

# A WAR OF WILLS

*By Patricia Smith*



*ILLUSTRATED BY C. PITTS*

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A 'YOUNG ADULT' NOVEL

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# A WAR OF WILLS

by Patricia Smith

## CHAPTER 1

I was twelve years old and had one week of school before summer vacation when Dad hit us with his annual trimming of the boys' hair. Well, it wasn't really a *trim*: Dad liked to shave our heads almost bald every summer. Usually, he didn't do it until after school had let out, but this year he was early.

I already had the shortest hair of any kid in school, except for my two brothers. All the other boys were in style with their longer hair. He got my brothers first, and I tried to talk him out of my annual scalping.

"All the *other* guys have long hair, Dad," I told him as a pile of my brother Charlie's light brown hair hit the floor, "It's the style these days for boys to wear their hair longer."

"Only *girls* should have long hair, Adam," he replied in his condescending voice.

"These are the eighties, Dad," I complained. "My hair is shorter right now than any other guy in the sixth grade. You always cut it too short and the other kids will make fun of us and try to push us around because of it."

"I can't help what another parent might do and not do," he replied sternly, "This is *my* house and I am in charge around here and I say that all boys have *short* hair and only the *girls* can grow it long. Girls know how to take care of long hair. *They* keep it clean."

"I can take care of my hair and keep it clean too," I told him, "I bathe at least twice a day now as it is."

"You *want* to look like a girl?" he asked, while Charlie got out of the chair and ran his hand over his new crew cut. It was Barry's turn as I continued my argument.

"Having long hair won't make me look like a girl. None of the *other* guys at school look like girls and some of them even have earrings!"

"Like I said, Adam, I can't help what other parents do or don't do with their kids. Boys in *my* house will all have short hair. *Girls* can grow it longer."

"Mom is the only girl here. Its not fair," I cried. "Why do you have to do it *today*? Why not next week?"

"I do it when I feel it's time. It's time!"

"That's not fair!" I repeated, "The other guys pick on me already because I can't take gym class with them or go out for recess. Now they'll pick on *all* of us a lot more."

Barry was done and ran his hand over his nearly shaved skull as he got out of the chair. "Feels good!" he told me.

"It looks terrible," I replied. He laughed as he went out to play in the backyard.

"If all the other guys in school jumped off a bridge, would *you* do it too?" Dad asked me.

"No," I answered, "but if only Barry and Charlie jump off the bridge and drown, would you want *me* to do it too? Or should I try and save them?" It was a logical approach to Dad's senario.

"*Of course* you should save them, if you can. What does that have to do with getting your hair cut?"

"Just because they like having short hair doesn't mean that *I* do. *They* like mushrooms and I *don't*. I like broccoli and *they* don't. Why do we have to look the same?"

"Because *I* say so and *I* am in charge around here."

"Dinner is ready!" Mom called. I was saved temporarily but kept up the argument right through dinner. My one year's growth of hair wasn't long by any stretch of the imagination and I was able to talk Dad into at least postponing my shearing until the next week. Then, I would be out of school and not have to put up with the harassment because of it. Mom seemed to take my side when she said, "Adam might look really cute with longer hair."

"He *already* looks like a girl," Dad told her. "I'm going to call him Amanda until he agrees to let me cut his hair for him."

My two younger brothers joined in with Dad. They all laughed at me and tried to ridicule me into doing something I didn't want to do. It was "Pass the potatoes please, Amanda", and "Amanda, please pass the salt" and "Amanda, help your mother with the dishes". I *always* helped Mom with the dishes, since I was the oldest, and never broke any when we cleaned up.

I had asthma and allergies and dry skin and couldn't go out to play with the other kids. I was virtually housebound, unless it rained. Then I got to go out for a walk, fresh air and a bit of exercise. The rain settled the dust and pollen in the air and I could breathe easier. Of course I had to stay out of the puddles, or Dad would lecture me about keeping my clothes and shoes clean.

I had inhalers that I took to school with me or when I had to go out with Mom or Dad. I had a tank of oxygen next to my bed in case of an attack in the middle of the night. I had my own room, because it had to be airtight and clean to keep it sterile. I soaked my body in the tub several times a day, using bath oils to moisturize my dry skin.

Being housebound gave me a lot of time to read and watch television, and I got almost perfect grades in school. I helped Mom with the dishes because the water felt good on my hands. She had to wash the pots and pans, though, because the grease and grime irritated my skin. And when I did the dishes I had to wear one of her aprons to keep my clothes clean.

Wearing the apron over my short pants and shirt gave my brothers more fuel for their ridicule. "That's a pretty skirt you're wearing, Amanda," Barry said to me from the kitchen doorway.

