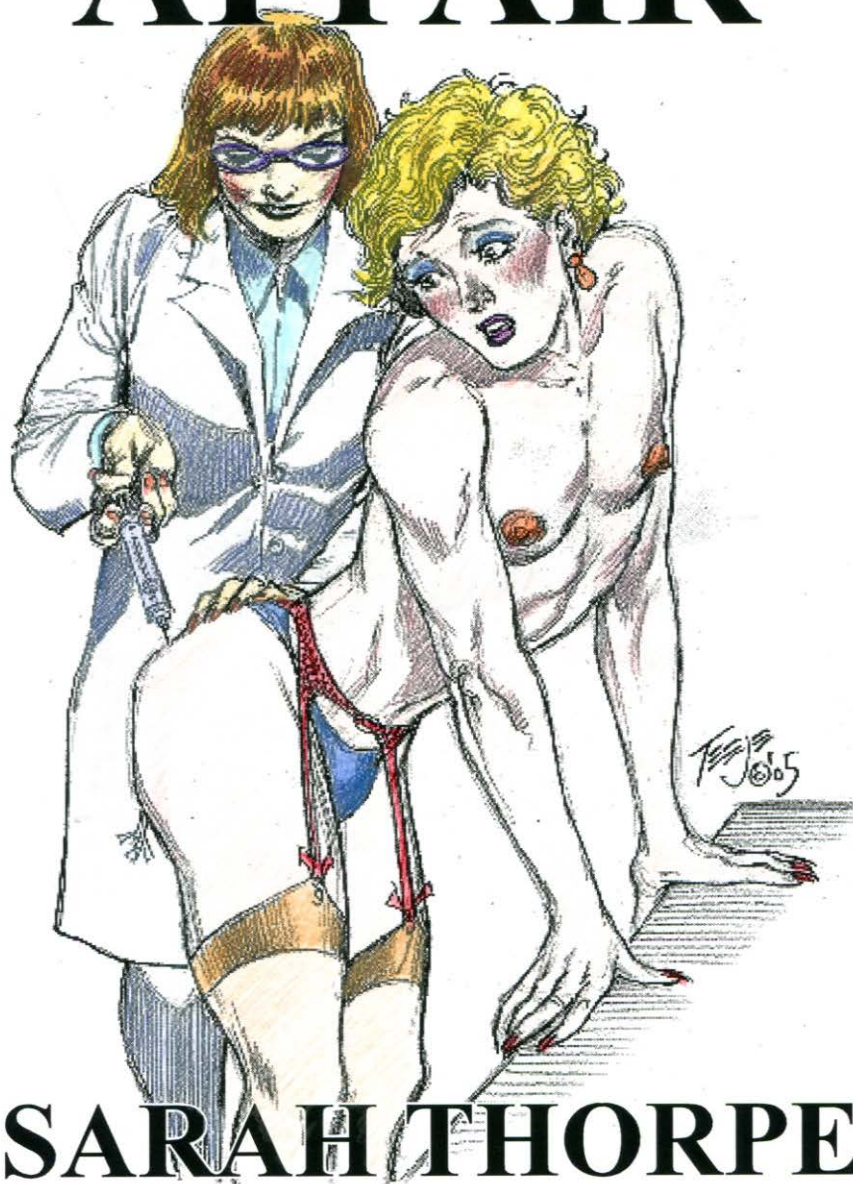


A Family **AFFAIR**



SARAH THORPE

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by **SARAH THORPE**



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CHAPTER 1

Hilltown looked like every other small town in America. I was located in the hills above the Pacific, not too far away from San Francisco. Mr. Kane, a former High School principal, built the first house in town in 1953. He had just retired and decided to live alone away from the big cities. It didn't take long before other families moved in; most of them knew Mr. Kane from his time as principal. The people that moved in did so for a reason. Since they didn't fit in with mainstream America they wanted to move away from bigotry and discrimination.

