

## Your Son Must Be Feminized!

Amanda Hawkins

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The note didn't waste any time laying it on the line: "**Disguise your son as a girl by noon on Saturday or your entire family will die (no cops!)**" It gave today's date, which meant the deadline was less than three days away.

My father stared at the scrap of paper as though doing so might help him figure out where it came from. The text was laser-printed on the back of an ad for a local window-cleaning service, which narrowed the search to pretty near everybody in town. "How seriously should we take this?" He was talking to Cindy's boyfriend, Jiahao, who was a cop, although he wasn't in uniform.

"I don't think it's a prank, Mr. Munsey," Jiahao said. "Three months ago a family of four was, well... they were found murdered in their home. It isn't generally known, but the same type of note was found there."

My mother look horrified. "I read about that in the paper! It didn't say anything about a note or—" She glanced at me. "—making a young man dress up as a girl. That's just... well, it's absurd!"

"That information wasn't released to the public," Jiahao said. "I only found it by searching the police database." He bit his lip. "I could get in trouble if you were to tell anyone, so please don't let the information leave this room."

Cindy took his arm. "I won't tell a soul, sweetie, you can count on me! Neither will Mummy and Daddy, will you?" She glared at her parents.

"Of course, dear. We wouldn't want to get Jiahao in trouble." Mum patted her husband's arm. "Reggie? You can keep a secret, can't you?"

"Huh? Oh. Yeah, sure." He squinted at Jiahao. "You're sayin' the whole family was killed because their son *didn't* disguise himself as a chick?"

The young policeman shrugged. "The perps were never caught so we can't be sure, but that was the investigators' best guess." He lowered his voice. "But here's the thing. There have been *four* other instances of a note like this being delivered to a family in the Bay Area, all within the last few months. In each case, the family decided to have the son in question assume a female role."

Dad grunted his surprise. "And none of *them* got shot, huh?"

Jiahao spread his hands. "I checked. As of this afternoon they're all alive and well—and the sons are still living as girls, I'm told. That was the advice they were given: until the lunatics behind these threats are caught, it's better safe than sorry." He looked over at me. "I guess it's pretty much up to you, Ben."

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I feigned innocence like it was going out of style. “What’re you saying? You think I should actually *do* that—dress up like a girl?”

Cindy snorted. “Oh, *puleez*, like you—” She caught herself and threw a glance at her parents. “I do it practically full-time, you know. It’s not so bad.”

Mum seemed to be wavering. “Well... it would only be for a little while, wouldn’t it? Until those awful men are caught?”

Jiahao nodded briskly. “They keep this up, it won’t take long, that’s for sure. I had the note dusted for fingerprints. It was clean, but they’re bound to slip up sooner or later. We’re not talking about criminal masterminds here.”

“Damn radical feminists,” Dad muttered.

“That’s one possibility, although no feminist I’ve ever met would dream of doing something so bizarre. But regardless of whether they’re feminists or pranksters or whoever—at least one of them has a weapon.”

They all looked at me. Mum said, “What do you think, Benji? I’m sure you could pull it off.” What she meant was that at five-foot-eight I wasn’t exactly bound for the NBA. I wasn’t built like a football player either. In other words, with a little help from the ladies I’d have no difficulty passing as female.

I shook my head. “I dunno... what about school?” As objections go, that one was pretty lame. Cindy pointed out that I’d only just begun college, didn’t know anyone there, and most of my classes were virtual. What’s the big deal?

Jiahao said he could arrange for a temporary driver’s license. His guess was that this would all be over in a few weeks—a month or two, tops. That seemed to settle the issue. The next morning I was hairless from the eyebrows down, moisturized past the point of no return, and bound for our friendly neighborhood wig store. Naturally, I knew exactly where it was.

“Something close to his natural color,” Mum told the saleswoman, “so he doesn’t look *too* too different. “Synthetic, of course, because money. And let’s go with a fairly straight style, to make it easier to care for.”

The woman eyed me like a she-wolf sizing up its prey, then perused her available stock. “Given the shape of her—pardon me, *his*—face, I think a gentle flip style might be suitable.” She retrieved a long brunette wig from the wall-o’-wigs that dominated the store. “Shoulder length, with a slight curl at the tips.”

I sat down and the lady fitted me with a nylon cap and then the wig itself. Mum studied me with an intensity I’d never seen before. “That should do the trick,” she said at last. “His sister wore a similar style some years back.”