"Get out of here!" Mom commanded. "Unless you want to put on an apron, too, and help with the dishes."

Barry left us alone then. He was just over a year younger than me and capable of helping around the house, too. Charlie was four years younger than I was. They got to help with the things I couldn't do, but only on Saturday. Dusting, vacuuming, laundry and shopping. I had my own little world up in my room.

## CHAPTER 2

The last week of school passed too quickly to suit me. I knew it wouldn't be long before Dad would be back at me with his shears to shave me as bald as my brothers were. I tried to think up new arguments to save my hair while enduring their taunts. All they called me now was Amanda, but I wasn't letting them bother me *too* much and they knew it.

To further ridicule me, Dad and the boys began to treat me as they would a girl. I wasn't allowed to lift heavier things, and as Dad always held Mom's chair for her, Barry began doing the same for me. I tried to chase him off, but Dad *ordered* me to let him do it.

Finally, time was up, and Dad asked, "Are you now ready for a haircut, *Amanda*?" He stressed the name.

"No," I answered. I could be very stubborn when I wanted to be, but so could Dad. It became a test of wills.

"School's over for the summer. What's the problem now?"

"I want to grow it to see what its like. I won't know if I like having long hair if I don't *try* it. I had to try mushrooms before I found out I didn't like them."

"Fine. You can grow your hair as long as you want to. But, you'll get all the things that go with having long hair in this house."

"I take two or three baths a day, Dad. I can keep it clean and neat. You'll see."

My birthday was a week away. I'd never had a birthday party, since I had to live in a controlled environment. Lots of other kids coming over was out of the question, and so was going out for dinner. To celebrate Mom made me a cake and anything I wanted for dinner. Then, I got to open the presents. Mom usually did the buying and just signed the others' names.

Dad and my brothers had come to calling me Mandy. They laughed at me as often as they could. Only Mom and I weren't laughing, and I tried not to let them know how much it bothered me. Of course it hurt me deeply that they would be so cruel to me just because I wanted to grow my hair long.

This birthday was no different than any other, except that they treated me like a *girl*. I was thirteen now, a teenager, so Dad bought me my first watch. I opened his present first as he said, "All teenagers should have one of those, Mandy." I opened the box and found a girl's slim wrist watch.

"*Its a girl's!*" I shouted.

"*Of course* it is," he answered seriously, "A girl's watch for a girl named Amanda" My brothers joined in laughing with him.

"I'm a *boy*, Dad," I reminded him.

"Boys have *short* hair, girls have *long* hair. Amanda is a girl's name so now you have a girl's watch to go with it."

“This one is from me and Charlie,” Barry said, thrusting a package onto my lap, “Open it next.” I could see from the wrapping that they had wrapped it themselves. “We used our own money and picked it out ourselves. Dad helped us get it. You’ll like it!”

I opened the haphazardly-wrapped package with apprehension, since Dad had helped pick it out and *he* had given me a girl's watch. With the paper off I cut the tape holding the box shut and opened it to find something I half-expected. It was a girl's nightie set in bright pink nylon and lace.

“Since you are our sister now, Amanda,” Barry said, “we thought you should have the kinds of things that *other* girls have, too.” He had a grin plastered on his face from ear to ear and so did Charlie.

“Your father ordered all of us to buy you girl's things for your birthday, dear,” Mom apologized as she handed me one of the things she had gotten for me. I saw the smirk on Dad's face but I wasn't going to let him win this easily. I had gone too far already to back down now.

I opened Mom's present and got two party dresses complete with girl's underwear. One set was in pink, the other in yellow. All of my other presents were along the same line. Girl's clothes, jewelry, shoes, and Mom's final present, makeup and a large bottle of bubble bath.

Dad and the boys sat around laughing every time I opened a present. Mom didn't laugh once; she found it hard to enjoy picking on me like the others did. But, she had to do what Dad told her and got me nothing but girl's things too.

Once all the presents were opened, I was allowed to go upstairs to have a bath. My skin felt dry and itchy, and I needed the relief that only a bath would give me. Mom packed up all of my new things and helped me carry them to my room.

“I'm sorry about this, Adam,” she told me when we were alone in my room. “Your father *insisted* that all presents be for a girl and he would burn anything we got that wasn't. He meant it, too.”

I dumped the things onto my bed, then took off my shoes and socks and shirt and reached for my bathrobe.

“Wear this one, Adam,” she said, handing me the new yellow quilted robe she had bought for me.

“I'm *not* a girl, Mom,” I told her, as I refused to take it from her.

“I know that, dear. But try to imagine what it's going to do to your father. He thinks you're going to throw all this stuff in the garbage or refuse to use any of it. Then, he'll feel justified to tie you down and shave your head. Turn the tables on him. Try to make some use of these things. Its not as bad as you may think it is.”