To people from the outside Hilltown looked quite normal. On the surface everything was as it should be. But most people here had secrets that the 'normal' people wouldn't understand or tolerate.

The first couple that moved in after Mr. Kane was Connie and Clark Edwards. They moved in as soon as they were back from honeymoon. Mr. Edwards was a free-lance journalist, delivering articles to newspapers all over the state. Mrs. Edwards was teaching Grade School in a town not too far away.

Now let's move forward some years, in fact all the way to 1990. The town is thriving. More than 3000 people lived in Hilltown now. Mr. Kane himself died three years earlier at the age 81. The town now has its own Grade School, and Junior and Senior High. In addition the town has all necessary facilities required for its population. And since the town is located on a hillside and has no through route, the only visitors they get are people who are there for a purpose, or they are lost. The town therefore looks more like a suburb than a town on its own. Mr. Edwards is now an editor of a large newspaper. He therefore has to commute, by car,

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to his workplace every day. He plans to retire in two years. That's when he turns 60. His wife is now the principal of the local Grade School and has no plans of retiring yet.

Another prominent couple in town is Beatrice and Raymond Peterson. Ray is the local physician and Bea the local dentist. Both have their offices adjacent to their own house. They have two kids, Carol and Larry, 12 and 10 years old respectively. It also happened that Ray takes turns at the nearest hospital.

So what kind of people lives in Hilltown? From the outside they look like ordinary people, but in some respect they have, at least once, in their life been the victims of discrimination due to the lives they had chosen to live. In this town many people were gay, but still they were producing and raising children. People with other sexual orientations were also represented in high numbers. Rapists and child molesters were not welcome of course.

One day in mid-September young Larry came home from school with a strange look on his face. "What's up, darling?" his mother asked.

"They're planning a special Halloween party for us kid in the fifth grade, and the subject is that all boys dress as girls and all girls dress as boys."

"What's the problem with that? You remember two years ago, your sister went through the same, It's been a tradition in our school almost as long as it has existed."

"I know. But I don't think it's right for boys to dress up as girls. It doesn't feel natural."

"What you call natural, darling, is only a norm decided by society a long time ago. Here in Hilltown we don't care about such norms. We dress as we please. If you take a closer look at many of the young women in town, you will find that they're actually young men. They started out with a Halloween party like that and found out that they like women's clothes better than men's. The same is true for some of the young men you see: they are in reality

women. Be a nice boy and do what everybody else in town has done.”

“Did you do the same, mom?”

“In a sense yes. When I was your age we didn’t have any schools yet. That came a few years later. But a similar party was arranged in town anyhow. And it was a huge success. That’s one of the reasons we carried it over to our school. I bet you also have to dress the part two weeks before and after the party as well.”

“Yes we have. I don’t look forward to that.”

“ Since everybody’s doing it, it will be the least of your worries. An I promise I will make you into the prettiest little girl you can imagine.”

“OK mom. And we’ve also been told that afterwards we can dress the way we like as long as we don’t do it in school.”

“I know. Haven’t you noticed that some of the students switch after school almost every day? Even your sister goes out as a boy from time to time. But when you’ve finished your third changeover Halloween, you’re allowed to dress even in school. At that time some students decide to switch permanently.”

“When you say so it’s probably correct. But I have never paid attention to such things.”

“You’d better start paying attention then young man, because soon you will be part of it as well. There is only one rule that applies, you always have to look convincing when dealing with people from out of town. We must keep this secret of ours as tight as possible.”

“I understand and will follow the rule.” Deep inside though, Larry was very curious on he would look in girls’ clothes. He’d seen the guys the years before and some of them had looked really good. Maybe this wasn’t such a bad idea after all.

“I knew you would. And at the end of the four week period you will have a long talk with my mother, your grandmother.”

“But she’s the principal!”

“So what? Remember, she is also your grandmother and

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it is in that respect you're going to have a talk with her. What you will learn then will have a lasting impact on the rest of your life, especially on the way you chose to live it."

