



Reluctant Press presents:

Releasing Desire

Philippa Peters



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRISTA HAIGHT

AN 'ADULT TV' NOVEL

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Re-Leasing Desire

by Philippa Peters

I. GINNY KNOWS ABOUT ME

I wasn't expecting to meet anyone I knew at the Ulysses that night. I was sweating after dancing half an hour with Cathy. At first, when someone touched me, I thought it was she behind me, come after me to help with the drinks from the bar.

It wasn't. It was Ginny Walker, looking gorgeous in a flirty, gold, dance dress, smiling at me. Her blonde hair was shorter than I remembered, cut into a short shag. She had on big button red earrings, red shoes and Revlon Red lipstick. She even had a red evening bag over her arm.

"I didn't expect to see you here," she laughed at me, seeing my unease at meeting her again. "Not here. Do you recognize my outfit? Isn't this a darling little dress?"

I knew what she meant by 'Not here', of course. Ginny had been my girl, well, a girl I dated, it would be fairer to say. She knew a lot about me and, of course, I recognized her outfit. I had bought it and trashed it as I did periodically with my women's clothes.

Yes, I like women's clothes, to dress in them, and Ginny knew that, too. She knew far too much about me for me to be comfortable meeting her here in the Ulysses. She also did much more for that outfit than I ever could have. I must ad-

mit to at least one envious glance at her female shape so well shown off by the dress.

“Who are you with?” she asked then and smiled mischievously at me. She lowered her voice. “Boy or girl?”

That was a low blow, dressed the way I was in purple shirt and grey pants. When she had got from me the admission that I was a transvestite, a cross-dresser, I'd tried to explain to her that it didn't mean that I was gay.

Someone gay, I'd tried to explain, would be attracted to someone of the same sex, dressed as they were. But if I was dressed as a man, I would be with a woman. She ought to have known that.

“I came with a bunch of friends,” I said, offering to buy her a drink, too, with a wave of my hand.

She shook her neatly cut hair. “A girl friend?” she asked, again with that annoying, knowing raise of one eyebrow.

Greg Cuthbert, one of the guys I roomed with, knew these girls on the floor below us. We'd just joined them and some of their friends and had come over to the Ulysses, in walking distance of our high-rise. I'd danced mostly with Cathy Hunter because she was a very good dancer. We had gotten to the ground floor and stayed there, which was good. You had to be very good to be invited 'Down' at the Ulysses where all the patrons at the first and second floor tables and viewing areas could look down and see what you were doing.

Cathy, I think, really had her eyes on Tom O'Donnell, an ex-college football player, who'd come with another football player type to pick up the girls to go dancing. Naturally, the big guys didn't dance, not well anyway. It was hard to explain all of that to Ginny and so I just gave her a shrug and a little wave of my hand to mean, 'sort of.'

“I came with Bart,” she said, leaning over to me. I got a whiff of Chanel Number Five, always one of Ginny's favorites.

I remembered Bart. When Ginny had laughed and said she couldn't go to a grad party with anyone who wasn't a real man, me that is, she'd also said she'd be going with Bart Hoover. That hadn't been so bad but she'd also told Bart and her girl friends about me. The girls gave me such funny looks when I asked them out. They always refused and then I found out the horrible thing Ginny had done.

Little Angie Clymer was the one who let me in on it. “Are you gay?” she'd asked me bluntly. “Ginny says you like to dress up in her clothes.”

That wasn't true. I'd never dressed in her clothes. In women's clothes, yes, but in Ginny's, no, never. So I quite rightly denied both of Ginny's assertions and Angie did go out with me for a little while until she worked out the right question to ask me. Then, she was really disgusted with me and that was that.

I was glad to get out of the city then and to take an entry-level job as a stock-broker in New England. How was I to know that that would dry up and I would be transferred right back to town before the year was over?

Those I'd been with in university were scattered to the four corners of the globe. I hadn't met anyone from State, or my class, in my work at Connelly in over two months. Until now. Until Ginny.

I'd even begun to relax and think again about the possibility of contacting Joanne or Lucy. They were transvestite friends that I corresponded with only. They understood when I went on one of my purges. They seemed to know that I would always come back to cross-dressing. So far, they had always been right.

