

Gaby

Summer Girl



Maddy Bell

Gaby

Book 2

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Part 1

A Gaby Summer

I awoke to the sounds of a summer Sunday morning. I couldn't place where I was immediately but then I realised that I was in my room at Bond acres. Seven thirty – time for a training ride before meeting the guys. I dressed quickly and managed to leave the house without waking Jules and Dad, I think.

I decided to head out to Retford, I needed to loosen up after yesterdays train journey. I was riding on sort of autopilot and going over last week's holiday with mum. This 'training' ride was a bit different to last week with Mum and Maria and the rest of the team! That day was awesome! Then there was Thursday with Kat and Freddii at the pool, that was just so much fun.

As I rode past Thoresby Hall, people were already setting up for the boot sale; it would be busy around here in an hour or so. I went back to my musing. Now Sunday and Mums big win, now that was just an incredible day, riding in the team bus, doing the feed, Mums big sprint finish, meeting Kat. Then I remembered about the masquerade at the dinner. Hmm not really sure how I feel about that or having to pretend to be a girl at the Krone. I guess it was no real hardship, the strange thing really was the way both Mum and Dad not only went along with it but Mum especially encouraged it.

I stopped briefly to watch the traffic on the A1 as I crossed the bridge, there was a time trial on, so I watched a few riders pass before I continued on. Well at least I can forget dressing up as Gaby now I'm home; I mean what reason could there be?

Retford was negotiated and I turned toward Worksop. I decided I'd better try a bit harder on the way home so I turned my attention to my riding. Past the prison, under the A1 at Ranby and along to Worksop, I decided to cut through the town rather than take the bypass. The town safely crossed I followed the Mansfield sign which would take me home. Just over twenty minutes later I was home and it was still not much past nine.

We had arranged to meet at Maddy's for a sort of end of holiday party, yeagh! School tomorrow. By the time I had showered and joined the others for breakfast it was nearly time to leave for Maddy's.

"What are you up to today Drew?" Dad asked

"Meeting the guys, Mrs Peters is feeding us" I replied

"When are you going?"

"Er, I need to leave in a minute or two"

"I'll give you a lift, I'm dropping your sister off at Charlie's so I can drop you on the way ok?"

"Thanks Dad, I'll just get my stuff"

"Your sister will be a few minutes yet. Did you enjoy your ride?"

"It was ok, I went out to Retford"

"You just be careful when you're out"

"I am"

"You are what?" Jules asked as she joined us

"Careful when I'm out"

"Oh right"

"Come on you two if you want a lift"

Dad dropped me at the end of the Peter's road and I walked along to Maddy's abode.

"Hi Drew, come on in, have a good holiday?" Mad's mum answered the door

"Yes thanks Mrs P, the weather was good and we got to see mum a fair bit"

"That's good" she lead me through to the back of the house.

"Drew's here girls" she announced

Much to my surprise I found myself engulfed by Ally, Mad and Bernie who gave me a considerable hug. I don't know what I did to deserve that.

"What was that for?" I said blushing

"We missed you this week" Bernie giggled

"You want a drink Drew?" Maddy asked

"Yes please"

"Come on Drew, tell us all about it"

"Is Rhod coming?" I asked

"He'll be here about twelve, he's not fully recovered yet but he went swimming with me and Ally on Friday" Bernie replied

I found a comfortable spot – the swing seat and prepared to tell them about the trip.

"Wait for me" Maddy yelled as she came back out with my drink. She joined me on the swing seat and it was time to tell my tale.

"So you had to pretend to be a girl at the hotel?" Ally queried

"Yeah, otherwise we couldn't have stayed there. I don't know why but they thought I was a girl when we arrived and we couldn't convince them otherwise," I added

"That is just so weird Drew" Maddy added. "And so you had to share with Jules?"

"Yep, she wasn't pleased"

"I bet!" Bernie stated

"...and she thought you were a girl?"

"Well I was wearing Jules stuff still so I guess I looked a bit girly"

The girls just nodded.

"Your Mum dressed you up?" Maddy was incredulous

"Well she said if it was worth doing, it was worth doing well"

"And you wore her dress?" Bernie continued the questions

"Well I could hardly go to a fancy dinner in jeans could I?"

I told them all about Monday's visits and Rhod arrived as I started to tell them about the Nurburgring place. I hadn't seen him for a couple of weeks and he was looking a bit drawn and peaky still.

Ally was really interested in all the car stuff, she's a Grand Prix fan and has a crush on Jensen Button!

They listened as I bored them with Tuesday's training session and how Mum came clean about the deception at the reception on Sunday. I explained how I thought a couple of the girl's still thought I was a girl even after Mum explaining it all.

I raved about the Roman Villa and how everyone recognised Mum. They all thought that was pretty cool. I had got through Wednesday before Maddy's mum called us for lunch, pasta, pesto and salad today followed by homemade ice cream.

"And so they saw your tan lines?" Ally giggled

"Yeah so I had to tell them how I got them, I'm not sure if they really understood it all though. I guess that's just about it. We did some sightseeing on Friday after Mum left then Kat took us around Cologne before we got the train."

"Sounds like you had a good time" Rhod suggested

"Yeah even if Gaby had to go along too," Ally added

"Well that wasn't too bad I guess" I can't believe I said that, "so what have you guys been doing?"



