He cross-dressed to please his girlfriend, but Jeremy would soon discover that Jasmine was born to the skirt the way birds are born to fly.
Dedication

To you...

You’re the one who saw yourself in this story, and were inspired to continue your own journey, perhaps to womanhood, but certainly to inner peace.

You know who you are.
Be the person you must be, and be happy.

Amanda Hawkins
“Babe, you’ve gotta believe me. I really am a cross-dresser. Cross my heart and all that stuff.” I signed an X over my chest.

Ayana’s eyes narrowed. “I don’t believe you, Jeremy.”

“What the hell not?” I stopped pacing long enough to spread my arms, palms up. “No guy in his right mind would say that if it weren’t true!”

Ayana settled back on the couch and crossed her arms. “I’ve been burned before.”

I glared. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“A boyfriend in high school,” she said, plucking at the hem of her skirt. “As soon as he found out I like cross-dressers—bam! All of a sudden he’s a cross-dresser. But we’d been dating for months and I’m pretty sure he wasn’t.”

“How can you be so sure? We cross-dressers are pretty darn secretive about our cross-dressing, aren’t we? Hell yeah, we are!”

Her smile was pained. “He dressed for me. He said he didn’t have clothes of his own—girl stuff, I mean—because he was living at home. One day when his parents were out, he offered to put on some of his mother’s things.” She sighed. “It was so pathetic. He looked like a hooker who got dressed drunk.”

“So he lied. We’re not all like that, you know.”

“You’re different, huh? You wouldn’t lie to me, just to get into my pants?”

“No way.” I grinned. “But that dress you’re wearing, maybe. It’s to die for.”

“I see. Well, you don’t live with your parents. You have your own place, so you must have a stash of women’s clothing I haven’t seen. Where is it?”

I waved my finger. “Uh-uh. That’s a secret. You don’t get to find out stuff like that until…” I paused to think. “Until you meet my alter ego and she passes whatever test you got in mind. In case things don’t work out.”

Ayana shrugged. “Fair enough. What’s her name?”

Another long pause. “Jasmine.”

“Sweet. Is she pretty?”

“Oh hell yeah.” I lifted my arms. “Look at me. Skinny as a rake. All I need is the right padding. My face—heck, everyone says I look like my mom. When I was a kid, my buddies called her a fox all the time. I was jealous.”

She sat up, running a hand through her long black hair. “That’s cool. So you were going through her closet all those years?”
“Absolutely. Probably knew my way around in there better than she did.”

“Also cool. When do I get to meet her?”

“Oh, uh—” Think, Jeremy, think! It couldn’t be too soon; I had to order a whole bunch of clothes online and that would take time. But if I left it too long, she’d think I was stalling—and she’d be right. Then it hit me: the theater! I was part of an amateur theatrical group; I could get access to the dressing room, and there were all kinds of clothes stored there. Finding something that fit shouldn’t be too hard. “How about next Saturday?” That would give me nearly a week to bone up on the subject. How hard could it be to put on a dress?

She looked disappointed. “Why so long? I thought maybe tomorr—”

“Sorry, babe. I only dress on weekends. You know how it is.” I gestured at myself. “Beauty comes at a price. It takes time.”

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Turns out, beauty takes more time than I thought—a lot more. I spent hours and hours online: picking out clothes, surfing before-and-after pics, watching makeup videos—the male-to-female makeover vids were the best. It blew my mind, what those guys could do with the right products. Fortunately, I’d been doing my own theater makeup for the last few years; nothing elaborate, but it gave me a leg up on how to use the stuff.

On Thursday I arranged to meet with Gerard, the guy who handles the tougher cosmetic work for the troupe. He works in the film industry and has a background in special effects makeup. We met backstage at the theater, which was currently between plays. No one else was there.

“Lemme get this straight,” he said, after I once again outlined the mission plan. “You want to dress up as a girl, just to get into this chick’s short shorts?”

“She’s hot, man.” As if that explained everything.

Gerard shrugged. “Whatever. I’m not one to judge. Acting is acting.”

He had brought with him the items I requested: breast forms, hip pads, and a prosthetic flap to cover the area between my legs. I figured that would give me a fighting chance to create the kind of feminine shape that would convince Ayana I was seriously serious about looking like a woman. After what happened with her high school boyfriend, I couldn’t afford half-measures.

I had already depilated the areas in question—along with the rest of my body—so right away Gerard was able to glue the prosthetics in place. The breasts he gave
me weren’t overly large, but they looked genuine and they’d be easy to hide under a sweatshirt when I wasn’t being Jasmine. The skin tone wasn’t a perfect match, but I didn’t expect to be inspected in the nude. A bra and whatever underwear I wore would cover my newborn tits and curvaceous hips.

As for the silicone wedge he applied to my groin… “Oh, man, I did not expect it to look like that.” Feeling apprehensive, I eyed the slit between my legs and its attendant triangle of coarse hair.

