



*Reluctant Press*

# Mother's Girl

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. DIAMOND

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**A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL**

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# MOTHER'S GIRL

By Deena Gomersall

## Chapter One: A Loving Son

The day that Stephen Clarke's father, William, left the family house to go live with his attractive young secretary was the day Stephen's world began to turn upside down.

It had all happened without warning... His mother Brenda hadn't even been aware of the illicit affair: She both loved and trusted William - and believed him each time that he said he had to work late at the office without question.

Stephen's mother was devastated. Her husband's departure created a void in her life in more ways than one.

Even though he had left her with the marital home, he had also left her with the mortgage, the bills and the repairs. Brenda was close to the edge of a nervous breakdown, though luckily she had the support and understanding of her sister, Joan.

Stephen was just eight at the time and didn't really understand what was happening. He had cried a lot at first, over the thought of never seeing his dad again - and that only added to his mother's frustrations.

Stephen's mom was able to find temporary, part-time work to help with the finances but suffered in the job by being sexually harassed by some of the cruder males in the office where she worked... At thirty two, she was still a very attractive woman and had kept a shapely figure.

The feeling of resentment for William having walked out on her - and the sexual harassment at work - developed into a mistrust and dislike of all men for Brenda.

Stephen was the only child of the family. Technically, Brenda and William did have another two children before he was born - the first, a girl, which was stillborn and a second, another daughter, who had died of whooping cough at the age of eleven months.

Brenda often dwelled on the loss of her two daughters... especially if poor Stephen, who always tried to be as helpful as possible for his Mom, did anything wrong. He would then be blamed and berated about how useless he and all other males were and how she wished her daughters had lived. Brenda loved her son, in truth, but her pain

overflowed into anger which would be taken out on the nearest symbol of maleness - Stephen.

Stephen grew up under this cloud. Her verbal attacks hurt him, yet he never rebelled or stopped loving his mother. If she had stopped to notice, she would have seen that her son was a godsend to her. He quickly matured - (he had to)- and kept the house in order as, bit by bit, his mother let herself go and just stopped caring.

He was sixteen when he managed to get a job for himself and bring in some much needed extra money, but his efforts were rewarded only by his mother's failing health which prevented her from socializing and hardly ever setting foot outdoors.

Because of the care he was providing for his mom, Stephen was missing out on all the young years of his life. He did have friends but hardly ever had the time to join in their activities or do the kind of things that teenage boys of his age did.

He had girlfriends, occasionally, but they hardly ever lasted more than a few weeks: Although they liked him, they wanted someone who could share more time with them. Poor Stephen hardly ever had time at all between his job, doing the household chores and looking after his sick mother.

Then he met Veronica. She was wonderful and he was very fond of her - and determined not to lose her the same way he had lost the others, vowed to put his Mom second just for once.

Stephen knew that his mother wasn't too ill to look after herself... she merely preferred for *him* to do everything.

It didn't take long for Brenda to start complaining at her son's lack of attention towards her, but she quickly realized that this time she was not going to succeed in manipulating him and that this time he was adamant about living his own life.

She eased off, knowing that she might drive him away. She even began to show an interest in his new girlfriend.

She prompted Stephen to keep himself clean and smart for Veronica and suggested that he let his hair grow and wear it in a pony tail like all the trendier boys were doing. "Girls like long hair on boys these days," She told him.

Because of his strict upbringing, Stephen was always the perfect gentleman on his dates and would never look any further than a goodnight kiss. In fact, because of his sheltered life he was shy regarding sex.

It was then that more tragedy and heartache struck when Brenda's sister, Joan, was killed in a car crash along with her husband. Brenda was devastated and this time, truly did need all the support that she could get from her son.

Brenda became even more withdrawn and depressed, and Stephen had to dedicate much more of his time to her. For all the harsh treatment that he had received from her since his dad left, he still loved her dearly.

