

THE FEMINIZED FUGITIVE

By Deena Gomersall



ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES PITTS

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

Copyright 1999, Friendly Applications, Inc. - All Rights Reserved

Reluctant Press TG Publishers

This story is a work of fiction. Any similarity to persons living or dead is entirely coincidental. All situations and events herein presented are fictional, and intended only for the enjoyment of the reader. Neither the author nor the publisher advocate engaging in or attempting to imitate any of the activities or behaviors portrayed.

Persons seeking gender reassignment surgery, hormone therapy or any other medical and/or body-altering process should seek the counsel of a qualified therapist who follows the Benjamin Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorder.

Protect Professional Fiction on the Internet!

We need *your* help! We want to keep providing our readers with low cost, professional quality fiction on the Internet. We spend thousands of dollars to edit, illustrate and typeset *each story*. It is important, therefore, that everyone works to help keep professional fiction alive on the Net.

This story is protected by US and International copyright law, and is owned exclusively by Friendly Applications, Inc, DBA Reluctant Press, which retains exclusive rights to publish these materials. The civil penalties for copyright infringement can be severe, including substantial monetary damages, injunctive relief, and liability for attorneys' fees incurred in prosecuting a case. If a court determines that the infringement was committed willfully, statutory damages of up to \$100,000 for each copyright infringed can be awarded. Even if not found to be acting willfully, a defendant can still be held liable for statutory damages of \$500 to \$20,000 for each copyright infringed. **These penalties apply even if money was not charged.** In addition, criminal penalties may be imposed if someone willfully infringes a copyrighted work for commercial advantage or private financial gain. This crime is punishable by up to five years imprisonment, up to \$250,000 in fines, or both. State civil damages and criminal penalties vary from state to state and country to country, but are always severe.

The best way to keep professional illustrated fiction available on the Internet is to do YOUR part to protect the author's and publisher's copyright. *You can be part of the solution.* Encourage others to purchase our stories. Never share the access rights you've purchased. **You** make the continued availability of TG fiction on the Internet possible. Thank you for your cooperation!

THE FEMINIZED FUGITIVE

By Deena Gomersall.

Chapter 1: ON THE RUN

20th January. 19:30... Will was pulling his car over to the side of the road as he spotted a patrol car further up along the dark country road. He knew that they would be looking for him, him and the bank raiders.

Quickly turning his car around he set off back the way he had come, driving a couple of miles back towards the city which was now sixty miles ahead.

In the distance he could just see the hazy blue flashes from the three or four patrol cars that were now heading his way from the other direction.

To the left he could make out a dark narrow track leading down into a steep wooded valley. He instinctively turned off the road and bumped and bounced down the track extinguishing his headlights as he headed into the shadowy gloom of the forest.

Three hours earlier William Chantler had not a care in the world. He had just picked up a couple of pizza's and a bottle of wine and was ready for heading back to his fiancée's house for a late supper.

As he was getting back into the car from the liquor store he suddenly felt a gun pushed into his back and he was ordered to get into the car by a stockily built rough who followed him inside.

“Just do as I say and nobody's gonna get hurt.” He was told.

Will was instructed to drive and was given directions that led him into the center of the city before being told to pull over.

After an anxious ten minute wait the rough told him to flash his headlights which he immediately complied to.

He was then amazed to see four darkly dressed, hooded figures moving towards a nearby bank and enter into it. What seemed like an instant later the bank door flew open, there was a shout and a shot rang out.

The four men sped towards his car as two guards appeared in the bank's doorway. They fired several rounds at the running men. One robber turned and returned the fire and Will gasped as he saw a guard slump to the ground gripping his belly.

Everything seemed to be happening at double the speed and the next thing that he was aware of the four men had piled into his car.

“MOVE MOVE MOVE.” the man behind him called out, even before the doors had been pulled shut.

“For fuck sake, MOVE !” He was ordered again before he took the initiative and, after taking off the hand brake he slammed his foot down on the gas.

Two more shots rang out, both hitting the car.