“You didn’t tell me not to,” Gerard said, grinning. “You wanted to look like a girl, didn’t ya? Now you do.” He had me there. I wasn’t planning to wear a bikini anytime soon, but a little more verisimilitude wouldn’t hurt.

The next day, I’d arranged to meet the hairdresser who handled that task for our troupe. Kayla was an actress herself, besides working in a salon. At closing time, she ushered me straight into the back room before locking up.

“I’ve had my eye on you for quite awhile,” she said, running her fingers through my long hair. “This is gonna be fun.”

“Nothing complicated,” I said. “I hafta be able to stick it in a ponytail and not look seriously out of place in a hardware store.”

“C’mon, Jeremy. You planning to buy a screwdriver tomorrow? And here’s me thinking you were gonna spend the whole day dressed up as one of us gals.”

“I am! The hardware thing—don’t take it literally. I just have to be able to fit into society as a guy, when I’m not doing the cross-dressing thing.”


“As long as it all disappears into the ponytail, I’m happy.”

Kayla was true to her word. The style she chose looked fantastic—and utterly feminine—when it lay draped across my shoulders. But pull it back into a tail with a regular ponytail elastic and it became little more than a long bundle of hair that got a bit jumbled at the bottom.

She brushed my hair out, facing the mirror. “Listen. You’re dressing up first thing in the morning, yeah? So lemme give you a deep cleansing facial. No makeup, just a depilatory cream, a couple different moisturizers, eyebrow shaping, that sort of thing. It’ll give you a leg up on what you have to do tomorrow. It’s not gonna be easy, you know. Sure, you can use the tools, you’ve watched the vids, but turning yourself into a woman for the first time—that’s gonna take awhile.”
I gave her the go-ahead and she spent the next two hours applying everything but makeup to my face, feminizing it as much as possible. Afterward, I thought I looked pretty darn effeminate, even without makeup, but that was all to the good. I wanted Ayana to believe I’d been doing this for years. She expected realism and I aimed to give her exactly that: the next best thing to a real girl.

On Saturday morning I headed down to the theater. A few items had already arrived on Amazon’s overnight delivery: perfume, a few bits of costume jewelry, a makeup kit—so I wasn’t entirely dependent on whatever happened to be in the dressing room—and some lingerie, including a black-lace body briefer that caught my eye. I wasn’t sure where to begin, so I painted my nails with a deep red lacquer while going over in my mind what I needed to do.

The facial had left my face nicely smooth, so that’s where I began. A thin coat of primer came first, to help the makeup to follow last longer. Then the foundation: a ‘second skin’ liquid, to create the flawless complexion you see on models—in Cool Rose to match the undertones of my skin. I added a honey-tinted concealer beneath my eyes, blending it into the foundation with my forefinger.

I used the same product to contour my face the way I’d seen online: to bring out the bridge of my nose, my cheekbones, and the space over my eyebrows. I dusted all over with fixing powder, brushing softly until the liquid was dry, then used a darker powder to add shading under my cheeks, along my jawline and up near my hairline. As I understood the process, this would serve to shrink my nose, enlarge my eyes and narrow my face. The bottom line: more feminine.

It seemed to work. Studying my image in the vanity, it was hard to believe I’d ever gone through puberty. I couldn’t imagine ever having to shave such a face.

While the makeup was drying, I stripped off my male clothes and stored them in a locker. Damn if my whole body didn’t look female! “I think this is gonna work,” I muttered, gently sliding my legs into a pair of sheer pantyhose. That was followed by the strapless body briefer; the combination of my small-but-firm breasts, padded hips and the tight briefer gave me enough of a feminine figure to get by. No one would call me voluptuous, but nobody would mistake me for a man either. I slipped on the heavy necklace I’d bought, and a bracelet, and then released my ponytail, allowing my hair to spill across my shoulders.

Back to the vanity to finish up. Cream primer for my eyelids, followed by a subtle aquamarine eyeshadow. Then black eye liner, suitably diffused, and two layers of mascara—plus a touch of same to define my eyebrows.
Okay... that just about does it. Too weird... I look like an actual woman. Hope I didn't overdo it. But if this getup don't convince Ayana I'm a cross-dresser, nothing will.

How far is far enough? To convince the woman you love that you truly are the cross-dresser of her wildest dreams!
I opted for a light touch around my mouth: lining a shade darker than my natural lip color, followed by a delicate rose-red lipstick. It really is amazing what you can learn in a few days, just by watching other guys turns themselves into passable females. I’d read through a few tutorials as well, but nothing beats seeing it done right before your eyes. Even so, I wasn’t prepared for the effect it had on my own face.

The girl reflected back at me—her eyes wide and small mouth frozen in an ‘O’ of shock—was beautiful. But at the same time she was me: that blew my mind. I can’t say it was easy sledding, but for a guy who only took up the craft six days ago, I looked pretty damn good! As it turned out, I wasn’t wrong.

