



Reluctant Press presents:

Living In Another World



Louise Paynter

AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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LIVING IN ANOTHER WORLD

By Louise Paynter

One can never predict what's going to happen on our journey's through life, but I thought that I had my future mapped out fairly well in general terms. I was certainly not prepared for what actually happened to me in my mid-twenties, and how my life completely changed from that point on.

Let me start at the beginning by telling you a little about myself and what I had done before the dramatic events happened. I grew up in a completely normal,

loving family with my father, mother and an elder sister. I had a typical childhood with all the things that a healthy, outdoor-loving, sociable boy could wish for. I loved school and although I was never a swot, I did well enough in my exams to get to University. When I graduated a couple of years ago, I joined a large company based in the North of England as a project manager in the product development department, which was a fabulous job. Like every other guy of my age and background, I had a full social life of clubs, drinking, sport and just generally hanging out with my friends, enjoying ourselves. So you can see why I was fairly confident that my life was settling into a pattern for the future with good chances of career progression, good friends; maybe one day I would meet the right girl and we would get married, have kids, etc., etc. Great, that's just what I wanted.

However, all of those plans and ideas about my future were completely turned on their heads a few months ago when Simon and I went to a computer fair at the local University. Simon was my best mate and he worked for the same company as me in the IT Department. It had been Simon's idea to go the computer fair, and I went along with him, as I didn't have any better plans for that Saturday afternoon. I soon reached my saturation level of interest in looking at all the new bits of computer hardware and software and games. I was wondering how much longer we needed to stay there, so I was not pleased when we bumped into one of Simon's work colleagues, a guy named Kevin. Kevin's a typical computer nerd; not too strong on inter-personal skills, always coming up with crazy ideas, or weird information about subjects that he's read about on the Internet. He's been mad keen on several conspiracy

theories in the past, and currently is really into paranormal sightings, UFO's and aliens.

Apart from all that, Kevin thinks that he is God's gift to women and is always trying to chat up the girls at work, although I can't recall him ever having a serious girlfriend. I reckon that his normal about psychic or astrological events frightens them off. He drones on and on about whatever his latest craze happens to be, and it is almost impossible to shut him up, or to shake him off. Unfortunately, he joined up with us whilst keeping up a non-stop flow of facts and opinions about the products on show, obviously gleaned from magazines or websites.

The majority of attendees at the fair were male; they were crowding out the stalls to look at the latest gadgets and gizmos, and talking to each other in a techno language that included words and acronyms I couldn't understand. I told the other two that I needed a drink and made my way towards the coffee bar, figuring that I would take my time over a long cappuccino before another stroll through this Tower of Babel. However, on my way to the coffee bar, I came across an exhibit that was there for fun rather than for the techno-wizards. It was called a morphing machine; according to the information displayed outside the stand, it worked by taking a high-resolution digital picture of you. They could apply their software to it and produce an image of you as a younger or an older person, even as someone of the opposite gender.

I wasn't rushing to go anywhere so I joined the queue. When my turn came, I chose the opposite-gender/same-age option just for a laugh. A few minutes later a colour print appeared, showing me what I would look like if I had been a girl. She was quite at-

tractive and I could see the family resemblance to myself, but 'she' had a softer jaw line and a more delicate bone structure. She could easily have been my sister; I thought the guys running the morpher had done a good job. Needless to say, I got a lot of ribbing from Simon and Kevin over having gotten the picture but I liked it very much. When I got home later, I stuck it on the wall in my bedroom.

I looked at that picture every time I went into my bedroom, as her eyes seemed to follow me around the room. I admit that I got a bit obsessed by her and even gave her a name, Jessica. I actually started to think of her as a real person, even as my sister, and thought that I would like to meet her.

A few weeks later, Simon and I went out for a drink with a couple of other friends on a Saturday evening; somewhere along the way we met Simon's colleague, Kevin, who had been at the computer fair. He was on his own, so he tagged along with us even though a couple of us did try to encourage him to go elsewhere. After we left the pub, we decided to get a takeaway, go back to my flat to eat and have some more beer.