The others hadn't really done that much, only Mad had really done anything, a visit to 'Anicon' over in Manchester. So we checked out her pictures and stuff that she got, the others had seen it before but were happy to see it all again with me. Mad and her olds had gone in costume, I was blown away by Maddy's. She'd even used a wash out hair colour and looked just awesome.

It was getting on in the afternoon before I remembered to ask about our exchange partners.

"Rhod got a mail from Dan but no one else has" Mad told me

"What did Dan have to say?" I asked Rhod

"You know, stuff."

"Like?" I prodded

"Well you know, what stuff he's doing at school, he runs for the school so he was going on about some match he was going to, it was all percentages this and rating that, pretty boring"

"Like don't you know your average?" Maddy mimicked an American accent much to everyone's mirth.

"Perhaps we should mail them?" I suggested

So that's what we did. My mail to Britney had the edited highlights of my German trip; I missed out the Gaby moments!

"Dinner!" Maddy's Dad called us in

You have to say the Peters eat well. We sat down to a proper Sunday roast, Rhod had some stuffed aubergine thing instead of the beef and Mrs P once again delighted our taste buds with a peach and rhubarb crumble with real custard. Mmmm. If you've never tried it, do. After washing up we watched a couple of Buffy vids before Mr P did the taxi bit to get us all home.

Tomorrow was the start of summer term, which means just one thing – six weeks until the summer hols!

Part 2

In The Summertime

"Get up Drew!"

I prised my eyes open when I heard Dads voice, ugh Monday morning, school!

"Coming" I drawled to put him off.

I dragged myself up, did my ablutions and descended to the kitchen for a hurried breakfast.

"Get a move on Drew, do you want a lift?"

"Please"

"Come on then, I'm running late this morning too"

I wasn't awake enough to come back with a witty rejoinder, I guess Saturdays journey has caught up!

Summer term – two things happen at our school every year in summer term, athletics and girls summer uniform! Well the former is really the result of the end of the football and rugby seasons; the latter is just tradition, and a tradition a lot of the girls detest! I think I told you about my first trip out with the girls dressed as Gaby? Yeah? In that case you'll remember that the week before they dressed me in Mad's summer uniform, pink and barely knee length! Well they do get a choice; they can have pale yellow instead!

As a boy we don't get any choice but at least the girls dresses are shorter than their uniform skirts! So when I met the girls they were wearing their summer frocks, Maddy in her pink, Ally and Bernie preferred, if that's the word, yellow!



"Hi Drew" Maddy greeted me

"Hi Guys"

"Is everyone coming round tonight" Rhod asked as he joined us

"I'm set" I replied

"Us too, why?" Bernie added

"Mum just want to know how many to expect, I said I'd ring her at lunchtime"

The first bell went off telling us we had five minutes before we have to go in.

"See you two at lunch?" Maddy asked as they prepared to leave us

"Usual place?" I queried

"Ok see you then" Maddy answered as they headed toward their form room.

I was caught unaware as I was hailed as Rhod and I headed in.

"Drew, wait up!"

I turned to see who had called, it was Anna, her hair if anything even pinker than before the holiday. Rhod walked on while I waited for her to catch up.

"Hi Anna, you have a good holiday?"

"Fine thanks"

"What's up, I need to get to my form"

"Er, well you, well Gaby didn't make the sleepover the other week so I was wondering if you, erm she would come next week, please?"

I was a bit gobsmacked, I thought I'd escaped by not showing last time and here was Anna practically begging me, or rather Gaby to join her next sleepover. I hedged

"I'll have to let you know later"

The disappointment was evident in her face.

"Well it's on Wednesday, I checked with Jules, she said you usually stay in doing homework then"

"Ok, I'll let you know if I, er Gaby can make it"

The second bell sounded

"Look I've got to go, see you later"

"Ok, bye Drew"

She hurried off towards her class leaving me bewildered. Just when I thought Gaby was gone, everyone wants her around, well perhaps not everyone but you know what I mean. Well I've made my decision – no more Gaby, they can all like or lump it!

I did my best to forget about Anna's sleepover as I tackled double maths and geography before lunchtime. I headed to our usual lunch spot under the trees where the girls were already waiting.

"Did Anna catch you this morning?" Ally asked

"Yeah" I must have sounded a bit petulant or something because Mad then asked

"Well what did she want then?"

"Nothing really"

"Not likely!" Bernie retorted

"Ok, she wants Gaby to go to her next sleepover, there I've told you. And I'll tell you now and Anna when I see her, I'm not doing it!"

"Doing what Drew?" Rhod queried as he joined us on the grass.

I hesitated thinking of a reply, just long enough for Ally to get in first.

"Anna invited Gaby to a sleepover"

"You're kidding right? Drew?"

"No she's not kidding, I was just telling this lot I'm not doing it."

"Spoilsport!" Maddy mumbled

"Wimp" added Bernie

"You are really going to pass up going to a girls sleepover? Boy, I never thought I'd see the day" Rhod lamented

"Yeah well it's not you that's expected to dress up like a girl is it?" I countered

"You make a cute girl" he replied

"Not you too! First this lot, now you. I am not doing it!" I was getting a bit peed off now

"Leave him alone" Maddy directed as she cuddled up to me. I could get to like this side of Maddy. She even hung on when some kids started whistling and cat calling as they passed us. I calmed down and set about my sandwiches, cheese and Marmite®, Maddy swapped one of mine for her chicken salad – we often ended up with more of a buffet as we all shared our lunches.