All that remained was to get dressed. The storeroom was stuffed with clothing, but only half qualified as ladies wear and of that only a subset would fit. Dismayed, I realized that it might take hours to find something appropriate, and Ayana was due to pick me up within the hour.

Then inspiration struck. Our troupe had recently concluded a two-week run of *The Widow’s Lament*, and the garments used in the play were still hanging on clothes racks in the dressing room. The eponymous widow in the play, a tall blonde named Chloe, was about my size. In fact, because of that, I had been her stand-in during many of the rehearsals; though not ‘dress’ rehearsals, of course.

I rifled through the rack and found her outfit: a creamy white skirt, blouse and blazer ensemble, suitable for the thirty-something woman who paid attention to her image. The shoes and jewelry for the character were bagged and hanging next to the garments. The size looked about right.

Both skirt and jacket were silk-lined, so I didn’t need a slip. The skirt zipped up in the back and had enough give in the waist to be comfortable. It had a fairly tight hem that didn’t quite cover my knees, but having to take shorter steps would help maintain the image I wanted to project. The blazer closed with two buttons in the front; it was a good fit shoulder-to-shoulder, which was the main thing. I slipped my feet into the gold-tone sandals, and swapped the jewelry I was wearing for the multi-layer rhinestone necklace and earrings from the prop bag.

I was ready. Hell, I was more than ready. I looked more like a woman than I ever thought possible. If there was such a thing as being born to cross-dress, I was it.

I spritzed myself with the perfume I’d bought—*Flowerbomb*, by Viktor & Rolf, for obvious reasons: its principle scent was jasmine. It was described as a “floral explosion”, an unsubtle perfume for women who don’t want to go unnoticed.

“That’s me,” I told the mirror. I did indeed look like a woman intent on making a statement—that being “I really am a cross-dresser, dammit!”
I packed my wallet, keys and phone into the clutch handbag the widow Chloe carried on-stage. Then I locked up and hastened outside. The small parking lot adjacent to the theater was empty.

A shiver ran through me, as a new thought boiled up from within. The girl had mischief in mind. Well, why not? I was a woman now, wasn’t I?

I turned away from the parking lot, where Ayana would soon arrive, and moved as quick as my skirt would allow toward the park behind the theater. It wasn’t empty either: there were older people on benches, couples strolling around the set of linked ponds, kids and parents in the playground. I was the only single woman present, but there was a shopping mall the next block over and I headed that way. It was early September and the breeze was cool, but not so much as to require a coat.

With the wind in my hair and even blowing up my skirt, I was tempted to say that I never felt more alive. It’s amazing how liberating it can be, turning into a whole different person. I wondered if I’d feel the same way, if I done up as a bearded lumberjack or some other male stereotype. Probably not.

I crossed the street and window-shopped at Macy’s for a half-hour or so, just to kill the time. Then I headed back through the park. There was a red Honda sedan parked in front of the theater, and Ayana was pacing back and forth underneath the marquee, repeatedly checking her phone. Bingo!

Now for phase two: be the woman.

I strolled past the theater and gave Ayana a friendly nod as I passed. She nodded back, without a hint of recognition. I crossed the street and headed up the block, as though returning home from the mall. I thought the lack of shopping bags might give me away, but apparently not.

When the theater was out of sight, I found a quiet spot and turned my phone back on. There was a missed call and a text from Ayana, of course, demanding to know where the heck I was. Wouldn’t she like to know! I returned her call.
“Hey, babe. Sorry about that, I was away from my phone. It’s hard to find the stuff you actually want to find in that storeroom. It took me awhile to find a dress that would actually fit me.”

“Uh-huh. Why not just wear one of your own dresses? For that matter, why didn’t you just dress up at home? You got the painters in or something?”

Good question. Why didn’t I dress at home? “Nosy neighbors,” I said after not too long a delay. “They got family over, people coming and going—it was easier to slip out unnoticed this way. And wouldn’t you know, I forgot to bring a dress.”

“Okay… I take it you found one to your liking. You ready to go?”

“Straight up, babe. I just have to—ya know, powder my nose and stuff, and then I’ll be right out.” I returned the phone to my purse. Time for phase three.

I crossed the street and strolled back down the block, toward the theatre. Ayana was standing under the marquee. She glanced at me as I approached, then resumed peering through the glass doors. Looking for someone?

“Excuse me,” I said, in my best attempt at a female voice. “I wonder if you might have a tampon to spare. I seem to have been caught short.”

“A tampon? Really?” She barely looked at me before opening her purse. “I guess I might—” Then she stared, her mouth falling open. “No—Jeremy?”

“The name is Jasmine, toots.” Airily, I flicked my hair back.

“Oh. My. God. You look fantastic!” She poked me playfully. “You walked straight past and I did not recognize. Got me good, girlfriend.”

I shrugged. “Just something we cross-dressers do.”

