

# A WOMAN'S GIFT

*By Diane Woods*



*ILLUSTRATED BY MISTY MALVEAUX*

---

**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!

## **A WOMAN'S GIFT**

**by Diane Woods**

### **Chapter 1**

Most people figure their life as starting when they were born, or at least back to when they were two or three when their first memories began to form. But me, I kind of feel that my life really began when I was about 12. That's because that's how old I was when my life sort of started over, and I began down the path I've followed since then. It's when I started to become a girl.

I hadn't been born a girl. At least, not on the outside. Because I had male sex organs between my legs, I was raised as a boy. I just blundered along, accepting that as the way it was supposed to be, for the most part. Although, to be honest, there were signs along the way of what I really was inside.

For instance, I can vaguely remember handling some of my mother's nylons and underthings, and being absolutely fascinated about how they felt. I must have been five or six years old then, I guess. It seemed so unfair, even then, that I couldn't wear things like that. Boy clothes were so...dull, so coarse and boring. The things I found in my mother's drawers were just the opposite, they were exciting and wonderful.

I wasn't a very big or robust little boy. I was always very thin and short, so I got picked on a lot by the other kids. My neighborhood was a little rough, so I spent a lot of time hanging around the house, rather than playing outside with the other kids. They all just picked me, and beat up on me, so I learned to avoid all the trouble and stick close to my own house.

My father, I never knew. I gather he took off before I was even born.

So it was just Mom and me, living in the bottom apartment of a three-flat on the far South side of Chicago.

Mom never was able to get child support (I don't think she even knew where Dad had taken off to) so we were always pinching pennies. Mom worked as much as she could, but her health was always kind of poor.

The one thing we could really share was our love of music. Mom made a little money giving piano lessons, on our old standup piano, and she made sure that I learned to play also. Unlike a lot of the kids Mom taught, I didn't mind practicing. It was certainly better than being beat up or harassed out on the streets.

And I found a connection with my mother through the music. My happiest memories of her are of the two of us at the keyboard, working our way through some difficult piece.

But one gray day in November, when I came home from school, there was an ambulance just leaving from in front of our building, and all the neighbors were standing

around. Everyone had these terrible looks on their faces, and talked to each other very softly. I didn't know it yet, but the music was about to go out of my life, at least for a while.

"Joey?" a policeman said to me, "Joey, you need to come with us to your Aunt's."

I asked what had happened, but no one wanted to tell me too much.

"Your Mom's sick," the policeman finally told me. "But don't worry, you'll be okay. We've talked with your Aunt, she'll pick you up from the station."

"I want to see my Mom," I told him, but he said that I could do that in a bit.

But the truth is, I didn't get to see her again, except at the wake. She had suffered an aneurysm, something let go in her brain, and she died that gray November day. I was alone in the world, at the age of 11. I didn't understand it at the time, but my new life had begun with a death.

My Aunt Margaret did eventually pick me up from the police station, and I stayed with her over those next few horrible days and nights. I can't remember too much about that time now, just an incredible sense of sadness and my crying virtually non-stop.

Aunt Margaret owned a store on the Northwest side of Chicago, and had a big apartment on the second floor, over the store. It was a woman's clothing store, of a kind you don't see too much anymore, except in older neighborhoods of the city. Nowadays, big modern chain stores have taken over most of that kind of business.

My Aunt's store seemed from another time, even then. It was pretty big, or at least it seemed that way to me then, but a little old-fashioned. The slightly faded sign outside read "A Woman's Gift", and underneath, in smaller letters, "Fine Fashions for Today's Woman". But I kind of got the impression that most of her customers were more yesterday's women than today's. Still, she managed to make a living with it, I guess.

I was utterly devastated, of course. Even now, I can feel the indescribable sadness well up within me when I think about those days. I felt absolutely miserable and inconsolable. I didn't know then the words to that old song, *Sometimes I feel like a motherless child*, but I lived the pain and crushing sadness that those words hint at.

My Aunt Margaret was actually my great-aunt, the sister of my grandmother. She must have been sixty when this all happened. My grandmother lived in Florida, my grandfather was dead, and so it was agreed that Aunt Margaret would take me in. I really had nowhere else to turn, except maybe foster care or something. Her apartment was large, and I could have my own room there, but I was in such a daze of utter depression that I hardly noted the changes around me.