I'd resisted it up to now because I didn't want to louse up my status at Connelly nor did I want to get Greg into trouble. Greg was an old high school friend who had gone to California to college. I didn't think he knew any of the things Ginny would say about me. He was a genuinely nice guy who included me in his plans for the weekend. I was enjoying just going out with the different groups of girls and guys that he organized.

I'd met my share of really nice girls, and some, like Cathy, I was thinking I could ask out on dates. Now, Ginny was here and I had a feeling that things were going to worsen for me.

"Bart could learn a lot from you in how to treat a girl," she said, leaning towards me again to be heard over the loud music.

I'm sure I looked as surprised as I felt. Ginny complimenting me on something! Yet, I could only think of her 'real man' remark and feel resentful.

"I've got to get these drinks over to the group I came with," I said, giving her the best smile I could, intending, hoping, to brush her off.

"I'll help you," she said, taking one of the trays for me.

"Won't Bart miss you?" I began, squinting across the dark, crowded, spectator area, to see if I could see Bart's tall, dark-haired figure.

"He's already gone," she shouted to me, waiting for me to leave. "When we saw you dancing, he said something about you wearing my dress, and I told him it was the other way round. I was wearing yours."

Why, oh why, did she choose that moment to say that? Right as Tom O'Donnell and his friend reached us to help with the drinks, too. The looks they gave me as I introduced Ginny to them would have scorched paint off the walls. I was glad to dump the drinks in their hands and take Ginny out onto the dance floor, my face the color of her purse, I'm sure.

"Oh dear," laughed Ginny as we slipped easily into a classic rock dance. "Did I say something at the wrong time to the wrong people?"

I could feel a cold chill running through my body even as the sweat ran down my chest. I swung Ginny into an old routine I'd only ever done with her. I could imagine the conversation at the table with Tom, Cathy, Greg and the others. I thought of what I could say. Ginny meant that I had bought it for her, I could say. But Ginny was irrepressible. She would have contradicted me for sure. I had to dump her before I rejoined Greg and the others.

But how to dump Ginny? She seemed to want to hang on to me, as I don't recall her ever doing when we were just going out. When we had danced through five numbers, her giggle and infectious smile attracting attention all around us, she allowed me to buy her a drink.

"Hey," she said, turning with a daiquiri in hand. "There's Kelly, my roommate. Come and meet her."

Kelly was a dark-haired girl with a pouty-looking mouth that softened when she smiled, as she did often to a lanky, blonde-haired guy who was leaning over her and regaling her with some kind of story. He seemed put out by Ginny's interruption of his career outline but Kelly was only amused. Her brown eyes took in my appearance and she gave me a casual nod as Ginny squeezed herself in between the tall blowhard and her roommate and started enthusiastically praising my dancing.

Kelly gave me a lazy glance and so I had to ask her to dance, which she accepted, stepping past me to take my hand and lead me to the dance floor. I scarcely had time to pass off my daiquiri to Ginny before I was swept into a South American dance. The Latinos had taken over the dance floor, hips wiggling in ways staid North Americans can seldom match, though Kelly was very good. I fitted in with her steps quickly and she raised an eyebrow to me.

"Ginny was right," she said, raising her voice to be heard over the music. "You do dance well."

I was pleased by the compliment. "What about what's-his-name?" I asked, indicating the guy she had come with.

"Clive?" she asked in surprise and began to giggle. She was very pretty when she smiled. "He's got every excuse in the book why he can't dance."

The music switched to a rap beat after three tejano numbers and a lambada and so we retreated back to where we had left Ginny. She was talking to some other girls, Clive nowhere in sight, when we returned.

Ginny jumped off her barstool and took my arm possessively while Kelly took her seat with a smile. "You should talk to Andrea," she said to Kelly. "She might know someone who'll fit in with us."

I was getting very tired but Ginny wanted to dance again and so I had to go with her. I wondered if the guys I had come with were missing me. I hadn't noticed Tom or his friend dancing and the girls I had come with would be getting quite miffed with me, I was sure, if they saw me dancing with other girls, not one of them.