She smiled. “Okay, okay—I believe you’re a cross-dresser. Are we good?”

“It’ll have to do.” I flashed a coy smile. “You can make it up to me later. Like, when I’m not quite so ‘encumbered’.”

“I bet you are. I don’t remember Jeremy having a figure like that.”

I sniffed disdainfully. “He doesn’t. I’m the one with the killer bod. Besides, I don’t see anyone by that name around here, do you?”

“Gotcha. Stay in character. Method acting, right?” She took my arm. “I may be able to help. Your voice is—it’s not quite as convincing as the rest of you.”


“Sure. But a female voice is hard to fake. What you need is a little pharmaceutical therapy, East Asia-style.” She led me over to her car.
“Hang on, I don’t wanna take—whatchamacallit—estrogen, or whatever.”

“Nothing like that. It’s traditional, okay? Couldn’t be safer.”

We drove halfway across the city to Chinatown, ending up in the basement of a heritage building doubled as a Chinese pharmacy. I was the only Caucasian in sight. “I thought you were Japanese,” I whispered to Ayana.

“I am. But some of the products are the same.” She broke away to speak to an old woman behind the counter. The tiny lady selected a bottle from a shelf behind her, set it on the counter and stared fixedly at me.

Ayana beckoned me over. “This will help with your voice.”

I stared at the clear liquid. “I dunno… what’s it made of?”

The old lady sighed. “Made of extract from ovaries of wild banteng. That is type of cow from Asia. Also from uterus of Tibetan yak. Very fertile beast.”

“Is it endangered?” I wondered if I was supposed to ingest the stuff, apply it to my skin, or stuff it up my wazoo.

Ayana was growing impatient. “Probably. C’mon, Jasmine. Open wide and let the nice lady do her thing.” The woman had opened the bottle and was drawing a generous dose into a plastic syringe.

“Uhm, that’s okay. I don’t think I need any help. With the animals in danger and all, we really shouldn’t reward—”

“Look, it’s already paid for, okay? I was here yesterday. God, don’t be such a girl. Just stand right here—” She pulled me close to the counter. “—tilt your head back and say ahhhh.”

“Well, if it’s already paid—” The old lady seized me by the neck. She had climbed up a small ladder, and from there was able to stick the syringe deep into my open mouth. Almost instantly, my throat went numb. Only part of it, to be honest, since I was still able to breath. Gasping, I availed myself of the ability.

“Don’t try to talk,” Ayana said quickly. She consulted her watch. “Give it an hour or so. I’ll let you know.”

We returned to her car, with me rubbing my neck in a futile attempt to warm it up. What the hell had I gotten myself into?

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We landed in a wine bar not far from where Ayana lived. It was fairly upscale, so the two of us decked out in smart skirt suits didn’t look out of place. I was glad to
get my lips on a glass of the house red, because anything was better than the taste lingering at the back of my throat. Whether it was wild banteng or Tibetan yak, I didn’t want to know.

Ayana was feeling chatty. “I guess you’ve been wondering where this fascination with cross-dressing comes from.” I nodded; the thought had crossed my mind. “My family came over from Japan when I was about ten. I read a lot of kids’ comics when we lived in Kyoto, and over here too, as a teenager. Lots of animé.”

No surprise there. Animé was big when I was a kid and it was bigger now.

“Well, the cross-gender theme is huge in animé. You don’t see it as much in the stuff we get overseas, but it’s really popular in Japan.” She shrugged. “Don’t ask me why. It just is. That includes both male and female cross-dressing, and being transformed into a member of the opposite sex.” She lowered her voice. “And also ‘doing it’ as a member of the opposite sex.”

And that, right there, is when I realized I might be getting into something a whole lot kinkier than I thought. Ayana was such a sweet, quiet girl. But when she talked like this I could see a whole different side of her emerging.

“I don’t know what it was,” she continued. “There was just something about, you know, a guy turning into a girl I found really exciting. It’s just—” A wistful look crossed her face. “Maybe it’s him giving up all the advantages of being a boy and having to act all sweet and girly, and looking small and pretty, and then having to deal with what the real boys want.” She giggled. “That usually involved taking a big one up the you-know-where.”

Uh-huh. I sipped the wine, hoping the comics hadn’t given her any ideas.

“I think it’s because Japan is still such a traditional society, in a lot of ways. It’s high-tech and all that, but in terms of family life the man is still expected to bring home the sushi while the woman keeps house and runs the family. That’s just as bad for men as women, in some ways. Lots of men end up working themselves to death. It’s also why a lot of young women in Japan don’t want to get married at all, because it would mean giving up their career. I always figured I was better off over here, where I at least have a shot at doing both. Is this making sense?”

