

WHY

By Patricia Marie Allen



ILLUSTRATED BY MISTY MALVEAUX

A 'YOUNG ADULT TV' NOVEL

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“Hi sweetie. How was your first day at the new school?”

“OK, I guess.”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t come with you to see you get settled. You know I have to work this week so I can train my replacement. Did you meet all the kids?”

“Yeah, most of them.”

“Do any of them live around here?”

“Well, there’s this one kid, Mark and a girl named Gloria. They were at the bus stop this morning and Mark’s older sister, Linda.”

“Good. At least you’ll have one friend that you can go out and play with.”

“Oh, I don’t know if…” My voice trailed off.

“Don’t know? Isn’t he nice?”

“He’s nice all right. He was real friendly. He talked to me and showed me where the office was so I could check in. He’s good friends with Gloria.”

“What’s the trouble then? Is it because he’s good friends with a girl? If they’re the only two kids around, they have probably been playing together since they were little.”

“It’s not that. It’s that the other guys… Mom, do boys ever wear girls clothes?”

“Well, I’ve heard that some do. Why?”

“Why would they?”

“Well, I’m told that some boys just feel more comfortable in girl clothes. They just like it. Do you have a special reason to ask?”

“Well, the other guys; they... they said that Mark likes to wear girls clothes, underwear and everything. That’s why he’s such good friends with Gloria. He gets all dressed up like a girl and they play together.”

Mom smiled. “So, what does that mean to you?”

“I don’t know. I just can’t understand it.”

“Why do they say he wears dresses? I mean, how do *they* know?”

“He used to be friends with Tom in the third grade. He told Tom about it. How he liked it and it was really a lot of fun. He even tried to get Tom to do it, too. When the rest of the guys heard about it, they teased him and he quit coming around. Then I guess he started playing with Gloria. Then they caught him at it a couple of summers ago. His mother knows and everything.”

“Well, does that mean you’re not going to play with him?”

“If I do, the other guys won’t like me.”

“From what you know about Mark, if the other guys hadn’t told you about the girls clothes, would you want to be friends with him?”

“I... well, I... I guess I would. But they *did* tell me and I *do* know about it.”

“Think about it for a minute. Is it really all *that* bad? I mean, who is he hurting? Does what kind of clothes he wears affect anyone but him?”

So I did just that. I thought about it. “No, I guess it’s really not that bad and he isn’t hurting anyone. But the other guys make it hard on him. He knows they think he’s a sissy and he doesn’t care what they think about him. Why would he do it if he knows they think he’s a sissy?”

“I’m sure he has a good reason.”

“I can’t figure out. I don’t think *I’d* do it.”

“You know, if you had a friend who was bad, I would insist you give up that friend and I wouldn’t insist that you befriend any one in particular. However, I will insist that you be polite to Mark and not engage in teasing him. Okay?”

I nodded. “I know better than that, Mom.”

“What’s more, if I were you, I’d rethink my position on this. I mean, of all the kids at school, it seems to me that Mark needs friends more than the rest. He hasn’t done anything to hurt anyone. Someone is just uncomfortable with what he does as a hobby and decided to try and influence the rest of them. Who ever that was, he was successful.”

“I think it was Tom. He seems to be the one everyone follows.”

“So they all followed like sheep. You’ve done the same. You don’t do what he is alleged to have done isn’t all that bad. I had hoped you wouldn’t be a sheep.”

“I still don’t think I want to be too close to him.”

“Suit yourself. You know that Grandma will be coming home from the hospital at the end of the week, don’t you?” she said, changing the subject.

“Yeah, I can hardly wait. I didn’t like seeing her in the hospital.”

“Remember, she had a stroke. It was a mild one but she still needs a lot of help. So I need you to take care of yourself. Can I count on you?”

“Sure, Mom.”

It was nearly a month later when Mark confronted me as we got off the bus. Gloria had been home sick that day.

