Better Not to Know: A Fable of Cross-dressing Ambiguity

“Oh… hello. I’m Jared. The door was open, so…” The young man couldn’t help staring at the blonde woman who was slowly descending the stairs. She was… well, sexy didn’t begin to cover it. He swallowed hard and forced his voice back into its normal register. “M-my aunt said I should be here at five o’clock. I’m supposed to meet my date. It’s sort of a blind—”

“I’m your date,” the woman said in a breathy voice. “I’m Sarah.”

“You? But you—” This was not the person he had expected to see. Had he misheard his aunt?

“Let me guess. You were expecting to find a 20-year-old college guy; quiet kid, bit of a geek, but spiffed up fairly convincingly like a girl. Right?”

“Um, yeah.” Jared stared at the floor, shuffling his feet. “Aunt Beatrice said she caught the dude going through her old clothes down—”

“I’m him,” the blonde said, delicately seating herself on the lowest carpeted stair. She tugged at the thigh-high hem of her minidress. “Timothy Oliphant, at your service.”

“Huh? No way. You’re, uhm… you’re real. You know, a real—”

“I see your point,” Sarah said, cocking her head. “I don’t look much like a ‘Timothy’ anymore, do I? But, well… she did quite the number on me, you know. Your aunt. She wanted me to look like a proper lady for our date.”

“Is this a joke? I mean, you don’t even sound like… you know, a guy.”

She grimaced. “Don’t I know it. Your aunt hit me with some kind of throat spray. Felt like liquid nitrogen. It hurt like hell for awhile, and I couldn’t talk for a few hours. But now I sound more like my mother than my self, which is pretty damn kinky.”

“But you’ve got boo—boo—”

“They’re called ‘breasts’, Jared. And it’s not nice to stare. They aren’t real, although it is kinda hard to tell, even for me. We got them at a store that sells mastectomy products. Imagine if you will: your aunt drags some guy into a place like that and sets him up with a pair of pamelas that would give your average frat-boy wet dreams for a month.” She rolled her shoulders and gazed down into her cleavage. “Impressive, aren’t they? The salesgirl matched my skin color and stuck them on with medical-grade adhesive. They won’t come off without solvent, so feel free to go nuts and do whatever it is you usually do on a date. Later on, I mean. Not right now.”

Jared felt flushed. Truthfully, he didn’t have a clue what he’d do with a body like hers at his beck and call. He had enough trouble getting girls to go out with him even once, without trying to imagine what might happen if he ever got to second base. All he wanted for the evening was a date for his cousin’s wedding. This was too much.
The woman touched her bare leg, eyeing him through lowered lashes. “Everything you see here is real, Jared. At least, it might as well be... as far as you’re concerned.” She stroked her thigh. “Your aunt made me look like a real woman. She shaved my legs, my arms... and everything else. There’s not a hair left on my whole body. My skin is soft, just like a girl’s. She even pumiced my feet; they’re just as pretty as the rest of me.” She laughed and drew her foot back. “She went to a lot of trouble, you know. Your aunt. Just for you.”

Jared shook his head. “That doesn’t make sense. Wouldn’t it be easier just to find a real girl?”

“You’d think so, wouldn’t you? I gather she did try, but—not takers. Apparently, you aren’t exactly prime rib. There, see? We’ve got more in common than you thought.” She gave her head a toss. “I bet you’re wondering about my hair. Well, Aunt Bea doesn’t settle for second-class. You’re looking at real human hair, fused to mine with keratin glue. I spent hours in the salon yesterday having it done, along with the dye job. I wasn’t blonde before either.”

Jared stepped backward. “All I wanted was a date for Hector’s wedding,” he muttered. “To show him I’m not... I’m not—”

“I know what you want, dear.” Aunt Beatrice appeared at the top of the staircase, clad in the skirt suit she often wore to court. She was one of the city’s top defense lawyers. Her pageboy blonde hair brushed the top of her collar, and Jared couldn’t help thinking that ‘Sarah’ could easily have been the daughter she never had.

