

Your Turn To Be The Wife



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YOUR TURN TO BE THE WIFE!

by **Gabrielle Johnson**

1. A new roommate

When Marsha left me to live with her one and only true love in Southern California, I wasn't really shook up at all. I'd already met Anita Black. Mmm, the way she stood in that denim miniskirt and black top burned her womanly figure in my mind!

Anita smiled at me, at the way that I was staring at her with my tongue hanging out! The difference between her kind, considerate, affectionate manner towards me, when I moved in on her, as she coyly accepted a drink and then dinner with me, and the attitude of the snarling bitch who'd called herself

'Mrs Jim Banks', only when it suited her, really eased the pain of my wife's leaving me.

My ego was hurt of course. Whose wouldn't be? I'd come into the garden court in the Chelsea Arms pub, though, to console myself. And there was Anita, all long, tanned legs, parted blonde hair, pageboy in style, very little makeup on her lovely face, her brown eyes sparkling as she looked me over as I looked her over.

With Marsha, I always felt like a failure. It was worse now as everyone that we knew, well, that wasn't more than ten people really, knew that she'd left me. At the Trust, I couldn't even say that I'd left her. My bosses wouldn't have liked that. They believed in happy marriages and 'secure' family men.

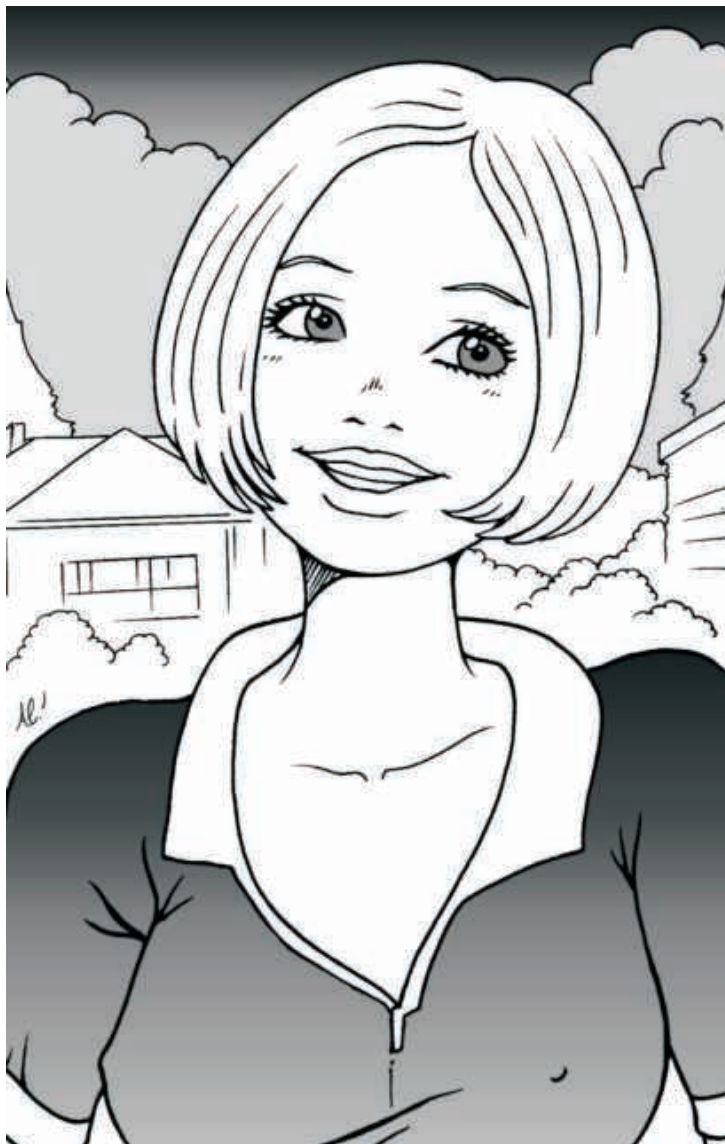
So, though Marsha had been gone a week, I kept up the fiction at work that Marsha was still with me. Then, the absolutely, deliciously, feminine Anita Black looked up at me and I was smitten. But when she saw the ring on my finger, she told me that she wouldn't go out with me.