All I could do was nod, although I did wonder what all this had to do with cross-dressing. In the West, I always thought it had something to do with escaping the gender roles mandated by society. That might work for dressing up as a woman, but it certainly wouldn’t cover the people who considered themselves to actually be a member of the opposite sex, on the inside. They’d just be trading one gender straightjacket for a different one, albeit the one they preferred. Nothing wrong with any of that, of course, but it still left me wondering.
“All the sex you see in animé,” Ayana said, “it’s kind of a safety valve. It lets men blow off steam—no pun intended—because they’re frustrated at being forced into such a narrow lifestyle. The transgender aspect—maybe it’s their way of rebelling against how society expects them to act. I don’t know… I’m not a guy. It’s not something anyone talks about openly.” She sighed. “For me, there’s an obvious appeal for girls turning into guys, because she gets more power and more freedom to act—at least, that’s what it looks like from our point of view. As for guys turning into girls—maybe I just like seeing guys get a taste of their own medicine. Or maybe I’m just kinky. Who knows?” She consulted her watch. “You can talk now. Take it slow.”

I drained my glass, opened my mouth and squeaked. “Testing… testing?” My fingers flew to my lips. “Oh, wow, is that me?” My voice was at least an octave higher, if not more. I didn’t sound like a little girl or anything; more like a mature woman who spoke in what could be described as a sexy purr.

“That’s you,” Ayana said in her own sexy purr, “at least for the next few days.”

A few days? How long did she expect me to stay dressed like this? I was hoping to change back this evening, prior to her hopefully going down on me as payback for doubting my exalted status as a cross-dresser.

Ayana polished off her own glass. “Shall we go? There’s some people I’d like you to meet.”

“Hang on. I thought this was just you and me having a girls night out. Grab a few drinks, maybe catch a flick over at the mall, then head home.”

Ayana smiled. “C’mon, Jasmine. Where’s your sense of adventure? The way you look, you’ve obviously been out before. Lots of times, I bet. You’re comfortable around people. I get that you probably haven’t had a conversation with anyone, as a woman. But now you that sound like Lana Del Rey, why hold back?”

“Gee,” I whispered, “maybe—just maybe—it’s because I don’t want anyone to find out I’m really a guy. In case you hadn’t noticed, some people still disapprove of that sort of thing.” I glanced around to see if anyone was staring.

Ayana shook her head, looking incredulous. “You really don’t see it, do you? Babycakes, you are gorgeous! You’re more feminine than most of the women I know. Sure, your voice was holding you back, but it’s all better now. Whatever’s keeping you from feeling confident in yourself as a woman, it’s all in your head.”

“Yeah, well… what’s in my head is still running the show.”

“Maybe I can help with that too.” She took my hand. “C’mon, let’s hit the ladies’ before we go.”
In the washroom, Ayana checked the stalls before opening her purse. “You just need to relax,” she said, uncapping a small plastic bottle. “Take one of these.” She handed me a large pink pill. It was a cylinder, packed with tiny beads.

“You want me to get high?”

“It’s not that kind of drug. It’ll just relax you, get rid of your inhibitions.”

“So I’ll just run around out of control? What’s it called?”

“You wouldn’t recognize the name; it’s Japanese. You won’t be running around; if anything it’ll make you feel more laid back than you thought possible.” When I hesitated, she took the pill, pinched my nose and dropped the capsule into my open mouth. “C’mon, baby,” she said, stroking my throat. “Just swallow. It’ll be so much easier this way.”

I swallowed. She handed me a paper cup of water and I chased it down.

It was just as well I wasn’t driving. Ten minutes after we set out in her car, I didn’t feel like doing much of anything. I wasn’t tired or sleepy; I just wasn’t motivated to actually *move*. I sat with my hands in my lap, folded over my purse, content just to stare out the window and watch the pretty lights go by. They looked all streaky, even though it wasn’t raining.

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There were people there for sure, lots of ‘em—hurrying this way and that, talking briefly to one another before moving on, some leaving the room and re-entering. A few people seemed to be talking to themselves. Too weird. No one paid much attention to us, which was fine by me, although one man spoke briefly to Ayana. I was just happy not to have to put my female persona to the test. I sat where Ayana told me to and watched the hustle and bustle. Didn’t I *know* these people?

Ayana came and sat next to me. “When you go through that doorway,” she said, pointing, “your name is Chloe. You got that?”

I looked at her. “My name is Chloe? Not Je—Jasmine?”

“Nope. Chloe. *Kloh—eee*. You know the lines, you’ve spoken them often enough. When you get out there, you know the set, you know where your character is supposed to be—so just do what Chloe has to do, speak the lines, and say it like you mean it. Remember, while you’re on stage—you *are* Chloe.”

I tried to wrap my head around that. “I *am* Chloe.”

“That’s right. You’re a genteel lady who lost her husband not that long ago, so it’s okay to be kinda sad. But don’t go overboard.”
A man with a clipboard interrupted: “One minute, ladies.”

Ayana helped me up and escorted me to the doorway. “Curtain’s going up,” she said, as a wave of applause washed over us. A disembodied voice spoke, setting the scene. From behind, somebody gave me a push.