Aunt Margaret told me that I had to try and get on with life, but frankly, I didn't want to. I had to start at a new school, in my aunt's neighborhood, but honestly, I couldn't hear a word the teachers were saying most of the time. I was lost in a private world of sorrow and pain, of overwhelming longing and loss.

Aunt Margaret had never married, never had children of her own. So I can just imagine her discomfort at my suddenly being thrust upon her. At first, she struck me

as a bit grim, but since all the rest of my life had become horrid, her personality (or lack of it) just seemed consistent with everything else that had happened to me.

That next Christmas was, needless to say, a pretty rotten one. I don't think I had much interest in it, and I just kind of went through the motions of opening my presents, which were mainly clothes and some books. Looking back, I don't think Aunt Margaret had much of an idea about what I might like for Christmas. I guess she did the best she could. The Chicago winter settled in around us, and I wrapped myself in my sorrow as if it were a blanket.

The neighborhood around the store wasn't exactly great for a kid, either. The store was on a busy commercial street, lined with other stores, restaurants, and bars. The nearest park was a mile away. So my life, such as it was, consisted of going to school, coming home, hanging around the apartment, watching television, and sometimes helping my aunt out a little in the store.

She let me earn a little spending money by helping her out in the stockroom, sometimes watching the cash register, that kind of thing. It was something to do, something to occupy my mind and my hands occasionally, to fight off the curtain of gloom that was always threatening to close in around me.

And gradually, I began to take some notice of the pretty and beautiful things I sometimes got to handle there.

"Joe, you should make some friends from school," she would tell me sometimes. "You can bring them over here, if you want, sometime. Life has to go on, you know."

I would nod my head at that, make some sound that was vaguely in agreement with her, and then sink back into the black depth in which I lived most of the time. I think even a tough old customer like Aunt Margaret must have seen how much I was suffering.

I couldn't even find any solace in my music. Aunt Margaret knew that I played, and she had told me to feel free to use her piano (a very nice upright model) anytime I wanted. But every time I tried to play, I found that being at the piano just increased my sense of loss and pain. After a few halfhearted tries, I stopped altogether.

When my report card came from my new school, I had received the worst grades of my life. I had usually been a B student, with occasional A's and C's. But now I had consistent D and F grades. I just didn't care anymore, not about anything.

Sometimes I would overhear her talking on the phone with my grandmother.

"He still seems terribly depressed. And he's not doing well in school. Perhaps you should think about having him come by you, maybe Florida would cheer him up. I'm worried about him, he's so sad all the time."

But that kind of talk just depressed me even more. It made me feel like I was just some unwanted burden, about to be shunted off somewhere. I felt worthless, unwanted, alone. Truthfully, many a tearful night I wished I would die also, so I could at least be back with my Mom.

Somewhere around this time, something finally happened to help me find a way out of the terrible place I was in. One day, while working in the stockroom, I found myself

holding a beautiful silver satin bra. Something about the way it looked, so shimmery and beautiful, like a Christmas ornament or something, absolutely enthralled me. There was more to it than that—it was exciting, somehow.

My aunt was out by the cash register, talking to a customer. And so, following some deep and unnamable instinct, I shucked off my sweater and put the bra on.

The feeling of slipping my arms through those beautiful straps, of feeling the cups close around my boyish chest, was exhilarating. It was as if the terrible black shadows that haunted me suddenly retreated.

My heart raced, and I shivered in excitement and...joy.

For the first time in months and months, I felt excitement. I felt as if *I* were the Christmas ornament, wrapped in shining silver, as if I were something precious and beautiful and beloved.

In moments, I had also donned matching silver satin panties, and I trembled as my soul soared within me in guilty pleasure. Finally, I had found something which could comfort me, something which could cut through my pain and loneliness.

I wore that bra and panties all that day. I would have died before I took them off, I think, given how they made me feel. And so began my rebirth, slowly, bit by bit, item by item, day by day.

Soon I was regularly sleeping in a short satin chemise, with matching panties. It was difficult to fall asleep sometimes. I was so excited by the feel of those wonderful things, but at least I was aware again that my heart was still beating.

I guess my aunt noticed that something had changed with me, for I heard her mentioning something about it on the phone to my grandmother. Yes, I had found something, something that made the pain go away, even as it mixed guilt with pleasure in my tortured heart.

Every once in a while, I would be overwhelmed with guilt at what I was doing. Sometimes, I would fervently promise God that I would give up my newfound preoccupation. But I never did.

I stashed my beautiful treasures under my mattress, thinking that they were secure there if I made sure to put them well into the middle. And gradually, my collection grew. And with it, my desire for more of the same grew also.

