

Two Parents In One



Simone Reynolds



A "New Woman" Novel



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Two Parents in One

By Simone Reynolds

The car pulled to a halt at the curb and the door flew open, two scruffy boys fell out.

“I hope you’ve got everything!” Jan shouted after them. Either Jeremy or Michael always managed to forget something. She hated the school run, but twice a week it was her turn, Norman did the other three.

Soon she was back in the traffic, slightly flustered, as she was late. Eventually she pulled into the car park and hurried into the lab. Only a little late, but the viruses wouldn’t be complaining!

Dr. Jan Hodgson was a research scientist, on Herpes viruses, her favourite. She had been working on them for the last 14 years, since her post doctoral days and now she was reckoned something of an expert. She sat down in her office seat and momentarily took in the view across the fields by the science park. Not for long. There was smart knock at the door.

“Can you help us with the subbing? Mike’s not turned in ‘cause his kids are sick”. This was Gemma, her technician, a mousy girl in her early twenties.

“Do you think I still can?” she joked as she pulled on her white coat. Jan rarely did anything practical now, but liked to keep her hand in. If called upon by her team she felt confident that she knew what to do.

They donned their gowns and goggles and made their way into the lab. The cultures were kept in a clean room with care taken to ensure strains were kept separate as contamination could wreck years of work.

“It’s this one today Jan.” Gemma indicated rows of tubes. The strain was a Herpes simplex. Jan knew it carried a gene, which allowed it to insert new genes into its human host, and indeed clip out existing ones. They had a whole range that they were working on, just in culture. Seeing what could be established and then looking for it with probes, so that their success, or indeed, mostly failure could be examined.

“This has been our most promising. It seems to be able to pick up sequences and maintain them OK.”

“Let’s hope you’re right Gemma, we’ve waited long enough”.

They worked their way down the rows making the subcultures into the new broths, which Gemma had produced. Jan wasn’t quite as dextrous as she had supposed and splashed a little on to her cheek, left exposed by the goggles. She wiped with some tissue and they continued. With the job done, Jan returned to her office and a cup of coffee, made in her rather sor-did stained mug.

Across the city the other Dr. Hodgson was busy in a meeting. He was a Public Health Doctor, a “Snoddy”, as they were still known after Dr. Snoddy from Dr. Findlay’s Casebook – it wasn’t meant to be a compliment, but medicine was like that! It was the usual stuff, arguing over health care needs for the local population, trying to prioritise purchasing with a pretty limited budget. Today had been a discussion about fertility and how much they could afford to spend on IVF – not much it would

seem in the face of a high demand. So many women left things too late and that meant problems. He was glad he and Jan had had their children relatively early. The last item was paying for sex change operations; essentially the cupboard was bare on that one!

Once the meeting was over Graham headed back to his office. He looked at himself in the mirror. Thirty-eight years old, balding, podgy and none too fit these days. He always called himself Dr. Hodgson SHV – short fat hairy version. He didn't mean his head either. His wife had stayed slim and attractive. What did she see in him? Anyway he could do the right thing today and he picked up the phone to book a restaurant table and order some flowers for their anniversary. At least he could get that right. It was three days away and would be a perfect night out.

With that done he headed for his next meeting, trying to sort out the MRSA targets with the Hospital Trust. They had been doing terribly, he wondered if they were completely clueless over hand hygiene and cleaning. Mind you that Microbiologist was a complete bastard so that probably didn't help much.

When Graham rolled in that night, dinner was already on the table and the boys were arguing over some television programme that had been on. He was happy to let it wash over him. He kissed Jan's hair and sat down. He still enjoyed its texture and smoothness. She kept it shorter now but he still found it a turn on, he wasn't sure what she thought of him.

“Well darling how has your day been?” he queried.

“Oh, not bad I even had some practical to do. I helped Gemma with her work, because Mike was away. Then it was teaching with the undergraduates. They seem a nice bunch. I need to think of a project I can offer.”

“It’s a question of do you want someone, or to put them off as I recall!”.

“Well a nice young chap would be good,” she smirked.

“I am afraid that to a student anyone over twenty five looks like their granny,” he knew his wife didn’t, but then she was 38.

“I thought that I would go to aerobics this evening, I haven’t been for a couple of weeks and it would be nice to get out for an hour or two.”

“That’s a great idea; I might go to the gym too. At least I have some flab to get rid of,” he said, glancing down at his waist. The trouble with being in Public Health was that you knew everything about what you were supposed to do, but it didn’t in anyway improve your ability to do it.

“The boys should be OK for a couple of hours.”

“I should think so mum. We’re not idiots.” This was Jeremy. Actually they were both pretty academic in their own way, Jan was hoping at least one of them would do something artistic and not follow their parents into science or medicine, but mostly that didn’t seem likely.

“OK then, but not too much telly, as I’ll be checking those spellings...”

“Since when were you any good.”

This was a reference to a time when Jan had assisted Michael with his story and added a few embellishments, including three spelling mistakes. Oh the embarrassment! She could never quite look that teacher in the eye again. It had meant a missed star. Life is so hard as a parent.

She nipped up stairs to change. Looking the part was key in the gamesmanship of exercise. She chose her black leotard this evening. Look professional. With some grey shorts over the top, subdued and professional. Graham came into the room. He loved the sight of his wife looking sleek and smoothed his hand over her back and round to her waist. He smiled appreciatively.

“Trying to improve on perfection.”

“Maintain the possible, I think”.

The class was moderately full, about twenty heaving young to middle-aged women. Jan fitted in the middle, but definitely with an above average body for her age – though not in her own mind where she could see bulges and defects undetectable to others.

Graham had done his stint in the Gym and was now at Jim’s the bar attached in the Leisure Centre. It was titled to aid punning and for people who wanted to be seen to be exercising, without actually doing so. Graham was in that category. He put in 20 minutes of heaving on the weights machines and then headed for the showers. Soon warm and dry he needed to quench his thirst and for that he chose Timothy Taylor’s, probably the best beer in the world. Now he could in the cliché sense exercise his right arm.

Two days later, having just got home, Jan stood looking at the flowers on the table and wondered what they were doing there. The boys had brought them off the doorstep, when they had come in from school. The card gave it away.

“Happy anniversary. Don’t cook I have booked a restaurant. Sally’s picking up the boys. Love and kisses. Graham.”

Bugger she had forgotten again. Each year she tried, but only succeeded in remembering one in three times, much to Graham’s amusement. She had a busier life than him. (More relevantly she didn’t have a personal secretary.) Oh well she could make the best of it and just enjoy the meal.

Jan had a long shower, washing her hair for an especially long time. She loved running her fingers through it. It was even better if it was someone else doing it for her. After drying she chose what she knew would please Graham, not that that was too difficult. Tight black brief knickers, a low cut black bra and hold up stockings. Her black dress went over the top and she added a small amount of make up to her face. She couldn’t help

noticing a slight itch in the corner of her mouth. Probably nothing.

The meal was at their favourite gourmet restaurant. They both particularly like fish, but Graham made sure that he had a plate of potatoes with his and then came the puddings. Profiteroles. The chocolate sauce is key, not too hot and with just the right amount of alcoholic embellishment. The little buns themselves need to be fresh that day so that they are crisp not soggy. If all is perfect it's the ideal sweet. Today it was. Time for home and coffee on the sofa.

The boys were still about, but they were in the other room watching sport, while Graham and Jan sat close together enjoying each other's warmth. Jan knew that when Graham stoked her thigh, as he always did, then he would feel her stocking tops and his thoughts would move elsewhere. Why were men so predictable? When they were happy that the boys had gone to bed, they floated upstairs, Graham hardly able to keep his hand away from Jan, but she was more fleet a foot.

Her dress slipped off easily and Graham was left to soak up the pleasure of a beautiful wife, as she shook her hair free. They cuddled and she helped him to remove his trousers and shirt, and they fell to the bed.

"The least I can do is offer you a little treat," she said sliding down his pants and grasping the contents. Graham smiled gratefully. The start of a lovely interlude.

Next day at 11am found Jan sitting in the kitchen dabbing at small spot in the corner of her mouth. A little painful, but she had some Zovirax ointment to apply. She didn't think any more of it as soon the boys arrived. They like to help with the cooking on a weekend and that meant cakes. Jan was an expert at chocolate cake and felt that the skill ought to be passed to the next generation.

Soon there was flour liberally spread round the room. Michael, who was 14, was the most expert, his brother who was

two years younger, was keen but tended to spill everything. Michael took charge of the mixer and was soon beating the ingredients together to produce a white smooth cream. Eggs, flour and cocoa soon followed and then they both ladled the mix into the tins. Jan watched benignly and then put the tins in the oven.

“I think you would both cope in an emergency”, she declared and the boys smiled. Parental approval was always welcome, but tended only to be voiced by their mother.

The next step in cake baking is of course to lick out the bowls and this occupied a prolonged time until the cake was nearly ready to come out of the oven. The boys like to apply chocolate butter cream and melted cooking chocolate over the top. This took another half hour to do and then everyone needed a wash.

Graham came in. “What’s that on you mouth?” he enquired of Jan.

“Not sure, a cold sore I imagine. Should know from all my herpes work.”

“Oh, has something upset you, or are you hot?”

“Not even in your preferred way I am sorry to say,” she smiled. Neither mentioned it again.

Gemma entered the office. “Jan I’ve got some results I need you to see. We think we have a strain contaminant. Those ones we were subbing the other week seem to have altered their spectrum, they now seem to be able to infect other cell lines. Brian thinks they may have picked up another virus, perhaps a retro, which is inserted in our original strain. It means that it could pick up and transfer genes potentially and possibly reintegrate in the host cells in new points.”

“That’s great Gemma. Something novel to look at. Have you run any gels?”

“Yep. Definitely some non-herpes virus genes. It could be what we’ve been hoping for, or a complete mess.”

“Well get the details down and we should take it to the departmental meeting next week and get some other views. There’s usually a simple explanation, like a bacterial infection.”

“Well not this time. I’m voting for the jackpot.”

“And me, the damp squib. I’m glad you’re an optimist!”

“Anyway we should have more checks by Thursday and I will try them on some other lines and see what markers we have of the potential new virus, or whatever it turns out to be.” With that she left, clearly excited to be back to work.

That’s the kind of folk Jan had always wanted. Enthusiasts. People who wanted to do science for its own ends, not for immediate patents and cash, like the University always wanted.

It was three days later when Graham first noticed the itching. It was along the shaft of his penis, but there was nothing to see and nothing to scratch. It was like a fine tingling sensation. He put it out of his mind when he was working, but whenever there was a break he could feel it again. He also seemed a little chilly; perhaps he was developing a cold. Next morning there definitely was something to see. Along the shaft of his penis was a string of little blisters and when he pulled back the foreskin, they were on the glans and under the foreskin too. Even a Public Health doctor could make a diagnosis of genital herpes.

“Well Graham if you will play away from home, what do you expect.” This was Martin his GP.

“That’s the problem I haven’t been. Not that either you or Jan will believe me I suppose.”

“Too right mate. Anyway I can give you some Zovirax. Or at least a prescription for you to buy some. Just as well that you’re a rich consultant.”

“Not like you GPs then with your items of service payments stacking up. I bet I’m one now!”

“Eat your heart out!”

“Actually don’t forget I’m epileptic, so I don’t have to pay anyway.”

“Oh of course, it says here right on the screen ‘Claims to have had a fit’. Any way that gives me the chance to review your prescription for that too. Have you considered stopping therapy?”

“Not a chance. Do you remember what happened last time?”

“No. But according to our records you had another seizure.”

“..So no go. My license is too important.”

By the following day there were little sores and he felt very miserable. Jan inspected the damage.

“I have an admission to make. It could have been me.”

“What! You’re seeing someone else.”

“No! It could have been my cold sore, in fact it probably was. Remember the oral sex on our anniversary. If you hadn’t taken me out for a meal it wouldn’t have happened.”

How did women always manage to make it their husband’s fault? Graham inwardly smiled, but it made no difference to complain and he had enjoyed it at the time. It was the first time she had taken him completely. Worth the pain just to remember it. She had lingered long drawing up and down his shaft with her lips and then at the end deep-throating him and sucking all his semen inside.

“Actually I don’t know really what came over me that night. I wanted to suck you off even before we left the restaurant. It

was like it was meant to be. Anyway I shan't be doing that again in a hurry."

"But it won't matter next time."

"Well if it doesn't matter, there's no point anyway", she laughed.

The next week was thoroughly miserable as the crops of vesicles and ulcers took a long while to settle down, even with the anti-viral tablets. It wasn't so good being a service user instead of an NHS worker. Gradually his pain abated, but it took a further week for him to stop feeling sorry for himself. He had a sick note to take back when he was ready and although he was received with sympathy he was not looking forward to prying questions from his fellow medics, no matter how well meant. If they found out about his problem, they would certainly tease him.

Eventually all was quiet in the nether regions and he could take a shower in some comfort. He made sure that he didn't get too excited and Jan did her best to help, by keeping her clothes on in his presence. Oh how thoughtful! Anyway he had to be right for the expedition with Michael and Jeremy, who he had promised to take on a trip at half term, the following week.

They set off early on the Saturday morning into the dales, taking the bus to Horton in Ribblesdale and walking from there. Jan was going to meet up with them later on for a meal in Long Preston and the trip home. The weather was good and no one complained as they soaked in the excellent weather. The idea was to enjoy a trip with the boys and talk to them, unlike the usual pattern - they would be men together. At least that was Graham's unspoken concept. In fact, Jeremy and Michael did like to be with him, but usually didn't let on.

Generally speaking, Michael tried to stride on ahead whilst Jeremy had to be cajoled. Graham often had to carry his rucksack as well as his own. Then both boys would run off in the down hill sections and Graham would stagger afterwards, complaining inwardly about his knees. The lunch stop was a chance to commune with nature by a stream and for Graham to down a can of beer. Somewhat lively and warm by this stage. The boys had to make do with fruit juice and some of their own cake, to go with the cheese sandwiches.

They were all able to stretch out in the sun by the river, watching it splash across the rocks, leaving a small dragon fly flitting between the droplets. The last gasp of summer before the cold started to set in. Graham felt that this was the first time that the boys had been able to cope with a proper walk, up over the hills, at a reasonable pace and with not too many arguments. He definitely felt that they were growing up. He was proud of his two young men, but he was careful not to show it. Jan was rather more demonstrative with her affection, but he could never manage that. He was more of a handshake man, than a bear hug type.

By late afternoon they were completing their circuit and arriving back in Horton for the pick up. Jan should be well on her way, but as they approached the spot there was no sign yet.

Jan had a lie-in until 10 and then a lazy bath, mooching around the house for the rest of the day, doing odd tasks. It must have been last year, when she last got the chance to be alone. After lunch she planned how long it would take and reckoned that if she left by three; that would give her plenty of time.

The car slid along the country lanes at a steady forty, a perfect afternoon for a drive, she would have preferred Graham's old soft-top. It was red, but she couldn't recall that it was an MG. Graham had always wanted a Lotus, but by the time he could afford one, the feeling had worn off! The MG was the best he ever managed, but it wasn't terribly reliable. Jan's car was

built with that in mind really and in her view, elegance. The boys always moaned, but they were happy not to walk.

Over the hill in the opposite direction came a Mercedes, an old version, but making the most of the empty roads. It crested the hill, without reckoning on the sudden turn, which left it on the wrong side of the road. Unfortunately, it arrived in the space left for Jan's car.

Graham paced up and down on the pavement. It was now 6.30, with no sign of Jan. He had tried her mobile, but with no response. This usually meant that she had left it on the table. So they were left in limbo. He rang his neighbour Bob, who had by chance seen Jan leave at 3.05.

With that information Graham knew all was not well and made his way to a phone box to find the number for the local police. He eventually got through to a desk sergeant somewhere, who went away to investigate.

"The lads tell me there was a head-on before Long Preston," he intoned calmly. "It was a white Clio and a Merc. Apparently. Mean anything to you?" Graham shuddered.

"Yes the Clio could be my wife." He gave the number.

"I'm sorry sir, that does match. I don't know what's happened to the people involved. Can we come and pick you up?"

Jan had been delivered to a little hospital in the countryside, some way from home.

The police went with him to the ITU and he was ushered in to one of the bays. The nurses shuffled the boys into an interview room. One glance at Jan told him all he needed to know. She wouldn't make it. A rather chubby man approached in theatre garb.

"Hello, you must be this lady's husband. I am Dr. Worrell."

"Hi, yes." Graham gave nothing away with his look. He didn't make it easy.

“I am afraid that things don’t look good. In fact we think her brain is so damaged that she won’t survive”.

Graham regarded the various screens. The ECG and respiration looked normal, on the ventilator.

“Have you done the brain tests yet?”

“Oh are you medical?”

“I’m the Public Health Doctor.”

“I see. Not yet, but I am afraid that I can predict. Has she expressed any wishes..”

“To donate? Yes. Whatever you like.”

”Thank you.” He couldn’t look Graham in the eye.

“Alright if I bring the boys in?”

“Please do.”

Graham spent ten minutes talking to the boys about what they would see. By the time they arrived at the bed, both were sobbing and Graham was holding back his tears. They spent a long time holding Jan’s hand, knowing that there would be no sign of life, beyond the automatic. Finally all of them had had enough and they decided to go.

As they departed the transplant team were being summoned and the virus tests were underway. Liver, kidneys, lungs and heart would all be going in different directions within a few hours. One life lost, but maybe five saved.