Distractedly, I stepped onto the stage. It was set up as the elegant living room of a Georgian mansion, in some ill-defined location bordering the old Mason-Dixon line. Exactly where wasn’t important.

I glided toward my familiar spot, center-stage. “Sorrow is my own yard,” I said in a sultry purr, “where the new grass flames, as it has before—but not with the cold fire that closes around me this year. Twenty-two years did I live with my husband. But no more can I feel him next to me.”

Ignoring the audience hidden in shadow, I moved toward the window at the back of the stage, which opened onto a garden. “The plum tree is white today,” I purred, “with masses of flowers. Flowers load the cherry branches and color the bushes yellow and red, but the grief in my heart is stronger still. They were once my joy, but today I see them and turn away—forgetting all that came before.”

A teenage boy edged into view, perhaps fearful of interrupting. “Mother,” he said. “I was in the meadow at the edge of the woods, and in the distance I could see trees full of white flowers. They reminded me of you.”

A man and a woman entered behind the boy. The woman—Chloe’s sister—put her arms around the boy. “You must forgive your mama,” she said. “She knows a sadness few of us ever will.”

“I know those trees,” I said, “and those flowers. I feel that I would like to go there now, and fall into those flowers, and sink into the marsh nearby.”

The man—my late husband’s brother—shook his head. “Get him out of here,” he growled, and the woman and boy faded from sight. Georges crossed the stage in three strides. “For God’s sake, Chloe,” he said, seizing my arm, “you have got to snap out of this. It’s been nearly a month. You can’t mourn forever!”

I gazed up at him, as Chloe was wont to do. “Can’t I?”

“I won’t let you.” He shook me. Then he kissed me. That wasn’t in the rehearsals, although it had occurred when the play went live—and Gracie, the actress who portrayed Chloe, had put on a good show, at first resisting the kiss, then relaxing into Georges’ arms and letting the strength of his desires overcome her.

With Ayana’s instructions in mind, I strove to do the same. As our mouths moved in unison, my mind faded into nothingness. According to those present, I was far more convincing as a woman yielding to her passions than Gracie ever was.
The Widow’s Lament played itself out over the next forty-five minutes, ending as it always did with re-marriage and the widow’s renewed appreciation for the trees and flowers in her garden. After the curtain fell, Ayana took my hand and guided me to my seat backstage. There was a lot of noise, with people talking and slapping each other on the back, and the lights were still sort of streaky.

“Kid, I gotta say, you were fantastic out there. You’re a real natural.” I looked up to find Desmond towering over me, still clad in the suit Georges had worn for our staged wedding. He grinned, running a hand through his wavy brown hair.

“I agree,” Ayana said, touching my arm. “He’s a wonderful actress.”

Dez laughed. “He’s a natural—as a woman. Missed your calling,” he added.

I managed to muster enough initiative to ask a question. “Wh—where’s Gracie?”

“Too bad about that,” Dez said. “Nasty case of food poisoning.”

“She’s home now, with her husband,” Ayana said. “She’ll be fine.”

I looked at her. “The play ended… two weeks ago. Wh—why—?”

“Encore performance for charity,” Dez said. “Save the Children.” He looked concerned. “I’m kinda surprised you didn’t know.”

“She’s just confused,” Ayana assured him. “It’s been a long week, getting ready for a role like this.”

“I bet. You did a great job, turnin’ him into such a looker. Never saw a prettier boy in my life.” Now his laugh sounded forced.

“Like you said, she’s a natural.” She stood up. “You two had some real chemistry going out there. Maybe we should get together and talk about it.”

He looked puzzled. “I thought you two were—”

“I like to watch.” She touched my hair. “I think you should know… this isn’t her first time—as a woman, I mean.” His eyes widened and she nodded. “Jeremy is a cross-dresser. I can’t take much credit for turning him into such a convincing lady. But I’ve been trying to bring Jasmine out of her shell—to get her to embrace her feminine side, her womanhood.”

“I see.” Dez licked his lips. “You think I can help?”

“A big, strong man like you? I’m sure of it.” She obtained his address.

“Just—just a minute,” I stuttered. “I do—I don’t—”

“I think you need another one of these,” Ayana said. She handed me a glass of water, pinched my nose and poked a pink pill down my throat.
Desmond lived alone in a condo just outside the downtown core, only blocks from the police station where he worked as a desk sergeant. He was ex-army, divorced with no kids, he told us, as we relaxed over drinks. I sat and stared out the window at all the pretty lights streaking by, which seemed odd because we weren’t moving.

Ayana glanced at the clock, then took my glass and set it next to hers. “We should get ready. Is there somewhere she can change?”