His aunt descended the stairs like royalty born and bred, her skirt brushing Sarah’s shoulder. “Your cousin is a bit of a man’s man, isn’t he? A very well-built young man, as I recall. Next to him, you’ve always felt rather—shall we say, inadequate?”

Jared bit his lip. The l-word sprang readily to mind: loser. Or the dreaded w-word: wimp. He’d heard both from Hector and his buddies, all his life; not so much to his face, thankfully, but within earshot. Just once, he wanted to show those guys he had what it took—in this case, to get a girl. Only he didn’t. He’d failed, and so had his aunt. No real girl would go out with him—only this person.

“What’s in it for him?” Jared said, pointing at the seated blonde.

Beatrice smiled. “Who is ‘him’, sweetheart? You’re the only man in the room.”

“You know what I mean.”

“I assume you’re referring to the present tenant of my basement suite—who, I must point out, isn’t here at the moment, and won’t be for the foreseeable future. Well, what’s in it for poor Timothy is the favor of not being ousted to his family and friends. To him, that is a prize worthy of Fort Knox.”

Jared was unconvinced. “Outed as what?”

“A cross-dresser, of course. The boy’s got a bad case of ‘say yes to the dress’. He simply couldn’t keep his hands off of the old clothes I keep stored in the back of the basement closet. Things I haven’t worn in years, but were just too lovely to part with.” She brushed the girl’s hair with her fingers. “But they fit you just fine, didn’t they my dear?”

Sarah ducked her head. Jared knew shame when he saw it. “You can’t force him to dress up like that,” he said, his voice quivering. “It’s not right.”

Beatrice laughed. “Not right? My dear boy, for her this is a dream come true. Timothy spent his entire life just dying for someone to turn him into a proper woman. All I had to do was explain what his options were. Then he almost begged me to feminize him.”

“It still sounds like blackmail,” Jared said.

“Such an ugly word,” his aunt said, pouting a little. “I only gave him what he wanted. It’s not my fault he needed to raise the stakes before he could let himself go.”

Jared stared at Sarah, whose eyes were on the floor. “Is this what he wanted? To be turned into a woman? It’s incredible.”

“Isn’t it just? I’m quite good at this, aren’t I?” Beatrice backed off for a better look. “I often thought of doing this to you,” she said, with a glance at Jared. “You and he are about the same size; both nice and quiet, not brash like most boys. You should be thankful he came along when he did.”

Was that a veiled threat? Play along, nephew, or this could happen to you too? Jared wasn’t certain, but everyone in the family knew that Aunt Bea was a hurricane to be reckoned with. What she wanted, she got.

“Okay... I get it. He’s a cross-dresser and he wants to look like the real thing. No problem. Nothing wrong with that. But I dunno about this whole date idea. If someone figures—”

“No one’s going to know she isn’t female. She could take her clothes off in the middle of the reception and they still wouldn’t know.”

Jared stared. “How’s that?”

“She’s wearing a prosthetic—I won’t say the word.” Beatrice gave her head a shake. “Oprah
calls the item a ‘vajayjay’. A rather significant expense, but never mind. Glued on, just like the breast forms. And it… ‘functions’, shall we say, exactly like the real thing. She’ll pass any inspection short of a physical.”

Jared swallowed hard. He didn’t have to think too hard to imagine what sort of ‘inspection’ his aunt had in mind. But—my God, was she really suggesting that the two of them might… no. He couldn’t go there. It was too much.

“It isn’t just that,” he finally said. “There has to be more to being a woman than just looking the part. There’s her… attitude, I guess you’d call it. I know her voice is feminine, but she’ll still wind up saying things—”

His aunt tut-tutted. “Come now, Jared. What did you think when you arrived? You thought Sarah was a woman. You didn’t even believe her when she told you the truth!”