“Hey Ken!” He called as I started toward my house. I turned around and he walked up to me. “You want to come by my house Saturday? I just got *Xena: Warrior Princess* for my Play Station.”

“Ah, I think I’m busy.”

“Can I ask you something?”

“I guess.”

“You know, I’ve noticed that you are nice and friendly when we wait for the bus, but as soon as it pulls up, you get real cold toward me and don’t talk to me ‘til the next morning. Why is that?”

“Well...” I said, hanging my head. He had me. That was exactly the way I was treating him. “I... the other guys... they say that you wear girls clothes.”

“I *thought* that was it.”

“Is it true? *Do* you wear girls clothes?” I blurted.

He shrugged. “Sometimes.”

“But they’re *girls* clothes. I just don’t understand how...”

“I guess you couldn’t unless you did it yourself.” He cut me off.

“Why!? Tell me why you do it.”

“I don’t know, I just like it. It’s like I can have the best of both worlds. I mean boy clothes are just so boring. You know; jeans and some kind of shirt. Tennis shoes or dress shoes. The only real choice you have is what color shirt or shoes you have. But girl clothes come in all kinds of fabrics and colors and there’re shorts, dresses, skirts and blouses. And all different lengths and styles. And there’re so many kinds of shoes. Even more important is they just feel good to wear.”

“But, everyone thinks you’re a sissy.”

“Well, maybe I am, but it doesn’t matter to me. When they found out, I just decided that if they didn’t like me on account of it, that would be OK. I like me and the girls all like me. Well, maybe not *all*. Some of them have bigger brothers who know about me and they won’t let them be friends with me.”

“Well, I don’t want anyone to think I’m a sissy. If I’m friends with you, they will.”

“OK, I guess I don’t blame you. If you change your mind and want to be my friend I won’t hold it against you.”

“OK,” I said sheepishly. I just told him I wouldn’t be friends with him and he acted like I said I couldn’t make it for an invitation to dinner but might come next week.

That really got me to thinking. How could he live with all the guys thinking he was a sissy... accepting inside himself that he was a sissy? What was so great about girl clothes that would make it OK for everyone to shun him? I had all the questions but none of the answers. What he had said just didn't compute.

I was lost in thought all evening. After dinner, Mom looked at me for a long time. "Penny for your thoughts," she said smiling.

"Huh? Oh, I was thinking about Mark."

"What about him?"

"Well, it's all true. I asked him straight out and he admitted it."

"What's all true?"

"The girl clothes. I told him what the guys said and he said it was true. And I asked him why and he went on and on about fabrics and styles and colors and stuff. I pointed out that they were still girl clothes and that wearing them made the guys think he was a sissy."

"What did he say to that?"

"He said it didn't matter, that maybe he *was* a sissy. He said that it was OK if they didn't like him. He likes himself and most of the girls like him."

"I'm impressed! He sounds like a very confident young man. You'd do well to be that confident."

"But I don't understand. How can it be so good that what other people think of you doesn't matter? I even asked him that and told him that I didn't understand. He said that I probably wouldn't unless I was to do it myself.

"When I told him that I just couldn't be his friend because I didn't want the guys to think I was a sissy, he was OK with that, too. He acted like I just turned down a dinner invitation. He said if I changed my mind, he wouldn't hold it against me."

"Would you *like* to understand?"

"I..." I paused to think, because it wasn't an easy question to answer. "I don't know. Maybe that's what I'm thinking about. He's really a nice guy. He wants to be my friend and all, but it's the other guys I'm worried about. I just don't understand how he cannot care what they think."

"He seems to be pretty wise on that issue. He knows it's beyond the grasp of intellectual thought. He knows that you have to experience it firsthand to understand. Some things are like that."

"I guess he's right. There is *no way* I can understand."

"Well, that's not entirely true."

"What do you mean?"

"Didn't he say, '... unless you did it yourself?'"