"What was that about?" I asked, making conversation.

Ginny pulled a face. "Kelly and I have this huge apartment on Whittimore. At the Towers." I knew the place. Very upscale. Very pricey. Ginny must be doing very well to be able to afford an apartment there. "We have to have a third to share the costs. We have three bedrooms. I thought it would be easy to find some-

one after Sue moved in with her boyfriend but it's been a month now and the rent's going to kill us.”

“You're going to have to move out?” I asked sympathetically, hands resting lightly about her as the music slowed down and we did the modern version of the waltz, where we just leaned on each other and hugged. Hugging Ginny was rather nice, her scent in my nostrils.

“Can't,” she said, screwing up her nose in her pretty, little frown. “We've still got six months on the lease I signed. So we've just got to have a third. Say, David,” she moved her head back and grinned at me. “How would you like to move in with two other girls?”

That sounded strange. I felt suddenly nervous. “Other girls?” I asked huskily.

“Of course,” she laughed, hugging me while my body shivered and broke out again in that old, familiar, cold chill. “We could be three girls together, couldn't we? Most of the time, anyway. Don't tell me you wouldn't like that!”

I tried to pass it off with a laugh. I hated the way Ginny now treated me, as if I was somehow a different person now that she knew something I had kept secret from the world till then. I guess I had thought at one time that she might be ‘The One’ and, as Joanne and Lucy were always telling me, you couldn't, shouldn't, keep our ‘hobby’ a secret from someone you love. It had blown up on me, though, and I couldn't for the moment see any way out of the quagmire I was getting into with Ginny.

It took me a while to finally dump Ginny with Kelly, who was in earnest conversation with some other girls about apartments and the like. I told Ginny I had to see the people I came with. She had to rest after dancing really hard to the little disco numbers the deejay had put in the middle of the midnight set.

“Come back and find me,” she urged before I left. “We've still got a lot to catch up on.”

I got back to the table where Greg and the others had been and, of course, they were gone. I could have bet that they had gone back to someone's place for a quieter party where some pairing up would have taken place. I would have been able to make time with one of the girls, perhaps even Cathy, I thought, but it was too late.

Our apartment was dark and silent when I arrived home. I had slipped out of the Ulysses, avoiding Ginny as I left, and almost run back to the Fairlane Apartments, but no luck on the floor below or above. The party had not gone back to our building.

II. NOW EVERYONE KNOWS

Greg wouldn't look at me as he repeated what he had said to my astounded ears. "I'd like you to leave at the end of the month," he repeated. "We're not really cut out to be roommates, you and I. We're too different. I roomed with Tom O'Donnell's brother in college and Tom and I said we'd get together and he's looking for a place and so..."

"We're too different?" I asked. I was pale, I'm sure, because I could feel the blood draining from my face. "But...But last week..."

Last week, we had gone to the Ulysses together. Greg had told me of the really great party I had missed at Naomi's, all because I had gone off with some other girls at the club.

I'd explained how I'd met girls from university, one of whom was wearing a dress I'd bought for her when I was going out with her.

"Oh, was that how it was?" Greg laughed, his open face creased with mirth. "You should have heard what Tom and Rory were saying about you at Naomi's party. I thought they misheard what that girl had said to us about wearing your dress."

I feigned surprise at what Tom and his friend had related hearing Ginny say. I laughed along with Greg then and felt nothing but relief at the end, or so I thought, of one embarrassing incident.

I had to work late at Connelly, Corcoran and O'Brien, all the following week, and so I missed going out with Greg, even though I was invited. I had a portfolio of entertainment stocks and projects to research, however, and I didn't like to skimp on that. Some of the work was downright interesting, actually.

Now there was this. On Sunday morning, with the football game going, Greg was telling me I had to leave, that he no longer wanted me as a roommate.

"It's not fair," I spluttered.

"No, it isn't," he said, looking up from the game. "You lied to me. Dave. Tom and Rory had it right, didn't they? You *are* a fairy, aren't you? A little light in the loafers? I met this girl named Ginny Walker at Tom's last night. Her boy friend, Bart Hoover, knew all about you as well and told Tom it was true. I looked like a complete fool defending you when she said how you used to get all dressed up in her clothes."

