examined himself one more time in front of the mirror. As he stood there, a feeling of ease and calmness came over him. Maybe it was the effect of the alcohol but Jamie started to feel very, very relaxed. Very relaxed indeed. He started to swish the skirt around his legs, he started to notice how heavy it felt. He started to think...

It’s only the boys at school. If it wasn’t for them, I would rather like this, but why should they ever know?

And that made him shudder inside. He was fourteen and girls were still alien to him but he had started to notice how they wriggled their backsides

and wore tight clothes and high-heeled shoes and he started to think...

I did something special today... I did something really special – I fooled an adult into thinking I was a girl... a woman...

And he started to think of the other boys in his class, in his year, in the cricket team – Murphy and Hunter and Davies and Jones and Scott and Ashley-Hawkin and Williams and Dennett and Johnson and Spears and Sullivan and Nichols and Jacobs...

Could any of them done what he had done? Pass himself off as an eighteen-year-old girl?

Jamie knew they could not and he started to feel proud – he really had done an amazing thing and he felt good about himself. The cricket team didn't want him; they said he was not good enough despite all the practice he put in. He was an average, perhaps a below average, student and he had never excelled at anything in his life but *he had passed himself off as an eighteen-year-old woman! He had kept his parents out of prison!*

Jamie lay back on the bed, this time on his back and he started to think and, for the first time in weeks, a smile eased across his face. He had to admit to himself that when you discarded all the "male stuff" and the thought that he was doing something that was not "right" and was akin to homosexuality - when you put that to one side - he had actually *enjoyed* the eleven days he had practiced being a woman and the twelfth day when he fooled Oscar. He had enjoyed it. He had enjoyed being the focus of attention; he had enjoyed being with his mother and Nancy and the feeling of power he had and, he had to

admit to himself. that in some ways he had grown to like the clothes too.

Eventually, Jamie got undressed, wiped his face clean of makeup and got into bed. For the first time in a long time, he did not cry himself to sleep. He felt happy. He would go for a meal and to the theatre with Oscar and he would dress as Savannah again. His mother had been right to spank him, he was being selfish after being so impressive and so convincing as Savannah. He knew he could pull it off again. He knew he had “let the side down” and things would change.

The next morning Jamie woke up happy but he found that no one in the house was talking to him. He had to get up and wash and find his own male clothes before going downstairs. His mother walked past him without saying a word and Nancy had not bothered about him at all. There was no breakfast laid up. Jamie felt disconsolate, how different it had been when he had been compliant. How he regretted his outburst which had resulted in a third bottom tanning in as many weeks. Jamie wandered around the house as if in a trance, not sure what to do. Then his father spoke.

“I hope you are proud of yourself, Jamie,” he said.

Jamie was surprised he was not at work.

“I’ve had to take a day off to call the solicitors – your mother is so distressed.”

“Why?” Jamie asked.

“Well, the game is up, isn’t it? Oscar will call to collect you for the theatre on Friday and we will have to confess that you are no longer available and the

whole thing was a fraud. It is such a shame because I thought it all went rather well yesterday.”

Jamie beamed. “But I *will* go out again as Savannah!” Jamie said. “I will do it *again*, Father. I think the tension of the whole thing finally got the better of me. But I was thinking last night. It did go well and I am being selfish. I *will* dress as Savannah and go to the theatre and out for a meal.”

His mother, who had been listening at the door, burst from the drawing room and lifted Jamie up in her arms.

“Oh Jamie, Jamie, I love you so much and I am so, so proud of you. I hardly slept a wink last night for fearing the game was up and I would soon be up before the courts. Your father has been so worried he even took a day off to consult our solicitors. He said he had a friend who was in such a predicament to hide my identity but now we may get away with it after all. If you do it this for me one more time, I will be so, so grateful!”

“I will, Mother,” Jamie said. “I am sorry I was so selfish and obstinate last night and I am glad you spanked me. I have learnt the error of my ways and I will go to the theatre and for a meal with Oscar on Friday. Come Mother, get Nancy and I will start to prepare for Friday. I think I need more practice!”

Once again, Madeline kissed her son’s cheek and held him close to her. She had been on a roller coaster ride of emotions since the letter from Johannesburg had arrived but at last the whole dastardly episode seemed to be nearing its conclusion. Jamie was such a good son.

