



Reluctant Press presents:

Her Son's Name Is
CHRISTINE

Philippa Peters



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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Her Son's Name Is CHRISTINE!

A continuation of the story, *My Father's Name is Jennifer*

by **Philippa Peters**

I. LIFE WITH MY MOTHERS

"You have to talk to your father for me," my mother snapped at me over the phone. "I've tried calling that clinic of his but they keep on saying that he is away."

"Jennifer is away, mother," I told her. "She's in Canada for a while, at a really big conference, I think."

It was easy to lie to my mother. She wouldn't check up on me. She never had. I wasn't going to tell her that Jennifer, my father, was in fact at a clinic somewhere in Montreal, Canada, having her sex reassignment surgery at last. My mother thought that Jennifer had had the surgery years before.

"Since you two are such buddies again after that time with her in Haversham," my mother sneered at me, "you talk to her, Jack. Tell her that I have to have more money, about a hundred thousand."

"But, mother," I protested. "You've just sold the apartment in New York." That left me homeless except for my residence at the university which I was soon going to have to vacate. "You got millions for that."

"Yes, well," said my mother snappishly. "That's gone. Pablo's investments have been taken over by some awful socialist government in South America. Pablo's down there now, trying to find out what happened and to get our money back. I need money, Jack."

Tell your father. The Ritz hasn't lowered its prices over the last five years, you know. Where else is there to stay in New York?"

"Mother," I said to her, as I had many times before. "Pablo has absconded with your money. You are never going to see him or your money ever again. Why don't you call in the police?"

"Oh, that's just like you," said my mother angrily. "You never did like Pablo." She was off on one of her rants against me, about what an awful son I had turned out to be. I listened for a while, then went into the kitchen and made myself a sandwich. When I got back to the phone, she was still going on about Pablo.

"I'll talk to Jennifer when I see her," I told my mother. "I have to leave the residence next week. My lease is up and I have to find a job, so I don't know when that will be."

"Why don't you just go up and see Jennifer, then?" said my mother. She was unable to keep the sneer out of her voice when she used the feminine name that her former husband, my father, now used. "She will give you anything that you want. You know that. And you wouldn't want to see me reduced to living in Harlem, would you?"

The idea of a racist bitch like my mother living in Harlem was ludicrous. I could barely keep from laughing out loud.

"I'll talk to Jennifer," I told her. "But, mother, no one stays at the Ritz any more."

"I do," Carol Sheffield, my genetic mother, snapped at me. Then she slammed down the phone.

"Way to win friends and influence people," I said to the dead phone as I hung it up.

Having listened to my mother made me wonder just how rich my genetic father really was. My mother had never worked; since their divorce, she had flitted round the world with one boy friend after another. The boy friends were gigolos, in reality. They had been in their early twenties, even as my mother became older and older.

I headed down to the Student Employment Office. Some wag had gotten up on the roof again and the letters 'Un' appeared in front of 'Employment'. Judith was standing in front of the huge noticeboard.

"Anything new, Judy?" I asked her. Judith whipped around, then saw that it was me.

"No, Jack." I was John Molloy Sheffield, John or Johnny to everyone at the university. I had had a fling with Judith after sitting next to her on the flight back from Haversham to New York. I had never told her that I was 'Jack' to my mother and father.

"So, which café are you going to be a waitress in?" I asked her.

"Thinking of coming there and pestering me?" asked Judith. No, our little affair hadn't ended well, not after I got back early to my residence and found her making love to one of the biggest lugs on campus. She stomped petulantly and I was left to check in once more with the Unemployment Office.

"I thought you were away for the whole weekend," didn't cut it as an excuse when Judith said it to me. I told her so, then the real recriminations started. I wasn't manly enough for her. Bart had hair on his legs and on his masculine equipment. It wasn't like making it with a junior high school kid as it was when Judith was making it with *me*.

Actually, my hair had started to grow back. When I came back from Haversham, I was without eyebrows, hair on my head or anywhere on my body. She loved me being so smooth, she told me many times at the start. I didn't remind her of that as she stamped her foot at me and slammed my door as she left.