At first Veronica was sympathetic towards Stephen's plight and even helped out, believing that Brenda would soon get better and she could see more of Stephen. But the illness dragged on, and Brenda became more and more demanding.

Veronica was well aware that there were other guys waiting to take her out, after six months she grew wary of the situation. She gave her boyfriend an ultimatum: *Your mom or me.*

Although Stephen knew his mom needed his aid, he knew also that there were little things that she could still do for herself which would allow him some freedom to be with Veronica. He was trapped between loyalties.

After much emotional agony, Stephen chose to spend more time with his girlfriend - fearing that to do otherwise would end the relationship. Yet he still wanted to be there for his mom as much as possible. He was trying to be fair.

Brenda didn't see it that way and felt snubbed by her son. She began to liken him to his father...leaving her to fend for herself while he cohabitated with another female. Her relationship with her son hit an all time low - despite Stephen promise to never abandon her.

It wasn't long after Stephen's seventeenth birthday that the next turn of events were to happen, one which would ultimately change his whole life...

He had returned home one evening from his date with Veronica, when he discovered his mom unconscious on the floor and fighting for breath.

With panic in his voice he urgently called for an ambulance and, on it's arrival, traveled to the hospital beside his mom, tears in his eyes and vowing never to forgive himself if anything should happen to her.

Stephen had been waiting in the hospital for well over three hours before a doctor finally came to talk to him.

"Your mother has had a heart attack Stephen. She is stable but, of course we want to keep her to ensure that she has complete rest over the next four or five days. There is nothing for you to worry about, she's sleeping peacefully now so I suggest that you go home and return to see her tomorrow."

Still guilt ridden, but greatly relieved, Stephen took the doctor's advice and went back home to an empty house, feeling very lonely and insecure. His mother had always been there with him, and now, he was all alone.

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The following day Stephen collected together what little money he had and bought some fruit and fresh flowers to take to the hospital. Asking at reception for ward 29 and Mrs. Brenda Clarke, he was directed to the ward where he then asked again, this time to be directed to where his Mom was.

"Are you a relative of Mrs. Clarke?" The young receptionist asked.

"Yes, I'm her son." Stephen replied.

The receptionist gave him a strange look "Her son? ...I'm sorry but I must have got mixed up, I thought that Mrs. Clarke had just one child...A daughter called Stephanie. I'm sure that is what she said when I spoke to her earlier."

Now it was Stephen's turn to give a quizzical look. "Yes, you must have. I am indeed her only child, but I can assure you that I am a boy."

The receptionist smiled and showed Stephen to where his mom was laying. She looked very pale and weak and didn't speak very much other than to thank her son for coming and bringing the gifts.

From then on Stephen went along to the hospital every day to see her while continuing working and keeping the house immaculate. It gave him very little time to see Veronica and he often felt drained at the times when they did go out. He tried to promise her that it would only be for a few more days, until his mom came home again.

He was visiting on what he believed was her last day before release when he was informed that Brenda had suffered a relapse. He was forced to go home without seeing her but later the same evening the hospital contacted him and informed him that she had again regained consciousness. He was told that he could come and see her that evening..but he ought to contact a Doctor Beecham first.

On his arrival, Stephen asked for the doctor and was shown to his office where he was invited to sit by Dr. Beecham's desk.

"Well Mr. Clarke, your mother is still not well, but conscious and able to talk. Why I have asked for you to contact me before seeing her, is because..she has been asking nurses if she can see her daughter. My files show you to be the only living child of Mrs. Clarke and so I am wondering if you can shed any light on her strange request? Does your Mother have a daughter that lives with your Father perhaps? ..or a child from a previous marriage, maybe one that was given up for adoption?"

Stephen could only answer no to any of the questions. He was as mystified as Dr. Beecham.

At length he was taken to see his Mom but sat in shock by her bedside when she failed to recognize him.

"Mom...it's me...Stephen," He told her.

