



Reluctant Press presents:

My Father's Name Is
JENNIFER



Philippa Peters

AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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MY FATHER'S NAME IS JENNIFER

by Philippa Peters

I. LIFE WITH MY MOTHER

"I can't afford to pay for your schooling any longer," said my mother. "You will have to go to your father and ask him for the money."

I blanched at what she said to me. "Me?" I asked her. "Why can't you speak to my father for me?"

"Because," my mother said, "the agreement between me and her only covered you for the first eighteen years. We left the issue of your university education open but your father did invest in the education scholarship that bought you your first year. The only money she sends me now is just for me."

Just for her, my mother, I thought in distress. I wanted to say, "Mother, you didn't have to buy that Jaguar Mark Whatever. We still had the year-old Cadillac you gave Pablo Something for his birthday. You didn't have to go to the French Riviera for four months and live in a Monte Carlo hotel all that time with Pablo Someone Else. If you just stayed in your New York apartment for a little while instead of going to Vail and St. Moritz for the season with Pablo's other brother, there'd be plenty left over to finance me through my second year at university."

I wanted to say that the money that 'she,' my father, was paying my mother was more than enough to finance both of us comfortably in life. The fanatical look in Mother's eyes whenever the subject of my father came up told me that it was useless to argue with her, however.

"I, I don't know how to get in touch with Dad," I said sullenly instead.

That made my mother erupt with laughter. "You still want to call her 'Dad'?" she said in a mocking tone. "Here," she gave me a business card. "That's her address. Call her. She's often said that she wanted to see you again." I shuddered. That was news to me. Mother had said the opposite many times before whenever the subject of my father had surfaced between us.

I looked at the card. It was embossed in pink with a pink rose but the black lettering could be clearly read as 'Jennifer Whitehouse,' the name my father now used. It was followed by lots of letters indicating the degrees he had accumulated as a surgeon and ophthalmologist. There was a phone number for the clinic from which Jennifer Whitehouse operated.

I turned the card over slowly. I had last seen my father when I was about thirteen and he had tried to explain to me what a transsexual was. He had tried to tell me that there were people born into the wrong sex, men who thought that they were really women, trapped in the wrong body. He had tried to tell me that he was a man like that and I couldn't believe it. I didn't *want* to believe it.

"You're a queer!" I sneered, angry and disgusted with him. I threw off his hand that had rested lightly on my shoulder. "You're telling me that you're a she-male!" I'd just heard that word in a *Maury* episode on television. Bobby, Carl and I had watched it in Carl's basement, chortling over the fairies, nancies, pansies, queens, we had used all the words, who paraded through the show. How we giggled at the men trying to pretend that they were women.

My father winced as I backed across the room. The long, elegant fingers with which he played the piano so well, went up to his face and pushed his longish hair back behind his ears in a gesture I had seen many girls do. It totally unnerved me. From my point of view, my father was telling me that he was like the drag queens we had seen on television.

"I'm not like them at all," my father said to me.

I didn't stay to listen to any more of it. I took off out of my room, past my mother, her arms folded, glaring up the stairs. I heard my father call, "Jack!" after me but I didn't stop. I ran right out of the front door and ran for twenty blocks to where Bobby lived, went in, and played *Call of Duty* with him for the next three hours.

When I got back to our house, my mother was on the phone to a real estate agent. "Yes, he has signed all the papers," she was saying. "The house is legally mine and I want to sell it right away. Yes, a legal separation is what has happened and we have agreed to divorce. I want to get rid of this house now. It's far too big for just my son and me. You can help me find an apartment in New York, yes," she went on, waving to me to go to my room.

I didn't, of course. By sitting on the stairs and listening to her side of the conversation, I learned that my life in suburbia was over. I was going to be uprooted as soon as possible. I was going to be a ward of my mother's and I would not see my father again. My mother was quite emphatic about that. My father, she said for the first time, something she repeated to me several times as that year wore on, wanted nothing more to do with his son.

When Mother finished on the phone, she came striding out of the living room and caught me sitting on the stairs. "You heard all that?" she snapped at me. I nodded.

"Is Dad ...?" I began, hesitating. I didn't know what to say.

"Molloy," my mother said, grimacing as she used my father's name, "is Molly now. He's in transition to become a she."

"Did, did you know all about it?" I asked her.

"He's always liked to wear my clothes," my mother told me bluntly. "Don't you remember him as Marie Antoinette on Halloween? Or when he was Mae West, Marilyn Monroe or Snow White? No, I guess you were too small to remember how you liked the pretty lady he became. He's been much more subdued the last few years. I thought the passion to crossdress, that's what it's called, had died in him. Apparently, it has become much worse. From now on, he's going to live as a woman full-time. He goes into some clinic on Monday for cosmetic surgery to make him look more like a woman."

