



Reluctant Press

Here Comes Clare

Solon Plorry



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Here Comes Clare!

By Solon Plorry

The hot summer sun sparkled on the cool lake surface, giving perfection to the day. From the distant shore, shouts and laughter of kids enjoying themselves in the late afternoon brought smiles to Clark's face as he paddled the canoe towards the place where Clare said she saw treasure. They were going to dive for the sparkling mysteries, and both ten-year-olds were in bathing suits. Clare hung over the bow of the little wooden canoe, watching the lakebed and squealing eagerly now and again while Clark giggled, "Not yet, Clare; we need to go further out!" Clare stood, her back to her friend, then she turned, looking at him mischievously. "Sid-down!" Clark told her, "you'll rock the boat." Clare smiled, laughed, and purred "You're such a sissy!" then rocked the canoe back and forth. Clark cried "Stop it!" in fake terror. So to excite the cutie more, Clare rocked harder. To really throw a scare into him, she suddenly lifted her leg and put a foot on a gunwale. The boat tipped over.

Instantly! The unexpected was shocking! Clark found himself pitched head first into the very cold wet. In a confusion of muffled thumping and bubbles, he flew way down, like a high diver, then frantically digging at the coldness, almost screaming, he fought his way to the surface. He came up beside the overturned canoe, gasping loudly, frightened and shocked. From way off came the sounds of normalcy, laughter and squealing shouts, highlighting the awful reality of getting dunked. Remembering he was a boy, Clark flickered a smile on his face, as he grabbed the canoe, draping his arms over it and buoying himself, prepared for Clare's teasing.

"Clare! Clare!" he gasped, his ability to shout rendered impotent by chill. "Claaare!" he cried louder, as the silence from her remained, immovable and terrifying! Craning his neck, Clark tried to look towards the shore, where the silence had also spread. There was a shout of alarm, by an adult, in the distance, and Clark started crying. He tried to look over the canoe, tears running down his face,

and suddenly the thing shifted down. Clark was too young to know the wood canoe couldn't sink, and he panicked, grabbed at it again, crying louder. Ashore, two workmen hurriedly pushed a motorboat off the beach, and the sounds of the roaring motor told Clark to hang on.

As soon as the rescuers got there, they cut the motor, gliding past Clark. One of the rescuers grabbed the boy, effortlessly lifting him out of the water. "There's a girl!" he cried. The other man had grabbed the end of the canoe. "What?" "There's Clare, she's not here!" Clark cried, helpless at the enormity of the situation. The men looked at each other, then the guy by Clark stood, looking into the depth. "My God!" he yelled, jumping up and diving, fully clothed, into the lake. Clark's heart pounded mercilessly, he was faint from stress. The other man paddled closer to where the rescuer went under. Clark looked, almost frozen in shock, crying and shivering. He saw something, down in the water, and looked closer. Clare! She rose into view! She was looking right at Clark, unblinking, her eyes wide, and her hair formed a flotsam around her head as she rose straight up at him. Clark squealed in horror, pulling away, but the fiery stars exploding behind his eyes gave way to sudden warm darkness and welcome relief.

There were murmurs of voices when Clark became aware of the warmth and smells of institutional security. He opened his eyes, and his mom saw, as she sat beside the bed, talking to Clark's daddy. "Oh baby!" she cried softly, reaching down to the boy, enveloping him in her safety. It was a dream. "What happened?" he asked innocently, hoping that nothing did. His mother hugged him, saying "It's all right Clarky, you didn't do anything," kissing him all over. Other friends and relatives were there for him, in a little crowd outside the hospital bedroom. Several of his chums were outside, trying to peer in and they were saying "Way to go Clarky; we need you for the team!" and other encouraging things. His grandparents were there, his teachers too. Others also pushed into the crowded gathering, some whom Clark wasn't sure he knew. All were saying "Get well Clark, we're with you." No one mentioned the disaster.

"Mrs. Heibolt's here" someone mumbled, as the crowd by the door parted, leaving a path. "I don't think..." Mrs. Wonderly said, still clutching her kid protectively. Mrs. Heibolt appeared at the door, dressed rather plainly. She was early middle-aged, and had once been very pretty, but her looks had given way to drabness. She approached the foot of the bed, looking at Clark, her eyes dull. "Mrs. Heibolt...poor you" was all Clark could say. "The camp had very good insurance," someone said, putting the terrible loss in its best light. Helpless, Clark looked at Clare's mom. "I want my daughter," she murmured, foolishly in some opinions. "Yes, we're all very sorry at your loss, madam, but it's no help being maudlin," Clark's dad said. "I want a daughter," Mrs. Heibolt intoned again, moving beside the bed.

Clark looked at her, and suddenly an idea suggested itself. "It's not too late, Mrs. Heibolt, you're not old yet...why not have another baby?" Mrs. Heibolt looked at him, saying, "I'm all alone. Clare's daddy..." "That's no problem!" Clark continued. "My dad can help you, if you need," as if getting pregnant was just holding hands and staring at each other. Mrs. Wonderly gasped slightly. "Clark!" Titters

and embarrassed coughs told Mr. Wonderly the visit was over. Grabbing her elbow, he guided her from his son's room, telling her the Wonderly family was always available anytime, if she needed anything but..."The boy needs rest." It was with considerable relief that the crowd reformed after the unfortunate mother left. "Never heard of adoption!" some voice said, to nervous giggles. "Those people think the darn world revolves around them!" Clark's dad added. The death of the poor woman's only child was yesterday's news to the forward-looking assembly. "And face it, she caused the accident," someone else said, to head-shaking agreement. "It was as if she was trying to kill poor Clarky!" someone else suggested, kindly. In the hubbub, Clark basked in the love of his people. Then, in a break in the crowd by the door, he suddenly saw Mrs. Heibolt, standing just beyond! Clark gasped, looking into the strange, angered eyes that bore into him! "Someone run that woman off!" Clark's mom demanded. Someone did.

