

CATHERINE'S TALES

By Catherine Bell



ILLUSTRATED BY C. PITTS

A 'SPECTRUM' NOVEL

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KILTS FOR A START

By Catherine Bell

Stephen was in trouble again. The White Horse Security Agency guards had caught the gang spray painting dirty words on the side of the local supermarket. He was cooling his heels in the waiting room while his mom talked to the social worker. Sarah Coleman, the social worker, was telling Ellen Worth that he would be put in a boarding school for problem boys if he continued to get into scrapes. The gang he was running with was trouble, and if his father beat him again, his father would go to jail for child abuse. The Social Service Department of the city had a new director intent on using every regulation to enforce good behavior among the department's clients. The new director knew all the regulations and the latest theories of deviant behavior, and wanted to make a name for herself.

On the way to school, Ellen told Stephen what the social worker had said, omitting only her comment about his father. When she got home, she called Kevin, her husband, and told him what the social worker had said. He complained that it was a Catch 22; Stephen could be taken away from them, but if they tried to straighten him out, the family would be broken up anyway by one of them going to jail.

Ellen told Kevin that beating was not working and that it upset her a lot. She was afraid that, if they punished Stephen at all, the social worker would call their home unfit and put him in a foster home. She was in tears. When they hung up, she called her sister, Patsy Kerns, who lived across town with her daughter, Michelle. Instead of blurting out her woes, Ellen asked her sister about the teaching job in Berlin she had applied for. Patsy was thrilled. Just that morning, she had received notice that she had won the job and would be leaving for Germany the following Monday. They needed someone right away; one of the teachers had had a bad accident and would not be able to teach for the rest of the school year. She did not think it would suit Michelle to be yanked out of the seventh grade during the school year. Would Ellen let Michelle stay with her until the end of May next year?

“She's really very fond of you, Ellen, and she's in the same grade as Stephen. She might be a stabilizing influence on him.” Ellen agreed but explained about her family nearing a breakup what with the threats from the social worker. Ellen wanted Michelle to stay with her because she was such good company and told Patsy so.

Patsy told Michelle about the conversation. Michelle was very pleased that she would remain in the same school and live with her aunt Ellen until the end of the school year. She would miss her mother but that would be the only change until next summer. Then Michelle and Patsy talked about Stephen. Michelle pointed out that she might be able to control Stephen because she would be with him more and was bigger than he was. She had just had her adolescent growth spurt, which girls often get a couple of years before boys. She was a bit of a tomboy and interested in sports while

he was more inclined to stand around with the other troubled boys and brag. She could physically control him, and he would not want to admit that a girl could beat him up. Besides, even if he did, nobody would believe that she could, or would, do it.

Patsy suggested that if she could separate him from the other bad boys, he would probably cease to get in trouble. They egged one another on, each trying to out-brag the other, until they felt compelled to do something so offensive that the police would surely be called. Michelle could keep Stephen from going to the gang by keeping him with her but that would not work if other people were around, and she could not pick him out of the gang either. If anyone saw her physically abusing him, the cat would be out of the bag. Michelle suggested that she must do *something* before she and Stephen left home in the morning. That way no one would see her coercing him. Maybe she could give him a good beating and promise him another when they got home if he contacted anyone in the gang.

Patsy explained that it was the nucleus of a good idea, but beating him regularly with promises of more to come was what Kevin had been doing and it was not working. Michelle observed that she would know if he had been with the gang because they roughed one another up and it showed with his tousled hair, ruffled clothes, and exposed shirttails. Patsy wondered if Michelle could paint a sign on his chest that would embarrass him, perhaps write "I'm a Mommy's boy" with a felt tip marker.

Patsy and Michelle started to tell Ellen of their plan, but Ellen stopped them before they could get started good. "Don't tell me. If we get caught, it's Michelle's fault if I don't know about it. The Welfare Department won't punish her, because she's just a kid like him, but they will go for me if they can. I hope whatever it is works, but I can't afford to know about it." It was left up to Michelle.

Patsy went to her overseas teaching job, and Michelle moved in with Ellen and her family. The first school day, Michelle explained the plan to Stephen. He promised to leave the gang alone, but of course he did not. The next morning, Michelle held him down and wrote the message on his chest. When they got to school, he went to the boys' toilet and took several wet paper towels, a soapy one and some dry ones into a stall and scrubbed the message off. He hung out with the gang again. That night, she checked him out and felt great frustration. He smiled slyly, as if to say, "You're stronger than I, but I can outsmart you." Early the next morning, Michelle called her mother as she did every few days, and explained her frustration.

Patsy suggested that the gang would reject a sissy. Maybe she could make him wear a bra. Michelle explained that he would only remove it in the toilet. Patsy suggested that Michelle take her problem to Mrs. Grey, the foundation garments specialist at the town's department store. That afternoon Michelle went to Mrs. Grey and told her the problem. Mrs. Grey suggested a corset. Michelle could pull it tight and use wire and pliers to lock the stays in place at the top and bottom. It would fit so tightly that he could not remove it without undoing the stays. Stephen could not undo it with his hands or use pliers to cut the wire. Michelle ordered two and charged them to Ellen's charge card. They came three days later and Michelle picked them up.