"You're not suggesting I put on girl clothes."

“I’m not suggesting anything. I’m just pointing out that he said there was a way you could understand.” She grinned.

“No Mom. I don’t want to understand *that* badly.” She was teasing, I could tell. At least I *hoped* she was teasing.

Mom changed the subject, but I was still thinking about it. To be honest, Mark impressed me, too. I could *never* be like him. Doing what I wanted to do without thinking about how everyone else would judge it... even knowing that they didn’t like it and still doing it, just because I wanted to. Maybe he’s a stronger person than I’d ever be. I wondered who was really the sissy? The subject bothered me all night. I hardly slept. As a matter of fact, I hardly slept all weekend.

Monday morning, I had to drag myself out of bed. Mom was busy with Gramma while I got ready for school. I got ready and headed off for school.

I fell asleep three times in class. The last time, the teacher caught me. I was seriously cutting Z’s. He had a hard time waking me. The class really laughed about it. I took some serious ribbing on the bus that afternoon. The teacher called my mother. When I got home, she was waiting.

“Kenny,” she said as soon as I hit the door. “I got a call from Mr. Samson today. He says you fell asleep in math class today.”

“Yeah, I guess I did.”

“Why did you fall asleep?”

“I was really tired. I couldn’t help it.”

“You went to bed early last night. You shouldn’t have been tired.”

“I didn’t sleep all that well.”

“Why not? Are you sick?”

“No, I just couldn’t sleep.”

“What kept you awake?”

“I was thinking?”

“What about? Well? What were you thinking about?” Mark, were you thinking about understanding?”

I nodded again.

Mom looked me in the eye. “If it’s bothering you so much, you had better resolve it.”

“But *how*?”

“He told you how.”

I shook my head and shrugged.

“Unless you do it...” Mom reminded me.

I turned a little white at the thought. I *couldn’t*. I looked back at Mom and shook my head no.

“You think about it until dinner and we’ll talk again. If you can’t assure me that you’ll be able to sleep, I want you to settle it the only way you can.”

After dinner, Mom got Gramma settled in the family room and came into the kitchen where I was doing the dishes. She looked at me for the longest time. It began to make me feel uneasy.

“Well, what do you think? Are you going to be able to sleep?”

“I donno.”

“Look, I can’t have you falling asleep in class. I need you to take care of yourself. Gramma needs my full attention.”

“I know Mom. I’m trying. It’s just that this thing about Mark is stuck in my mind.”

“I think we had better put it to rest.”

“How?”

“You should try it and see what there is about it that makes it so special.”

“No. I mean, I can’t with Gramma around. What would she think?”

“What will she think when you can’t keep from falling asleep in your supper? I saw you nodding off at the dinner table.”

“A lot less then if she saw me wearing girls clothes.”

“I’m not so sure. She told me that she’s done some sewing for Mark.”

“What kind of sewing?”

“Well, like this,” she said holding up a white blouse with some unfinished embroidery on the pocket. The collar was embroidered with the name “Marcie” set at a slight angle.

“She knows?”

“Yes. It seems that Mark mowed her lawn the last two summers. He asked her to pay him by doing some sewing.”

“She... I mean, well... I don’t know *what* I mean.”

“She knows this stuff is for him. She likes him. She told me that it was a shame that you two weren’t better friends. She’d like to have him around. She says he’s really polite and a hard worker.”

“She doesn’t think he’s weird for doing it?”

“No, she thinks what he wears is his own business. Now, to the subject at hand. You need to resolve this in your mind. Can you tell me that you can put it out of your mind and sleep?”

I looked down and studied the floor. Finally I shook my head no.

“Well, I think you should go ahead and do it. I don’t mean to push you on this. But one sleepless night isn’t enough to make you fall asleep in class. You’ve been not sleeping well for some time, haven’t you?”

“Yes, I really haven’t slept well since you and I talked the first time.”

