

**HIGH PLAINS
TWISTER**



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By Teri Lynn Richards

Alexis was born on a farm on the high plains of Kansas - the child of a wheat farmer father and airplane manufacturing executive mother. Life on the farm had benefits and challenges. Farm-life knit the Wilson family closely together, but in case of trying times ahead, Alexis' mother, Andrea, supplemented the family's income by working at the nearby Cessna manufacturing plant in Wichita. Not that the farm was doing badly, but if a drought came, their good farm could be wiped out in one season. Therefore, the Wilson's believed that they needed a strong cash-reserve in the bank. Alexis' father, Ken, was tall and lean, a product of many years of toiling on the 1,000 acre farm. Work, which would kill most men, was his daily routine. Ken hoped for a son or two, to help with the grueling work and, in his later years, perhaps to take over the business, but no children came. Finally, after 10 years of marriage, the first child was born to Ken and Andrea - Alexis. Yes, Ken was hoping for a son first, as most farmers do, because he could use the help of a son; but they got a daughter instead. No matter, Ken was happy that they had a child after so many years, and he was proud of his daughter.

Alexis' mother was a beautiful woman. Tall and slender, she made heads turn wherever she appeared. Perhaps her charm, more than her college education, was instrumental in getting her a career as an executive at Cessna. Andrea was the Director of Interior Design for the airplanes manufactured by Cessna. Each year, under her direction, Cessna won industry awards for its airplane interiors - in the category of versatility, comfort and appearance. Andrea's physical features were also a plus, especially in an industry dominated by males. She had red hair and blue eyes which pierced through body and soul when she looked at you. Her figure was very shapely, adding to her allure and femininity. Yes, Andrea was a gorgeous woman, who had a lovely family and successful career.

Alexis did not take after her mother. From the moment of birth, it was obvious that she looked more like her father. She had her father's eyes and nose, but the hair was a beauti-

ful red, just like her mother's. Two years later, Alexis' parents were blessed with one more child – John.

Alexis' parents married at an older age than most couples. Both had come from poor families and stayed home longer than customary, in order to help subsidize their families' incomes. So it was that by the time Alexis was old enough to help with the farm chores, her father was already 52. Alexis seemed to be the typical girl; playing with her dolls and wanting to imitate her mother. Until almost her teen years, Alexis lived life as would any other little girl. But times of change were ahead. Her father was working himself to exhaustion on the farm because he had no help. He could not afford to hire anyone. His wife's income was solely to establish a retirement fund and a college fund for their children. Thus, at age 12, Alexis learned how to drive the tractor and other farm equipment, such as a combine - this at an age when other girls were not even driving cars yet. On a farm, a driver's license was not required to drive the farm implements. They could even be driven down the highway a short distance, to the next field, and often it was Alexis who was driving the equipment. Alexis' father was grateful for the help. While he was fixing broken equipment, Alexis could drive the tractor, hauling irrigation pipes from one field to the next. She could drive through the fields with the fertilizer machine and haul hay for the horses. Her help was greatly appreciated.

And John, yes, he was growing quickly and his father was looking forward to the day when he could help out around the farm, doing the chores that Alexis was doing. John seemed not to put on much weight. Instead, John's growth was upward – a tall, skinny kid and much weaker than most kids his age. John didn't have his father's looks; he looked a bit like mom. John developed his own unique appearance. His face was much softer than his father's and did not have a masculine appearance. His face had feminine-like features. John was also a small-boned child. Some might even have thought of him as a bit on the effeminate side. As John got older, his friends were out riding horses and hauling hay-bales for feed, but he was engrossed in reading, music and the arts. It became apparent, early in his life, that John would not be the type of son who would be a helper with the farming chores. This made his father rely more on Alexis to assist him, with the thousand chores on the farm. John was not a lazy son, he just had other interests. Because he spent most of his time inside, his mother availed herself of his presence to help her around the house. She too had a fleeting thought that her son might be somewhat effeminate. His mother wanted to see in which direction John was leaning. She taught John to help out with chores in the house, doing the vacuuming, dusting, and mopping the floors. John never objected and that was not common for the typical teenager. His mother was grateful for his help and John was always glad to help. As John got older, his mother thought that it would be a great help if he knew how to cook, so she offered to teach him that skill. Again, John did not object. John, in fact, seemed quite interested. Was this another sign of how John was leaning? Andrea decided that she needed to know. So at the age of 13, Andrea put an apron around John and led him into the kitchen. Andrea did not say anything to her son about wearing an apron. She wanted to see whether her son would ask why he had to wear an apron, but John did not inquire, nor did he object. John seemed a natural, quickly learning how to prepare the family's favorite dishes. Andrea watched John as he was mixing ingredients and cooking. He seemed to handle things differently than the typical boy. John had a more gentle touch. He was a natural for the task and he