"That's not true!" I said indignantly.

"Then the other girl, Angie Clymer, said she asked you directly and you said..."

“I know what I said to her,” I exclaimed angrily, but my stomach was churning. “She was Ginny's friend and kept on repeating the lies Ginny told about me.”

“Stop,” Greg said wearily. He sat up in his armchair and brought out the letters he had been sitting on, the two that had been in the inside pocket of my jacket when he got home at whatever time it was last night.

“You've no right to read my mail!” I yelled, seizing Joanne's and Lucy's letters from him. Lucy's still had the photos in it, I could feel, the ones she'd felt obliged to send me that her wife had taken of her.

“I won't be doing it any more,” snapped Greg, looking at me in disgust. “I thought I knew you, Dave, or is it Diane now?”

I couldn't bear the looks he was giving me. I stood up and headed for my room. I had to pack, to get out of there. I could feel the animosity being directed after me.

Greg came after me. “Why, Dave, why?” he asked. “You like dressing up in women's clothes? I don't understand it. Why do you do it?”

“I don't,” I said bitterly, which left him perplexed. I could have added 'any more', which would have been accurate. Not since New England had I dared.

“But the letters...” he persisted, his face set in a stony mask.

“Believe what you like,” I said, throwing my cases on the bed and beginning to pack.

“You're paid to the end of the month,” he said slowly. “You've got a right to stay until then. I won't bother you.”

Greg was a nice guy. I didn't see it right away then because of his kicking me out and going through my pockets. Another roomie would have thrown all my stuff out into the roadway and me after it. I had, after all, lied to Greg and been found out. I hated Ginny Walker with a passion. I hated Joanne and Lucy and their stupid advice with a passion. I hated transvestites with an even greater passion.

I didn't have anywhere to go. After Greg left, I felt like sitting down and having a good cry, the lump in my throat was so large. But only women cry, right? Right.

I stayed in my room, away from Greg, that day. I went to work on Monday, spending most of my time trying to find an apartment for rent. The only thing available would cost me a thousand a week.

I went for dinner alone at Ronald's Place and thought gloomily about the chance I had missed for a somewhat normal life with Greg for a friend. I was feeling really sorry for myself. All around me the kids and families enjoying their Big Macs and McNuggets only made me feel more alone. I wondered if I would ever have a family like those I saw around me.

My own family was wary of me. My mother knew of my 'hobby' and urged me constantly to go to counselling. I already knew the answer to that one. She was the one who needed the counselling, to learn to accept me the way that I was. But

when I tried to explain that to her, she wouldn't listen. Dad was much older than her. I'd rarely seen him at home when I was growing up. He was always on the road, doing 'business'. Now retired, he was never home. He was always on the golf course. I don't think he realized he had a son.

My sisters had put up with my raiding their clothing closets when I was younger. I only used stuff they had grown out of for years. But Aline had had this so-cute, red-sequinned, mini-skirted dress and I *had* to try it on with a pair of her black, silky panties, and her dark, opera hose, and her red lipstick, and her auburn wig. I thought I put everything back exactly as it should have been after a dizzy, wonderful afternoon, but I guess I didn't do it as well as I thought.

"David," my mother said. "Don't touch Aline's stuff again, you hear me? And not Nora's either. They are getting very tired of you using their dresses and wrinkling them."

I hotly denied her charges even while I was quaking inside.

"I know it was you," my mother said. "Stop it now or...or you're going to grow into one of *those* kinds of people. You know."

I didn't know. I still denied I had been in their clothes and my mom just looked at me until I stalked off, faking a huff. It did stop me for a while but it was a factor in my crossing the country to go to university. I was safely away from all those prying eyes and pointed expressions. I had never been that close to my sisters, they were five and six years older than me, and I was wary around them after that, though they were always nice to me.

I got letters from Nora every couple of months or so. Now, I realized as I sat there chomping on my burger and fries, that the relief on my mother's face and the look Aline had given her when I went out with Annie, a pretty girl in my Grade Ten class, to the movies, was because they must have been convinced that I was going to turn out to be gay. Going out with a girl must have made them think that everything could be normal with me. Normal. I was disgusted with myself. I would never be normal, I thought.

