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Love,

Ms. Chrissie Editor in Chief

Jimmy's Foolish Mistake

By B C

Gabe Davis (short for Gabriel) had just turned 18 years old but he looked like and could have passed for someone much younger on most days.

Gabe was looking forward to this summer vacation. He'd been making so many plans and couldn't wait to get out of school. Gabe was small and skinny and was tired of all the bullying and jokes played on him all the time. He looked forward to the piece and solitude of being alone.

Gabe's Mother Sue worked so he'd be on his own most every day. He and his mother lived alone in the little suburb of Centerville. Mom was quite strict and sometimes very hard on young Gabe. She loved her only child very much and wanted him to grow up and make something of himself. She was very determined that he wouldn't grow up to be anything like his deadbeat father.

That no good S.O.B. left her with a four-year-old son on Christmas morning some 13 years ago. He ran off with his secretary and never came back or cared for them again since that day. She found out after he'd left that he'd fooled around on her ever since they'd married. She'd even got phone calls from several other women, even months after he'd left.

So it was she had to go to work not long after the divorce to try and provide for her son and herself. She fought with her ex for years about the child support but finally gave up and looked for work that could sustain them. She did the best she could trying to raise their son alone but she tended to be quite hard on the boy. Because it was just the two of them, she'd taught Gabe at a very young age to help her out around the house.

When most young boys were out playing all like young boys do, Gabe was learning to cook, wash and dry laundry, fold and put it away. He learned to clean the house from top to bottom, making beds, dusting, cleaning the bathroom and washing the windows of their modest home in addition to mowing the lawn and many other little tasks.

Gabe could sew or mend his own clothes, then Sue taught him how to do her nails and brush her hair and many other things that a mother typically teaches her young daughters to do. She never intended to make Gabe into a girl or a sissy boy however. It's just there wasn't anyone else to help her out; it was just the two of them and she needed his help always.

Gabe was a great kid and he never really complained much about his having to help out this much...until just recently that is! All of a sudden his buddies at school started making fun of his shoulder-length hair and some of the clothes that Mother picked out for him to wear.

Gabe was not a big-boned he-man type at all. He'd been cursed with a small and frail body, more along the lines of his Mother's side of the family. It didn't help that he had delicate facial features with full pouty lips and a cute turned-up nose and big blue eyes along with a soft chin along with his full shiny auburn hair.

Gabe just had to get used to things like being the last one picked in gym class for team games or sports. He was too small for football or basketball. He loved baseball but had no way to get to or from practice and was counted on at home for helping out. Adults were constantly mistaking him for a young girl because of his slight frame, long hair and high-pitched voice. Whenever the class had a substitute teacher in school they would call him Gabriella by mistake, making everyone in the class laugh at him. All these things were adding up to further give the poor boy a terrible complex and make him withdraw into himself.

He didn't have the chance to date girls from even the lower classes and his only friend was Jim Peters who lived the closest of anyone he went to school with. Gabe only saw him mostly in the summer when school was out.

Jim was just the opposite of Gabe; he was bigger and stronger at six feet and 185 pounds. Jim was popular and had many friends in school as he was always involved in sports or girls or working in his Dad's business. Jim's problem was that he too lived out away from town where there weren't many houses or kids his age to hang with. So if he wasn't involved in school or sports, he'd get lonely for companionship.

Finally, in his senior year, Gabe started rebelling a little more each day because of seeing all the other kids his age having fun and not having to spend most of their time doing chores and keeping house. Some of the kids he did talk to teased him about making

someone a great wife one day and enlightened him about what they thought were male and female roles and chores in the home.

Susan found herself having to get after him lately several times before he'd do his chores and get them done properly. Gabe started testing his wings so to speak, thinking that teenaged boys shouldn't have to do these 'girl' chores. He wanted to prove that he was a man and not a sissy maid. Sue tried over and over to explain that their situation was different than than normal families having two parents and kids to help share the load. It was necessary for him to help her out as she couldn't work full-time to earn a living for them and do all the chores at home all by herself as well.

Gabe asked his Mom about his long hair. "Maybe it's time I should get my hair cut shorter. Maybe then I wouldn't get picked on and laughed at all the time. Most of the guys and even some of the girls at school always tease me about my hair and some of the girl-type clothes that you pick out for me to wear. I'm tired of being the butt of everyone's jokes, Mom."

"So, what's wrong with your clothes now? Aren't they always clean and fit you well?" Sue asked.