seemed to enjoy it. Andrea was glad to finally have a helper in the kitchen. Besides, with his mother often coming home late from work, with John cooking, dinner would be served on time. Alexis often thought that she would love to do the cooking, but she knew that John would never drive a tractor or combine and she just couldn't leave her father without help. And so, Alexis continued to help with the outside work, while her brother assisted with the housework. Except for the fact that the Alexis' and John's roles, of helping their parents, were reversed, their lives were not that different from other children their age.

Alexis was now reaching puberty and while other girls her age were starting to show some feminine development, Alexis displayed no such outward signs. Instead of a soft and fair skin, Alexis, because of her constantly being outdoors, had a deep tan and somewhat rough-skinned hands. While other girls ran around in pretty cotton dresses, Alexis was out in her overalls, hauling hay or doing other farming chores. Because she had to get up early, to help with the chores, she didn't have time to set her hair, so she kept it fairly short. After the chores, she had to dash into the shower and get ready in a flash, so she could catch the bus to school. With short hair, only a few strokes with her brush, and she was set to go. As for appearance, Alexis looked rather plain, compared to the other girls at school, because they had time to set their hair, apply some make-up and get their clothes in order – a different outfit for each day. Often Alexis did not have time to do her laundry, so she wore the same outfit she had worn a few days earlier. A fashion model she was not – pretty yes, but not like her mother. In many respects, she resembled a boy more than a girl, especially because she was quite flat-chested.

John, meanwhile, was learning to be more of a help for his mother. Andrea approached her son one day and



asked whether he could help with the laundry. John replied that he probably wouldn't mind, but that he had no idea how it had to be done. Andrea said that she would show him how to do the laundry. John paid close attention to the instructions his mother gave him, such as washing whites and colors separately. She also explained that all of the lingerie should be washed separately because lingerie is very delicate. "John, take this slip in your hands and feel how soft and thin it is," said his mother. "Does it feel soft and delicate to you? She asked. John took the slip into his hands and felt the fabric. He seemed to linger longer exploring its softness than his mother though he would. Most boys would not even volunteer to do the laundry, let alone feel a slip, in the presence of their mother, to feel the silky-smooth texture. Blushing, John answered, "Yes, it does feel very smooth, soft and delicate. I bet that you enjoy wearing it more than I enjoy wearing my rough under-shorts." Andrea made a mental note of John's comment. Before the opportunity escaped her, she handed him some more lingerie items. "John, this is a camisole. Some are very thin, so you have to be very careful when washing them. Feel how delicate it is. You know, it is the silky feeling and sheerness of lingerie that makes a woman feel sexy when wearing it. Now gently place my lingerie into the washing machine. Oh, I almost forgot. I have several bras which need washing. Would you please retrieve them from my hamper and bring them to the wash?" instructed Andrea. "Sure Mom. I'd be happy to get them," John replied.

As John returned with the bras – each in a different color – his mother commented, "Before you put those bras down, look at them and tell me what you notice." John must have thought that this was a science test,, because he carefully examined each bra. When he was done examining the bras, his mother asked, "So, what do you see?" John replied, "I see tags on them saying that they are a size 38-D. And oh, they're all different colors. "I bet your wondering why I buy colored bras. Well, let me tell you. Even though no one knows what color bra I'm wearing, I know and women love variety and colors. Some colors make me feel sexier than others; so, if I want to feel sexier, I may wear my red bra. And did you notice that the slips and camisoles are in matching colors with the bras?" Andrea was slowly, but surely get John accustomed to handling lingerie and she was teaching him the finer points about color-coordination – even some feminine 'secrets' – such as why women wear colored bras. John seemed to just soak in all of the information, never commenting that he did not need to know all this just to do the laundry. "Oh John – hold on to those bras for a minute before you place them into the wash." Andrea stepped over to her son and said, "Look at the straps. They love to get tangled around other clothes. There is a way to help reduce this problem. Bra straps can present another interesting challenge. The tiny hooks love to get snagged in other clothing. To avoid, both of these problems, as much as possible, hook each bra, just as if you were wearing it." Andrea deliberately chose those words – "...as if you were wearing it'. She wanted to see John's reaction, but he said nothing.