He directed us to the guest bedroom. Ayana had the overnight bag she’d brought from her car. She laid a few items out on the bed, then helped me undress. “Very nice,” she said, inspecting my naked body. “You really went all-out for this little caper. I’m truly sorry I doubted you,” she said softly, wrapping a lacy black bra around my torso. I felt her secure the clasp. “You really are a cross-dresser.”

“I told—told you,” I murmured, blinking slowly.

“You did. I should’ve listened.” She had me step into a pair of black silk panties, then pulled them up around my hips. “I suspect that Gerard must be responsible for this exquisitely feminine figure. I must remember to thank him.” She helped me into a short kimono, made mostly of see-through black lace, and knotted the sash about my waist.

But—why was this happening? “I don’t—”

“Oh, hush. You’re a woman now, it’s time you started acting like one.” She sat me down on a stool and ran a wide brush through my hair, then unpacked a small makeup kit and began touching up my face.

When she was done, we locked eyes. “Your name,” she said firmly, “is Jasmine. You are a woman. Jeremy does not exist. You understand? There is no such person.”

My lips moved, soundlessly at first. “Jeremy doesn’t exist. My name is Jasmine. I—I’m a woman.”
“That’s right. For tonight, you aren’t even a cross-dresser—you’re the real deal: female.” She stood me up and aimed me at the mirrored closet door. “You see that girl? She’s you. And you’re going to do all the things a pretty girl like her would do with the man she’s attracted to. You got that?”

I nodded, staring at my reflection. My thoughts scattered. How could I ever have thought I was a guy, looking like that? I ran my fingers through my hair, sending it spilling down one shoulder. She was pretty, that girl.

Dez was waiting in the master bedroom, dimly lit by the glow of a single LED nightlight. He had undressed and was wearing a short kimono with, I presumed, nothing underneath. He took my hand, then gathered me into his arms for a surprisingly gentle kiss. Ayana stood by the closet door, watching.

“Babe, you are something else.” He guided me to a seat on the bed.

My gaze wandered. “I like you too.” What else could I say? That’s what Jasmine would say to a man she was attracted to. She was shy, that girl.

Dez put his arm around me, rubbing my back. “Listen... you haven’t said a whole lot tonight. Maybe you’re tired or whatever, but I kinda need to know that you’re into this. ‘Cause if you aren’t, that’s okay. We can call it a night right now, no harm, no foul. You two can crash here if ya want. I can take the guest room.”

Ayana stepped in. “She wants to know what it’s like—to be with a man.”

Dez gave her a funny look. “Is that true?” he asked me.

I glanced at Ayana, who nodded curtly. “It’s true,” I said softly, staring at his bare legs. “I want to know what it’s like. To be with a man.” Did I? Did I?

He chuckled. “Me too. I wanna know what it’s like to be with you.”

I touched his leg, then gazed up at him. “Let’s find out.”

He leaned down and kissed me. Our mouths stuck together as he stroked my hair. Then he helped me lay back with my head on the pillow. He stretched out next to me and began stroking the bare skin of my thigh. I shivered. “It’s okay,” he said quickly. “I’ll be gentle.”

I knew what I had to do—what any girl would do in my shoes. I untied the sash of my kimono and wriggled free of the garment. Dez tossed it aside, along with his own. Ayana picked them up and draped both over a stuffed armchair.

I stroked his chest, my mind numb. Here I was, in bed with a naked man, ready to service him as women do. There was no doubt about what he wanted; the blood-gorged whacking stick bouncing against my left leg left zero room for ambiguity. He was the man and I was the woman.
Being the girl, I knew it was up to me to get the male engine revving, so to speak. Although from the feel of it pushing against me, his engine wasn’t going to need much encouragement. Between lengthy kisses I stroked the hair on his chest and told him how handsome he was—as women do—and my fingers eventually strayed into his erogenous zone and got busy. For his part, Dez whispered “pretty girl”, or variations thereof, into my ear so insistently I couldn’t help wondering which one of us he was trying to convince.

Finally, he reached into his night stand and pulled out an old fashioned billy club: a stubby wooden bat, black-lacquered and gleaming in the dim light. “Seein’ as you’re new at this, I figured this’d be a good way to get you goin’.”

Instinctively, I recoiled from the weapon. Where was this going?

His eyes went wide. “No, no—nothin’ like that! It’s just to, ya know, clear the way. Open things up.” He mimed deep-throating the item.

“Oh. Okay…” I swallowed hard and licked my lips.

“Handle first,” he said. “It’s smaller.” He touched the butt end of the club to my mouth. I opened up and it slipped inside. The wood was cool and very smooth. We took it slow; me licking and he rotating the shaft and gently moving deeper. I had to raise my chin to take more of it. He backed off when it threatened to cut off my air supply. “Better do this while it’s wet.” He rolled me onto my side and pulled down my panties. That’s when I knew.

Ayana knelt beside the bed. She whispered, “That was so hot.” Then she locked lips and forced her tongue into my mouth, probing deep into my throat. At the other end of my digestive tract I felt a similar probing: the butt end of the club pushing and wiggling, then slipping inside; a little at first, short strokes, gently twisting its way deeper, widening the gap with every turn. I moaned.