A month later, the two grandmothers had gone home. Graham was left with the two boys. His mother had played with the children, diverted their attention and done school transport. The other, Margaret, had been in charge of cleaning, washing and ironing. He seemed to have done all the cooking, it wasn’t

really his strong suit, but he could do it now. He knew they had both meant well and at least the two grandfathers hadn't been too much in evidence. Both elderly couples had stayed in a hotel together and frankly they had enjoyed the time together, once the immediate grief was over.

Michael and Jeremy felt the loss most acutely. No one could replace their mother, but they were to a degree, stoical.

"We need Dad to be more like Mum," said Jeremy.

"How do you mean?"

"Just more friendly I suppose - a few more cuddles. Less cross. Chocolate cake. I dunno, really."

"You're right really. He just isn't the same. Poor old Dad."

"if only we could change him."

They were watching the television at least no one cared about that any more. They could play more computer games too!

"I heard about something at school. Women have different hormones than men, it makes them more motherly I suppose. "

"So?" Responded Jeremy.

"Well Jerry, they're in contraceptive pills, that women take to not have babies. If we had some of them to give Dad, maybe he would be better."

"How do we get those then?"

"If Mum had any they would be in her drawer still."

They both raced from the room and upstairs. Graham was out in the garden and they sneaked into the bedroom. Sure enough in the drawer on their mother's side of the bed they found six packs, with only the first started. There was even a repeat prescription for some more! They took them and left to plot. How could they trick their father into taking them?

Graham was over the immediate effects of his wife's death. He didn't sleep well. The first night was hardest, when he hadn't really slept at all. Then he found Jan's nightdress. It smelt of her and he found that by resting his head on it, he seemed to feel her presence, like a comfort blanket. She had a number of soiled clothes, which would do, but they didn't last his mother in law's attention.

She had wanted him to remove all Jan's clothes and other belongings, but he couldn't face it yet. They still filled every available space in the room. As she still did. He had all day to think about it too. He had been given two months off to sort out his affairs and to come to terms with his loss. He might get back by December. He wasn't sure that he wouldn't prefer to work.

The boys were preparing breakfast the next day. Very odd.

"We thought we would take this over to help you out", said Michael.

"Oh, OK Mike why not!". "I'll see how long you keep it up."

"Oh Dad, Mum used to give us these vitamin pills at breakfast, there are still some left." Indeed there were, the cupboard seemed full. He hadn't really noticed before, but until last week, his mother was rather in charge.

"We thought you ought to have one too."

"What rubbish. All you need is a good diet."

"Not what mum said? And they would go faster. Plus while you've been cooking there has been less fresh food," Michael scolded.

"Oh I give in."

A small red pill was planted in front of him and he took it without a moment's thought. Actually he was delighted, because from then on the boys organised breakfast. By the end of the month he was most impressed.

Graham looked at himself in the mirror. Was it his imagination or was he shaving less? He couldn't really remember, but he was sure that he used to be more spiky come morning. Who could tell? He looked at his arm perhaps that wasn't as hairy either. What of it? He thought no more about it. That morning he was set to see his Chief Executive.

"Hi Graham, come and sit down." Mark Beaufoot welcomed him in. "We're all so pleased to have you back".

"I'm pleased to be back too. I don't think I could stand another day thinking about my woes."

"I've been thinking about your proposal and I've spoken to Amanda too. The Board are in agreement. You can swap. She'll take on your role and you hers. Seems ideal".

Amanda Humphries was his fellow consultant and was going full time. She needed the money as her partner had left and she needed more work with a daughter to support. Graham was in the opposite position. He now had the money from the insurance on Jan, but needed more time for his domestic life.

"That's great Mark and it will improve your equal ops. Points!"

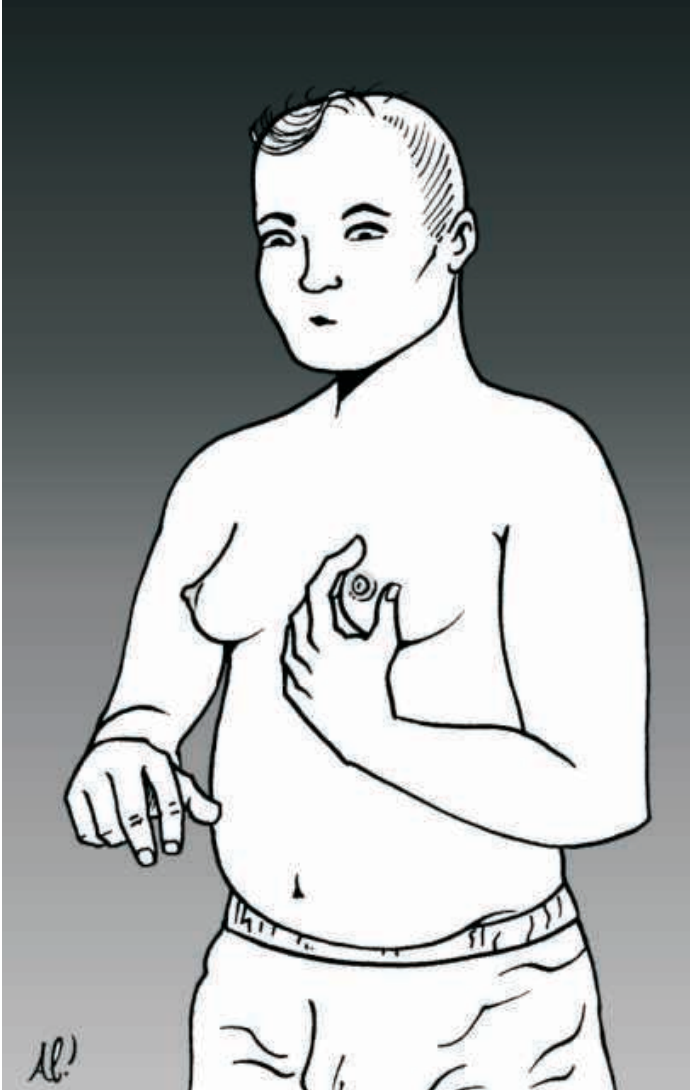
"Ha bloody ha. She's not black or lesbian or disabled, so she only counts a bit. At least I don't think she's lesbian - is she?"

"Waiting to meet the right woman, I suppose".

When Graham met Amanda she greeted him with a warm hug. She was a little taller than him, and always had a strong feeling for him, even before her partner Ian had left. She knew it was too early to do more than be sociable. Graham breathed in her odour and realised how much he missed the feel of a woman already.

"Oh thanks Graham, you've done me a real favour."

It was the week after Christmas, which he had spent with his parents and the boys. They had a fantastic time, but behind everything was their unspoken loss and when the boys went to bed he knew they ere upset and he too suppressed a sob. He seemed more emotional than 3 months ago.



He was standing in the bathroom, looking at his body full length. He had been quite an ape before, but now nearly all his body hair was gone. Only round his balls remained. What's more his pate was no longer bald. There was a fine down on it. How bizarre! He stood on the scales. He had lost a stone in weight, and his tummy was starting to disappear – brilliant! It must be the vitamin tablets. He had a week of nausea when they first started, but he thought he might have had a bit of a bug.

By the end of the month, things had gone a little further and he was quite smooth and noticeably his chest looked a little swollen. He seemed to be developing small breasts – gynaecomastia. This could mean anything or nothing. It could be a hormone-secreting tumour. He probed each breast with his fingers there was a firm lumpy plate in each, clear glandular tissue. He cupped his hands under the mounds. Stroking the nipples, which hardened. It certainly felt good. He looked quite different, in his body, but his face remained the same. He felt his testicles. Were they softer? He didn't really know. He would have to see what his GP he thought.

On Saturday evenings they all tended to watch television together. Graham sat in the middle of the sofa with Jeremy one side and Michael on the other. He used always to sit in "his" chair, but he preferred the sofa now. He couldn't explain why. He had started on the right originally and had been joined by Jeremy, with his homework. Then Michael wanted to come as well. It hadn't worked with them both on one side so inevitably he had been pushed to the middle to keep the peace. He felt that he was being manipulated to a degree, but he didn't mind. As the evening wore on the boys often seemed to end up leaning against him and he, in turn with his arm around them. He couldn't have imagined doing that a year ago. He hadn't had to fill the role of two then!

Doctor Who had always been a favourite with Graham, and they tended to start off with that, but now he also watched the programmes, which followed, usually some talent show. If he

wasn't careful the boys would have him in front of Big Brother. It was pleasant, but his reading had dropped off a bit. Not that histories of the Spanish Civil War or the between wars Labour Government had quite the same appeal. Actually he had tried the odd saga that Jan used to read and found that to be not as bad as he had imagined.

He appreciated that it would take a while for the boys to get over the loss of their mother. Now, nearly five months down the line they seemed pretty content, but it could be only skin deep. He checked with the school, and all seemed well there, so far. He would need to see the end of year exams. He had always left school to Jan; she was the academic after all, this year he would have to be the one to turn up.

Later the boys were discussing their father while lying in their beds. They had in part moved in together since Jan had died, only some nights. They found it fun if they needed a discussion.

“I think it has worked, what do you think”.

“Hmm.. I suppose so”, Jeremy responded. “I can't remember him being quite so... so cuddly before.”

“It's so slow we can't be sure. Anyway, we've only got a packet left now. Unless we cash that prescription. Do you think we dare?”

“It's rather out of date. Anyway the chemist here knows us and that mum has died”.

“I think it would be worth a try. We can always run off if there is trouble. I will just say our mum asked us to bring it in because she has a cold or something. Anyway they don't know us in Boots.”

Monday was always difficult, this time Graham had to hunt for some clothes. He finally decided that his trousers were too loose to stay up. Luckily, unlike his mother, he never chucked anything out. You could never tell when you would need it. A

search through the loft had revealed some old suits, which would do at a pinch. He guessed that no one would notice. He was quite proud to get back into something he had expanded out of fifteen years ago.

He found himself rolling his nipples round with his fingers. Quite a pleasant feel. Yes he was sure that there was a little breast underneath.

“Well Graham, I’m not certain”, said Steve his GP.

“Why have I lost my body hair? And I’m gaining some on top!”

“Could be alopecia, from the shock of losing Jan. It’s just fallen out and now it’s in a timed cycle. If you give it a month, it should start to grow back. ”

“What about my balls? Do you think they’re OK?”.

Graham was still on the couch and Steve gave them a reflective feel, rolling them round in his fingers. “There is such a large “normal range,” he thought.

“Yes I think so. And these tits of yours, 30% of men have some breast development. You know, manboobs.”

“Yes I know, but this is new.”

“Well, if it’s real. Anyway I can check your hormones, that’s really easy. By the way has that herpes attack recurred?”

“Thankfully no. I did feel a bit stupid with that. I hadn’t even got a new girlfriend”.

“But you could now.” Steve tested the waters.

“Quite honestly, I don’t think I could. It will be a while yet. I may need to chuck out Jan’s things first and I am not ready for that yet!”

Actually rather than chuck them out he tried one or two on. The trousers moved up easily over his hips and now his slimmed waist just filled them. They seemed made for him. He tried a blouse. A little tight across the shoulders but OK. He looked at himself in the mirror. He looked rather stupid, his face was all-wrong. He couldn't help but note the slight protuberance of his breasts at the front. To his eye they seemed to show through. He took a deep sigh. What did it mean? Any way he put them all back in the wardrobe for another day.

The boys' trip to Boots had been a success and they had enough supplies to last until September. No one had questioned them at all really. Michael had looked quite authoritative. They had to stock up on vitamins for themselves at the same time. They were still amazed about how easy it had been, with their father.

Back at the GP Graham sought information about his results.

"Well I am delighted to say that all is OK. The LFTs are bit up, but you're on Carbamazepine anyway. I hope you're not drinking too much". Graham confirmed that he wasn't.

"Are the hormones OK?"

"Apparently, yes. Possibly, you are at the low end for testosterone, but there is no evidence of a hormone secreting tumour or anything. Then your levels would be way up. So an all clear I think."

Graham was relieved. But still something nagged. It just didn't all fit. Why did he look changed? Of course, he didn't to anyone else. His face was just the same. He had a bit of hair on top of his head, where he had been bald before, but no one would appreciate that beyond him. If Steve thought his tits were Ok, then they probably were.

The summer wore on and Graham's body gradually changed, at least to him. He didn't think anyone else had noticed much. The hair on his body never returned, but he had an

appreciable growth on his head, which after some hesitation he allowed to grow. He only needed to shave his face once a week, though he passed the razor across every day. The boys had burst in on him when he was laying in the bath one day, but he didn't think that they had noticed anything at all. He eventually had to buy some new clothes and he was careful to make sure his breasts were concealed. By July that required a vest all the time, which needless to say he found a little hot.

The penis issue was now starting to play on his mind. He had very few erections. It seemed smaller, but when stretched it stayed just the same, as it had always been. His balls, however, definitely were smaller and the scrotum seemed smoother, holding them closer to his body. It made his pants seem pretty empty really. He certainly couldn't take a public shower!

That summer they didn't take a break until near the end of August. The two sets of grandparents provided a bit of holiday cover and Michael complained that at 15 years he was old enough to look after his brother during the day. Graham's prime concern was the damage that they might cause; actually they were now a highly responsible pair. They had had to grow up a lot in 11 months.

The three of them had decided on something simple – a cottage on the Norfolk coast. The boys valued having a parent with them most, rather than foreign travel they knew that they had to look after this one. Indeed now he seemed so much improved, they were keen to do so. They chose a small place in a little coastal village, not too far from Hunstanton.

The drive down was fairly arduous, but with regular stops Graham achieved it. They still had two cars, though to be fair they didn't really need them. He used his Espace, he hated driving it now, it was just a little too cumbersome, but on the other

hand the seats were very comfortable. The cottage was delightful, surrounded by climbing honeysuckle and beautifully situated at the end of a shady lane.

The boys rushed in from the car, after taking the key from Graham. They found that their room, with the two single beds overlooked the sea. The tide was in at that moment and it looked perfect, with the sun kissing the surface, broken slightly by the breeze into cream topped wavelets running into the beach.

In moments they were into their swimming trunks and pressing Graham to take them to the sea. He acquiesced having been revived by the cool breeze. They needed to pass along a little pathway, covered over with overhanging trees. It was difficult to rush without tripping, but they dragged Graham along as best they could until they burst out on to the sand.

“Come on dad,” they called from the water’s edge. Graham trundled down kicking off his sandals to plant his feet into the muddy sand at the edge. He was dragged further, but will still wearing his trousers.

“Where are your trunks?” queried Jeremy.

“Well you didn’t give me much of a chance did you?”

He kept back as they charged off, soaking him in the meantime. He returned to the warm sand to watch their antics of splashing and eventually diving in to the shallow sea. He sat down with his legs splayed letting the warm sand creep over his toes. At last he was escaped from the confines of home, only themselves to think about for two weeks.

After 15 minutes the boys were finished and as it was late in the afternoon, they headed back for home. Tea was of fish and chips from a shop in the lane and with some chocolate biscuits was entirely adequate.

“Go and get your trunks dad, then we can go back for another paddle,” demanded Michael, once he had finished.

Graham drifted up stairs to his room and ransacked the case. He knew already that they were not to be found. He came down with his palms turned up.

“Sorry guys, I seem to have forgotten them,” he pleaded.

“Oh Dad!” they chorused in an exasperated way.

They contented themselves with a walk along through the village returning for games and cocoa before retiring.

Next day the boys were up early and wandered off leaving a note for their father, to explain where they had gone. In the village they found the shops, all set up for the tourist trade. There were buckets, spades, beech games and rings and also swimming trunks and costumes. The boys looked at each other.

“Dad’s problems are solved. Shall we surprise him?”

“Why not?” Jeremy agreed. “Have you got enough money?”

“Probably,” Michael replied after studying the prices.

Back home Graham was preparing the table as the waltzed in. Michael went upstairs with the bag and when he returned they sat down to eat. Cereal and toast, plus some bacon and eggs - a real holiday treat. As they finished Michael asked about the plans for the day.

“Can we go back to the beach?”

“Yes I should think so..”

“Are you coming in today?”

“Well, I will be able to paddle, but I haven’t got any trunks, as you know.”

“We’ve bought you a present, I’ve left it on your bed”.

“Oh, what’s that?”

“Go and look the parcel is on your bed”, said Michael.

Graham climbed the stairs and found the brown paper parcel on his bed. He opened it with suspicion and opened out a one piece bathing costume. He reddened even without anyone to see. It was a sleek lycra model, which looked about his size he supposed.

“What’s this about’ boys?” he demanded of them.

“We know, Dad, ” replied Jeremy.

“You know what, exactly?”

“About your breasts.”

Graham’s eyes moistened. He sat at the table and tried to choke back sobs. Both boys clung to him. They hadn’t expected this. After some minutes he settled down.

“We know you have breasts and have been changing all year, since mum died.”

“Don’t you remember we saw you in the bath?” added Jeremy.

“We love you just as much. More..but we guessed you wouldn’t want to wear trunks.” Michael couldn’t look Graham in the eye.

“Well OK, lads. I have been trying to come to terms with it, and the doctors haven’t found anything wrong so far”, he was now regaining his composure.

“Well are you going to try it on?” This was Jeremy.

“I suppose I could.”

He pulled the costume over his bottom and smoothed it into place. It fit fine. His breasts now flopped above. They formed a small handful. They wouldn’t have held a pencil in place, if put underneath, but not terribly manly. To be honest he was scared to measure his exact proportions. He pulled up the top half and adjusted his breasts to fill the cups, which they did. It was open down his back, almost to his bottom, with a

highish neck at the front. The legs were cut quite high, and in former days the costume would not have contained him. He could see his body looked fine, but his head didn't really match. It was no longer as rough as it would have been, but was not that of a woman.