Yeah, like I didn’t know.

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Cindy and Mum spent the rest of the day schooling me in the cosmetic routines I'd have to follow. They took turns stepping me through online tutorials, and teaching me the tricks of the trade for different types of makeup. Mum expressed surprise at how quickly I mastered the techniques.

My mother and sister spent Friday afternoon turning me into a girl. We gathered in Cindy's bedroom, where I was cinched into a very tight strapless brassiere, stuffed with a pair of foam-rubber falsies. Cindy provided more lingerie—a lacy half-slip, pink panties and sheer pantyhose—while Mum gave me a pink off-the-shoulder sweater and a polka-dot skirt left over from when she was my age. A pair of Cindy's bow-toed kitten heels completed the outfit. They coached me through a simple makeup application, then added the wig and a plain headband to keep the straight fall off my face. Mum added a triple-strand pearl necklace with matching clip-ons, and carefully pulled the sweater's neck *off* my shoulders, to give my tresses free reign to ebb and flow. It felt every bit as good as I imagined it would.

“Now you're my lovely Bethany,” Mum said, as her eyes went all misty. That, apparently, would've been my name had I been born with a different set of gonads, although she didn't put it quite that way.

Dad didn't bat an eyelash when the three of us returned to the living room. He kept right on reading his paper, as if living with three females was something he'd been doing for years. I was impressed. He'd always struck me as the kind of man who'd make a fuss about his son being turned into a sissy—his word, not mine; I'd heard him utter it often enough, though not usually directed at me. Instead, he seemed to be taking the whole thing in stride.

I fought to avoid looking overly satisfied, but keeping that feeling bottled up was difficult. My plan was working!

We three girls gathered in the kitchen, where Mum poured us each a glass of white wine. “We have to do this properly,” she said. “We don't know if they're watching the house, but just in case they *are*...” She paused. “I'm sorry to say this, Bethany, but I think it's important that you remain a girl until these men are caught.”

I bit my lip and looked downcast. “I know, Mum. I'll do what I have to do.”

“Naturally, you can remove the wig in the privacy of your room, but do make sure the curtains are drawn.”

Cindy had her poker face on. “That goes whenever you're in your skivvies, little sister. We gals can't be too careful. Ya never when there's a peeping tom around.”

They had nothing to worry about. No one could possibly be more discrete about dressing up as a girl than me, although of course I didn't tell them *why*. Cindy had caught me a few times, but Mum never had. I intended to keep it that way.

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Oh man... just look at 'em. My parents... What a bunch of rubes. I'm a girl now, Mum did the deed herself, and they still don't suspect a thing. Oooh, it's for the good of the family. Can't take chances, you know! I should do this more often...



It didn't take me long to settle into my new normal. I dressed as a girl every day, kept up with my coursework online, and after Jiahao brought over my new license and ID I was able to drive myself to campus and attend a few classes in person. I didn't know anyone and no one knew me, and that was the way I liked it.

I was livin' the dream—until the second note arrived. It was short and to the point: **“Make your son embrace his role as a woman or your family dies. You have two days (still no cops!)”** Needless to say, I was dumbfounded—not least because *I didn't write the damn thing!* Apparently, it had been stuffed through our mail slot during the night, but they didn't show it to me until the next evening when Jiahao had been called in—once again out of uniform.

Dad didn't take this one in stride, but he did do a lot of striding, back and forth in the living room. “Embrace his role as a— What the hell does *that* mean?”

Cindy was wide-eyed. “*I think* it means we have to sex him up. Sex *her* up.”

Mum spoke calmly. “Jiahao? Did any other families receive a second note?”

The officer shrugged. “Not that I know of. It's possible they simply didn't report it, but if that's the case we have no way of knowing. They might've thought that talking to the police a second time wasn't worth the risk.”

“Both notes said ‘no cops’,” Cindy said. “Who knows how many families got the note and didn't report it at all.”

While the family discussed my fate I stared at the TV screen, my face a blank, my mind a muddle. I kept wondering if someone really *was* watching the house, and if they found my impersonation of the younger daughter lacking. But that wasn't possible! How could there be a *second* note when *I* wrote the first one? How could anybody else even *know* about this when I'd made the whole thing up?