Brenda became agitated and started to call out to the nurses. "I don't know who this boy is...why is he saying he is my son? Please, take him away from me...who is he, where is my daughter, I want my daughter!"

Stephen sat in shock as his mom cried hysterically. The nurses and Dr. Beecham responded quickly, one nurse giving Brenda an injection in her arm to sedate her while Dr. Beecham gently escorted Stephen from the ward.

"Come on Stephen, you had better leave. Your mom has been sedated now anyway. Quite clearly we have a problem here. It may be hard on you but I do not think that you should visit again until I have had a chance to talk to Mrs. Clarke and try and find out just what is wrong."

\* \* \* \* \*

For the next few days Stephen felt too upset and unsettled by the events to even see Veronica, or do anything else for that matter. Much of the housework was neglected and his job in a local store suffered too. He was extremely upset by the fact that his mom had not recognized him and even more, by way of her having broken down and demanding his removal. He now felt more alone than ever before.

On a Wednesday evening, three days later, the hospital phoned and asked Stephen to come in and see Doctor Beecham once more.

“Hello Mr. Clarke, please sit down.” The Doctor invited. “I have now had several lengthy chats with your Mother since you were last here. She is still under the belief that she has a daughter rather than a son for a reason which I believe could be psychological rather than anything else. She apparently had two daughters who both died within the first year of their birth...you are aware of that fact?”

“Yes, I am.”

“She also suffered psychological trauma and a great deal of emotional hurt when your father left home. Because of this she has built up a mistrust... even a hatred towards all males. She has apparently often wished that you yourself had been a daughter, or that her daughters had lived rather than you. Following her relapse she has somehow managed to block out your existence from her memory. She really does believe that she has a living daughter at home in your place...To try and explain it better, she has created a daughter in her own mind - in replacement of you in order to give herself happiness and fulfillment.

“I..I was aware that she often wished that I had been born a girl...something I have had to put up with.” Stephen agreed.

“Well don't blame yourself about this, I am sure it has no bearing on you whatsoever. I am quite sure that you have been as caring and loving towards your mom as could be possible. If anyone should take the blame, it's your father.

The immediate problem that we are faced with now, is that your mom has built this protective barrier where a daughter exists and you don't. She is longing to see the daughter that she believes she now has, we have stalled her for a time in the hope that she comes out of this delusion but... Well the trouble is Stephen, your mom is getting weaker and weaker and there is a real danger that we could lose her.”

“What can I possibly do? ..what do you suggest?”

“...I was thinking on the lines of presenting your mom with that daughter she so desperately yearns for.”

Stephen looked at the doctor blankly.

“..I was wondering about the possibility of your appearing in front of your Mother as a girl...as her daughter, to see if it gives her the encouragement to fight for life.”

Now Stephen looked shocked.

“You... you, mean you want me to appear as a girl...to wear a dress and all that? No way, Doc, I am very sorry but there is no way that I am doing that. There must be some other way!”

“You do not have to wear a dress, Stephen, just be the image of a girl. I already see that you wear your hair long. Take it out of the pony tail...perhaps a bit of padding under your sweater. You only need to wear a top and jeans like many teenage girls wear. I'm sure that you would look convincing...perhaps a touch of makeup.”

“MAKEUP!! Padding on my chest! No, I won't do it I tell you.” Stephen replied so adamantly that the doctor stopped pursuing the idea.

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The very next day Stephen was informed from the hospital that his mom was even worse. The doctors had attempted to use nurses pretending to be Mrs. Clarke's daughter, even wearing red wigs - the same color as both Stephen's and Brenda's hair, but she saw right through the disguise.

Because of the deception, Brenda had started to believe that something terrible must have happened to her real daughter- the imaginary Stephanie, why else would the doctors firstly try and make her believe she had a son and then disguise nurses to pose as Stephanie? Was she dead and the doctors were trying to fool her into believing that she was alive? With the belief that her daughter was dead, Brenda went into a deeper decline, giving up her own battle for life.