Mom did have a point there. Dad would tie me down if he had to and shave my head if I refused to even try them. I knew he would be angry if I started to use the girl's things they got for me. I liked the idea of not letting Dad win so easily. I took the robe from Mom and put it on before removing my short pants and undershirts. There were

yellow furry slippers that matched, so I wore them as I headed for the bathroom. Mom handed me my bottle of bubble bath and after a moment of hesitation, I took it too.

Why not? I was almost out of my bath oils and bubble bath might work just as well. I could try it before I ran out of my necessary oils. It worked just as well as the oils and the bubbles weren't hard to put up with. Actually, the bubbles saved me some embarrassment as Mom came in.

"I don't need an audience when I'm having a bath, Mom."

"I know that, dear. But your Ivory soap isn't very good for washing longer hair. You need the proper shampoo and conditioner to clean it. I didn't think to get you any, so I brought you mine to use for now. I'll show you how, unless you would prefer the hair-cut?"

I let Mom wash my hair for me and by the time she was done, all of the bubbles were almost gone. She stayed and watched as I washed myself using my Ivory bath soap, then she pulled the plug to drain the soapy water. I was losing whatever cover I had so I had to get out of the tub and let her dry me off with one of the large fluffy bath sheets she kept just for me. She washed them in Ivory laundry soap as I was allergic to detergents. Mom wrapped another towel around my head, turban style, before I put on my new robe and slippers and headed back to my room.

Mom followed me and I soon found out why. "Did you think about it, Adam?" she asked me when she closed the door behind us.

"Think about *what*?" I asked her.

"About using some of this stuff we got for you?"

"Yeah. I know Dad would cut my hair if I tried to avoid it. It would *really* make him go crazy if I used some of this stuff. They already call me Amanda and treat me like a girl. Since this is now my stuff, why not?"

"Does it bother you the way they treat you, like a girl?"

"I don't let it bother me, Mom."

"Would it bother you if *I* called you Amanda, too?" she asked.

"No, I guess not."

"Of course I would never make fun of you, dear. But wearing girls' things can be fun too. How about trying on that pink baby doll night gown your brothers bought for you? I'll bet they spent every penny they saved to get it. They made a bet. Your father promised to give them their money back if you didn't wear it within a week. If you *do* wear it, they won't get their money back and you'll get revenge on them, too."

I liked that idea. It would teach them a good lesson if they lost the money for good. I turned my back to Mom and opened the robe as she dug out the pink lacy panties for me. I took them from her, removed the slippers from my feet, then put them on before removing the robe.

They were loose-fitting and trimmed with pink lace. They weren't as uncomfortable as I thought they might be. Mom bunched up the nightie and pulled it over my head, letting me put my arms into the short, puffed sleeves. She arranged it over my body. I



put on the sheer little lace robe that went with it and belted it loosely about my waist. Dad had bought me a pair of bright pink furry slippers that matched the nightie, so I put them on as well.

“This is going to shock the heck out of them,” Mom said as she smiled at me. “Wait here, I’ll be right back.” Mom left my room and was back in minutes with her hair brush and a pair of sissors. “Longer hair requires a brush rather than a comb. Can I cut off some of your split ends? It makes the hair look neater and it grows out even faster then.”

I let Mom brush and trim my hair for me, though I thought she went a bit far when she trimmed my bangs just above my eyes.

I was all set for the laughter I knew I was going to get. But when I walked into the living room where Dad and the boys were watching television, it didn't happen. My appearance before them, wearing the most feminine of all apparel, shut them all up for a long time. I tried to act like it was perfectly normal for me to wear a pink nylon and lace nightie in front of them. I tried to goad them into a reaction.

“It fits really good, doesn't it?” I asked them. “Thanks Barry and Charlie. You too, Dad.”

Mom was in the kitchen laughing to herself when I came in to help her with the dishes. She wasn't laughing *at* me and I knew it. She was laughing at *them*, and the stunned expressions they all still wore on their faces.

The television was turned off and I peeked around the corner to see what they were doing. Barry and Charlie were crying that they wanted their money back, but Dad wasn't going to give it to them. A deal was a deal! Dad reminded them of that, but made a new deal with them that meant a lot more trouble for me. They were scheming and I let them, since I now knew for sure that I had really gotten to all of them in a way they'd never expected.

I was enjoying myself at that moment, watching them squirm, so I really didn't mind wearing the nightie. Letting them see me in it was what had done the trick. And the nightie wasn't nearly as uncomfortable as I thought it would be. It fit and felt better against my sensitive skin than my pajamas ever had.