"He's going to be called Molly Sheffield?" I asked her, feeling sick. Sometimes the wags in my school called me that when they heard that Molloy was my middle name.

"No, I was being sarcastic," admitted my mother. "I used to call your father Molly whenever he borrowed my wig and got dressed up as a woman for one of our weekends away. He loved it then. I should have realized that he swished far too much to ever be the real man he always told me that he was. He swore to me that he was a heterosexual transvestite attracted to women. I should have known better than to have believed anything a woman like him said to me, shouldn't I?"

I shuddered at the vituperative way she talked about my Dad. Just twenty-four hours before, I had been laughing and playing with him as he served up lollipop pitches to Carl, me and some others of my friends to practice our home run swings over on the school diamond in Fountain Park where we lived.

Now, my dad, who loved to go out and do stuff like that with me, and who encouraged me to invite friends over to our house, was gone. I was so confused with what he had been trying to tell me and what my mother was now telling me. I hated him for quite a while for what he did to my life and to my family.

I turned the card that my mother had given me back over to the name. Jennifer Whitehouse. It sounded so feminine. Surely, my Dad couldn't have a name like that.

"Here," said my mother, snatching the card back from my hands. "I'll call Jennifer for you. I have a lot I need to say to her. She needs to up my allowance, for starters. I'm maxed out on my credit cards as it is and she will have to do something about that. I can't eat at Nino's or shop at Bloomingdale's until she takes care of the effect inflation is having on my alimony payments."

It was on the tip of my tongue to say, "Why don't you get a job, Mom?" I was exhausted almost every day by the landscape job I was working at, trying to get money for food and drink when I was back at school. If she could just pay for my books and tuition, it would help, I thought, but one look at her face told me the answer to that.

I used to think my mother was so pretty. Now, I saw her in a different light. Yes, she still was attractive on the outside, I thought, but I had heard her talk about everyone she knew in such sneering terms that I knew that her beauty was just a veneer. She was always caustic about my father. She had called him 'she' from the moment he left the house, when I was still hoping for him to return. As I got older, I realized that if I had been him and had gotten away from her, I would never come back.

II. MY FATHER, JENNIFER

"I talked to Jennifer," said my mother when I got in early from my summer job. Rain had forced us all off the gardens where we were digging ditches to install an underground sprinkling system. "She has paid for your ticket to go up and talk to her about the money you want."

I was nonplussed for a moment, wondering who 'Jennifer' was. Then our conversation of the previous day came back to me. "D-Dad," I said, my tongue unable to say a woman's name and refer to the man I had known as my father, "wants me to visit him?"

My mother smiled at me. "I told you that she has wanted to see you, come and visit with you, many times," she said with a smug smile. "If you want your money for tuition, John," that was my real first name, "you have to go up to Haversham and meet your father. There's a flight up there in the morning. Your ticket will be waiting for you at the counter."

"I, I can't do that!" I protested. "I, I have to work."

"I agreed that you could visit with Jennifer for a week," said my mother, her smile getting smugger by the second. "I told her that you might not come and she said that she wouldn't pay for your education any more. She said that you could sue her if you liked."

"Did, did Daddy..." I shivered as I said that as if I was still a little boy. "...pay off your credit card bills?"

"None of your business," snapped my mother. "And if you look at the weather forecast, it's going to rain for the next week, off and on. Not much work for you outdoors, I'm afraid. You might just as well go up to Haversham and get it over with. She'll pay for you, I'm sure, if you just go up there and say nice things to her. You'll have to remember, of course, that she thinks she looks like a real woman in a dress, not the man that she really is. You have to tell her she looks nice, just like a woman. You can do that. You can be polite to a man in a dress, can't you, Johnny?"

I shuddered, not knowing that I could. I thought of my father and the way that he had looked at the end and imagined him in a dress like my mother's. It was absurd. I wouldn't go. But money got the best of me in the end and I went.

It was raining as, at the last moment, I caught a cab and went out to Kennedy, checking in for my flight just forty minutes before it left. The airline counter worker wasn't amused by my attitude, especially when I said that they could just cancel my ticket then and return my money if they had a problem with my late arrival.

I got an escort to the small jet far out on the tarmac. There were no more than twenty people aboard a plane that could carry a hundred or so. My luggage delayed our takeoff

by twenty minutes, the smiling cabin attendant told me, her sweet smile denying the cattiness of her remark.