He looked at his legs, they looked fine, certainly firm and muscular and his arms too looked well proportioned. Essentially, the costume was almost a perfect fit. He was just a little thick in the middle. His pubic hair crept round the edge of the high cut legs. He took his razor and trimmed them off, and did under his arms at the same time.

He felt a certain pride in it, which he knew was absurd that he could look this good. But was he seeing his body through the eyes of a man or those of a woman?

The boys were very pleased. He did a twirl and they both grinned. He would certainly be able to wear that on the beach. They overlooked the rather obvious point as to whether he would be their mother or father while he was there.

"You look fine," they reassured him. He wasn't really sure what that meant.

"It may look OK to you two, but what will other people think?" The boys could see what he meant.

He decided to put on a t-shirt and shorts over the top and then gauge how he felt on the beach. The boys thought that that was fine and he mentally prepared a plan of action.

Initially he sat with his clothes on and ran about with them as the need arose. By 11 he had decided to dispense with the shorts. Nothing given away so far and of course the costume underneath controlled his chest. He had combed his hair as best he could to give a sort of urchin cut. He wasn't very convinced. At lunch they behaved very naturally and afterwards he promise to come in after he had had a sunbath. For this he removed his top.

“Well-done dad!” they whispered and smiled encouragement at him. He lay back and took in the warmth and had soon dozed off. At around 2 pm he decided that this was it and he was going to have a dip. He strode down to the sea with the two boys and after a few moments hesitation he dived in. No one had noticed and no one seemed to care. He had a great time swimming up and down and diving to the bottom. It brought back happier times when all four had been together. After he was fully satisfied with his exercise he headed back for the towels.

Well that hadn't been too bad, but he hadn't had to pass any form of inspection from anyone else, so it didn't really matter. He put his T-shirt on and headed back to the water's edge. He saw some other families playing's little groups with the children running up and down, circling their parents like sheep dogs.

“Oh my God, where's Simon?”

It was the woman in front of him who spoke. She was jumping up and down, frantically, casting in all directions.

“Pete, was he with you, where is he?”

“I can only see John. Is that him out there on the li-lo? God I think it is!” They were now running up and down in demented fashion, while Graham watched.

“Can I help?” he said involuntarily.

“Its our son, we think that's him out there”, the man replied.

They all charged for the sea with Graham in the lead. He could see the child was getting further away and only looked about 5. He sped into the water and shot off in a shower of splashes, headlong towards the li-lo. By the time he arrived the child had tipped into the sea and was floundering. Graham grabbed him under the chin and swam with an elegant sidestroke back to the shore.

The child lay spluttering as his mother ran up and enveloped him in her arms. As a small crowd gathered, Graham

slipped to the back. The couple started to look around for him, but Graham was sidling away.

“Who was that woman? She was astonishing,” Pete asked. Jeremy was near at hand and thinking quickly.

“That was our Mum.” He announced proudly. Graham couldn’t hear and was drifting away. Michael was at the back.

“Mike, I’m off. Could you bring your brother back?”

“OK, I guess you didn’t really want this! I’ll drag Jerry away in a minute”

He picked up his gear and made his way off the beach and back down the track. Soon he was home and able to relax. He wouldn’t if he knew what Jeremy was up to.

“We must come and thank your mum properly, young man. Where has she gone?”

“Home I think,” it was Mike who spoke this time.

“Oh that’s a shame! Perhaps we can call in. Where do you live?” It was the woman this time.

“Oh last cottage on the road just before the footpath”, Jeremy spoke. Michael inwardly groaned.

“We can drop round after tea.”

“Oh shit! What have you done?” Graham didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. “You don’t know what time they’ll be round I suppose?”

“Anytime from now on.”

“Well boys to quote from Oliver Hardy. ‘This is another fine mess you have gotten me into’”. He smiled, what else could he do?

He needed something androgenous at least to cover himself up. Maybe he should emphasise his chest this time? He chose to put his costume back on, as it was barely dry, with his tightest T-shirt, it showed off his curves. He found an old scarf to cover his hair, but it took an age to get it tied in a pretty way. Even as he was adding the finishing touches he heard the gate opening.

“Is your Mum in young man?”

“Yes I’ll just go and fetch her.” Michael had been practising this. So he was ready. “Mum,” he called up the stairs.

Graham descended with as much dignity as he could muster and entered the room.

“Hello, I’m Dr. Hodgson”, he announced. No lies there!

“Oh I am pleased to meet you. I’m Sylvia and this is my husband Pete”. Sylvia was a buxom youngish woman and a tall skinny Pete loomed behind. “We bought you these”. She held out a bouquet of flowers. Graham gave genuine and hearty thanks.

“Oh they are quite beautiful!”

“You were so magnificent this afternoon. We could never have reached Simon.” He stood by his mother’s side. Smiling up shyly.

“Please take a seat, I was just going to make a cup of tea”, he lied.

He escaped for a few minutes. What could he call himself? Gail – that was it –Gail.

He placed the cups down, together with a cake. He passed them out and offered the cake.

“Well Dr. Hodgson, we were so relieved, when you got our son. And you rushed off so quickly, we didn’t even have a chance to thank you.” It was Pete this time.

“Oh call me Gail.”

“Yes Gail, you shouldn’t have done that”, Sylvia added in mock admonishment.

“It was nothing really, and I’m not keen on making a fuss. Its what I’ve trained for, so I should be OK.”

They chatted merrily for half an hour or so and then felt it best to part. Sylvia gave him a big hug, commensurate with her hearty form and Pete gave him a kiss on the cheek. This bought a flush. He had never been kissed by a man before!

“Well I’m sure we’ll see lots of each other this week. But I hope no more heroics are needed.” Finished Sylvia as they left.

“She was strange, could almost have been a man”.

“I know what you mean Pete. Uncanny really, but quite nice all the same”

“Now what boys? Looks like I’m a woman for the duration!”

Next morning Graham had a mission to buy two weeks of women’s clothes. He had made a list of thing that he might need and measured himself up. He reckoned he could be 14 or something like that. He reckoned on mostly skirts and blouses, with a couple of jumpers. Shoes were easy – a size 7 would be fine. He could go for something fairly flat, but he couldn’t really try anything on. He also needed some bras, which would be a bit of a guess. He reckoned on a 34 B, but he wasn’t really sure how this was calculated. Tights too would be needed and he selected 2 packs of 2, surely he couldn’t wreck 4 pairs?

The staff looked at him a little oddly, but he could have been anything, let alone anybody in his coat and jumper.

When he had everything on board from M&S, he considered cosmetics. Perhaps a touch of lipstick might give him authenticity? Fortunately there was plenty in the supermarket and he chose a fairly subdued colour and hid it under his vegetables

and meat. He then rushed home to find the boys and show them what he had.

Putting a bra on was needless to say a bit of a struggle, he had no problems taking them off in his younger days, but now he nearly dislocated his shoulder. The tights were easy, when he took a little care. The blouse, white plain and simple. He had a fullish flowery skirt to complete.

Graham went through all that he had purchased and the boys nodded their approval.

“The only wrong bit is your hair, it’s just not right,” noted Michael. “Perhaps you need a hat.”

“A sun hat!”, suggested Jeremy. They tore off to look in the cupboards and came back with a passable straw hat. Graham tried it on. Now he was in trousers and it didn’t seem, to work. Would Jan wear it with a jumper and trousers? He realised she wouldn’t, it would need the skirt. He returned to his bedroom.

He realised that his somewhat saggy underpants would probably not stay up in the long term with a skirt. Fortunately, he had bought some knickers to go with the bra. He opened the packet and pulled them on. Very cute. He couldn’t think that he had ever worn anything so fragile, but they seemed to cover the relevant bits, so it would have to do. He looked in the mirror for the umpteenth time. Did it work?

His hair was combed at urchin length. His collar was open and he had a thin white blouse. His bra showed through its translucency. Neatly tucked into his floral skirt. He gingerly applied a small amount of lipstick. That was probably OK.

The boys plonked the hat on his head and this time he thought, “yes, I’ll get by”. The boys agreed.

“Lets go for a walk,” Jeremy put forward.

“That would be a good tester I suppose.” Graham was just a little apprehensive, that is panic was rising. He forced himself to suppress it. “I’ll just get my wallet”.

“Where am I going to put it!”

“In your handbag!” they all chorused with laughter.

So now their trip had an object to get a handbag. They decided to go to the Marie Curie shop first to see what it had. It was in the middle of the main street and fairly empty as it was just after lunch. There was a stack of handbags and Graham delved into them to see what would be suitable. He picked a couple of moderately sized ones with shoulder straps that he reckoned would fit the bill and took them over to the counter.

“That would be £5 then madam,” replied the woman behind the till, “have you thought about some sandals to match? They don’t really go with those do they!” she smiled.

Graham looked down at his feet. They were clad in tired looking trainers and black socks. He never noticed that, when he put his skirt on, even though he must have removed them for his pants!

“What have you got?” She indicated a pile. There was red pair with open toes, which looked a perfect match to one of the bags. The problem was, they also had a 2-inch heel. The shop assistant came from the till and picked them out for Graham.

“Try these, I’m sure they’ll fit. Sit down here if you like”, she indicated a seat.

Graham undid his shoes, removed his socks and applied the sandal. It was a Cinderella moment! He looked down at his foot. Normally he would have drooled over it, but now it was his own foot.

“Oh yes Mum, those look great,” chimed in Jeremy.

“OK. I’ll take them. Can you put them in a bag for now?”

Transaction completed they trooped outside and went to sit on a bench. Graham put on the sandals and manoeuvred to his feet. He was on tiptoe, but within a few yards soon got the hang of it and reckoned he could discard his trainers and put them in the bag instead. He came to sit back down by the boys.

“I reckon I can manage those, not as bad as I thought”.

“What about your toes? Mum would have nail varnish.”

Graham had a deep intake of breath. Yes he supposed that was right, this was getting more and more complicated.

“Hi, Gail”.

Graham looked up like a startled rabbit as he suddenly realised he was being addressed.

“Oh I do like your hat!” It was Sylvia who spoke as she came over. “Of course you don’t often get enough sun to make it worthwhile I guess”.

“No. And I realised with this skirt I might need something to set it off.”

“And have you just got those sandals as well?”

“Yes, we’ve been to the charity shop. I always like to check them out and the lady suggested these”.

“Cool. You just need to paint your toes.”

“I haven’t really been one for that.” This remark had the virtue of complete truth.

“Men love it. What would your husband like?”, looking at Graham’s ring.

“My other half died last year.”

“Oh I’m so sorry. I just didn’t think, I should have asked yesterday.”

“That’s OK I’m over the worst now. But nights are still a bit difficult. We’re here to escape in some ways.”

Sylvia could feel she had dropped a bit of a clanger.

“Hey, why don’t we go and choose you a colour. The shops just over there.”

Graham wasn't exactly frogmarched, but guided towards the shop. There wasn't an extensive range of cosmetics, but Sylvia knew what she wanted and found a crimson shade.

"What do you think?"

"Its difficult to be sure until it's on I would have thought. I am not hugely into nail varnish really."

"Oh my dear, you should be. It makes them look so much better. Lets look at your fingers." Graham proffered his hand. He didn't really look at his hands.

"Um they're a bit tatty."

"Gardening, I am afraid". That was spur of the moment.

"Well let's get you some hand cream too." Sylvia soon found a bottle of some Nivea. "How about really rounding it off with some smellies?"

Before Graham could complain she was looking for samplers of what might suit. Graham was invited to sniff. He eventually found an aroma, which he thought he could cope with, and nodded to his choice. The whole package came to £30, but then he was on holiday. Not the purchases he would originally have had in mind.

"Next time I see you, make sure you have them on," she teased and giving his bottom a squeeze and his cheek a peck, before heading off towards her family, further down the front.

The boys were in hysterics at the performance, and dragged

Graham home so that they could help him apply his purchases.

He decided to start on his toes and put pieces of lavatory tissue between each and them gently applied the first coat. It was a bit like painting his model aircraft as a child and of course the smell was much the same. He was quite pleased with the result of a couple of coats. Fingers represented a greater challenge, particularly painting his right hand using his left. After much

moaning the task was done and he waved them until they were dry.

“That’s your fault, you miserable pair.” He said being as cross as he could manage. They both came up and cuddled him.

“Dad its time we told you, I think. We agree with you. It is our fault.” It was Michael.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” He was immediately suspicious.

Out came the tale from an increasingly embarrassed pair about how they had been feeding him contraceptive pills in lieu of vitamins. At the end he didn’t know whether to laugh, shout or cry. They all went quiet. After a minute Graham broke the silence.

“I don’t know what to think. You wanted a mum back, and you’ve in part made one. What do you think of your handiwork?”

“Well to be honest, you’re not as good as her, but you’re nicer than we ever remember you being before. We love you and we’re only a bit sorry for what we did.”

Graham’s eye’s moistened. He held out his arms to them and pulled them close. He was soon sobbing.

“If I am honest boys, I don’t know what to feel. I have to say though, that there have been lots of changes to me and I am not sure that the pill would be able to cause them. OK I’ve sprouted breasts and lost hair. I’ve also lost weight and changed personality almost, from what you say. I doubt that it could cause all that, particularly since the oestrogenic activity in pills is actually quite low. It needs the woman’s own hormones to act, and I just don’t have them.”

“We’ve nearly run out anyway now,” Jeremy spoke.

“So we’ll have to see what happens now then.” He went on, “for the moment I have to be a woman, Gail, and you’re going

to have to keep calling me mum until the end of the week. I don't think I can face explaining it to anyone else."

"Can we go back to the beach? You don't need to hide now!", piped up Jeremy.

"I should think so," he smiled benignly, "but I am going to have to fix a few things first." What he had in mind was to finish shaving off the hairs from his armpits. Before he put his costume on he neatened round his groin too. It looked very trim! He put his new sandals on and clomped back down. He had found a baseball cap, from the children's kit to wear too.

This time he had a great time dashing up and down the beach and in and out of the water. He didn't have to worry about his appearance and everyone he met seemed to take him for a woman. When Pete and Sylvia arrived, he had praise for his handiwork and he felt he glowed. They even took some photos.

Later that day Sylvia and Pete were in their flat, with Simon.

"What we thought about Gail. I'm sure she's a woman now, just perhaps at the manly rather than girly end. I would be happy to have her figure anyway!" Opined Sylvia.

The rest of the time went very well, with the sun staying out during most of the daylight hours. The boys always referred to Graham as mum even in the cottage and he came to quite be used to it, but not be quite certain how welcome it really was. When they packed up to go home he found that he had acquired all sorts of additional gear. Including a tight black skirt that Sylvia had insisted on him having then claiming he looked gorgeous in it.

As he drew away from the cottage was over he knew his time as a woman was over. He told the boys as much and they were a little crestfallen.

"Couldn't you be Mum at home? And Dad at work?"

“I’m not sure I can manage it, but I guess I might give it a go once in a while.”

“How about a mother’s day, once a week”, Jeremy made them all laugh. For Graham, however, the re-entry for work might be a little difficult. He would be giving up his bras and knickers and had sizeable masses to hide, whereas this week he had been trying to show them off!

By the middle of September all was back to normal pretty much. The boys had talked him into a “Mothers’ day”. They had enjoyed it enormously. He had put his women’s clothes on and the night before, Saturday, had painted his nails. On the Sunday he had a shower and made sure he had no under arm hair and then dressed in a bra and knickers set. He wore his skirt and blouse and a pair or slippers, which he had bought at the local shop. They then spent the day enjoying each other’s company and most importantly for the boys doing things together, such as cooking.

This arrangement seemed a link to his holiday, without giving in to his changing body. He was now letting his hair grow to an extent that would fit with either sex. Boyish in a woman, he hoped stylish in a man. At work things seemed to be progressing swimmingly, he got so much done these days, as much as if he had worked fulltime. What he didn’t realise was that the staff preferred him and responded better, giving him a priority he had never enjoyed in the past.

Amanda breezed into the room. “What are you guys doing this Friday she enquired?”

“Oh just collecting our thoughts.”

Sam and I go swimming on a Friday, would you like to join us?” Sam was her fifteen-year old daughter.

“I am not keen on swimming, but the boys love it. Perhaps we could go to a restaurant afterwards?”

“Do you want to come over to our place about 6?”

“Sounds just about possible”. He agreed and they set up the arrangements.

“What’s Sam like Dad?” Michael enquired.

“I’ve really no idea. She’s your sort of age I think.” He looked pleased.

“Are you going to swim?”

“I think I’ll give it a miss this time.. as you know full well. Amanda’s not ready for the truth yet.”

“High Mandy”, Graham called across the car park. He could see his colleague and tall leggy girl by her side. Looked about Michael’s size. He saw that his son was smiling. Jeremy was waving wildly.

They gathered at the entrance and introductions were made.

“Have you changed your mind?” Amanda queried.

“No I’ll watch this time.”

The boys disappeared in one direction and the women in the other. Graham headed for the viewing gallery. Swimming pools have an unpleasant feel for those not in the water – hot clammy and with a smell of chlorine that catches the breath on each inspiration. Still he liked watching the kids and Amanda was certainly still pretty lithe. They stayed in for about 45 minutes and then all left to change. He met them at the entrance.

“OK. What’s it to be? Pizza, burger, proper food even?” he asked.