The next morning, Michelle twisted Stephen's arm until he let her put it on him. She did as Mrs. Grey had suggested, pulling it quite tight before wiring it in place. Ste-

phen could only take short breaths. He looked in the mirror and could see the shoulder straps through the back of his shirt. At Michelle's suggestion, he put on a heavy sweater with a knitted pattern. He could no longer see the straps, but he could feel them.

He tried to remove it in the toilet at school and was unable to even loosen it. He avoided his rowdy friends all day. When they got home that afternoon, he pleaded with Michelle to remove the corset. She explained that he might run away and so she would only remove it for a few minutes in the morning so that he could bathe. He had a bad night, waking several times from the discomfort and weeping himself back to an uneasy sleep. Michelle made sure that he had not hidden clothes in the bathroom before she removed his corset and let him shower. She put him in the other corset and washed the first one and hung it to dry in the bath. If Ellen asked any questions, Michelle planned to say that it was hers, but Ellen had already heard about his avoiding the gang and thought it wise to avoid knowing anything that might be related to his changing behavior.

After several days of his wearing the corset, his spirit was broken. He pleaded with Michelle to let him go without the corset and promised to keep avoiding the gang. She took pity on him and asked him, "Would you like to wear panties and a bra instead?"

He wanted to say, "No, I'll wear a T shirt and my Y-fronts instead." but his spirit was so low he actually said, "Yes." He looked up at her when she made no reply and realized that was not enough. He said, "Yes, I'd like to wear girl's underwear."

Michelle said, "OK, but you'll have to ask your mom to get them for you. You can't wear mine."

Stephen pleaded with her but she remained adamant. When Ellen arrived home, Michelle told him to ask her for girl's underwear.

He said, "Mom, er...", and could say no more.

Michelle whispered, "corset," in his ear.

He tried again, "Mom, er, er, would you get me some panties and bras, please?" He was speaking so softly that he had to repeat "Panties and bras."

Ellen looked at Michelle who, at this point nodded. Ellen said, "If that's what you want, it's OK by me, but I'll let you buy them yourself and put it on my charge card. You should do it because they must fit just right. A bra that's too big or too little can be very uncomfortable. Why don't you ask Michelle to help you?"

Stephen turned to Michelle and said, "Won't you help me buy some girl's underwear, please, Michelle?"

Michelle replied, "Sure, come on up to my room, and you can try on some of my underwear for size."

He did and they found the exact sizes for him. The next afternoon, they went to the lingerie department at the town's department store and got his underwear. Michelle would not help him until he said, "I want white cotton panties and athletic bras with the smallest cups," and handed them to her. She carried them to the checkout counter and paid for them, though. When they got home, she let him out of the corset, and he

hurriedly put on a bra and a pair of panties and his boy clothes over top of them. The bra straps could be seen through his shirt, but they looked like the top of a sleeveless undershirt. At least he would not have to wear a heavy sweater on the warm days.

Michelle told him not to get a haircut, she would trim it when needed. Some of the other boys had long hair, usually tied in a pony tail, and the girls seemed to like them best.

Michelle encouraged Stephen to eat lunch with her and her girlfriends. They accepted him because Michelle was well-liked, but he did not quite fit in because he was a boy. Michelle talked to her mom about this and Patsy suggested that maybe some hormone therapy would help until he became sexually active. Then they could use estrogen and progesterin to bring out the secondary characteristics of females. Her girlfriends would be more accepting then. He should let his hair grow, too. Learning some feminine gestures and feminine inflections to his speech would help, too. It was not his clothes that made the girls uncomfortable because some of them wore the same clothes - jeans and a plaid shirt. Acting like a boy was the problem. Girls feel free to be silly and talk about menstruation and the like when no boys are within earshot but, when around boys, they act more seriously and avoid girl talk. Michelle said she knew all that but had not thought about it explicitly or pulled it all together. Patsy said she would call her gynecologist and get her to give Michelle a prescription for the FSH and LH now and be prepared to give her another later for the estrogen and progesterin. Patsy and the gynecologist had gone to high school and college together and were very close. Patsy had tutored her in her non-science courses so well that she had A's the first time she took them. Without this, she would have had a hard time getting into medical school. She trusted Patsy, even in medical matters.

Michelle picked up the prescription the next afternoon and told Stephen that he should take one of each with his vitamins in the morning and explained that they would induce his penis and testicles to mature and become active. He would be the first boy in his class to go through puberty and thus be in a leadership position. He liked that. He was careful to remember the pills and in a few weeks he started to see his prick and balls get bigger. Several weeks later, while he was playing with his prick, he got a good feeling and it gushed. He asked Michelle what it was and she explained that it was his first orgasm. He thought he was a man now and tried to go back to boy's underwear, but Michelle was still stronger and more skilled than he and he found himself face down on the floor with her holding his arm in the middle of his back. His spirit was broken again. He had not gotten the growth hormone and his growth spurt gave him only two inches. His height increased from 5' 2" to 5' 4", not really man-sized at all. Michelle told him that he would continue to grow but secretly knew that it would be very little.