“Yeah, but she did tell me. I sure as heck don’t need a date that goes around telling people that she’s really a guy.”

“She won’t do that, will you, dear?” Beatrice looked pointedly at Sarah.

The blonde girl shook her head, sending her hair swirling. “No, ma’am. Not a chance.”

Beatrice looked annoyed. “Tell him, not me.”

Sarah bit her lip. “I’ll be your girl, Jared. From now until… well, whenever you stop needing me to be one.”

Jared looked from her to his aunt. “That’s easy to say, but—”

Beatrice drew her nephew aside and hissed, “For goodness sake, Jared—the girl’s been conditioned. She has to act like a woman. She has no choice.”

“I, uh—no, I wouldn’t do that. It’s, uh—”

Beatrice whispered in his ear. “And isn’t she exactly what you wanted? A lovely, attentive woman to make your cousin jealous? And later on, the kind of woman you always wanted to be with? Don’t let this opportunity pass you by, my dear. It may not come again.”

“But isn’t that… I mean, she’s not—”

“She is a woman, Jared—mind and body, body and mind. Tomorrow, she may not be. Perhaps, perhaps not. But for tonight—just look at her! Is there any doubt in your mind? She really is female! And she’s all yours.”

Jared shook his head. “That’s not possible.”

“Of course it is—for someone who’s unusually susceptible to hypnosis. Thankfully, Timothy was an excellent subject.”

“But she isn’t. She doesn’t sound—”

“Why, because she isn’t flapping her wings and clucking like a chicken? That’s not how subliminal programming works. She knows who she is and what’s going on—more or less. What’s changed is her subconscious mind. She now thinks of herself as female, even though she knows perfectly well it’s only temporary. She’ll react exactly as a woman would—in all situations.”

His eyes went wide. “All situations?”

“Precisely. But what you choose to do about it is up to you. At the very least, I believe her performance will keep Hector and his friends at bay. But don’t take my word for it. Ask her.”

Jared looked at Sarah. “Uh… Tim? Are you okay—with all this?”

Sarah gazed back though lidded eyes. “Timothy doesn’t exist, Jared. Not tonight. Tonight… I’m the girl you’ve been dreaming of for your whole life.”

She shifted forward, her dress sliding up over her hips. She opened her legs and grabbed what wasn’t there. “See? Nothing between my legs but this nylon gusset. Play your cards right, though, and you could be right… here.”

“My God.” Jared backed away.

Beatrice stopped him. “This is what he wanted—to become a woman, in mind and body. Don’t deny him that.”
Later that evening…

Jared caught Hector glaring down at him from the head table. They were halfway through the dinner, past toasting the bride and groom, and the endless speechifying that followed, but it wasn’t the first time Hector had subtly made his displeasure known. Jared was pretty sure he knew what was going through what passed for his cousin’s mind: how could such an obvious dweeb as Jared have landed a hotter chick than the one he himself was marrying? For that matter, the bride wasn’t too happy at being one-upped at her own wedding. She was certainly better dressed, but from the looks Sarah had been getting since they arrived it was pretty clear who most of the men thought was the more attractive—although ‘sexier’ might be closer to the mark.

Jared leaned toward his date, who was picking at her vegetarian plate as if it held little appeal. “How are you holding up?” he asked, touching her arm possessively, knowing that Hector was watching. “Me? Right as rain.” She gave a hair toss and leaned back, fingerling her wineglass.

No one else was within earshot. “It’s just that, I know you’ve never been out like this before. So if you feel uncomfortable, just let me know. We can leave anytime.”

Sarah half-smiled. “Are you kidding? I’m eye candy to every man in this room. You’d have to drag me out of here.” She stroked the back of his hand. “Hector’s looking,” she said with barely concealed excitement. “Look at me—I’m upstaging the bride! How cool is that?”

“Uh, yeah. Doesn’t get any better.”