But one day, when I came home from school, I found my treasures missing. A terrible flood of emotions overwhelmed me. I was terrified at having been found out, but also devastated at having lost my wonderful bras, panties, slips, and nightgowns. My mind whirled as I tried to think of some kind of excuse, some kind of story I could invent, which would explain why I had all those things hidden in my bed.

But my thoughts became even more scattered and disoriented when I found, newly washed and folded in my dresser drawers, all my lovely satin lingerie.

“Yes, I washed it all for you,” my aunt's voice said from behind me.

I spun around, closing the drawer as I did so. I could feel my face blushing hotly.

"I don't know what you...what's all this..." I tried to make a coherent sentence, but I couldn't get my thoughts to line up right.

"Shhh," she said to me. "It's all right. If that makes you happy, then fine. You've been through enough. As far as I'm concerned, you're welcome to anything in the store...within reason."

I was still in my denial mode. "I don't know what you mean, Aunt Margaret. What are you..."

She held up her hand, then sat down on my bed.

"Joey dear, stop trying so hard. It's really not anything to be upset about. If you like those things, that's fine. It can be our little secret, as far as I'm concerned." She smiled at me, one of the first times I can recall seeing a genuinely warm smile on her face. "I could tell you were wearing a bra under your clothes for a while, you know. In the right light, I could see the outline of the bra under your shirt. So relax, dear. You're not the first boy to like wearing girl's clothes. You'd be surprised, I've had more than a few male customers, over the years."

I felt all confused, upset and angry and afraid all at once.

"You're not going to send me away?" I finally asked, tears welling up in my eyes.

"No, of course not," she said, seemingly in surprise.

I broke down then, sobbing and crying. Tentatively, she took me into her arms, and my body shook and heaved as I wept uncontrollably. Aunt Margaret patted me on the back, a little unsure of herself, I think, but trying to comfort me as best she could.

"It's all right," she said over and over to me. "It's all right, things will be better, you'll see." Her normally controlled voice was tender for once, thick with emotion.

When I finally regained my composure, she kissed me on the forehead, and said that dinner would be ready soon. I nodded my understanding, and wiped my eyes with the palms of my hands.

We didn't talk about it during dinner. I still felt awkward, knowing that she knew about my enjoying wearing girl's clothes. After we had eaten, while I did the dishes, Aunt Margaret went downstairs to the store. When she came back upstairs, she had a gorgeous long satin nightgown, ivory in color, with a matching robe, and pretty satin slippers. My heart stopped for a moment, when I beheld those beautiful things.

"Tell you what," she said carefully, looking at me with a hesitant look. "If you promise me you'll work on your homework tonight, and every night from now on, you can have these, to relax in around the house."

I looked at her with what must have been a dumb look on my face.

"Okay," I finally said, in a voice just above a whisper.

"Good. Why don't you take a shower, get nice and clean, then change and start your homework. I can help you, if you like."

I was still a little unsure about all this, but I did as she suggested, and so, in short order, I was freshly showered, and dressed in that absolutely delicious nightgown, and

robe and slippers. I worked on my homework in the kitchen, feeling simultaneously a little embarrassed and exhilarated.

Aunt Margaret came in while I was engrossed in my work, and she laid her hand lightly on my shoulder.

“How about a nice cup of cocoa?”

“That sounds nice,” I said a little awkwardly.

“I’m glad to see you keeping your end of the bargain. You get your grades back up to where they belong, and maybe we can find some other ways to reward you.”

I looked up and smiled at her. “Thanks,” I told her. “For everything—for understanding, for taking me in here, for...for *everything*.”

“It’s all right. It’s nice to have company here, to be honest.” It’s funny, she actually seemed nicer, somehow, now that she knew about my secret.

“You know,” she said as she brought over my hot chocolate, fresh from the microwave, “you don’t look bad like that. You’d have made a pretty girl, I think.”

I’m sure I blushed furiously at that, for my face felt very warm. I looked down at my open schoolbook, and smiled, then blew on my cocoa.



## Chapter 2

Given my new incentives, my attention to homework greatly increased. And that, in turn, began to improve my understanding of what the teachers were talking about in class. Fortunately, I had always been a pretty bright kid, so I began to make up for lost time at school. My aunt began to get encouraging communications from my teachers, and my next report card was much, much better.

Aunt Margaret applied careful and regular rewards for my efforts, and soon my room had nearly as many girl's clothes in it as it did boy's things.