Kevin was still with us; he had been quite excited all evening as a lunar eclipse was scheduled to happen that evening about two o'clock in the morning. He tried to persuade us all to stay up and watch it with him, as our part of the city was along the line of the absolute epicentre of the eclipse and so we would experience the maximum effect and duration of the eclipse. Apparently, a lunar eclipse is caused when the sun, earth and moon are in-line with the earth in the middle so that it casts its shadow on the moon, thus obscuring the moon's reflected light, making everything look a strange red colour. The epicentre is the position where

the exact centres of the three bodies are in a perfect line so the effect is maximised.

Whilst we were eating, Kevin proceeded to drone on about his latest discoveries on the Web about eclipses and the effects that they can produce. There's been a lot of research in the U.S. on parallel universes and how they can be triggered by external events like eclipses or other rare planetary events. We all know that the sun and the moon have an effect on gravity, for instance, affecting the height of the tides when they are in different alignments, so it is possible that they could also have an effect on the electro-magnetic fields around the earth.

I think he said that these electro-magnetic fields are what determine our universe, so that if we disturb them, we could flip into another universe. He said there were people who claimed to have led two or more separate lives at the same time. It all sounded typically Kevin. However, our luck was not in and it became cloudy about eleven o'clock with some light rain so there was absolutely no chance of seeing the moon or the eclipse. I was really tired and quite glad when the other guys decided to call it a day. We all packed up, not too late for a change, and I flopped into bed, dreaming of Jessica as usual.

The next morning I woke up late with the sun streaming through the curtains and was immediately aware that something was different. I normally sleep in my skin as I don't like pyjamas. I was sure that I wasn't so drunk the previous night that I had forgotten to undress before getting into bed, but I was definitely wearing something. I lifted the duvet a bit and looked down to discover that I was wearing a white cotton strappy T-shirt with a pattern of pink roses on it, with loose

shorts to match. That's weird, I thought, someone's played a practical joke on me, but as I sat up in bed, I could feel the upper part of my arms brush against my chest, which seemed heavy in some way. I pulled the front of the T-shirt forward and looked down to find two female breasts pushing against the fabric.



I leapt out of bed as if it was full of scorpions, ran across to the wardrobe, and looked at the mirror. I was completely bewildered because, instead of seeing my normal self, there was a girl looking back at me. There was no doubt it was a girl, and there was no doubt that it was me because she moved her arms when I moved mine, and turned around when I did. I couldn't explain this at all, so I took my T-shirt and shorts off to examine my reflection in the mirror. Instead of my short brown hair, this person had medium-length blonde hair. Instead of my flat chest with a few strands of hair in the middle, this person had beautiful shapely breasts (36C as I found out later by looking at bras in the underclothes drawers) that I had already discovered. There was no sight of my penis; instead I now had a neat triangle of soft pubic hair. Instead of my slightly overweight body and hairy legs, I now had a slim waist above gently flaring hips and long slim legs. "What on earth has happened to me?" I cried out in shock.

I looked around the flat and out of the windows; it was definitely my flat but it was a lot tidier than mine normally is, and some of the furnishings were more feminine. There was no sign of me, my clothes, or other belongings anywhere. Instead of beer glasses and plates left lying around in the lounge from the night before, there were four neatly stacked wine glasses by the kitchen sink.

If this was a practical joke it seemed to be pretty complicated. I rang Simon in panic. "Hi Simon, it's Andy."

"Andy who? I don't know anyone called Andy. You must have gotten a wrong number, darling, but feel free to call me anytime," and he rang off. With a start, I

realised that I had been speaking in a female voice, so it was not surprising that Simon had not recognised me.

I tried ringing another friend who had been with us yesterday evening, but I got a similar response. I was totally confused by this time and I couldn't understand what was happening to me. Everything seemed to be real, I was sure it was not a dream, but I kept coming back to thinking about what Kevin had been talking about the previous evening. I hadn't been paying much attention to what he had said, but were there really parallel universes, and did the lunar eclipse trigger some event where I had transferred from one to another? I needed to check it out somehow. I had an idea and decided to look up my entry on Facebook on a laptop that was in the bedroom. I was not there. Well, actually there were three hundred and ninety six Andy Pembertons in Facebook, but not one of them was me. It was as if I did not exist.

