

IT STARTED WITH

An illustration of two women in bikinis embracing. The woman on the left has dark, curly hair and is wearing sunglasses and a red bikini. The woman on the right has long, straight blonde hair and is wearing a white bikini. They are shown from the waist up, facing each other in a close embrace. The background is a grey halftone pattern.

PETE

Sarah

THORPE

It Started with Pete

by Sarah Thorpe

Chapter 1

It started with Pete. He was 13 years old when he first realized that something might be terribly wrong with him. It happened during adolescence. Pete was in Junior High and like everybody else in his class, things started to happen to his body. In the beginning everything looked right. Hair grew on his genitalia, his balls came out of its hiding in his body and he started to have wet dreams. This was just what happened to every boy in the world at about the same age. But as summer leave started something strange happened. Pete noticed it himself. One morning he felt sore in his breast region. He walked over to a mirror and took a closer look. What he saw gave him a shock; his breasts had started swelling just like a girl's! This couldn't be normal and he ran to tell his mother. His mother, Mary-Beth saw it right away, Pete started to develop into a girl!

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Pete lived with his mother in a small town in South Eastern USA. This was the town where his mother, Mary-Beth Thompson, was born, and where her parents still lived. They were her closest neighbors. Mary-Beth had left town to go to college. She left college as a fully licensed nurse and started working at a hospital in a town in New Mexico. Close to the town was a military installation where various Top Secret tests were taking place. The hospital also had a military wing and they were responsible for all medical tests and check-ups of the personnel at the facility. It didn't take long before Mary-Beth went steady with one of the engineers at the facility. His name was Don Lang. They fell in love with each other and everybody around thought they would tie the knot in the not so distant future.

About two years after her arrival Mary-Beth found out she was pregnant. She hoped that this would convince Don to marry her. When he heard the news he promised to do so and make an honest woman out of Mary-Beth. The date for the wedding was set and guests were invited, but two weeks before the wedding Don just disappeared without a word. Mary-Beth was devastated. She didn't know what to do. An abortion was out of the question so she had to go through her pregnancy. So on March 12th, 1945 she gave birth to a baby boy. She named him Pete after her grandfather.

Mary-Beth stayed in New Mexico for two more years. Then there was a vacancy for a trained nurse at the doctor's office in her hometown. She applied for the job and got it. She took her son with her and moved to her hometown when Pete was 2½ years old.

She moved in with her parents. Her two brothers had already moved out and lived elsewhere. Her mother took care of Pete while she was at work. The doctor's office was not more than a local office; it was in fact a small clinic where people could get treatment without having to go to a large hospital in larger town. This suited her fine; it gave her a better chance to exploit her nursing skills.

But being a single mother in such a place in the forties and fifties was not easy. Many people frowned upon her, and some even didn't want to have anything to do with

her. She even experienced that an elderly woman walked out of the doctor's office when she saw that Mary-Beth was on duty. The doctor himself liked Mary-Beth. She was an excellent nurse; in fact she was the best nurse he had ever had. His name was Sam Collins and he was 33 years old when Mary-Beth arrived. He was a liberal man and had no problems with Mary-Beth being a single mother. He was a well-respected doctor in town.

A few years after she had moved home, the house next to her parents was up for sale. She gathered all her savings and bought the house. She still had to have a small mortgage on the house, but that was manageable. As time went by people started to accept her, but there was still a few left that didn't like a single mother. These people scorned her and did their best to make her life miserable. This was also reflected on her parents, but they were strong enough to withstand the pressure from these people. They even tried to make things difficult for Pete, but he didn't understand much so he shrugged it off. He had enough friends to play with anyway.

When Pete started Grade School there were some people that would stop him from attending the local school, but the board said that they had no rights to do so. Instead these people started separate classes for their own children.

In general life was good for Pete and his mother. Mary-Beth was an excellent nurse and was well respected in town. Those who had anything against her needed her help anyway.