Clare Returns

The door slammed as Mrs. Wonderly and a neighbor split a beer. The pitter-patter of hurrying feet told Mrs. Wonderly that her son was home. "Clark!" she yelled as the boy raced upstairs. "I'm busy now, mom!" he yelled back, to amused laughter in the front room. "Well, don't let a little thing like your mom interfere with your active schedule!" she yelled up at him, her tease seemingly lost. A few minutes later, Clark zipped down the stairs and appeared in the door, going to his mom and kissing her on a cheek as she leaned across a couch. The neighbor woman and she had returned from their ten-mile jog, and were sweaty as they did their cool down exercises, using the furniture as supports. "Remember, father will be home tonight, for dinner...at sevenish," she breathlessly told the sixteen-year-old as he admired the neighbor, doing full flex and stretches with her Spandexed ass pointing up. Clark felt his balls stir, but he just slapped his mom's rump in acceptance of the information. Forgetting the old ladies, the longish-haired teen hurried off for a game of pickup at the park, with his friends, including Garret, who made Clark weak-kneed every time he came near! His mom yelled that the "hairstylist" was scheduled for next day, for his haircut, but only the door slamming greeted her words. Her son was so damn pretty, it was scary, and longish hair just made him more so, Mrs. Wonderly thought proudly.

Clark was eagerly looking forward to the game. Garret was always there lately to help him; being an atrocious player, Clark needed all the help he could get. Actually, Clark despised playing any kind of sports, being weak in the wrists and afraid of flying objects like baseballs hitting him. But the jocks...they were fun to be with. Very slender, nubile. With an open, eager personality, Clark had a variety of girlfriends, but recently found being with men preferable. Many of Clark's girlfriends also were interested in the jocks, so Clark wasn't alone. These kinds of thoughts crowded his busy mind as he strolled down the walk towards the park. Ahead, a car, its motor running, sat at the curb in a no parking zone. Behind Clark, Mrs. Heibolt stepped from the shadows, following Clark a few feet behind. The youth was preoccupied, thinking of his friends, especially the hardness of their rear ends as they ran, jumped and sat...and he blushed to himself! The sidewalk beside the car was in an area hidden from view unless a car was passing.

Mrs. Heibolt had mapped out the procedure, timing every step, and if no car was within limits, she was ready. This time, as Clark approached the “hot zone”, nothing was visible. Mrs. Heibolt rushed forward silently.

Clark nearly shit himself when the creature grabbed him, a chloroformed cloth clamped to his face and arms like vises gripping him. The sissy tried to cry, panicked, then blacked out. Mrs. Heibolt knew enough about Clark Wonderly to expect that, having used part of her settlement from the camp corporation to hire a number of private eyes to learn everything she could about him, his family and what was required. It was time. She lifted the wraithlike youth and stepped to the car...one two three four! Each procedure went as planned, perfectly. She tossed the unaware boy on the seat. Counting, she checked fore and aft, while going around and getting in the driver’s side well in time. No one had seen anything. Still counting, she drove, in a relaxed manner. Outside of an old lady fighting a rambunctious poodle on a leash, no one was on the street. As she drove, she watched everything, finally pulling into a leafy alleyway behind the community center a few blocks west. She checked the youngster slouched over on the shoved-back seat. She taped his arms to his torso, then put a plastic stringbag over his head, pulling the string snug around his neck. She rested Clark on the floor of her car, finally covering him with a blanket. Mrs. Heibolt checked the surroundings, peaceful and quiet with routine decency. She drove away, opening a window and resting her arm on the door. “Clare, honey...we’ll be so happy,” she murmured softly, again and again, a mantra of hope designed in hopeless love.

She drove out of the gated community with a recently stolen set of license plates over her real ones, for the benefit of the security camera at the unmanned gate hidden at the end of a quiet access street west of the community center. As soon as she was back in the messy, polluted and dirty world most were forced to live in, she relaxed. She stopped at a car wash to remove the fake plates, which ended in a dumpster. She drove to her new house, set on two acres of privacy and worth at least twice what she paid for it only four years before. She took “Clare” into the house, securing him in “her” prepared room. Without a minute's hesitation, she then got rid of the car, flipping the alarms on before she exited the house.