John attempted to get the hooks into the clasps but found it difficult to do so. After several attempts, he finally succeeded. After hooking all the bras, his mother chuckled, "You think it's difficult to hook them while holding them in your hands. You should see how difficult it is to hook them from behind." John smiled and retorted, "You seem to manage as if it isn't difficult at all. Walking past your room in the mornings, I've seen how quickly you hook your bra." "John, my sweet son, I can hook a bra quickly now because I've had

years of practice. Come hear for a minute. You just hooked about 8 bras, so you have some experience; now let me see what you can do under different circumstances. Take off your shirt." John did as his mother requested. "OK, pick a color," John picked the black bra.

"Oh, black is your dad's favorite color, for those special moments.... Good choice. Now, let me slip this on you and then I want you to try to hook it." Surprisingly - or maybe not - John offered no resistance, only another little blush and for the next five minutes, he tried to hook the bra, without success. Seeing his lack of achievement, his mother offered, "May I help you with your bra? I'm going to guide your fingers as you grab each end of the bra. Then, as you go through the motions with me, you will feel what your fingers need to do in order to get the hooks into the clasp. Gently, Andrea guided John through the motions of hooking the bra closed. She repeated the process several times, then asked, "Well, what do you think? John stuttered, " It's very difficult. How did you ever master doing it?"

"Practice, practice, practice. Just for fun, while the water is filling the washer, why don't you try closing the clasps on your own. Let's see whether you are a quick learner." Without objection, as if it were nothing unusual, John spent the next several minutes trying to hook the bra. Finally, John succeeded in hooking the bra closed. "I see you finally managed. That wasn't bad for the first time hooking your bra. The washer is almost filled, so you can take your bra off now." John tried to unhook the bra, but was not having any success. Unhooking it seemed more difficult than closing it. "Mom, can you help me to unhook this bra?" pleaded John. "Sure honey, in a minute." Andrea reached down to the laundry pile and saw that her nylons were in the stack. "One more thing, John, never put nylons into the wash. They will get ruined. Besides, if they did survive, they would come out in a ball." With that said, she grabbed the nylons and rolled each into a ball, to demonstrate. "They will come out like this and there is no use for nylons which look like this - except for this..."

Before John could see what she was up to, Andrea took the balled nylons and slipped them into his bra - one in each cup. "I get it, Mom. You didn't have to demonstrate so vividly," remarked John. Andrea smiled. "No I didn't, but now you'll never forget what I told you." "Mom, unhook me, please." His mother answered, "Don't panic. No one is here to see you wearing that delicate, sexy bra. I think that you need some more practice with the hooks, so just keep at it until the washer is full. If you can't unhook it, you'll just have to wear the bra all day. Besides, wearing a bra is every young girl's desire. In fact, girls want to wear a bra before they need to. You don't even have to ask. I'm offering you a bra. Don't turn it down - as you just noticed, they are so soft and sensuous. If you wear it for a while, you may begin to enjoy it and never want to take it off." John had no choice. Interestingly, he did not remove the nylons from the bra-cups while he was trying to unhook the bra, thus he was sporting a very nicely-shaped bra. This spoke volumes to his mother. Finally, John gave up and pleaded with his mother to help him. After John took the bra off, his mother took it and said, "Watch me. Place the lingerie gently into the washer." And ever so gently, Andrea placed the bra into the water. With the clothes washing, Andrea grabbed some items from the previous load and showed John how to iron the clothes, pointing out the various temperature settings and explaining that, for example, lingerie must be ironed at a lower temperature than his jeans. John wasn't sure he heard much of what his mother said because he was thinking about her comments: "Besides, wearing a bra is every young

girl's desire. In fact, girls want to wear a bra before they need to. You don't even have to ask. I'm offering you a bra. Don't turn it down – as you just noticed, they are so soft and sensuous. If you wear it for a while, you may begin to enjoy it and never want to take it off." Why did his mother make that statement? He wasn't a girl.