This was very much the situation in the summer of 1958 when Pete's problem was discovered. As soon as she understood what was about to happen to her son, Mary-Beth made a private arrangement with Dr. Collins to ask for his opinion.

This meeting took place on a quiet Monday evening in Dr. Collins' office. "What seems to be the problem, Pete?" he asked.

"It looks like I'm getting breasts like the girls in my class. I hear them complaining about pain in the chest region and I feel just like them."

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“Sounds strange to me; but let me have a look. Please take off your shirt so I can see and feel your chest.”

Pete did as he was told. The doctor took a good look at his chest and frowned. It showed clear signs of growing breasts. He tried to touch them and Pete jumped back in pain. “This is strange,” the doctor said, “I have never seen anything like it. I’ve heard about similar things though, and it might have some natural explanation. It can go away in a few months, but I don’t think this is very likely. In the case I’ve read about the person had a chromosome disorder. It can be the case with you as well, but to find that out I need to take several tests. Are you ready?”

Pete nodded.

“Good. First I want to check on your genitalia. Can you please take off your pants?”

Pete did as he was told. Soon he was standing naked in front of the doctor. The doctor took a good look at Pete’s penis and balls and asked: “I understand you already have had your first wet dreams?”

“Yes, I have.”

“How was it?”

“Strange, but since my mom had told me what I could expect it wasn’t too bad. She has told me all about what happens to boys and girls during puberty and what that means to us.”

“Your mother is a wise woman. Most other kids learn nothing from their parents and puberty comes as a shock to them. It’s easy for me to see that your penis and balls have developed into what they should look like when you’re grown. It’s not over yet, but you are well on your way. What I want you to do now is to give me a urine sample, and if you could, give me a sample of your sperm. You only have to play a little with yourself and it will come by itself. Then you collect the fluids in a special bottle I will give you. Start with the urine sample while I find the bottle for the sperm.”

Fifteen minutes later Pete had delivered both urine and sperm, the only thing left was a blood sample. That was quickly taken care of by Pete's mother.

When all the tests had been done and properly packed, the doctor said: "Tomorrow I will personally take these tests to a laboratory in the University Hospital in Richmond. I know the people there and I trust their discretion. I assume it will take a few weeks before I have the results, but when I have them we will have another talk. In the meantime I suggest you lay low; it is not wise to let other people know about this. There are people on his town that don't like you and they might take advantage of the situation if something is wrong with Pete. We talk about it on Wednesday when I'm back in the office. Before you leave I have one final question. Pete, what does your head tell you; does it tell you that you are a boy or a girl."

"It has always told me that I am a boy and it still does. How come?"

"Because there are people out there where their body says they are men, but their mind tells them they're women, or vice versa."

While they were at the doctor's office someone had seen Mary-Beth and her son at the doctor's office that evening someone had seen them and wondered what was happening. The person decided to try to get information about that meeting at all costs.

Chapter 2

Dr. Sam Collins left early the next morning. He had a three-hour drive ahead of him. In the fifties most of the roads were still two-lane highways, the Interstate program was still in its infancy. He reached his destination a little after nine and went straight to his old friend Professor Charles Wilkinson, or Chuck amongst friends. This visit was one of his regular visits to the University; Pete's test was just something he added in the last minute. "Hi Sam, and welcome," Chuck said as Sam came through

his office door, "I see you're in one of your monthly visits to us in order to update yourself."

"Yes, I am, and I have brought some samples I want you to analyze for me." Sam took out the bottles and told Chuck about Pete.

"A most interesting case," Chuck said, "ever since I heard about the first sex change operation I have tried to find out more about the subject. It's hard to find; it seems there is some kind of taboo on the subject. The idea of a sex change upsets many people. It's not according to God's will they say. In my eyes this is just another variation of sexuality amongst the human race. None of these variations are accepted, however."