I shouldn't have given her the silent treatment, I suppose. Judith had been very good for my masculine ego after the days that I spent with my mother in Haversham. Yes, I thought of my father as my mother now, although I called him Jennifer all the time. I thought of Jennifer that way. Carol was simply 'Mother' with a capital 'M'. It was Jennifer who had been the nurturing parent all through my early life when she was just 'Dad'. Visiting her in Haversham had rekindled the affection I had for her. We had swept away all the lies Mother had told me about Jennifer. I understood so much more, after that visit, why my father had to become a woman.

I talked to Jennifer after she had arrived in Montreal and she told me about the lovely place she was renting in Westmount, the English part of the city. Charlie Greenwood was with her.

"So when are you kids going to get married?" I teased my mother.

There was a little pause then. "We're thinking of late July," my mother, Jennifer, told me then. "Will you be able to stop whatever job you are doing and be part of the wedding? It just won't be the same without you."

"I'll be there," I assured her. "Just as long as Christine isn't expected to be."

Jennifer laughed at me then. "No, she's long gone, isn't she?" my mother said. Christine had been my name when I had taken her up on her dare that the only way I could understand her was to 'walk a mile in her shoes.' I had dressed as a girl for two days and it had been an earth-shattering experience, for a time. It was why I had no body hair and no eyebrows to speak of. I had shaved off my hair and claimed to have come back from the tropics and done it on the advice of my doctor.

My lie worked for a while with Judith. It was a pity we broke up just before Christmas. I would have loved to take her back to Haversham and have her meet my mother.

"You know that when you come back," I ended my call to Jennifer by saying, "I am going to be calling you Mummy."

"Oh no," Jennifer gasped. "You mustn't! You really don't have to do that!"

"I am going to," I laughed. "You really were my mother all of these years. You are still nurturing me, even now. I'll only come to your wedding if I can call you Mummy, Jennifer."

"Then I suppose," she began, "that I shall have to agree, darling. It will be so great to see you in Haversham in the summer. It's going to be a small, quiet wedding."

We ended with her telling me how much she loved me, as any mother would. I added, "I love you, too, Mummy," as I hung up. I hoped that helped take back some of the harsh words I said to her in the first few days of our re-acquaintance in Haversham. I hadn't been very nice to the person in a dress, long hair and makeup who said that she was my father.

But Jennifer had been so kind to me. In exasperation with me, she challenged me to understand her. I didn't have to take her up on the offer to be her daughter, basically, for a day. I hadn't expected that she would have had a friend like Andrea, another transsexual. Andrea ran a model agency and saw nothing wrong in transforming me into someone who could have been one of Moore Models, Andrea's agency. I learned so much what it was like to be a girl and I had begun to understand my mother, Jennifer, much better.

I hoped that she didn't have *too* small a wedding. I hoped Charlie, her lover, could persuade her to be a bride in a long, white, flowing dress. She deserved it and I would tell Charlie so when I met him again.

After Mother's telephone call, I called the number Jennifer had given me and was shuffled off to her voice mail. I left her a message. She had been scheduled for her surgery two days before; I couldn't expect her to call back after the trauma she was undoubtedly going through. I had listened to her one night telling me about all the doubts she had about undergoing the final operation to make her a woman.

Jennifer had been thinking that maybe she shouldn't go through with it. What if Charlie didn't like her any more? They had such a wonderful sex life as it was and he wouldn't be able to touch her for so long. What if he didn't like her new sex organs? What if she didn't feel pleasure? What if she couldn't show Charlie how much she was aroused by him and loved him?

"Jennifer, he loves you," I told her. Charlie idolized my mother and it wasn't just because she was a better surgeon than he was. "Those last two days, when I saw you together in Haversham, it was very, very obvious," I told her. "Charlie clearly thinks of you as a woman as well. Every move he makes shows that you are his woman and he is the man in your relationship. Really, Jennifer, this is only going to be cosmetic surgery for you."