I impulsively took it off and threw it down the middle of the street. It astounded Anita. "That was real gold!" she said to me, standing up from our outside, restaurant table.

"Let some homeless person have it," I said to her. "When we get married, I'll buy us both something better than that one."

"How much did it set you back?" asked a bemused Anita, hesitantly sweeping her blonde hair behind her ears in a feminine gesture she made so often. I could have watched her doing that forever, it was so cute and girlie. She was so cute and girlie.

Anita did relent and go out with me. I tried to talk her into bed but she wasn't having any of that. Not until I was an unmarried man, she told me with a giggle. But, when she'd had a drink too many, we fooled around a little too much at a party with some of her friends in Upper Sandwich.



“Come and live with me,” I begged her but she only laughed at me, her gorgeous brown eyes telling me ‘No’. Anita wouldn’t even consider getting engaged to me or marrying me, not while I was still married to Marsha.

“And,” Anita whispered to me as we kind of cuddled while the house party went on all about us, “we have to get to know each other so much more than we do now.”

It was so marvellous to kiss Anita goodnight on her doorstep. However, she never let me up to her apartment. “When you’re a free man,” she said to me, stroking my face with her soft hands, her long, unpolished fingernails so endearing. Then in a rustle of skirts, she loved petticoats, Anita would blow me a kiss from her door and be gone.

When Mr Dynes or Miss Fotheringham, my immediate supervisors at the Trust, asked me about my wife and family, I told them all about Anita, though I called her ‘Marsha’.

I continued to live in the old, riverside apartment building I’d shared with Marsha, after she’d gone. I knew that Anita didn’t like to visit me there. I can’t blame her. Can you? But then the landlords doubled the rent when the first year lease was up. I angrily told the landlords that I’d move. They shrugged and told me that if that was the way I felt about it I should get out of their building.

It was much harder than I’d expected to find a new place. I tried but it was soon obvious to me that if I wanted to move into any place that was pretty good, I’d better find someone to share with me.

Barry Davies was introduced to me at a club somewhere down on Whiteside Avenue. I was a little

drunk; I've forgotten who actually introduced us. I do remember that he was with this stunning, blonde girl, Cicely, who had breasts, well, that I would have been willing to climb. She must have been a model as she was tall. She made herself even taller than Barry by the high heels she wore.

"I think that Cicely was poured into that dress," I said to Anita as we danced. I had a good view of the low-cut, slinky dress the platinum blonde wore.

"Be nice!" said Anita, leading me to Cicely, trading partners so that she danced with Barry and I danced with Cicely. Yeah, I dreamed of mountain climbing. The girls got along famously. Cicely was a pretty shrewd girl, not at all the stereotype of the dumb blonde.

Anita had blonde hair but you could see her dark roots down the center. Once, when she had leaned back in her chair, and I saw her thin, white panties exposed, I confirmed by the darkness at the vee of her thighs that she was not a natural blonde. Cicely was, seeing where I'd been looking at Anita. Cicely smiled as she said that to me, flicking her hair over her shoulders. If I hadn't been with Anita, I know I could've taken her away from Barry.

Barry was an ordinary kind of guy, short, brown hair and regular features, a pencil pusher, I thought, like me. If anything, he was thinner than I was. He mentioned he was having trouble finding the right apartment in the city. I don't know who suggested we share. I think it was Anita. I'd had far too much to drink by then (I hardly drink at all now). I saw Barry shake his head as if to say 'No' when I asked him for his phone number to see a place at the Sunrise that Cicely, I think, said Barry had his eye on.

Well, we moved into the Sunrise a week later. We each had our own bedrooms, naturally, though everything else was shared. The Sunrise was a very modern building. There were stores, offices and things like a sauna and a games room on the first two floors. There was underground parking and private elevators to the twelve floors of private apartments.

The apartments were very private, even isolated. It took me six months to find out who was in the apartment next to ours. Barry didn't get in the way at all so that Anita would have had the run of the place if she'd wanted it. But Marsha wasn't answering any of my lawyer's calls while Anita made it clear to me that, if I wanted more than the occasional petting session, when she was in the mood, on the sofa with her, I'd better show her, at the least, that Marsha and I were legally separated.