That was a very scary conclusion and it took me a few minutes to come to terms with it. If I'm not Andy Pemberton, who am I? I looked around the flat for any information that would help me and found a handbag on the sofa in the lounge. Inside was a notebook; the name and address on the front page was Catherine Pemberton, living at my address. How spooky was that? I went to the laptop and got back into Facebook to look up Catherine. Amongst the other four hundred and twenty seven Catherine Pembertons, there she was. Or, rather, there *I* was. The picture on the screen was the same girl that looked back at me from the mirror. I also realised that she was the same girl in the print from the morphing machine that used to be on my bedroom wall. Or more correctly, Andy's bedroom wall.

Well at least I had a name, I thought, but what good is that? I don't know anything about who I am, or what I do. There was also a Blackberry in the handbag; by looking through Catherine's diary and her mobile phone logs, I reckoned that her best friend was a girl called Alice. I rang her.

"Morning, Kate, I was going to ring you this morning as you looked a bit tired last night."

"Can you come over? I think I've got a problem and I need to talk to someone about it."

"Are you OK? You sound a bit stressed, are you feeling alright?" she said.

"I'm OK at the moment but I need some help, and I can't really explain on the phone. Can you come?"

"Of course. I've got a couple of things to sort out and I'll be over in half an hour. Is that OK?"

"Thanks, see you then."

I was in a state of shock at having been transformed into a girl overnight and was decidedly unhappy with the prospect. Up until yesterday I had been happy being a man and I wanted to stay that way. Being a girl was something I had never thought about before and I didn't want to think about it now either. But I didn't want to stay in these girlie pyjamas all morning, so I decided that I'd better have a shower to wake myself up and get dressed before Alice arrived.

Showering was straightforward but it took a long time to dry my head, as I wasn't used to having long hair. Then came the problem of getting dressed. I really was not comfortable with the thought of wearing girl's clothes, so I found some plain white cotton pants without any frilly bits on them in the drawer. They looked far too small and thin, compared to my normal pants,

but fitted perfectly. I didn't fancy putting on a bra, but my breasts had been bouncing around a bit from walking around the flat, so, reluctantly, I decided I'd have to wear one. There was a great selection of all shapes and colours, many with lots of lace or embroidery but I found a plain white one that didn't look too girlish. It was more difficult than I thought to put on as I couldn't get both little hooks to go in the loops at the same time. I had to finally resort to taking my arms out of the straps, pulling the fastener around to the front, clicking the hooks in the eyes, twisting it round to the back, pulling the bra up to my breasts and putting my arms through the straps again. What a palaver.

It was most uncomfortable to have a tight band of material around my chest, although I did welcome the support it provided for my breasts as they didn't feel so floppy any more and my nipples weren't rubbing on my clothes. I guess there's always a trade-off for being comfortable, but I was not at all happy with being a woman, having to wear these feminine underclothes. I had found a pair of loose-fitting jeans and I pulled them on only to discover that the zip on the jeans was left-handed instead of being the right way round. I'd just managed to put on a loose shirt and was struggling to fasten the buttons because they also fastened on the wrong side, when the doorbell rang.

It was Alice. I recognised her as the very attractive blonde who worked in Overseas Marketing in our company. Although I knew who she was, I had never had the opportunity to talk with her before.

"Hi, Kate, I came as quick as I could, as you sounded desperate. What's the problem?"

"I need some coffee for a caffeine boost before we start but I've got lots to tell you. But first of all, would

you tell me everything that happened last night. What did we do?"

"It was just a fun night out with you, me, Helen and Nicki, very similar to other nights out we've had."

"OK, but tell me every little detail of what happened. Was there anything unusual? Did I seem strange?"

"Well, we had a meal in the little Italian restaurant near Helen's flat. Then we went on to a club where we danced till nearly midnight. Then we all came back here for a coffee and some wine. We packed in early-ish about one o'clock as you looked tired. You've been working hard recently and you're a bit rundown, so I thought nothing of it. Why do you ask me what happened? Have you lost your memory or something?"

We sat in the lounge and I told her everything about the previous evening and about that morning that I could think of. I told her all about being a man, the life I had as Andy, and all about waking up and discovering that I looked like a girl. About how I had discovered my name was Catherine, how I had found her name and telephone number, and how I had contacted her in desperation to find out if she knew what had happened to me or to Catherine.