“I'm shot!” screamed one of the gang, clutching his left arm.

“Don't worry Rick, it's only a flesh wound.” Someone else answered. “Turn down here.” The first gunman ordered, indicating a left turn with the barrel of his gun.

For the next five minutes the car was filled with yelling, Rick groaning, voices cursing or bellowing out directions until, finally, Will was told to pull up behind a parked Ford Taurus.

The gang all began to scramble out of Will's car and run towards the parked vehicle. As the last man got out, the one who had been sitting directly behind Will held the barrel of his gun and slugged Will hard on the back of the head with the handle.

Will felt the sharp pain and blacked out, slumping forwards onto the steering wheel.

—0-0-0—

It was the same, sharp, throbbing pain that he sensed first when he began to come around some time later. Instinctively, he put his hand to the source of the pain and, as well as making it sting more, he felt the sticky wet blood on his fingers.

His head still spinning and his mind foggy, he tried to piece together what had happened. Obviously he had been used in a bank robbers getaway... but what now?

He had almost decided to drive straight to the nearest police headquarters and report what had just happened when the news bulletin that was playing on his still switched on car radio changed his mind.

Will listened intently to what was being said. It was all about an armed robbery in the city.

“The police say that six men were involved in the raid which has left one man dead and another injured. It is also believed that one of the gang members was also shot during their getaway. Although most of the men wore hoods, the driver of the car was seen by several witnesses. He is in his mid-twenties with a thick growth of blonde hair. The police are also searching for the car that was used in the getaway, the getaway, the registration which is...”

Will couldn't believe it, he was being implicated in an armed robbery. The police believed that he was part of the gang, they had his description and were looking for his car.

The only solution still open to him. Had he not got such a befuddled brain due to being slugged, he should have been able to still turn himself in and give the police an account of his story. He did bear a gash on the back of his head and, why should he be the only one not wearing a mask if he was guilty?

But he was not thinking that clearly, his head was throbbing and he was panicking. He felt very nervous and shocked by the whole turn of events. Instead of heading

back downtown he drove off out of the city, he had to get away, reach the freeway and escape before he was caught. When things settled down he would be able to think more clearly on what to do.

That had been two hours ago, now he was trapped between two sets of police cars, darkness was surrounding him as he left the main road and entered into the shadow of the trees.

The unimproved road ran through the outer edge of the forest and he seemed to recall that there was a road that ran through the southern section of the forest. He had to reach that road, via the woodland track so that he could continue his escape.

A mile or so along his route the car hit a mud ditch.No matter how he tried, he could not turn the car out as the wheels slipped and slithered in the thick mud, churning it up all the more.

Finally, he decided he had no other option but to abandon his car and set off on foot. He knew that the police might find the track and follow him down. He knew that he couldn't be too far away from the southern road now, maybe if he reached it he could hitch a lift.

He still had the presence of mind to realize that he was hungry and decided to take the pizzas along with him. ...Not to be. The robbers had taken them both and the wine too. He cursed his luck then clutched his breast pocket as a new thought dawned on him. As he feared, his wallet was also gone. He was penniless.

Desperate and despondent, he began to set off on foot along the dark and lonely track. Every so often he would hear something scurry into the undergrowth. There was the call of a screech Owl and at one point a deer bolted directly in front of him causing his heart to virtually leap into his mouth.

After what seemed like hours he finally saw a faint glow of the road through the trees some way ahead. He could hear the murmur of vehicles traveling or an occasional flash of a headlight. With renewed vigor, he headed in that direction.

Focusing straight ahead, he never realized that he had come out onto another narrow track, nor did he hear the sound of the approaching engine or see the headlights, not until the vehicle was on top of him.

With a thud, he was hurled up onto the hood of the Land Rover, then rolled off again as it pulled to an abrupt halt.

Will now felt a new pain as he clutched his shattered leg. From somewhere he thought he heard a woman's voice call out.

“Oh my god! Are you alright?”

Will looked up to see if he could see the person but his sight was already dimming and going out of focus. For the second time that day he blacked out.