"I agree with you there. Human sexuality is not 100% clean cut. History has told us that. Remember Josh, he used to dress as a girl at Halloween and got away with it. I think it gave him satisfaction to see himself as a woman. I saw him out on the town as a woman on other occasions as well. To me it was obvious that he liked it."

"I saw him as well. I had no problems with that. As long as he didn't hurt anybody it was OK to me. Have you seen him lately?"

"I met him on a congress five years ago. He was his usual self, very happy with his life. He lives in New York."

"That figures. Now back to business. I'll take care of the tests myself. We have to be as discreet as possible. You told me that Pete still feels that he is a boy, and that gives us some clues on how we shall handle his case. What do you know about Pete's parents?"

"I know everything about his mother. She is a highly qualified nurse and works at my office. After college she worked at the hospital at a highly classified facility in New Mexico. She treated many of people working there. She fell in love with one of the engineers and he became Pete's father. Two weeks before the wedding he just disappeared and Mary-Beth haven't heard from him since."

"If my first hunch is right, we might have more cases on our hands soon. I have a good friend that can help me

find others that worked there at the same time. He can then instigate tests on these men and their children as well. I'll keep you posted."

Dr. Sam Collins spent the rest of the day at the hospital. When he left around 5PM he had lots of new information that could come in handy in his line of work.

The person who had spotted Mary-Beth and Pete at the doctor's office late Monday night was back to pay a visit to the doctor on Tuesday. The person managed to get an appointment saying she needed new pills. The nurses knew the person and they knew what the person wanted. During a short absence from a nurse the person managed to get a glimpse of the doctor's protocol. From the visit last night it could be read that Pete might suffer from some kind of gender disorder. That was all the person wanted to know, so after having received the pills the person hurried back home.

Later that evening it was a meeting amongst some of the leaders of the local church. There the issue of Pete's situation was raised. It was clear consensus that if Pete had a gender disorder it must be the work of the devil. It must be God's punishment for being born and raised by a single mother.

The congregation wasn't very large, just 20% of the small town's inhabitants were devoted followers. But this was enough to cause a ruckus. During the next sermon the minister preached about Mary-Beth's sin and God's punishment by sending her a freak as her son. They must leave the town in order to keep it clean. After the sermon they marched to Mary-Beth's house demanding that she and that monster of a son she had should leave town immediately.

Mary-Beth called the Sheriff and he came and cleared the street in front of her house and told the people to go home. They did as they were told.

Next Sunday the same thing happened again. This time Mary-Beth came out and asked for an explanation. "Your son is turning into a girl, and that is the work of the devil," the minister said, "and this is God's punishment for having a child and not being married. You have

sinned in his eyes and we don't want your kind around here anymore."

"That's not the God I know," Mary-Beth replied, "My God is kind and gentle to all his children. He accepts every person that believes in him, no matter what he or she looks like. He gives mercy to all his children. In his eyes I have done nothing wrong. And my poor son is completely innocent in all kinds of wrongdoing. He is what he is and is accepted as that. My God had assured me that we have done nothing wrong."

"You are a witch and your son is the son of the devil!" someone screamed.

At this point the sheriff butted in and took two of the leaders in for questioning. That didn't help very much so he gave them a fine for disturbing the peace.

At the University clinic Prof. Wilkinson went to work almost right away. He knew what to look for. The tests were elaborate and required lots of meticulous work and it took days before he had all the results. They were puzzling, but they all pointed in the same direction. Pete was unique. If Chuck's hunch was right, more boys like him might soon turn up. He had to inform someone about his findings, but who? It had to be someone with the right connections so the other candidates can be tracked down. Then he had it! Craig Fillmore was the man! He had just recently taken over a position as head of the medical department at the FBI. He was a good friend and could utilize all the Bureau's resources to track down the other possible candidates. He had to call him at once and set up a meeting.

Ten minutes later he had Craig on the phone. "Hello Craig, it's me Chuck Wilkinson." He said as Craig answered his phone.