"OK mom. I hope you'll help me get ready."

"Of course, darling. As I said, I will make you into the prettiest little girl you can imagine."

Two weeks later Bea decided to take her son shopping for some girls' clothes. Larry was embarrassed to say the least. "You will make a fool of me in front of all my friends," he said.

"No way," she replied, "you will soon see your friends are out shopping just like you. You're not the only boy in school who will dress up, remember. Everybody in 5th grade will do so. And all the girls will dress as boys. Haven't you noticed what happened the previous years?"

"I guess not. I've been much too busy with my friends to really care. But when you say it, I do remember that Carol dressed as a boy for four weeks two years ago."

"And then I told you that the same would happen to you and your class later."

"I must have forgotten." Larry was still playing the tough boy role in front of his mother.

They arrived at the shop just as it opened on a Saturday morning. Bea took her son straight to the young girl department and started to look around. She soon found something she liked and that might look good on Larry. She took the garments and dragged Larry into a fitting room to try them on. They were all a perfect fit. When Larry was asked to give a comment; he just mumbled something unintelligible.

Bea decided to buy them all. "This will be a good start on your feminine wardrobe," she said to Larry.

"I doubt that I will use them more than these four weeks," came the reply.

"We'll see. But this is not enough. We also need some

lingerie and some shoes. Please come with me.”

“No please! Don’t let me wear girls’ underwear. Wearing a dress is embarrassing enough.”

“Nonsense. You must look the part from inside out. That includes lingerie. And we must do something about your hair. You have two options. One is to buy a wig, the other is that we take advantage of your relatively long hair and give you a hair-do fit for a girl your age. What do you think?”

Larry thought about the options. None of them was appealing, but he had to make a choice. If his own hair were re-arranged, it would probably have to be made shorter when this was all over, and that might be good. That would make it more difficult to make it feminine again, so why not? Besides, wearing a wig might be a little awkward. “I go for the re-arrangement of my own hair,” he said.

“Good. I hoped you would do that.” She paid for the cloths and headed for the lingerie department.

This area made Larry even more embarrassed. This was an area he never dared to venture into. He became a little lighter when he saw two of his classmates there as well. Shoes were next. Bea found some nice girl shoes that were just adorable. She picked out three pairs, paid and headed out of the store. Since the morning shopping had taken quite some time, mother and son decided to have something to eat. Burger King had a restaurant in the outskirts of town, so they went there to have a burger.

After the meal Larry thought they were going home. But no, Bea drove back to where they came from, but to another side of the building. She parked the car outside a hairdresser. This time Larry almost panicked. “Can’t you do this at home?” he begged.

“No way. I am not good with hair, so I think it’s better if the professionals do it. This way you will have a hair-do that will suit you very well. These people know what is required in order to make your hair into something real feminine. Just you wait and see.”

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Larry accepted his fate and followed his mother through the door.

Inside they were met by a couple that obviously was mother and daughter. "Hello Bea," said the woman.

"Hello Anita," Bea replied, "I'm here for our appointment for young Lynn. And who is that lovely girl at your side?"

"That is my daughter Christine. She will help me take care of Lynn for you. She is so anxious to get started on her four week period amongst the girls."

"I know how it is. You must make Lynn as beautiful as possible so she can really enjoy her upcoming weeks. I'm sure she's looking forward to it."

"So am I. Please come with me." She guided Bea and Lynn into another room where a chair had been made ready for Lynn.

Larry was bewildered. Why did they suddenly call him Lynn? And who was that teenage girl accompanying them? She looked familiar, but he couldn't pick her out. Anyway, he gave in and sat down in the chair.

Christine laid a towel around his neck and told him to bend backwards. He did as he was told, and soon he felt shampoo and warm water in his hair. It didn't take long before his hair was clean, and then Anita took over. She combed out his hair and took a good look at it. "It's fairly long for a boy," she said, "so it won't be hard to make a real nice girlie hair-do out of it."