Michelle got the second prescription. She did not tell him that the female hormones, estrogen and progesterin, would induce the secondary characteristics of a woman and prevent him from having a male secondary development. His penis and testicles would be kept from atrophying and he would continue to produce sperm. The absence of certain chemicals would prevent the production of testosterone and reduce any aggressive tendencies that he might have. He would have the drier skin of a woman and his nipples and aureoles would enlarge. If he picked up any fat, it would

go to his hips and breasts. Michelle explained this last development to him, urging him to remain skinny. He understood and made it a point to eat barely enough. Ellen urged him to eat more, but he refused and the nutritionist at the HMO confirmed that he was getting enough to survive on..

Ellen's oldest sister, Teresa had married a medical student who eventually became the town's orthopedist. Keith was a very competent physician and had good bedside manner. From the poor, he would accept insurance money or what the county welfare department paid him and demand no more, but he demanded a lot more from those with good incomes, especially for sports injuries.

A few years after setting up his practice, he bought a small farm on the edge of town, tore down the farmhouse, and built a big house with a huge living room and an even larger dining room. He turned the field in front of the into a huge lawn. When Teresa's father died, he built an apartment on the side of the house for her mother. Keith's house became the house of Teresa's extended family where her mother held court every Sunday afternoon. All that could come for Sunday dinner, each family bringing one dish. Keith always provided the meat, usually a beef dish and a few choices of poultry or seafood. Everybody had a good time, especially Keith. He enjoyed sitting at the head of the table and carving the meat; otherwise he stayed in the background and avoided dominating the situation.

There were six children within a year's age of Stephen, and on the Sundays that it did not rain or snow, they played soccer on the front lawn. Stephen and the other boy, Tommy, dominated the play with the girls just running along and occasionally getting in a kick. One Sunday, over dessert, Grandma spoke up and said that she had been going through an old trunk and found a kilt that her grandfather had as a boy in Scotland before his family emigrated to America in the early nineteenth century. It was mainly black with wide and narrow tan stripes, the McGonicle tartan. Teresa urged her to show it to them, and she went and got it. Ellen suggested that one of the kids should put it on. Several of the girls held it up to their waists but it was way too long or short or so small in the waist that it would not overlap itself and the girl's underpants would show. Michelle spoke up and suggested that Stephen try it. He tried to avoid holding it to his waist but everyone insisted. It obviously fit. There was nothing to be done but that he put it on. Grandma had the tan argyle knee socks to match, too.

Stephen, Michelle and Melissa, Teresa's daughter, went to her room to help Stephen change. He wanted to balk, but he looked at Michelle's eyes and knew he would have to go through with it. He went in the bathroom and switched to the kilt. He came out and complained that he could not wear it because the coarse wool was causing him to itch terribly. He kept reaching under the kilt to scratch. Michelle asked Melissa to lend him a full slip (because a half slip would slide off of his straight figure). He refused the slip until Michelle gave him the look that promised a return to the corset. He turned to go to the bathroom to put on the slip and Michelle whispered to him that he should remove his bra and put it in his pants pocket. He put it on and returned to the bedroom and looked at his back in the mirror. The thin straps and the lace around the top of the slip could be dimly seen. He complained and Michelle said he could put on

his jacket. The outfit really did call for a jacket. The socks itched and Melissa lent him a pair of nylon knee-hi's to wear under the socks. He looked very Scottish.

They went to the living room and everyone liked what they saw. Michelle then suggested it was time for the kids to play some soccer. They were all eager to go outside and burn off some excess energy. Stephen wanted to change first but they insisted that he come as he was. The girls, and Tommy, too, realized that the kilt would be a handicap. The girls had changed from their Sunday dresses to shirts and jeans while Stephen was putting on the kilt. Melissa said the kilt would not restrict his leg movements. Michelle escorted him outside. Stephen was very careful about how he raised his knees, giving the girls a chance to control the ball. After a little while, he forgot what he was wearing and became more active. On a kick, his kilt flew up, exposing the hem of the lacy slip he was wearing. Alice said, "My, that's a pretty petticoat you're wearing."

Stephen blushed. The girls were having the best game ever, ganging up on Tommy, taking the ball away from him, passing it back and forth among themselves, but letting Tommy or Stephen have it occasionally, too. Michelle noticed that Stephen's face was becoming sweaty and insisted that he remove his coat. He might catch a cold. Another girl noticed the outline of the slip under his shirt and remarked, "Alice, he's wearing a full slip, not a petticoat."

Michelle explained, "He doesn't have enough of a figure to hold up a petticoat. It has to be supported from his shoulders. Without the slip, the wool kilt would itch his legs to death. Melissa let him wear one of hers. It *is* pretty, isn't it?"

Stephen blushed again, and Alice kissed him on the cheek, saying, "You look so sweet!"

Later they returned to the house. Ellen was ready to go and Michelle would not give Stephen time to change. She insisted that he tell Melissa, "I'll bring your slip back next Sunday. Thanks for the loan."

She replied, "Keep it. It's too small for me now."

Grandma chimed in, "And keep the kilt, too. You looked so cute in it. I know my grandfather would have wanted you to have it. Wear it next Sunday to remind us that we're from the McGonicle clan. I've got the matching bonnet, too. Let me get it for you." She fetched it from her apartment. Michelle helped Stephen pin it on his red hair.

When they arrived home, Michelle would not let him take off the kilt, saying, "Let your father see it when he comes home from work. He'll get a kick out of it." She complimented him on the way he had played soccer that afternoon. "Girls are not so aggressive and you and Tommy usually hog the ball. You did much better today, letting the girls have it a lot. I liked that and the other girls did, too. I thought Alice went out of her way to be nice to you after the game."