Ayana took charge. “I think she’s ready. Leave the club in.” They got me up on all fours and switched ends. As Dez knelt in front of me, Ayana gave the club a gentle turn. “Open your mouth,” she told me. Her lips were hard to my ear, although I could still feel her fingers manipulating the billy club. “You’re the girl, babycakes. This is what girls do. Teeth apart.” She gave the club a quick shove. The head of his whacking stick popped into my mouth. Automatically, I sucked air and felt my cheeks dimple. “Lick first,” Ayana said, “suck later.”

Slowly, Dez slid himself deeper. I licked as Ayana gently applied pressure. It was mind-boggling, what was happening. When he was far enough inside, I applied suction, Dez played my throat like a slide whistle, and Ayana did more or less the same with the billy club. I was their instrument, upon which they played a duet.
At halftime, they took a five-second break, swapped ends, and resumed the concerto—only now it was Dez’s own built-in stick that delved into the depths of my lower intestine. Ayana was flooding me with kisses—mouth, ears, cheeks and neck—while purring, “This is so hot, babe. It’s just so hawt.”

I grunted as Dez pushed ever deeper. “Unnnh—no. You don’t—get it. I’m not—unnnh—a cross-dresser… Did this—for you.”

“Oh, hush. Be quiet, baby. I know you did.” She laughed. “I knew all along, silly.” She kissed me, long and hard, then took my face between her hands. “But you’re a cross-dresser now and that’s all that matters.”

She held me in her arms as Dez worked himself into a short-lived frenzy and then exploded inside me. He collapsed onto the bed, a spent force. Ayana laid me back down, applied kleenex to the affected area, and helped me relax.

Slowly, the tension left my body. It was over. A few minutes later Dez, bless him, began snoring. Ayana and I escaped into the en suite bathroom. She helped me clean up, tidied my hair and straightened my lingerie, including the lace kimono.

My head was beginning to clear. I downed a glass of water—no pill this time—and stared at her. “Why? Why did you do this? You knew I wasn’t—you knew I only cross-dressed so you’d sleep with me, didn’t you?”

She smiled. “Of course. You pitched it pretty good, but even so—it was obvious. The big surprise was you were so goddamn good at it.”

I slumped in my seat. “Yeah. I’m a natural.”

“You are. Don’t feel bad. Maybe it was just, you know—meant to be.”

“Sure. Maybe. But even so,” I said, straightening, “why the sex? Why serve me up like a side of fries to the first guy who took an interest?”

Her laugh was like music. “I didn’t plan it, Jasmine. It just happened. You two had such chemistry out on stage, I just went with it. The flow, that is.” She pulled me to my feet. “C’mon, babe, let’s get you dressed—in that lovely skirt suit, I mean. Dinner at Denny’s is on me. We’ll leave Dez a note.”

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It never ceases to amaze, the way one’s life can turn on a dime. Not that it happens all that often, of course, but when it does—look out. Anything goes.

I never saw Dez again; our encounter was a one-time thing. No hard feelings or anything like that; it was just time to move on. I never went back to the old theater group either. With talent like mine, and a glamorous image to match, I joined a
professional stock company attached to the major theater downtown—and from there it was onward and upward, all the way to Broadway.

I’ve been tapped to star in the stage adaptation of *The Glamorous Dead*. It’s set in the show biz dream factory of the 1940s and I bring life to the role of Miss Penny, an aspiring young actress lured into the star-studded web of scandal, celebrity and, yes, murder that was wartime Hollywood. The production needed a dynamite performer who can carry the story, with the stage presence of Garbo at the height of her powers, and I’m just the blonde stick of dynamite for the job.

Ayana and I are no longer together. We broke up within a few months of my rather awkward initiation into womanhood. I bear her no grudge—considering all that’s happened, becoming a woman was just this side of inevitable—but there’s only room in a relationship for one dominant bitch, and that’s me. Besides which, once I went full-time, she found it impossible to see me as a cross-dresser anymore and that’s what she really wants. It was an amiable split.

I have a boyfriend now; a sweet young man a few years younger than myself. He’s a medical student with a slim build. I often find myself imagining how wonderful he’d look in a little black dress, with killer heels and enough cleavage to choke a horse. His hair isn’t nearly long enough, but I happen to know of a top-notch salon that can do wonderful things with hair extensions.

I don’t believe I’ll be able to resist acting out my little fantasy; it’s far too alluring. And as my thoughts drift in that direction, I can’t help wondering what it might be like to set the boy up with one of my handsome co-stars, then step back into the shadows—and watch.
Mirror, mirror, in my hand... Beauty me, am I still a man?

Oh my. I simply must cut down on all this cross-dressing. It’s getting harder and harder to see myself as a guy anymore.

Are you kidding me?