Homework

Clark awoke naked, his face still slightly irritated and reddened by the chloroform. The pills Mrs. Heibolt had inserted in his butt were working, relaxing and tranquilizing him. He was still afraid, if only at the overwhelming confusion of his surroundings. In a trance, he explored the room; its solid oak and heavy velvet atmosphere needed only a squawking hundred-year-old parrot to cap it off. The curtained window overlooked a leafy backyard, and its natural light painted on the silence, which had a foreboding quality. An open door led to a short hall, with a doorless bathroom at its end. In an alcove on the other side of the bed, a small pantry, with fridge and microwave, plus some goodies on an open shelf, looked ready for him. Beside that, in a large closet-type roomette, was a television, along with an exercise bike and set of weights, with bench. Clark wept, despite the tranquilizers, after his tour of his elegant prison. He had been really looking forward to

seeing Garret, and the ball game, and the unexpected change upset the spoiled youth. Clark wasn't used to being denied his every wish, much less being kidnapped!

The sissy spent time at the window, looking out on the lengthening shadows. He preened himself, self-conscious of his nakedness. The view was of a slice of nature, leafy trees and flowers; parts of the back yard were visible through breaks in the foliage. Birds, small and pretty with unfettered freedom, cavorted in little twittering clichés, and Clark watched them. The door was locked, and he grew lonely and concerned about the mysterious circumstances. He saw the increasing shadows grow dark with nature's enigmatic transience. An emotional spasm struck when he suddenly recalled his daddy was home this evening, as a part of his parent's marriage contract. He was going to miss Father! The spasm brought tears from the depth of the waif's spirit, and he cried softly.

When Mrs. Heibolt returned, she consulted the spycam and saw the kid whimpering at the window. She shut off the room alarms, and with a preemptory knock, entered. She wore a mask and had gloves to her elbows. Clark jumped to his feet, crying openly while looking at the strange person, who rolled in a dumbwaiter. She removed a foldout table from under the bed, and set it quickly, using a crisp white tablecloth to establish propriety. She waved the boy to the chair she held for him. When he was settled, she served him his meal, a delicious Lamb Pechod, which she knew was a Wonderly family favorite, having bribed the cook for the information. The boy was hungry; with the pills dissolving in his ass still affecting him, he never asked Mrs. Heibolt anything, instead merely digging in. Mrs. Heibolt watched the young glutton eat, with the single-mindedness of youth. When the boy was full, his short cake and ice cream gobbled up, she served him a small glass of claret, which was his mom's habit. Using a remote, she operated a sliding door, revealing another television on the wall beside the main door. She turned it on, to a movie, "Pee-wee's Big Adventure" which was a favorite.

Later, Mrs. Heibolt visited and squared everything away. She carried the sleeping kid to the bed, tucking him in. She checked a false wall panel above the bed headboard, and confirmed that the tape machine was ready. She turned it on, then left. In the silence, the sleeper's breathing activated the machine, and a soft, monotonous voice said, "I am Clare Heibolt. I am sixteen. I love my mama, Olive Heibolt. I am very happy." The soft voice faded away, then started over at the beginning, going around and around, not disturbing the sleeping kid. Outside, in the "control room", Mrs. Heibolt consulted the spycam, checking the decibel and clarity levels on a spaceage-ish control panel aside the color monitor. She watched as the hypnotic voice went on and on, stopping instantly when Clark rolled over, making a noise that the sensors mistook as waking sounds. The boychild slept, breathing steadily, and softly. The subliminal message became audible again, gaining strength and volume as the steadiness of the sleeper's breath returned. Satisfied, Mrs. Heibolt left to go cruising the nightlife.

The next morning, Clare woke up, strangely refreshed in spite of her extraordinary situation. Stretching with a kitten's grace, she went to the toilet, flopping down on the seat and, pressing her erection down against its natural bend up-

ward; she pissed for a long time as the bladder irritation soothed and her hard-on softened, until finally she could let go and not worry that it would spring up, shooting urine around the room. Pissing steadily, Clare lifted her foot, examining the small reddish toes. Suddenly, Clark realized he was sitting on a toilet, peeing, while examining his toenails, which he had planned to paint a ruby red! Perplexed, he stood up, grabbing his penis, squeezing its shaft to stop the flow. He turned, letting the remains of his piss whiz on its journey to the sea. Clark idly wondered at himself....he sure was a girlie boy!

Scratching his ass, he went to the sink, brushed his teeth and looked at himself afterward, thinking his nipples were sore. The nubs stood out, red around the aureole and angry-looking. Clare touched them, becoming very thoughtful. Her face needed some blush, she thought; he was looking pale! Clark caught himself, shaking his head and blushing at the crazy thoughts she was having. Returning to the bedroom, he interrupted Mrs. Heibolt setting out a sturdy breakfast. The pink place settings were rather nice, she thought. When he was sitting down, eating heartily as a hungry girl would, Mrs. Heibolt laid out some casual clothes for her delightful daughter.

As yet, the boy hadn't spoken a word to the strange creature who was caring for her. As she ate, chewing greedily on a slice of bacon, Clare looked at the servant. Mrs. Heibolt placed a card by her prisoner's plate. Clare interrupted her feeding to grab the card, with greasy hands. Curious, she took it out of its envelope and read it. The card said, "To the most wonderful child on earth; Mama loves you!" Mrs. Heibolt fled the room; the effect of watching Clare reading her message too moving for silence. Outside, she hurried to the spycam, watched her daughter reread the card, looking mystified but not overly so. She watched the youth finish the meal, pick her teeth, wander into the bathroom, sit nonchalantly on the toilet and, without effort, half-fill the bowl, a testament to her healthy young appetite. When Clare finished and got in the shower, Mrs. Heibolt reviewed the tapes, watching her daughter wake up and go about her day totally unconcerned at her status! Mrs. Heibolt was very pleased.