"Oh hello Chuck. Long time no see. You're still professor at the University Clinic in Richmond?"

"Yes I am, and I need your help. We have to talk."

"It must be important since you obviously won't tell me anything over the phone. Can you come to DC on Fri-

day? Bring your wife and you stay with us over the weekend. I have a feeling our wives would love to see each other again.”

“I’m sure they would. I’ll bring her. When do you want to see me?”

“Why not take the evening train on Thursday. I’ll pick you up at the station and take you to our house. On Friday you join me at my office and we can have a talk there. If we need to talk with other agents I’ll call them in if needed. OK?”

“It’s a deal.”

Chuck hung up and called Sam. “Sam,” he said, “on your next trip up here, please bring Pete and his mother. Prepare them for an overnight stay. I need to see Pete in person and I might have to run some more tests on him.”

“We’ll be there. That will be Tuesday next week.”

“Right. See you then.”

Chapter 3

Dr. Collins, Mary-Beth and Pete left for the University Clinic on Monday afternoon. They arrived in the area around 9PM, found a hotel and settled in. Mary-Beth had packed for a week just in case. There was a diner close by and that gave them something to eat before they went to bed.

At precisely nine they walked through the doors of Professor Wilkinson’s office. He welcomed them and offered them a chair each. When the formal introductions were over and some refreshments served, the professor went straight to the point. “I have the results of the test taken from Pete ready. Before I go on I want to know how much Pete knows about human reproduction, hormones and chromosomes. It’s important that he has an understanding of these things. Otherwise much of what I say will not make sense to him.”

“I have told him almost everything,” Mart-Beth said, “I thought it would be in his best interest to know as much

as possible about what boys and girls go through during puberty.”

“Good, but I will ask him some questions just in case. Pete, do you know how we reproduce? What we do and what happens when we make babies?”

“I know how it is done, but I’m not sure about the details afterwards.”

“Have you heard about chromosomes, especially X and Y chromosomes?”

“Yes, and I know what they do.”

“Have you heard about testosterone and estrogens?”

“I’ve heard the names, but can’t remember what they do.”

“OK. Let me begin. I started with the blood sample. I checked for testosterone and found that Pete has the normal level for a boy his age. Then I checked for estrogens and to my surprise I found that Pete has normal level of estrogens for a 13-year old girl! And that really surprised me. It might explain why Pete is developing breasts. But why does he produce estrogens?”

“I checked his urine to see if something was wrong, but everything was all right. Next came the sperm. As you know sperm is actually millions of small cells that contains a number of chromosomes. Half of them contain an X-chromosome while the other half contains a Y-chromosome. It is these chromosomes that determine the sex of the child. All the egg cells in a woman contain an X-chromosome. That means that an XX-combination will result in a girl, while an XY-combination will result in a boy. I was looking for chromosome anomalies. They have occurred before and you might be just another case. For instance has an XXY combination been observed before?”

“Your sperm count is normal for a 13-year old boy, but one of your chromosomes is not quite like it should be. The X-chromosome is OK, but there is something wrong with the Y-chromosome. It looks almost like an X where the lower right line has half-length. That might be the problem. By crosschecking your blood for chromosomes I

found the same anomaly. This tells me that this is something you have inherited from your father. His sperm must have been like yours, there are no other explanations. So where do we go from here? There is no way we can stop the flow of hormones in your body. We don't have any drugs that can do that. We can stop the flow of testosterone, but that involves an operation where we remove your penis and balls. Since I understand that you are a boy inside your head, I don't consider that a very viable option. We can remove the breasts when they are fully developed, but you will anyway be stuck with a very feminine body.

"So my conclusion is that the defective Y-chromosome causes your body to produce both testosterone and estrogens, and that the testosterone takes care of your primary sexual characteristics; that is your active penis and balls, while the estrogens takes care of your secondary sexual characteristics; that is breasts, hairless body, soft skin and low muscle mass. How you want to live your life I leave entirely up to you and your mother."