II. IT DOESN'T HAPPEN TO EVERYONE

It was Charlie on the phone from Montreal, Dr. Charles Greenwood, a partner with my mother in the clinic they belonged to in Haversham.

"Charlie!" I gasped, responding to the somber tones which which he had asked for me. "Did everything go well with my mother?"

Charlie stopped for a moment. "It's Jack, isn't it?" he asked.

"Yes, yes," I said. "How is Jennifer? Is something wrong?"

"The sex reassignment surgery went perfectly," said Charlie. I relaxed a little, a huge sense of relief coming over me. "It's something else they found in the surgery, Jack, and so they transferred her to the General Hospital here."

I think the blood must have drained out of my face. I stopped in the middle of the quadrangle and people walking behind me walked right into me. "Hey, man!" one guy yelled. He stopped and added, "Sorry," as he saw my face.

For a moment, I thought that my heart had stopped as I stood there. Charlie talked about tumors they had found and wasn't it lucky in a way as they were quite hidden and

wouldn't have been found until they had meta-somethinged into her organs. Jennifer had had surgery the previous night; the surgeon was very confident he had gotten them out completely but Jennifer wasn't going to be a hundred percent for a long time.

"I'm coming up to Montreal," I told him. I could use the last few dollars in my bank account to do that.

"You don't need to," said Charlie. "I was there through both her surgeries. She won't really be conscious for a week. I'll want her to move back to Haversham as soon as it's safe for her to do so. She's not a heart risk so she'll be able to fly. You could do me a favor though."

"Anything," I said.

"Come up to Haversham in a couple of weeks or so," Charlie said. "You haven't found a job yet, have you? How about being my assistant for a week or more? I'll pay you and you'll be able to visit with your, your mother and she will be able to talk with you."

"That's a long time," I said, wondering why he wanted to keep me away from her.

Charlie seemed to understand. "There are things she has to do after the sex surgery," he said to me bluntly, "that aren't very pretty that she wanted to keep both of us away from. How about, if she asks for you, I send you a plane ticket for the next available flight from Kennedy? If she wants you to wait till she gets to Haversham, will you respect her wishes?"

I really wanted to go to Jennifer. Charlie was trying to be kind to me and protect Jennifer as well. He had been with her for much longer than me since my other mother and Jennifer divorced. I had really only had a week with Jennifer last year. I would have gone to her at Christmas but the airlines were jammed. We had to agree to just chat on the phone over Christmas. Jennifer had been most concerned that I had broken up with Judith. She had been looking forward to meeting her son's girlfriend, she told me.

I didn't look very hard for a job as I was worried about Jennifer. I jumped when the telephone rang every day. I finally booked a flight to Haversham with the last of my money. Charlie told me where to find a key to the house. Then I met Judith again in the lounge as the passengers for Haversham gathered near the jetway entrance.

"You're not sitting beside me again?" said Judith with a toss of her long, dark hair.

"If you're in row 12, you are," I told her. The look on her face was priceless. "Hey, it won't be so bad. I have a book that I want to read."

"Me, too," Judith said grimly. I really didn't understand her. Shouldn't I be the aggrieved party? She was the one who had been sleeping around. She was making it appear to everyone in school like I had done something awful by dumping her. She was the one who had ended what we had by slamming the door and walking out on me.

During the flight, thoughts of Jennifer kept interfering with me, preventing me from reading.

"What are you going back to Haversham for?" asked Judith.

"My mother," I told her. She closed her book.

"Me too," Judith said.

"Mine had cancer surgery," I said to her.

"Mine, too," said Judith. "That's why I have to go back to Shelby." I had learned from her that Shelby was 'the deadest place in the whole effing world' on a Saturday night. Jude had sworn that she wouldn't go back there ever again. If her mother wanted to see her, she could just come to New York, she had said.

"The job situation might be better up here," I said to her.