"I thought so. I'll tell you what. I have to take Gramma in for a checkup on Thursday morning. While she's in the doctor's, I'll pick up some things for you and this weekend you can get it out of the way. One way or the other, you'll be able to put this behind you." She looked at me right in the eyes for a minute. "OK?"

"OK." I crumpled. Mom got me some Tylenol PM and sent me to bed.

When I got home Thursday afternoon, Mom smiled at me as I came in. Uncharacteristically, she came over and gave me a hug. "I've got your things for the weekend. You want to take a look at them?"

My heart was chilled, but I nodded my head. She led me to my bedroom. There, on my bed, were two dresses, a skirt, blouse and a slip. On the floor were two pair of girls shoes. Laying on top of my dresser were a package of panties in multiple colors, a bra, a pair of tights, a package of six socks in white and three other colors and some white knee socks. Everything was all laid out so that I could take it all in, in a single glance. I stood looking at them while Mom put her arm around my shoulder.

"Mom, that seems like an awful lot of clothes for me to just try it." I picked up the panties. There were three in the package. "Nylon hip hugger briefs," it said. I took the socks in the other hand. There were three pair in white and three colored ones. "One of each of these would have been plenty, or either of those," I said indicating the knee socks and tights.

"Well dear, you're going to try it for Saturday and Sunday. You can't wear the same pair of panties more then one day, now can you? And the socks were a good buy. Besides, the white socks you can use everyday. Once they are out of the package, no one can tell they're girls socks."

"Well, why three outfits?" I said, looking at my bed.

"One for Friday after school, one for Saturday and one for Sunday. You can't wear the same clothes all weekend."

"*All weekend?*" It had a "forever" sound. I began to have second thoughts. I guess I had agreed to trying it this weekend, but I didn't think that meant *all* weekend. Well, Mom bought all the clothes. I guess they shouldn't go to waste.

"Ah... OK. ...Mom, does Gramma know you bought these clothes?"

"Yes, I had to tell her where I was going when I left her at the clinic."

"She knows they're for me?"

"Yes dear, I explained it all to her. She's fine with it. As a matter of fact, she thinks that all the boys should do it, so they'd get over their problem with Mark.

"In the morning, why don't you just wear a pair of panties under your jeans when you go to school. That way, you won't have to change underwear when you get home." Mom smiled.

That evening, Mom gave me some more Tylenol PM to take at bedtime. She could see that I was agitated and was going to have trouble sleeping.

In the morning, when I was ready to get dressed, I opened my underwear drawer and looked at the panties. They were white, pink and blue. The waistband was about

half an inch wide and made of stretchy elastic lace. If I was going to wear one, it had to be the white. I just couldn't bring myself to wear the others. I picked up the panties with trembling hands. As they slid up my legs, they took my breath away. I had never felt anything like it. When I wear my jockey shorts, I'm never aware of them. But the simple act of walking to the bed so I could sit down and put my socks on was an electric experience. The panties caressed me as I walked. As I was sitting on the bed and bending down to pull up my socks, they sent messages of their presence.

When I got to the kitchen for breakfast, Mom was already there. "Hi Hon, how are you this morning?"

"Fine," I said getting my bowl out of the cupboard.

"Are you wearing your girls underwear?"

"Yes."

"What do you think so far?"

"Well, it's different."

"How so?" She was a million questions.

"It really feels different."

"Good or bad?"

"I'm not sure," I said, but it was a lie. It felt better than I ever thought it would. I couldn't even admit to myself that I liked it.

Mom was waiting for me when I walked in that evening. "Hi Ken. Are you ready?"

"Ready?" I asked pretending ignorance.

"Yes, ready to 'understand' about Mark."

"I guess so."

We walked to my bedroom where Mom opened my closet. Hanging there, looking out of place, were my three girl outfits. She took the dress off the rod and hung it on the hook behind the door. She smiled at me. "The first time, you should wear something pretty and special.