She was not so pleased at the news. The kidnapping of an upper-class young person had sent shock waves through the gated community. The local community police, minimum wage-paid retirees for the most part, had been replaced in the investigation by the city police, who called in the county constabulary, then higher levels of experts. They talked about Clark as having "disappeared" without a scintilla of information about what happened! But Mrs. Wonderly, in a frantic appearance on the late news, offered a five-figure reward for information, and Olive wasn't certain someone whom she dealt with wouldn't connect certain things and tell the police. She needed time...time to achieve her objective! As she saw her re-energized daughter taking form, she reflected that she had done everything humanly possible to wall herself off from anything that leaked out, and she must remain focused on Clare! Clare! Her daughter was there, in the person of this boy, barely discernible yet, but she could be brought to life, if Olive remained focused. Like a laser beam, she must not waver, or else... Olive's heart caught, stabbed

through with hideous pain! Clare depended on her mama, and her mama was *not* going to fail!

She had planned her daughter's day around her education. Clark had been slated to go into business as an MBA, by his mother, with his education already planned years in advance. But Mrs. Heibolt had no idea what an MBA did, thinking that it was some type of lawyer, which struck her as stupid. Instead, she wanted Clare to specialize in Radiology, what with her strong logic and math skills. Radiologists were important people, well-paid and vital to medicine. Its practice never required kissing thousands of asses to get in, being a skill measured strictly in ability. It was a lot of work though, almost a medical doctorate in terms of requirements, without any of the cachet. Radiologists were thought of as "laborers" to people like Clark's mom, but work was important to Clare's future!

So after the morning's preparations, Clare, dressed in fresh blue panties, silky soft on her tender skin. She put on the cotton top (by Jenny's) and a pair of tan "White Hunter" shorts. For footwear, she wore off-white flats, with knee-high stockings. Ready, she buzzed for the servant, as she still thought of the masked personage. Mrs. Heibolt attended the sleek beauty, elegant in her summerwear. With the books Mrs. Heibolt had chosen, based on Clark's latest classes at the private high school he attended, Clare was escorted to the backyard, for sun and enjoyment, plus schoolwork, if she chose. A keyed bracelet was placed on her wrist. Around the yard, Mrs. Heibolt had stretched a blue and white ribbon. Like police tape, it was to alert Clare to the limits she could go in her strolling. Beyond the tape, the steady signal became too weak, collapsed, and stepped voltages were sent through the youth's body, very painful! Mrs. Heibolt gave Clare the card telling her this...it was for her own safety!

The day passed uneventfully, and the night's subliminal message was reinforced by a restful sleep. An additional message: "I will obey my beloved mama. I am a pretty girl" was added. In the morning, Clare whimpered when she found a pimple on her nose! Crying, she was despondent until Mrs. Heibolt attended her, touched up the pimple, and introduced a nightwash for the girl's face. Mrs. Heibolt smelled the girl's breath, also upset at the pimple! Clare's diet was designed with her complexion in mind, so when Mrs. Heibolt detected a taint of sourness in Clare's breath, she adjusted the youth's diet, increasing the salts in her morning feed, and cutting a corresponding amount from dinner. By then Clare had discovered the television in the exercise roomette could only be powered by her bicycle, and she quickly put many miles on it, burning calories by the thousands. When the kid was sleeping soundly that night, Olive went cruising again, looking for another blonde, having been left unsatisfied by the one from the night before.

Mrs. Wonderly got over the loss of her son, as one would expect from a daughter of Able B Mose, of the firm Beckeworth, Millings and Stewart. Losses were just God's way of saying no. But not a day passed without her thinking of her boy, and his birthdays were very tough for her to get through. Her husband took Clark's loss hard too, but he had fathered a couple of kids via mistresses, so it was not a total loss. It had been Jack's idea to adopt, and Mrs. Wonderly thought about that, until Jack showed her pictures of a delightful youngster, three years old,

available for private adoption. Despite reservations, she had okayed the deal. Little Christopher was everything a broken heart could want. But even with Chris scampering about, filling the house with liveliness, she missed her only child. The police had concluded he had been snatched, but beyond that...nothing.

Buster Street

Clare returned home, her stint at the Ubiquitous McDonalds finally over. Though tired from the after-school job, she ran up the drive and into the house, her backpack already off her shoulders. Bursting into the house, she yelled a greeting at Marie, the maid, who was fussing in the laundry room. Clare hurried to her room; she knew her calls would have piled up. Leaving her door open, she flopped on the bed with her private line telephone, and began going through her messages. She giggled and smirked as various boys, and a few girls, tried to excite her interest in them. Clare ruthlessly fast-forwarded message after message, pressing seven again and again, with a pretty girl's ruthless cruelty, until she had deleted all but the half-dozen "important" messages.

Top of this list was Fredd Stevens, her best male friend, and head of her high school's yearbook committee. Fredd's name had two d's because his parents had been fans of foul-mouthed comic Redd Foxx, who was famous in the olden days. Clare had only been at Buster Street High School for two years, yet she had fit in very well, after a rocky start. Freddy had been one of her early champions; he never pressured her to have sex, which so many of the kids did! Instead, Fredd introduced her to the "misfits," a group of scholarly toughs from every race and income class, who avoided the limelight but took care of their business very well. The 'fits hung out together, and debated all the great themes the wise men of history steered them to, as young interesting people have always done. Buster Street was a rough school, with an unsteady supply of teachers. Clare's mom would have preferred to send her to a higher-class private school, but the cost was prohibitive. Besides that, Buster Street was only a ten-minute walk through clean, safe streets. Clare was happy that things had worked out so well.