—0-0-0—

Every part of Will's body ached as he regained consciousness. He tried to open his eyes but even the dim light caused a searing pain to cut through his head so he quickly closed them again with an audible groan.

For what seemed like an age he just lay there, mentally awake but his eyes were shut, waiting for the pain in his head to dissipate. He was listening acutely for any noise other than the roar and occasional whistle of the wind coming down the chimney of what was an open fireplace or the sound of the rain lashing against window glass. He could smell the burning of wood in the fire and feel its glowing heat.

He had heard no other sound but the weather for so long that when he then heard a door open and close followed by the sound of things being placed, he was momentarily startled.

“Hello! Is someone there?” He called out through his dry throat.

The sound of approaching feet was heard followed by a woman's cheery voice.

“Ah! You're awake... at last.”

“Please. Where am I? What's happened?”

“You ran right in front of my Land Rover on the South track. I gave you a rather nasty bump, I'm afraid. Split your leg open and broke your thigh bone... I never saw you, you came out of the shadows like a fox.

“Don't worry, I'm a qualified nurse. I've stitched your leg up and set the break in plaster from your groin to just below the knee. I've also had to strap your fingers of the left hand together -three bones are fractured. Other than that you caught a nasty hit on the head from my hitting you and there's another cut at the back of your head which looks like something you did earlier.”

“Yeah, er, I knocked it a few hours ago.” He answered gingerly.

“A few hours ago ! Don't think so Chicken, I've had you here the best part of forty-six hours. You mean a few hours before me hitting you? What on earth were you doing in the forest, on foot at that time of evening anyway?”

“My car broke down some way back along the forest cut. I was trying to reach the road along the bottom when, when you hit me.”

“I'd just come off the bottom road on my way home. I live here in this shack on the South side. I just never saw you 'til it was too late, you just appeared in my headlights. I tried to brake.”

“I don't hold you responsible, Madam. I guess I was just too focused on heading for the road. I never saw your lights or heard your engine.”

“My lights are faulty I'm afraid. The uneven track shakes the wiring loose, it only takes a bump or two. How are you feeling?”

“Stiff, sore and I have one hell of a headache.”

“Well, don't you worry. I'll fix you up good as new. No point in me having the skills if I don't put them to practice once in a while, eh?”

“Yeah, thanks. Do you think I ought to...” Will was just about to suggest going to the hospital for proper care and attention when he remembered that the police may still be looking for him. He'd driven out of town to lie low for a while; here was as good a place as any, as long as the woman didn't mind.

“...Uh, it doesn't matter,” he said instead. “I'm called er, William, William Chantler. Will to my friends.”

“Pleased to meet you, Will,” the woman replied, taking his right hand. “I'm Maggie. Now, I've a lot of things to do. I'll give you some tablets for that headache, then I suggest you get some sleep.”

“What time is it, Maggie?”

“A quarter after seven, Saturday evening. It was ten after nine Thursday night when I hit you... like I say, you've been out for forty-six hours. You may as well get some sleep now. I'll see what you're like in the morning.”

Maggie gave him a couple of tablets and a pill to help him sleep, covered him over and wished him a good night. When she left the room, Will tried to think about all that had happened to him and what he should do next as the sleeping tablet began to make him feel drowsy.

—0-0-0—

Will stirred and his eyes flickered open as he awoke to some bird singing outside of the window. His head pain still hadn't quite gone but it was reduced now to a dull ache. For the first time, he was able to glance around and look at his surroundings.

The bedroom that he was in was medium-sized and looked clean and orderly. The furniture was the heavy, old-fashioned wooden type, varnished and well polished. The smell of polish hung in the air.

There was a bath tub, a three-drawer and a two-drawer chest, a large, free-standing closet and an old chair with carved arms and legs. The floor was covered with a rather plain, mauve colored carpet. The bed he lay upon was the old spring and mattress type with both foot- and head- boards.

A wooden framed clock sat upon the larger chest of drawers and showed it to be 9:30 AM. To the left of his bed, as he knew, was an old fashioned fire place still filled with smoldering embers.