John was now 14 years old. His friends were participating in sports and urged him to do so also. John, because of his tall and gangly stature and his somewhat high-pitched voice, was not a popular kid at school. John felt that he needed to improve his image so that he would be more accepted at school. John thought that because of his height, he might be able to play basketball; but he was so uncoordinated. He asked one of his close friends, Paul, about his idea to play basketball. Paul thought that John had some potential because of his height, but didn't think that the 'jocks' would accept him because of his geekish appearance. Paul suggested to John that he grow his hair longer, as was the trend among the athletic type. By the time basketball season was near, John had acquired the "jock" look and went to the tryouts. The coach was not thrilled with John's performance, but realized that with some training on coordination, because of his height, John had good potential; so he put John on the team.

Meanwhile, back on the farm, life was going well. With John helping with the housework, meals were served on time and the laundry was done on a timely basis. Alexis was particularly happy, because now she could wear a different outfit to school each day of the week, just like the other girls. Oh yes, there were the days of surprise for John. After seeing that he had learned how to wash and iron most of the clothes, his mother decided it was time for him to learn how to launder even finer underwear -panties. The first time John's mother handed him some bras and slips, and explained how to wash them, he blushed. Should he be touching such items? His mother noticed his hesitation and assured him that it would not harm his manhood to handle those items; just as it didn't hurt him to do the other lingerie. Reluctantly, John accepted her words. It took him several times of doing such dainty, delicate items as the panties before he was no longer embarrassed to handle his mother's and sister's intimate lingerie. After doing the lingerie for a while, John actually liked feeling the softness of the lingerie. It felt much nicer than his underwear; but, except for his one-time comment that the lingerie felt softer than his underwear, John thought it better not to voice such comments again.

Alexis' life was also going in a somewhat different direction than that of the average girl. Her help on the farm was needed, but working on the farm cut into the time she had to spend on girl-activities. While other girls were out shopping for clothes and make-up, Alexis was hauling farm supplies behind the tractor or feeding the horses. While they were learning the art of femininity, Alexis was becoming a future farmer – so it seemed. Alexis was strong and as tall as her brother – not weak and dainty as her girlfriends at school.

Andrea's career consumed much of her time – maybe too much. She did not have the time, so it seemed, to teach her daughter some of the things which a mother should teach a daughter. Other mothers were teaching their daughters how to pick good materials for clothes, how to select the right colors for particular skin-tone, what colors of make-up to wear, etc; so it was no wonder that Alexis did not learn the finer points of femininity. In fact, it was no surprise, that after a few years of helping with the farming, her father would

privately refer to her as "Alex". If he was in immediate need of help, perhaps in an emergency, in order to save time, Ken would call her by a shortened version of Alexis – "Alex".

Evenings, in the Wilson home, would find John cooking or doing laundry, while Andrea was reviewing magazines to see which new materials would look best for the airplane interiors. Yes, too often, she brought her work home. It seemed that there was never enough time to complete everything at work. Alexis, after she had finished the farm chores, had a few moments to do her nails, perm her hair, read an article or two in her teen magazine, or chat for a few minutes with a girlfriend on the phone. Finally, as the sun set, Ken would stumble into the house, exhausted from work - just in time for dinner.