Freddy told her he wanted to pick her up at seven, for their gang's usual get-together, at Maced Rappers, the group's favorite restaurant. He also told her to wear something "fetching" as he wanted to introduce Clare to a new friend, a kid named Garret.

Mrs. Heibolt arrived home from her job as account secretary at a large transport company. She still had plenty of money, having invested the payoff from the insurance companies very well, but living was very expensive, and Mrs. Heibolt hadn't gotten where she was by being unprepared. Tired from the grind, she consulted her maid, and checked to make sure Clare wasn't goofing off with her friends, which she sometimes liked to do. The subliminal reawakening of her kid had worked wonderfully, and Clare was now nearly ready for the final touch. Her breasts had blossomed to a firm AB cup, not large, but sufficient. Her hips hadn't widened much, but neither had her shoulders, so she remained a gamin size six. Most importantly, she had externalized most of her interests, compulsively investigating world history, conspiracies and speculative futurism, and spending hours in conference calls with her buds debating proofs and evidence of the corruption

ruining planet Earth. The boy she had been was forgotten, for the most part. “He” still liked “his” pleasure, a little too much, Olive thought, stroking her chin. Something would have to be done about that! “Soon,” Mrs. Heibolt said to reassure herself, “soon.”

Clare skipped out to the Cavalier gasping in the driveway. Fredd Stevens fought the pre-owned car’s obstreperous insistence on quitting, by pumping the gas and pounding on the steering wheel, which helped, because the motor suddenly settled down, just as Clare jumped in. Donna and Wyltoskli were also there. Wyltoskli laughed, and in belabored English told the others that Fredd’s new car “really liked Clare baby” while patting the seat in front of him. They all laughed, the joke well-put. Wyltoskli was a Polish immigrant, and he was picking up English at a marvelous speed. A bespectacled, nerdy-looking kid, he was in fact one of Buster High’s most feared fighters, with a piston-like punch. The girl in the front seat, Donna, was fast becoming one of Clare’s best friends. Clare leaned ahead to exchange kisses with her, getting into a faux wrestling match with Wyltoskli right after. Fredd smiled in his mirror at them as he drove away, but he was distracted by worry about his “new car.”

Mrs. Heibolt went to her “office” which also housed the control room beside Clare’s room. She busied herself for a couple of hours after dinner, with an idea percolating quietly in the back of her mind. When she tidied up some paperwork and put things away, she did a quick review of her daughter’s sleep routine. The idea that “mind over matter” could change personality had long been studied, with the results, sometimes called “brainwashing” well accepted by most scholars. Mrs. Heibolt was certain she had—at quite reasonable expense—gone beyond ego programming, into the netherworld of id...altering the sex and gender identification of her charge too! Pouring herself a brandy, Olive sat back in her easy chair, thinking hard. She hated the idea of being alone. She recently had suffered a strange impulsive sadness that her Clare had been born of some other woman. If Olive Heibolt wanted her genes to go on after her...her clock was ticking LOUDLY! Olive went back to the television and video timer, checking it out. What did her kid like, when she was feeling horny?

Two years earlier, Mrs. Heibolt had confronted the boyish nature of her Clare, when the girl still reverted occasionally into a pugnacious teenaged young man. An operation to alter Clare physically had been tempting, but the possible personality damage...Olive had taken a deep breath. There were no easy answers, not in this world and her Clare would go first class if her mama’s efforts were paying the way. Olive had gone on the Internet, joining an obscure research and study network, which had examined several ideas that resulted in papers published in top-flight scientific journals. At great expense, Olive had fabricated an esoteric, private research organization, religiously paying the fee.

Olive of course had no idea of the mathematic or scientific intricacies involved, but she was very curious about psychological impacts, and the effect of sexual hormonal changes on them. She understood enough to find out that the latter stages of a youth’s growth, the years leading up to full adult personality cohesion, depended in part on youthful sexual activity! If a boy, or a girl, never jerked off,

hormones weren't produced, the personality failed to mature properly, and the later physical costs were incalculable. That was amazing! It was a simple fact that castrated animals lived only half as long as fully functional animals. Castratos or eunuchs died early and hideously lonely. Sex wasn't just for procreation; it was also necessary for health.

So Clare's sexuality ran rampant, a hothouse of emotions and bodily functions, sprouting in the richest soil any creator could imagine; a teenager! The problems Olive faced was clear: if her Clare was to become real and healthy, she needed to masturbate to develop right. But Clare was a boy! She could not identify her sex activities as female, which would cause severe social problems. Olive considered going ahead with the operation, to get rid of the problem, but she hesitated, uncertain of whether that would consign her Clare to some kind of living hell. She constantly wondered how Clare integrated the mixed signals her body was sending her, with the subliminal training she was undergoing, in her mind.