"Take off your shirt," she instructed as she opened my drawer. I pulled off my Jets jersey. "T-shirt too. Wasn't it awfully warm for that much clothing?"

"Maybe this afternoon, but it felt good this morning." I mumbled through my t-shirt as I pulled it over my head.

"Here, put this on," she said, handing me the bra.

I hadn't paid too much attention to it yesterday. It was really thick, yet soft. I looked at it for a moment, puzzled, then I looked at Mom.

"What's the matter?"

"How do you put it on?" I asked, realizing I only had the vaguest of ideas how the thing worked. I mean, I *kind* of knew where the pieces ended up, but it was all straps and elastic with a kind of a hook and eye catch at the back.

Mom smiled. “Here,” she said, taking it from me. “Hold your arms out.” I did. She slipped the straps over my shoulder and stepped behind and fastened the catch. In front, she pulled it down some and adjusted the straps. It was really strange. There was lace over the front part. They were the “cups” I guess, but these were more like saucers, *thick* saucers. They were padded and made it look like I had little boobs.

“You’ll need this underneath,” Mom told me, handing me the half-slip. “Kick off your shoes and put it on over your pants for now. I heeled my way out of my sneakers and stepped into the slip. “Put this on over everything,” she added, handing me the dress. I stepped into it. It had a wide waistband and a zipper in the back. Mom helped me do up the zipper.

“Now you can take off your pants,” she said, getting a pair of brown flats out of my closet.

I dropped my pants to the floor and kicked out of them. I was treated to the most sensual feeling I could ever have imagined. I had thought the panties were electric. The slip and dress around my legs made me forget about the panties. I caught my breath as if I had been doused with ice water on a hot day. I looked at Mom and she just smiled at me.

“Here,” she said, dropping the brown flats at my feet and handing me the knee socks. “Put these on.” They kind of looked like loafers, but the toe piece was way too short.

“There,” she said. “Let me do something with your hair. It looks all out of place like that.” She led me to the bathroom and began brushing my hair. Out of nowhere she had two barrettes and put them on either side of my hair. She combed part of it forward and messed with it a while, then bunched it up between the fingers of her left hand, grabbed a pair of scissors and trimmed it.

“Mom!”

“It’ll be all right. It’s still long enough that no one will notice.” She teased it a little and finally pronounced it OK. I looked in the mirror. I kind of looked like a girl. I mean, if I didn’t know, I think, given what I was wearing, I’d have thought the reflection was a girl. It was like I was my own sister.

“Let’s improve the look a little.” Mom was enjoying this, I could tell. She took some blush and touched it to my cheeks, then with a big fluffy brush she brushed it off. I looked back in the mirror and something had changed. I couldn’t see any specific thing, but the entire image was softer, more feminine. The reflection was definitely that of a girl. But... it was me.

“Let’s show Grandma.”

“Bu... Ma... she... I... do I *have* to?”

“Sooner or later. What, did you think you’d spend the whole weekend in your room?”

“Well no but... I guess I didn’t really think about where I’d spend the weekend.”

“Come on, she’s expecting to see you.”

Like a man going to the gallows, I followed her into the family room. Grandma was watching television and looked up as we came in.

“Why Ken, you look real nice. Ken... that doesn’t seem right somehow. Kim. Kim, don’t you think, Mary?” she said, looking at Mom.

“I think Kim would be nice. What do you think?” she said looking at me.

“Kim?”

“Well, we can’t call someone who looks like you *Ken*. You’re going to be dressed like that all weekend, so we need something to call you. Don’t you think Kim would be nice? It’s near your name. You shouldn’t have too much trouble answering to it.”

“OK. I guess I’m Kim for the weekend.”

“You look really nice, Kim.” Grandma said with that half smile of hers.