Pizza's won the day and they headed off. As they sat down they all seemed like the one family that they weren't, but the waiters treated them as such and Amanda clearly enjoyed it.

"Anything planned for tomorrow?" she tentatively asked.

"Shopping and cleaning on Saturday and maybe some gardening and cooking on Sunday. The boys had persuaded him into a second "Mothers day", but he was hardly going to tell Amanda that. They had a pleasant hour and split up for home.

"She was cute," said Michael.

"Who?" Jeremy asked.

"Sam of course! Can we have them round?"

"Yes of course. Would you prefer them to a Mothers Day?"

"I want the Mother's day!" announced Jerry.

"Can we bring you breakfast in bed this time – like a real Mothers day," he suggested.

"I don't see why not," Graham smiled.

Next night he had to do a bit of preparation. He needed to find suitable night attire. He looked through Jan's drawers to see what she had. He decided on some satin finish pyjamas. They were red and covered in little yellow teddies, he could even remember buying it. He never imagined these circumstances.

On the Sunday the boys wanted to treat their father totally as a mother. So they put in all the touches they know she would have liked, like serviettes and cups instead of mugs and a cozy on the egg and an individual teapot. They knocked on the door.

"Come on in," he called and the boys entered.

He was sitting up in bed and this was the first time they had seen him in these clothes. He had also done his hair. The boys were delighted. He shuffled to the middle of the bed and they put the tray on his lap.

“Can I get in too?” asked Jerry. Graham nodded. Shyly Michael came round the other side too.

They lay and watched him eat and when he was finished the tray was put aside and they all lay down. It was like having five year olds. They both like stroking his pyjamas. This amused him as they all cuddled for half an hour together, before deciding it was time to get up.

Graham’s room had an en –suite, so he was able to dispatch the boys to dress, while he went about his ablutions. After showering he found a bra and knickers and then sat plucking his eyebrows a little. He tried some mascara today, just little as a tester and then put on some red lipstick. Then he was able to go about adding the rest of his clothes - A skirt and a salmon pink, short-sleeved jumper. He looked in the mirror and felt impressed by his authenticity.

On the programme for today was a drive into a neighbouring town to buy some ingredients – all part of the event – and back for cooking. It seemed trivial, but the boys liked going out with him for minor chores and they now had a certain pride because of what he had done for them. It filled a gap.

After lunch they set about preparing for the cooking. Today was to be doughnuts. This needed the airing cupboard to be on to warm the dough. Graham had to go and check and went upstairs. Just as he was out of the room, there was a knock at the back door, which Jeremy was answering as Graham returned. In walked Amanda and Sam.

It was one of those jaw-dropping moments for the two women. Graham went completely red, then white and red once more.

“Hi boys, hi Graham..?”

“This is our Mothers day, today” interjected Jeremy. “This is our Mum.”

“Oh is it, Jerry? How delightful! Are you cooking doughnuts?” Amanda could hardly contain her amusement. She could see the book open at the relevant page.

“Do you want to help?” he asked innocently.

“Yes please!” replied Sam, much to Graham’s discomfort.

“I’m sure you didn’t come for that you two.”

“No. We found a spare towel and it seemed to be one of yours, so we thought we might bring it back as its such a nice day.” Even as she spoke Sam had dived in with the boys, passing the point of no return. Graham had to contain his horror and just smile, inwardly wanting a hole to open.

“Oh thanks” he said, as she brought it out.

“Is it really OK to stay?” she asked, with a degree of anxiety, she could feel the vibes. They stepped to one side.

“Well to be honest I think I can cope and no doubt I will have to explain”. Amanda nodded with a smile.

The kitchen was a little crowded, with five but the children were clearly entranced. Soon the dough was ready for it’s proving. Michael and Sam took it to the airing cupboard and didn’t return, off to explore the house.

“Do you do this often?” Amanda asked of Jeremy.

“No, he’s planning on once a week, but this is only the second since we came back from holiday. Dad was Mum most of the time there,” plunging Graham in deeper.

“Oh was he, I’ll enjoy him telling me all about it”.

After the doughnuts were finished they had to be eaten, so naturally Amanda and Sam had to stay to tea. It was very convivial and not very balanced from a dietary point of view. The boys then wanted to show Sam the area as soon as the doughnuts were gone.

Graham knew that the time had come.

“I suppose I have to explain”.

“Otherwise I tell everyone at work. Yes”, she smiled, but he suspected it wasn’t true.

He took her through his year since Jan’s death and how his body had seemed to change, and indeed, was still changing. He got to the holiday part and how the boys had brought him the swimming costume. He recognised that he had been a fool to go in for it, and that had now charted his path. He made light of the rescue but Amanda was still deeply impressed.

“In all honesty, I’ve wanted to do things for them and this seems to be what brings them most pleasure. It shows how a Dad rates in comparison with a Mum”.

“But now they have both”.

“I suppose so, but today shows how hard it is!”

“Well are you going to show me?”

“What my body? No way!” even as he said this, he knew he would give way.

“Well what bargaining cards do you have?” her inquisitiveness overcame her compassion for his plight.

Up in the bedroom he took off the jumper to reveal his white bra. Amanda undid the straps and his breasts bobbed free. She took a sharp breath.

“They’re lovely!”

“On a woman, you mean. Even I enjoy fondling them and teasing the nipples.”

“Can I?” she touched them without waiting for a reply. They seemed authentic. She then gave each a stroke. It made Graham squirm with illicit pleasure, but he didn’t say.

“So let’s see down below.”

He was on autopilot and undid his skirt to reveal his knickers. Jan could see the bulge of his penis, easily contained by the

briefs. She pulled them down; it was a bit of a sorry sight. The testes, or what passed for them were pulled up against his abdomen and a smallish penis hung over the top.

“Lie down so I can feel them”, she commanded. Graham complied.

She felt smallish masses, soft and forming a strip, the scrotum had shrunk over them, forming a lipoma structure on either side of midline. His penis had responded to her administrations by standing erect. It would certainly stimulate a clitoris, but the smallest vagina would have no problem containing it.

Fascinating.

“You’ll have to go back to your GP”.

“Oh he’s clueless, I thought I would give Martin a ring, but he’s away until the end of the month”. Martin was a urologist.

“I have to say its not obvious what one can do anyway”.

Graham put his clothes back on.

“Oh Graham I’m really sorry. It must be awful for you. If I am frank though, you seem to be nicer than you ever were before and I think that’s what the boys are finding. I will keep your secret, while you find out what’s going on.”

“By the way, I am Gail while I’m mum.”

When they got downstairs the children were returning. Ready for some drinks and the final few cooking products.

“So when is it mothers day again?” asked Sam.

“We don’t know yet,” said the boys.

“How about coming swimming with us again on Friday?” said Sam.

“If you like we can go further away and maybe Gail will want a swim too? I know she’s pretty accomplished,” suggested Amanda archly.

“Oh yes Mum, please?” said Jeremy.

“We’ll see.”

“How about being Mum for the whole weekend, with us?” asked Amanda.

“That’s terrific!” added Michael to add to the pressure.

The following week they had small cases packed for the trip. Graham was in female mode and he had only packed women’s clothes. He had brought his holiday costume, which his breasts now filled, and his genitals were squashed completely. His hair was brushed to look feminine and he was certainly getting impossible to distinguish from a woman from the outside. Mannerisms, attitude and voice, well, that was another matter. The boys were bouncing with excitement. The car couldn’t go fast enough for them. Graham had sold the large one and they were now left with the Clio. He liked driving this now and the larger one was just a waste.

They drove to the pool where the meeting was to take place and found the other two already waiting. The boys were dispatched to the men’s changing room and for the first time Graham entered the women’s. It was all in cubicles, so no risk to dignity, he was soon ready and picked up the other two sitting on the edge.

They all enjoyed their time. Graham was delighted to take up one of his favourite activities again. Even though he worried a bit about being spotted. Amanda was impressed by his ability, and it was clear that not everything of Graham had atrophied!

When he was in the changing room he realised his ring had gone. It must have fallen off, he didn’t know how, since it used to barely cross his knuckle without considerable effort. He had to go to the counter to tell them about it and ask for them to look out.

“We’ll give you a ring if it’s handed in. So to speak.” The chap at the desk punned. Realising how pathetic it sounded, he made a sheepish grin.

This time they went for a McDonalds, the parents did not approve, and that is probably why the children chose it. It didn't take too long and they headed for Amanda and Sam's house. It was pretty grand, and no doubt funded by Ian, but that meant it had room for the boys in one room and Graham in a second. His looked out over open fields, down to a stream. The boys room faced the front and over the lawns.

"What it is to have a rich husband, Amanda," he said, on coming down stairs.

"The girls usually call me Mandy, you can too, when you're Gail," she laughed.

They all watched a video. 'I know what you did last summer'.

"A bit girly I am afraid," said Sam, not too much violence.

When it was finished the kids headed for their beds and the adults were left to chat. Graham went up after 10 minutes to do his mother bit and kiss the boys, but he wasn't sure that they would stay in place. Back down with Amanda, he sat on the sofa and found that she joined him.

"How's you body?" she enquired.

"Like last time you saw it. What about yours?"

"Like yours, only I'm taller and don't have any dangly bits," she laughed.

They were both then awkward for a moment before laughing again.

"Do you want to compare?" she asked.

"Lets!"

They made their way upstairs to Amanda's bedroom. They took their outer clothes off to be left on their underwear. Somehow, Amanda had changed from earlier, since now she was wearing a black basque, and very small knickers. He was most impressed. He still had the bra and pants from swimming.

“Do you want to try something else?”

“What do you have in mind?” he said gingerly.

He handed a red bra. He took off his own with his back turned and fastened on the new one, He tried to push his nipples in, but they kept popping out, in other ways the bra fitted fine.

“It doesn’t really fit,” he complained.

“That’s the whole point”, she laughed and handed some matching knickers.

He found that these, once in place, split with a ball either side – open crotch. Very curious. As he looked up Amanda snapped with her camera.

“You cow,” he laughed.

“You’ve got a lot of these clothes. I didn’t appreciate that there were all these garments.” He continued.

“Well, I bought them to impress Ian and it did, but he still went off with that little tart,” she seemed a little upset. Graham held out his arms and they came together for a cuddle, which seemed to improve Amanda.

“How about trying some make-up?”

He found this quite entertaining as she took him through the intricacies of applying eye shadow and blusher and he improved his mascara technique. She even applied a little blusher to make his nipples stand out more. More photos resulted.

Eventually, after a while they found themselves embracing and then on the bed. Kissing each other, not quite what either had planned.

“Well in the past I wondered about sex with you, but that no longer seems a runner,” sighed Amanda.

“We could try, I would think,” as he demonstrated that his penis now boasted an erection even though it was not enormous.

Amanda was soon out of her knickers and they indulged in some mutual oral play before he mounted. He worked his way into Amanda in a way that he had not done for a long time. He was literally out of his depth, but the pressure of his organ and his pubis rubbing against hers soon created a moaning peak. As that happened he started to feel as if he was buzzing all over and tingling as though juices were rising in his penis. He slowly lost control, but as he pushed the sensation went on and on. Eventually, he had to stop. From his penis, there was only a little squirt of fluid.

“And that Gail, looked like your first female orgasm.” Amanda smiled, with satisfaction.

“Bloody hell”. He collapsed into a heap.

They eventually retired to their own beds to sleep.

The next morning was spent in the neighbouring town. First there was some clothes shopping to do, which the boys tolerated. Amanda helped Graham choose what she labelled essentials in underwear, skirts, shoes and makeup. She and Sam also got things at the same time. Then there was a trip to Games Workshop for the boys to top up on Dwarves and Elves and so forth. Finally they returned to Amanda’s for lunch and an afternoon of craft. This involved making a large collage of a woodland scene and the children enjoyed immensely. During the process, Jeremy tore his cuff, while messing about.

“Your mum will have to sow that up now,” said Sam.

“She won’t, since she can’t”, noted Graham.

“Oh dear me! That won’t do!” teased Amanda. Graham was cajoled into learning how to use the sewing machine, and how to sew on a button. This all added to the amusement, showing how incompetent men are.

“Next stop, making dresses,” laughed Amanda and Sam, the boys joining in. Graham faked annoyance, which added hugely to their amusement.

They went out for tea and took in a film at the local cinema, under cover of darkness, Graham felt more confident of not being recognised. But who would believe their eyes if they did see him?

Once the children had gone to bed, Amanda and Graham had some peace and were able to sit and talk about their families and backgrounds, over a cup of coffee and liqueur.

“Shall we play again tonight?” asked Amanda.

“We could I suppose? Have you anything particularly in mind?”

“I think you should learn a bit more about being a woman, since you were the man last night. Go and put those new things on and be ready for me in my room.” Graham complied with amusement.

The new garments were a low cut white bra and knickers and a matching waspie with stockings. He did the waspie up to give a reasonable shape and attached the stockings. He got under the covers. Amanda entered, wearing a suit and tie, men’s clothes essentially.

She summoned Graham from the bed and kissed him full on the lips, while holding him close. Graham helped Amanda disrobe and this revealed a flaccid penis dildo held in a harness. Graham was most amused.

“Suck it,” commanded Amanda.

Graham dropped to his knees and complied, for a few moments. He was told to kneel on the floor next to the bed and drop his knickers. Amanda forced his torso down on to the bed. He felt cold jelly applied to his anus. Amanda had changed to an erect dildo, which she applied to his hole. She advised him to relax as she gradually forced it in. She gradually built up to a gentle rhythm, forcing ever deep with each thrust till his thighs brushed his buttocks. She then squeezed the balls of the dildo injecting sticky liquid into him.

“You didn’t give me much warning of that,” he complained.

“That’s the other side of the woman’s experience, “ she commented dryly. “Shall we call that Ian’s way,” Graham couldn’t help but laugh as he drew her to him.

“Would you like me to use my tongue as it can be used?” This time he pushed her flat and pulled off the dildo harness to reveal her vulva. He went between her legs and worked his tongue round her labia arching up over her clitoris and the down it’s length. After several minutes of action of this type, she collapsed in a shattered heap.

“That’s what love with a man can be like.” He announced this somewhat smugly. She smiled and they clasped each other together. He decided to have another go at mounting and again achieved a modicum of success.

This night, they decided to sleep together, making sure they were both in their proper night attire, in case the children came in early.

The next day they had a country walk and picnic taking in the countryside round the Humphries residence. Looking at the agricultural animals, throwing stones in the pond, walking across the stepping-stones and nearly falling in. At last it was all over and time to go home.

Sam embraced both of the boys and then Graham, giving him a kiss on the cheek. He did the same to Amanda, who also kissed the boys. They all agreed that they had had an unbelievably good time and wanted to repeat the exercise.

Back in his office, Graham found some flowers on his desk. Most unusual.

“I thought they would brighten the place up”, announced Mary when she came.

“Thanks very much, but you shouldn’t have gone to any expense.”

“Oh they are a few odds and ends from my sisters stall on the market.”

“You’ve never brought them before.”

“And I’ve never wanted to, before!” She left with his dictated tape.

He opened his e-mail including one from Amanda.

The message read, “Don’t open unless you are alone, love Mandy”

He felt that he could guess what was coming. Two shots of him in his red revealing bra, before and after makeup. The third was of Amanda penetrating him, with the dildo”. Phew. Dynamite. He closed them and saved them to his secure flash drive. He then deleted the message and attachments. He hoped that that would be enough.

The reply read “You cheeky sleezeball. Gailx”.

Martin took-in the sight before him. “They’re the best I’ve seen on a man”, he was looking at Graham’s breasts. It rather annoyed Graham that his colleagues felt free to be light-hearted in a way that they wouldn’t be for ordinary members of the public.

He examined his scrotum and penis.

The balls feel very odd, just like fat really. I’ll do a biopsy if I may. The penis, is obviously smaller. The whole area looks to be, I don’t know how to put this really – reshaping”.

After preparing the skin, he took a needle biopsy of a testis. Not too painful. He then made some notes and gathered himself.

“Well you are certainly unique in my experience and I will have to do some research before you come back. I would suggest that you have had some kind of hormonal failure. This has cause the testis to involute. A second possibility is a form of testicular feminisation – except of course that is never adult on-

set. In that case you expect high testosterone, in the former low, but with high GHRL. Quite simple really!”

Graham showed that he had understood.

“Would you like me to send you for subcutaneous mastectomy?”

Graham shook his head. One thing he hadn't shared with his Urology colleague was his feelings. He felt increasingly less male and these breasts were very much part of who he was. He didn't suffer from gender dysphoria he had changed to match his body.

Martin looked at the results on his next client. The hormones showed raised Oestradiol and low testosterone. This would be quite normal for a woman, where the enzyme aromatase converts androstenedione into oestrone, then oestrogen. In a man this doesn't happen, and testosterone is formed. These were supposed to be the results from a man. The biopsy report was interesting too, “vestigial seminiferous tubules only, surrounded by primitive cells of stem cell appearance. No malignant cells identified. Genetic analysis showed mosaic of XY and XX cells.” Totally bizarre. The relevant patient knocked on the door.

“Hello Graham, nice to see you again,” he proffered his hand and welcomed Graham to a seat.

Martin went through all the results and indicated that he didn't know what to do about them.

“We could do a CT, I suppose to see if anything is happening inside. Tumour markers are normal, and we don't know why the Oestradiol is up. I am going to have to ask elsewhere about that, because frankly I haven't a clue!”

“When could I get a CT?”

“Whenever you like”.