On the message board the group maintained, Clare had asked a couple silly question. A scientist named Onley toiling in obscurity in some institute in England contacted her. After a long-winded series of qualifiers, he had answered her questions. That the questions were very pedestrian, almost amateur in tone, slid right past the good doctor, who knew things only a tiny fraction of one percent of the human race knew. Olive challenged him repeatedly, asking exactly what she needed to know, then spent days deciphering the answers. It was like fishing! It became a game to "Dr. Heibolt Ph.D." and it also did something for Dr. Onley, who had a half-dozen Ph.D's, all in the higher sciences. He seemed eager to share. He also seemed very alone.

He was so fucking smart, he had no idea he was communicating with a kidnapper who was reprogramming a pretty youth! Even Dr. Heibolt's most banal question he interpreted as very insightful, requiring much thought, though not articulated well. Dr. Onley insisted full growth potential still existed long after puberty, and that some hormones produced by a fifteen-year-old, for example, would kick in at twenty or even later! His final point was that at eighteen, full maturation could go on regardless of whether the testicles still remained! Clare had just turned eighteen, and her vibrancy was marvelous. And her testes were no longer necessary!

The next day, Mrs. Wonderly was raging at her nanny when the phone rang. The nanny had kept Christopher out in the sun too long, and a slight sunburn on his face attested to the infraction. Enraged, Mrs. Wonderly screamed at the Asian teen, who was stupider than the recently-fired woman who, Mrs. Wonderly suspected, was a damn thief. Mrs. Wonderly was just about to take her strap to the cowering girl when the phone rang, and she ordered her to wait. It was a good friend of the Wonderly family, the mother of one of Clark's old playmates. She had incredible news. Clark was still alive!

Olive received the news at work. A Mrs. Gilles Wonderly, of the South Georgia Wonderlys, had called about some boy named Clark! Olive was shocked, but tersely ordered the maid to lock the driveway gate until she got home, and, feigning illness, took off. Enroute, she activated her "Buster Plan," sending the word to Clare's high school principal, with whom she had arranged Clare's immediate safety. The principal was being paged even as he went to get Clare, a taxicab already awaiting the surprised senior. Within a few minutes, Clare was home, and Marie continued watching the gate. Olive arrived minutes later, taking charge of the scene.

Mrs. Heibolt calmed her household, then called the angry Wonderlys. Jack was storming around, demanding answers, and his wife wept helplessly. Chris was with the nanny, whose dismissal had been revoked by Jack when he arrived home. Mrs. Wonderly had been overjoyed at the good news, apparently learned when the son of one of the community's families who had been in trouble with his parents and had recently moved to the city had met Clark; although the circumstances were still rather vague. The boy had mentioned the meeting to his sister, and the rumor had gotten around, until Mrs. Wonderly's informant overheard something. Like all wealthy people, the Wonderlys never stormed off halfcocked. They consulted a lawyer versed in family issues. The lawyer advised them strongly to find out what was happening before the police, and by extension the media, were brought into the loop. Knowledge is power.

So Gilles Wonderly invoked an old friendship, which he had let slide for far too long. Mrs. Wonderly had to sit there for fifteen minutes, listening to her husband repair bridges before he felt comfortable to mention Clark. The old man was an ex military specialist, and had gleaned critical information from people, some who couldn't even speak English. He knew plenty of the locales and could guarantee confidentiality. Thus he was quickly able to report that it seemed that their son had run away, and was living as a female named Clare, the daughter of Olive Heibolt!

Stunned, the Wonderlys called, looking for Olive, which had precipitated the activity at the Heibolt place. Now, they were joined by some trusted friends and Mrs. Wonderly's sister, along with some legal advisors. When Olive's call came, the place hushed, as Jack raged. "Where the hell is my son?" he shouted at Olive, who had a crudely fabricated taped message from Clare, which she played for Jack after pretending she was calling "Clark" to the phone. "Clark" spoke softly to his amazed father, sounding very girlish and confident. "He" told his father he was "home". "He" hoped they were well, but he was not interested in visiting them "at this time." "He" promised that soon he'd "ask my mama; and we'll see." Mrs. Heibolt then coolly asked Wonderly if there was anything else? Confused, Jack hemmed and hawed, until Mrs. Heibolt ended the call with "Thank you sir, my regards to your wife" before hanging up. She flipped on the answering machine, curious as to how they reacted.

Clare

The young lady was feeling soft. Clare enjoyed sitting at the drawing room window, watching the way the clouds and sky interacted with the greenery behind the

Heibolt's house; the way the wind constantly tried to sort the arrangement out; then hesitated for a moment as if satisfied, before stirring everything up again with a big optimistic gust. She was happy. Exams were coming the next week, and she had exemptions in all but English and gym, which probably had more to do with her gym and English teacher's desire to postpone the time she went out of their lives rather than any shortage on her part. Her mama was very strict, and even though an eighteen-year-old has rights, Clare always was and would be a mama's girl.

Olive joined her angel. Clare was beautiful, but that wasn't what captivated her mama. Beauty is common, and in eighteen-year-olds, it is virtually inherent. Especially in girls. Olive took great pride in her daughter; while Clare had not began life in Olive's womb, she existed only because of her mama. Now the idea that had been percolating in the back of mama's mind had surfaced and it would require some tweaking of Clare's programming. The end game was approaching, and Olive felt as thrilled as she did when she spotted one of the gorgeous night creatures who provided her with the love her spirit needed for Clare's health. Since Clare's papa was destroyed in an industrial accident, Olive had lived for her...and the six plus years' long "suspension" of Clare's life had forced Olive to resort to cruising and sampling the endless supply of wondrous beings found parading their charms everywhere Olive went late at night. They filled a void in Olive's life, which otherwise would have been very lonely indeed.