"Are you kidding me?" said Judith bitterly. "I'll be pumping gas on the Interstate for fourteen hours a day to make enough money to get back to Sunnyside." That was our private name for the State University of New York; the name hadn't caught on with anyone else but Judith and me. "That is, if I can wrest the job out of some pimply high school kid's hands before they get let out after exams. What will you be doing in Haversham?"

"Me?" I asked her. "Oh, a doctor friend of my mother's needs an assistant for a couple of weeks. After that, I'm not sure."

"He'll keep you on," Judith said, almost sneering at me. "A professional courtesy to your mother. You always fall on your feet, don't you, Jackie boy? You never did tell me. What does she do, gynie, peedie, what?"

"She's not a gynecologist, a pediatrician or a what," I told Judith. "And Dr. Greenwood wouldn't give me a job as a personal courtesy to my mother." I didn't want Judith poking around, looking for me. "He isn't really a friend of my mother's, just an acquaintance, really."

"Some acquaintance," snorted Judith. "Ask him if he's got any other juicy intern jobs lying around the office. I know a dozen people who work in Haversham who could give me a ride into town."

"What type of cancer?" I changed the subject.

"Mastectomy," said Judith darkly. "My mother had a mastectomy. And yours?"

What could I say? I kind of thought that it might be prostate cancer from the medical gobbledegook Charlie was feeding me. "Her ovaries, I think," I said. "She's lucky they caught it."

Judith pulled a wry face. "I know I shouldn't say this but if I had to choose, I would prefer to have something internal rather than external. My dad was saying that my mother was having fits over losing a breast. Do you know what it's like to be a woman without breasts, having to wear padding all the time?"

I *did* know what it was like to be a woman without real breasts but I couldn't say anything about that to Judith. I mumbled something.

"She thinks that she isn't a woman at all," Judith went on. I had to shudder at that as Andrea had said I should wear mastectomy pads in the bra that I wore when I was Christine. Now I was glad that I hadn't.

We talked all the way into Haversham. "I should have been nicer to you, shouldn't I?" said Judith as we waited for our luggage.

"I was pretty hurt with what you said," I murmured, watching the bags come down.

“Didn’t stop you boffing Steph Smith at the Greek Bash, did it?” asked Judith with a funny smile.

“That was weeks later,” I said.

“Two,” said Judith. She waved to me then as she went off to find a cab. I suppose she was right. I *had* gotten over her pretty quickly.

I found the key where Charlie had said it was and entered Jennifer’s house with a slight sense of apprehension. Nothing was changed but a picture in the living room. I went into the room I had used before and dumped my bag. The first thing I spotted was a collection of photographs on the chest of drawers. They were all pictures of me, pictures of me from when I had been Christine.

I had an ominous unsettling feeling in my stomach as I looked at the pictures of me as a female fashion model, smiling at the camera as if I loved wearing the clothing I had on. The picture of me in the long, strapless, yellow, evening dress made me feel as if I was in it. I clasped my hands to my chest and shoulders but I was still me.

I hesitated to open the closet door but I did. There they were, all the outfits I had worn for the picture shoot, all the designer clothes that had been brought over to David Backman’s studio where the photographer of the same name took my picture so many times. There were even a few things I hadn’t worn but I had seen earlier in the fashion show. No wonder Rosemary Dallbrooks, the daughter of the boutique’s owner, had been smiling so much as she wrote in her notebook while my mother had talked to her. It looked like Jennifer had bought out the show.

I opened the top drawer of the chest of drawers and there were the panties I had worn and a whole lot more. I touched the soft silk and a shiver went right through me. I closed the drawer hastily. What was Jennifer thinking, to have a room like this ready for me. Did she think that I was going to come back to Haversham and be her daughter again?

No, I said to myself, I was *not* going to do that again. No, I was not ever going to wear that yellow dress hanging over the yellow high heels in the far part of the closet again.

I swallowed and turned down the bed. There was the nightie I had worn for one night. I had dreamed that I was wearing a long-skirted, evening dress. It was swirling about me as I danced with Grant Kinsley as he smiled and held me tightly around my waist.