“Say Tuesday of next week. I am a bit busy till then. Can you just ring me with the results and then tell me where to take things next.”

“That would be OK since I have nothing else to offer. Your appearance seems to be of a man changing into a woman, not just on the surface, but also at the cellular level. It should be impossible, but clearly it’s happening.”

“Is there a paper in it do you think?” joked Graham.

“I’m sure there is. In many ways that’s one of the most bizarre aspects to me. You are clearly concerned, but not desperate. Most men with shrinking balls would be.”

“Yes I see what you mean and you’re right. I have been worried, but I have received such a lot of positive feedback. The children think I am wonderful now, whereas before they were at best indifferent. My staff think I am a new man, but then they don’t know what is happening. For me, there are pluses and minuses – I feel fine but I am embarrassed and periodically scared. To put it at its lowest – I have had some fantastic orgasms”. They both laughed at this.

“I actually have invented a name. Tiresias syndrome.”

“He turned back. Do you think I will?”

“Your guess is as good as mine.”

Just as Graham was leaving, Martin added almost as an afterthought, “by the way your prostate is OK, small and no sign of problems, but I guess if your balls are going, it may be as well”. Graham smiled and closed the door.

The CT the following week showed precisely nothing. Martin was planning to take the case to the Urology group at the local teaching hospital and said he would let Graham know what that came up with. There was no indication from Martin as to when the meeting to discuss the results might happen.

At home, having had the weekend at the Humphries, the boys began to press him to be mum for weekends at a time and he agreed reluctantly to do Saturday and Sunday provided homework was done on Friday night. It didn't mean necessarily that the boys would be home per se, thank goodness they just wanted him to be in role. During this time he now improved his sewing technique and repaired lots of things that had been lying around for months. He also thought perhaps a project of making some garments would be good, perhaps a shirt or something. He looked through some of Jan's old mags. What about this skirt?

Mandy offered to give him lessons in knitting as well, when they discussed things over lunch. He decided that he would take one new skill at a time.

He and his colleague met on a regular basis as fellow workers, but the relationship seemed quite different and they were now more considerate of each other than they had been in the past. The families had overnight stays about once a fortnight and they used that opportunity to become a little more as one. They tentatively talked about having Christmas together, if there were no other family commitments.

They eventually had Christmas day and Boxing Day together before parting on family tours. The boys were under strict instructions as to what to say to the two sets of grandparents and all went pretty well. Graham inwardly laughed at the underpants he received as presents, which would certainly no longer fit. Then he reminded himself that clothes selected by his or Jan's mother rarely fitted anyway. He was careful to keep in loose fitting garments all the time. Firstly this was to conceal his chest and secondly to hide his weight loss. With a mother things are pretty hard to hide, particularly when she is looking for trouble.

It was soon after his return that he first noticed a small sore in the strip between his scrotum, such as it was, and his anus. It was a little uncomfortable, but he thought was probably a spot. Over the week it spread a little forward and aft and by week two, a slight depression formed in the middle. When he had an intimate session with Mandy, she inspected it closely and pushed around with a cotton bud. I came out gloopy with mucus, which they smelled suspiciously.

By the next week the depression had spread the length of his scrotum with the two ridges on either side. Feeling these now, there was little evidence of any testicular material, it seemed to have withdrawn the way it had come. It took a further week before the slit broke open and there was a slight mucous discharge. Now Mandy's cotton bud slipped inside for about an inch.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" said Amanda looking straight at him.

"You mean it seems to be forming a vagina." She nodded her assent.

He went on, "An entirely logical progression, so to speak."

At the same time as this was happening, his penis was shrinking further, it was little more than an inch long. This bit was distressing. He could now no longer pleasure Amanda in the way she wanted, but both recognised that at some stage this would be inevitable.

One morning in late February he got up early for a meeting that was due to start at 8 am. He stood at the lavatory bowl and as he released his stream, it ran down his leg. He realised that nothing was coming from his penis, just from the new cavity. A milestone was passed, he could no longer urinate standing up. Once the stream had stopped he pushed in his fingers and realised that the cavity was now quite wide and stretchy. In fact, it was quite pleasant to stretch, but he hadn't the time to think about that now.

Looking at himself in the mirror as he shaved of the few stray bristles, he felt that his days as a man were over. Hair was spread all over his mound in a fine curly layer, but now much more limited than it had been. So when his penis was flaccid there was little to show that he was other than female. It nestled now at the top of a slit, with a covering over it. In recognition of that, he picked knickers from the drawer instead of pants. Today in part was another mother's day. He could see that head down he looked woman, until his vest was applied and then he could, to an extent be masculine, reinforced by his outer clothes.

His face was still his, but softer and thinner about the chin. He stroked along his throat and felt his larynx. Perhaps that was smaller too?

At break time he realised that the urinals were no longer an option and had to sit himself down. He realised that the sound of passing urine sounded different too and hoped no one else was aware of it. The day passed OK and once tea was consumed he could sit down to a proper analysis. He wasn't in the mood to share just yet, so he would need to resolve it himself.

He had gone over a bit of hurdle that separated women from men – their position for urination! He felt inside his new cavity and could sense the meatus of the urethra. It had moved from the end of his penis to the base. The cavity itself was not large, stretchy. His penis was now about an inch long, and no longer had a hole, because the pipe down it had opened to form a ridge. That was why the urethra opened further back. His remaining foreskin covered the penis, although of very reduced dimensions. He supposed it was like a large clitoris.

Coincidentally the next week brought his birthday - the usual oddments from family, socks and chocolates and after-shave. The boys could have cooked up anything, he didn't know what. Literally they had made a cake, but as they unveiled this they also gave him a small box wrapped in shiny paper and with a bow. Along with this was a heavy object in dark blue paper. This he opened first, it was a hammer. He had complained of

the lack of a claw hammer the previous week, when doing some minor repairs.

“That’s brilliant, mate,” he said to Michael.

The second set of wrappings opened on to a small blue jewellery box. He opened and inside was a set of pearl earrings. He could see that they needed the ears to be pierced.

“That’s terribly sweet of you Jeremy, but I don’t have pierced ears.”

“I know, but I thought you could get them pierced,” he smiled terribly sweetly.

“We’ll see.” He knew that this would expose him as very odd in the eyes of his work colleagues.

Amanda was very supportive and her present to him was a sexy corset in a floral design. Later on she had to help him to put it on and it pulled his waste in to a more hourglass shape and there were some gorgeous white silk stockings to go with it. He looked in the mirror and agreed that he liked what he saw.

“Well what do you think?” he asked.

“You were made for it. I want you to experience lots of bits of womanhood before you make any rash decisions”.

“Looking sexy being one,” he laughed.

“Well you need to see your cunt framed properly don’t you.” She smirked at him.

“You want me to come out don’t you?”

“Well yes I do, we’ve gone 90% of the way and you can’t stay as a transvestite with a body like yours. It’s one any transsexual would die for.”

“What a charming way of putting it! What about the inner me, the Graham inside?”

“Is there one?”

Was there indeed? He had lived through a very violent change but kept going is though it was more or less normal. Sure he had mourned his penis, but amazingly not that much, particularly now he was able to experience female type orgasms. What did he have to lose now? Anyway he supposed he could get his ears done for the boys.

When the boys were alone they chatted about it. Wondering whether their father would really do it. They appreciated that it would be difficult for him to be a man without a certain amount of ridicule, They didn't know that their father had lost his essential male component.

For Graham this was just like the swimming costume, taking him a step beyond what was wanted, before he was ready, but then perhaps the boys saw a different side of him and could sense a change. The boys were dominating him in their own interests. On the other hand the die seemed cast in any case. By the next day he had made up his mind.

"I've decided that next time I have a weekend Mother's Day I will do it."

By this stage the boys often talked Graham into being Mum on weekdays as well so Jeremy felt that it wouldn't be too long. When he was being Mum, he worked on the household things and developing his needlework skills. He had made the skirt and, with Amanda and Sam's help, a blouse as well. He was most efficient now with the cleaning, and nothing was out of place in the house.

There were some things he definitely enjoyed about being in role as a woman and one of those was wearing tights. He enjoyed the feeling of them on his legs. It amused him, because Jan had hated them. The sensation of the gentle pull on his hairs and the smooth glossiness meant he often ran his hand up and down his legs for several minutes. Of course he had wrecked lots of pairs at the start with his clumsiness.

On the other hand, how awkward everything else was and he was definitely doing two jobs instead of one and a hobby, or in the old days just the one! Mastering buttons took a time and tying garments behind his back was hard, his joints didn't seem up to it.

The day for the piercing was actually set for two weeks later when they had Amanda and Sam with them. None of them had pierced ears and they had decided to all go together.

When they reached the shop Sam went first, as they had already dipped. She was very brave and came out with some nice studs as sleepers. Amanda was second and took it all very calmly. Graham was very anxious, which was no surprise to the other two, but eventually he managed to get inside the shop. The girl was very encouraging and looked very clinical. The pain in his ear was intense and he felt the sleepers being inserted. He received an instruction kit on what to do to keep the lobes from becoming infected. He was asked if he had thought about having his tummy button done as well.

"Perhaps next time," he laughed. He was soon outside.

"Does this mean you are going to go all the way and become Gail full time?" asked Sam innocently.

"I have thought this through and I think yes is the answer. I don't have anything left to show I'm a man, only my mind knows."

"And we do."

"So how are we going to deal with the work issue?" asked Amanda.

"Well Mandy, I am going to have to bite the bullet and tell Mark. I can't say I'm looking forward to it and what will everyone else say?"

“I don’t think you’ll find them as difficult as you suppose. They already think you’ve become a little effeminate, what with having flowers and so forth. Now if you have pierced ears too, you’ll seem as bent as a nine bob note.”

“Well thanks for that! If Mark agrees I will announce it on a Friday and come in the following Monday dressed as a woman and from then on I won’t go back.”

“So how are you going to celebrate your last day as a man?” Sam asked.

“Perhaps I should have saved my ears until then,” he mused.

What he decided to do was to throw out all his men’s clothes and male belongings and set fire to them in the garden. He would tip on his aftershave and use that as additional starter fuel. He would have a small gathering of friends to witness the proceedings, with a meal, film and drinks. It would be his “coming out” party.

“You’ll have to wear white,” remarked Sam.

During the planning stage of this event he received a call from Martin.

“No one had any ideas. They suggested that you might like to have hormone replacement to put things back together. They would also like to publish you, and I want to write you up.”

“Well I don’t see why not,” but I don’t think I’ll want to be a “named author.”

“By the way,” Graham added I’ve decided to come out as a woman. Would you like to come to my party with your wife?” He could hear Martin’s guffaws.

Meanwhile Graham’s cleft had developed quite a depth, which he and Amanda cautiously plumbed with a dildo. It wasn’t very long, but was becoming freer. His penis had now become a clitoris, his scrotum labia majora. It all amounted to a true vagina.

“Come in,” called Mark. “Oh hi Graham. What can I do for you?”

“This is about to be one of my more difficult conversations. Mark, I am going to become a woman.”

“Well I guess I can safely say that wasn’t what I was expecting!” Mark was visibly amused.

“It’s like this, Mark. For the past eighteen months or so I have been gradually turning physically into a woman. I have been to the doctors and no one knows why. It’s just happened. While it has been happening I have been growing used to the idea and want to go the whole way and let the world know. That means coming out.”

Mark was agog and asked more questions, to understand the problem and when he was happy, agreed.

“That’s no problem to me and if it were, there is a non-discrimination clause in all our policies now anyway. You may even get us a feather in our caps.”

“I’ve planned it all through and I am even going to have a party. I would like to announce it to all the staff on a Friday and return on Monday in role. Would that be OK?”

“You betcha. It’s your body. I have to say I was wondering about the earrings, are they by any means linked?”

“Yes I guess so, the boys gave them to me as a present to push me the final little bit.”

“Little buggers. They obviously want it.”

“Very much so, as far as I can tell.”

The following week he sent round an E-mail announcing his plan, with additional remarks from Mark. He even invited people to come to a personal briefing at lunchtime, if they were interested. He had actually decided to take a fortnight’s holiday

in the gap, rather than change over the weekend, so that he could see his family as well.

Plenty of people arrived for the meeting and he addressed an audience, which seemed to include nearly half the staff, prurience he supposed. He told them as much of the whys and wherefores as he reasonably could and was gratified with the pleasant response he received, although there were quite a few suppressed sniggers.

“I am sure you’ll be a great woman!” said Des from the supplies section.

“You’ve been a terrible bloke anyway” Jim from finance joked.

All passed off very well.

People started arriving for the party about 7 pm, he had invited about 40 or so but had no idea how many might come. There was lots of food, provided by a local catering company and plenty of wine and beer. Graham started off wearing his suit and tie, just as he might to any reasonably posh function, most of the guests were more casually dressed. He was surprised at the number of acceptances he had received, lots from work and a fair few from friends and acquaintances.

Quite a large number had brought small presents. The first was a half pint tankard, there was Bridget Jones DVD, some lip gloss, Emma, Jane Eyre and a book of Carol Ann Duffy poetry. Someone had bought a small bottle of babysham, with glass. There was a sewing kit, a recipe book and a feather duster together with a small apron – with domesticity in mind. There were also a few racy items – a Rabbit vibrator, some saucy underwear – nipple tassels and some stockings with little red hearts on them. There was also a pack of sanitary towels and some tampons.

He was delighted with it all and pleased that everyone had thought about what he might like. Halfway through the party he made an exit and headed for the bedroom.



He had laid his clothes out in advance. He now removed his suit, tie and shirt and socks and tossed them in a pile. He had placed a white G-string decorated with sequins. He had found this amongst Jan's clothes and she seemed to be planning to wear it – he hoped she might have been – and it seemed fun to wear it memory of her. In the past just the thought of it would have given him an erection. There was a sheer white bra, decorated with flowers to cover over where the nipples would fall. Then he added a matching pair of knickers and suspender belt, ready to take long white stockings. He had a waist slip and before he added his dress, he applied a layer of pink nail varnish, to match that already applied to his toes. That needed drying under the hair dryer. Finally a white satin ball gown with puffed short sleeves. There were the pearl earrings and a trace of pink lipstick. Some mascara for the eyes left a look of comparative naivety. For his feet were low healed satin court shoes.

With his hair brushed into a central parting, he was complete and he stopped to admire himself. He had an old photo to compare. He looked bodily and facially different, to his eyes. His jaw was less prominent and his cheeks thinner, perhaps there were fewer lines too? His fingers were empty and he opened the top drawer of the dressing table. There were a few scattered rings, then he saw Jan's wedding band, returned from her body – a bit grim. He picked it out and tried it on his ring finger. It fitted snugly in place. It had never done that when they bought it. Finally he had some long gloves to add and a gold cross on a chain for his neck. OK he looked a bit silly but he wanted to be a debutante. Not for Queen Charlotte's ball, but for womanhood.

She came down the stairs with a bag of clothes and everyone came out into the hall to applaud. Gail flushed bright red. All the women rushed up and gave her a hug. Some of the more

outgoing men did likewise. She delivered the bag of clothes to the boys who took the out to the mound already outside in the garden. All Gail's aftershave was tipped on top and Amanda lit it with a match. There was soon a healthy blaze going and an old life departing like a Viking ship cremation.

Now there were bottles of champagne to be opened and a cake to be cut. Everyone gathered round and took photographs. All totally absurd, the obverse of hiding from public view, that might normally be the case for sex change.

They partied on through the evening and she told her life story many times over. By 11 there were about 10 left and the boys had headed off for their rooms. Some folk were much the worse for wear.

"Well I don't see how he can have changed into a woman, and anyway they all look terrible," this was Sarah's husband. There was quite a lot of murmuring to this effect.

Amanda defended Gail, who was in the next room, "Well I have seen Gail all along, and strange it is, but true."

"How about seeing what he/she looks like underneath that frock?" called another.

"What about a celebratory strip tease? Like La Dolce Vita," came from one of the other men – looking for cheap entertainment.

"She might be game for it," laughed Amanda.

Gail was invited through from the kitchen and the assembled group made a strong case.

"I'll only do it, if all the women vote for it," she said somewhat shyly, with deep misgiving coming through her voice. All the females present except Amanda voted in favour, they were just as interested as the men and quite inebriated, in some cases.

Some music was flourished on to the CD player. It was classical and provided a drifty if not very dramatic backdrop. Firstly Gail had gloves to remove, and she remembered how to do this

quite teasingly as she remembered a stripper from her past. Graham had frequented fairly sleazy local pubs in his student days! She moved slowly round the room, gradually unhooking her frock, this did look a little ungainly, as it wasn't designed with easy removal in mind. She dropped her shoulders out, clutched the frock over her bra and then worked it down. Eventually she stepped out. The audience all made an abrupt intake of breath. They actually thought she looked fabulous, in perfect shape, not least since she hadn't had any children.

The stockings were removed one by one with the help of a chair and tossed across the room. As she passed by on one circuit one of the men popped a ten-pound note in her knickers, which made everyone laugh and Gail suppressed a smile. Several others then did the same and she gathered up the cash and put it in a little pile. She was left wondering how far to go, but realised she would have to remove her bra at the very least.

This was done strap by strap and she held it in place across her chest until eventually letting it reveal her breasts to a ripple of applause. Now she entered a spell of hip rolling and swaying to allow her breasts to achieve a gentle sway. She lowered her hands to the waistband of her knickers and worked them, eventually pulling them off to reveal her tiny bejewelled G-string. She then wiggled her bottom in a few faces before turning to face her audience.