The farming season was over and it was time for Thanksgiving. This year, it was the Wilson's turn to invite their neighbors over for Thanksgiving dinner. The neighbors, Mark & Janie Hall, both worked. Mark was the Minister of Education and Music at his church. Janie was a travel agent and was often over-seas on business. To prepare for Thanksgiving, John and his mother spent any spare moments to shop for groceries for the dinner and to decorate the house for the festive occasion. Alexis, because she had to help with the farming, did not have time to participate with preparing the house for Thanksgiving. On the big day, the house was finally ready and meal was almost out of the oven. When the neighbors arrived, John, along with his mother, was in the kitchen getting ready to serve the meal. Ken came in early, so he was there to greet the guests. As the guests were seated on the couch, Ken asked Mark and Janie whether they would like to have something to drink, while they were waiting for dinner to be served. Mark and Janie said that they would love to have some iced tea. Ken thought that his wife and daughter were in the kitchen, not as part of the normal routine, but because it was Thanksgiving, so, looking towards the kitchen he said, "Alexis, would you please bring us three iced teas?" John replied, "Sure Dad, coming right up." Looking towards the kitchen and seeing only the back of the person, with long hair and wearing an apron, Mark pointed to the figure standing there and said to Ken, "You have a wonderful daughter. We always wanted a girl, but two boys are what we got and as you know, they are now gone away to college." In a minute, John was heading into the family room with the iced teas. "Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you were Alexis," remarked Mark. "When your father asked for the iced teas and you answered, I thought it was Alexis' voice." John assured Mark that his honest mistake was OK. Mark thanked him for being so understanding. John's father was also surprised and asked where Alexis was. John replied that he saw her a few minutes ago, but didn't know where she was. Alexis was getting candles for the dinning room table, for an extra touch of festivity. Andrea, meanwhile, was hanging a wreath on the front door.

Thanksgiving dinner was wonderful – great food and fabulous friends. What could be better? After dinner, Ken was in the family room talking to Mark, discussing the football game. Janie was helping Andrea to clear the table and get the dessert ready. While in the kitchen, Janie remarked to Andrea, "You're so lucky to have John helping with the housework and cooking. He makes a wonderful daughter. Are you sure that you didn't mix up who was who when they were younger?" Andrea replied, "Yes he does. I mean it's great that our son helps me with the chores. I know it's not customary for boys to do housework; but Alexis, because she is older, began helping her father with the farming and once familiar with that role, she never seemed interested in housework. John feels more comfortable inside. I've been teaching him about housework. Because the outside

work was getting done, but I had no one to help me inside, John, stepping into the role, was a perfect fit. I've gotten used to his help and he is glad that he doesn't have to haul hay or manure around the farm." John overheard the conversation and later, after Janie had gone back to the family room, confronted his mother about it. "Mom, when Janie referred to me as 'a wonderful daughter', why did you sort of agree with her, instead of objecting?" "Well, my dear," replied his mother, "It's Thanksgiving and we should be thankful for all of our blessings. And good neighbors are certainly a blessing. I didn't think that this was the moment that I should correct her. I thought that she was in such a good mood I didn't want to change that, so, instead, I humored her. I didn't think that was so bad." "Well, it wasn't so funny either," retorted John. John's mother assured him that even though he was doing the chores customarily associated with women, he was still her son – it didn't make him a woman. She further assured him that gender-identity is not related to what tasks a person performs. This seemed to calm John and he continued loading the dishwasher. After getting the dishes done, John had some time to relax and chat on the phone with his friends.

It was getting late, so the guests got up to leave. As they were leaving, Janie smiled at John and said, "You make a wonderful maid, sweetie. I know that your mother is proud to have such good help. Oh, and I love your hair. I wished I could keep mine that long and beautiful. Maybe some day you can show me your secret for hair-care." John couldn't wait to confront his mother again. "Mom, what is it with Janie? First she refers to me as 'your daughter', and then she calls me a 'maid' and wants me to show her how to do her hair." John's mother gathered her thoughts for a moment. "John, you can't let little innocent comments from our friends upset you. Maybe she had a bit too much wine. You chose to be the one to stay inside and agreed to help with the housework; and there is nothing wrong with that. However, a boy helping with the housework is not what people are used to. It is still a task associated with women. And you know how traditional the Halls are. When she saw how diligently you performed your tasks and saw your long curly hair, she probably associated that to what she is accustomed and thought of you as fulfilling a feminine role. Perhaps she sees something in you that we don't. With the apron and your long hair, even Mark mistakenly thought you were Alexis. These kinds of comments may come up from time-to-time, so don't let them get to you." What is important is that I appreciate your help and that you enjoy what you are doing. And what is more important is that for whatever task you perform, remember that you will feel better if you are in the right mode and mood for that task. Sometimes I think that you feel a bit uncomfortable performing your tasks, like doing the laundry. Perhaps we can change your mood by changing your mode a bit. We can discuss it in more detail some other time. Andrea had some ideas, but she wasn't ready to share them with John, yet.