I trudged out of the fast-food restaurant and headed back to the Fairlane, thinking only of my family and the little clues that told me they knew more than they had ever let on. I was warm but shivering with embarrassment at my own naïveté when a familiar voice broke into my reverie.

"Hey, David," came Ginny's voice from a car parked in a loading zone. Her blonde head was leaning out of the passenger window. She was smiling at me. "Whatcha doing?"

I forgot that I was going to bite her head off the next time I saw her.

"Nothing," I said, even smiling at her.

She opened the back door of the blue Neon. I could see that Kelly was driving. "Get in," she said. "We've just been food shopping and we could use some help getting it all in. We'll even make supper for you if you help."

Kelly looked back and frowned at me. I shifted some of the bags over, put my briefcase on top of one and slid into the back seat. It was better, I thought miserably, than getting back to the Fairlane apartment and having to face Greg Cuthbert again.

“Wow,” said Kelly, looking in the mirror as she edged back into the traffic. “What a face!”

Ginny turned all the way around and looked at me, still smiling. Did she take drugs, uppers, I wondered? She was always smiling and so happy, even when she was hurting or insulting her friends. Then it came to me how she was the architect of my current misfortunes.

“You were talking to Greg,” I said flatly to Ginny.

“Greg?” she asked, her fair eyebrows knitting as she frowned and looked to Kelly who shrugged.

“At Naomi's party, you talked about me,” I said. “Angie Clymer was there.”

“Oh, yes!” Ginny's face brightened and she sparkled as she remembered. “That was a real blast! You shouldn't have missed it, David. Angie was asking after you.”

“That wasn't what Greg said you discussed about me,” I said sourly. “After you talked to him, Greg asked me to move out.”

“After I talked to him?” Ginny frowned again and looked to Kelly.

“You know,” Kelly said, looking at me in the back mirror. “About David in your dress, to the guy on the couch. You and Angie.”

I felt as if I had been punched to hear Kelly speak out what I had been trying to keep from her.

“Oh, that guy!” said Ginny, smacking her head. “That was David's roomie?”

Kelly nodded and moved the car into the lane for the underground parking of the Whittimore Towers.

“Oops!” exclaimed Ginny, her hand covering her mouth, her eyes glinting with suppressed amusement as she looked at me.

I didn't know why I had allowed myself to get into the car with the two of them. I expected Kelly to be cool to me but she just asked me to carry up several cases of canned stuff, a pile that rivalled her own.

Their apartment was every bit as fantastic as I expected. It had a huge living area, the walls a dark pink edged with white woodwork at the ceiling and along the shining hardwood floor. The rugs were thick-piled Persian, I was sure, or an excellent imitation and most of the furniture, French provincial in style, fitted the decor in color and elegance. I could scarcely believe the richness of the apartment.

“You don't have to gape so baldly,” said Kelly wryly. “The furniture is my mother's, all of it. She remarried and dumped it all off on me. I'd rather have had new stuff than all this old junk...” Her wave took in cabinets that I knew were ex-

traordinarily expensive. "...but I'm stuck with it now until I marry some rich stockbroker."

Ginny came struggling in with more than Kelly or I had carried. "David's a stockbroker," she said.

"More than that," murmured Kelly under her breath as she moved into the kitchen.

"I've already eaten," I said, looking at my watch to conceal my nervousness at Karen's first pointed remark. "And I do have to go and do some phoning about a new apartment. So I have to go."

Ginny wasn't fazed at all. Her outer clothing went onto a loveseat and her parcels were dumped on the table. She threw herself into a chair and reached for the television remote.

"There's a phone here," she said, "and wine in the fridge. Be a darling and bring one for me as well, David dear."

I picked up some of her bags from the table and took them into the kitchen where Kelly was putting everything away, in the fridge, the freezer or the pantry.

She looked surprised when I emptied the bags and put away the frozen stuff in her freezer. "Oh, we should keep you," she said, her characteristic pout becoming a smile. "Ginny would have everything unfreeze before she stirred from that chair."