As Will lay upon the bed viewing his plaster-cast left leg and his bound-up hand, he thought of his car which was possibly still where he had left it. If the police discovered it, they would have an idea that he was still somewhere in the area. They might be able to trace him to this place.

At 10:15 by the clock, Will heard a door open and footsteps coming up the stairs. Shortly afterward, his door swung open and a woman entered.

“Ah! Good...You're awake. I'll bet you must be ravenous?”

Will had the first opportunity to view his host. Maggie was a plump woman in the area of 5'4"-5'5". She had a mop of short, curly brown hair on her rounded head, a chuckly smile and rosy cheeks.

"Hello. It's nice to be able to see you at last, Maggie. Yes, I am rather hungry... famished actually... if it's not an inconvenience to you. You've been extremely kind to me already."

"Nonsense, it's no trouble at all. Anyway, I kind of feel responsible seeing as it was me that ran you down. How does steak, French fries and beans sound?"

"Sounds wonderful. Uh, could I further lean on your kindness and ask if you could see if my car is still along the track and if it's able to be freed... it was bogged down in thick mud. I hate thinking of it out there, abandoned."

"No problem honey, I have a tow truck around the back. I'll go out and haul it in this afternoon."

"Oh. And just one more thing? If I give you my fiancee's phone number, will you contact her for me? She will be worried sick, not knowing what's happened to me. Her name is Cheryl."

"Consider it done, dear," Maggie replied with a smile.

It hardly seemed any time at all before Maggie was returning upstairs, propping Will up in his bed and putting a hot, mouth-watering meal onto his lap. Will's stomach rumbled as he realized just how hungry he really was.

Stuck as he was with one usable hand, Maggie remained a while to cut up his steak and offer other assistance.

"You said that you're a nurse, Maggie. My being here isn't preventing you from going to work, is it?"

"Actually, Chicken, I said I was a qualified nurse. I don't do it anymore. I just run my little farmstead out here and occasionally help the doctor down in the town, five miles back down the road."

"Well you sure seem to have done a good job of fixing my leg up and strapping my fingers. I really don't want to be a burden to you, though."

"Never you mind, Chicken, You aren't a burden. If you were, I'd have run you down into the hospital. Truth is, it gets mighty lonely at times here on my own with nobody but my animals. I used to share the shack with my sister but she passed away some years back, God rest her soul. I don't get into town too much, so it's a nice change to have someone to talk to."

"I'm sorry about your sister. I suppose it's pretty quiet out here. Not much happening, huh?"

"People down in town generally keep themselves to themselves. Mind you, today's been an exception; there's been a whole lot of police activity along the bottom road."

Will stopped chewing his food and looked at his host. "Really? Has something been happening been happening around here, then?"

“Don't know, young man. Suppose I'll hear tell sooner or later. I don't get to catch up on news 'til I get into town as a rule.”

Maggie wiped Will's mouth and removed his plate when he finished his meal and informed him that she would look in on him later.

He stretched as much as he was able and tried to get himself comfortable. Full and contented as he was now, he dozed until late afternoon.

—0-0-0—

When Maggie returned to his bedroom later that day, Will could detect a change in her expression and her attitude toward him. She wasn't as chatty as she had been before and gave him occasional suspicious looks.

He wondered if she had heard something, possibly suspected him. He threw caution to the wind in an attempt to draw her out as the uncertainty of it was nerve-wracking.

“Did you manage to get my car, Maggie? You didn't say when you got back,” he asked.

“Yep, I've hauled it out and put it 'round back for you. I'll check an' see if it's working tomorrow.”

“And my girlfriend? Did you reach her?”

“No luck there, Chicken, nobody was answering. I'll try again for you later.”

Will didn't see Maggie again until she brought him up a hot meal at 6.30 PM. She placed the tray of food down on his bed along with a hot drink and a couple of pills.