“I’ll say. Every time he looks this way, I make sure to give you a little extra attention. I smile and laugh at what you’re saying, and I touch your hand like this, and when you’re turned the other way I totally check out your ass. He must be stewing in it by now.”

“Thanks. I appreciate that.”

“No worries. He’s been on your case pretty much your whole life, hasn’t he? I know guys like that. They’re a waste of space, if you ask me.” She sighed. “Sadly, no one ever has.”

Jared nodded. “The guy never had any trouble finding a date, that’s for sure. He never let me forget it either.”

Sarah eyed the head table, where the bride was arguing with Hector. “Way too many women are attracted to tall, dark and brainless dudes like Hector,” she said. “Not me, though.”

“Not you? But you’re, uh—”

“I’m a woman with more refined tastes,” she said coyly. “Sure, I know how it looks. Here I am, dressed like a floozy, fawning over one man to make another guy jealous. But I’m not really like that, on the inside. I’m attracted to a man for the way he thinks and what he does, not just the way he looks.”

“I see. So… you’re attracted to guys?”

“Of course.” She shrugged. “I know it’s just your aunt’s subliminal programming at work. I didn’t feel this way yesterday and I might not feel like this tomorrow, but for now…” She leaned forward. “This is how I feel now, and it’s no less real for being temporary.”

“Wow. Still, I’d hate to take advantage…”

Her gaze fell and her fingers came in for a landing on his thigh. “Maybe I want you to.”

Jared gulped. “Are you serious?”

Her eyelashes fluttered. “From the moment you walked through the door, back home, I felt myself drawn to you. We’re so much alike… And, well—” She giggled. “To be honest, I’m attracted to the kind of guy I used to be.”

Jared was torn. The attraction was real for him as well, but the idea that her behavior might be coerced in any way was an issue. As for the idea that Sarah was really a guy named Tim… that felt a lot less important than it had before, to say nothing of seeming more than a little far-fetched. He’d never met Timothy, and he certainly hadn’t been a witness to his alleged transformation into a gorgeous blonde. Was it possible that the whole story was an elaborate hoax? Was his aunt just having a bit of fun at his expense? Maybe she really did find him a real girl, and this was her!

Jared considered the idea. She certainly looked like a woman; she was the right size, the right weight, the right softness, and she sure as hell sounded like someone who’d spent her whole life being female. He only had his aunt’s word, and Sarah’s, that this whole turn-the-tenant-into-a-girl story had any basis in reality. The whole story sound incredibly absurd; like, who does stuff like that?

Jared smiled to himself. They probably figured he’d be too freaked out to even make a move on the little hottie. But he’d show them.

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After a slow dance, where Jared made a point of waltzing right through Hector’s view with one hand pressed to the base of Sarah’s spine, he moved their party of two out onto a balcony adjoining the ballroom.
“You can sure dance,” Sarah said, gazing up at him with admiring eyes. “All I had to do was follow. You made it easy.”

“I took ballroom lessons as a kid. My parents thought it might help me find a girlfriend.” He grimaced. “Fat lot of good it did.”

“Seems to be working out just fine—now.”

Jared looked down into her eager face. Even in heels she was two or three inches shorter than he, which seemed about right. His lips moved but nothing came out.

Sarah tilted her head to one side, toying with her hair. “Aren’t you going to kiss me? Hector might be watching.”

Jared glanced at the French doors behind her. “The curtains are closed.”

“Even so. Just in case.” Her lashes fluttered lower. Jared remembered that this was, in all likelihood, a real girl. Probably. Fifty-fifty at worst. Instinctively, his own eyes lowered and his head bent toward hers… their lips met.

Briefly, at first. Then with renewed energy.

Jared took her into his arms, one hand pressed into her back as if they were still dancing. The fingers of his other hand rose sifted through her hair. Her arms encircled his waist, slim hands clutching at his shoulder blades. Their mouths writhed against one another like fish out of water. Air hissed through their noses.