"Not true!" Ginny squealed, coming in behind me with the last of the groceries.

Kelly smiled. "You're only doing that to impress David," she said pointedly. "When was the last time you ever put groceries away? Or made supper?" She indicated the water heating on the stove and the microwave that was defrosting something else.

Ginny giggled her little-girl giggle. "Why would I want to impress David?" she asked.

Yes, why, I thought miserably. David didn't need to be impressed by Ginny. I needed her to keep her mouth shut and not ruin my chances with every girl I met. Girls like Kelly whom I was sure did not have a good opinion of me now.

"You need to impress David," said Kelly carefully, eyeing me seriously, "before you ask him to move in with us since he is looking for a place to stay and we need someone to share the rent on this place for the next six months at least."

I was stunned. I could feel my hair standing up on end with the strange, shocked way Kelly's words impacted on me. She couldn't be asking me to share an apartment with her, not after what Ginny had been telling her about me.

"Oh, right!" exclaimed Ginny, her face mirroring my shock. "We're going to have a guy move in with us?"

I agreed exactly with her sentiments. It was an outrageous suggestion.

"Oh, come on," said Kelly, disgust in her tone. "It happens all the time these days, you two. Besides, David isn't just any guy, or so you tell me, Ginny."

The last statement stunned Ginny just as much as it stunned me. I looked at her, my insides churning. To share an apartment with two women, not my sisters, two women who knew that I was a cross-dresser. I was shaking all over.

“You're right,” said Ginny slowly and seriously. “It could work out.”

“Just one condition,” said Kelly, a grin seeming to hover on her pouting lips as she looked at me.

Here it comes, I thought grimly. “What?” I asked, my face rigid.

“When we've got friends over,” said Kelly, and I think she winked at Ginny, “we don't want you prancing around here in women's lingerie and high heels.”

I flushed. How I got it out in my extreme nervousness I don't know. “I,” I said it emphatically. “I never prance.”

They both looked at me then. Kelly grinned first and then Ginny started to giggle. They both ended up laughing their heads off while I stood there feeling remarkably foolish, shudders passing through me and not knowing whether they were just having a joke with me or not.

Kelly recovered first and led me out of the back of the kitchen into the little hallway I'd noticed when I entered. “That's the bathroom,” she indicated. It was a dark grey and pink with frilly curtains and obviously feminine. “And this is your room,” she said.

It was a cream and white room with a canopy bed and frilled white and yellow pillows, quilt and counterpane. Kelly looked at me as I blushed again. “You won't mind all this femininity, will you?” she asked, indicating the dressing table, its makeup mirror, and padded commode. “The bed and furniture is mine and Sue did the rest so that it all matches. You could switch with me and have the pink room.”

“No,” I said hoarsely, suddenly wondering when it was that I had agreed to this mad arrangement.

“You wouldn't want Ginny's room,” said Kelly, disregarding my state of nerves, if she even noticed how uptight and anxious I was. “It's a total mess. I won't go in there and neither will any man after she gets them in there once.” She suddenly turned and looked at me speculatively. “I'm not sure you should have a guy in here. You know, we don't want to be that notorious.”

“I'm not gay,” I said, trying to show her my indignation at such an assumption, but my voice squeaked with my nervousness and she laughed at me.

“Okay,” she said and I could tell that she didn't believe me at all.

Back in the living room, I was glad to have the glass of wine that Ginny offered. “We put in five hundred a month,” she said directly, “and that covers the rent, sundries and some of the groceries. We usually have to split groceries at least twice more a month and liquor we try to share. We're always borrowing from each other and we try to pay back if we can remember.” She gave me her cute smile and glanced at Kelly who rolled her eyes and disappeared into the kitchen.

Ginny came over and cuddled up to me on the sofa. "I never did see you dressed, did I?" she asked with a smile, her arm about mine. "Now I will, won't I?"

I swallowed hard. "Ginny..." I said carefully. How could I explain it to her? Cross-dressing was something I did in private. I didn't look at all like a real woman. I wasn't going to put on any kind of show for her, not at all.