"You certainly looked tired last night. Did you drink any more of that wine after we all left?"

"I don't know what Catherine did after you left because I wasn't here. Last night I was Andy, but I don't think I was drunk. I was very tired and went straight to bed after my mates left."

Alice agreed that it all sounded totally weird but that there must be a simple explanation somewhere. I

told her about Kevin's theories concerning parallel universes and how people can jump from one to another when an event is triggered. She was not impressed.

"That has got to be the craziest story I've heard for a long time. Who is this Kevin? Is he one of those Internet anoraks, always reading about conspiracy theories and weird unexplained events? If so, I think we can discount that explanation as just plain nonsense."

I nodded agreement because I didn't want to argue with her but at that moment it seemed to be the only possible explanation, however far-fetched it might seem.

"Well, however I got here, I'm here with a brain that thinks I'm Andy but a body that looks like Catherine. I'd rather be Andy if I could, as I don't want to be a woman or to dress up as a woman and pretend to be one, but I don't seem to have any options. I need your help to tell me who I am and what Catherine does, please."

"Gosh Kate, it does sound like a crazy situation, but you're my best friend, so I'll help you all I can. By the way, everyone calls you Kate. Catherine's a bit too formal for every day. Where do we start?" Alice gave me a detailed rundown on Kate. It turned out that she worked in the same company as Alice, the same company as me. Or Andy. On closer discussion, it was determined that Kate worked on the same project team as me, sitting at the same desk and doing the same job as me. When we talked about Kate's family, we discovered that she had a mother and an elder sister, Claire, who were exactly the same as my mother and sister. Same names, same ages, same addresses. In fact, we concluded, Catherine was Andy. Or should that be

Andy was Catherine? But Alice had never heard of Andy, either at work or in conversation with Kate.

But I had no memories of being Kate, only memories of life as Andy. How was I going to cope with being Kate instead of Andy? And how was I going to cope with being a woman instead of a man?

We stopped for lunch as I was exhausted and my mind was in a whirl, but I was aching to find out more about Kate, so we continued through the afternoon. After an hour, we needed a break. Alice said, "You're going to have to accept that you are a woman, even if you don't think you are. Therefore you'd better think and behave as a woman."

So she made me walk around, sit down and stand properly so that I didn't look masculine in any way. Clearly, there were no problems with the way I looked, but I didn't want to make people think I was acting in an odd manner. After that exercise, we went back into Facebook to check out the friends I had there. I could recognise all the family members on it, and Alice filled in details for all the people that she knew. There were a few faces of old school friends, some of whom surprised me. "Oh, I remember him. What's he doing here?"

"Who's that?"

"Rodney Fuller. He was a girl chaser even at school. I'm surprised Kate has let him anywhere near her. I haven't seen him since school and don't want to, thank you. But I would have liked to have seen the next one."

"Ah, I can see why. She looks very attractive."

"Always did, even as a schoolgirl. All the boys fancied her, but she was out of our league and was going

steady with a lad in the year ahead of us. Oh yes, I remember Veronica Gatenby."

Near the end of the list, we came across a friend called Charles Frobisher. He seemed a pleasant enough chap but Alice seemed very excited. "Ooh, I wondered if he'd still be here."

"Who's he then? You seem to know him."

"Charles? He's the love of your life. You two were very close; everyone thought that it was going to be a permanent arrangement but something happened and you finished with him. You said he had no commitment to a future together, so you dumped him. He was very upset, and I think he went abroad shortly after that. I wonder what happened to him. I know that, even though you had finished the relationship, you were very miserable after he left."

"It seems I've got quite a lot of history to learn about. You better tell me some more about Kate and her life." And so we settled down to analyse what Kate did, who she was friendly with, what she liked and disliked, as many details as Alice could think of, or as many as I could absorb. We'd nearly finished when the phone rang. I jumped out of my skin, but I had to answer it.

"Hi, Sis. It's Claire. It's just a quick call to say that Tom, Harriet, Alfie and I are going down to Mum's in three weeks time for her birthday. We wondered if you would be free that weekend to come along too."