Some time later, as Jared gasped for breath, Sarah leaned on the balustrade and rubbed her bare arms. “That oughta do the trick,” she said. “I bet he’ll never bug you again.”

Jared blinked. “I guess not… erm, who?”

“Hector. He can’t call you a wuss once you’ve scored with a babealicious fox like me.”

“Oh, yeah. Him.” Impressing Hector no longer seemed important. He placed his jacket around the girl’s shoulders. Quite likely a girl, he reminded himself. Probably.

Sarah swept her hair out from under the collar, turned her face up to his and again their lips touched—briefly this time, but tenderly. “You can take me home now.” She flashed another coy smile. “I don’t mean Aunt Bea’s.”

Jared’s mouth fell open. “I, uh—actually, I’ve got a room here at the hotel. It’s upstairs.” Well, duh, he thought, annoyed with himself. Where else would it be?

Sarah shrugged. “So much the better.”

Room service delivered a bottle of champagne five minutes after his call. Jared was pouring a second glass when Sarah emerged from the bathroom. Her dress was MIA.

“A little lingerie goes a long way,” she said, tugging on the hem of her slip.

Jared handed her the glass. They touched rims. “To new friends,” he said.

She smiled. “Is that what we are?”

“Sure. I know it’s only been a few hours, but I really feel like I know you. We’re a lot alike.”

“I’m not sure that I know me very well, but… whatever. I’ll drink to that. Heck, I’ll drink to anything.” She upended her wineglass.

“Whoa. Slow down. You’ll make your—”

“Liquid courage,” she said. “Hit me again.”

Jared did so. They both drank. Then Sarah set her glass aside. “Can I ask you something?” She pressed herself against him. “Do you think I’m… well, I’ll just say it. Pretty?”

Jared shook his head, just to clear it. “Are you kidding? You’re gorgeous.”

“I didn’t used to be,” she said, eyeing the long mirror behind the bed. “I was kind of an ugly duckling, until your aunt got hold of me.”

“Aunt Bea’s got a good eye for style. I always admired the way she presented herself.”

Sarah nodded. “Me too. Lovely lady, gorgeous clothes. How could I resist?”

“Resist what?” Jared put his own glass aside, wondering how he might go about moving this party onto the bed.

“Wearing the dress I found in her closet.” She slipped an arm around his waist. “More than one dress, actually, but one in particular was very nice. I’m a sucker for the vintage look.”

“Oh. So she really did catch you wearing her old clothes? I thought—”

“Shhh.” She began undoing the buttons on his shirt. “It’s time you got more comfortable.”

“You really are Aunt Bea’s tenant?” Jared felt disappointed. She’d found the poor girl going through her things and blackmailed her into this date. It was too much to expect that she’d actually want to do it, he supposed.

“That’s not why I’m here.”

“Uh-huh. So you aren’t doing this because she forced you to—or because she hypnotized you into finding me attractive?”

Sarah pulled his shirt down around his arms. “Cards on the table? All right, yes, your aunt told me I had to be your date, or she’d tell my parents what I did. Yes, she hypnotized the hell out of me. But it wasn’t to make me like you. It was all about making me feel comfortable… looking like this.” She lifted her arms.
“You needed help with that?”

“You have no idea. Ugly duckling, remember? Your aunt totally changed the way I look. The hypnosis changed the way I think—not about you… about me. About who I am.”

Jared discarded his shirt. “I don’t see how you could ever—ever have thought of yourself as anything but beautiful.”

“You’d be surprised.” Her fingers plucked at the button of his pants.

“It’s just… it’s hard to take seriously what she was saying, back at the house. All that stuff about you being a cross-dresser.”

“She’s got a funny sense of humor, your aunt.” She opened his zipper and his pants fell down around his ankles.

“Ye-yeah, I guess she does.” He gulped hard. “B-but, you are a woman, aren’t you?”