My interest in all things girlish continued, of course, and in fact increased as I was able to indulge in it more and more. I began to devour the fashion magazines and catalogs that my aunt had around the house and the shop, and sometimes, on weekends or in evenings after the shop was closed, I would clean up for my aunt and then try on some of the dresses. In a little while, I was regularly cleaning up the shop dressed completely in girl's clothes.

One evening, I had finished up cleaning up, and was rewarding myself by modeling some new outfits that had caught my eye. Soon, I was standing before the dressing room mirrors, wearing this incredible red silk shantung sheath dress, tan pantyhose, and matching red pumps. Underneath, I had on a red satin bra and red panties, the bra stuffed with tissue to give me an appearance of breasts. I had even begun experimenting a little with makeup. I had lipstick, eyeshadow, mascara, and earrings (clip-on ones, of course). I had even appropriated a cheap wig from one of the mannequins, to complete my efforts.

Beholding my reflection, I felt a growing sense of awe. There in the mirrors was a young woman who was hauntingly reminiscent of my mother. Not an exact replica, of course. But there were strong similarities. It kind of took my breath away, and I turned this way and that, amazed at what I looked like.

Suddenly, I realized that I wanted to play the piano again. But I wanted to do it while dressed like this. My aunt was out, and I didn't expect her back for a few hours, so I made my way upstairs and found myself sitting, quite ladylike, on the bench.

I fantasized about being on-stage, giving a concert, dressed in my beautiful silk dress, all eyes on the pretty girl at the piano.

And from somewhere deep within me, the music flowed once again. I played all of the music that my mother and I had shared. Finally, after having been shut off from it for so long, the connection was back. Soon I was lost in Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue", my eyes shut in pleasure, my fingers moving with a heart and mind of their own.

It was only when I was done, and I felt drained and spent and exhilarated, that my aunt let her presence be known. She clapped, slowly but seriously, and I jumped up and spun around on the piano bench, feeling embarrassed and guilty all over again at how I must look.

"That was lovely," she said. "You play with much feeling, dear. Your technique could be better, but you have some real talent, I think."

I didn't know what to say, and so just looked down and blushed.

"An interesting ensemble in which to practice, I must say. But you do make a pretty girl, I'll give you that. You've been practicing more than just music, I see."

I looked down at my feet, feeling foolish at the sight of my nyloned legs, my feet in those high heels.

"Really," she continued. "You look quite nice."

She turned and headed back towards the kitchen. "Would you play some more for me? It's nice to hear what you can do, finally."

I sat there, a little stunned, as she left me there. Without thinking, I rose up from the bench and smoothed my dress down around my hips and underneath me.

"Sure," I said, with a calmness that surprised me. And I proceeded to give Aunt Margaret a little concert of some of the music that my mother had loved best.

And I felt...wonderful. The combination of the way I was dressed and the beauty of the music released something primal and deep within me. I'm not saying that I was a great pianist or anything, but mother had taught me well, I think, and now everything just came together somehow.

When I was done, I sat there, momentarily dazed. Aunt Margaret came over to me and hugged me.

"Your mother would be proud, I think," she said simply, and I began to cry.

"Oh goodness," she said, "as you'll learn, crying can be terrible on a girl's makeup. Here, dear," and she offered me some tissue.

"Oh, Auntie," I said, "you must think I'm terrible, I don't know why I like to dress like this, but I don't know how proud my mother would be if she could see me right now."

"Shhh. What's important about a person is what's inside them, not the outside. If this is how you feel good, who am I to argue? Stop being so hard on yourself."

"All right," I said, and got up to go. "I'll put these things back where they belong, don't worry."

"I know you will, dear. It's all right. I told you could use whatever I have in the shop."

She smiled at me again with that same warm smile. "If you like, we could work together on your music. I used to play a little, myself. And if you want to play while dressed like that, that's fine."

I nodded meekly. "I'd like that, I think. If you don't mind."

"I think that it will be fine. Now you should get your homework started, I think. We can talk more later."

"Okay. And thanks, Auntie," I said, and impulsively hugged her.

Next morning, at breakfast, Aunt Margaret didn't act as if anything unusual had occurred. I made her tea and toast while I was dressed in my nightgown and robe, then after I had some cereal I reluctantly began to get ready to change into boy

clothes. It was a Saturday, so I didn't have school, but I still had some work to do for the store.