## CHAPTER 3

I retired to my room once we had everything cleaned up again and the house was back in order. I sat on my bed and looked over all of the clothes and accessories I had just gotten for my birthday. I remained in my little pink nightie set. What was it Mom had called it? It was a baby something-or-other. No matter, it was mine and I laughed again when I recalled how wearing it made the boys and Dad squirm with discomfort.

Just then I heard Mom's faint yet discernible knock on my door, so I went and opened it for her. She had brought up a tray of tea for us, a rare treat, so I held the door open wide for her to enter, and she placed it on my desk. The tray also held two plates with slices of my birthday cake on it.

"I see you are still wearing your baby doll, Adam... oh, I mean Amanda," she said looking me over appreciatively.

A baby doll! That's what this nightie was. "Yeah," I answered simply. "Should I take it off?"

"No, no. Unless its too uncomfortable to wear in front of me. I *really* enjoyed the effect your wearing it had on your father and brothers."

"Me too. I was all ready for them to laugh at me some more but they didn't. You and I were the ones doing the laughing this time. The nylon feels cool against my skin, not like my cotton pajamas. It was hard to wear it downstairs in front of the others, though."

"I can believe that dear, and your father has pretty well figured it out too. I overheard him telling the boys that you only wore it to irritate them. That you couldn't last for long, having to wear girls' things. And that you'd soon be begging to be allowed to wear boys' things again. You know, I wouldn't *blame* you if you chose to get your hair cut now."

"I don't *want* to get my head shaved, Mom!" I told her. "*They* started it. They had their fun teasing me and making fun of me and now its *my* turn to watch them squirm."

"Are you *sure* about this?" she asked me. "Don't get me wrong, Amanda. I love watching them squirm too. After everything they've done to you already, it serves them right. And I love even more finally having a daughter I can teach things to and have tea with."

Mom poured the tea and served the cake, while continuing, "I hate the thought of letting them win but I would hate it even more if I thought you weren't enjoying some of the things that as a girl I really enjoyed too. Its not wrong for you to enjoy dressing up and looking pretty, or to get revenge against your tormentors, but it is wrong to do it if you're not comfortable with it."

"I don't know if I'm going to be comfortable doing it or not, Mom, but I'm going to *try*. The bubble bath felt better than the oils we got. And the nightie feels better than my old pajamas. Do you *really* think I might look pretty as a girl?" I had to ask.

“I imagine that if you worked at it you could be prettier than a lot of *real* girls. Feminine beauty, I believe, comes in two parts: the genes and the work. You have the genes to be very beautiful, so all you need now is the work.”

Mom helped me hang my new dresses up in my closet. It felt strange to realize that these dresses were *mine* and even stranger to realize that I would soon be *wearing them*. We found hangers for some of my new lingerie too and the rest got folded up and put into my dresser drawers. Only my boy’s undershirts and bathing suit came out of the drawers.

“Girls these days wear a *lot* of boys' clothes too, so I don't see why *you* can't,” she told me.

“Won't wearing some boys clothes make Dad think that he won?”

“Not if you do it femininely.”

My next question she answered it before I could ask it.

“A little makeup and some nice jewelry should do the trick. Not to mention that the outlines of bras and panties can be seen through most clothes. Short pants, jeans and tee shirts can still be worn as a girl.”

Mom tucked me into bed wearing just the pink nightie and matching panties. She kissed me on the forehead.

“Yes,” she said softly, “it *is* going to be fun to have a daughter for a while.”

I slept in the next morning, having been so emotionally drained the day before, but also because of the luxuriousness of the baby doll. I awoke to Mom shaking me saying, “Come on sleepy head. Time to rise and shine!”

I got out of bed and Mom helped me out of my comfortable new sleepwear and into my new quilted robe. I put on the slippers and headed off for my ritual morning bath. It was the bubble bath again, and I enjoyed it as much the second time as I had the first time. I wasn't surprised when Mom came into the bathroom and helped me wash my hair. While I dried off she cleaned the tub for me, then escorted me back to my room. She had made my bed up for me too and laid out some clothes for me to wear.

It was cooler that day, so she had laid out jeans and one of my sweatshirts, along with a white bra and panty set. White socks and my sneakers were beside the bed. I stood and looked at them, with a little sigh.

“What's the matter, Amanda?” she asked me.

“I was just thinking that Dad and the guys are going to laugh at me again no matter *what* I wear. If I wear jeans and a sweatshirt now, even with makeup and jewelry, they'll think they've won. I don't want to give them that much satisfaction just yet. Can I wear something else?”

“Certainly. What do you want to wear?”