Chapter Nine

Friday, 14th August, 1953

Nancy was given the task of dressing Jamie for the theatre. Madeline gave Mr. and Mrs. Gibbs the night off as she did not want them to know about this new escapade. So, during the afternoon Jamie trudged dutifully to his room where Nancy had laid out his undergarments. Jamie peeled off his male clothes, neatly folded them and laid them on the bed. He took a deep breath. He still felt a bit confused and was unsure about dressing as a girl but he knew his parents were relying on him and he had pulled off the illusion two days before – the only difference was that this time he would be on his own without his mother for support. Once naked, he wrapped the suspender belt around his waist, then pulled on camisole knickers. The garments felt so soft against his skin – so different from the harsh fabrics of a boy’s clothing. Once so attired, he sat on the bed and pulled on the stockings that Nancy had left out. Then he fastened the tops to the suspender belt. When he was ready, he called for Nancy.

“I say, Master Jamie,” she said. “You are getting ready on your own! Soon you won’t need me!”

Jamie smiled. He had come to like Nancy through all the dress rehearsals and attempts to feminise him. The first thing Nancy did was to reach for the waist clincher which was on Jamie’s bed. She wrapped it around Jamie’s waist. It was new and a lot stiffer than the one he had worn on the Wednesday. Nancy did up the hook and eye front, then pulled in the laces so the cincher was tight. Jamie squirmed uncomfortably.

“I’m sorry, Master Jamie, but the dress your mother requires you to wear is proper nipped in with an 18-inch waist so you will have to grin and bear it, I’m afraid.”

Once tightened into the cincher, Jamie stood in front of the mirror looking at his reflection. He was having difficulty breathing – a result of the awful contraption around his waist.

Whilst he stood staring at his reflection, Nancy secured a bra around his chest and placed in the pouches of the bra two fillers. Jamie’s appearance was immediately transformed. He had a “figure.”

“Here, Master Jamie, place your head in this,” Nancy said. She gave Jamie a slip and he placed his head through it and let it fall down his body. He was beginning to look like a woman – the slip masked some of his more unnatural curves.

“Your mother has asked that I bring your through in your undergarments, Master Jamie. She does not want the dress to get grubby with makeup.”

With that, Nancy took Jamie by the hand and lead him to his mother’s bedroom. Madeline was already perched on the dressing table stool, and was awaiting her son; a pallet of makeup was before her. She patted the seat beside her.

“Come Jamie, sit down, she said.

Jamie walked towards his mother and sat on the long, dressing table bench. His mother was beside him; she smelt of expensive perfume and hair spray. Rich, delicious odours filled Jamie’s nostrils.

“I am so pleased you are doing this again for me,” she said. “And for your father of course,”

She smiled into the mirror and Jamie smiled back – they both knew that the real reason Jamie was doing it again was because he really loved his mother and the thought of her going to prison was just too much. He knew he should not be so immature as to destroy his parents' lives through his own selfishness. Also, wasn't there just the hint that Jamie was growing to like the clothes and the impersonation? In a way, the physical chastisement had taught him a good lesson. He had realised just how important it was to carry on the charade. There was still a part of him that hated it, although that was diminishing.

Madeline didn't care one way or the other what her son thought. The key thing was he was prepared to dress again and she was not going to let such an opportunity pass. She set to work with the makeup, stippling on the face powder. She used all her skills as an actress to ensure Jamie looked like a young woman with rouged cheeks and deep, red lips and long, luscious eye lashes. Jamie looked the part no question and because he did not need to shave, it was easy to make the young man look like a woman. That was what Madeline did - she made her son look like a woman again.

When she had finished she sprayed on perfume and added jewellery. Then she went to the wardrobe and took out the most beautiful New Look dress with a voluminous full skirt which was bolstered up by layers and layers of tulle. Jamie was astounded by the latest dress as it was a lot fussier and fuller than the first dress and the skirt was slightly slanted so it was longer at the back. Jamie was not sure if he could wear it.

"Of course, you can," Madeline said when he voiced his doubt. "You will look good in the dress. The more feminine, the better."

Jamie stepped over to the middle of bedroom to where Nancy was holding the petticoat. Jamie stepped into it and Nancy lifted it to his waist and fixed into position. Then Madeline collected the dress. Jamie was ordered to lift his arms up and the dress was pulled over his head and manoeuvred down into place by Nancy and Madeline. The fussed around ensuring the skirt fell over the net underskirts. Then Madeline edged up the zip in a series of jerks. The bodice pulled the dress in and made Jamie's chest feel tight. When it reached the top, Madeline pulled the cloth together and fastened the hook and eye.