I shuddered and shook. Grant Kinsley was the man who had kissed me as if I was a girl and turned my senses to mush. He was the man with whom I had so embarrassed myself in his car, kissing him and putting his hands on me when he had had his fill of making me feel like a woman and wanted to stop.

My cheeks turned bright red as I looked at myself in the mirror. Oh God, I promised myself, I am absolutely not going to do anything like that again. No, not ever, never, never, never. It was going to be *so* embarrassing, if I ever met him again. I must just stay away from Moore Models, Andrea Moore and any suggestion that I dress as a girl again. I must learn how to take the teasing I would get if I did meet Andrea again. I would definitely not rise to the bait and let on that it was anything more than a sophomoric joke to me.

“Yo!” called a male voice from the door. “We are home!”

I hurried out of my room. There was Charlie Greenwood at the front door, holding the door as the ambulance attendants steered Jennifer in her wheelchair into the house.

"Here we are, Dr. Whitehouse," said one cheerfully. "Home, all safe and sound."

Jennifer looked quite peaked, I thought, as she smiled up at the attendant. "Thank you," she said in her familiar, soprano voice. "I don't know what Dr Greenwood was thinking of, having me come home as if I was still a patient. I could have walked, you know."

Jennifer tottered to her feet, in her black, shiny, high heels. Charlie and one of the attendants were there right away to catch her. "Oh," she said, with a laugh, "I've been sitting down too long."

Then she saw me and the look of pain on her face dissolved immediately. "Jack!" my mother called out, filling me with joy at seeing her. "You did come after all!" She held out her arms to me. I put my arms about her and hugged her warmly.

Her reddish hair was plaited about her head and pinned in a little bun at the back of her head. She was exquisitely made-up. She was as fragrant with 'Joy' as I remembered her being from my last visit. But she did look a little older and her eyes were definitely strained. I hugged her and felt her breasts against me as tears came to her eyes.

"We weren't expecting you today!" Jennifer smiled at me. "How did you get in?"

"I talked to Charlie," I told her. I helped her over to the sofa and assisted her to sit down. She made sure to adjust the skirts of her burnt orange dress beneath her and about her stockinged legs. Behind us, Charlie ushered the attendants out and stepped outside for a moment to pay them.

"Are they gone?" asked Jennifer as she held onto my hand. Her own hands were soft and her nails were long, pink and femininely shaped. I nodded as I looked at her, my father, and realized that she was now completely a woman. "Don't change your sex, Jack," she said to me with an attempt at a smile. "Really, it's the pits. I can't believe Peggy and Nikki went through it so easily. I've had nothing but complications. You wouldn't believe it if I told you. It must be my age or something."

"Then I should change my sex while I'm still young and healthy," I quipped.

"Of course," laughed Jennifer, patting my arm. She studied my face and my hair. "It's all grown back then, just as untidy as it was before. Have you had it cut since you had it all shaved off?"

"I have indeed, Mummy, three times," I told her. "And if you had arrived home tomorrow as Charlie led me to believe, you'd have seen me all neat, barbered and clipped."

"Oh, so you came home early," Jennifer said with that lovely smile of hers, "to surprise us and we came home early to surprise you."

"I beat you by only minutes," I told her. "If I had looked around, I probably would have seen you at the airport."

"Oh no," said Jennifer with a smile. "Grant leant us the Shavers company jet. We didn't have to go through the arrivals gate or anything."

"Grant?" I said stupidly. My senses were spinning again and my mother looked guiltily over to the piano. There it was. A large copy of the picture of Grant and me, as Christine, smiling and hugging after the Cubs win over the Dodgers, was positioned in pride of place, along with other pictures of me, walking hand-in-hand with Grant, or leaning against him as he hugged me into him at Wrigley Field.

"We bought all the pictures the free-lance photographer had of you and Grant," Jennifer said. "They were such good photos of Christine. She looked so pretty and seemed so much to be enjoying herself. Grant was right, you know. You did need that day out, as a girl, with a male friend to treat you like a girl as Grant did. I think it did a world of good for you."