I got out the pink party dress and looked questioningly at her. Mom helped me with the pink panties and bra, the slip and into the dress. She brushed my hair for me, then watched as I put on the socks and shoes. It felt somewhat strange to see myself in my mirror wearing only girls' clothes, but the feeling of naughtiness dissipated when

I told myself that in Dad's mind this was all part of having long hair. My one hope in wearing these things was that it might shut Dad and the boys up for at least a little while.

I was right. They were so surprised to see me wearing that party dress that they didn't have a thing to say. There was no more laughing and snickering or jokes about me; I had done the unexpected and caught them off guard.

I wore pink all that first day; though I needed Mom's help to get out of it when I went for my soakings in the tub. Mom didn't mind helping me get undressed in the middle of the day, and stayed to watch as I soaked in my tub of hot water and white bubbles. I no longer minded that she stayed and saw me naked, since I needed her help to get dressed again when my skin had soaked up the required moisture.

Mom took great care in helping me, too. She liked to fluff out the skirt and make sure the tiny pink ribbons threaded through the lace trim of the puffed sleeves were straight. And after my evening bath, she liked to help me into my pink baby doll night gown set, even though it was simple enough for me to put it on by myself.

I spent two days wearing pink. The boys tried to get me going by giving me the kinds of compliments that girls normally received but, I shut them up when I thanked them. Then, I went two full days wearing the yellow party dress and its matching underwear. They had a hard time thinking up ways to bother me.

I spent a whole week wearing the party dresses, two days in each color before switching. Then, I felt ready to change things. Mom had my yellow outfit laid out for me when I got back to my room after my morning bath. "I don't want to wear that today," I told her.

"What would you *like* to wear then?" she asked patiently. "A T-shirt and jeans?"

"No. How about that orange-colored dress Dad gave me?"

"It's peach, and it's a sundress. Its pretty cool out there today, dear."

"That doesn't matter much, Mom. I'm stuck in the house anyway, right?"

"True enough. Okay, do you want to do it right today?"

"If I can. I want to make them feel like losers. What do I do first?"

"First, we put this stuff away. Girls wear underwear as close to the color of their outfits as possible to minimize detection. The closest you have to peach is pink."

Mom put away my dress and slip while I exchanged the yellow bra and panties for the pink ones in my drawer. Off came my bathrobe and slippers so that I could put on the tiny bikini panties with delicate lace trim at the waistband and leg openings. Mom helped me into the harness-like bra and fastened it behind my back for me. Her hair brush was on my desk so I took it and stood in front of my dressing mirror to brush my hair dry. She left me there for a minute as she got something from her room.

Nail polish! *Pink* nail polish. She sat on my desk chair while I sat on my bed and put a foot onto her lap. I watched as she painted each of my toenails pearly pink. Two coats on each nail. Then, she did my fingernails.

From my new makeup case she took an odd-looking device and explained that it was an eyelash curler. She used it on both sets of my upper eyelashes, then showed me how to put on the waterproof mascara, upper and lower lashes. Not too much, just enough to make my eyes stand out more. She brushed a bit of blush onto my cheeks, then showed me what faces to make as she applied pink lipstick to my lips. After blotting my lips she let me look in the mirror.

The effect was startling. I looked pretty without looking overdone. My hair was clean and dry and the style added to my feminine appearance. Even my underwear made me think I was looking at a girl rather than my own reflection. Mom had a body cologne spray with her and sprayed some on my shoulders, back and chest. It was her light lilac scent which I could tolerate, despite my allergies.

She took out my sundress and unzipped the back before removing it from the hanger. She held it open for me and I stepped into it, pulling it up past my hips so I could slip my arms into their openings. She settled the shoulder straps over my bra straps and zipped it shut for me. Mom arranged and smoothed down the skirt portion while I ran my hands over the bodice and fingered the ribbon trim.

“You look *fabulous*, Amanda,” she told me. “Very pretty and very feminine.”

Looking in the mirror I knew she was right. I looked like a *real* girl. While Mom ran to her room again I got out my new wristwatch and put it on my left wrist. Mom returned and placed about my neck one of her thin gold chains. It had a tiny locket attached.

“My mother gave me this when I was sixteen,” she told me. “I want you to have it now.” Again I looked in the mirror and touched the locket, while she put in a pair of pink berettes to hold the hair back from my face on each side. The final step to getting dressed was to slip my feet into a pair of white sandals, which had a strap running over the instep and buckled on the outside of each foot.

“How do you feel, Amanda?” she asked, as I studied the overall effect in my mirror.

“I don't *know* how I feel,” I told her honestly. “All I know is that I look like a *real* girl! I guess that how I feel will depend on who does the laughing. Us or them.”