"That ladies and Gentlemen is all," she turned and fled from the room, to resounding applause, making sure she took the money as well.

"Blimey I didn't think she would do that," someone said.

"Terrific body," came another.

"Well I'm totally convinced". They all nodded assent and when Gail came back in wearing a jumper and trousers, they all rushed up to embrace her all over again.

After everyone was gone Gail made her way to bed. She put on her cosiest nightdress and made some cocoa to take with her.

She sat contemplating her action. Was that the right thing to do? It may well have cheapened her, sort of selling her body for money, a circus oddity. In her old form she would have felt very confident, Graham would have thought it a hoot. Now, she wasn't so sure. She had made £90, however!

What she knew now was that there was no going back and that she had to face all the complications that the new life delivered. Legally becoming a woman, learning how to behave properly and bringing up two children. Also she had developed a close friendship with Mandy, would that change now she was fully a woman too? Would she develop a real desire for men, which she recognised that she didn't yet have. Had her body finished changing yet?

There were a few people who knew nothing of all this – her family. That would be the next problem.

For seeing her parents Gail had selected jeans and large sloppy jumper to make sure everything was covered. As her ears had healed, she was able to remove her studs and hoped no one would look too closely. The boys were full of beans and were sworn to secrecy for the time being. Gail had removed all traces of make up and nail varnish.

Her Mum and Dad welcomed them into the house, remarking that it seemed ages since they were last there. They were in their sixties now, his mother scrawny and hyperactive, his father relaxed tubby and very grey on top. Both had now retired, her father from banking, her mother had been a schoolteacher.

“Its so difficult as a single parent you know” said Gail. “The whole weekend is used up with cooking housework and shopping”.

“Well, it's been over 18 months now, perhaps you ought to be thinking of a new wife, “ interjected her father.

“You look so thin, Graham,” you are wasting away.” His mother said, as she always did, this time Gail acknowledged that she would be right.

“What have you done with your hair?”

Gail had it shortish, but of course he couldn't disguise the fact that it was now covering his head!

“Well I've started to grow it a bit, I thought it may improve me!”

“It does,” said his father, “I just didn't realise that you could.”

The boys were welcomed too in general, her parents were more interested in their grandchildren anyway and asked all about their activities

Lunch was soon on the table. Roast pork and massive quantities of potatoes.

After lunch Gail sat down with her parents in an armchair, with a cup of coffee nestled in her lap and took a deep breath. The boys disappeared to play on the computer.

“I've something to tell you both,” she started.

“You've not found a new woman,” her father interjected.

“Maurice, let him speak,” her mother scalded.

“Not quite, I haven't felt too much like that, if I'm honest. The fact is I've changed more than even I could have imagined since Jan died.” She was assembling the words.

“My body has changed over the last twelve months and I've turned into a woman.” She couldn't help but pause there for enormity of it all to sink in. The fact was that event to Gail it sounded like a revelation from a far-fetched soap opera.

“I’ve heard some lines in my time, but I have to say I would not have predicted that you were about to say that!” It was her father who had recovered first.

“Do you mean you’ve had a sex change or done like in Kafka’s book?” he followed up.

“Well it was not overnight, and as you can see I am not a cockroach, but in essence yes, I suppose so.”

“Well fuck me!”

“Maurice!”

“Graham’s not a stranger to bad language, and it’s definitely called for here.”

“Do the boys know about it?” asked his mother at last.

“Oh yes I’ve been dressing as woman periodically for seven months and fully for the last month. They’re very pleased. They encouraged me.”

“You mean, we’re the last to know?” was the pained question from her mother.

“Yes. It was slow and I’ve been finding out things from a doctor and it’s not something to discuss with your family.”

“Well to be honest I thought you looked different, but I thought you had just lost weight at first, but your face has changed and your voice isn’t so deep somehow. I just thought you were still a bit down.”

“No I feel fine really. In fact that’s the extraordinary thing in some ways. I always have done. Not as much panic as you might have supposed.”

Slowly Gail realised that her parents were coping fine, just naturally inquisitive. They still had a child and they hadn’t been deprived of grandchildren. They had lost a son and gained a daughter, but they would live with it. Finally his mother asked.

“Well can I see?”

“Shall I change into some women’s clothes?”

“Yes, you should but I would like to see what’s underneath. Your father probably would too, but he’s your father, so he can keep out.”

Actually Gail felt rather like some circus freak already without being put forward to her mother’s scrutiny. She stood in the bedroom and removed her voluminous sweatshirt. Her breasts were revealed in a flattening bra, which she removed at her mother’s behest. She was quite pleased at that, because it had felt very uncomfortable. She reluctantly agreed to drop her trousers and demonstrate the absence of a penis too.

When she was dressed her mother opened her arms to give Gail a cuddle. Her eyes were a little moist.

“Oh, Graham. You do look fine, albeit in a different way. It’s hard to believe you are or were, our son, but I still love you, just the same.”

“I know, I don’t feel like Graham. That’s why I chose Gail, but I could choose anything else. I haven’t taken any legal steps yet officially I am still a man.”

“Won’t you always be?”

“Actually now you can get all your documents changed. You have to have a document that recognises your change and be committed to not going back. As far as I know, that’s not going to happen, but I guess that I am a special case.”

“Well obviously your father and I would accept you whatever you’re like. At the age you are, there isn’t really anything else we can do is there?”

“No true. But I was pretty worried about telling you.”

“Well it will be pretty interesting telling our neighbours too. You bring in a man one day and send out a woman the next. They’ll wonder what on earth we do in here!”

When she returned to the sitting room with her mother, she had changed into a thinner jumper and her breasts were somewhat more prominent, she had her studs in and hair properly brushed. Her father stirred from his nap and looked up.

At first he said nothing as he took it all in.

“You definitely look like a woman, and to be fair a pretty attractive one. I don’t know yet whether I would prefer to be talking to Graham, but then you tell me that’s not an option”. He looked somewhat wary.

“He seems pretty genuine underneath too Maurice.”

“Well so be it then!” he put on a weak smile.

The rest of the day was spent in normal reminiscence, about family events and friends. Judy, Gail’s sister was coming the following week with her husband and family and Gail’s mother undertook to tell her about the change.

“Do you still keep fit?” asked her mother.

“I’ve been going swimming, but I thought I would do some jogging, I’ve even bought some new gear and a sports bra.”

“You know it won’t be the same, a woman going out by herself,” put in her father.

“I’m sure I will be alright.”

Gail was up at six the next morning, to put on her running gear. White sports bra, pink singlet and white shorts, together with some socks and trainers. She was soon out into the morning air running along the lanes, which had been so familiar from her childhood. There weren’t many people about at that time on a Sunday so she could enjoy the tranquillity. She was headed down to the park and past the lake.

“Morning sweetie, you’re up early,” called a milkman and she waved a reply.

She became aware of someone jogging in her wake and obviously trying to catch her up. She let him close the distance by slowing slightly.

“Hello my dear, nice to see an attractive bottom ahead.”
Gail flushed, despite herself.

He seemed to be a fat middle-aged man, certainly not wearing well.

“This is how I keep it that way,” she retorted.

“I can suggest some better exercises to do with you,” he replied with a cheeky tone.

“I don’t think I know you, do I?”

“No, but you can get to know me. I’m said to be very good with the ladies”

Gail now started to feel a little uncomfortable.

“I think I’ll pass on that one,” she said and started to speed up. The man started to do the same. It seemed that he wanted to stick with her.

“I’ll bet this makes you sweat,” he noted. “You’ll need a shower afterwards. Do you want to pop over my place?”

“No I don’t think so,” she added through gritted teeth.

“Come on now I can help soap your back!”

“Oh piss off,”

“Tut tut! That’s not at all lady like.” He answered with glee knowing that he had induced a response.

“Look I’m not interested in you,” she turned from him.

Gail was now obliged to accelerate to leave him behind. He tried to speed up too, but wasn’t fit enough.

“Come back bitch.”

Gail was at her limit, but he was gone. She wondered how things would have gone if he had been faster? By the time she

got home she was completely shattered. She was disappointed in herself, as Graham she could have stood her ground and as Graham no one would have said anything to her anyway. There and then Gail decided she must keep her mental strength and develop her fitness so she could face adversity of this kind. Perhaps being a female wasn't going to be so easy.

She said nothing to her parents concerning her meeting and the rest of the day went smoothly. Her mother dragged her to a Car boot sale and she found it more interesting than she expected coming back with some novels and a bolero jacket. Her mother also bought her some fancy tights, which she thought might be fun.

The next day was Gail's first workday as a woman. There were lots of glances from all the staff as he she walked through, but just normal "Hi's" and "Have a good weekend?". Some of course had been at her party the previous week, though none from work apart from Amanda had seen the striptease. She had chosen something fairly downbeat for work of smart trousers and jumper, covering over a blouse, there wasn't going to be any absurd, and inappropriate glamour. She even had short socks on her feet.

"Welcome back Dr. Hodgson. I'm so pleased to see you." Her secretary Mary greeted her and she noted that there were flowers in place on the cupboard. The room had also been tidied in her absence.

"I have opened all your letters and they are in day order."

"I hope you won't mind working for a woman Mary."

"I've been suspecting things about you for some time, so I have been getting used to the idea." She had imagined that Mary would be a little staid.

“As you know, most people already thought your personality had changed for the better.”

“That makes me wonder what was said about the old me!”
She laughed.

Gail had caught up more or less by lunchtime and she called round to see Amanda, in her office further down the corridor. She was invited in.

“Hi, how’ve you been getting on?” Amanda enquired.

“It’s gone pretty well really, no adverse comments, even from Mary.”

“But Mary’s a lesbian anyway,”

“What, I’m sure I never knew!”

“..And I’m sure you never asked either. You will have to do more small talk and ask about the lives of your staff and their families and start remembering birthdays.” Angela smiled.

“Well Jan was no better than me, she couldn’t even remember our anniversary reliably.”

“Changing the subject entirely. Would you like to take on some different work?”

“What sort of thing?”

“Well I had it in mind to dump the STI portfolio on you. And can you do the Transgender stuff as well?”

“It’s just as well that I have a sense of humour I suppose.”

“Oh that’ll be a new thing as well then”.

“Cheeky cow!”

“Now don’t forget who’s boss around here. I can make you do it anyway.”

“To be honest, I would like to do it actually, though I don’t suppose there is much of a budget for transgender”. She didn’t

let on that she had experience of STI and not just transgender issues.

“You’re right and your job will be to explain where it sits after, children, elderly, heart disease, diabetes and renal failure and a few dozen other things.”

“Is it in front of or behind infertility?”

“Definitely behind. Infertility is on the up since the Chairman’s daughter had IVF.”

“It’s my turn to change the subject now. Are you on for this weekend still, now I’m a woman?”

“Actually yes. It will be great, kids are quite keen. I think Sam’s taken a shine to Mike hasn’t she?”

“And I’ve taken a shine to you. How do you feel about being with another woman?”

“Well I’ve been waiting for the right one. It could be you!”
They both laughed.

Before departing they gave each other a kiss full on the lips. Neither really approved of workplace romance.

So Gail took on the role of part time public health doctor and mother and to that she added fitness enthusiast in her spare time. Friday was swimming, 2 or 3 days jogging and some cycling. Amanda then suggested that she came to her aerobic class. Gail thought that a bit easy, but Amanda laughed and told her to get a leotard and some suitable shorts.

Gail had to check with the Internet to find out what that might be and selected a suitable sleeveless sort for gym use. Rather less delicate than the ballet sort and some baggy shorts. She wasn’t really sure whether footless tights were needed but took some and a variety of footwear.

There were a wide variety of bodies on view and Gail was definitely above average. When the exercises started she could cope with most of the stuff but struggled with keeping in time

with the music. Still got Graham's skill level there then, Jan had always complained of his two left feet.

At the end of the session Gail was pretty purple and sweating, they all headed off for the shower and getting back into their clothes.

"Well what did you think?"

"Not bad at all I'll certainly come again. Can we make it a regular date?"

"I come pretty nearly every week, so why not you too?" Amanda replied.

Soon the Humphries and Hodgson families were meeting more and more and spread themselves between the two homes, depending on the plans for the next day. Amanda and Gail fell into a pattern of sleeping together, such that they both fulfilled the parental roles for the two families. It was in some ways a relationship of convenience, some aspects a sexual relationship, and in all respects a strong friendship blossomed. Gail used Amanda to develop her skills as a woman and Amanda had a wide range of saucy underwear and toys, she also chose some things for Gail. Equally, Gail still retained DIY and maintenance abilities, which were useful about both houses. She was working too on her needlecraft and kept up a regular supply of new clothing items.

"You're keener than I ever was," remarked Amanda. She was admiring a new pair of trousers that Gail had produced.

"It's something new to me and it's not been tainted by learning at school. A bit like English lessons taking the pleasure out of classic English books."

"Like *Pride and Prejudice*".

"Yes. I've even read it now.

The boys too were growing up, this year was GCSEs for Michael and choosing subjects for 'A' levels, whilst Jeremy had to choose his GCSE topics. This meant two trips to school for

Gail. That would be interesting. Only a few people knew of her change, certainly not the school. Maybe they were about to find out?

There was an array of teachers spread throughout the hall and queues of children and parents ready to see them.

“Michael Hodgson,” Mr. Jameson called without looking up. He read the details. ‘Bright child should be capable of As and A*s, mother died last year.’ He looked up and saw a woman taking her seat together with Mike, who he knew pretty well.

“Ah, Mr er Mrs. Hodgson. How do you do?” he proffered a hand, which Gail shook.

“Your son’s doing jolly well despite the death of his Mum. Dad? Sorry.” He was a little off his stride. Gail was naturally laughing inwardly and was not about to relieve the discomfort.

“How’s he been doing? It’s been such a difficult time since Jan died. I was hoping it hadn’t affected him too much.”

Mr. Jameson set everything in his mind to one side and got on with the job. “I’m confident that he’ll be getting good grades.”

“Anything you want me to do?”

“No I don’t think so. So what about the sixth form choice, Michael?” he said turning to face Michael.

“Well Mum and I have had a long chat and I’ve decided on Maths, Physics and Chemistry and can I do them OK?”

“Well, Mike that should be absolutely fine and would you like to choose a forth for your first year?” All the time he was looking at Gail suspiciously. Finally he cracked.

“It says in my records that Michael’s Mum is dead and yet he has just referred to his Mum, how is that?”

Gail blushed very slightly but essentially she had been building up for this.

“I could tell you, but I wonder if we could go somewhere a bit secluded first do you think?” she smiled sweetly. They stood up and all three headed for a nearby classroom.

“Well its like this, I used to be Dr. Graham Hodgson, but I gradually changed into a woman over the past eighteen months or so. I’ve been to see my medical colleagues and so far, no explanation has been forthcoming. Having completed the change more or less I decided to come out as a woman. I just haven’t told everyone yet. I hadn’t appreciated how many there were to inform!”

There was a lot more questioning to satisfy Mr. Jameson, but Gail was not that forthcoming.

Mr. Jameson looked most taken aback by the story, but with modern parents and their attitudes there was little that fazed him for long these days.

“Well that’s extraordinary, but it doesn’t seem to have impacted as much on your sons as one might have imagined. What have you thought about it Mike?”

“Well, sir, my brother and I are very pleased really. Dad is nicer as Mum and we love her very much”.

Mr. Jameson couldn’t help but smile. “I’ll have to talk it through with the Head, if you don’t mind. But I can’t see that anyone will care. Have any of Mike’s friends said anything?”

It was Michael that answered.

“No one knew my parents very much so people like Steve and John seem OK, but I’ve never explained.”

“I am afraid that after tonight, you might find it a bit different.”

Gail didn’t notice at first, but when she went to odd school events or even picked up the boys, but from time to time she fancied that she heard some whispering. The trick of course was to put it behind her and not notice. One evening in particular found her standing examining her face to see how it compared

to Graham's. She looked at each aspect in turn. First the hair, obviously that had now grown back and there was no loss above her eyes to form that M-shape and now her crown grew very thickly. The ridge above her eyes seemed lessened too, quite flat really and she thought perhaps her jaw line had gone too. It looked like Graham's face but as though someone had sanded away all the bits, which had stuck out. This particularly related to her Adam's apple, which seemed to be less by comparison with his. The most odd thing was when her face was relaxed you could see just the tops of her upper set of teeth. This wasn't true of any of Graham's pictures unless he was laughing. It was as though her upper lip was, well shorter. Perhaps her teeth were longer?

Was this all fanciful? She couldn't be sure.

There was a knock at the door. Seven O'clock, she wasn't anticipating anyone. She opened it to find a smallish woman, about her own age who looked a little familiar.

"Hi, I'm Stephanie Sanders. My son Peter is in Jeremy's class. I've come to invite you to our Tupperware Party; it's the Single Parents Group. Would you like to come?"

"Oh that would be nice," Gail slipped ahead of he thinking. "When is it?"

"Next Tuesday at Val's, it starts at 8 pm. Not very exciting, just a chat you know." Stephanie was actually pretty nervous about the response she might get and in meeting this strange woman, but curiosity had got the better of a number of them and they had to find out about Gail.

So it was that Gail arrived the following Tuesday at a small 3 bed-roomed semi, round the corner from her own home. There were about 5 others there when she entered. Val, Steph, Chris, Jane and Danielle were present and a couple of others who arrived later. Anne the representative had her equipment out and they looked at all her wares and played some fairly

amusing, if to Gail's mind facile, games and then had coffee with some cakes.