Jamie could see his reflection in the mirror. He began to shudder. He looked glorious, regal, beautiful... it was just so hard to think that it was him. He could not believe that the voice in his head was the owner of such a magnificent female body.

"You look like a princess," Nancy said, echoing his thoughts. "It is hard to believe you are little Jamie with the scrapped knees and dirty shirts."

Madeline agreed. "Yes, even without the wig he looks like a woman."

The dress felt so big and cumbersome around his little waist Jamie felt he would not be able to move but worse was to follow. Jamie was asked to lift one foot and then the other as Nancy knelt on the floor and pushed stiletto shoes onto his feet. They were a lot higher than those he was used to. Jamie placed his feet onto the deep pile carpet. Immediately he could see the effect. He looked so much taller and somehow more womanly but at the same time his slim ankles ached.

"Now for the crowning glory," Madeline said. "Come."

Jamie was told to go back to the dressing table and sit down on the stool again. He achieved this objective with some difficulty. He had never realised before how cumbersome female clothes were and how shoes made it difficult to move. Once he was seated, Madeline drew the blond wig from the plastic head and placed it on his head. She then fussed about him with a comb, ensuring it looked right. A pretty face stared back at Jamie from the reflection in the mirror. Jamie felt himself blush. In some ways the whole experience was embarrassing and in other ways he was beginning to discover a strange excitement about the whole process.

“Don’t tell Oliver and Harry and the boys in the village...” Jamie said – for discovery was his biggest fear.

Madeline laughed. “No one will ever know.”

“And I don’t want the masters and the boys at school to know – they would rib me something chronic.”

Madeline smiled as Nancy winked at her. “No one will ever know, Jamie. It is our little secret. After tonight, if all goes to plan, things will return to normal and you will have the rest of the holiday to enjoy yourself.”

Once such words would have been pleasure to Jamie’s ears but now, as he shifted in the beautiful dress and felt a sense of pride that he could be made to look like such a beautiful woman, Jamie was not so sure he wanted things to go back to normal. He was a lonely boy who had few friends. He didn’t really fit in at school with its emphasis on rugby and cricket and academic achievement. He had enjoyed having the attention of his mother and Nancy. He had relished being the centre of attention and had rejoiced

in the feeling that he could do something that would make such a big difference to his mother and father's lives – particularly his mother's. He knew things would never be the same again.

Once the wig had been styled, Nancy and Madeline added jewellery. A gold bracelet; the pearl clip-on earrings; the pearl necklace; a little gold watch; rings. Then Madeline applied some more makeup. When Nancy and Madeline had finished fussing around him, there was no doubt that Jamie was a woman. Jamie knew that most people - if not everyone - would be taken in by his masquerade. It felt so strange. He did not know what to think. Part of him felt very excited about the whole prospect of being dressed again as Savannah and part of him was filled with fear. He did not *want* to like it. It was not right but that could not stop him liking it.

Madeline took her son by the hand and eased him off the stool. She led him to her wall to floor mirror and said, "Look, Jamie, look. Are you not Savannah?"

Jamie did indeed look and before him stood a beautiful butterfly of a woman dressed in the most gorgeous, gigantic, organza gown which was pinched in at the waist but billowed out around him. The waist cincher hurt his waist and the high heels hurt his ankles and calves but Jamie felt an almost unbelievable sense of euphoria well up inside him and fizz through his body. He shuddered.

"Someone walk over your grave?" Nancy said.

A rich red smile eased up Jamie's face. No longer were there tears and tantrums and immature behaviour. Jamie had found something he was good at, very good. For the first time in his life, he felt complete. He thought about the boys at school. He didn't

like most of them so why should he care what they thought? The masters were a motley band of sadists and no-hopers for whom he had no real respect. Why should Jamie be concerned about their preachy religious views that what he was doing was “wrong.” He knew if they could see him he would be branded a homosexual or a “queer” as they were the words that were used to describe men who dressed as women but Jamie didn’t care. He had done all this to help his mum but now he had to admit to himself he enjoyed it too. One thing he was sure about was that, when he went out as Oscar’s daughter, Savannah, to the theatre he was going to make sure he was convincing.