She smiled. “I am now. I never really thought of myself ‘that way’ before, but now…” Her fingers stroked the front of his briefs. “Let’s just say, I’m all-in on womanhood.”

Jared wasn’t sure how to decipher that, but his desire betrayed him. He kissed her again, and Sarah wasted no time in pulling him onto the bedspread. As he was fumbling to remove his underwear and socks, she reached over and switched off the bedside lamp.

The room went dark. Light from the street filtered through the curtains. It was enough to show him where she was. He drew their bodies together. His hands slid easily across the silken fabric of her slip, as if she were a living liquid trying to slip through his fingers. Not this time. He wasn’t about to let her get away.

This night had been a long time coming.

He pressed his lips against hers and felt them yield. They were soft and they tasted like girl. He opened his mouth and felt her tongue dart inside. All questions of consent left his mind. She wanted it. This was going to happen.

Jared wrapped her in his arms, pressing her against him as though trying to bring her body inside his. Slowly, but with increasing passion, they fed upon one another—vampires who thrive on saliva. Distantly, he felt a slim hand gripping his manhood. He responded by stroking her breast, which she seemed to find amusing. “Never mind that,” she muttered between kisses. “I’m waving you in, slugger. Head straight for home.”

Whatever. Less work for him. He slid his hand underneath her slip, and for one brief dizzying moment wasn’t sure what he’d find. But no—his fingers uncovered a moist cleft, surrounded by what felt like a well-trimmed tuft of coarse hair. Feeling clumsy and unsure of himself, he let one finger descend into the opening.

“Gently,” Sarah said. Her own fingers eased up on their ceaseless slide up and down his stiff member. “Pretend you’re stroking a kitten.”

He grinned. “Is that how you ladies talk about their naughty bits?”

“Oh, totally.” Her free hand caressed his chest. “Sugar and spice and everything nice. I’m sure that includes kittens.”

“Sure, why not? Boys are snips and snails and puppy-dog tails. Although I have no idea what a ‘snip’ is.” He ran his finger up and down the cleft, wondering where the sweet spot might be. Somewhere in there was the fabled clitoris, gateway to the female orgasm, but as to its precise location—he was literally in the dark.

Sarah giggled. “I looked it up once. It’s either a small eel, or a little piece of something that gets snipped off. Either way, it’s not what most guys would find flattering.”

Jared grunted. He was beyond caring.

“Lucky for me,” she whispered, “you’re not small at all.” Her fingers danced.

He dug his own fingers in and felt her twitch, then pulled them out. They felt not just moist but slick to the touch, almost oily. Probably normal, he decided, dismissing the ridiculous thought that actual oil might be involved.

Sarah stopped doing what she was doing. “I’ll turn over,” she said softly. “Doggy style. For you and your puppy-dog tail.” Her lips found his and then she lifted herself onto her hands and knees.

All fours. Jared found himself kneeling on the bed, facing her backside. He lifted the hem of her slip. His manhood was poised to strike, for the very first time.

Sarah widened her stance. “Can you see it?”

“Barely.” There wasn’t a whole lot of light for his eyes to adapt to.

“Careful. You know there’s two—”

“I know! Trust me, I think I can figure—”

“Oh! Yes, that’s it. Slide, batter, slide!”

Jared wondered how many women were prone to making baseball references during sex—but what did he know? He slid himself into the wet cleft, feeling its snug warmth. Then he leaned forward and swept her hair back. “I’m inside you,” he whispered into her ear.

“Right where I want you,” she whispered back. She gave him a quick kiss.
Jared shifted backward and forward. Blood thundered in his ears. No fucking way was this girl a cross-dresser, he thought fiercely. How could she be? He was inside her! You can’t do that to a guy, unless you somehow manage to take a big ole left turn at Albuquerque—and he was pretty sure he hadn’t. Probably.