“Make sure that you take the pills after your meal. There's a pain killer and a vitamin pill to keep your strength up,” she informed him curtly without any further attempt to make conversation.

“Thanks Maggie. Uh, is there something wrong?”

The plump lady stopped in her tracks, turned and looked at him. “I heard on the radio what all that rumpus was about with all the patrol cars.”

Will studied the woman's face cautiously before continuing. “And...?”

“Apparently there was a hold-up at a bank in the city. They say that they have caught five of the gang but a sixth... the driver... is still at large.”

Will continued to study her looking for any reaction. It seemed obvious to him that she at least suspected that he was involved.

“And they believe he's around these parts, do they?”

“The police are searching the whole area. A guard has been killed and the five that have been caught say it was the driver who did the shooting. No gun was found on the other men that matched the bullet taken out of the dead man. They are circulating a picture of him and... they also have his car registration number.”

Will's heart skipped a beat. Maggie wasn't panicking, she wasn't scared. Rather, she seemed to be in control of the situation... and why not? His left leg was set in plaster and he had one hand strapped up.

“Maggie. I think we ought to talk. I have to tell you something... I must explain.”

“Yes my lad, I think you had better,” Maggie replied.

Will took some time in telling the woman everything that had happened that evening. Throughout, Maggie gave no indication as to whether she believed his story or not.

“Then, as I tried to make the South Road on foot, that’s when you hit me,” Will finished. “That is exactly what happened.”

There was a long period of silence. Maggie looked thoughtful.

“So, what happens now? You going to call the cops?” Will asked at length, his voice shattering the deathly quiet.

“For the time being, I am only interested in getting you fixed up and back to health. I've started and I plan to finish. No, I won't call the police; you can remain here until you are better. During that time, the police may find fresh evidence so as to realize that you weren't involved.”

“Thanks Maggie, I *really* appreciate this. When this whole nightmare is over, I will pay you back for my time here, I promise,” Will told her meaningfully.

“Forget it, you have enough problems to contend with. Anyway, like I told you, I'm short of company here on the ranch since Liz died. When you are strong enough, you can do a bit of work for me though... whatever you can manage, and there is always plenty to do around here.”

“That sounds fair enough. Just so long as I get to let Cheryl know where I am and what is happening.”

Maggie frowned suddenly. “Perhaps it would be best to wait to contact her. The police may already have linked you with her, especially if she reported you missing. She may even believe you were involved.”

“Cheryl! No. She knows I would *never* do anything like that but she will be worried for my safety, especially if she's heard my car registration on the TV.”

“Well, let us just wait and see first, eh? You've mentioned her, but what about anyone else linked to you... family, friends, work people, doctors?”

“No. My folks split up when I was fifteen. I lived with Mom down South for a while with no contact at all with Sad. When Mom remarried, I moved out, came to these parts and rented myself an apartment. I'm an only child and it's over eight months since I last contacted Mom. So, there is only Cheryl really... and the guys at work.”

“I suppose they will all think that you've taken off?” Maggie suggested.

“Yeah, maybe. I've really got to straighten this mess out, clear my name, Maggie. I've *got* to get my life back onto the right track.”

“Not until you are fit enough to do so. You’re going to need to be able to get around, collect evidence. You can’t do that while you are immobilized or while the police are actively searching for you.”

Her words made a lot of sense to Will but he felt frustrated. He was implicated in an armed robbery, someone had been killed and he was missing. He had a strong desire to clear his name as quickly as possible but, apparently, the robbers were framing him for the murder.

“Maggie, if I could just use your phone and contact Cheryl. I *know* she will believe me. She could start trying to find things out for me. She’s a witness to the fact that I left her place that night anyway, I’d only gone out for ten minutes to get some supper for us.”

“I understand how much you want to get things cleared up, Will. Look at it from the police point of view, though. If your girlfriend made such a statement without evidence, they may believe that she, herself is implicated... or giving false evidence to protect you.”

Will's face dropped and showed his disappointment.

“Anyway, I'm not on the phone line here so you cannot speak to her yourself yet. I'll contact her for you and fill her in, okay?”