“Who knew?” I said abruptly, interrupting the conversation. They all stared at me. “Who did you tell?” I looked at each of them in turn. “Someone must have told *somebody*, because how else—” I didn't finish the sentence. Heck, I'd probably said too much already.

Dad hung his head. “Well... I talked to a couple higher-ups at the college. I didn't want you to get in trouble, for uh... illegally impersonating a girl or somethin'.”

Mum sat stiffly. “I spoke to a few of the neighbors. They see us coming and going all the time. If they recognized you, questions would be asked. People *talk*.”

Jiahao said, “I mentioned it to a few guys at the station, but they agreed to keep it under their hats. If there was a leak, I'm sure it didn't come from there.”

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My shoulders sagged. “In other words, half the town knows by now.” I looked at my sister. If anyone might’ve blabbed it around—

“Me? I didn’t tell a soul.” She crossed her heart.

Dad peered out the front window. “None of that matters,” he said quietly. “What does matter is that someone’s watching this house. And if what Jiahao told us is right, we’re still in danger. The question is, what do we do about it?”

“I hate to sound like a broken record,” Jiahao said, “but the original advice still stands. For whatever reason, these people want Ben to disguise himself as a girl—and it would appear they aren’t too happy with what they’ve seen so far.”

“What the hell do they expect us to *do*? Far as I can see he’s already as girly as it gets!” Dad glared at me, as if all this was somehow my fault. It was, of course, but *he* didn’t know that—and I wasn’t about to spill my guts about it.

“There *are* things we could do,” Mum said, her voice wavering.

Cindy pointed at the coffee table, where the note lay. “Didn’t it say ‘embrace his role as a *woman*’? Didn’t the first note say ‘girl’?”

Mum nodded. “We could give Bethany a more grown-up look. Longer hair, more makeup, a fuller figure, more flattering clothing... that sort of thing.”

“Like I said, sexier,” Cindy added, with barely disguised eagerness.

Dad waved his hands. “Ugh, do what you have to. I don’t wanna hear about it.” He stalked out of the room. Heavy footsteps trod the basement stairs. My father liked to putter in his workshop when he was upset. Thanks to recent events, we had more bird feeders than birds in our back yard.

Jiahao also took his leave, promising to ask whoever was on patrol in the coming days to cruise by our house more often. Otherwise, he had little to offer. That left me alone with my mother and sister, who now intended to turn me into more of a woman than I already was. I was in no position to argue.

The next day Mum and I boogied on down to her favorite salon. “A set of your best extensions,” she told the stylist. “A bit longer than the wig, I think.”

The lady smirked. “Halloween came early this year, eh?”

Mum shook her head. “I’d like to keep this quiet, if you don’t mind, Helene. It’s not something we can talk about. Benji needs to be a girl for awhile—hopefully just for a few weeks. It’s nothing kinky, though,” she hastened to add. “He’s doing this for the sake of our family.”

Helene shrugged. “Doesn’t matter to me. I’m happy to provide whatever service you need. He wouldn’t be the first boy I’ve turned into a girl.”

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“To be more precise, Bethany is going to be a *woman*.” She turned to me. “We need to go all-out,” she said, “cross our t’s and dot our i’s. You can’t wear a wig full-time but we can’t chance you being seen without one. This way you’ll be able to be a girl 24/7. If that doesn’t satisfy those awful men, nothing will.”

I wasn’t about to object. Wearing my hair long had always been the dream.

Helene removed the wig and tinted my hair to match the set of brunette extensions she’d chosen, then spent the next two hours inserting at least three dozen twenty-inch synthetic micro-wefts. She used a cold-fusion technique to clamp the wefts to the base of my own hair, which meant they wouldn’t be coming out anytime soon. The result looked perfectly natural; I literally couldn’t tell the difference between the add-ins and my natural hair.

The extensions curled gently inward at the tips, and the blowout styling I received emphasized their volume. Helene instructed me about how to take care of my new ‘do, then gathered it back off my face. She turned to my mother. “I gather that you want her to look more mature?”

“Absolutely. Not overly made-up, but less of a baby-face and more like she’s been around the block a few times.” She nudged Helene. “You know the look; the way a woman gets when she knows her way around a man’s body.”

Helene gave me a malicious grin. She spent the next two hours fiddling with my complexion, applying various oils and creams, and adding just enough makeup to subtly alter my presentation. When she was done and had brushed out my hair to frame my face, I could barely recognize myself. I was the same person as before, but... I did look a little older. I even *felt* more mature.