"Mom, you can't be that out-of-touch. It's just that most of the clothes that you get for me are pretty girlish and feminine. The guys mostly just wear jeans and football jerseys, rock star sweatshirts, college logo sweatshirts or even plain pull-over shirts. I'm always wearing dress pants and flowery loose shirts that look more like girls' blouses. Plus now my hair is even longer than most of the girls in our school," he said, trying to make her understand how he felt.

"Well, I say that your hair is just beautiful. I never thought that you were so weak in character that you'd allow other kids to make you give up your own individuality or your own self-worth. I'd like to believe that if they all jumped off the school roof, you wouldn't be fool enough to follow," Gabe's Mom told him

"If it means that much to you, we'll try and get your hair trimmed up next week when I get paid, if we can get an appointment that soon. I'll call tomorrow and get you set up. Perhaps it would be best to have a little shorter hair for the summer anyway. I'll tell you this though, I'll miss brushing it out at night and I'll bet you will too, if you'd be honest and admit it."

She smiled at him thinking maybe he was right. Was she keeping him a little too much like a girl? Was she trying so hard to keep him from becoming like his father that she was subconsciously making him more feminine? The more she thought about it and the more she watched him, she began to realize that he really wasn't very masculine at all in his actions or his appearance.

"I'm sorry if you feel deprived or overburdened with having to help around here, but unless you want to live in a mess or you can find the money to hire a maid, you are just going to have to suck it up and continue to help me with the housework and chores around here and that's all there is to that," Sue told her sad-looking son.

Summer vacation was starting and Gabe loved not having to get up at the crack of dawn to rush around to get his morning duties done before school. He now had plenty of time to get outside and do things and still get his list of chores done and dinner started before his Mom got home from work each evening.

His 17th birthday was coming up in a couple of weeks. He'd asked Mom for a new laptop computer, as he'd saved up half of it himself over the past year. (Actually it was his 18th birthday but Mom, for reasons of her own, had convinced him years ago that he was really a year younger than he actually was).

Mom had indicated that with his help around the house and his good behavior, it was quite possible.

On his very first week off from school, he was thrilled to be free to do as he pleased and things started out just fine. On Tuesday he was walking in the woods behind his house, enjoying nature, when he heard someone coming out from behind a thick patch of trees. A little afraid at first for not being able to make out who it was, he sighed in relief as he realized the form was Jim Peters walking towards him. He greeted Jim with a smile.

After exchanging greetings, they talked for a while and went back to Gabe's house to get a sandwich and a drink. Jim was impressed as he watched Gabe quickly throw a nice lunch together for the two of them.

As Gabe finally noticed Jim watching him, he looked up and said, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"It's nothing. I'm just surprised, I guess. You really seem to know your way around the kitchen, that's all. This lunch looks really good. Do you do a lot of cooking?" Jim said.

"Well, we can't all have maids and cooks and hired help to take care of us," Gabe replied defensively.

"Sorry, I meant that as a compliment. I wasn't making fun. I really think this looks good." Jim said and took a bite. "And it really tastes good too."

"I'm sorry too, I guess I am a little defensive from catching crap from everyone in school. They all treat me like I'm a sissy or fruit and it takes its toll after a while. I've always had to help out around the house since I was a little kid. My Dad left me and Mom when I was only around four years old. Mom's always had to work to support us, so I had to learn to help out.

"I learned to cook before I was 9 or 10 years old. Mom doesn't get home until 5 or 5:30 so I just usually get dinner going before she gets here. I've had to learn to pretty much take care of myself for as long as I can remember. But we manage and can take care of each other that way," Gabe said, blushing and looking down.

"Hey, I think that's really cool of you. Shit, I can't boil water or cook anything. I guess I've really been spoiled and take a lot for granted. I'm sorry if I've offended you in any way," Jim told him.

"Ok, no problem. Like I said, I'm a little too sensitive sometimes." Gabe said, getting them each a Pepsi and a glass of ice. Jim didn't miss the fact that the sandwiches were almost too pretty to bite into. They were on nice plates with chips on the side with a pickle and the napkin was folded next to the plate, very formal-like.

The fact that there just wasn't very many homes or kids his age around where they lived made them friends out of the need for companionship. Jimmy was almost two years older than Gabe, or at least that's what Gabe thought. The boys got along just fine. They played together most of the afternoon. Jimmy wanted to play ball but try as he might, Gabe just wasn't very athletic. After getting hit a couple of times, the smaller boy said he'd had enough. They then switched to playing Army, then deep woods firefighters, then ambulance drivers and helicopter rescue guys.