"I'm not going to have to look at those photos every minute that I am here, am I?" I asked her. My heart beat at a million beats per second as I looked at the pretty girl that I had been.

"No," said my mother. Then her hand flew to her mouth. "Oh, your room! Have you been in there?" I nodded. "I meant to put it all away in the basement before you came. You'll have nowhere to put your male clothes, will you?"

"I don't have much, Mummy," I told her. She reached over and pulled me to her and kissed my face. That was when Charlie came in.

"Hey, hey!" he called at me. "I know she's your mother but, if Jen's going to be kissing any men around here, it's going to be me."

Smarmy, I thought, but it got Charlie a little kissing session with Jennifer then. I had to move off, closer to the pictures of Grant and me, in which I seemed even more compellingly female than I did from far away.

"I have to move the thing around," said Jennifer in a whisper but I heard her clearly.

Charlie bent over her and picked her up, one hand under Jennifer's thighs. "Excuse us ... Jack. Yes, Jack it is, isn't it?" Charlie said. I would have died of mortification if he had called me Christine as I think he was going to do. What was wrong with him? I thought, as I stood in front of the string of photos of 'her,' Christine?

"We'll have to do this several times a day," Charlie said as he carried my mother off to her lovely bedroom. "You'll have to get used to it."

I waited and looked at the pictures of me. All of the model pictures were on display. I looked at myself in many dresses and in many girlish poses. Worse were the candid photos at the ball park. Oh, did I really look like that when I got in and out of a car, with my legs all exposed like that? I shivered and turned away from looking at myself.

Charlie came back then. I flushed as he raised an eyebrow when he saw what I had been looking at. "Jennifer is lying down for just a moment," he said.

"She said that the sex reassignment surgery was terrible," I began but Charlie was shaking his head.

"No," he said sharply, looking hard at me. "That went very well. Jennifer is entirely a woman now and we're following the program. She has to have stents inside her to keep the lips of her vagina from closing up again as well as to shape her uterus."

I had to shiver as Charlie spoke of my father and referred to sex organs a father shouldn't have, in fact didn't really have. "But she's in pain," I said.

"Very little from the sex change surgery but I haven't let her know about the cancer yet," said Charlie, "which has been very difficult to conceal from her since your mother is such a wonderful doctor."

"You haven't told her that she has cancer!" I exclaimed.

"Because she doesn't," snapped Charlie at me. "Not any more. But it's the after effects of that surgery that are sapping her of strength right now. When she's better, stronger, I plan to tell her but stress would be the worst thing for her right now. I would appreciate your not telling her for a week at least."

I could agree to that. I told Charlie that I wouldn't ask her for money for Carol either as my other Mother wanted me to. Charlie frowned at that.

"A hundred thousand dollars?" he fumed. "I shall have to talk to Carol. She may not realize that Jennifer is not making any money this year. She's put off taking on any new surgeries and referred patients to other doctors because we didn't know when Montreal was going to call us for her surgery. She won't be able to work for a long time. I earn enough to take care of the alimony Jennifer promised your mother but that's all I can do for your family, Jack."

I swallowed. "My university fees?" I asked.

Charlie shrugged. "You'll have to work a lot this summer if you want to go back in September," he said. "I really can't afford the thirty thousand she laid out for you. I'm not going to ask her to go into debt to get it for you which we both know she would do. It's going to be tough enough for her to restore her practice in the year ahead once we are married."

"You are going to marry Jennifer this year?" I asked. I got funny feeling in my stomach again at the thought of my father getting married again, this time to another man.

"Definitely," said Charlie. "No matter the circumstances. We may set it back to August or September but Jennifer *is* going to be my wife. I hope you aren't going to give us any problems about that."

"N-No!" I said nervously, still a little flushed at the thoughts floating around in my mind.

"Yes, we will have a church wedding," said Charlie then, a gleam in his eyes as he looked at me. "She will be a bride in a white gown. I am going to insist. Would you like to be one of the bridesmaids?"