Cindy was out of the house when we got home. Upon her return she took me into her bedroom. “Got you a present,” she said, opening the box that sat on her bed. A pair of breasts stared up at me, like a pair of eyes boring into my soul, ready and willing to claim me as their own. “They’re Amoena,” she said eagerly, “the same type regular women wear when they get a breast removed.”

I blinked to clear my mind. “Cindy? Did *you* write that note? The one about making me embrace my role as a woman?”

“Huh? What’re you tal—I thought *you* did!”

I lowered my voice. “Me? No way. Why would you think that?”

“Well, *duh*. You wrote the first one, little sister.”

“Yeah, and you and Jiahao backed me up—thanks for that—and it was *working*. It was a dream come true. Why would I mess with a good thing?”

“How would I know?” She frowned. “If you didn’t write it, who did?”

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“That’s what I’d like to know.” I sank onto the bed, staring at the floor.

Cindy put her arm around me. “Poor Benji. You look really nice, by the way. As in seriously gorgeous. Color me jealous.” She stroked my hair. “Is that why you were going on about ‘who knew’? You figured one of us must’ve blabbed.”

“Yeah, and it turns out the neighbors knew, some people at the school knew, and who knows who else? They told two friends, and *they* told two friends, and pretty soon the news gets to someone who’s willing to take it to the next level.”

“Someone who wants you to be more of a woman?”

My head found her shoulder. “Probably some sicko who’s into she-males.”

“Holy cow... This isn’t quite what you signed up for, is it?”

There was a knock on the door and Mum bustled in. “There you are. I see you got the appliances.” She picked up one of the breast forms and bounced it in her hand, eyeing it critically. “D-cup, I’d say. Decent size, but not to the point of being silly. Nice weight. It shouldn’t be too hard on your back, dear.”

She had me remove the blouse I was wearing, and the bra. Bare to the waist, I lay flat on Cindy’s bed as my mother and sister pressed the breast forms to my chest. They were asymmetric to mimic the shape of real breasts, and they utilized what the instructions called ‘vanishing-edge technology’ for a seamless fit that would blend with the body even at close quarters. I thought that might be just a wee bit over the top, given that our supposed enemies were unlikely to get close enough to tell the difference.

The forms were attached using surgical adhesive. Mum reminded me that I’d have to remove them every week or so—using a solvent—to clean the backside and let them air overnight. Only then did I realize I’d be wearing the things full-time. “Cup them with your hands, Bethany. Just until the glue dries.”

I held on for dear life. The material touching my fingers was a soft, medical-grade silicone gel, which made for an amazingly lifelike feel, especially once it warmed up to body temperature. I wondered what a sicko who was into she-males would make of *that*.

Cindy handed me a black brassiere. “Black is sexy,” she said. My mind reeled. What on earth did they have in store for me? I sat up and strapped myself in.

Mum placed a silicone/latex panty girdle on the bed. It matched my skin tone, and sported a fleshy slit that looked disturbingly like the real thing. She and Cindy left the room while I wiggled into the tight garment and packed my junk into the appropriate pouches; the glue coating the inside hardly seemed necessary. The garment added inches to my hips and noticeable bulk to my butt.

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“Our family’s safety is at stake,” Mum said when I raised a weak objection to all the money she’d spent. “What we *can’t* afford to take is any chances.”

Cindy provided me with black panties and sheer black pantyhose, then stood back and whistled. “Wow... if I didn’t know better I’d *swear* you were a girl.” Then she giggled. “What am I saying—you are a girl.”

Mum took my hand. “Now, Cindy. She may be your little sister, but we both know Bethany is a full-fledged woman. Come with me, sweetie. Now that you’re a little older, let’s see if we can find you something to wear from my closet.”

Off we went to the forbidden zone.

“Your sister means well,” she said behind closed doors, “but let’s face it: she’s always been a bit—is ‘flighty’ the right word? You know, frivolous. It’s a bit unusual in terms of birth order, but you’ve always been the responsible one.” She went to her dresser and pulled out a black skirt with a tight geometric pattern of off-white diamond shapes. “Try this on,” she said. “It was one of my favorites when I was your age.”

The skirt was satin-lined, so I stepped inside and drew the rear zipper closed. “It’s a little short,” I said, tugging on the hem. But it fit me perfectly.