“Yes, thanks, Maggie. I owe you.”

“Well, for right now let's concentrate on getting you out of trouble, shall we? We'll start right now by you taking those pills that I put out for you.”

“But, I don't really have a headache now.” Will informed her.

“So? You have a vitamin pill there and an antibiotic. I don't want your leg turning bad, so just take them. *I'm* the nurse around here.”

Will smiled. “Okay nurse, anything you say.”

—0-0-0—

Things were pretty much the same over the next few days. Will stayed in bed and had Maggie wash him down, bring his meals up and often sit chatting away with him, but he was getting restless.

He wore only his shirt and jockey shorts during all of this time. His trousers, according to Maggie, had been badly torn and blood-soaked, plus she'd had to cut them off him. His jacket needed dry cleaning as it was caked in mud and it, too, was covered in blood. His left shoe had apparently split and he had lost his right shoe in the undergrowth when he was thrown on impact.

Maggie was always very cheery and talkative; she obviously was enjoying having company. She looked after Will as though he was family and through her long chats she learned much about him and his past life.

It was the fourth full day of his being there, when small things began to change from the normal setup. It began with Will asking Maggie whether she had got around to contacting Cheryl.

“Oh yes. Didn't I tell you, Chicken? I phoned her last night. She sound ever so nice and she was ever so pleased that I had phoned. She had heard all that had happened and she had been worried sick about you.”

“Yes, I thought she would be. She does believe I'm innocent?”

“Never doubted you, Gill. I told her that ,for the time being, it's best that I keep you under wraps. I didn't tell her where I live, thought it best not to, but I did say I would keep in contact.”

“Gill?”

“Pardon, dear?”

“You er, you just called me Gill.”

“*Did* I? Oh dear, I *am* sorry. Of course it's Will, isn't it, Chicken?”

Will gave her an odd look. He supposed it was easy to get names slightly mixed with similar sounding ones but mixing up a man's name with a woman's?

A while later, after he'd had lunch and a sponge-down, Maggie gave him a critical look.

“You know you've been wearing those same things since you came here. They could do with a wash,” she suggested.

“I can slip out of them and cover myself with the comforter, if you wish.” Will responded.

“Well, actually, I was thinking in terms of you putting something on in place of them. They are going to need a good soaking and the weather outside is dismal, so they could take an age to dry out. I'll see if I can't root somethin' out for you.”

When Maggie returned, Will had already struggled out of his things, the jockeys having given him the greater difficulty as his leg was in plaster and his fingers still bound together.

He looked surprised at what she brought him.

“What on Earth have you got there, Maggie?” he asked.

“Just a few old things to cover you over until I get those things washed of yours.”

“But... but...”

“Oh, don't go getting all testy on me now. I've spent ages looking for the least feminine things that I have in my house. In case you haven't noticed, I'm a woman who lives on her own. I ain't never had a man in my life so all that I have is women's wear. These are just plain things and nobody is going to be seeing you but me.”

Maggie had brought a long-sleeved night dress. It was of plain cotton though it did have a frilly band around its V-neck collar and a tiny white satin bow at the bosom. She also had a pair of plain white cotton briefs which also had a narrow lacy edging along each leg hole.

Will protested some more but he could see that Maggie was becoming upset with him.

“You need something to cover your crotch and keep you decent,” she explained to him. “And I reckon that a night dress will be easier to slip on and off without disturbing your bad leg so much.”

He began to feel guilty about his protests. She had cared and tended to him so much and obviously she had nothing manly in the whole house. These things were rather plain at least and so, although slightly ashamed, he consented to wear them.

He felt obliged to protest once again though when Maggie offered to help him into the cotton briefs.

“What on earth is up with you *now*?” she asked furiously. “You will have a struggle putting the elasticized waist and legs over your bad leg...one handed at that. Believe me, Mister, after all my years nursing, you ain't got nothin' I haven't seen a thousand times before.”

His face blushing furiously, Will looked away as Maggie first positioned the briefs comfortably around his lower body, then pulled the cotton night dress over his head and down his body.