Gabe finally looked to see what time it was and told Jimmy that he had to go in now. He had all his chores to get done before his Mom got home from work or there would be hell to pay. He didn't want to get in trouble and not get his birthday presents that were coming up soon. They parted ways and Gabe thanked Jimmy for coming over and spending the day. It was all Gabe could do to barely get his chores all done before his Mom walked in the back door.

"Hi honey, something sure smells good. How did your first day of no school go for you? What did you do besides your chores to keep busy?" Mom asked, giving him a kiss on the cheek.

"I ran into Jimmy Peters while walking out in the woods. We hung out for a while, then I came in and got my chores done. We just talked about being glad school was out and hung out. Then he left so I could get the laundry done, clean house and get dinner started. No big deal really," Gabe said.

"That is kind of a big deal, isn't it? I think it's nice that you had a friend to spend a little time with. You spend too much time alone, so it's nice you have a friend."

After dinner Mom rested while Gabe cleaned up the kitchen and put everything away. Gabe then joined Mom in the living room. She took her hair down and asked him to brush it out for her so she could relax. They watched a little TV until it was time for bed. Gabe thought nothing of this and took the brush and began stroking it through her hair.

Wednesday was almost the same as the day before. Gabe had just finished cleaning up the kitchen after Mom had left for work and was starting in on the living room with the vacuum when out of the corner of his eye he saw Jimmy through the window, jumping up and down and waving his arms trying to get his attention. Gabe shut the vacuum off and went to the door. "Hey, what's up?" he said to Jimmy.

"Man, is that all you ever do, work? Come on, let's go into the woods and down by the lake for a while," Jimmy said.

"Yeah, I guess I've got all day to finish up in here," Gabe replied and off they went. They had fun running off into the woods, except it was a real struggle for Gabe to try and keep up with the more athletic Jimmy. They got to the lake and skipped stones in the water and Jimmy scared Gabe threatening to throw him in the water.

"Jimmy, stop. Seriously, I can't swim. I'm not kidding, I've never had a chance to learn," Gabe yelled.

Jimmy holding Gabe with his arms and his mouth right by Gabe's left ear combined with his warm breath caused Gabe to get goose bumps.

Jimmy said, "You're kidding, right? Everyone knows how to swim. Jeez, Gabe, don't you ever get to get out and have any fun?"

"Yeah, I do things," Gabe replied, pulling out of Jimmy's grasp, blushing and still tingling from the odd sensation of being held and having Jimmy's warm breath in his ear like that. He wondered why that made him feel this way but also knew that he liked how it made him feel for the moment. He knew that he probably shouldn't like it, Jimmy being a guy and all but it was a pleasing sensation all the same.

They played for an hour and so, then began to get hungry for some lunch so they returned to Gabe's house where once again Jimmy marveled at Gabe's culinary skills as he watched Gabe make them a really nice lunch.

After lunch, Jimmy suggested that they stay in and play video games for a while as it was getting hot outside. They played for a while and then he said, "Hey, let's do something different. I'll even help you finish up your chores. Let's play house and since you're so good at all these household things, I'll play the Dad and you be the Mom.

Gabe was a little embarrassed about this at first but when Jimmy insisted that it would be cool and kept on about it, Gabe, being a submissive type person, gave in.

Jimmy grabbed a big pinafore aprons and tied it on Gabe. They played like Jimmy was coming home from work and Gabe was making dinner in the kitchen. For the second time that day, Gabe got that strange feeling as Jimmy walked up behind him and put his arms around him and whispered in his ear. That gave Gabe goosebumps up and down his whole body.

"Smells good. What's for dinner?" Jimmy said.

They played around like that for an hour or so when Jimmy looked at the time and said he had to go. "I'm meeting up with the guys at the school to play a little baseball and practice up for the summer league that starts in a week or so. You want to come along?" he asked

"No, I can't. I have work to do here," Gabe answered, ashamed to admit that he wasn't allowed to go into town without permission. Mom didn't want her son hanging in town without her.

Gabe was disappointed. As Jimmy left and said he'd see him tomorrow, he got back to his chores and was lost in thought about how nice it was to finally have a friend to do things with. He was deep in thought and day dreaming about Jimmy's hug, if that's what it was. Mom came in and found him humming to himself, cleaning the bathroom sink and toilet and still wearing the big apron that looked like a dress on his small frame.

"Don't you look sweet? That apron is so big on you, it looks like you're wearing a dress. You've let your hair down and you look like very pretty young housewife working away," Mom said, smiling at him.

Gabe blushed a deep red color. He'd forgotten all about wearing the big apron. He tried telling her that

he'd only put it on to protect his clothes as he cleaned the bathroom.