As the evening wore on they took the orders and most people bought about £10-15. Gail found she had spent about £25, which made her seem on the generous end. That helped Val, whose house it was, to get a bigger reward, so everyone was pleased. Anne and one or two others departed and the remainder were left to gossip. Naturally men came up as a topic.

"Well I was glad to see the back of my Nigel actually, he was just a hairy brute really." That was Chris.

"My Steve just cleared off with another girl when I was pregnant" added Jane.

"What about you Gail?" Gail was rather waiting for people to try and resolve their curiosity.

"Well Graham, just gradually faded away really," she said cagily.

"How do you mean?" It was Steph. Everyone was all-ears now.

"Well you probably all know Jan was killed in a car accident. Slowly in the year after she left Graham slowly disappeared and Gail. That is me. Replaced him."

"You mean you've had a sex change operation?"

"No I haven't and didn't even want to become Gail. It just happened, step by step."

"You mean you just lost your, your willie? And gained boobs."

"Well... yes."

"God that must have been awful for a bloke," put in Danielle.

"I suppose it must have been, but frankly I never seemed to panic and the doctors didn't know what was happening or why. I know what has happened, but not why."

“God. And what are you like down here?” Steph indicated her vulva.

“Operational as a vagina. Looking it as I might have done in the past, quite pretty really!” They all laughed at this.

“And do you have periods?” queried Jane.

“No, I don’t think I am functional in that sense just look like a woman. I even think my face has changed.”

“Well you seem to have the good without the bad. You lucky cow.” This was Val.

They all agreed that this seemed really ideal. Now the ice was now fully broken and they fell to general chit before the evening broke up. Gail felt very much one of the group, although she wasn’t sure if it is one she wanted to be in.

“How about something more exciting next time?” suggested Danielle, “Anne Summers”.

Gail was standing next to a woman at the Checkout who she vaguely remembered. Who was she? Her brain chugged through lots of possibilities. Ah one of Jan’s team.

“Hello, did you used to work with Jan Hodgson?” she enquired.

The woman turned round and looked her head on.

“Er, yes. Who are you?” It was Gemma.

“I used to live with Jan at one time and seem to recall seeing you. I am Gail I’m sure she wouldn’t have mentioned me.”

“Oh I sort of vaguely do. You look a bit like her husband in a funny sort of way. Are you family?”

“Yes I guess I am. How’s the research going?”

“Oh its very exciting actually. I’ve even got a PhD out of Jan’s work. If she hadn’t been dead I would feel a bit guilty. But then I suppose she would have lead it then.” Now she was away.

“We had developed this Herpes virus that had changed its ability to bind to cells such that it had increased its spectrum. This is the amazing thing it also combined with another virus, that was sort of piggybacked on to it. A virus within a virus. We think it must have picked it up from the cell line. It has 2 effects, it introduced random mutations and when the Herpes exits the cell, the virus can take host genetic material with it!”

“That sounds very exciting have you had anything published yet?”

“It’s coming out pretty soon, in Nature. It couldn’t be better.” She was clearly animated now.

“So can it infect outside tissue cultures?”

“That’s the joy of it really, it has the potential to do so, though we have been careful to prevent that happening.”

They went on gossiping a bit further and Gail enquired where Gemma, now Dr. Thwaites could be found and was given an E-mail address.

“Well it’s been lovely to talk to you, Gemma. Keep in touch I so want to hear how Jan’s work has gone on.”

“I certainly will Gail”

Gail wandered off and Gemma, still excited by explaining her work to a new audience was left wondering why this stranger who she admitted looked rather like her ex-boss’ husband, was so interested.

That night Gail tossed it all over in his mind. This was what she would call “very interesting”, but usually that was when it happened to someone else, not herself. This could explain how she had transformed from Graham. That fateful cold sore of Jan’s and her subsequent genital herpes, what a final parting gift! Jan would have been so excited if she had been alive to see it all, perhaps that was the real irony.

If she broke it to Gemma, she and her colleagues would want to do lots of tests on her. Could she stand it? Science had

to go forward, but at her expense? Could her anonymity be preserved she wondered?

By morning she had decided. She would e-mail Gemma and suggest a meeting to take matters forward.

The next day they met over lunch in the University. Gemma bounced in very excited and came to sit down next to Gail. She went through the story step by step and Gemma took it all in. At the end she paused for a few moments and then plunged in.

“Well Gail, it is an extraordinary story and I’ve never heard anything like it before, but there is a relatively easy thing to check some DNA samples. I can collect them from multiple sites and compare it both to our viruses, to any samples you have of Jan and ideally something from the boys. Also, do you think you could put me in touch with the Urology chap? This could be very exciting for them as well.”

They chatted a bit further and then stood up to part, Gemma gave Gail a very warm hug and wished her well. She had promised to do her best to protect her anonymity, but appreciated the difficulties that would now be faced.

“Oh another thing” Gail added, “Jan was an organ donor.”

“Good grief, I hadn’t thought of that! That’s a whole new ball game. “

After talking further, they decided to deal with Gail first and look at her genetics and then consider the others. It would take a few weeks to get all the results together, but when it was all sorted out Gail would be invited to hear what had been achieved.

When it came to holidays that year, Gail knew that she would have a problem. Her passport photograph didn’t really match her described identity and she was not in a position to

have it changed yet. She had applied to have her sex change recognised, but that would need her to live as a woman for 2 years and have a medical statement in support. Was it worth getting a new passport at this stage?

They decided it would be more fun to try and get her through as Graham. Amanda had bought a people carrier, so they all planned to go in that. It was ironic to Gail that she had only downsized last year, but that was life. Anyway the plan was for Amanda to drive through on the British side, nearest to the passport control and Gail on the French side, furthest from it. If they could manage it! She had her hair cropped a bit and did away with any makeup, not that she wore much when not at work.

Fortunately, with the confusion of 5 passports all from EU citizens, neither the French going out nor the British coming back were terribly interested. In fact Gail could only remember once when it had been taken seriously and that was when she travelled back from Ireland when she was a child during a period of high IRA activity.

They had two tents, with the Humphries planned for one tent and the Hodgson's for the other. Losing two public health doctors at the same time wasn't kindly viewed, but they argued that their impact was not felt on an immediate basis and it eventually held force.

As a holiday reminder the boys with Sam had chosen Gail a new bathing costume. This time it was a two-piece in pink. Gail wasn't sure that it was quite "her" but knew that she would have to wear it in any case. She would feel a lot more comfortable in it this time round!

The children had a wonderful time on the beach and it was clear that Sam was pretty attached to Michael, which reflected their ages and burgeoning hormones. Amanda wasn't sure whether it was filial affection or something more. Anyway they would have to watch developments.

The beach was also a quandary for the two adults, whether to go topless or not. The French women had a 50/50 split on this issue. Sam was a little shy and she looked very cute in her various outfits and there was “no way I’m going to do that!”

Amanda and Gail decide to draw cards and whoever got the lowest would sunbath topless. Amanda got a two of clubs, so Gail was in the clear for the time being. Amanda had a sleek black two-piece and she looked entirely natural as she slipped the top off. Her breasts were majestic and full with, Gail thought, lovely nipples when played on by the sun.

“Oh hang it I’ll join you. When I consider how I nattered on to Jan to be more daring, I’m a total hypocrite!”

The two relaxed back to take in the sun, but of course as good doctors, they knew it couldn’t be too long or they would have the horror of burnt nipples and tender breasts. At least some kind of psychological Rubicon had been passed. The boys were a little amused and tried to goad Sam, but to no avail.

Gail also had a pat on the bottom from one of her male neighbours, which came as a shock, but she realised she enjoyed it. Being attractive to men was going to take some time to get used to. She was very much at home with Amanda and wondered if that was part of a male psyche, genuine love or physical desire. Would it last? Only time would tell. Amanda’s feeling was mutual, she didn’t feel herself to be lesbian, was she in love with what used to be Graham, or was Gail a woman in her life. Could she still attract and enjoy men?

In other words between the two they had great confusion about their sexuality. They had sexual relations predominantly by mutual stimulation, but also they would take turns with using a dildo and even a double header. They most enjoyed the warm embrace, cuddling and kissing. Amanda was a little larger, but they could also share clothes and there was a certain piquancy in changing into the unwashed clothes of the other, to enjoy the warmth and the aromas. When at home they also en-

joyed bathing together and soaping each other's bodies, simple pleasures of a shared life.

The last evening of the summer holiday was spent at a party in the camping site bar, where the company had organised a some drinks and nibbles so that everyone could say goodbye. It was an ideal way to finish and the children exchanged e-mail addresses with all the new friends that they had made.

Amanda and Gail sat chatting to their tent neighbours, people that they had had barbecues with and played beach tennis etc. The evening wore on and they reached a pleasant haze before the disco began. While Amanda was in the lavatory a man wandered up to their table. He was about their age and starting to grey at the temples. He was a little taller than Gail and looked quite fit and muscular.

"Would you like a dance?" he invited.

Gail looked around in blind panic for a few moments and then realised it was her he had in mind. She blushed a little.

"Yes, please". She stood and followed him to the dance floor.

It was old Beatles numbers to start with and they enjoyed bopping together. Then the DJ announced a smoocher. They came together, with Gail's head lying across her new friend's chest as he pulled her close. She took in his warmth and realised the pleasure it gave to be held close, but for this to be with a man was of course new to Gail. She was pulled close as he had his hands on her bottom and through the thin cheesecloth of her skirt, she sensed his penis pressed against her. Not unpleasant. They danced for a couple more numbers, and then came to sit down. Gail had reddened quite markedly.

"I'm Richard," he said. "I hope you didn't mind that. I have been looking across the room all evening and I didn't want to miss meeting you before we left."

“Oh that’s fine. I’m Gail and this is Mandy.” Who was now back in her place.

Richard acknowledged Amanda.

“Are you ladies here with your families?”

“Yes, just us and two sets of kids,” replied Amanda.

“I’m with my two as well. It sounds like we’re all single parents.”

“It seems to be the place for us doesn’t it,” Gail added.

They indulged in some more dancing with the three combinations, but it was clear that Richard had a particular favour for Gail. The evening passed off very pleasantly and they too exchanged addresses. At the parting Richard gave Gail a particularly enthusiastic cuddle and kissed her on the lips, lingering a little longer than she had anticipated.

“So what did that feel like?” quizzed Amanda, who was clearly highly amused.

“Well strange, I’ve never been kissed on the lips by a man before. It was rather warm and nice actually”.

They laughed and made their way to the tents. Once they were settled Gail lay awake considering, whether this attraction to a man was the circumstances or a change in her psyche, or just a reflection of her current biology. How would things go from here?

Once they returned to Britain the new school term was upon them with Michael and Sam heading towards ‘A’ Levels and Jeremy towards GCSEs. This meant the boys and Sam were taken up with schoolwork and their parents were able to get back into the swing of work.

Gail had met the Transgender Group on a couple of occasions and it was one of the more entertaining parts of her job. The room was filled with a jumble of humanity. On the service user (patient) side there were some masculine appearing men, dolled up and seemingly in role and some women with weedy beards. On the NHS side she had a psychiatrist and some social workers who looked at the mental health needs and did assessments for the clients. They were able to obtain support with hormones and counselling, but not what was really wanted – NHS surgery. The scope for this was very limited, with only a few thousand pounds available.

“I have some good news,” Gail was able to announce. “We are going to look at the costs of plastic surgery for the face and neck. We think we may be able to wangle some money there.”

“I have already paid out £8,000 for facial work,” said one woman, “any chance of a refund?”

“No, I’m afraid not.”

The psychiatrist, Jane Brown, came in at this stage.

“If we find that you are being damaged by not having the surgery, or we can do something to help you fit in, the system will support it. You’ll need your GP’s backing and recommendation from me, then that will be fine.”

“How long is your waiting list?” asked a small bearded man at the front.

“It’s currently at four months, quite an improvement since I got a registrar.”

Conversations were batted back between the users and staff for about an hour and Gail went away with a list of things to do. They would all convene again in 6 months time to see what progress had been made.

Over the last few days Gail had been feeling a “bit off”, as she might have put it. She was ratty with the boys and not so warm with Amanda. She decided that she must be sickening for a cold. A few days later she noticed red staining on her knickers and mentioned it to Amanda. She laughed.

“Gail, I think that you may be starting with periods.”

Gail looked aghast. She had had mostly upsides of being a woman, but could she be starting with the down? What would it mean?

“Surely it could be anything. I’d have to have a uterus and even ovaries before that could happen, and while I am already a surprise, that would be an even bigger one.”

“True enough but we should be able to find out. Do you want me to do a vaginal examination on you?”

“I guess you could. What do your nails look like?” she laughed. Amanda had fairly long nails, which looked distinctly dangerous.

“Don’t worry I could get some gloves.”

She came back from the kitchen wearing her filthy gardening gloves. “Will these do?”

“What do you think?”

Fortunately they were able to uncover some thin latex ones. Gail took off to the bedroom, followed by Amanda and removed her tights and knickers. She lay on the bed, lifted her knees and splayed her legs - ready for Amanda.

“Go carefully please.”

Amanda gradually introduced her fingers, making Gail squirm. Amanda reached up to the apex of Gail’s vagina and her fingers abutted a small lump. It was about the size of a small

cherry, firm in consistency. She slipped her fingers behind it and flipped the tips forward while pressing on Gail's tummy.



“Well it feels pretty bona fide to me,” she pronounced. “I reckon you’re now fully fledged!”

“I can’t say I know how to feel about it. Is it good, bad, inevitable?”

“Anyway, on a more practical level. I have some tampons, which you can use.”

“It’s sort of marvellous though isn’t it?” Gail sat up now dreaming.

“I guess it is, yes.”

Gail was starting to cry softly. She was now all woman, in her body.

“Oh darling don’t be like that.” Amanda came over to loop her arm round Gail’s shoulder.

“I’m not really. But it’s so weird. What does it all mean?”

“It means you’re a real woman.”

“Mandy would you have taken up with me If I had been a woman from the word go?”

“No, I don’t suppose that I would have. It was Graham that I wanted, but he disappeared. We make a good couple, but even so I am not sure that I will be a committed lesbian. How about you?”

“I just don’t know either.”

They stood and embraced. Gail needed the comfort, which her friend and colleague, and lover provided. It took a while to recover, but when she had, she felt that maybe her destiny was complete. It was now 2 years since Jan had died.

Over the next few cycles Gail was established in having normal, lightish periods lasting four days in each 28. By Christmas she would be indistinguishable from a woman. It was quite a new experience with the monthly mood and other body changes, having to cope with sudden starts and always having to

be aware of the risk. Under it all she did of course know that she might now be actually fertile – able to produce eggs.

It was just after Christmas when Gemma rang.

“Hi Gail, it’s Gemma Thwaites.”

“Hi, Gemma. Happy New Year.”

“I’ve got the results, do you want to come in for them or shall I tell you over the phone?”

“Face to face I think. I can hardly contain myself!”

So it was that Gail arrived at Gemma’s little office in the University to hear all the details. The following is a summary of all that she said.

Most of Gail’s cells contained either 1 or 2 X chromosomes, derived from Gail herself. The Y-chromosomes were either gone or altered so as not to function. This seemed true of cells taken from skin, bone, genitals etc but the nerve cells seemed pretty much intact.

The cells contained herpes virus components and she had found her other virus – the piggybacked or PBV – in many of the cells and it seemed that it was this that had disabled the Y-chromosomes. Most of the changes in Gail’s body had been the result of the hormone changes brought about by the changes in the cellular components. However, a series of cells seemed to have de-differentiated – regressed – as though they were stem cells and reformed into new lines. This was true of Gail’s genital tract. This was where the virus components were present in greatest profusion.

“The PBV may be a new thing or more probably everyone possesses it and we have found a new way of bringing it into action. It’s this that we will be turning our attention to from now on. It may be another way of creating stem cells from differentiated cells. The real breakthrough.”

“Do I have any of Jan’s genes?”

“We’ve looked pretty hard for this and we think you may have picked up some bits, but we’ve no idea what they do.”

Gemma summarised. “Essentially, there is the carrier Herpes simplex strain that has given PBV mobility to wreak havoc round your body. You are now a bit of a genetic mess. Whether you will stabilise, who can possibly know?”

“What about publication?”

“Well Prof. Beardsley has had a look and he thinks we can get it into Science or possibly Nature. It wouldn’t be till the end of the year, unless they think it’s so exciting that they want to rush it through. The Lancet would do that.”

“You mean like the bloody Wakefield paper.”

“Yes just like that.”

“Science would suit me better, but it’s down to you really.”

“Well there are actually 20 of us working on you and PBV. You have created quite an industry. Or perhaps I should really say you and Jan have. Thanks to her clumsiness!” Gemma was beaming all over, if that’s possible.

“Oh and with a bit of research we have tracked down Jan’s heart and lungs – they went to a woman. So nothing we can tell really. But at least she seems to have not had problems with Herpes, despite her immunosuppressives”.

When she got up to go Gail received a warm hug. It was a shame she was not now a man Gail thought as she soaked up the warmth of the embrace. It was only now that she was a woman that she appreciated the bits of female friendship that she had ignored as a man!

It was an evening in late February when Gail found herself wandering back through the Park. The conference had seemed

never ending and she had caught a later train than she intended. She had checked the boys and they were organised to get something from the freezer.

She had always enjoyed the park and now even with the growing gloom she could see signs of impending spring, with bulbs just starting to push through in places. The gardeners had everything in good order as always, she was impressed by the lack of weeds, how unlike her own garden and their grass never had daisies and dandelions. A man approached.