“I have a feeling that you and I are going to be the ones doing the laughing from now on.”

## CHAPTER 4

Dad, Barry, and Charlie had all finished their breakfasts and were sitting around the kitchen table planning their day for a way to bother me as much as they could. It looked like rain outside, but they were planning to do things I could have done too, as a boy, things they felt I *couldn't* do as a girl. Mom and I did some eavesdropping before we made our entrance.

Mom led the way into the kitchen and I followed as naturally as I could. I said my good mornings to them as I went about getting a bowl of cereal, as if nothing was out

of the ordinary. They stared at me with wide eyes and open mouths, and I saw Mom trying to hold back a smile. It was all she could do to keep from laughing out loud.

Dad gave the boys a nod of his head and they left the room to go and get ready to leave with him.

“Uh, its pretty cool out today, Amanda,” he said to me, “I thought you would wear jeans today.”

“If you wanted me to wear jeans you should have got me some for my birthday,” I told him. “I figured that since you went to all the trouble of getting me this dress that I should at least let you see me wearing it. I'm wearing the watch you gave me too, see?” I held out my hand so he could see the nailpolish on my fingers.

Dad had nothing to say and sheepishly left the room. Only then did Mom let out the laughter she was holding back. Now I knew for sure that I had done the right thing by wearing that sundress instead of the jeans. Mom had coffee and toast while I ate my cereal.

Dad and the boys were ready to go before we finished eating, so Dad had to come and tell us what they had planned. He asked Mom what she and I were doing today. Mom dug her calendar out of her purse and after looking up the day said, “Oh dear. I forgot all about it. I have a doctors appointment this morning. It'll only take a few minutes, so Amanda can either stay here or come with me.”

“I think I'll go with you, Mom,” I said. “Its no fun staying home alone.” That put a sour expression on Dad's face. It was clear that he didn't want me to have any fun at all.

They left, and Mom burst out laughing again. I couldn't hold in the mirth I was feeling either.

“I love the way you keep doing it to him,” she said. “After a whole week of wearing the party dresses, they were just getting it together again when you wear the sundress and throw them for another loop. I love it!”

“He's been asking for it. They *all* have,” I answered.

“You want to do it to them again, only better?” she asked.

“Sure. How?”

“Come to the doctor's with me. Then we can go shopping later and get you your own things, so you don't have to borrow mine all the time.”

“Do I have time for a bath and to get changed Mom?”

“Do you *need* a bath?”

“Well, I can't go out like this. Its one thing to dress up to get Dad and the boys going crazy but its another thing to go out dressed up, too.”

“I think it would drive them even crazier if they knew you went out dressed exactly as you are. My doctor is not the one you go to so neither she nor her staff will know that you're not a *real* girl. As a boy you don't go out with me often enough so that people I know might recognize you. Plus, it might make it easier for you in the long run around here if strangers can accept you as a real girl.”

Mom kept giving me more and more reasons why I should try this, but the one I gave myself was the best of all: I wouldn't know what it was like until I *tried* it. It made perfect sense for me then to go out as a girl and see how the world would accept me. I agreed to accompany Mom as her daughter.

Mom had a small shoulder-slung purse she lent to me. We filled it with the things girls usually take with them. The purse was white and matched my shoes, which was very important for girls, she told me. She lent me one of her wallets, but all I had to put into it was my money. Since it was cool out, she lent me one of her white sweaters and I wore it draped over my shoulders.

It was a short drive and we were there in minutes. Mom went in to check out the waiting room while I stayed in the car. Being chemically sensitive I couldn't take heavy colognes and perfumes, so she ran interference for me. The coast was clear, so I took the plunge and joined her in the waiting room.

Mom got through her appointment quickly and, as we were about to leave she introduced me to her doctor as her daughter. That was when things began to look dark for me. The doctor asked Mom all kinds of questions about me; since she had the time now she insisted on doing an examination on me. It would only take a few minutes and Mom couldn't come up with enough reasons to refuse it. Mom and I found ourselves in the doctor's examination room together.

To my relief though it wasn't a complete physical exam she wanted to give me. She took me to be a real girl just entering puberty, and asked me things like if I had begun to menstruate yet and did I have cramps and was I sexually active. I said no to all of them. She listened to my heart and lungs through her stethoscope, then Mom undid my dress and removed my bra. She examined my chest and asked my age, then wrote Mom a prescription for me. Mom took it and put it into her purse before she helped me put on my bra again and refit my dress for me. I was really glad to get out of there.

In the car again Mom burst out laughing. "What's so funny?" I asked her seriously.

"A doctor," she explained, "who treats nothing but women examined you half-dressed and never realized you weren't a real girl. Think about it, Mandy. If a doctor who is a woman who treats *only* women can't tell the difference, what chance does anyone *else* have at realizing the truth?"