“It’s supposed to be.” She opened her closet and selected a long-sleeved black top with buttons down the front. “That one doesn’t tuck,” she said, as I slipped it on. “And, uhm... it’s meant to be worn loosely. Try showing some cleavage.”


As kids, we’re taught to do what our mothers say. But it occurred to me, as I was stepping into a pair of open-toed slingbacks, that it was Mum herself who’d taught me that—and in my wildest dreams I’d never imagined that one day she would be telling me to ‘look sexy’ and ‘show some cleavage’.

We met Cindy in the hallway. “Oh my *gawd*,” she cried. “Bethany, you look just awesome! Dad is totally gonna flip when he sees you.”

No time like the present. The three of us strolled into the living room, where my father had just settled down with a beer and today’s newspaper. He’s always been a bit old fashioned, in a blue-collar sort of way. I figured he’d spit up his beer, or cry out “I have no son!” but he took it surprisingly well. Didn’t say a word.

I perched on the couch, casting nervous glances his way. Mum whispered in her husband’s ear. He still didn’t have much to say, but when you’re a guy who’s dressed head to toe as a woman—and a hottie at that—it’s nice to know that your father is on-side. Dad didn’t disown me, he didn’t grab me by the skirt and chuck me halfway down the sidewalk; he didn’t call me a pansy or a sissy—so all in all everything went fine. From then on, I was his full-time daughter.

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Well... this is a bit more than I bargained for. I can't tell them what I did *now*, but how am I ever going to get out of this? If they don't catch the bad guys I could be stuck in skirts until my parents are too senile to notice the difference—and bad guys who don't exist can't be caught.

Reggie? Say hello to your lovely daughter. Bethany is feeling a little nervous about her appearance at the moment, so why don't you tell her how pretty she looks? And would it kill you to mention how proud you are she's your daughter? I'm sure she'd love to hear it. Who knows how long this mess will last?

Ah, jeez... you've gotta be kiddin' me. This is poor little Benny? Well, okay... Bethany, you look very pretty today, and your Dad is very proud of you. I know you're a grown woman and all, but... you'll always be my little girl.

They say history repeats itself: first as tragedy, then as farce. That's the way I felt when we got the news of yet another note, although this one wasn't directed at me. Jiahao came over to see Cindy one evening and a short time later the two of them edged cautiously into the living room, where Dad was watching a game show called *Big Mother* and Mum was teaching me how to sew. She said it was a skill all girls were expected to master.

Cindy cleared her throat. "There's a problem we kind of need to talk about... Jiahao?" She ceded the floor to her boyfriend.

Jiahao pulled a chair in from the dining room and sat on that, which placed him slightly higher than the rest of us. He was in full officer mode, in spite of being dressed in civvies. "Over the past week or so, a handful of reports have shown up in the incident database that pertain to our situation—or rather, Ben's situation." He threw a glance my way. "Surprisingly, there are now multiple cases of threats being sent to families in the Bay Area, where a young male is targeted for—for lack of a better word—feminization."

*That* got our attention. Mum put down her sewing and Dad muted his show. As for me, my heart skipped a few beats while my guts threatened to repudiate the dinner just passed. This was impossible!

"For example," Jiahao said, "one family with three boys, ranging in age between fifteen and twenty-four, were sent a note that threatened their lives unless the youngest son was forced to disguise himself as a girl—more or less permanently, it would seem. They did report the incident, but only after they made the decision, as a group, to feminize the young man. Apparently, he was the 'runt of the litter'—their words, not mine—and it was no big loss to turn him into a girl. No offense intended," he said to me.

I shrugged. "None taken." I'd always thought being small was a good thing.

"The other reports followed the same script, although none of them expressed the issue in such blunt terms." He looked at each of us. "My point is, the similarity of these incidents to the notes received here *cannot* be a coincidence."

Silence. Dad cleared his throat. "One thing I don't get, Jiahao. Why would these reports come as a surprise—to anybody? Didn't you tell us weeks ago there had been several similar threats in the past few months? Not to mention the family that was killed. What's so different about these new notes?"

For once, words failed the policeman. Jiahao's mouth opened but nothing came out. He looked at Cindy, and Cindy turned her gaze upon yours truly. So did Mum. That left me holding the bag.