"That was quite a story," Mary-Beth said, "it tells me that in a few months my son will have the outward appearance as a girl, but with the sexual desires as a boy. What a mess. And all this because of that man I happened to fall in love with and who promised to marry me. He stood me up and I haven't seen him in 14 years. I think Pete and I will have to talk seriously about what we will do in the future. One thing is for sure, we must move."

"I'm sorry to hear that. I can arrange so you can move here. People are more tolerant here than in your hometown. I can get you a job here at the hospital and Pete can go to the local school dressed in the clothes he would prefer."

"I thank you for your offer and I will consider it."

Sam had kept quiet and listened to Chuck's account on Pete's situation, but now he felt he had so say something. "This was very interesting, Chuck," he said, "and my gut feeling tells me that you're right. I think Pete's father has been exposed to radiation that has altered his

sperm. This means that we possibly have more kids like Pete out there. They need to be tracked down and warned. We can't stop what's going on, but we might be able to prepare them for what might come. And that has to be done by someone other than us. We are into some very touchy stuff here."

"I know and I have already been in contact with Dr. Craig Fillmore. He's the head of FBI's medical department. He will be here tomorrow and I would appreciate if you could stay."

"If Craig's coming I'll stay. I didn't bring any overnight kit, but I will manage. I just have to inform my office. By the way, you shouldn't happen to have a job for me as well?"

"I might have. But what about your job in the village and your family? I understood you took that job because your wife was from the area."

"I have an assistant that can take over any time. My wife left me two years ago and youngest starts college thus year. No problem. Besides I'm very interested in following Pete's future development." He looked at Mary-Beth and Chuck could see they had warm feelings for each other.

"I'll check with the University Board. I will give you my highest recommendations, but it will involve that you have to work for me."

"I can live with that."

Chuck went on with a few more tests of Pete. Amongst them was an x-ray to see if something might be hidden inside him.

At the end of the day Mary-Beth and Pete was taken back to their motel. Sam managed to have his room extended for one more day. The three of them had dinner together that evening.

Before they went to bed, mother and son had a long talk about the future and what it would bring. It was Pete that drew the conclusion. "Mom, I think we should move here," he said, "then we can get away from the fanatics

that is making our lives miserable back home. I also like Dr. Collins very much and if you both start working here I think you should start to see each other more often also outside your work. For my part I think it will be easiest to start living as a girl from the moment we come here. I think that will be the best solution. But I need to get exceptions from having to shower with the other girls. I don't think it would be wise for me to be naked in front of them. I will see how I like being a girl on the outside and decide later what to do in the future. Science might be able to solve my problem in a few years time."

"I'm happy to hear you say what you just said. I have the same thoughts. In the present situation I think it's best that we move. I know that my parents won't like it, but they will understand. And for you I think it will be best if you start looking like a girl on the outside. Then you must also act and behave like one. I will teach you everything you need to know. And when it comes to Dr. Collins, and me so are we seeing each other quite a lot already. If things work out right he might even become your stepfather. Would you like that?"

"I would like that very much."

Chapter 4

Next day Sam, Mary-Beth and Pete showed up at the hospital at 8:30. It gave Chuck some extra minutes with his clients. "First of all," he opened, "I have talked with the hospital management and they accept that you both start working here from August 15th. And if you can share a house I have the perfect place for you. It's ten minutes drive from the hospital and large enough for you all. You can rent it from Aug 1st with an option to buy it when you have sold your own houses. And for Pete I have some good news. My youngest daughter is the same age as him and will be in his class. I have told her about Pete and she had promised to help him become a girl like her. I will talk with the school board later about Pete not showering with the other girls. Janet knows that Pete is a very special case and needs to live as a girl in the years to come. She will not tell anybody a word about him."