While he was in the chair, another young girl came storming in. "Please don't disturb us, Carly," Anita said, "as you can see we're busy with Lynn here. Go back to your room, or go out and meet the other girls."

Larry took a good look at the girl. Then it dawned upon him, it was his classmate Carl; all dressed up as a 10-year old girl. Just the way he would be soon. "Hi Carl," he said.

"I'm Carly now," the girl answered, "Can you come and play when you're finished?"

Bea and Anita looked at each other and nodded. "Lynn

will be with you in a short while,” Bea said, “we just have to dress her first.”

“I’ll be in my room.”

During the session Larry also saw a young boy running by. He learned it was Chuck, Anita’s son who was on his way to play ball with the boys.

“I see you have all your children transformed in the same year,” Bea said.

“It’s done on purpose. When we learned that every child has to go through these four weeks every three years, at the ages of 10, 13 and 16, my husband and I planned it this way. It’s so neat to have them all transformed in the same year. This way they can help each other out. In fact, Christine dresses up quite often already. I believe she will be just like her father.”

“By the way, where is Victor now?”

“He’s on a congress for transgendered people over on the East Coast. He goes there every year. He even travels back and forth as Victoria. It gives him an added pleasure.”

“Have you ever been there with him?”

“Not yet, but I plan to go next year. It will take place one week earlier then so it won’t be in conflict with our Halloween preparations. You can come along if you wish.”

“I’ll think about it. I have to talk to Ray first.”

“You’re both welcome to come.”

It didn’t take long before Larry, now Lynn was ready. Her hair was cut in a very girlish style and with addition of some light make-up; he looked just like a little girl. Bea took out some of the clothes they had bought earlier and dressed up her little girl in a nice dress. A look in the mirror told Lynn that she now really looked like a girl. She hurried into Carly’s room and joined her classmate for some play.

When Lynn arrived at school on Monday morning she looked around to see her fellow students’ reaction to their new

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role. Some looked very relaxed, while others seemed very uncomfortable. Her own feelings were something in between. She sat down at her normal desk and displayed a sign, telling the teacher which name she now used. The other students had a similar sign. She looked over to Carly. She looked back and they exchanged some invisible signs. She also looked over to Janet's desk to see what she looked like as a boy. Larry already had a small crush on Janet, and now Lynn was hoping that it would continue. The sign on Janet's desk said Johnny and she looked very boyish. If one hadn't known better, she would have been taken for a real boy.

In the first break Lynn walked up to Johnny and said hello. Johnny recognized her right away. "Oh, hello Lynn. You really look cute," he said.

"Thank you. You don't look so bad either. Are we still up for homework together on Tuesdays and Thursdays?"

"Of course. My place tomorrow and yours on Thursday as usual."

"Suits me fine."

The two weeks before Halloween went quickly. Lynn felt more and more comfortable in her new role. Her old friendship with Janet continued, except that it now was with Johnny. He even took her to a movie on Saturday. Lynn's mother smiled when she saw what was going on between them. 'This is working exactly according to plans,' she said to herself.

At the Halloween party Lynn was dressed in a dress made for a princess out of a fairy tale. She looked just like Cinderella. Johnny came as the prince and they became the hit of the party and won first prize for 5th graders.

Back in school everything went on as if nothing was out of the ordinary. Lynn continued to spend time both with Johnny and Carly. At the end of the dress up period it was as if they wanted to stay the way they were. But that was not possible; the rule was that

on Monday they all should be back to their own self. It was only the students in Senior High that were allowed to continue to dress up. Lynn learned from Carly that her sister Christine intended to stay as a girl at least until Christmas.

On Friday before the last dress-up weekend, Bea called her mother and had it confirmed that Lynn should spend the weekend with her. Connie was actually looking forward to have Lynn at her house for two full days. Lynn, on her side, also looked forward to spend the weekend with her grandmother.