During the next several weeks, Andrea reflected upon the comments made by Janie on Thanksgiving and her conversation with John. Why was John suddenly so sensitive to those comments? Usually, nothing ever seemed to bother him. Did Janie's comments strike a nerve? Were John's objections a smoke-screen? Andrea decided that she needed to know why John was so sensitive. True, those weren't ordinary comments, made by guests, about ones child; but she thought that John should have shrugged them off. Andrea pondered these thoughts and finally came up with a plan to test John and to help him in adjusting his mood for the tasks of housework. Her plan would entail pushing John towards a

feminine mode. One evening, when John was about to serve dinner, his mother pretended to suddenly notice that John was not wearing an apron and that he still had his good school-clothes on. She asked him why he was not wearing an apron to protect his good clothes. John replied that they were all soaking in the washing machine. "I think that I may have a spare one lying around. Let me check, before you ruin your clothes," answered his mother. Andrea was off like a whirlwind, heading for her closet. There she found a fancy apron with ruffles and pink flowers on it. Instead of just fitting around the waist, this apron was hung over the neck and covered the wearer from neck to the knees. She ran back to the kitchen, saying that she had found an apron. "You just continue stirring the noodles, while I slip this apron on you," instructed John's mother. John suspected nothing unusual, so he didn't turn around to look. His mother reached over his head, draped the apron over him and tied it behind his back. John was so busy that he didn't even notice that this was a different style of apron. As they were getting seated for dinner, his sister commented, "Nice apron sis – looks like a dress. You should be wearing heels with that." John blushed and looked at his apron to see why his sister would make such a remark. John burst out, "Mom, what in the world are you thinking, having me wear this apron? This is clearly only for a woman to wear! It looks so feminine. Now Alexis is calling me a girl." But, John did not remove the apron. "Calm down John. An apron is an apron. Don't fuss over it just because it looks a bit feminine. It's not like we're strangers. No one thinks of you any differently just because of what you're wearing. Alexis is just teasing you, probably because she's jealous that she isn't wearing that nice apron." John's father added, "Son, I appreciate your great cooking and how you help Mom. Mom was just trying to be considerate and keep you from getting your clothes ruined. We really don't care which apron you're wearing. We all know that you help with the housework, laundry and cooking and so whatever you wear, to protect your clothes, is just fine with us. Now let's enjoy this great meal you've prepared." What could John say? If his father didn't object to how he looked, maybe he shouldn't stress over it. In spite of the words of assurance from his father, John felt that the apron was a bit too feminine for him – at least that is what he was trying to convince himself of believing; but if it really bothered him, why didn't he remove it? Could he really be enjoying wearing it? John buried those thoughts deep in his soul.

Christmas was rapidly approaching and Andrea was out shopping for presents. In an up-scale jewelry store, a beautiful woman's gold necklace caught her eye. But who should she buy it for? Alexis had several gold necklaces and her husband, Ken, would never wear one. It could get caught in the equipment he worked with, if it dangled out from his neck. Not a good choice. Then Andrea thought about the incident with the frilly apron. Even though John objected to wearing it, he did not remove it. She even thought that once or twice she saw him casting an admiring glance at his apron. The certain choice – she would buy it for John. Andrea wanted to see John's reaction when he got the necklace. Besides the necklace, she also picked up some silks shirts for him.

Alexis was still helping with the farming during her last year of high school. A college future, for her, seemed uncertain. Alexis enjoyed working on the farm. She didn't mind that she didn't have to spend hours getting dressed up in fancy clothes like other girls. She could jump into her overalls and be out of the house in minutes, and yes, she often went to school dressed that way. Because the Wilson's lived in a farming community, no one

thought anything about how Alexis dressed for school; in fact, many of the girls dressed as she did. So, for Christmas presents, her mother bought more overalls and other clothes Alexis needed for work on the farm; but she also bought a few nicer items for church and other special occasions, but very little make-up and no jewelry.