“Well, now that I have a daughter in the house, why don’t you help me get dinner ready, Kim.” I had washed dishes for Mom ever since Grandma came home from the hospital, but this was the first time I would help prepare anything.

I followed her to the kitchen, suddenly aware of my dress again. It swished and swayed against my legs, sending little shivers everywhere. I was struck with how light the shoes were. They weren’t anything like their boys counterpart. I had a pair of loafers. I thought they were comfortable, but they were gunboats compared to how these felt. All in all, it was quite a pleasant sensation.

Mom had me set the table. There was a lot of walking, bending and reaching. Every movement gave me a curious sensation. Leg movements, arm movements, took on new meaning. Soon, dinner was on the table.

I was just sitting down when Mom and Grandma came into the room. “Kim, hold your dress against your legs as you sit, so it doesn’t bunch up.” I stood and ran my hands over my backside and sat again. “That’s better. After a while, that will be second nature, but for now you have to think about it.”

We all sat and talked at dinner as if it was an every day experience for a boy to wear a dress while having dinner with his mother and grandmother.

Around 10:30 I decided I’d go to bed. I needed to get out of these clothes so I could relax. It’s hard to relax when you have to be conscious of keeping your knees together. I was trying to take my dress off when Mom knocked on the door.

“Kimmy?” She called through the door, opened it up a crack. “Do you need any help?”

Kimmy? “No Mom. I’m fine. Well... maybe, could you unzip the back?”

Mom stepped in. “Here, I thought you might want to borrow this,” she said holding a flimsy, blue nylon thing out. I took it from her and turned around for her to undo the zipper. I noticed then that the nylon thing had two parts. Then she handed a matching item in a heavier nylon in and I took that.

“What’s this for?”

“Well, I thought after spending all evening in softer clothes, you might not want to put on those scratchy flannel pajamas you wear,” she said as she unzipped me.

“Thanks Mom... goodnight.”

“Goodnight Kimmy, I’ll see you in the morning.” She closed the door and left. I examined the garment she gave me. It was what I’d heard called a “Baby Doll” nightie and a matching robe. The nightie was kind of like a tank top, only nearly sheer and it had ruffles sewn all around the neckline and at the hem. The panties that went with them were loose and had the same ruffles sewn across the bottom. The material had that same silky feel of the slip, only more so. The robe was an opaque thing with long loose sleeves that had ruffles around the cuffs. The ruffles went all around the collar and down the opening, joining with the ruffles around the hem. It had a belt of slightly heavier material.

I tossed it on the bed and continued undressing. When I got to the bra, I almost wished I’d asked Mom for some help with it. But after some struggling, I managed to get hold of it and get the cursed catch unhooked. Once off, I studied the catch. Next time, I wanted to understand it. I nearly strained something because it took so long to figure it out. It was a pretty simple thing. There were two closely set hooks that fastened into a matching set of metal loops.

I picked up the nightie. I shrugged. *Might as well*. At least when I was asleep I wouldn’t need to keep my knees together. I pulled on the top, putting the label in the neck opening to the back. It was the only way I could tell the front from the back. I traded my daytime panties for the ruffled ones. The outfit felt really good. It was quite an experience when I climbed into bed. Being caressed by all the sheer nylon really captivated me. I know that I tossed and turned for a while, but it was because I wasn’t used to the feel of the fabric. Every time I would be close to falling asleep, I’d move just a little and fabric sliding over my skin would send a little shiver through me. Eventually I slept soundly.

In the morning I woke with a start. Something wasn’t right. Oh, well, it was right after all. I had to go to the bathroom bad. I clambered out of bed. Normally, I’d just head straight for the bathroom, but the nightie hardly hid anything, so I pulled on the robe and tied it. I was heading out for my room when Mom met me in the hall. “Oh good, you’re up. I’m going to get breakfast ready. Want to help?”

“Sure,” I said.

Gramma didn’t even blink when she saw me. “Good morning Kim. You look chipper today.”