I could see now why she thought it was funny. I, on the other hand, just felt a sense of relief. I was relieved that I had made it through there without having been discovered for what I really was.

Mom drove us to the drug store where we filled a basket with all of the things she felt I should have to continue our charade indefinitely. Light-scented colognes and perfumes, nail polish in different colors, hair brushes and barrettes and ribbons. At the pharmacy counter, Mom stopped to get her prescription filled and accidentally handed over my prescription, too. It was too late to take it back when we realized the mistake. Mom had ordered the full dosages as we might go away for the summer and might not be here to get a refill when needed.

Mom paid for our purchases and we carried it all out to her car. "What did the doctor prescribe for me?" I asked just out of curiosity.

“Birth control pills,” she answered. “You see Mandy, women don't just use them to prevent pregnancy. We also take them to regulate our menstrual cycles. Most girls your age are already well into their secondary stages of development. The doctor feels that the birth control pills will jump-start these changes for you, so you can be like all the other girls.”

“I don't have to take them, do I?” *Now* I was worried!

“No dear, you don't. They are close enough to mine that I can use them if I run out or lose some. But I doubt if they could do anything to you anyway. Your system would probably just flush them right through without any problems. It might be a good idea, though, if you were to carry the case in your purse. I keep mine with me, as do most girls. It'll be just one more signal to other people who might see them that you are a *real* girl.”

I could do that much. She handed me the pink, plastic, oval case with twenty one pills in it, and I put it into the purse she had lent me. “There are thirty one days in a month, Mom. How come there are only twenty one pills here?”

“Girls get their periods once a month,” she explained as she drove. “They only take the pills when they aren't menstruating. One package will last from cycle to cycle. Three weeks on and one week off. Then, a new package.”

“Okay,” I said.

Mom parked the car in a small strip mall and said, “Lets have lunch out, okay?”

I was somewhat hesitant as it seemed to me that we were pushing my luck. We had been to the doctors, we had been to the drug store, *now* she wanted to take me into a restaurant.

“I hope there aren't a lot of smelly people here,” I said in reply.

“Not usually,” she answered. “That's why I came here. Its out of the way and not too busy and we should be able to get a table fairly quickly. We'll just have a sandwich and some tea and get out fast.”

Mom led the way into the restaurant and straight to a table in the center of the room. My apprehension grew as I felt a lot of eyes upon us. I was nervous and it showed.

“Relax, Mandy. We are just two more beautiful females for people to look at. Didn't Adam ever stare at the girls in school?”

“Uh, yeah,” I answered tentatively.

“Well, Amanda is a very pretty girl now, so she is being stared at, too. Just ignore the stares and pretend that it's just you and me here.”

We ordered our sandwiches and tea and continued to talk quietly to each other. “You know Mandy, all of the clothes you got for your birthday were chosen to make Adam feel foolish if he had to wear them. The prettiest, the frilliest, and the most feminine styles. Your father checked every item before it was wrapped to make sure it fit his scheme. I even had to take back some blouses because he felt they just weren't frilly enough to make you feel foolish wearing them.”



Her words brought out my stubborn streak and gave me the resolve I needed. "Dad is going to regret starting all this," I told her.

"He already *does*, dear. His biggest fear right now is that you might learn to *like* being a girl."

"I *don't* like it, Mom. But it's not all that bad either when everyone thinks I am a girl. For Dad's sake though, I think I can pretend to like it a lot more than I really do."

"Sometimes I wish you could *stay* a girl forever."

"It's not easy being a boy and wearing girls clothes, Mom. It was hard enough at home and out here it's *really* bad. I'm doing it because I don't want to let Dad off the hook too easily. *He* started this."

"Yes, but no matter *what* your reasons are, you are now my *daughter*. I feel wonderful and alive again even if it is only for a short time. I am having the best time of my life being out with my daughter!"

She meant it, too. She was drawing a great deal of personal pleasure from my being a girl with her, at home and in public.

"Do you want to have some more fun, Mom?" I asked her.

"*Of course I do*, Amanda. What do you have in mind?"

It was a big step but it might piss Dad off even more. "A lot of the guys at school wear earrings. Maybe I could get one ear pierced too?"

"Not as a girl, Amanda. Girls get *both* ears pierced. But if we do them both now, then as a boy later you can wear one earring. How about that?"

"Sure," I said. "Why not?"

After lunch, Mom took me to a jewelry store and we picked out several pairs of girls' earrings for me. Mom had them put one hole in each earlobe and insert a tiny diamond stud. I was given directions for the care and cleaning of the holes and told not to remove the studs for at least a month. Mom told me I could take them out, but *only* if I put in another pair immediately.