After eating we sat around chatting until the registration bell heralded our afternoon classes. The afternoon was pretty uneventful and I shared the classes with Clive and Paul. Holiday stories were exchanged, mine being the abridged version, i.e. no Gaby! Eventually school finished and I joined the rest of the gang to walk to Rhod's house.

As his mum's salon was open until five thirty, we had nearly two hours before she got home so Rhod's PS2 was pressed into action, Ally got to choose the game this week, F1 Championship was the unsurprising choice.

"You really going to pass up going to a girls sleepover Drew?" Rhod asked as we watched Ally racing Bernie.

"Yep" I replied

Overhearing our conversation Maddy chimed in

"I told her I'd help her out last time Anna asked"

"You mean she asked you before?" Rhod was incredulous

"Before the holiday and I am not going!" I replied vehemently

"Well I would if she asked me" Rhod surprised me with his statement

"What dress up as Pippa again?" I asked

"Sure. I mean its only clothes and how many times does the average boy get the chance to go to an all girl party?"

Well I had to concede his point.

"I won, I won! Who's next to get whapped?" Ally enthused

"I'll have a go" Rhod offered and he replaced a bored Bernie in front of the screen.

"What do you think Mad?" I asked

"I agree with Rhod especially as Anna's parties are supposed to be a bit wild"

"Sheesh! Even my girlfriend" I hoped I could get away with that, "want's me to dress up as a girl"

"Well you are kinda cute as Gaby" she replied

I got away with it I think.

"I am not cute!"

"Oh yes you are!" Ally and Bernie echoed, I glanced over at Rhod who just shrugged his shoulders non-committally.

"Look I'm not doing it so drop it eh?"

"Ok Drew" Mad answered, why didn't I believe her?

Sylv, Rhod's mum poked her head around the door when she got in.

"Hi kids"

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Sylv"

"What are you up to tonight?"

"Just playing on the console mum" Rhod offered

"Well dinner is in ten minutes so you can all get the table ready and wash your hands"

We might be on first name terms but Sylv's word was law.

"So kids, what's new?" Sylv asked as we tucked into our food.

"Not much really" Ally offered

"Drew, I mean Gaby got an invite to Anna's party next week" Rhod told his mum

"Rhod!" I exclaimed

Realising that he had made a faux pas Rhod coloured up

"Sorry Drew"

"Well Drew are you going?" Sylv asked with a glint in her eye

"No way!" I exclaimed

"We've been trying to get **Gaby** to go though" Maddy emphasised the name

"And is 'Gaby' likely to go?" Sylv wouldn't let go now

All eyes turned to me.

"Aaaah"

"It's all right Drew, I know it was you the other week, I'm not blind and my son here confirmed my suspicions"

"Sorry Drew, it just sort of slipped out," Rhod admitted

At this rate half the town would know!

"Well Drew, will Gaby be attending Anna's little soirée?" Sylv pursued, "after all you're not likely to get another invite like that in a hurry"

"He's already wriggled out of one" Bernie advised her

"Iii" I shrugged in defeat, everyone, but everyone including Rhod, whom I gave a withering look, seemed to think that Gaby should attend the sleepover. With my mind made up for me I finally got my voice back.

"I guess I have to go to get you lot off my back"

"Way to go Gabs" Ally cheered

"Ooh playtime" Maddy added, I gave her a 'look'

"In that case you'll need my services before you go" Sylv advised

"Huh?" I queried. I was being a bit inarticulate this evening

"Well you want to look good don't you?"

"Course she does" Bernie gushed

"That's settled, after school you come round to the salon and I'll fix you up"

"Er thanks, I think"

"Now who wants some 'Phish Food'?"

Well at least the subject was dropped in favour of ice cream!

"Hey Drew" Jules greeted me when I got home

"Oh hi sis"

"Did she ask then?"

"Who ask what" I hedged

"She did didn't she?" Jules had seen past my delaying tactics

"Yes Anna asked Gaby to go to her sleepover next week"

"And?"

"And I said I'd let her know"

"Don't keep me in suspenders, are you gonna go then?"

"Well everyone else including Sylv thinks I should"

"Sylv knows about?" Jules queried

"Yep"

"So?"

"So I guess Gaby's going to the ball"

"Brill! I thought you would, you're too curious not to"

"That's not all"

"There's more bro?"

"Yeah, Sylv wants to give me a make over before hand too"

Well the look on Jules face was priceless.

"And just for the record, I'm doing this to get everyone off my back and not because I like dressing up as a girl right?"

"Okay, okay, I won't tell them about last week then" she smirked

"I already did"

Juliette just kept smirking

"Oh give over, I'm going to bed. Goodnight"

"Night sis"

Now Jules was at it.

My dreams were destined to be weird tonight! I vowed that I was gonna be Gaby free when I got back from holiday and here I am, back two days and I've got a salon appointment and I'm accepting an invitation to an all girl sleepover! Will I ever break this cycle? Next week is definitely the end of Gaby! There I've made up my mind and I'm sticking to it. I dropped into a fitful sleep.

Part 3

Fame!

Tuesday Got up late (again!) Jules reckons I could sleep for England but I think I'm only second string. He he. Met Paul and Clive at papershop and walked to school with them.

Our English teacher, Miss Ross, had got us all writing a diary this week and I have to say that so far mine is very boring! Well the day didn't get any more exciting than that, well not till after school anyway.