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I put my own sewing aside. The jig was up. “Fine—you got me, okay?” I took a deep breath. “*I* wrote the first note. There, are you happy?” I crossed my arms.

Dad blinked rapidly, like he’d just been slapped in the face with something wet, like a fish. “*You* wrote the note? But *why*? Why would you...”

Now we all stared at *him*. Cindy was scathing. “Come on, Dad, are you seriously saying you had no idea? Not a single clue that Benji was ‘into’ this sort of thing? I caught him going through my closet a bunch of times.”

“Now, now, don’t be so hard on your father. The man of the house is always the last to know.” Mum sat next to Dad and rubbed his back.

I was horrified. “Uh, Mum? Are you saying that *you* knew?”

She stopped short of blowing a raspberry. “Good heavens—of course I did, honey. No one can hide that sort of thing from their mother. I was fine with it.” She half-smiled. “That’s why *I* wrote the second note.”

We all did a comedic double-take. Dad stared at her like she’d just turned into an alien Xenomorph. “Why? Why would you do that to your own son?”

She sat back, not looking at anyone. Her gaze slid out the window. “My father was a drinker; did I ever mention that? My mother wouldn’t have the stuff in the house, so he had bottles hidden all over. One day me and a couple of girlfriends found a bottle of scotch, and we took it. We were only gonna have a few sips, but then we had a little more, and a little more... Anyway, Mother found us souped to the gills and called the other mothers; we all got in trouble. But she remembered how *her* parents once made her brother smoke a whole pack of ciggies and he never smoked much after that, so she made me drink the rest of the bottle. I got really drunk and pretty darn sick as well.” She heaved a sigh.

Cindy rolled her eyes. “So you never drank again? Is that the moral of the story?”

Mum laughed. “I wish. Actually, I started staying out late, drinking in secret, my grades took a nosedive, and my parents ended up sending me to Catholic school so I could sober up and graduate.”

Dad looked dazed. “I never knew that about you.”

I was confused. “What’re you saying? You *wanted* me to go all the way dressing up as a woman, so I’d get sick of it and not want to do it anymore? That’s not how cross-dressing works, Mum! Everybody knows that.”

“That may be true.” She looked wistful. “I suppose it’s too late to enroll you in a strict parochial school? They could make you wear a uniform with a skirt, and the headmaster could punish you for wanting to be a girl, and maybe even make you do scandalous things not to be mentioned in polite company.”

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I toyed with my hair. “Actually, that sounds kind of intriguing...” Then I gave my head a shake. “No, now’s not the time.”

“I’m gonna pretend I didn’t hear that,” Dad muttered.

Mum placed her hand on his arm but spoke to me. “One other thing. It seemed to me that you were only playing at being a girl—like it was just a fun thing to do in your spare time. Nothing wrong with that, of course, but I thought if you were made to embrace the role, and really *be* a woman, you might find out whether it’s something you truly want to do—as in, for the rest of your life.”

Cindy looked at me. “I’ve been wondering that too. I read about it online. Are you a cross-dresser or a transsexual? Either way, I’m cool with it. Having a little sister is cool beans, whether it’s full-time or part-time.”

I didn’t have an answer. I’d always been so focused on keeping my inclinations a deep dark secret that I’d never given much thought to the future. I admitted as much. “I’ll let you know when I figure it out.”

Jiahao *ahem*-ed loudly. “First of all, Mr. and Mrs. Munsey, I’d like to apologize for my part in the deception perpetrated by your son. Cindy knew how badly Ben wanted to be a girl—at least for a while—and we both thought this would be a harmless way to help him out. But it did involve lying, and that wasn’t right.” He paused. “But there’s a larger issue. Somebody out there is sending similar notes to other families, and we need to figure out *who*.”

Cindy nodded toward the front door. “It has to be the neighbors, doesn’t it? Some idiot stirring up trouble? God knows there’s enough of *them* around.”

“It’s unlikely to be someone any of us told directly,” Jiahao said. “I think we’re all smart enough not to talk to an obvious loose cannon. But it could easily be one of *their* friends or family members who somehow got wind of our situation, perhaps even by accident.”

Mum looked worried. “How could we ever find that out? We can’t contact-trace who told who, like it’s some sort of disease. Certainly not without announcing to the world that my Benji started the whole thing. Think of all those families being threatened, all the poor boys obliged to dress up like girls—goodness, my baby could end up going to prison!”