He was still feeling embarrassed when she brought him a late night drink and his two pills. Swallowing the pills, he settled onto his pillow as Maggie turned off the main light and prepared to leave the room.

“Good night, Gill dear, sleep well,” she bid.

The following morning, Maggie brought Will his breakfast and, as she positioned the tray on his lap, she inquired as to whether he had slept well or not in the clothes she had given him.

“They are not too tight or uncomfortable, are they, Gill dear?” she asked.

“MAGGIE!” Will raised his voice in protest.

As he could see that the only response to his outburst was one of bewilderment, he continued.

“You’re doing it again.”

“Doing *what*? What have I done wrong now?”

“Calling me Gill. You called me it last night as you were leaving the bedroom and you have just done it again. Three times is more than just a slip of the tongue. What are you playing at?” he demanded to know.

Maggie looked ashamed. “Yes, you're right, Chicken, I had hoped that you wouldn't mind, it's just that... that ...”

Will's host began to sob slightly and dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief.

“It's just what, Maggie?” Will pressed, a little gentler this time.

“Well... it's just that I have always been uncomfortable around men. That's why I never married. My sister was the same and it's why we set up home out here together. My father was a very brutal to us and my mother; he made us fear men. You have no idea how hard it was for me to bring you here and look after you.”

Will looked at the woman, trying to figure her out.

"I brought you in here because I felt it was my duty, seeing as it was me that injured you in the first place. Referring to you by a feminine name helps me feel a little easier about you, that's all. I did choose a name similar to your own."

"Does that also explain the nightie and briefs you've given me too, Maggie?"

"Oh no, Like I told you, I had no choice about that. I really do have nothing other than women's wear in here. As I have just said, I..."

"Yes, yes, okay, Maggie. But if you really did feel so uncomfortable with my being here, why didn't you just get me straight to the hospital?"

"I was planning to as soon as you were well enough, but then I discovered that you were wanted for questioning by the police. I believed your story, so I tried to protect you."

"Very well, I'll buy that. If you really feel awkward about my being here and calling me... Gill... helps, then I guess I can live with it for a while. It's not much to repay you for all that you have done for me. You should have explained right away, though."

"You are a very nice person," Maggie complimented with a smile. "You know, someone like you could help me restore my trust in men. It's lovely having someone here for company, to look after and talk to."

Will didn't respond any further; he just started eating his breakfast now that the mystery was cleared up.

—0-0-0—

For some reason, Will didn't get his own, cleaned clothes, back again. When Maggie requested the clothes he was wearing for washing, she gave him another nightie and fresh pair of briefs.

When he asked her about his things, she simply informed him that night dresses were longer than his shirts so they would cover him better and, being thicker, they would keep him warmer, too.

Will knew this was true so he couldn't really argue on that score; the briefs were just accepted along with the night dress.

One new problem was that, although basically still plain white cotton, the new night dress he had been given had a frillier collar and also had lace edging on the hem and cuffs. Also, the briefs had an elasticized gusset that was adorned with lace and were much softer than the first pair.

Time went by and Will still hadn't had any contact with Cheryl, not even a letter, though Maggie informed him that she was keeping his fiancée regularly informed on his improvement. In fact, Will had no contact with anyone other than Maggie. Nobody ever called to her place and there were occasions when he was left all alone in the house when she drove off into town or elsewhere on an errand.

She continued to make his meals and bed-bathe him. He was given pills daily to help speed his recovery and, on one occasion, Maggie gave him an antibiotic injection in his left thigh.

Not unexpectedly, Will soon began to get bored and ached to be up and out, getting his life back together. His leg had been itching for three weeks and he was keen to have the plaster cast removed. He was also very keen to be able to see Cheryl again; he was missing her madly.

With the aid of a walking stick, he had begun to get out of bed, walk around the upper floor, get to the bathroom to do his toilet and even try exercising his limbs to some degree. Seven weeks after his arrival, he confronted Maggie.