I know it's only two weeks since I last raced but it seems like forever. I got myself ready as soon as I got home, grabbed a sandwich and went to polish my bike before going out. I settled down to doing a thorough job, I had an hour before I needed to leave and after seeing the gleaming team bikes in Germany I was determined to use that bit of psychology. I was surprised; in fact I jumped when the doorbell went.

"Hi Mad" guess who?

"Hi Drew, you ready?" Mad asked

"For what? I'm racing tonight remember"

"Course I remember, I thought I'd ride out with you if that's ok" she sounded a bit peeved.

"Er sorry. Yeah why not, I'm just finishing cleaning my bike, come round to the garage"

"Ok"

I estimated we would take about five minutes longer to get to Cuckney than I usually do so I quickly checked my tyres before declaring I was ready to leave. We must have looked an odd pair as we rode along, me on a racing bike wearing a skinsuit and Mad in shorts and t-shirt on her lumpy ATB.

Now let me just state that tonight I was *not* wearing earrings or any makeup ok.

"Hi Dee, I take it your racing?" John the timekeeper greeted me

"Er yes please" I replied – Maddy stifled a laugh

"It's not funny!" I mouthed to her as John fetched the signing on sheet.

"We'll all have to watch out for you eh!" John went on, I looked dumb, "I bet that mum of yours has been giving you tips eh?"

"Oh, yes"

"That was a great ride last week, I saw the highlights on Eurosport"

"I didn't know it was on, but as I was there I didn't think to look"

"Number eight this week, I think I've got it taped, I usually do, I'll bring it next week" he offered

"That would be great" I enthused

"I can't interest you in a ride" he addressed Mad

"Er no, I'm strictly a spectator for 'Dee'" she replied

"About ten minutes before we start Dee"

"Thanks"

We walked along to a bench where I could finish getting ready.

"I can't believe they think I'm a girl!" I pouted

"It's not so bad 'Dee', they think I'm one all the time" Mad replied deadpan

Well I couldn't keep a straight face; I just cracked up followed closely by Mad.

I started to give my usual pre race self-massage but my new 'manager' took over and gave me a thorough leg rub that I can never manage myself.

"I'll have to have you at all my races if this is the treatment I get" I joked

Mad gave me an appraising look.

"Time for you to go 'Dee'"

"Yeah and give up the Dee business please"

"Okay Gab, see you in a while"

Grrr girls!

It was a nice evening but the lack of any real wind meant that there was little help anywhere around the course. It seemed like forever getting to the turn

and longer on the return although my clock was showing a healthy twenty four minutes when I passed Mad shouting at me at the last corner. I wheezed a bit heavier and pushed on to the finish.

"Eight!" I gasped

I checked my computer, nah there must be something up with it perhaps I stopped it early?

When I got back to the finish I was greeted by a lot of 'well done's, a bit of clapping and smiling all-round.

"25.03 Dee, congratulations!" John shouted across

I just about managed to put my bike down before Maddy grabbed a hold of me and started doing that girly jiggy thing they do when they're excited. I had little choice but to let her finish.

"Stop Mad please?"

"Sorry Gab, come on I'll do your legs!"

We had attracted a small audience of amused (mostly) competitors and helpers. With legs fast turning to jelly, Mad led me to the bench where I just collapsed with my bottle of energy drink. My 'manager' attended to cleaning me up and giving my legs a post race rub aah! bliss!

I wasn't the only one who had done a personal best; there were several more rounds of congratulations while Mad administered to my needs.

"I can't believe it!" I stated

"What?" Mad asked

"Well taking most of a minute off my best" I ticked off one finger, "you coming out and doing this," a second finger, "and everyone still thinks I'm a girl!" a third finger.

Mad just giggled

"Come on Drew, let's go home"

"...25.03 mum! I couldn't believe it, I thought my computer had broken"

"Well done son. How's school going?" mum asked

"Oh you know, same old"

"Jules says you're going with her to Anna's party?"

Loudmouth sister!

"Yeah, I got talked into going"

"You're going as 'Gaby'?"

"Yes mum" I sighed

"Well make sure you wear a clean bra and pants"

"Muuuum!" I exclaimed

"Okay Drew, are you sure you want to dress up again?"

"Well like Rhod said yesterday, it's only clothes"

"Remember what I said before, if you want to talk?"

"Yes mum"

"Now put your dad on"

"Dad! Mum wants you" I shouted before continuing, "bye mum"

"Bye Drew"

Wednesday's entry in the diary was a bit more exciting!

I managed to stay out of trouble and Gaby until Thursday evening and Mr Woods meeting.

"Okay people settle down"

We quieted.

"We've sorted out the programme and there has been a bit of a change of plan" he paused for emphasis as we all looked at each other.

"Our friends in America say they don't want too many excursions, they are going to have a few days sightseeing before they arrive in Warsop. So we will now have just six excursions which you can all go on."

There was a round of happy / excited comments.

"Now I know one or two of you have been in contact with your exchangees, I hope you are 'bonding'?"

"Yes sir"

"Good. Right then I'll let you know when we are meeting again. Off you go"

I hung back to talk to Mr Woods

"Ah young Bond, what can I do for you?"

"Well sir, urm,"

"Come on Drew, spit it out"

"Well everyone else has someone the same sex as an exchange partner, how come I got a girl?"

Mr Wood looked thoughtful for a moment and then made a decision.

"Okay Drew, the Americans had more girls than boys compared to our side. Rather than disappoint anyone I thought you wouldn't mind looking after Britney, especially as you er, 'get on well' with the girls and your sister will have a student there too. Is that ok?"