Kevin thought it was sissy, but said nothing. Ellen had explained that if they knew nothing about how Stephen was being changed and assumed that it was Stephen's idea, the welfare department would not give them a hard time. She thought it was enough that Stephen was keeping out of trouble. Kevin agreed, reluctantly.

Stephen complained to Michelle about the lace on his slip and its pink color, and Michelle suggested that he ask his mother for a couple of tailored white ones. He did not want to do that but the thought of wearing the lacy, pink slip again was even more hateful. He said to her, "Mom, could I have a couple of tailored white slips? I hate this pink, lacy one."

Ellen replied, "If that's what you want, it's OK by me. You can take my charge card to the store tomorrow and get what you want."

"Aw, come on, Mom. Get them for me, please."

"No, you're a big girl, now...big boy, I mean. You can buy your own lingerie."

Michelle would not do it for him either, or even go with him. It was Monday and the store was not busy. The lingerie department was nearly empty. Stephen quickly picked up two slips and sidled up to the checkout counter. The clerk was the same one who had checked out Michelle when he had gotten his first panties and bras. She said, "I remember you. Your sister got you some underwear."

Stephen nodded and blushed.

The saleswoman said, "These slips are for you, aren't they?"

Stephen said, "I don't have enough of a figure to hold up a petticoat and my kilt makes me itch real bad."

"Well, these slips are much too big for you and too long to wear under a kilt. Go home and get the kilt and bring it back here right away. We'll find just the right fit for you. You don't want a slip all bunched up around your waist or hanging below the kilt."

He was back in thirty minutes and the area was still free of other customers. He showed it to the clerk, and she helped him pick out a slip that seemed right. She said, "Now, go on back in the dressing room and put on the slip and kilt. We've got to make sure it fits."

He tried to argue with her, but she was as forceful as Michelle, so he did as she said. She went with him, and although he tried to get her to leave while he changed, she stayed. He stripped to his panties and bra, and she helped him into the slip, his shirt and the kilt. Everything looked OK in the dressing room mirror but she insisted that he look at himself in the big mirror beside the checkout. He needed to see himself from a little distance. It looked OK there, too, and she led him back to the dressing room. She was on commission and was trying to think of how to sell him something else. She pulled up her skirt exposing her fancy panties, and said, "Aren't these panties pretty? Wouldn't you like some fancy nylon panties, too? Those plain cotton panties don't have any style at all."

At that point, she pulled up his kilt and slip, exposing his panties, and said, "See how coarse they feel?" and ran her hand across the front of his panties. "Why, you've got an erection. We can't have that. Wait here. I'll be back in a minute." She went out and got a pair of thong panties for him, but one size smaller than the correct fit for him. She returned to the dressing room and had him remove his panties and pull on the thong panties. "Now reach in, push your balls into their recesses, push your prick

back against your crotch, and pull the thong as high as you can on your waist. Put your regular panties back on, dear. Now hold your skirt...your *kilt* and slip up and look at yourself in the mirror. See, you're nice and flat now and even if you get an erection again, it won't show. She let him remove his slip and change back to his shirt and jeans. He left with the two slips and a week's supply of thongs.

When he got home, Michelle checked him out and spotted the thong panties in the bag with his slips. She got him to tell what had happened. She said, "You look so much nicer like this. Wear thong panties under your regular panties from now on. That lump in your panties looked awful. A flat abdomen looks good, and it'll keep you from having an erection or at least keep it from sticking out the front of your skirt...your *kilt*, that is. I'll make sure that your mom approves the purchase of the thong panties, too."

After this, he always wore his kilt to Sunday dinner with his grandmother. He always protested but it got him nowhere. Everybody thought he looked good and that wearing of the kilt added a bit of color and increased their pride in being McGonicles. The kilt reminded everyone that they were members of the clan. Teresa bought a ruffled shirt and gave it to Stephen. He complained that the buttons were on the left but was persuaded to wear it anyhow. Ellen got him a tan jacket to match the tan of the plaid. Alice spotted a pair of clunky shoes with two-inch heels and big burnished-brass buckles. She persuaded her mother to get them for Stephen. She wanted Stephen to look good but she also figured that he would not be able to play soccer too well if he were wearing high heels. That way, she would have more opportunity with the ball. The other children insisted that he play in his good clothes because they would have more opportunities at the ball.

The high heels and Michelle's urging him to let the girls have the ball more led Stephen to less competitive play. He often passed the ball to one of the girls, and was slow to steal it back. The lack of competition led Tommy to softer, more friendly play, too. When the weather was bad, the girls went out of their way to include the boys in their indoor activity. Melissa even gave Stephen one of her dolls to hold while watching a scary movie. He saw what was going on and liked it. Tommy was not so swift but he knew *something* was better, and his life with the girls was easier.

Teresa doted on Melissa. One Sunday at dinner, she remarked to her mother that she wished Melissa had a dress in the McGonicle tartan, but that she had never seen one, had never even seen the tartan except on Stephen's kilt. Her sister-in-law, Elaine, piped up, saying, "You know, I do my art on a loom. If I knew how much cloth was needed. I could weave it for you."

Ellen said, "If you'll pick out a pattern, Terry, I can run it up for Melissa. I'm a pretty good seamstress."