Whatever. Too late now for second thoughts, regrets or the path not taken. Time to swing for the fences.

He picked up the pace and was soon rewarded.

*Beatrice opened the front door for them, just as Sarah was preparing to use her key. It was five minutes past 9 o’clock, the morning after.

“So… was Hector suitably impressed?”

“Speechless,” Jared assured her. “Didn’t say a word to me the whole night.”

“Why would he? I’m sure every eye in the house was on this lovely creature.” She gave Sarah the once-over, as though inspecting her clothing and makeup for flaws. “I assume she played her part perfectly?”

“She was awesome. I couldn’t have asked for a better date. Thank you for that, Aunt Bea.”

“You’re welcome. I’m happy to see that the after-party was also quite… satisfying.”

Sarah cringed and stared at the carpet. She’d been noticeably less enthusiastic during their repeat performance in the early light of day, which Jared had initiated. Perhaps, he mused, the hypnosis was wearing off. Normally, he suspected, she probably wasn’t the sort of girl who handed out one-night stands. Hopefully, he thought, she’d feel differently about it once he asked her out again.

He made a ‘lips zipped’ motion. “A gentleman never tells. Didn’t you teach me that? It’s not something I’d get from my parents.”

“I suppose I must have.” Beatrice looked over at Sarah, who was sniffing. “What’s wrong, dear? Didn’t you have a nice time?”

Sarah shook her head, gently swirling her hair. Her face scrunches up and she began to cry. “I liked it,” she said between wails.

Beatrice put her arm around the girl. “There, there. Like I told you before, there’s a big part of you that truly is female. The conditioning simply brought it to the surface.”

“But—I don’t know who I am anymore!”

“Sure you do. Deep down, you do. Hypnosis isn’t magic, you know. It can’t make you do anything you really don’t want to do.”

“I guess.” She cast a sidelong glance at Jared.

“Trust me, it’ll be easier next time. It won’t be long before you won’t need hypnosis at all. You’ll be every bit as comfortable as Sarah as you are as Timothy—if not more so.” Beatrice steered the girl toward the stairs. “Now, I’m sure Tim has things to do today, so go up to the bedroom and change out of those dirty clothes. Take off your makeup and I’ll be up with the solvent shortly.”

Sarah’s eyes went wide. “He’s got an exam. Today? Tomorrow. He needs to study.”

“Well, go on then.”

Sarah turned to Jared. “Thank you for a lovely evening,” she said shyly, then straightened her dress and mounted the stairs.

“I don’t get it,” Jared said.

Beatrice laughed. “Oh, come now. Of course you do. Deep down, you know exactly what’s going on.”

Jared blinked slowly. “You mean she—or he really is a cross-dresser?”

“That depends on your point of view.” She glanced up the stairs. “The way I see it, Sarah is a woman right now, but she won’t be much longer. But then, at some point in the future, she’ll be a woman again. Understand?”

“But I thought—”

“I did tell you, dear. Right up front.”

“I know. But I didn’t—”

Smiling, Beatrice drew her nephew into a brief hug. “Trust me, sweetheart. It’s the ‘not being sure,’ one way or the other—that’s what makes these encounters so delicious.”

“If you say so.” Jared let himself be guided out the front door. “But—Aunt Bea? How do you know all this?”

A shrug. “Chalk it up to experience.” Closing the door, she added, “If you really want to know, ask your mother about her long-lost brother, Bartholomew. It’s a long story, but surprisingly enlightening.”

In a daze, Jared stumped down the path to his car. How to process all this? He gave his head a shake. Focus on what’s important.

Not a virgin. In spite of the circumstances of his deflowering, he grinned. He’d just had sex, and that was what mattered. As to exactly what kind of sex it was—figuring that out could wait for another day.

Whistling, he revved the engine. There was a send-off brunch to attend and a certain nose to rub in his newfound manhood. Not that he had to share all the details. Just the good bits.