“Got the time love,” he enquired with a friendly smile. He was a little taller than Gail, and bulky, in t-shirt and jeans covered by an anorak.

Gail glanced at her watch, “Just before six thirty.” She headed off.

Suddenly she was grasped round the throat and a cloth held against her nose, Gail recognised the odour, but was gone.

She came to lying on her back, her legs parted with the man between them clearly in a state of excitement. Her skirt was up round her waist, her blouse ripped open and her bra pulled up above her breasts. Her tights were gone, as were her knickers. Fighting back the nausea, she was just able to make out what was happening to her, with her shoulders pinned down, by his hands her assailant was about to penetrate.

As he climaxed all the training, both as a doctor and in self-defence clicked in with the rising levels of adrenalin. She put her hands up and grasped his neck, pushing her thumbs in to his carotid arteries. His parasympathetic activity made him slow to respond and he put his hands to hers, but too late. He slipped from consciousness.

Gail was up and pushing him off, but before he could come round she held his neck again, just keeping him under, without killing him. Her tights were in view and she used them to secure his hands, rolling him on to his back. Even her hand band bag was neatly placed and she was able to reach for her mobile

while perched on his chest, playing with his carotid arteries. Next to her phone her nail scissors tipped out. She took them and opened her assailant's shirt. She took the mid-clavicular line and the third rib space and drove them home, clear into the pleural cavity. She opened the blades and let the air flood in, causing the lung underneath to collapse.

While she made the 999 call, she sat astride his chest with a branch across his neck, pressed against his cricoid cartilage. As he came round she offered the following comment as she pressed her knees against the branch. She could see he was in considerable pain and short of breath, he would struggle to escape.

“Move you bastard and you're dead.”

The police arrived within minutes to find Gail in position.

“Bloody hell, Dave this one's got it sorted!” said the first arrival.

As she collapsed to one side Gail's adrenalin levels were sinking. She was now able to take in the bruising to her back, the leaves and twigs in her hair and the seminal fluid running down her legs. She realised her bottom was naked and covered in mud.

She was helped to her feet and into the arms of a WPC; soon scene of crime people were arriving and she was helped to a police car. Little was said apart from encouragement and sympathy until she arrived at the police station and was taken into a small room with armchairs.

The WPC a small woman with fair hair and a cosy manner took her through the events, and told her what to expect. Unfortunately, no one could quite prepare Gail.

There was a bolt of recognition between Gail and the Police Surgeon. It was Phil Parsons, one of her Medical School contemporaries. He didn't immediately recognise her but the name awakened his brain. His challenge was pretty immediate.

“This isn’t the Dr. Hodgson I was expecting!”

“No but I think you’ll find I fit the bill as it were.” Afterwards Gail didn’t know how she had been so calm.

Phil examined her and took the necessary swabs for the evidence.

“You are pretty knocked about aren’t you? There are bruises all over the place and round your vulva. Not very pleasant. Can I ask is it all authentic?”

Gail had to explain as briefly as she could the last 2 years of her life.

“Bloody hell that’s extraordinary and you are genuinely female now? Sort of an Orlando.”

“Yes it seems I am. How is the man?”

“In intensive care, since you ask. They are having to re-inflate his lung. You certainly went to town there!”

“I am not sure how I did it. I think my brain is the one bit of me still possessing active ‘Y’s’. It still responds to violence with violence. I also felt coldly detached, and of course I have been training for the last 10 months.”

“Anything else I can do?”

“Yes Azithromycin if you please, I’m not catching Chlamydia thank you.”

With the drugs organised Phil bid her goodbye and made way for the WPC to come back bearing a cup of coffee for Gail and also the news that her sons had been contacted. This time she had her notebook at the ready and wanted Gail to go through her story. She did this in some detail, but clearly with a gap where she had been unconscious.

“I can only believe that he didn’t use enough Chloroform and I came round too soon, or that he intended that I should, it’s difficult to be certain.”

“Well Dr. Hodgson I can tell you that you are one of a series, perhaps the fourth or fifth, that we are aware of, so they may all be the same man. We haven’t got semen samples from the others, but you are a obviously a rich source and we have the culprit.”

She went on. “The issue with you is somewhat different. We don’t have any record of the existence of a Dr. Gail Hodgson. At the address you gave us a Dr. Graham Hodgson, a widower, lives with his two sons. Perhaps you can explain?”

“I am Dr. Graham Hodgson, or at least I was, but I have changed into Gail and I have been living as Gail for nearly 2 years.”

“But you seem to be a woman, have you had a sex change operation?”

“No, but I have changed sex and have all the necessary bits, so to speak.”

“Oh,” the woman was agog.

“I don’t really want to go through in all now, suffice it to say that I am a one off and it seems to be the result of infection with an experimental virus strain that my late wife was carrying. There will be a scientific paper on it in the near future. But I don’t really want any of this coming out.”

“I guess not, but I don’t think there will be too much problem as we sort of have this chap bang to rights. Its difficult to see him not pleading guilty.”

“You mean, no court appearance.”

“Probably not, but you would have anonymity anyway.”

“Yes, but maybe not if the rest of my story leaked into the public domain.”

“Well what do you think is going to happen with the scientific paper.”

“Well that has patient confidentiality, I’m not named in it.”

“Yes, but it’s sure to stir up some media interest all the same, especially if its in something like Nature or the Lancet.”

“Well, we shall have to see I suppose.”

“On a separate note have you applied for a Gender Reassignment Certificate? It would be open and shut for you, I would have thought.”

After that the boys arrived with Amanda, Sam and a bag of clothes. There were welcoming cuddles all round and Amanda in particular was very anxious for her. Gail went and had a shower, returning pink and bright in her clean clothes, ready to go home. She found the trip in Amanda’s car uncomfortable as she was sitting on her bruises.

Once home they sat down with coffee and cake all round, even though it was now pretty late. Amanda put on news 24.

“... A rapist got more than he bargained for from one victim tonight. She strangled him with a so-called blood choke and then stabbed him in the chest with her nail scissors. He is now on intensive care under police guard. The police say that he may be serial rapist who has assaulted at least 5 other women....”

“Oh shit,” added Gail before turning off.

The boys cuddled up to her, they were impressed and knew that everyone else would be, but Gail felt that her life was about to get a lot more complicated. Once in bed, with Amanda sleeping with her tonight she lay awake sobbing quietly. All she had wanted was a quiet life and now she had been violated and because she had fought back may well be about to be news all across the country.

The newspapers were full of the catching of the serial rapist, but of course were barred from naming Gail, even if they had weeded it out of the police, which Gail could not be sure of. Gail new it would only be a matter of time and then they would be on to her.

Later that day she was rung by the WPC who had interviewed her, a Lesley Charleston.

“Hi its WPC Charleston here, Lesley. How are you feeling today Gail?”

“Not too bad I suppose, I’ve thrown a sickie, but as I spent the night with the boss, I’m sure she will cover for me.” Gail sounded more matter of fact than she felt.

“Gail there has been a lot of pressure on us to release your name, but we haven’t done so. Problem is some journalists have found out somehow and its on a foreign website.”

“But I don’t want to be news,” she responded.

“That’s fine and although they can’t publish, they might try to doorstep you.”

“Perhaps some surreptitious protection would be handy. Couldn’t you put some one on the door for a week or so?”

“We’re not made of money, but I can ask.”

Even before the police arrived there was a knock at the door and Gail opened to a flash.

“Dr. Hodgson, I’m Mike Smith from the Sun. Can I speak to you?”

“No, go away.”

“I have been authorised to offer you £50,000 for your story,” he pressed to keep the door open.

“I don’t really want money I want peace and quiet.”

“Too late the website with you on it has already been hit a million times,” this was a lie, but what the heck.

There were two more calls in the 10 minutes before the police arrived and then all was quiet. The boys could not be photographed or interviewed so Gail was free, but trapped.

During the course of the day, she changed her mind and decided to break cover and do one interview. She e-mailed the

BBC to see what would happen. The 'phone rang within 10 minutes and she agreed to do a phone interview. She asked if she could specify journalist, this was eventually agreed and she chose one of the young Asian newsreaders, just for fun really. She would never have agreed to that appalling John Humphries!

All went very well in her own mind and she answered all the questions and emphasised how lucky she had been, but how her medical knowledge had probably helped her. She didn't mention her genetic makeup. Once the interview was over the producer came on the phone and thanked her, but added that he knew that this would only be the beginning.

So for the next few days it was. She gave some press conferences from the PCT headquarters, thanks to Mark's help and allowed some photo sessions.

All went well until day 7. That day she was asked the question she had expected on day one.

A small man in an anorak stood up at the back and asked, "Can you confirm Dr. Hodgson that you started life as a man, Dr. Graham Hodgson?"

"Yes that's right. I was surprised how long it's taken you to find that tiny bit of information out. I have changed spontaneously into a fully fledged woman, don't know how, don't know why and I didn't want to be one."

"Do you think it helped you fight your attacker?"

"Who knows? He wouldn't of course have attacked me, if he had known that I was a man. I think it allowed me detachment from the appalling nature of the assault. It was like it was happening to someone else. I have also trained in self-defence since I was molested last year. I can subdue my feelings to act with deliberation, I fight I don't flee. Oh as a final point, at least make the headlines tasteful, I do have feelings."

She knew what they would be – Rape Heroine really a man."

The panjandrum of media interest was re-ignited for a few days and then all settled down. Gail did an appearance on a lunchtime women's programme and did her best to explain her state, all were very sympathetic, but no one really believed that she was other than a masquerading man. Frankly she didn't really care.

One group took a different view and that was the Transsexual Group. When she arrived for the scheduled meeting she found the room totally packed and when she entered everyone rose to applaud her. They had discovered that Gail was one of them, albeit a very special one and on top of that a woman who had stood up to be counted. She could feel the restless nature of the meeting and she tried to get through the agenda with decorum.

At the end of the meeting everyone wanted to shake her hand, kiss her, embrace or all three. It was most unsettling. Eventually she had to say enough was enough and that she had work to do. She made her escape only after another hour of questioning.

Gail had marked up her calendar with her cycle dates and the March day arrived, with nothing. Perhaps it was a little late. Perhaps she wasn't regular yet. Who could tell? She confided her fears to Amanda.

"Well, this would truly be a miracle, or a disaster."

"Oh a miracle my dear, except it will be by the most appalling means possible."

Gail was soon at the chemist's cash in hand to get it a kit. She hardly dared to know what to think. She took it to her home and called Amanda to help.

She closed her eyes, "Here, you look".

Amanda took a deep intake of breath.

“It’s positive. Oh Gail, you’re pregnant.”

They collapsed into each other’s arms. Pregnant in a most vile way. Pregnant with a new life. A pregnant man. They didn’t know whether they were sobbing with joy or horror.

Gail spent the rest of the afternoon wondering what to do. Did she want to be pregnant? The answer to that was no. The problem was she would never want to destroy a life by termination. She had decided that from a moral standpoint many years ago. Was it now time to go back on that as it was due to a rape? She felt appalled by her dilemma, one that she imagined was not unique for people who had been female from birth, but there was so much to take in, not least the impact that this news story would eventually have on top of her plucky heroine story. Then there were the boys, how would they feel and respond?

The boys were amazed and gave her a special hug each. They had discussed abortion at school and were against it. This was a dilemma that they hadn’t discussed. They would never want to meet the father they said. Gail didn’t want to meet him again either, but knew that at some point she might be summoned to give evidence. This would mean that her assailant, who she now knew to be Craig Matthews, would be bound to find out about his child. He would probably be proud of what he had achieved!

So it was for better or worse and with many heart rending nights of anxiety and long discussions with Amanda, Gail decided that motherhood beckoned.

Steve referred her to one of her other old colleagues, Theo Stanley. A genial and fat elderly obstetrician who had taught her all she knew of Obstetrics, which was little since she had dodged most of her classes.

“Well so I’m to call you Gail, am I?” he intoned. “It’s an absolutely extraordinary story, and I’m glad you have decided to go through with it. It gives me a chance to get on the paper too!”

He laughed with a rich boom, which Gail remembered very well from her student days.

“But what do you think of the pregnancy Theo?” Gail was a little exasperated.

“Well you’re very early, but looking at that cervix and those breasts, you’re clearly underway. We wouldn’t normally do a scan for a few more weeks yet.”

“but are you sure I am pregnant?”

“Oh my dear yes! That’s one thing I do know all about, there’s absolutely no doubt about that.”

“I presume I qualify, now I have tits and a cunt.”

“Absolutely!” he guffawed. He put his arms around Gail’s shoulder and gave her a special hug. “I’m afraid that you have a jolly long while to go and there is all the sickness and being fat all summer to put up with ready for all the sleepless nights over winter. Still you will be able to get maternity leave and so forth.”

So it was then that Gail decided that this was the way forward. She would now experience life as a woman to the full, by having a baby, assuming that all went well. She was keen not to give birth to her child as Graham, which was what her official records still said, so she needed a Gender Reassignment certificate.

“Well I’ve never filled out one of these before,” Steve admitted. “I’m pretty confident that you will be successful, even if you haven’t completed two years as a woman. Saying that you’re pregnant, must be enough to convince any committee, not matter who they are.”

Gail was not so sure, but supposed that it wouldn’t be a disaster in any case. Once successful she would get a new NHS number and could apply for a new passport and driving licence. It would make it all official and irretrievable. Not that she could do anything to retrieve her Graham form anyway.

The case against Craig Matthews opened a few weeks later. He pleaded guilty and she wasn't to be called as a witness after all. She followed the proceedings in her paper. There were ten rapes to be considered, along with her own, and clearly he had left his victims sleeping in most cases. It was clear that she had been a miscalculation, but she had provided the forensic information that had ended his reign of terror. The judge praised her bravery and strength and didn't mention that she was a he. This was of course mentioned in all the papers and she was doord stepped for her opinion once more. It was on a Saturday just after the verdict for guilty had been announced on the Friday and the sentence was due on the Monday.

"Dr. Hodgson have you any comment to make about Craig Matthews?". It was a man in his early thirties, unkempt but seemingly a journalist.

"Who are you?" she said as sternly as possible.

"I'm Malcolm Jarvis from the Sun," he said, bringing out an identity card, which seemed to confirm it. "This is my photographer Lionel." He indicated a burly man with a beard, who emerged from the shadows and proffered his hand, with a smile

"Not really, just pleased to see him behind bars and delighted not to have to give evidence."

"Do you feel that you've moved on?"

"Yes," lied Gail. She hadn't really thought about the man much but the event yes and now the pregnancy and the questions.

"Can I say that you feel emotionally detached?"

"Say whatever you like?"

Malcolm was looking at her rather oddly.

"You look as if you have put on a bit of weight. If I didn't know better, I would say you looked pregnant."

"You're an expert are you?" was the surly retort.

“No but, you do look plump in right places.”

“Well, have you ever heard of a pregnant sex-change man?”

“I guess not. Still can you confirm anything?”

“I can confirm that a. it’s none of your business and b. you’ll have to wait 9 months to see if I am.”

The next day there was an article quoting his non-quote and pictures, which even to Gail’s eye did suggest pregnancy, but without directly mentioning it. She received calls from a number of other papers and they all ran small items in the following week before other events took over.

The Gender reassignment documents came through in about a month, which seemed pretty quick to Gail and she was able to apply for a new passport and driving license. Tada! She was officially a female expectant Mum and not a strange male one. She would have had a party, but as a good doctor could not contemplate drinking alcohol – so what was the point.

It was not long before everyone could see she was pregnant, and the circumstances were recognised, which meant that congratulations were rather muted. Life had to go on; she was resigned. She started going to antenatal appointments quite early, more for Theo’s amusement than her own benefit, but she was “specialied” so she didn’t see too many others.

As the summer rolled into autumn she took care of the boys lives with exams coming up and Amanda kept a watchful eye over her, by September she was ready to finish and start her maternity leave. She left work with about a fortnight to go and lots of flowers, baby clothes and good wishes.

She had plenty of time to rest up and get a room ready. A new cot plus plenty of baby clothes, some she had even knitted herself. She was particularly pleased with her socks, she would never have believed she was capable of making something like that.



One evening, maybe in week 39 she started with the anticipated pains. They came over her in waves, not of agony but of tightness like very bad stomach ache. Over the next couple of hours they became more regular. Amanda was coming in with her, so she had to call, as she was in her own home. She soon

arrived and they scooped up Gail's case and took off for the hospital. The boys were left to fend alone, they were very anxious as their mother left.

On the Labour Ward, Theo was called in, as she was a star case. All he did was pat her on the back and leave the midwives to take charge. Soon all the monitors were in place and the waves of pain began to build. She had a consultant anaesthetist for the epidural too, Katherine another contemporary from Medical School.

The hour ticked away with regular waves of tempered pain. She hated the indignity of peeing into a bedpan. Amanda was highly amused.

"Not many men get to know about this you know!", she beamed with glee.

"You're not exactly sympathetic are you".

"What were you like with Jan?"

"More worried by the absence of sandwiches at 3am if you want to know"

Soon the contractions became more regular and the midwife announced she was full dilated.

"Do you want to push yet?"

Suddenly Gail definitely did. She sat up and started to squeeze as a contraction started. Agonisingly slowly a head appeared. She was sweating hard now and sucking on the gas. Two more attempts and the new life was free.

The midwife nestled him in her arms, and slopped him on to Gail's belly. Next his cord was cut and the placenta was delivered.

Both Gail and Amanda were in tears. He was so beautiful and so unbelievable. But he was here.

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