Teresa thanked them and got a pattern the next day. Melissa wanted a fitted dress that would show off her slim waist. Teresa, with Melissa's approval, picked a simple one: a full skirt with three-quarter sleeves puffed at the shoulder, and a scoop neck. Ellen told her how much cloth she would need, Elaine told her how much black and tan polyester thread was required and told her where to get it. It was a lot of work for Elaine because the thread was much finer than what she ordinarily used to make art

weavings. She finally brought the dress length to Sunday dinner and explained that she had worked almost full time on it for three weeks.

Ellen decided to experiment first. She bought the same length of cloth in a pattern roughly similar to the McGonicle tartan, and cut and basted a dress from the pattern. She tried it on Melissa and made a few minor adjustments so that it fitted perfectly. She finished the dress and tried it on Melissa again. It looked good and both Melissa and Teresa liked it. She was now sure that she could make the tartan dress. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, she cut and basted and sewed and it came out perfectly. There was enough leftover cloth for her to make a skirt that appeared to be a kilt. She made one somewhat bigger than Stephen's. One of the other girls would like it. Sunday, she would take it to dinner and Melissa could model it for them all.

Meanwhile, on Thursday night, Melissa and her father had a falling-out over a boy who wanted her to go to a party with him Saturday night. He was from Stephen's old gang and had a terrible reputation. Keith put his foot down, something he had never done before. Melissa wept and raged but he remained adamant. She ate most of a half-gallon of ice cream before going to sleep Thursday night and kept on gorging herself on chocolate and sweets Friday and Saturday. She finally came to her senses Saturday night, but she had gained nine pounds in three days.

On Sunday, she tried on the dress and the zipper would not even come close to closing. Melissa, Teresa, Ellen, and Elaine were all in tears; Melissa because she had screwed up, Teresa because she was responsible for what Melissa did, Ellen because she falsely felt responsible somehow, and Elaine felt that she had wasted her efforts on jerks. Melissa said, "Let one of the other girls wear it today. I'll go on a diet and be able to wear it in a couple of weeks, but let Alice or somebody wear it today."

Alice tried it on but it was too small for her, too. The other girls were as big as Alice or bigger. Alice said, "Stephen's the only one it fits. Let him wear it today."

Stephen exclaimed, "No, it's Melissa's dress and only she should wear it. It won't hurt to wait a few weeks."

Melissa replied, "Please Stephen, I feel so bad about it. Wear it for me today, and I'll make it up to you, please."

He gave in and it fit, except in the bodice. Melissa gave him a couple of foam rubber pads for his bra. He knew enough not to ask why she had them, and she knew better than to ask why he had a bra. He told her that he did not need them but she suggested that the *dress* needed them and that without them, he would look like a boy in a dress. He said no more because he really did not want to look like a boy in a dress. Michelle insisted that he remove the knee sox and wear panty hose. Wearing the socks with the dressy dress would ruin the whole effect. She undid his ponytail and put a hair band under his hair in the back and above his forehead to hold his red hair out of his eyes. When they came back to the dining room, Ellen gave Melissa the kilt that she had made from the leftovers and urged her to wear it. It fit! With Stephen in the tartan dress and Melissa in the new kilt, Ellen and Elaine felt good and Melissa and Teresa felt better. Everybody was much relieved. A bad situation had been recovered.

Just before leaving, Stephen changed back to the kilt and ruffled shirt, and Melissa hung the dress away. Michelle told Stephen to not remove the breast pads and panty

hose. He went home looking more like a girl than ever. Michelle saw to it that he stayed that way until bedtime. Both Kevin and Ellen were concerned about how Stephen was becoming a sissy but they knew that his avoiding the gang and becoming more thoughtful of others was more important. They did not have any other way to accomplish this and they were afraid to know exactly what Michelle was doing. The welfare people had thoroughly intimidated them. In bed at night, Kevin sometimes argued with Ellen, but when she asked him what *he* wanted to do, he could only throw up his hands in frustration.

The next Sunday, Melissa seemed to have lost a little weight but was a trifle taller. Stephen wore the tartan dress again, with all the accessories. In a few weeks, it became evident that she had had a growth spurt and Melissa would never be able to wear the dress. Teresa bought a length of fabric with a beautiful floral pattern of metallic thread. It cost an arm and a leg, but Keith was eager to make up with Melissa and paid without any complaint. Melissa wanted to make up with him, too, and this gave her the opportunity to throw her arms around him and squeal. Ellen used the material to run her up a womanly dress that made both Melissa and Teresa feel good about themselves.

Melissa gave the tartan dress to Stephen and threw in her whole wardrobe from before the growth spurt. None of it fit, or ever would again.

Stephen was less than thrilled, but Michelle saw her opportunity to save him from macho manhood, and perhaps keep him out of trouble with the law. The following Sunday, Stephen wore the tartan dress, panty hose, and three-inch high pumps to dinner but Michelle had him change to a thin blouse, a knee-length denim skirt, black tights with lots of texture, and the clunky shoes with the big buckles.