“Mr. Clarke, is there any other close female relatives in your family ? It is getting desperate, your mother will die unless we can pull off some kind of deception.”

“No, nobody that I know of. I'm an only child, as you know, and mom just had one sister..my Aunt Joan. She had two sons and they both live in France, I have no other cousins or anything.”

Doctor Beecham looked down in defeat.

“Is there absolutely no other way?” Stephen asked. “Is there no other way to save her?”

“It may already be too late, son...your mother is very weak. Perhaps all that I can offer her now would be to die happily knowing this fictitious daughter is really alive...But who knows, love is a very powerful medicine.”

Stephen became very solemn. “Then...I'll do it.” He almost whispered with a great deal of reluctance in his voice.

Obviously, Stephen had no clothes available that would befit a teenage girl, nor had any female relatives to loan something from. On his acceptance, several nurses rushed home to raid their daughters closets, the result being that within a few hours several large piles of girls clothing had been stock piled; dresses, skirts and plenty of feminine, skimpy under things.

On seeing the feminine attire before him, Stephen made clear his intentions: “I'm not going too overboard on this - Jeans and tops would be suitable, you said.” He retorted.

“That's correct, I did, and I'll not pressure you to do otherwise,” Doctor Beecham replied.

Stephen was offered a nurses dressing room to change. There he was assisted by a nurse who handed him a pair of panties that were silky and adorned with a lacy front paneling and more lace around the legs.

“Whoa, I'm not putting those on! I don't see any need as they are not going to be seen anyway, I'll just keep my Jockey shorts on thank you.” He quickly told her.

He did have to consent though in having a brassier fastened around his chest so as to provide him with a feminine shape, but did cut back on the amount of cotton wool padding that was offered.

He found the jeans that had been brought to be rather tight in the crotch and loose in the rear but at least they fastened the 'correct' way. A broad leather belt was added and pulled in to give him some waist.

The black, knitted wool sweater was comfortable to wear but he was devastated to see how much 'the small amount' of bra padding still managed to tent it out in front, making him feel extremely embarrassed.

He wore his own socks with a pair of girls running shoes then proceeded to take his hair out from the pony tail. He had never worn his hair loose since allowing it to grow, even when washing it he would only remove the rubber band just prior to wetting it then gathered it back into a pony tail after quickly toweling it and allowing it to dry naturally.

Seeing it now, he was amazed at it's length and fullness while the nurse carefully brushed it out. It had it's own, natural waviness.

The last and worst touch was a smear of pink lipstick and touch of foundation to add some color and softness to his face.

“This thing had better work after all this!” he muttered to himself.

He was nervous about entering a ward full of people with how he looked and he was hesitant about being led to the bedside of his mother ..afraid not only of her seeing through his disguise but of her causing a scene so that all the other patients and visitors looked and saw that he was really a boy dressed as a girl.

His fears subsided as he looked upon his mother, she looked deathly pale and weak as she lay propped up on a pillow with her eyes closed. Tears began forming in his eyes seeing his mom this way and looking so aged as he really did love her, for all her faults.

“Brenda, Brenda, We have a surprise for you, your daughter's here.” One of the nurses announced, softly shaking Brenda's shoulder.

“Go away. You are all trying to fool me. Why won't you tell me the truth about what has happened to Stephanie ?” Came the weak response from Stephen's mom.

With his heart pounding. Stephen took a deep breath and stepped forwards. “Mom.. mom, it really is me. It's ... Stephanie, I'm here.” He said quietly.

Brenda's eyes flickered open causing Stephen a moments anxiety.

“Stephanie? Stephanie? ” Slowly a smile spread across her pale face. “Oh my darling, it is you..it really is you!” She said as she struggled to lift herself so as to embrace her 'daughter,' though there was barely any strength in her arms to give a cuddle.

The two sat holding hands for several minutes and talked. Stephen found that he really had to use his imagination to invent for himself a completely new character and life as well as a plausible story as to where he had been.