Preparing for the Christmas season, as with all American families, was a hectic time in the Wilson household. One Saturday, in his hurry to do the laundry, John unknowingly threw in the last of his pants. When he went back to his bedroom, to change out of his PJ's, he realized that he had no pants to wear. Because doing the laundry was now his regular task, John was quite familiar with the clothes worn by each member of the family. Quickly, John found his way to the laundry room, where there were still stacks of clothes waiting to be placed in dresser-drawers. John went to his mother's pile of clothes, knowing that there were at least several pair of jeans in her pile. John grabbed one pair of her jeans and took them back to his room. The jeans had no feminine embroidery, so perhaps it wouldn't be too obvious that they were women's jeans, thought John, so he slipped them on. The fit was perfect. What else was he to do? His jeans were all soaking in the wash. John finished dressing, and, for some strange reason, felt that he should brush his hair so that it looked nicer – nicer than he usually kept it for a Saturday. Satisfied that his hair looked better, John began his chores, starting with fixing breakfast for his family. One-by-one, the family appeared and sat down for breakfast.

If anyone noticed that John was not wearing his own jeans, no one spoke up. After breakfast, John cleared the table and put the dishes away. His sister and father went out to ride the horses – a weekly treat that Alexis really enjoyed. It was the best reward for all her hard work during the week and gave her some quality time to spend with her father. Her father used this time to teach her about farming, telling her everything he had learned about farming. It was a special time of bonding. Meanwhile, John and his mother were doing the last of the dishes. As John was taking the dishes out of the dishwasher and handing them to his mother, she glanced at John and remarked, "You look so nice today – much nicer than usual for a Saturday. What am I missing? Let me look at you." For starters, Andrea noticed that John had neatly brushed his hair and fluffed it a bit more than usual. Ah, and then it caught her attention – John was wearing different jeans – jeans with a smart look, not the normal baggy jeans she was used to seeing him wear. The jeans appeared tailor-fit - hugging his body.

"Your hair looks nicer today and I love your jeans. When did you buy them?" asked Andrea. John replied, "They're not new. I didn't buy them. While doing the laundry this morning, I unknowingly put all of my jeans in the wash and had nothing to wear, so I borrowed a pair from your laundry pile. I promise to wash them as soon as mine are dry and put them back into your dresser." "Oh, there's no rush, dear. You can wear them as long as you need them because I have enough for the week. I see that wearing nicer jeans compelled you to fix up your hair much nicer than most Saturdays. If my jeans have such a good effect on you, I think you should wear them more often. Besides, I kind of like how they look on you. For once, it looks like your jeans fit, not like you're wearing hand-me-downs. I didn't know that we wear the same size. In fact, they look so nice on you, I think that I'll buy you several pair when I go shopping today," replied John's mother. "But Mom, I can't go around wearing women's jeans. At home, because it was an

emergency, I borrowed yours, but I can't wear them outside and I certainly wasn't planning on wearing them longer than until mine dried."

"Honey, I think those jeans look terrific on you. If only for home-wear, would you be a dear and wear them for me? I so love the tailored-look they give you – much nicer than your other jeans. Just consider those jeans as yours until I can buy you some – a reward for doing such great housework. Please!" John replied, "I didn't know that you were so observant as to what I wear. I thought it didn't matter to you. I must admit that I like the fit of your jeans, but if you insist that I wear them, you'd better make sure that Sis doesn't harass me about it."

John's mother couldn't wait to get to the Mall later that day, to buy some jeans for him. "John, please clean my bathroom while I'm at the Mall. I promise to get you some really nice women's jeans. Wait and see," called out John's mother as she left the house. While his mother was out shopping, John thought about what she had said about him wearing her jeans. Maybe a new style of jeans is what he needed to improve his appearance. He did like the look and fit of his mother's jeans – they felt smoother – not as bulky as his jeans. John didn't want to admit it, but he was kind of excited at the thought that his mother was going to buy him some nice jeans - like hers. After all, if his mother liked how he looked in her jeans, why not get some of his own? With his own jeans, he could look as nice as his mother looked in her jeans and he wouldn't have to borrow her jeans again.

Once at the Mall, Andrea headed for the Macy's Women's store. There, she bought several jeans and some white ankle-top socks to go with them. Of course, with new jeans, Andrea thought that John shouldn't wear his old sneakers, so she bought him two pair of new tennis shoes and a pair of black loafers. She also bought some overalls, a couple of sweaters, some nice clothes and shoes, for Alexis. She didn't want Alexis to get jealous; nor did she want her to focus on the feminine jeans that she got for John.