“Hi Gramma, you look good today, too. You’re getting around with your walker real good.”

“Thank you, Kim. Your mother is a stern taskmaster. She makes me practice all the time. I can’t get her to baby me.”

“I’m just doing what the doctor ordered. Nothing more, nothing less. He said that you could come home so long as someone would see to it you did your therapy,” Mom defended herself.

“I know dear. I’m just teasing.”

We sat down to breakfast, just one happy family. A mother, her daughter and her “granddaughter.”

After breakfast, I cleaned up as usual. When I went to get dressed, Mom had laid out what she wanted me to wear. Pink panties, full slip, bra and the lightweight dress. The white knee socks and the brown flats.

I stripped and put on the panties. I struggled with the bra. Finally, by concentrating on it, I got it hooked. I pulled the slip over my head. I’m not sure what I thought the slip would feel like, but I wasn’t prepared for *this*. It was as if someone were gently caressing me all over at once. I put my hands on my belly and gently stroked them downward to my thighs. As they crossed my panties, I thought I had died and gone to heaven. I slid them back up and over my buttocks. The pure sensuality of the nylon on nylon was beyond description. At last, I sat on the bed and pulled on the knee socks. They were nylon as well. By now my skin was tingling with a life of its own. The dress was simple. A light yellow cotton/rayon blend pull over. It had a peasant neckline, elasticized so that it hung loose, as did the hems on the cap sleeves. The waist was a simple elastic band sewn into the fabric. The skirt was full and loose, coming to just above my knees. The whole thing swept over my body with an unprecedented sensory overload.

I went to the bathroom and began brushing my hair. I got the barrettes in OK, but I couldn’t get the bangs just right. Finally, I gave up and pronounced it good enough. Who would see me anyway? I found Mom’s blush and put it where I thought she had and I took the big fluffy brush and rubbed it until I couldn’t be sure where my natural skin tone started and the blush ended or even if there was any blush left. But the effect was there. I went back to my bedroom and slipped on the shoes.

As I walked to the family room, I wondered if Mom could have chosen a more exhilarating outfit. The dress electrified my senses as I walked. The bodice hugged me with tender loving strokes. The dress swirled over the slip against my legs in a constant teasing motion.

If this is what it’s like to wear girls clothes, sign me up!

That thought stopped me in my tracks. I couldn’t believe that such a thing would even cross my mind. It just jumped up and I embraced it wholeheartedly. Just as quickly, I tried to assert my macho image and failed. I couldn’t help myself, reveling in the spell of the dress and slip.

I reached the family room on autopilot. I was off somewhere on another plain of existence. “Oh, Kimmy, that dress looks *good* on you. And you fixed your hair too,” Mom’s voice called to me from a great distance.

I stopped and shook myself. “Earth to Kimmy. Come in, Kimmy.”

“I’m sorry, Mom. I was thinking about something.”

“I could see that. I’m surprised you didn’t run into something with that glazed look in your eyes. What were you thinking about?”

“Well, you startled me and it just jumped out of my head.” She gave me that look like she does when she knows I’m not telling the truth.

“Mary, can you help me?” Gramma called from her room.

I turned on the TV and sat on the couch. I was delighted with the dress when it swirled around my legs as I settled into position. I was again distracted by the need to keep my knees together.

Mom and Gramma came into the room about fifteen minutes later. “Kimmy, you *have* to learn to keep your knees together,” Mom intoned. I snapped my knees together once again and looked at her. Then she took pity on me. “Let me show you a couple of tricks you can use.” She sat in the chair opposite me. She turned just a little sideways in the chair and crossed her legs at the ankle putting them off center from her knees. “There, try that. Your knees just naturally fall together.”

I tried it. It worked. Then she stood up and sat down again, only this time, she put her left foot into the chair and sat on it turning it sideways when she did. Somehow, that made her legs stay together.

“Doesn’t that hurt?”