“I’m just amazed at how good I look,” Jamie said. He was smiling so much Nancy and Madeline were amazed at the transformation in him. “I’ve never been good at nothing,” Jamie said. “But I am good at this, aren’t I Mother?”

Madeleine could hardly conceal her own delight. Tears welled up in her eyes. Jamie, her darling son, was going to keep her out of prison. She touched his bare arm.

“You look amazing, darling,” she said. “You see, your mother said she could make a pretty woman out of you and she was right, wasn’t she?”

“She was right,” Jamie said softly. He stared back at the reflection of the beautiful blond woman now with the wig on and it was utterly impossible to recognise himself. Even he was convinced by the image that stared back at him. “Mother was right...” Jamie said softly. “She was right...”

Chapter Ten

Slowly Jamie descended the stairs with Madeline and Nancy behind him. This time his heart did not pump with fear and there were no tears in his eyes. He held the banister rail for it was difficult to walk in the high heels and with the full skirt brushing around his legs; as he descended, the dress fell about his ankles. The stockings felt itchy on his calves and thighs but he felt like a Queen. He felt important. He felt happy. He reached the last stair and stepped into the hall.

“Your father is waiting for you in the drawing room,” Madeline said.

Jamie took short steps, feeling the weight of the dress around him. He pushed open the drawing room door. His father stood by the mantelpiece over which there was a painting of a Lancaster bomber. It was not just any Lancaster bomber but the one his dad had actually flown during the Second World War. It dominated the room. How many times had Jamie looked at that picture and imagined himself flying it? Imagined himself a man in a man’s world who was fighting an enemy. But now, instead of appearing to his father as a man, his father was seeing a woman – a beautiful woman.

“Jamie,” his father said softly. “Uh, Savannah, you look wonderful, beautiful. I can’t believe the transformation that my adorable wife has been able to achieve and you... you deserve much credit for buckling down and helping her... helping *us*. Well done, Jamie.”

Madeline stood beside Jamie.

“Doesn’t Savannah look wonderful?” Madeline said. “Doesn’t she just look like the most amazing woman in the world?”

“She does,” Hugh said. “And let’s hope that after tonight we can bin these silly clothes and masquerades and go back to being a normal family again.”

The whole situation had certainly taken a huge toll on Hugh who had none of Madeline’s optimism and strength of character.

“It will, Hugh, it will,” Madeline said.

Hugh continued. “Now remember Jamie... Savannah, if Oscar offers you a drink say no. We can’t have any more histrionics the like of which we had the other evening. You will give the whole game away and you have played your part beautifully to date. So chin up and think about your mother and what you are doing to help her. I know it must be difficult having to experience all these frills and potions and skirts and rouge and what not but you have, with a bit of persuasion, kept to the task in hand and this, God willing, will be the last ever night you will have to wear such clothes and the last we will ever see of Oscar.”

As if on cue there was a pull on the door chain and Nancy scurried off to open it. There were voices in the hall, then Oscar appeared at the drawing door in a black evening suit and bow tie, his coat draped over his arm.

“Oh my darling daughter!” Oscar said on seeing Savannah. “How beautiful you are and so like your mother.”

This time Jamie beamed and his heart beat with excitement. Had he ever felt so pleased with himself?

“Hello Father,” he said. “It’s lovely to see you again and I am *sooo* looking forward to the theatre. I have spoken about nothing else to Mother all day. Is that not so, Mother?”

Madeline agreed Savannah had been exited by the evening’s entertainment. Oh, wasn’t Jamie the little actor? Like his mother, he liked playing a part and Madeline fairly beamed. Gone were the nerves and tears of that first occasion. Now Jamie had grown into the part and wanted nothing more than to convince Oscar he was his daughter.

Oscar walked over to Hugh and shook his hand.

“Sorry, I was so taken with my gorgeous daughter that I forgot my manners.”

He then kissed Madeline on the cheek.

“Come, darling Savannah, my car is waiting. We must be off.”

Madeline followed Oscar and Savannah down the hall. They stopped near to the door and Nancy, who had been to the cloak room, re-appeared with a black cap which belonged to Madeline. She passed the cloak to her mistress and Madeline attached it to Savannah’s neck with a large brooch. The cape afforded Savannah little protection but fell about his dress, adding to the vision of femininity. Nancy pulled open the door and bowed her head as Oscar and Savannah passed.

“Have a lovely, lovely evening, Savannah,” Madeline said as she watched her surrogate daughter being lead to the car by “her” father.