Everybody in the house thought that he was becoming very sissified, but he *was* keeping out of trouble, he *had* rescued a situation that seemed headed for a bad scene, and it was none of their business. They also thought that events had conspired to make him a sissy because Michelle had kept her part in the process to herself and Stephen had not dared to expose her. The soccer game went well because Stephen was becoming a sportsman, one who played for the fun of being with the other kids. As his sensitivity to their feelings grew, he was able to make their lives more enjoyable, and this made *his* life better, too.

On the way home that afternoon, Ellen drove because Kevin had not come. She was worrying about Stephen's becoming a sissy, a girl, and felt compelled to tease him about it. She said, "Stephen, you've got to be careful about the boys now. You look so feminine that boys will soon be chasing you, asking for dates."

Stephen replied, "Aw, Mom, everybody knows I'm a boy. I wear boy's clothes except for going to Gramma's. No boy is going to ask me out!"

Michelle chimed in, "He's safe enough. Only his close relatives ever see him wearing a dress and looking like a girl."

Ellen continued, "Well, just in case, I want you to know what to do if a boy puts his hands on you. Michelle, you better listen, too. It's OK to hug a boy you like and kiss him on the cheek, but don't let him put his tongue in your mouth."

“Oh, gross!” said Stephen and Michelle together.

“You can shake his hand, or hold it, even, but don't let him put it anywhere else, especially on your legs or breasts or ass. If he does, push him away and scream. If he lifts your skirt, push him, too.”

“OK, mom, OK. That's enough. I won't let any boy use me. I promise.”

Ellen changed the subject.

The next Sunday, Alice's friend Bettie Freeman and her mother drove past Keith's place while Stephen and the other kids were playing soccer. She spotted Alice and asked her mother if she would stop for a minute while she asked Alice about a party. It was a beautiful late fall day, and Mrs. Freeman was willing to sit around for a few minutes. She backed up to where the kids were playing; Bettie got out of the car and called Alice. They stopped the game and Alice went to the fence to talk to Bettie. Stephen made a run for the house. He had a secret crush on Bettie and was terribly afraid that she might recognize him. Michelle overtook him and dragged him to the fence where Tommy and the girls had congregated. Because Bettie knew all the kids but the redheaded one, she looked at him carefully. It dawned on her who she was, and she said, “Why, Stephen, you look very pretty today.”

He blushed and Michelle said, “Stephen, why don't you take Mrs. Freeman in the house and introduce her. It's not fair to make her wait in the car.”

Bettie went with him to the car and said to her mother, “You remember Stephen, don't you? He's been to our house with Michelle a few times.”

She replied, “Why yes, I remember you now. The red hair is a dead giveaway. Not a soul in town has such a shade of red as you do. You do look very becoming, but I've never seen a girl play soccer in a skirt before...or a boy either, for that matter.”

Alice had come up while they were talking and explained, “Playing in girl's clothes keeps him from being so aggressive and puts him more on a par with the rest of us, skill-wise. It makes playing with him a lot more fun.”

Stephen showed Mrs. Freeman where to park and introduced her to his mother, telling her the circumstances. Ellen introduced her to the rest of the people and she was soon caught up in conversation. It did not take much effort for Alice to talk Bettie into playing with them, and now there were two girls in skirts playing. When they finished the game, they went in the house, except Bettie asked Stephen to show her around the estate. When they went around the garage, Bettie spotted a bench behind an evergreen hedge row. She led him to it and they sat.

After a while, Stephen said, “You don't seem to mind seeing me looking like a girl. I thought you would never speak to me again, and I was heartbroken.”

“Oh, no, I think you're cute.” She put her hand on his leg and moved it to the inside of his thigh.

He pushed her hand away, saying, “Mom says I shouldn't let boys feel me up.”

Bettie laughed, “But I'm not a boy, am I?” and she put her hand on his breast.

He just blushed and shook his head.

She kissed him on the lips, sticking her tongue deep into his mouth, then pulled him to his feet. She kissed him again, hugging him around the waist. He put his arms around her neck. Neither wore lipstick so they did not make a big mess. She said, "Can you tell that I like you like this, Stephen?"

He replied, "Oh, yeah. I've had a crush on you for months."

"Well, I hardly knew you existed until today, but I developed a crush on you today."

They went in the house and the Freemans went home. Bettie enthused over Stephen. Her mother remarked about his being a sissy, but Bettie defended him and complained that all the other boys were jerks and were only interested in getting into her panties. Mrs. Freeman knew Bettie was right and changed the subject.

That night, in the kitchen, Stephen asked Ellen if her warning about boy's hands applied to girls, too.

She explained, "That's who the warning is for. Girls need to watch out for a boy's hands."

"No, Mom. That's not what I mean. Should I push a girl away when she runs her hand up my leg and under my skirt?"

"Oh. That only happened to me once or twice when a lesbian made a pass at me. I pushed her away because I'm as straight as the Kansas Interstate. I guess the answer depends on whether you're a lesbian or not. Do you like girls, Stephen?"

"Yeah, mom. That doesn't make me a lesbian, does it?"

"Well, in your case, I guess it doesn't. If you like a particular girl, and she wants to put her hands on you, it would be OK, I guess. Be aware, though, that if you so much as hold her hand in public, you'll be thought a lesbian and many people take offense at that. Be a little discreet. And Michelle, you can hold a boy's hand in public, but nothing more. You don't want to be called a slut."

"Thanks, Aunt Ellen. I'm as straight as you, and I'll deal with boys in the way you suggest. I really don't want to be called a slut."