I went to house parties with Anita and got to hold her. I let her hold me a lot as we chattered and hung out with her friends mainly. I was asked by several of the girls who knew Anita what it was like living with Barry Davies. Anita always kept a blank expression when I was asked about that.

It was easy to answer. In fact, living with Barry Davies was rather like living alone. Anita felt sorry for him, staying in to read or watch television while we went out and partied, sometimes with Cicely and whoever she was dating. That girl had a hundred boy friends, it seemed. No wonder that Barry hadn't a chance with her.

Anita did invite Barry, knocking on his door and going in where I rarely went, keeping the door closed as she talked to him. Barry always refused, how-

ever, with one of his tight, little smiles if he saw me beyond my prettily dressed girl friend.

I'm telling you all this so that you can get some measure of how I felt on that late June evening when I found out, more than I wanted to find out, about Barry Davies.

To start at the beginning of the evening, it began with Anita, in a summery dress and masses of petticoats, going out to the theater for the first time in a month. I wanted to see *Quantum of Solace* but Anita wrinkled her nose at macho men. She wanted the Anne Hathaway film, *Rachel Getting Married*, a chick flick.

Anita and I don't fight over movies. We take turns in choosing what we go to see. It was my turn but Anita said it wasn't as I'd dragged her to the stage performance of *Cats* in an umpteenth revival. I got the tickets free from a guy at the Trust who couldn't use them. I didn't tell Anita that as I wanted to impress her with my good taste. I didn't count a stage show as seeing a movie.

"It was a show," said Anita. "It was your choice. Now it's mine."

"It's my choice," I told her. We argued like a couple of kids. I think she was just set on seeing the Rachel thing while I was trying to prove a point.

"Well, we might as well go home," I said as she wouldn't come to the Bond movie that I'd already bought tickets for.

"You're absolutely right, as usual," snapped Anita, sashaying off, her high heels clacking down the sidewalk, a real sway in her walk, leaving me standing there with tickets in my hand and a bunch

of people grinning at me. It only took me a minute to sell the tickets and take off after Anita.

But in that one minute, she was gone. I walked up and down Whiteside Avenue but I couldn't find her, anywhere. It finally dawned on me that I'd been dumped. All through this account, you're going to find out just how slow I am on the uptake. After a hundred curses, I finally went home, back to the apartment.

It was only eight-thirty and no sign of Barry when I went in. I trudged over to the fridge and got a beer, thinking it a little strange he wasn't watching television or in the computer room. Barry had said there was a baseball game he was going to watch but he wasn't there, in 'his' chair, a recliner. I found it quite odd.

I'd have thought nothing of it but then I heard a sound, a definite creak, from Barry's bedroom. He must be lying down, trying to keep quiet when I walked in, I thought. I went strolling over to his room, practising my wry smile, ready to tell Barry all about Anita and me. I was thinking of inviting him out for a beer; you know, to console me as one guy does another after a tiff with the girl friend.

Well, Barry wasn't in his bedroom. Another person was. A dark-haired girl, really attractive and a little familiar, pretty, heavily made up, was sitting rigidly on his bed. She was wearing what I'd have called a cocktail dress. It had wide skirts, thin shoulder straps, a tight bodice and narrow waist, lots of dark, lacy material over orange. She must have been wearing several petticoats because the dress rustled as she uncrossed her legs, wobbled shakily to her high heels, moving from the bed towards the chair in the corner of Barry's room.

She was wearing dark stockings, I noted as well, as her legs, as far as I could see, were nice and shapely. Her heels were high. She was taller than me but even so, she looked frightened of me; so, I stopped glowering at her.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” I said, forcing a smile her way. “I was looking for Barry. Didn’t think he’d have company.” She was rigid, staring at me wide-eyed and positively scared. “It’s okay,” I went on, enjoying the faint smell of flowers that seemed to emanate from her. I put on one of my good smiles, ones I reserve for pretty girls, particularly any that I have a chance to get friendly with and possibly lay. Oh, Barry wasn’t in the room at all.

“I’m Barry’s roommate,” I told the fearful woman. “You can call me Jim. Did Barry go out for something?”

She couldn’t get past the fright with which she watched me enter further into Barry’s room. She looked wildly at the door as if she was going to run for it. Well, I didn’t blame her. It must be pretty grim when a guy suddenly walks in on you in someone else’s bedroom. If this was the first time she’d been there, she might be thinking something really awful about Barry for leaving her.