Oscar held the door open and Savannah climbed into the Rolls Royce, remembering to pull in his

skirts and fold them around his legs. Oscar closed the door and walked around to the other side. Seconds later, the car moved off smoothly and Madeline and Hugh were left down stairs waiting nervously for the return of Jamie/Savannah. So whilst Hugh and Madeline paced the room and imbibed spirits, Jamie, disguised as Savannah, was whisked along country lanes and major roads in a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow until the car finally reached London.

“You look so pretty, Savannah but I wish you had worn the necklace I gave you,” Oscar said.

Instinctively Jamie placed a hand on his neck. “Oh, Mother felt the necklace was just too valuable for me to wear in case I lost it. I must confess to being something of a muddle head.”

Oscar laughed. He took Savannah’s hand and kissed it gallantly. “Oh, to have beauty and brains would be just too much to ask. Your mother, I think, does fuss over you a lot, is that not right, Savannah?”

Savannah agreed it was and said that, as she was the only child, “her” mother felt very protective towards her. Oh, how Jamie had got into playing the part! By the time they reached the theatre, he had almost forgotten who he was – he was just so taken with playing the role – and he enjoyed it to boot! Maybe there was something of the acting gene in him too – the desire to deceive.

The car stopped just outside the theatre and once again Oscar went around and opened the car door. Savannah placed one foot on the London pavement and turned around gracefully on the seat. Those hours of rehearsal were now paying off because he gently eased himself out of the seat, taking a considerable time. It was beginning to rain so the chauffeur held an umbrella as Oscar held the door. Savannah

stood up and straightened the cap and dress. He took a deep breath, his heart now trembling with a mixture of fear and excitement. He was not to be rushed. Around him the lights of Shaftesbury Avenue glinted and sparkled into the night. Savannah had never been to London at night and was amazed at the capital. Maybe at that moment Jamie/Savannah made a sub-conscious decision to work in this very area, just as Madeline had done many years before.

Oscar closed the car door and said to his chauffeur, "Collect us at 10 PM."

Then, giving his arm for Savannah to hold, he escorted him up the steps and into the theatre.

Savannah was amazed at the hustle and bustle of the place, the programme sellers, the men in uniform who stood guard at the various entrances. He actively looked at people to see if anyone recognised him as a male but there was not the slightest recognition. An elderly gentlemen bound his head towards him and smiled and another stood back as he brushed past in his long skirts but no one looked at him untoward. Jamie had passed in public on his first outing! It was such a thrill. He had never before had such an adventure. Sometimes he read war stories about escapees from German prison of war camps or spies in Nazi Germany who dressed as women. For the moment he felt like the real life hero of one of his stories. He had achieved something amazing. He gazed around the foyer at the black and white photographs of famous actresses and actors. Oh, how he wished one was his mother.

"It's wonderful," Savannah said, and he meant it too. "It is truly magical."

Oscar was delighted. He took his daughter and lead her through to the box he had hired for the eve-



ning. The view, right over the stage, was the best in the house. There were four seats but only Savannah and Oscar were to be seated in the box. As they entered, a maid took Savannah's cloak and helped him get seated in the box; then she then took a drinks order.

"I will have a glass of white wine," Savannah said, feeling rebellious.

"The same for me," Oscar said.

The maid scurried off to get the drinks.

Savannah had never enjoyed himself so much. He loved the way men gave him space and glanced at him and smiled and were so, so polite.

The play started. It was something by a Russian playwright called Chekhov entitled *The Cherry Orchard*. Savannah had to admit to Oscar that he found it "heavy going" but he loved being in the box and looking out over the audience. In fact, Savannah spent the whole evening looking at other members of the audience and playing with his shoes which he kicked off, or feeling the soft fabric of his dress. During the intermission Savannah took the small silver bag his mother had given him and went to the toilet. Oh what luxury! Savannah had never seen anything like it.

A lady sat by the door keeping an eye on those inside the revered place. Savannah had never experienced such a thing, women talking and re-applying their lipstick and everywhere the sweet smell of perfume and powder. Savannah went to the toilet cubicle but the dress seemed too cumbersome to lift so he did not go. Instead he came out and stood by the mirror, looking at his reflection. He did not have the confidence to re-apply his makeup.

“What a glorious dress,” one woman said to him. “I saw you sitting in the box and told my husband you look like that actress... what’s her name?”

“Grace Kelly,” another lady said.