From then on, Bettie ate lunch with Stephen and Michelle and Michelle's girlfriends, and made a point of sitting beside him. The jocks all wondered what the best-looking girl in the seventh grade saw in such a sissy. Bettie liked Stephen's being so effeminate and came to realize that life was a lot easier without the attention of the jocks and the attendant pressures. Mrs. Freeman saw that Bettie was more relaxed and accepting of herself and less pressured. Stephen was welcome in their home, even when Bettie invited him over one evening and he came in a dress. In Mrs. Freeman's mind, he was Bettie's girlfriend and she did not feel the need to check on them when they watched videos in the darkened family room.

She knew that they explored each other with their hands for they often looked disheveled when they went to the kitchen for snacks and sodas. Ellen and Kevin had the same feelings when Stephen put on a dress and invited Bettie to their home in the evening. Michelle worried about their having sex and Bettie's getting pregnant so she stayed with them when it was video time. She expressed her worries to her mother, and Patsy urged her to talk to them. She added, "Stephen keeps his testicles in their

recesses and the body heat there kills the sperm. He's temporarily sterile until he lets them hang down again.”

The next time Bettie was over, Michelle asked them if they knew what to do about avoiding babies. Stephen blushed as Bettie matter-of-factly told her that they never had real sex but that she had a condom just in case and knew how to put it on Stephen. Bettie explained that actually she had never done anything but hand jobs and that seemed plenty good enough for now. Stephen nodded. Michelle told them that she was relieved, kissed them both and left them to watch the video alone.

At the school cafeteria the next Friday, Bettie proposed that Stephen and Michelle come to the mall with her after supper. Her mother would provide transportation. Stephen could wear the same outfit he had worn on Sunday, or one like it. Stephen got a worried expression on his face. Helen asked if she could come, too. Bettie and Michelle said, “Yes,” in unison. Stephen looked even more worried. They arranged for Helen, who lived near Bettie's home, to walk there. Bettie's mother would take them to Stephen's, then the mall. She would pick them up from the mall when the movie was over and bring them home for a snack and then deliver them to their respective homes. Whoever could not get permission would call Bettie as soon as they got home. Nobody did. When Stephen and Michelle got home, his Mom gave approval when it was explained that Bettie's mother was controlling the situation.

Stephen complained to Michelle about Bettie's wanting him to wear a skirt and sweater as he had on Sunday. Michelle tried to explain that Bettie was afraid of dating boys for fear that they would act like jerks. Stephen had demonstrated his acceptance of girls to Bettie at the cafeteria lunch table and proved it by dressing as a girl on Sundays and when they were together at his or her house. She felt safe with him whereas other boys made her feel that she did not know what would happen next. Some girls, especially if they had problems at home with a parent that was unpredictable, like the excitement of dating wild boys because of the uncertainty. Bettie's home was one where tolerance and acceptance was practiced and preached, and she found Stephen, in his femininity, to be predictable, and she had no problem with his crossing the line between male and female.

When he arrived home from school, Stephen called Ellen at work and asked if he could go the mall and a movie with Bettie and her mother. He explained that it would just be the four girls: he, Michelle, Bettie, and Helen. She OK'd it. He did his homework, then got dressed for the date. He put on a B-cup bra with the falsies, a white slip with lots of lace, black tights, tan pumps with one and a half-inch heels, and a fitted dress in green and tan plaid. He undid his ponytail, brushed it to the sides and back, and combed his bangs into his eyes. At school, he kept them brushed to the side, and, when they worked their way to the front, pushed them back again. Michelle wore maroon slacks, tight in the hips and crotch but loose in the leg, brown mocs, and a pink jersey turtleneck.

At dinner, Ellen complimented both Stephen and Michelle on how pretty they looked. Kevin told them that they looked nice. Bettie's mother picked them up on time.

Helen was surprised to see Stephen in a dress and said, "Gee, Stephen, you're so sweet and girlish, but I had no idea that you wore dresses. You're a bigger sissy than I thought."

Stephen turned white and started to weep.

Bettie said, "Don't make fun of Stephanie. He's a better girl than I am, and I really like that."

Bettie's mother said, "If you're going to fight, I'll just turn around and take you back to your homes."

Helen said, "I'm sorry, Stephanie. You make a good girl, and you're OK as you are."

Bettie's mother deposited them at the mall, and they did a little window shopping before the movie started. They got candy bars in a drug store before going to the theater. Afterwards, they went to a fast food restaurant for sodas and conversation. Stephen had been in a nervous condition the whole time, except while watching the movie, for fear that they would meet someone from school and he would be recognized. Sure enough, two boys from school spotted them and came over and chatted them up. One of them asked Stephen who he was. He hesitated, and Helen piped up, "That's Stephen Jackson. You know him. He's in our class at school."

The boy said, "Oh, is that you, Stephen? I didn't recognize you in a dress. You're not the sissy I thought you were. You're a *transvestite!*" The boys pulled up a couple of chairs and sat with the girls, but not beside Stephen. His face was white and he was weeping again.

Bettie said, "You're really a jerk, Tom. You've embarrassed him and made him cry. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. I'm going to the entrance where Mom is meeting us."