I settled back in my seat and thought about what I was doing. I got goose bumps as I thought about the person I was going to see. I was going to be *so* embarrassed, I was sure, in the airport when I got there if 'Jennifer' was there to meet me. I hoped that 'she' wouldn't be there. What would I call her? I thought in a panic. There would be people staring at her, I was sure. How could I call such a person, 'Dad' or 'Daddy'?

I shivered; then I thought a little more about it. Would my father recognize me now? It should be difficult for him as I was so much older, taller, tanned. I thought that I was a man now, not a boy, any more. I doubted that he would know me at all. I could just slide in and decide when I saw this 'Jennifer,' if she was in the airport, whether to approach 'her' or not. I shuddered and wished that it could be my father there waiting for me. It would be *such* a relief if I saw him and recognized him. We could talk and leave all this other man-being-a-woman stuff on the side. When I left, he could go on with the life he wanted and I could go on with mine.

I hung back as the other passengers scurried off the plane. I dawdled along the ramp and even the sweet-smiling, snotty stewardess went by me. The reception area was mostly empty. Then I saw him. He had a dark raincoat over his business suit, his hair was darker than I remembered and slicked back. He was a man! I almost crowed with delight as I saw the card he was holding up that read, 'John Molloy Sheffield.'

I went towards him and smiled. The dark lenses in his glasses made his eyes seem brown but I knew that they were blue like mine. "Dad!" I said, walking up to him and holding out my hand. He shook it awkwardly as he lowered his sign.

"I'm not your Dad, Jack," the man said to me, a little smile on his face. He indicated someone behind me.

I heard the click of stiletto high heels on the marble floor and whirled around.

"Jack!" said a woman with long, flowing, very curly, reddish-colored hair, putting out her arms to me and smiling broadly at me. "You did come after all!"

I stared, goggle-eyed, at the shapely woman who put her arms about me and hugged me, smiling and smiling as she looked into my catatonic face. Her lips were so red, like the long nails on her fingers that held me. Her eyes were gorgeously made-up, her eyebrows thin and feminine. Her thin, bobbed nose was nothing like the one my father had had. Only the blueness of the eyes reminded me of him at all.

The woman hugged me lightly and I felt the pressure of her breasts against me. That woke me up to the situation I was in. "D-Dad!" I gurgled, and the red-haired woman in front of me put her finger on her lips and shushed me, looking around in amusement.

"Jennifer," she said in a soft, soprano voice, smiling at me. "Or Jen or Jenny. I answer to those as well. Oh, Johnny, you are tall. I'm so glad I wore my four-inch heels. I can look down at you a little, like when you were a little boy. It's *so* wonderful to have you here. I've wanted you to come and visit me so much. I've asked Carol to let you come at every Christmas, every birthday, yours and mine, every time she's been away in Europe, but you never wanted to come before."

"M-Mom never told me," I said, shaking as I looked at this elegant and attractive woman. She put her arm under mine just like a woman should and guided me towards the luggage carousel. I noticed many people look at her but it wasn't with a sneer as I had imagined people would look at Jennifer. They looked at her, both men and women, as if they admired her. And so they should. She was a woman, my father, a most attractive woman.

"Charlie, can you get my son's luggage while I talk to him for a little while?" asked the pretty older woman. Charlie took my boarding pass with the baggage tags and went over to the little carousel.

"Is it too much for you, Jack," she almost whispered as she lowered her voice and stared at me, "to see me as Jennifer? You weren't expecting me to be a woman, were you? You thought Charlie was me."

"I hoped," I began, swallowing hard. She still had her hand on my arm, her arm under mine, holding me just like a woman would. Her high heels clicked on the floor and I felt her sway like a woman as well.

"I'm so sorry, Jack," Jennifer, my father, said to me then. "I could have sent you pictures over the years but Carol said she would burn them if I did any such thing. She said she would sue me and embarrass you with all your friends if I tried to contact you without her permission."

"I, I didn't know that," I said. My mind was reeling at the thought that this lovely woman was a man, and not just any man, but my father.

"So what changed your mind?" Jennifer asked me, smiling prettily. She waved to a man who went by and called to her with a "Jenny, how are you?" as he passed us. "Why did you decide that you



wanted to see me now? I can't believe that you wanted to come and meet me again. I've been walking around on Cloud Nine ever since Carol said that you wanted to come and meet Jennifer."

What Jennifer said took my breath away. "It was you who wanted to see me," I said in protest. "Mother said that you insisted."

Jennifer's narrow eyebrows came together in a frown. "No," she murmured. "She raised the topic with me after we concluded our business."

"You bailed her out of her financial mess?" I asked. Her red, glossy, lips pouted as she smiled again at me. "It was about my fees at university that I had to see you because ..."