"Yeah, I was just curious"

"Fine, see you next time Drew, goodnight"

"Nite Sir"

"My place after school Drew" Mad shouted across the crowded corridor. It received the expected whistles and catcalls from our classmates, which caused the 'sisters Grimm', to both turn bright red.

Sheesh I was not looking forward to this – Mad was bound to be in full 'dress Gaby' mode, I just hoped I could get away with something fairly unisex!

After an afternoon of sniggers from the girls and envious (if only they knew) glances from the boys, I finally left the hell that was school. The girls were waiting for me; there was no escape!

'Aunt Carol' was already appraised of what was going down so after feeding us, a salad unfortunately, she left us to it. I thought that I might get away with just trying on a few things – no way! My 'friends' started on my hair, moved on to my nails then rounded off with my face. I looked like Mad's twin again, very disconcerting.

"Right Drew, underwear first then we'll find you a nice outfit"

Ally passed me a set of lingerie the like I'd only seen in shop windows – all lace and underwiring. There was no point arguing, I was already on a loser. I changed in the bathroom; this bra was so different to any of those I had worn before. I positioned my breastforms and returned to the lynch mob.

"Come on girlfriend!" Bernie purred

"Wow Gab, that is soo sexy" Ally added

"Give over. Can we just get on with this? Please?"

"Okay Gaby"

Well I thought I'd seen most of Mad's wardrobe but there was stuff here I'd never seen her wear. My tormentors had me in and out of about a dozen outfits from jeans to a party frock. In the end I had to remodel three outfits for 'Aunt Carol' who decided on the final selection.

At least it wasn't too revealing!

"Okay girls time to go home, Gaby you're staying here tonight, I'll drop you two off"

"Yes Mrs Peters"

"Yes Aunt Carol"

Apparently there were forces in operation that I was unaware of.

"Come on Gabs, mum's bringing pizza back"

Even though I was wearing a dress, that sounded good.

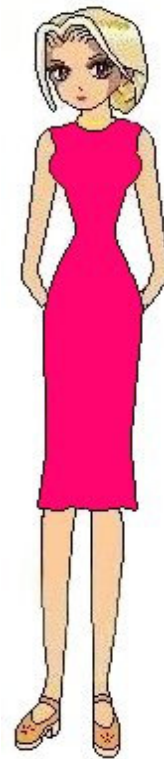
"Mum's taking us to Manchester tomorrow" Mad dropped into the conversation.

"Who's 'us'?" well I had to ask

"Ally, Bern, you Gabs and me of course"

Of course! What is this? Some sort of conspiracy?

"Whoa, whoa. I said I'd go to Anna's party not become Gaby full time"



"Oh come on Gab, it's only shopping"

I rolled my eyes.

"And like no one will know you in Manchester"

"I guess not"

"Oh pleeze!" she begged

Girls! Especially ones as cute as Maddy. Hang on, if Maddy is cute and I look like her twin that means – shit (excuse me), I'm cute! Aargh!

"What?"

"Er yeah ok" I replied in defeat.

At least the pizza was good, hot and spicy meat feast.

Part 4

Manchester United

I spent the night in the spare room wearing one of Mad's nightgowns and awoke to the sound of the shower.

"Come on Gaby, up an at 'em" that was 'Aunt' Carol

"Shower, dress, breakfast, come on"

I tried to get my head round what was happening; here I am in a nightdress, in my girlfriend's spare room. Ah well! The shower cut off and a couple of minutes later there was a tap on the door.

"Gab, showers free" Mad advised

"How much was it before?" I replied

"What?"

"Never mind"

"I'll put your clothes out while you shower"

What delights of Maddy's wardrobe would I wear today? Please let it be something not too girly. Please? I showered quickly and returned to 'my' room where Mad had left my outfit for the day.



I guess it could have been a lot worse, they were girls jeans, what else, and at least the front of the shirt was opaque, unlike the sleeves and back! I also had another set of underwear, a lacy bra and what I think you call a thong, and there wasn't much of it. A pair of Maddy's trainers and 'cute' be-bobbled trainer sox finished the outfit. Nothing I couldn't cope with.

"Mad? Can you give me a hand?"

"What can't put jeans on?" she replied poking her head around the door.

"No, breasts" I stated

"Use your own, you can't have mine" she giggled

"Give me a break Mad. Can you stick mine on for me, I don't want them looking odd"

"Sure Gab"

Well after the breast forms were glued on (after I checked that I had the solvent) I finished getting dressed. I joined Aunt Carol and Mad in the kitchen for breakfast.

"Morning Gaby"

"G'morning Auntie"

"Well don't you look nice this morning"

"Thank you"

"Eat up you two, we are picking the others up at eight thirty" Aunt Carol stated

"Okay mum" Mad replied for both of us as I had a mouthful of muesli.

I checked the clock, seven fifty - bags of time. Wrong!

Mad dragged me up to her room where she quickly did a double makeup application then started on my hair.

"What are you doing now?" I asked

"I thought we could try something different with your hair today"

"Really? Why can't I have like usual?"

"You are such a geek Gaby Thomas, live a little" she exclaimed

So I sat as she played then redid some of my makeup. When I saw me in the mirror I screamed.

"**AARGH!** What have you done to me?"