I was squirming in my seat, to the point where they were all looking at me.

Cindy said, “Don’t worry, sis, I’m sure it won’t come to *that*.”

I fidgeted, then hugged myself, more aware than ever before that I had effectively turned myself into a woman. I’d taken cross-dressing to a whole new level, but at the same time I had betrayed everyone who felt the same passions I did.

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Jiahao's eyes narrowed. "Ben—Bethany, rather—what aren't you telling us?"

My throat was threatening to seize up, but the truth burst out. "It's all my fault!" Deep breath. "You see, there's this message board for local cross-dressers... Not just anybody can get in; you have to sign up, and then message back and forth with a moderator to get approved. It's only for real cross-dressers. Anyway... a couple weeks back I posted about what I did—and that my plan had *worked*."

Jiahao slapped his knee. "Of course, I should've known—copycats!"

Mum's eyes went wide. "You mean, because of what *we* did—" She was being generous, taking some of the blame. "—those poor boys are writing anonymous notes threatening their *own* families? Just so they can dress up as girls?"

Dad's face fell into his hands. "Oh God, what a mess!"

Jiahao's voice was firm. "I'm afraid I'll have to report this. We started something here that could easily spiral out of control. The families have to be told. They'll find out sooner or later regardless, but if we go public now we can prevent any further damage. The police can arrange counselling for the people affected so far, but that won't be the case if this meme spreads much further."

I stood up, taking a moment to straighten my skirt. I'd lied to the people closest to me and it was time to pay the darn piper. "Mum, Dad? I know what I have to do." Going public wouldn't be easy. Talking to the cops was one thing, but facing the media while wearing makeup and a little black dress? I hadn't broken any laws, so I wasn't worried about going to jail, but to stand in front of a bunch of reporters, and likely a few TV cameras, and admit to being a cross-dresser? That would take balls, and for me balls were literally in short supply.

Cindy enfolded me in a badly needed hug. "It's okay, babycakes. I'm gonna be right there with you—we all will. When everybody sees how pretty you are, how *feminine* you are, no way will they be able to write you off as just some dude in a dress. They'll see you as the wonderful woman you've become."

That might've been the moment when I knew I was truly meant to be a woman, or it might've been the point of no return when I realized, for the sake of my own credibility, that I couldn't go back to being a guy. Either way, I was committed to following the path of short skirts and high heels, long hair and cosmetics—and frankly the more fabulously female I could make myself, the better off I'd be.

What made it bearable was that my family stood behind me. Even my father decided that he'd look more sympathetic, and a lot less gullible, if he ran with the idea that he'd known about his younger daughter all along.

There may be better ways of transitioning, but this was the one that chose me. ■

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## SEVERAL YEARS LATER

Oh crap... I was afraid this might happen. You can run but you can't hide from the wrath of a cross-dresser who's been hard done by. I guess just changing my last name, moving to Canada and becoming a woman wasn't enough to escape my fate. Time to pay the piper. Again.

Ah-ha! Now I've got you... You don't know me, but I was one of those poor saps you suckered into threatening his family so he could become a girl for awhile. Guess what, bitch... it didn't work. Soon as they found out what I did, they gave me the heave-ho. I had to go live with my butch aunt who put me to work in her bait shop in rural Idaho. I never wore a skirt or a pretty dress again, and I ended up becoming all hard and masculine... You're gonna pay for all that.

Bethany spent years on the run, trying to escape the effects of her terrible mistake. She took estrogen, grew hair down to her waist and got the operation, then changed her name and moved to a suburb in Nova Scotia where she found work as a fashion consultant, but she was forever afraid that her past might catch up with her. And one day, as she was undressing for bed, it did...

Here's the way this is gonna go down, tootsie. Now that you're the woman I should've been and I'm the man your actions forced me to be, all we got left is to do what comes natural for a man and woman, if ya catch my drift. You're all soft and feminine anyway, so I'm sure you won't mind one bit if I make you even *more* of a woman, and hey—you can return the favor by making me feel like more of a man. I think you owe me that much. Or I could demonstrate how Bessie here sounds. Spoiler alert: really loud...

Bethany agreed to Hal's terms and they did the deed... Incredibly, they soon fell in love, married, and adopted a small boy who they raised to feel no guilt whatsoever about being a cross-dresser.

*Amanda Hawkins*