“It’s really all right,” I said to her. “I don’t care what you kids get up to in here. I’m not broadcasting it to anyone; I promise you. Live and let live, I always say.” I smiled again, using my sincere smile, showing a few of my teeth. “I won’t tell anyone anything about you, really. Cross my heart and hope to die.”

If the woman hadn’t turned in profile, showing me her thick, false eyelashes and her black-painted,

eyelids, I'd have got out of the place fast. I'd have been joshing Barry later about the girl in his room as I tried to recover from the hangover that drinking alone would have produced.

I'd have gone right out of the apartment and left them, thinking of them as 'she' and 'he', Barry and the unknown woman. Barry could have dreamed up any lie to explain the girl in his room afterwards. But the woman did turn and showed me her profile. I'd have recognized that funny, little upturn on the end of her powdered nose anywhere. After all, I'd been looking at it every morning when Barry lounged sideways on his chair, the newspaper spread across his lap. He never folded it and read it on the table.

Yes, that upturned nose belonged to Barry Davies. It hit me like a sledgehammer! Like a sledgehammer to the stomach. No wonder 'she' looked so frightened. Wouldn't you if your roommate suddenly found out that you were queer? Oh, but it was worse than that. I'd found out that my roommate was a drag queen!

"Barry!" I croaked.

"Please!" It was Barry's voice all right. "Please," was all 'she' could say.

So what do you do when you find your roomie dressed up like a pretty girl, and it ain't anywhere near Halloween? I got out of 'her' room fast, leaving a whole bunch of nasty words behind me. 'Drag queen' was about the mildest of them. I even got to wondering if he might fancy me!

You can see how dumb I am. I wasn't aware that Barry could be a transvestite, a guy who liked women's clothing, and dressing in women's clothing,

but still being turned on by a good-looking woman anyway. It took Anita to straighten me out on that one much later. Anyway, I was using words about Barry I wouldn't want to put in print when the door to his room opened slowly.

Barry had changed back into being Barry Davies, his shirt collar all ruffled by the hurry he must have been in to catch me and convince me he was a regular guy. He'd wiped off the makeup but there was enough left on him about his eyes that my stomach turned a little. I felt really sick again. I must have been giving him a pretty murderous look because, the moment he caught my eye, he went reeling off into the living room area. Wow, I thought in astonishment, Barry looked as if he was going to cry.

"Frigging heck, Barry!" I snarled at him; well, it was a little stronger than that. "How can you do such an effing thing? You like dressing up like a woman? You effing pervert! In my apartment as well!"

Barry swayed as he sat down, head in his hands, hiding his eyes from me. Oh, the little gay boy could cry his eyes out now, I saw, as he sat in 'his' chair, in front of the blank television screen.

"If I'd known you were queer," I told him angrily, "I'd never have shared this place with you. Now, which one of us is going to be effing off out of here and it's not going to be me." No, not after how long it took me to find an apartment even if he'd been the one to find it first and offer his open space to me.

"I, I'm not queer," Barry said then in a muffled voice. "N-N-Not gay, either." I hooted with laughter as he tried to tell me all about transvestites.

I couldn't have cared less. I had a fair reputation in my social circle with the ladies. There was Marsha, of course, and now Anita, wherever she'd got to. Neither of them were skanks, not like some of the girls the single guys at the Trust seemed to hang with. Of course, whenever I'd seen Barry out, he was always out with a really attractive girl, someone like Cicely.

Come to think of it, Barry always looked guilty when I caught him chatting with some really pretty girl. Funny how he never went out with them very often. Now I knew why. The girls must have sussed out that my roommate was gay. I wonder if that was why I was having a hard time connecting with other girls beside Anita. In fact, she'd known Barry before me. I bristled at what she might have thought about me to recommend me to Barry as a roommate. I didn't want that kind of whisper about me.

"You'll have to go," I told him pointedly. "I know the apartment is in both our names but you're the one who's leaving. I'm not living with a queer."

Barry stopped talking about married men living happy lives with women who understood and helped them to dress like women. I guess he realized I hadn't been listening to him. He kind of sagged in his chair. "When?" was all he asked very quietly, his hands quivering, his face haggard.