"Well I know it's a bit different to what you're used to"

"Too right" I interrupted, "change it back, I can't go outside like this"

"Okay, but keep the ponytail please, its really cute"

We were disturbed by Aunt Carol's call

"Come on girls, time to go"

Maddy could see I was less than happy about how I looked,

"Come on Drew, I'll sort it out in the car, promise"

"There you are, I think that's a bit too much makeup Madeline, don't you think Gabrielle"

"Yes Aunt Carol" I agreed

"In the car, both of you, I'll be out in a minute."

So I had to go outside looking like an overdone pre-teen. I sat and fumed. It was bad enough that I was armlocked into this trip and now my girlfriend, no make that ex-girlfriend, had made me look ridiculous to boot. Hmmm!

"Look I'm sorry Drew, I just got a bit carried away" Mad tried to apologise

"Well do it on yourself next time" I sulked

"Right you two" Mrs Peters prevented the recriminations starting, "here" she presented her daughter with a wash bag.

"You Madeline Peters will clean that gunk off your cousin and then do a proper job, understand?"

"Yes mum"



"Okay Gaby?"

"Yes Auntie Carol"

We set off to pick up the others and by the time we got to Bernie's my face was mostly clean of the gunk Maddy had painted it with. Ally and Bernie sensed there was something going on and just gave us sideways glances while Mad repaired my makeup to its former 'glory'. By the time we reached Chesterfield I looked like Gaby's usual self and the tension in the car lifted.

With the makeup put away, a more normal conversation started up and whilst not forgiven, I was softening to Mad again by the time we got to Manchester city centre just after ten.

Before we left the car, Aunt Carol checked my makeup and grunting approval we headed for the shops. You don't need all the details but by the time we stopped for lunch near the town hall I was already beyond bored. The others pored over racks of clothing and displays of footwear, occasionally trying something on. Now I know that shopping with the girls can get tedious but I was still not in a great mood after this morning. What didn't help was realising that the low cut jeans I was wearing exposed my underwear everytime I left the vertical!

"Okay girls, enough clothes for now" Mrs Peters advised us

"Aw!" Ally whined

"Gaby has been very patient so far today, let her choose a few shops, okay Gab?"

"Yeah?"

"Well where are we going Gab?" Bernie asked

"There's a big bookshop I saw not far from here"

"Lead on Macduff" Aunt Carol instructed

So we despatched Mrs P to the coffee shop whilst we sieved through the shelves of Pratchett, Aldiss, Heinlein etc for best part of an hour. Maddy disappeared while I was queuing to pay for the new Pratchett 'Thief of Time'.

"You all done?" Aunt Carol asked when we met her and Mad by the lift.

"Yep"

"I'm not sure what you'll think of this Drew but my daughter really does want to apologise for this morning. She want to buy you a present to ask forgiveness, she realises you are really quite annoyed with her"

I nodded and Mad lowered her eyes. Ally and Bernie, still didn't know what was going off and just stood watching the scenario develop.

"That's not really necessary Mad, Mrs Peters, I'll get over it" I stated. Although my first instinct was to shout yes, I really wasn't that mad with her.

"I thought you might say that but my daughter really wants to make amends. Go on Madeline"

"Drew er Gaby, oh heck I'm really sorry"

We ended up in each other's arms, breast to breast me comforting a sniffing Maddy.

"Aw come on you two, put each other down" Bernie commented

Ally snorted and Mrs P chuckled too.

"What were you proposing on getting me then?" well I had to ask didn't I?

"Well I thought a new bike helmet"

"But that's at least forty pounds Mad" I stated

"I know, but I think you deserve something. I mean you take all this dressing up stuff from us girls, we've coerced you into going to the party next week and, well today is the first time you've really complained."

We were now walking back towards the Arndale Centre.

"She's right Gab, we all keep on at you and you just go with the flow" Ally put in

I was trying to cover all the colours from blush to crimson.

"And I've not helped either" Mrs P added, "I should have stopped these Wight's but instead I've encouraged this masquerade"

"Hey it's not all you guys, I could, should have said no so I'm partly to blame too" I insisted

"No Drew I don't think you could" Mrs P finished. I didn't pursue it.

Even Ally and Bernie were feeling guilty by this time and they still didn't know what had sparked all this off.

"I know" Bernie enthused, "we all put in towards Drew's new helmet, how's that Drew?"

"Only if you really want to"

"Say yes Drew, we'll feel better and you get that new helmet you keep on about" Mad put the case succinctly.

"I surrender" we were of course now stood outside of the cycle shop that Mrs P had been herding us toward.

I knew which helmet I wanted, a proper racing lid, loads of vents and a smart metallic blue finish so it didn't take long to select that but while my companions sorted out payment, I lost myself in the lovely shiny bits. Now me in a bike shop and this is inevitable, whilst mum is a pro, our own kit is mostly good mid priced stuff so nothing flash. So I usually ooh and ah with the best at the fancy stuff, Campag Record, Middleburn, Hope, nope none of that Shimano stuff for me if I can help it!

"Come on Gaby, time for a couple more shops" Mrs P called to me.

I decided to wait outside while they all piled into Top Shop but soon wished I hadn't as nearly every male under 95 that walked past was eyeing me up. The others found me just before I got paranoid and we headed off to the car park.

We stopped in Bakewell for tea and arrived back in Warsop just before seven. Gaby returned to Drew and Mrs P drove me home.

"Here Drew, don't forget this" she passed me my new helmet, "you'll need it in the morning!"

"Thanks Mrs Peters, I'm sorry I spoilt today"

"Not your fault Drew and you can call me Aunt Carol anytime eh?"