In two hours, Andrea returned home and presented the new jeans and shoes to John. When he tried on the new shoes, they fit perfectly. Other than noticing that the shoes looked a bit different than his old shoes, John had no clue that his shoes were women's shoes. His mother told him that the jeans were just like hers, in her size, from Macy's Women's store, so they should fit him. John smiled and hugged his mother, thanking her for her troubles. He promised to wear his new jeans around the house after school, because she liked the way he looked in them. Andrea smiled and told her son that it would please her if he did so. "John, every man has a feminine side and it doesn't hurt to get in touch with your feminine side. It brings out the nicer personality in a man. I think these jeans may help you do that," stated his mother. "But Mom," interjected John, I thought that getting in-touch with my feminine side meant that I would act nicer – that I would be more courteous and gentler." "His mother replied, "Yes, John, that is true and that is where it starts, but it doesn't have to end there. Femininity, or a man's feminine side, as it is usually referred to, is not only about behavior. Appearance is a big part of femininity and most men never realize that, so they never get to totally experience their feminine side. Wearing your women's jeans may give you a glimpse into what most men are missing – and what you've missed so far.

That evening, John had a date; but what to wear? The washing machine had clogged, so the wash never got spun-dry and was too wet to throw into the dryer. There was no

time to get his old jeans dried in time. He had no other pants. His mother had just bought him several pairs of jeans, but those were for wearing 'at home'. He couldn't wear those on a date. Could he? John thought – with no jeans to wear, he would have to cancel his date, claiming to be ill or something. But John had planned for months to get this date. He didn't have many dates because he was not a popular guy at his school. John did not want to blow this opportunity. He gave it some serious thought. His sister seemingly didn't notice that earlier he was wearing mom's jeans. Maybe, just maybe, this once, he could get away with wearing his new women's jeans outside of the house. With great hesitation, explaining his predicament, John asked his mother what she thought about him wearing a pair of his new jeans out for his date. His mother was surprised that just a short while ago he said that he would wear women's jeans, but only in the house, and now, suddenly he was entertaining the thought of wearing them out for a date. Andrea said that he shouldn't worry about wearing the new jeans. His mother explained, "People only care whether you look nice, not whether you are wearing men's or women's jeans – and most people wouldn't even notice." She agreed that John should not blow his date just because his jeans were in the wash, especially with new jeans in his dresser. John's mother added, "Honey, with those new jeans, you need to wear a different shirt. – one that matches your finer jeans. I forgot to tell you that I also bought you some matching shirts. You can't wear one of your old shirts with new jeans if you're going out." While his mother was getting a shirt for him, John went to his dresser and took out a pair of his new jeans.

As John was ready to slip on his new women's jeans, he noticed the label - that the jeans were a woman's size 6. He carefully tore out the tell-tale label. Why did he do that? he thought. Was this a subconscious attempt to fool himself into thinking that he was not wearing women's jeans? Thinking that it would make a better impression on his date, John also grabbed his new socks and new tennis shoes. With his new attire, he would indeed make an impression on his date. Tonight, his date would see a much cuter John.

Andrea returned from his closet with a light blue shirt-blouse and brought it to John's room. She handed it to John and offered to button it for him while he finished brushing his hair. With his mother buttoning the shirt, John did not notice that it buttoned differently than his old shirts. John knew that his mother had some men's shirts which she liked to wear and assumed that's what she had brought him. Instead, she had retrieved one of the new matching shirts – a shirt-blouse – which she bought for him. "Is this one of your shirts?" asked John. "No, it's one of the new shirts I bought to match your new jeans." John tucked in his shirt, thanked his mother and headed for the door. As he ran out the door, his mother whispered, "You look fabulous, darling - and such a great figure – almost better than mine! Have a great evening and say Hi to Julie." "OK Mom, and thanks for the shirt."

It didn't escape her, that John, in addition to wearing his new women's jeans and a blouse, was also wearing his new women's shoes. As she watched him leave, Andrea thought that John's appearance, with his new jeans, blouse and long hair, was a bit feminine – at least effeminate. She hoped that if Julie got the same impression, she would not object. With this touch of femininity, John looked very stylish and cute in his new clothes.