We had a couple of blocks to walk back to the car, which was safely parked in a lot. On the way we happened to pass a shop that sold swimwear. Mom stopped to look and I stopped with her. "Want to?" she asked. "It's summertime, and Amanda doesn't have a swimsuit. I can just see your father's face when he sees you in a girl's bathing suit when we go to the beach."

*The beach!* Usually we went to the beach for a day on the weekends when it was really hot. I had to be very careful on those days and have my inhalers with me. Sometimes, I had to sit in the car with the air conditioning on high. I did it so the others could have fun. Dad would *really* freak out if I did it like *this!*

I led the way into the shop and Mom helped me pick out two suits that would drive Dad crazier. The first was a bright orange one-piece suit with straps that crisscrossed behind my back and a short skirt built in from the hips, to barely cover my groin area. The second one was a white two-piece suit with pink trim, for sunbathing. Both suits had built in foam cups where my breasts should be.

We took a detour after leaving the swimwear shop and Mom took me to a lingerie store. I only had the one baby doll nightie and minimal lingerie as Dad expected me never to wear any of it. Dad had never been cheap with any of us and usually gave us more than what we really needed. He was a lawyer and made good money. I applied that “theory” to the shopping Mom and I were doing now and got more than I really had a use for. To say that Mom was eager to help was to understate the situation.

I got a dozen pairs of the frilliest panties available in the prettiest colors they had. I picked out bras to match, and Mom made sure they were in my size. There were garter belts too, so we matched up a couple of them and got a few pairs of stockings as well. I got some pantyhose, too.

Mom asked if I wanted some teddies, so I looked at them with her. I picked out three of the prettiest ones they had in my size, and Mom agreed that they would drive Dad nuts. We chose several camisoles with matching half-slips, some full-slips and six more of the prettiest nighties they had. It was too much for us to carry it all to the car so I stayed in the store with our purchases while Mom went to bring the car over.

Inside the store, no one came by to bother me much. To them, I was just a girl waiting for her mother. It was then that I realized that I didn't feel uncomfortable anymore. I knew that I *looked* like a girl, had *acted* like a girl, so everyone in the store assumed that I *was* a girl. Being treated as a girl by strangers wasn't so bad. And when Mom stopped the car outside the store and we began loading in our bags, men actually stopped and offered to help us. We declined the offers. There were definite advantages to being a girl, and I made a mental note to explore them a bit further.

## CHAPTER 5

It was late afternoon when we finally got home to find Dad and the boys wondering where we were. My walking arm in arm with Mom still wearing the dress from that morning shocked Dad and the boys. They had expected me to change into boy things to go out with her. They had expected to *win*.

“Where *were* you two all day?” Dad asked Mom.

“I had my doctor’s appointment this morning, remember?” Mom replied.

“*All day?* It doesn't take *all day* to go to the doctor’s and back,” he said.

“No, but you will recall that Amanda only had minimal clothing to wear. We went shopping and got her more things she’s going to need. The bags are in the car, so I would appreciate it if you would get them and take them up to her room for her.”

Dad took the boys with him to carry in our purchases, while Mom and I started to make dinner. It had to be quick so we decided on frozen fish and chips, which just needed to be heated up in the oven.

“Dad’s going to look through all of my bags, isn’t he?” I asked Mom.

“Of course he is,” she answered as she made us some tea. “I’m glad he will only find the kinds of things that meet his criteria for his new daughter. Pretty and frilly and feminine.”

“You know, Mom,” I said to her when they were all outside for a second trip, “we’ll have to go shopping again pretty soon.”

“Why? What did we forget, Amanda?”

“Well, I only have four dresses. No skirts and no blouses.”

“Right. And you’ll need accessories, too. Shoes, boots, belts, purses, sweaters, scarves, and a ton of other stuff. Your father is *really* going to pay now for having started all this.”

We served dinner at six, and everyone was very quiet until we were all seated. Then, Dad spoke.

“You two must be pretty hungry, having skipped lunch and all.”

“Oh no,” Mom answered lightly. “We had lunch in a tiny cafe I know of. We aren't starving.”

Knowing that I had been to all of these places as a girl obviously bothered him. I appeared to be as happy now as at any other time in my life. He tried another tact.

“That’s a lot of stuff you got today Amanda. And I see it’s all very pretty, too.”

“Thanks, Dad,” I said as casually as I could. “I *need* all of it, too.”

“You're planning to *wear* it all?” he asked, trying not to sound surprised.

“Of *course* I am,” I answered haughtily. “There’s no point buying it if I'm not going to *wear* it, is there?”