"Goodnight"

"Nite Drew"

She waited until I was inside before driving away.

Part 5

Prelude to Party

"You okay Drew?" Dad asked

"Yeah sure" I returned my attention to the passing fields.

In truth I was anything but fine. Yesterday was a disaster to put it mildly. Looking back I think I really did over react to what was, lets face it just an overdone makeup job. It wasn't even what I was dressed in and lets face it that should have been enough. No it was the make up and how it made me look, it seemed I was okay with looking like a girl, but girl wearing lots of makeup just flipped the switch. Go figure!

I think, no I know I really upset Maddy, she didn't mean anything by it and I really blew it up, which in turn got Mrs P annoyed with Mad. Guiltily I glanced at my new helmet lying on the back seat. That seals it! After Wednesday no more Gaby! Ever!

"Drew!"

"What?"

"What road do we want?"

I checked the map on my lap.

"A64 to Malton then it's the Pickering road"

"You sure you're okay?"

"Just feeling a bit off colour"

"You want to go home then?"

"No!" I almost shouted, "sorry, just a bit tetchy this morning"

"Hmm" Dad sounded less than convinced

Oh yeah forgot to say, we're on our way to a time trial near Pickering, which is not far from Scarborough which is on the Yorkshire coast. (Note from writer Maddy – have a look at www.ytb.org.uk to find out more, I know you want to). It's only a ten miler, but after Tuesdays 25.03 PB I'm quite hyped up.

Its quite a drive up from Warsop, about two hours, for just a ten but Dad okayed it as we can do the tourist bit afterwards. I watched the Yorkshire

countryside slide past and wondered again how Yorkshire ended up so big, I mean even with the new roads it takes about two hours to go from north to south and it must be at least three hours from east to west! Not impressed? Well the next biggest English County is less than half that size!

"Nearly there Drew"

I roused myself after my daydreaming, now eagerly checking out the road over which I would shortly be racing. It didn't look much like postcard Yorkshire in fact Lincolnshire sprang to mind! It looked almost billiard table flat although I could see the moors rising behind Pickering in front of us. Of course the main reason I was racing so far from home was Mums tenet that variety in location and competition was good for you.

The HQ was easy to spot with the number of cars and bikes parked around the pub car park! I retrieved my number and got myself ready before going for a warm up past Flamingo Land, Dad said it was once just a nice zoo but over the years it has added other attractions like an Imax cinema to keep the punters coming. At ten o'clock on a summer Sunday the main park traffic was still an hour away!

"Go!"

Here I was setting off on another race against the clock. There was a stiff easterly breeze across the north south course, not much help either way, but I guess that means not much hindrance too! I realised quite soon that the course had a bit more 'hill' to it than I thought not helped by a quite bumpy surface. In fact the rise up to the turn had me quite breathless.

There was a strange hush as I rounded the island turn then wahoo! Downhill and little sprocket time! I was keeping up a steady twenty-five mph for over a mile before it flattened off but I could smell the finish now, well the sewage farm just over the road. And as quite often happens on new courses, there it was much sooner than I thought. Seeing the chequered flag I made a last big effort failing to even gasp my number and there was Dad.

"How'd it go then son?"

I checked my computer,

"I got 25.07"

"I know it's not another PB but that shows Tuesday wasn't a fluke eh"

"Yeah" I wheezed

Dad wheeled me along to the car, then left me to change while he returned my number to get my 'free' drink. He returned hands full of cups and cake with a huge grin on his face.

"I think we need to get you an accurate clock, you were miles out"

Despite his smile my heart sank

"Much?" I asked

"Ten seconds I'm afraid"

"25.17" I sighed, "that's still my second best"

"No it's not"

"It is" I stated

"Who said it was 25.17?"

"You, I mean I thought, you said"

"I said you were ten seconds out" he interrupted, "it's 24.57!"

Well I tried doing Tuesdays jig on my own then started choking.

"Calm down and drink some of this" Dad gave me a cup of squash (orange and peach flavour) which I sipped at in between grins.

I missed out on best improvement because of Tuesday's ride but I did get first boy, it was only five pounds but I was pretty chuffed anyway. Out of 74 solo riders and 8 tandems there were 33 PB's which left a lot of happy people right out on the edge of North Yorkshire this Sunday.

Not knowing any of the riders, we left fairly quickly and we drove the mile or so into Pickering to get some lunch.

After getting a sausage and mash dinner, you can't beat traditional fare can you, Dad walked us up to the Castle. I like castles, there's something, I think romantic is the word about them. I know in reality they were cold, draughty places but I tend to think of colourful costumes, jousting and all that stuff. Well that's me. Dad sort of collects castles, if we go anywhere with a castle we have to go in, remember Germany? It's ok mostly, they're all different and you get a chance to get great views just like they would 8 or nine hundred years ago! That must have been really impressive at the time.

Anyway I left dad to explore while I climbed to the top of the motte (the mound bit plebes!) which at Pickering is right in the middle of the bailey

(that's the other bit) with a deep ditch around it. Kew! I went back down and explored the walls with their arrow slits; it would take an accurate shot to shoot into these! Dad was happily snapping away so I sat down to wait for him.

I was soon daydreaming about living here say five hundred years ago

"Ah here she comes, the lovely Lady Gabrielle!"

"Who is that with her sir knight?"



Madeline and the Lady Gabrielle

"That is her lady, Madeline"

"They are both so fair!"