I jumped away from the kitchen counter as if I had been shot, my face on fire. "You, you," I spluttered.

"Sorry," said Charlie then. "Cheap shot. I promised Jennifer I wouldn't do that." Which meant that he must have been making all kinds of comments about me when I wasn't there to defend myself, I thought angrily. "Seeing you here and seeing you standing in front of those photographs, I remember how vivacious you were as Christine and how

much your mother loved seeing you that way. I loved the way you made her so happy the day that we went to Chicago with Grant."

Don't remind me. Please don't remind me, I thought furiously. I think he was waiting for an answer to his comments about me. I didn't want to talk to him about Grant at all. He was about to say something more when the doorbell rang and he went off to answer it.

I had recovered my composure only a little when Andrea came clicking into the kitchen in a figure-hugging black dress, black high heels and a new brunette, pageboy hair style. "Well, hello, Christine," she said when she saw me. "How is your mother looking after her surgery? She can't be as poorly as Charlie says she is?"

I had to remember that Andrea had had the same surgery that my mother had just had but much longer ago. She would remember all the things that she went through and was probably comparing it to what my mother was going through.

"Mummy seemed pretty weak," I told Andrea. "She was quite wobbly which is why we still have the wheelchair."

Andrea pulled a face. "Ugh," she said. "I wish you didn't speak to me like that. You had such a lovely voice when you were using the spray I gave you. So, are we going to see the resurrection of Christine any time soon? I know that it would please your mother and aid in her recovery a great deal."

"No," I said, thinking of wearing dresses again, tucking my male parts away, binding my chest and sticking on fake boobies. "I-I'm not doing anything like that again."



"Pity," said Andrea. Charlie came from Jennifer's bedroom, his as well as hers, I supposed. He beckoned Andrea to come see Jennifer. "I have a class in how to be a fashion model starting next week as well as an offer of two hundred and fifty thousand for you to be in a fashion spread for *Exquisite Girl Cosmetics*, based on your photo shoot with David Backman."

Andrea waltzed off to speak to my mother. I was left speechless, my heart beating furiously, as I heard Andrea greet my mother. "I always knew that you should be a woman, darling!" Andrea said in her sweet, soprano voice. Mine had been very similar when I was Christine. "You should have done it before you became a one-man woman, you really should. Think of all you've missed that you and I could have done together."

I retreated to my own bedroom. The door to the closet was open with all the pretty dresses in sight. The nightie was still draped across the bed. Somehow, I had managed to turn the photos so that Christine smiled at me from every one of them.

I heard Andrea go. I lay on the bed, thought about money and the way Andrea had talked to me. I thought about the room my mother had kept for me with all the girlish clothes in it.

I crept out a little later. Charlie was watching some sport on television. "Jennifer is asleep," he said, glancing over at me. "I'll call you if she wakes up. I've given her a beeper. She can call me if she wants something."

I nodded. "I have to make a call," I said. "A local call, a girl from the university that I was on the plane with. May I use the phone?"

"You don't have to ask," said Charlie with an attempt at a smile. "Make yourself at home while you're here."

My fingers were trembling as I called Andrea Moore. I told her that I would like to earn two hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

III. CONTRACT

"I don't do this with all my fashion models," said Andrea as I went over to see her in the morning. Jennifer said she could cope and I shouldn't worry. I even got the loan of her car for my trip downtown.

"I realize that," I told her with some agitation. Occasionally, her phone lit up with calls but I guess the answering machine got them.

"Did you bathe and depilate the way that I told you to?" Andrea asked belligerently.

I gulped and nodded. There wasn't a hair on my body any more.

"You know that I am going to have to take most of your eyebrows away," said Andrea with a scowl. "Even if you change your mind, your mother is going to ask you what you did and why and I am going to be on the hot seat with her. I do not want you to do this if you have any doubts at all. If you are thinking that we can go so far and you'll pull out on me, I don't want you to start."