“Oh yes, Grace Kelly. It must be lovely to be so slim and attractive. Is that your husband you are with?”

Savannah laughed girlishly. He was enjoying the masquerade. “My father,” he said.

“I bet he’s keeping the wolves at bay,” the women said and winked.

Savannah fairly skipped back to the box. He could not wait to tell Oscar about the conversation.

“You *are* beautiful, my darling daughter,” Oscar said. And Savannah detected a tear in his eye.

The second half of the play sped by. Savannah felt special, regal. He was no longer Jamie the shy, diffident boy who was average at most things and not good at others. No, he was Savannah, the great beauty. After the play, finished the maid brought Savannah’s cloak and Oscar escorted him down stairs. Savannah took the steps carefully as he was still unused to wearing high heels. He reached the bottom and they walked to the Rolls Royce.

“We’ve got a table booked at Bartholomew’s,” Oscar said. “I hope it is not going to be too late for you but I want to fit as much in as possible and really get to know you.”

So Savannah was taken to dinner. He had never eaten such lovely food in such glorious surroundings. The waiters fussed around Savannah and smiled at him, bowed and complimented him. They

pushed his chair in and placed a napkin on his lap and Savannah wallowed in the glory of it all. Oscar asked questions and, without Madeline giving re-assurance, Savannah had to answer as best he could. He tried to remember the back story and, if confused, he would just smile sweetly. He twice got up to go to the bathroom (he loved the looks he got from men as he walked between tables), then they finished dessert and the evening was over. Oscar asked for the bill, put on his glasses to read it, raised his eyebrows, then unrolled some notes which he left on the table.

“Thank you so much for a wonderful night,” Savannah said as they left the restaurant. In his mind, he really did feel like Oscar’s long, lost daughter.

The night had been a spectacular success and when the Rolls Royce returned Savannah home, he felt a million dollars. As the car drew up on the drive, he was conscious of eyes peering at him from behind curtains. He walked up the drive, fairly swinging his handbag. Of course, once indoors, Madeline fussed over him

“How did it go? How did it go?” she shrieked impatiently.

“Well,” Jamie answered. “Very well indeed. Oscar, my surrogate father, will return to South Africa a happy man. He did not suspect a thing!”

And Madeline clapped her hands girlishly and she shrieked and hugged and kissed her son and cried with the blessed relief that the whole nightmare was finally over.

“Now you will be able to take of those dreadful clothes and get that wretched grease paint off your face and become a boy again,” Hugh said. He took up his wife and gave her a hug, lifting her off the ground.

“Oh darling, you are so, so clever. I never in a million years thought you would pull this off but you sure have made a damn fine woman out of our son!”

They both laughed.

“I know, it *is* clever, isn't it? And not only has Oscar gone away happy but he has left Savannah a necklace which must be worth a tidy sum – not to mention some money for a horse!”

As they kissed and hugged, Jamie slipped away. It was late and he was tired but adrenalin pumped through his body. He had done it! He had done it!

As he reached the top of the stairs Hugh called after him.

“Hey Jamie, you can take those awful clothes off now and go back to being a man. Isn't that great?”

But Jamie was not so sure and when he got back to his room, he did nothing of the sort. Instead, he stood in front of the wardrobe mirror, marvelling at his reflection. Then he rubbed his hands along his bodice of the dress and felt his false breasts. He felt the weight of the skirts, he swished them around his legs, then he rubbed the front of the dress. He felt strange. Euphoric. He stood gazing at his reflection for ages. Then he just shivered, quivered and quaked and he felt himself having the most amazing orgasm – his first ever. Tears of pleasure rolled down his cheeks. He had never felt so happy in his life.

The rest of the summer was a let-down in contrast to the first couple of weeks. The clothes were put away and so were the adventures of Savannah. The matter was not spoken about again – apart from by Nancy who occasionally winked at Jamie or made the odd comment. His dad took him to see Australia play

England at Lords in The Ashes series but Jamie was no longer interested. He was happier with the push bike his mother bought him but even that didn't excite him as much as it would have in the past. When he returned to school, he no longer cared about being in the cricket team. His interests had changed. He could not wait to leave school but he knew his future was mapped out for him and he would have to go to university and become a lawyer. Only Nancy seemed to understand and she helped him dress in the holidays behind his mum and dad's back but it wasn't the same, it wasn't the same at all.

(To Be Continued)