Clare looked at her mama with curiosity. Being hauled out of her Practical Critical Applications class had upset many of the other students, and Clare knew messages were piling up on her service. Fredd would be worried, even more after the weird event the other evening, when a new kid was at their table at the Maced Rapper. The tall elegant youth, who spoke with the crisp drawl of a North Sider, had come on to Clare, asking a few too many questions. Clare had suddenly recalled being with him a long time ago; she even knew his name: GARRET SUMMERFIELD! The poor girl had felt faint, and Wyltoskli had been upset at Fredd for introducing a North Side reject to their circle; he said half of them rich kids were narks! Fredd had taken Clare away, but while out by the car, the kid had called Clare "Clark" and drew attention to a birthmark on her lower back, in a place difficult to notice. The strange event had ruined the evening for Clare, and several others. Clare's gender was pretty obvious, after all. Males don't have tits!

Clare had never confronted mama on many things that confused her. She liked being a girl, but had once been a boy, and she had liked that too. She had memories from her early life, but they seemed torn out of the present, as if they were stolen. Clare's mama saw her perplexity, and held her close, stroking her hair and soothing her with reassurances. Olive had expected to have to confront Clare's original family for months, and had carefully prepared her attack, fallback, retreat and defensive strategies. She had run through a variety of scenarios, all predicated on what she knew of that class of people, and the distinct peculiarities of

Gilles Wonderly; his wife and their numerous girlfriends. The incest that had occurred between mother and son was “deep background” to much of Olive’s strategy. That it was not true hardly mattered; she believed it was true, and went from there.

All worldly people know that truth is. That’s it. The remarkable mystery of this world has no beginning, and it has no end. It is only by contemplating the mystery of creation, as the wise men and women, the saints and the prophets of humanity have done since Adam and Eve, that some idea of the Creator can be imagined. Somewhere along, Olive learned that her new little boyfriend was “sleeping with his mama.” Not true. Or at least not in the wicked way Clark implied when he told this fib to Clare, all those summers ago.

Olive was still reeling from Mike’s death, when his coworker, fired in a bizarre workplace love triangle gone bloody wrong, flew into the offices next day to shoot the guy who shared office space with innocent Mike, newly promoted from the shop floor! Olive had been angry at the story that came out, of two- and three-timed wives, guns, private eyes, blackmail and so on...and her Mike had gotten promoted into the middle of THAT! The dupe shot Mike instead, and said “Oops” like a fucking idiot! The boss, who was at the center of the Peyton Place atmosphere, anxiously had her paid off, while rushing off to Balmarine, anxiously licking his lips. The game no longer fun.

So, Olive, a small town girl who thought propriety demanded showered in a bathing suit, was in a mood to actually believe the fib! The fact was, Clark had been involved in a game of one-upmanship with his new friend, who was still an outcast at the Kissaway Summer Camp, persecuted for her differences, just like Clark was. The sissy and the “laundry lady’s kid” became pals, and every evening Olive interrupted her crying to listen to her daughter’s reports, almost fainting from love for her angel! She had no idea that her Clare had told Clark that her mama “played with her” at night. The outrageous stories just grew, in the hot-house isolation that gave the vivid nine-year-olds’ imaginations limitless range...which translated badly when converted to something adults and mothers understand! The children knew wickedness, and each wanted to tell the other something so wicked it would be a secret only they could ever think about, forever.

Unfortunately, little Clare shared the secrets with her mama. The nonsensical stories would have been exposed differently had not Clare been “killed” by little Clark Wonderly the next summer. He must have overheard the girl telling Mrs. Heibolt about his mother’s twisted sexuality, Olive suspected. Clark Wonderly was part of the wealthy herd, and they ignored the rules ordinary “sheeple” were forced to follow, Olive had raged. What really pissed her off was the way the insurance company suddenly went cold on the cash settlement from Mike’s murder, enough time having gone by to allow them to do so, other fresher scandals having taken center stage.

The months-long conflict had been played rough by the business types from the insurance company, until one day Olive called Mike’s old office, telling them she had a gun! Olive half-expected to be sent to jail, but instead an anxious ex-

ecutive paged her at work, literally begging her to wait for them...they were treating her to dinner! A guy whom she'd been told was "unavailable" for six months suddenly was in the parking lot, a check in hand! In the end, Olive had ended up with a tenth of what the insurance policy said, but she signed papers to get that. One consequence was that she no longer had any illusions about the integrity of the well-to-do. They had none, Olive concluded. Spurred by the anger over the problems with her insurance settlement, she had begun preparing to use the "incest" information to force the Wonderlys to help her and Clare with money when suddenly, her beloved child was gone!