"Tonight," I said. "Pack and leave or I'll be throwing your stuff down the hallway." I was pretty brutal. I just wanted him out of my sight.

"I'm paid to the end of the month," Barry said. I guess he couldn't find a place to disappear to, with one of his queer friends, as I suggested, not someone as mild as he was. The word 'milksop' came

contemptuously to my mind as I listened to him sort of begging with me to let him stay.

I could have driven Barry out, punched him up a bit or something, to get him to go but I've never been a thug. I'm often criticized, in a friendly way, in the Trust's 'Leadership Seminars', for my compassion. I'm not tough-minded enough, Miss Fotheringham, the old bat, said to me in her kindly, old woman style. She used that to hide the fact that she was a dictator who made Stalin look like a wimp in her own department.

"All right," I said begrudgingly, "the end of the month. But," Barry had looked too relieved, "you keep out of my way, my girl." That made him flush and look away. "When I'm using the kitchen or this place with Anita, you scarper into your own room. Got it?"

Barry got it all right. I think he bit his lower lip to keep himself from crying. It's funny how I hadn't seen before how much like a girl he was.

*******2. *You need a wife********

I made up with Anita the following day. She was very good to me at the crowded party we went to just a block away from my place. There were a lot of couples there, necking and getting it on, after the dancing petered out. She let me touch her quite a bit. That excited me enough to invite her back to my place but Anita just smiled. She took my hand and led me out on the balcony where I resumed my kissing of her delectable, shiny pink lips.

I was still trying to talk to her about marriage and let slip that she could move in with me now any

time. Marsha had never lived there with me. I, of course, was looking for a new roommate.

“Oh, what’s happening with Barry?” Anita asked me right away, kissing my ear and tickling me, turning me on with the way she pressed her shapely, little chest to me.

I made a face but Anita pressed me. So, I told her all about my fairy roommate. Her reaction floored me.

“Oh, the poor darling,” Anita said, pushing me off her. “Oh, he must have been horribly upset when you discovered him. How terrible for him to be outed like that!” I couldn’t believe it. She was actually sorry for Barry, the new ‘Miss Sunrise Apartments’!

“What about me?” I asked, peeved at her. “How do you think I felt? How’d you like a fairy for a roommate?”

“Oh, I wouldn’t mind,” Anita said, as calmly as anything. “I think transvestites are rather cute, especially the smaller ones like Barry.” Hey, I thought, I was only an inch or so taller than him! “I’d really love to see him dressed up!”

I was pretty shocked by the way Anita was talking. “Next you’ll be trying to get me into drag!” I spluttered at her.

“Don’t be silly, darling,” said Anita, kissing my nose, which I hate. “It’s a lovely thought, though. I’d really love you to lose some of that hair you have all over you. Sometimes, when you’re holding me, it’s as if I was being hugged by a bear!”

She cut off any indignant reply I could make by laughing and hugging and kissing me. Soon, I melted into what she was doing to me. Anita seemed

really aroused, raising her leg against me as I pressed her against the patio door frame. She sure knew my intentions for her very clearly. She let me walk her home. We stopped and cuddled or kissed by every bush or street corner. I should have been warned by the conversation that turned her on, but, as I said before, about some things, I was, I am, pretty dumb.

One thing I'm not dumb about is figures and accounts. I was only twenty-one when I got my CPA, the blue-eyed boy, literally and figuratively, of the firm I'd worked for off and on since I was fifteen. I got a permanent job at the Bentham State Trust and settled back for rapid promotions.

Only, advancement didn't come. My marital troubles with Marsha – she married me, I think, because I'd moved up so fast at the start – were quite well known. I didn't think much of how they'd affect me at first until Mr Dynes clued me in on the family nature of the Bentham State Trust. I could only expect promotion to the upper echelons of the firm if I was in a happy and stable marriage.

I saw other guys, Frank Mueller and Stuart Gray, nowhere near as smart as me, but happily married, pushed on ahead. When I was fighting with Marsha, of course, I really didn't care about promotions. But when Harry Klynski had a heart attack and the comptroller's job came up for grabs, I wanted it. I was the most qualified by far. I told Mitchell Dynes, the VP supposed to mentor me, that I wanted to be considered for it. Mr Dynes looked pretty sad, he always does when he's thinking, but he did promise me an early reply.