“Maggie, I really think it's high time I got this pot off my leg now. The itching is driving me nuts and it ought to get some air to it... don't you think? I'm sure that the gash on my shin *must* have healed by now.”

“You sound like you want to be leaving here.” Maggie replied.

“It's not so much that, Maggie sweetheart, as I really think that the cast could come off now, allow my leg to breath. I also think that I may have overstayed my time here. I must be a financial burden to you and, with respect, I really do want to see Cheryl again as well as seeing if I can sort all of this mess out. The longer I delay going to the police, the more guilty I will appear to be.”

“Yes, of course, you're right. I will miss you, but you *do* have your own life to lead. I'll take the cast off tonight and take a look at it, but I will not release you, even if the bone is fixed, not until you get some strength into your legs, build the muscle back up. Okay?”

“Yes, okay Maggie. It sounds fair to me so long as I can see some light at the end of the tunnel regarding my getting back home.”

Maggie laughed. “I'll bet you're aching to see your sweetheart again, aren't you?”

“I sure am, Maggie! I never knew I could miss anyone as much. I want to see if I can save my job too, resurrect my life. Maybe they have already discovered it wasn't me that was involved,” he added hopefully.

—0-0-0—

That evening, Maggie snipped open the plaster cast on Will's left leg. It looked awful, being thinner than it had been, was very pale and blotchy and had lots of flaky skin covering it.

“Yuk! It doesn't look too good, does it?” Will questioned.

“Oh, it's not *too* bad, Gill. It was only a closed fracture; it appears worse than it is because of all the dead skin on it. It would have been worse had it been a compound or comminuted fracture where the bone is actually shattered; then you really would have had to go to the hospital. It'll look better after a soak in warm water.”

Maggie then checked Will's gashed shin. She had put five sutures into it but it still looked inflamed and sore.

“I'll take the stitches out of it but then I will want to redress it. I'll bind it tightly to help support it while you get strength into your left leg,” she told him.

“So what do you think, Maggie? How soon will it be before I can leave here?”

Maggie looked slightly annoyed at his eagerness to leave. "You're gonna have to build your left leg up and I want to ensure that it is properly mended. I'll give you some physiotherapy exercises to do. I figure two and a half to three weeks."

"What! " Will gasped despondently. "No offense, Maggie, but I really do need to get back home real soon now. I am clear about what I want to do, I'll tell the police about my accident to explain my absence and Cheryl can continue with my treatment back home."

"You will go nowhere, Gillian, until you are properly fixed. *I* am the nurse around here. *I* will tell you when you are ready to leave, my girl."

Will was taken aback by Maggie's sudden change of temperament. She had never raised her voice to him before and it was the first time she had referred to him by the extended version of the feminine name she had given him. He also felt disturbed by the fact that she had just referred to him as "girl".

He didn't respond further for the time being but he felt most unhappy with the sudden change of attitude. Still, he knew that his leg was not good enough to allow him to walk out of the forest to get home. He had planned to ask Maggie if she would drive him back to the city. That was obviously not going to happen anytime in the near future now.

—0-0-0—

Nothing more was said until his bath was run. Up until now he'd had bed baths to prevent the pot and bandages from getting wet and causing infection. Now he had a tub full of hot, steaming water, water that had a strong aroma of scented flowers.

Maggie had been right about one thing: after his bath, his leg did look a whole lot better. Color had began to reappear and much of the dead skin was washed away. He felt fresh and clean.

His host gave him one of her quilted housecoats to wear out of the bath and he went back to his bedroom.

"That leg looks a *lot* better now, Gill. Tomorrow you can start exercising it. I think we ought to see if we can get you downstairs too, then you'll be able to help me in the kitchen a bit eh! What do you say?"

"Yeah, sounds good, Maggie. Listen, if I'm here for a couple more weeks, will you ring Cheryl and ask her to please write to me?"

Maggie smiled. "I suppose I could do that, Honey, I'll give her my address. Now, you rest and I'll bring up some supper, a nice hot drink and your pills."