"It's OK, honey, I wasn't making fun of you and there is nothing to be embarrassed about. I appreciate everything you do here and I couldn't get along without you. I'm sorry if I've make you feel uncomfortable. You are every mother's dream come true. I smell something very good coming out of the kitchen. What wonderful surprise have you got for dinner tonight?"

"I made Swiss steak, mashed potatoes, vegetables and a nice salad. It should be done in about 15 minutes. I'll just finish up in here and be right out. If you'd like to check on things in there, that would be good."

They had a wonderful dinner. After Gabe cleaned up the kitchen, Mom called him into the bathroom where she helped him wash his long hair, using a new conditioner that she'd just purchased. Next she used the hand dryer and brush on his hair, then brushed it out. She loved the feel of his soft shiny hair after washing and drying it, as she pampered him and ran her fingers through it.

Sue was thinking to herself how she was going to miss brushing and feeling his pretty long locks when he got them cut the next week. She'd actually felt bad making the appointment at Cindy's where she went to get her hair done. Cindy's was a full salon where she did both men and women's cuts and styling.

The next morning Jimmy showed up around 10:00 am and they started right off, at Jimmy's insistence, playing house again. After Jimmy threatened to leave and go play ball if Gabe didn't want to play along, he finally persuaded him into putting on one of his Mom's old dresses. They started playing house just as they did yesterday.

Gabe felt foolish wearing a dress; it hit a sore nerve with him as it reminded him of all the kidding and name calling he'd endured over the years. But his need for Jimmy's friendship and someone to hang with won out over his objections to the dress. After lunch his reluctance grew even stronger as Jimmy tried to make him put on a dab of lipstick.

"Come on, Gabe. We're only playing. No one will ever know. I'm the only one that will see you and it's no big deal. I promise I'll never tell anyone. It just makes you look more believable in our game here," Jimmy told the naïve young Gabe.

So with great reservations, Gabe played along and Jimmy applied the bright red lip stick they found on Sue's dressing table. Gabe was put off some as he saw his reflection in the full-length mirror. For starters, Jimmy used much more than a dab and his full pouty lips really stood out, all Red and shiny. He was now wearing a dress, high heels and lipstick.

A couple of times as they were acting out this game, Jimmy came up behind Gabe and hugged him. Finally he totally surprised Gabe by kissing him quickly on the mouth, when he pretended to leave for work and when he returned at the end of the day.

Gabe was really embarrassed and confused over Jimmy's actions. Gabe told him that he still had lots of chores that had to get done before his Mom got home from her real work. So Jimmy left and Gabe went straight into the bathroom. Before he put his own clothing back on and removed the makeup, he looked at his reflection in the mirror.

"Dear God, I really do look like a real girl. There's hardly a single masculine trait looking back at me. Why do I have to be so small and girly-looking? It's just not fair. No wonder Jimmy wants to play this game all the time. Well, I'm just going to have to insist on something more manly if we are going to keep being friends and hanging out. I don't like where this is



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heading," the confused boy told himself over and over.

The very next day Jimmy showed up right after Mom pulled out of the driveway and started right in as soon as the door was closed behind him. Gabe put up a fuss and told him right off that he didn't want to play dress up today. He told Jimmy that it made him feel wrong doing this and he wanted to do something that boys do for a change.

Jimmy looked at him and told him that he'd been asked to go play ball so he was going to leave. Immediately, Gabe caved in and was back in a dress, high heels, and lipstick. He was so afraid of losing the only friend that he had that he did as Jimmy wanted and just went along as they'd done yesterday. He tolerated the hugs (which he secretly longed for) and the occasional kiss, with Jimmy reminding him that they were only play acting.

Gabe just barely got all the stuff put away and the lipstick cleaned off before Mom got home. He stuffed the dress in his bottom dresser drawer as he heard the door open and Mom say, "I'm home." He felt guilty and self-conscious the remainder of the night. He'd never kept secrets from his Mom before. Every time she looked his way, he felt that she somehow knew what he'd been up to. Sue really didn't know what he was doing but she was sure he looked guilty about something or other. A mother always seems to have a sense about her children and these things.

The next day was more of the same. Jimmy wouldn't give in and again quickly wore down Gabe's objections and resistance. "Come on, smile and cheer up. You know that we've been having fun. We're not hurting anyone or anything and there's not much else we can do because your Mom won't let you go to town or even very far from your house," Jimmy told him.

"Well, why don't *you* play the Mom then?" Gabe offered