She stood up and left. Stephen and Michelle followed her. After a moment, Helen followed. The boys went with them with Tom trying to apologize, but every time he said something, he put his foot in his mouth further. After they had been at the entrance for a few minutes, Bettie's mother came and the girls left. She asked them how the movie was and they all said, "Fine," in depressed voices.

Bettie whispered to Stephen, "That was bad. I'll make it up to you."

Stephen replied, "It's not *your* fault that Helen is such a jerk. Forget about it. I'll be OK...I think."

Bettie kissed him and stuck her tongue down his throat. "I love you."

Michelle whispered to Helen, "You're dead meat."

At school the next day, Michelle told three of her girl friends that it was time for Stephen to start using the girls' toilet. They would engage him in conversation and walk him into the girls' room before he knew what was happening. He realized what was going on a couple of seconds before he went through the door. He hesitated for a moment, then went on in, used a stall, washed his hands, and checked himself out in the mirror. He pulled the rubber band off his ponytail, caught up some loose hair with it, and replaced the rubber band. Alice, stopped him, drew his hair into a higher pony-

tail, secured it with his rubber band, took a scrunchy from her wrist and covered his rubber band with it. He had become a tomboy.

The school decided to have an ethnic heritage day where the students would wear clothes from their ancestral homelands. The Indian girls would wear saris, if they had them, the Native Americans would wear buckskins, and so on. The principal had proposed that ethnic food be brought from home, but the dietitian vetoed that because teen-age children were very picky eaters. Michelle was enthusiastic about it and told Stephen that he could wear his kilt and bonnet and represent Scotland. Stephen tried to back out to no avail. Michelle opined that he could wear the tartan dress instead. He said no more.

On the appointed day, Michelle helped Stephen get dressed and arranged his hair with a hair band running under his hair at the neck and across his forehead, explaining that a pony tail was not a Scottish hair style. He pointed out that a hair band was not either, and she suggested that he might like it in barrettes. She took off the hair band and put on the bonnet, pinning it in place and used other hair pins to keep it off his face.

Michelle felt that Stephen was now willing to go along with her plan to keep him out of trouble by sissifying him. She was coming to like him as he became less selfish and more thoughtful, and she did not want to cause him unnecessary pain. He needed to be perceived as a sissy at school. The boys would avoid socializing with him because someone might call them sissies for even being seen with him. The worst thing that can happen to a schoolchild is to be out of the mainstream. Kids think being strange is contagious. They *think* that they want to be different, but only different in the same way as their peers. Being seen as effeminate would make him more acceptable to the girls, as a girlfriend, if Michelle appeared to vouch for him. Associating with a sissy boy did not make a girl unacceptable to either the other girls or to the boys.

When he got home that afternoon, Stephen switched to a predominately red blouse and long skirt without Michelle's prompting him. He was doing his homework at the kitchen table and having trouble with a math problem. He pulled his feet up and wrapped his arms around his knees. His skirt was in his lap and it and his slip was spilling out both sides. It was the first one that he had ever worn, the one he borrowed from Melissa, and the one that drove him to buy the two white tailored ones.

Michelle came in and poured herself some soda. His wearing a skirt surprised her a little but the pink, lacy slip was a bigger surprise. She had avoided teasing him ever since she had started his sissification, but temptation overcame her. "Well, Stephanie, I thought you hated that slip. You made a big deal out of not wearing it when you first got it."

"Aw, Michelle, don't make fun of me. I thought it would please you. I put on the skirt so you would know that I'm not mad at you any more. I've promised myself that I won't fight you about being a sissy or a girl. Everybody seems to like me better this way. The girls at school seem willing to associate with a sissy. Sometimes I even get the impression that some of them think of me as a tomboy, not a sissy. The family treats me as if I've been a girl all my life. Playing ball the girls' way lets us be friendly afterwards. It's all OK."

"I think it would be OK for you to dress to suit yourself, at least until you appear to be headed for trouble. I hate pushing you around; maybe you can keep out of trouble on your own."

Stephen replied, "I'm going to keep on wearing girls' panties and bras, but I'm going to switch to nylon lingerie except for sports. I'm envious of Bettie; she looks so nice in her fancy pants and bra. Melissa gave me some fancy underwear, and I'm going to ask Mom to get me some more. I want some new cotton panties and bras with flower prints for sports. Plain cotton panties seem so boyish."

The next morning, Stephen could not find his hormone pills. Michelle got them out of her room, explaining that she had thought he would not want to continue them.

He asked her to help him with his corset. She had let him quit wearing it because he had begun behaving better and she hated to see him suffer. Now he *wanted* to wear it! She could see the outline of his bra and the straps of his corset through his shirt but she said nothing. When he got home that afternoon, he changed to a dress and tights, and spent the rest of the day as a girl, even when the three of them, he, Michelle, and Ellen went to a roasted chicken place for supper and then to the supermarket.

Michelle called her mother the following morning, worried. "Mom, I think I've screwed it up. Stephanie's come one hundred eighty degrees around. He likes being a girl and wants to be one all the time; a tomboy sometimes but a girly girl, too. Now he likes that pink lacy slip Melissa gave him and wears it and a dress after school. I think he's going to start wearing skirts to school. I think I've pushed him too far!"

Patsy asked, "How is his behavior? Is he still running with that awful gang? Do you think he's trying to manipulate you so that he can go back to his old ways?"