“No, not at all. But you can’t do it everywhere, only in informal situations and on soft furniture.”

I tried it and was surprised just how comfortable it was. I thought it would surely be uncomfortable, if not out right painful. But it wasn’t.

It turned out to be an unseasonably warm spring day. When it was time for lunch, Mom asked me to help. As I began to get out the dishes we would need, Mom opened the patio door and looked outside.

“It’s such a lovely day out, why don’t we have lunch on the patio? Get the table cloth out of the pantry and clean off the picnic table,” she told me.

I got the tablecloth and hesitated at the patio door. “Mom, I don’t know if I should go out there. I mean, what if someone sees me?”

“Oh dear, no one will see you. Besides, if they did, our backyard is up against the open fields. They would be so far away, they won’t see anything but a pretty young girl having lunch with her mother and grandmother. I doubt that anyone could tell the difference even if they did see you up close. Only people who knew you would even have a chance.”

I studied the fields for any sign of someone out there. There was none. Finally, I reluctantly stepped out on the patio. I moved quickly to clean off the table and spread the tablecloth. I came back in with my heart racing. I had to force myself to calm down before I took the dishes out. I set the table, but I was nervous as a cat the whole time. Then, as Mom completed the different components of lunch, I took them out to the table, being sure to cover them with something first. By the time I was pouring drinks, I had become immune to the paranoia of being outside. That is to say, while it still both-

ered me when I thought about it, I could ignore where I was and not think about it so long as I was busy doing something.

Mom helped Gramma negotiate the threshold of the sliding door. We sat down and had lunch. There was so little to do that I found myself scanning the field to see if anyone was there. I guess, since it wasn't planting season yet, I should have just relaxed. I did, after a while. The breeze was light and cool. It teased my legs as I came and went to and from the kitchen getting little things. I found it exciting as I felt it tickle my thighs, the coolness extended all the way to my panties. I think I was even a little aroused.

After lunch, I cleared things back into the kitchen. When I was through with the dishes, Gramma called me out to the patio. "Kim, would please bring my sewing basket out here?"

"Sure, Gramma," I said heading for her room. When I returned, she smiled her crooked smile.

"Kim, would you sit next to me and help me finish my sewing? It's fine work and I'm not sure that I can manage it by myself."

She took the basket from me and fished out the blouse that Mom had shown me. The pocket design wasn't finished. She picked up her thread box. "Would you open this for me, Kim? The catch is just too tiny for me to get right now."

I took the box and opened the tiny little catch. It wasn't that difficult, but I could see how Gramma might have trouble. It required one hand to hold the box and the other to undo the clasp. Gramma's left hand was neither strong enough to hold the box nor agile enough to undo the clasp.

"Get me that green, the one next to the yellow," Gramma said, pointing. I picked up the indicated roll of thread. "Get a needle out of the package and thread it for me," smiled Gramma.

I pulled out a length of thread and threaded the needle. When I was finished, Gramma gave me an embroidery hoop and asked me to fit it around the pocket of the blouse. I was a bit clumsy, but managed with a little instruction from Gramma. Then she gave me a small little oval hoop and instructed me to stick it in the pocket. Gramma smiled when I was done.

"Now, hold it on my lap." She painstakingly tied a knot in the thread and clumsily made a stitch. "Watch me. Notice how I do this?" I watched. She did another stitch and pulled it tight. "You give a try," she told me.

I took the hoop and made the next stitch next to Gramma's. "Very good. You're a natural. Now see the leaves on the other side?" I nodded. "See if you can finish these just like them. I started and worked slowly. It was slow going, and I was unsure of what I was doing, but Gramma encouraged me and gave me hints about how to do the tricky parts. To my surprise, I really felt like I had accomplished something when I got the first leaf done. Gramma showed me how to start the next leaf and I worked it. Mom peeked out and saw what I was doing. Just as I was pulling the last stitch tight, there was a flash.