"You know, dear, if you want, I don't care if you want to dress like a girl today," she said calmly, while she sipped her tea.

"Really?" was all I managed to say.

"Yes," she replied without missing a beat. "Of course, I don't think a silk dress is appropriate for a Saturday, but maybe I can help you a little. What do you think?"

"Yeah, I mean yes, sure."

And so, we went down to the shop and started picking out some things. I ended up in a yellow bulky pullover sweater and a white skirt, cut just above the knee. The underthings I needed I already had up in my room, of course, but Aunt Margaret suggested I add a padded girdle to my ensemble.

"It'll give you a little more of a figure," she told me conspiratorially.

We completed my outfit with suntan pantyhose and white pumps.

"We'll also use this wig. What do you think?" she asked me, as she took it off a mannequin. It pretty closely matched my own natural light brown hair, but was curly and shoulder-length.

Upstairs with our goodies, Aunt Margaret also showed me how to use her hair-removal cream. I had begun to sprout hair on my legs and arms, and she suggested that I should look as realistic as I could, if I were going to be working in the shop as a girl.

That took me by surprise, a bit. "You really think I can do that, Aunt?"

"Oh yes, with just a little help you'll be fine."

After I was nicely smooth and hairless, I slipped into my wonderful outfit. Aunt Margaret helped me do a little tasteful makeup, spritzed me with some delightful perfume, and soon I felt like I was floating on air. When we were all done, there was this very pretty teenage girl looking back at me from the mirror.

Aunt Margaret looked at me and nodded in approval. "You look very nice, dear." Then her brow wrinkled a little. "But I can't call you Joey, not like this. Certainly not with customers around."

She smiled. "How does Jessica sound?"

I thought a moment. "Okay, that sounds nice," I told her.

We went down to the store, my feeling all nervous and self-conscious, but Aunt Margaret kept me busy getting the shop ready for business. We opened at 10, and we didn't have a lot of time to get ready.

When we had turned on the background music, turned up the lights, and straightened the merchandise on display, Aunt Margaret indicated that I should flip around the sign on the front door, so that it showed "Open". I did so, feeling excited and just a touch apprehensive.

"What about my voice?" I asked her.

"I think it's fine," she reassured me. And it was true, my voice hadn't deepened much. I was still quite thin and short for my age. Thin and short for a boy, at any rate, but just right, I thought, for a girl.

It took a while for the first customer to show up. Around 10:30, a woman in her fifties walked in. She wandered around a while, looking at various items, picking up several packages of pantyhose. When she approached the register, my aunt called out to me.

"Jessica, would you take care of this lady, please?"

I swallowed hard, and hustled over without speaking.

"Thank you, dear," she said when I had rung up her sale, and given her change.

"You're welcome," I said nervously, in a voice just above a whisper.

When she left, I let out a deep breath.

"See, you're fine," Aunt Margaret told me as she walked over. "You actually make a very nice-looking sales girl."

And so she pretty much left me to run the shop. She hovered around, of course, and that was reassuring to me, but she kind of pushed me to handle the customers.

"Hello, Margaret," one customer called out as she entered. She was a stylishly-dressed woman, perhaps in her late 30's or early 40's. I recognized her as a regular customer, someone I had often admired from the back room.

"Hello, Elizabeth," my aunt responded. "How are you today?"

"Just fine, dear," she answered. Then she looked at me and smiled. "Who's your assistant?"

"This is my great-niece Jessica," Aunt Margaret said cheerfully.

"Well, hello Jessica. You're looking quite pretty today, my dear. A very nice advertisement for the shop, I think."

"Thank you, Ma'am," I said, in what I hoped was a feminine voice.

While this was going on, several other ladies entered the store, and pretty soon I was too busy working to think so much about my new circumstances. The store stayed busy well into the afternoon, and my aunt and I kept quite busy.

Around three o'clock, I had a scare. One woman came in, with her son in tow. It was a kid from my school, a big kid who liked to push me around, when he noticed me at all. He didn't look too happy to be in the store.

"I'll just be a few minutes," she told him. "Then I can drop you off at your friend's."

I was very afraid that he would recognize me. I looked desperately over at my aunt, but she was busy helping someone else pick out a dress for a wedding reception. I was stuck.

But he didn't seem hostile. In fact, he smiled at me, and kept looking at me. At first, I feared he was staring at me because he saw through my new identity. But when he didn't jeer or point at me, I started to figure out that he was staring at me because he thought I was pretty. That made me feel a little strange inside.