Tom was her husband, Harriet was four years old and Alfie was their six-month-old baby who I hadn't seen yet. Oh goodness, I thought, what can I do? Three weeks hardly gives me time to get into the role of Kate. I'll be really exposed under the view of my sister and

mother. They'll be sure to find me out, and then what do I do? But there was no way I could refuse. I knew Claire well enough to know that she wouldn't take no for an answer, and I wouldn't have wanted to miss Mum's birthday, so I smiled and said, "That sounds like a wonderful idea. I'll put in my diary. I can't remember the last time I was down there."

"Weren't you down there six weeks ago for your birthday? I'm sure Mum told me you'd been down."

I knew that I'd visited Mum when I was Andy, but I didn't know that I'd been there as Kate as well. This is too confusing, I thought. "I'd forgotten. I seem to be forgetting a lot of things at the moment. Must be pressure of work or something."

"Don't work too hard. We'll look forward to seeing you there on the Friday evening."

By now it was early evening, Alice and I were exhausted and hungry so we agreed to go out to the local Italian restaurant for a plate of pasta. "I guess you'll want to freshen up and change before we go out," said Alice.

"Mmm, are these clothes not OK?"

"You're joking. I'm not going out with you dressed in those scruffy things. They're just about passable for lazing around the house, but not nearly smart enough to be seen out. And your hair is a mess. It's normally neat and tidy, what have you done with it?"

"I just washed it this morning, and it seems all over the place now."

"Did you use conditioner?"

"No, I don't normally do that."

"You'll find you need to. And how did you dry it?"

“As usual, with a towel.”

“I thought so. Ever heard of a hairdryer?”

“They’re just for girls. Ah, I see what you mean. I think I need a bit more coaching.”

“Boy, I can see it being a steep learning curve. Lets see what I can do with some mousse.” She rooted through the large selection of pots in the bathroom to find what she was looking for and combed the stuff through my hair to make it more manageable and tidier. “Now, shall I suggest some clothes for you?”

“I think you’d better as I don’t know what to wear.”

Alice rummaged through the wardrobe and came out with a black skirt. “This always looks good,” she said.

“I can’t wear that. It’s far too short. Is there something a bit longer?”

I was adamant that I wasn’t going to wear a dress or skirt. I just couldn’t imagine me doing that, but I didn’t tell Alice that that was the reason. In the end, she dropped the idea of a skirt and we agreed on a pair of bootleg jeans and a blouse worn over a vest top. I refused to wear a pair of strappy sandals that Alice showed me. I eventually got her to agree to a pair of black flat pumps. At least I don’t look too girly, I thought. I felt much happier in my choice of clothes, although I knew that Alice wasn’t very impressed.

After our meal, Alice sorted out some clothes for me for work the next morning and said that she would be round to give me a lift to work. I thanked her for all her hard work during the day and we wished each other goodnight. I went to bed early but couldn’t sleep well as my mind was racing over the events of the day.

I still couldn't believe what had happened and kept pinching myself to confirm that it wasn't a dream.

The alarm bell rang at seven o'clock. I looked under the bedclothes, but it was still Kate's body down there. No magic reversal of the situation overnight then, I thought. I had a shower, washed my hair and tried to dry it using the hairdryer but it still looked a bit wild. I looked at the clothes Alice had put out for me, which included a medium-length skirt and shoes with a small heel. I still couldn't face the prospect of wearing a skirt so I put on the jeans and top I had on the previous night. There was just time for a coffee and a slice of toast before Alice arrived. "What have you done to your hair?" she said in horror.

"I used the hairdryer and a brush like you showed me, but it didn't seem to work."

"You need to give it some volume. Go and get me that mousse that I used last night. And you can't wear those clothes. What happened to the skirt I put out last night?"

"I can't wear a skirt. I feel strange and people will look at me."

"You're a girl and girls wear skirts. There's nothing strange about it."

"Well, I'm not going to change."

"OK, but on your head be it. Are you ready to go? Have you had your breakfast?"

"No, I looked in the fridge but it was full of low fat yoghurts and fruit. I didn't fancy any of that stuff so I'll get a muffin on the way and I'll have a meat pie at lunchtime."