The Visit

Mrs. Wonderly sorted out what happened after Mrs. Heibolt's call, enraged at her husband's confusion! She listened to half an hour of babbling cross talk before, grabbing a telephone, she called Mrs. Heibolt, demanding to see Clark! "You mean Clare," Mrs. Heibolt corrected, before adding that she'd ask her daughter, please wait. Poor Mrs. Wonderly was about ready to blow her top when she was told that Clare had agreed to see her. She was told her appointment was for one hour from then, and to come alone...Clare was not interested in seeing anyone else! Both Wonderlys raged, filling the home with curses and cries; demanding answers from sweating legal advisors, who suggested contacting the police. But what about Clark? He was living with that damned woman, going to school, and dressing like a woman! Both Wonderlys were refined enough to clutch their heads and stagger to a chair, feeling faint while glasses of water were hurriedly fetched. It was too much! Finally someone said things would perhaps be clearer after Mrs. Wonderly saw her son.

Clare was wearing a light blue temptress lingerie set, from Fantasy Girl, under a sexy flared dark blue dress. She had her cedar blonde hair barretted back, framing her glowing face. She was lightly made-up, with soft-red lipstick, and she wore a pearl choker on her peaches and cream neck. She looked lovely. When Mrs. Wonderly arrived, Marie opened the gate, after ascertaining that she was alone. Marie then escorted the visitor into the drawing room, where Mrs. Heibolt waited. It was a chilly greeting she gave the damned woman, looking around for her...kid. Mrs. Heibolt ignored her demands to see her "son" immediately. "Clare," she told the intruder, "will be down shortly." She inquired after the family's health, while signaling to Marie to bring refreshments. Mrs. Wonderly cooled her heels impatiently, too polite to scream! After an interminable period, while tea was served, Mrs. Heibolt looked expectantly at Mrs. Wonderly, who stared at her in frustration, until Mrs. Heibolt asked about the family's health again (as if she cared!). Mrs. Wonderly remembered her manners, and mumbled something, before imperatively demanding to see her child.

Olive stood and, approaching the sitting guest, nodded to Marie, who flitted away to get the youngster. Mrs. Wonderly also stood. Although they were similar in age, the Wonderly woman wore her wealth on her strong, healthy bones, in her blonde hair and creamy skin. She was dressed in a power red pinstriped business suit, with a white rose in her lapel, to soften the effect. Her gray patent pumps gleamed, and her long legs gave her a height advantage over the shorter Mrs. Hei-

bolt, who never wasted money on nice clothes for herself, so looked mousy as a result. The two women faced each other, silently, until Mrs. Heibolt moved to the door as the girlish laughter of some young person reached them. Mrs. Heibolt glanced at Mrs. Wonderly just before Clare—or Clark—breezed in, still smiling at some interplay between her and the family maid. She looked at her mama before glancing over at the visitor.

Mrs. Wonderly was taken aback. Clark always was certainly pretty, but the beautiful young lady looking at her was a vision out of a magazine! Mrs. Wonderly paled, unsure what to say. “Clark?” she ventured, a catch in her voice. Clare coolly looked at her, ignoring the address. “She means you,” Olive leaned in and said, encouraging her. Clare whispered something, grimacing, before looking at Mrs. Wonderly guiltily. Mrs. Wonderly heard the other woman go “Hush!” in a stressed whisper, before both suppressed giggles. Straightening up, stiffening her spine, Mrs. Wonderly took a deep breath, then said, “Well, I see...,” trailing off into more confusion. “She claims to be your mama,” Mrs. Heibolt told the young lady, whose eyes widened as she looked first at her mama, then at the stranger, who stood haplessly, totally lost in the psychological drama she had wandered into. “You’re not mama!” Clare stated petulantly, narrowing her eyes and looking at Mrs. Wonderly closely, as if for the first time. “Clark...it’s me, your mom,” Mrs. Wonderly said, grasping wildly at straws. “Who are you?” Clare demanded of her, but looking at her mama, with amazement and a touch of anger in her eyes. “Clark...please,” Mrs. Wonderly pleaded when Mrs. Heibolt stepped in-between, looking back at Clare and touching her arm lightly before turning to Mrs. Wonderly. The visit was over. Clare went out, craning her neck to look past Olive at Mrs. Wonderly. Her face was dark with anger, but also questioning. Marie attended her upstairs, as her instructions detailed.

Mrs. Wonderly was white, her face bloodless. The visit had not gone well. She recognized her son in Clare, having spent sixteen years with the growing boy, and having thought of him every day since his disappearance. But she had mistakenly hoped things would go her way, and hadn’t prepared herself for calamity. Mrs. Heibolt herded her out of the drawing room, where traces of precious Clark still lingered, if only in memory. Mrs. Heibolt wanted the woman run off, and bodily forced her back, while Mrs. Wonderly reached out, as if trying to hang onto her son. Things moved fast, as Mrs. Heibolt wanted them to. The earlier pretenses of politeness were replaced by power politics and she savored her vengeance against the awful people who destroyed her life.

When Mrs. Wonderly was outside, some idea of the enormity of her failure struck her. Anxiously, she paced around the porch, ringing the buzzer, composing a fresh approach. Marie finally came, stepping out of the door, which locked with loud finality behind her. Marie smiled, but her duty was to get rid of Wonderly, who had as much value there now as a hungry dog. With benign ruthlessness, and many smiles, she continued Mrs. Heibolt’s trick of crowding the nice lady away, until the gate was open enough to let Mrs. Wonderly out. Her protests got thinner and more hopeless, bouncing helplessly off Marie, who closed the gate in the face of a woman whose sunglasses cost more than Marie’s monthly wage.