I got the reply in writing in my mail at the apartment at the same time I got the notification of Mar-

sha's divorce from me, from some lawyer in Los Angeles. I'd opened the bulky envelope with the divorce papers first. No way was I going to oppose that, I chortled to myself, and opened the other letter.

Only it wasn't a letter. It was an invitation. Only it really wasn't that, either. It was a command performance, cloaked as an invitation. 'Jim and Marsha' were invited to attend a weekend house party at Sam Grainger's the following week. 'Bring tennis outfits and swimsuits, but, please, no shorts for women and no bikinis,' was hand-written on the note.

Senator Samuel F Grainger is President of Bentham State Trust. My hand shook as I read the simple invitation. Here was Mitch Dynes's reply, I knew. Sam Grainger and his wife, Vicki, wanted to look me over. Heck, I was up for the job that I wanted. I was so pleased that I wanted to dance about the silent apartment.

Then, I realized what the letter really meant. It wasn't just me the Graingers wanted to look over. It was I and my wife, the one who'd just served me with my freedom from her. I sat down heavily and thought. How I could possibly get the job I wanted so much without a wife?

When Anita came round to meet me before we went out to another party, she sashayed in through the door I'd left open and found me still sitting at the kitchen table, staring at the two separate documents.

Anita read them, smiled at me and shook her short, blonde hair. "Well," she said. "Do you really

want this job? There are other companies, you know.”

“Yeah,” I agreed. “But not for me right now. If I was Comptroller for a year at Bentham, I could write my ticket anywhere else. But, if I’m passed over again, well, questions are going to be raised about why.”

Anita shrugged. “Well, Jimmy boy,” she said to me. “You need a wife.” But before I could get my soaring, ecstatic feelings out, she shook her head and deflated me completely. “Not me, lover boy. I know Mitchell Dynes and he knows me well.” Oh, yes, that was true. He’d seen me having lunch with Anita and had waved at us with a big smile on his face. Anita had waved back.

“I didn’t know you worked for Mitch,” Anita had said with her usual sweet smile. I’d had to admit I did, and for Fotheringham as well. That had made her giggle. She seemed to know all the office gossip, I realized, and always understood what I was saying when I talked about Bentham State.

“So, I can’t be Marsha for you for a weekend,” Anita said with a smile. She put her hand over mine and stroked it sympathetically as the front door creaked open again. Barry came in.

I looked at him, stunned. I hadn’t seen him for days. What stunned me was that Anita rose to her high-heeled feet, so lovely and leggy in her mini-skirt. She went right over to Barry, put her arms about him, and hugged him as firmly as she’d hugged me.

Barry looked at her very hesitantly. “Anita, Jim,” he murmured in his quiet voice. He couldn’t look at me. I hadn’t seen him in a week; yet, he still seemed

frightened of me. I dare say he was wondering if I'd told Anita all about him. I think that I saw a pleading look in his eyes as he glanced at me.

I had, of course, but I just stared at him, stony-faced, doing nothing to reassure him. The queen didn't deserve it or so I thought.

Well, after that, the rest of the evening was just dreadful. I'd have thought Anita had enough sensitivity not to say right out, "So, Barry, you're a cross-dresser. Do you dress every time Jim is out with me? Do you belong to a drag club? There are a lot in this city, aren't there?"

Of course, Barry wouldn't answer her questions. I actually felt sorry for him, the way she badgered him. She'd brought in the paper and taken out the fashion section. When Barry tried to take it to his room, he did pay for it after all, Anita wanted to know how he liked this dress and that one. She asked him if he used the makeup in the ad on another page and told him of problems with the mascara of that make. She asked him if he'd ever thought of having his hair permed at a real hair-dresser's.

Barry fled to his room, red-faced and humiliated, when Anita asked him quite seriously if he'd dress up for her and show her how he looked. It took my breath away when she said that. Poor Barry looked really embarrassed.

"What's wrong?" Anita asked me. "I can help Barry."

I felt sorry for Barry. It was the first time I felt that way since I'd found him dressed like a girl.