"Oh, I know," she sighed. "You do it to resolve your tensions. I understand that. You don't have to be worried about Kelly and me, though. Everybody has gay, transsexual and transvestite friends these days. You're not so different, you know. I know lots of guys who are living full time as women."

I felt the blood drain from my face. I can't go through with this, I thought. I can't. Not with someone like Ginny. She was going to have me in a dress before all of my friends and my bosses. I just knew it. Maybe I *did* want to dress, live out some of my fantasies for a change, but how could I? I had a living to earn. No, this was not going to work out. I had to get out of that apartment before I made a colossal mistake.

Kelly came back then and scowled at Ginny. "Don't do that," she ordered in a tone of voice I'd never heard before. "You're going to scare David off. Can't you hear it in his voice? We just want a roommate. I don't care if he dresses up every day of the week or never. Let him live his own life, Ginny. And stop with the snide putdowns or I'll let David know a few stories about your love life that would entertain everyone in town."

Ginny stared open-mouthed at her roommate. There was silence for a while Kelly glared at her.

"All right," said Ginny finally, grumpily. "I won't mention David dressing up again, not till Halloween at least."

III. THE BIRTH OF HEATHER

I didn't prance about the apartment. I moved in with fear and trepidation and kept looking for an apartment that might suit me better. But the girls were so good to me that, after a couple of weeks, I stopped looking or even thinking about a move. By 'good,' I mean that they were casual about our relationship. I was just a roommate. I did my share of the chores, put my money in the kitty and bought liquor and extras just as they did. The other tenants at the Towers, when they found out I was in 240, asked a little about the girls who lived there and I had to explain that we shared.

We all got raised eyebrows at that and some knowing looks. "David's a friend," I heard Kelly say emphatically once when I was about to enter the laundry room.

“He was looking for a place and we just couldn't find anybody else who wanted to move in here. He's doing us a big favor living with us till our lease runs out. So, if you'll just keep your insinuations to yourself, we'll all get along fine.”

I tiptoed away and so I never did see who she was lecturing. Certainly, the tenants soon didn't even bother to give me any special looks when I left in a rush in the mornings for Connelly, Corcoran and O'Brien.

The only fly in the ointment was Ginny and her boyfriends. Actually, it was one boyfriend in particular. Bart Hoover. I got used to Ginny bringing in boys from the parties she seemed to attend on almost every night of the week. Some I talked to while Ginny was prowling about the kitchen to make 'munchies' for them. It didn't bother me that they invariably ended up in her bedroom.

The only one who bothered me was Bart Hoover. I answered the door for him and he knew me and about me right away. He looked me up and down. I was wearing a black and grey shirt and black pants but that didn't stop the way Bart saw me. Kelly happened to have a guy there, too. They were going to the movies. I had decided to stay in my room and get the entertainment investment report ready for my section leader for the following week.

Bart wanted to know why I wasn't dressed up. Didn't I relax at home? he smirked at me. Was I going to have my boyfriend over? Perhaps we could make a foursome or something at the Ulysses. He filled in the other guy on my transvestite proclivities, embellishing every word, while I stood there, hot, embarrassed, and close to tears.

I hastily retreated from the living room to my cream and white bedroom in which I hadn't changed a thing. I felt stupid and ashamed. But still, it was so unfair, I thought, sitting on Sue's commode, looking at myself in the makeup mirror. I had done nothing to bring that on. I had done nothing to embarrass my roommates at all. Nothing. Sure, I loved looking at them in their sexy dresses and nighties. I had imagined myself like them. I couldn't stop my thoughts. It wasn't possible. I should never have moved in with them. I would have to find another place, I thought miserably, even though I liked them both and we all got along great.

As I sat there quivering, there was a gentle tap on the door. It opened and Kelly and Ginny came in.

“We sent the men home,” said Ginny. “They didn't have to behave that way towards you.”

“It's okay,” I said, surprised and grateful for the thought behind her words. “Really. I know it's hard to understand.”

“It's harder for us to understand,” said Kelly suddenly, sitting on my bed. She smiled at me.

“Harder for you?” I asked in astonishment.