"Isn't it enough?" asked Jennifer anxiously. "I thought that thirty thousand would be enough. Carol only asked me for that much. Oh, but you must have some more for living expenses, is that it? She said you've been working all summer but I suppose it all goes out as fast as it comes in at your age. Will fifty thousand be enough for the year?"

"No," I said and Jennifer gave me a shocked look, her earrings dancing along her long, thin neck. "I mean Yes," I went on and she looked puzzled. "Mom said that I had to come up and see you in order to get money for my fees and books. She said that you insisted that I come and meet you as, as Jennifer."

Jennifer's face was a pretty picture of dismay. "But I never said that," she said, stopping and looking at me very intently. "I would never say that! I talked to Carol only this morning. She told me that if you came, you would want to stay with me for a week and get to know me again! I, I've been so happy all day! Charlie can tell you! I've been dancing and singing with joy! Funny, 'Joy' is the name of the perfume I'm wearing. I hope you're not allergic to a woman's perfume. I enjoy being perfumed and my whole house is scented all the time!"

I was staggered at what my mother had told me. "Let's not worry about that now, anyway," said Jennifer, waving to Charlie who was coming towards us with my suitcase on a trolley. "You're here, Jack, and I can't wait to show you off to all my friends."

I couldn't help the way I reacted to that. Jennifer noticed and giggled at me. "All my friends are not like me, silly," she smiled at me. "Most are disgustingly straight like you and Charlie. But if you really wanted to meet a pretty girl who is a female of my kind, I could introduce you to some really nice ones."

"Thank you," I said to Jennifer, shaking at the knees at her offer. "But I think I would prefer to find my own girl friends, if you don't mind."

"As you wish," said Jennifer gaily. "You don't know what you're missing." She laughed at my horrified face as I looked at the giddy woman who had used to be my father. It was definitely another person, much livelier and happier, that I was looking at.

"We are going to have so much fun," said Jennifer, squeezing my arm joyfully. "I can't believe that you are really here, really here in Haversham. Do you remember how you loved to play with all the machines in my office back in Fountain Park? I've a whole new set of toys for you to play with now. Are you in science courses at State? Your mother didn't seem to know what classes you were in. It would be lovely if you could be in optics and

come and work for me. Then I could see my handsome son every day of the week. That would be *wonderful!*"

III. YOU ARE NOT MY MOTHER!

Being together, Jennifer and me, wasn't wonderful. After three days, it was quite clear to both of us that my visit to her in Haversham had been quite a mistake. On the fourth day, I made her cry.

There was some comedy show on television. The comic, whoever he was, began to make jokes about Hugh Grant and Eddie Murphy.

"That's not very nice," said Jennifer as she came into her tasteful, little living room. The long white, frilled curtains about the window alcoves made it seem really 'girlie' as was every room, including my temporary bedroom, in her house.

"They deserve it," I said, hardly looking at her but knowing she was there by the swish of her dress as she moved behind the pale-flowered armchair in which I was sitting. "They're both degenerates."

"Degenerates?" asked Jennifer, in her soft, lilting voice that made me want to squirm when I thought of it as coming out of a man's mouth, my father's mouth.

"He picked up a transvestite prostitute," I said, pointing to Murphy on the screen. "Said he was just giving a girl a lift. Yeah, he was lifting her skirt. But I shouldn't be calling the transvestite 'her', should I?"

"No," said Jennifer, moving past me then in her summery dress. The white petticoats she was wearing swished and swayed as she sat down on the sofa beside me. I had been careful after the first day of being in her home always to sit in an armchair. When I sat on a sofa, Jennifer almost immediately came and sat beside me and I could smell the perfume that she was wearing. She liked to touch me as well when she talked to me.

It was the same when we went out. Jennifer always wanted to put her arm under mine and she had a way of reminding me that she expected me to treat her as a female. She waited for me at doors to open them for her and she took my hand to cross avenues and streets. Waiters would hustle to pull out her chair for her and she would smile up graciously at them, reach over, take my hand and tell everyone that I was her son.

That peeved me so much because they automatically thought that Jennifer was my mother. "Don't tell anyone that I am your son again," I snapped at her when we left this swanky eatery where everyone seemed to know her. Older women had dropped by our table to say hello to 'dear Jennifer.' They'd fawned all over me and told me what a treasure my mother was to the whole city. They wanted to know all about me and if I would be staying in the city with my mother.

"No," I told them all through gritted teeth. "I will be staying with my mother in New York."

That had produced some consternation in one or two old biddies and a couple of older guys as well. "You can't be moving on," one said almost in distress to Jennifer. "We need you here, Jennifer. Anything that New York is offering you, we will match."