"Indeed your lordship, the finest beauties in all of Yorkshire!" the knight boasted.

"Drew, Drew are you awake?"

I was jolted back to the present by Dad's question, that was one weird dream!

"Are you ready?"

"Sure dad"

"Okay then how's about we have a look at the trains?"

"Great" I enthused. I like trains; well the steam variety anyway and there was one of the oldest preserved lines at the bottom of the hill.

We walked down to the grandly named North York Moors Railway or N.Y.M.R. at the platform was a hissing, gleaming tank engine fresh in from its southward trip. I walked up and down admiring the carriages and loco whilst Dad disappeared off somewhere.

"The next northbound is at three thirty, we just missed one" Dad informed me on his return, "we'll come up in the summer and have a ride"

"We could bring the Americans, I'm sure they'd enjoy it" I enthused

"We'll see. The woman inside suggested we go to the Roman camps while we're here, what do you reckon?"

"What Roman camps?"

"She said they're called Cawthorn and they're up on the edge of the moors. And they are free" he related

Well I knew history mad Dad wanted to.

"Okay, but can I look in the shop first please?"

"Go on then, ten minutes, I'll wait out here"

This was more my sort of shop, books, models, and posters, ooh boy heaven! I browsed the shelves and displays studying the model trains and their incredible detail then checking out the prices. Phewee! One of them was over two hundred pounds! I'm sure I was longer than ten minutes but I left with a poster of 'The Mallard' for my bedroom.

"Come on then, we can get a guide book at the National Park office according to the ticket lady."

So that's what we did. The drive up to the camps took about fifteen minutes; there were only a couple of other cars in the car park so at least that was easy. Dad had brought a flask of tea so we had a cup before following the way marked path through the woods to the camps.

Wow, I was expecting a little square thing but these were something else. They are huge! And all the more impressive because the experts think some of the banks were only dug for practice! I tried to imagine marching all the way up here and then digging these ditches just for the night. Sounds like hard work to me but the Romans apparently did it all the time. That's right they did it in that book I read a while ago, what was it now? Something about a lost legion.

Dad was at his photography bit again and I wandered along in his wake. It took us nearly three-quarters of an hour to walk round.

"Drat I've dropped my camera case!" Dad exclaimed

"Do you know where? I can get it" I offered

"I think so but it'll be quicker if I fetch it. Here" he gave me the car keys, " go and get in the car I won't be long"

I hummed to myself as I walked back through the woods.

"It is, it's Dee" I heard timekeeper John's voice from the car park

"Hi Dee, didn't expect to see you up here young lady" he greeted me

"My Dad brought me after the race this morning"

"Oh down on the Malton road eh?"

"Yes"

"What did you do then? You look quite pleased"

Well to be truthful it was good to be able to boast of my ride

"24.57!"

"Oh well done young Bond. You'll follow in your Mum's wheeltracks alright!"

"John, come on" a woman's voice called

"The wife, she's an archaeologist"

"Like on Time Team?" I asked

"Sort of I guess, but without Tony Robinson!" he chuckled

"John!" she called him again

"I better go Dee, nice to see you, are you out on Tuesday?" he asked

"Should be"

"Well see you then, bye"

"Bye"

He trotted off to find his wife while I opened the car.

"Who was that Drew?" Dad asked a moment later

"John, he's the timekeeper at Cuckney"

"Well it's a small world eh?"

"I guess"

We set off for home a good two hours away. Phew what a day. I went through the day's events as we negotiated the lanes towards York. My PB, now that was really cool, and two bests in one week! And that castle was pretty neat too; I recalled my daydream, Lady Gabrielle? Why the hell did I think that? It must have been Maddy's dress from Friday Sheesh! It's a pity we missed that earlier train, which would have been ace chugging across the moors on a steam train. Still the camps were ok too. But how freaky was that seeing John up there. Even wearing jeans and a sweatshirt he thought I was a girl! Ah well I'll tackle that one later.

We avoided the motorways on the way back, stopping at Selby for a late tea before finishing our trip. What a day!

Monday and at least I had a lot more to put in my diary this week! Mad caught up with me before the bell.

"Are you still coming tonight Drew?"

"Yeah, why wouldn't I?"

"Well I thought after Saturday..."

"Look Mad, I sort of lost it a bit. I'm sorry if it spoilt your day, I didn't mean to"

"I know Drew. Mum really tore into me when she got back from dropping you, I really should apologise to you."

"I thought that was what the helmet was for?"

"Well it was sort of but look I'm really sorry for doing that to you"

"Accepted"

"I still think you looked quite cute"

How can you be angry with her?

"I was, am and shall never be cute!" I tried to fume

"You so are Drewbie" she stated

I rolled my eyes as she retreated to her form room.

"What was that about?" Clive asked joining me

"I think she was teasing me"

"Girls" he stated shaking his head, "I bet her cousin Gaby wouldn't tease a guy"

Oh boy, I'd forgotten about Clive's crush on Gaby.

"No I don't suppose she would" I agreed with him.

The rest of the day was uneventful, Mr Wood's spies had failed him this weekend and the cricket team had won by a hundred and ten runs. At least I missed that embarrassment.

"Hi Rhod, Drew" Ally called

"Hi Al" I called back, "where're the others?"

"Behind you" Bernie called

We carefully avoided mentioning Saturday as we walked to Palace Peters; Mad made sure she walked with me though, which was nice.

"Did I tell you guys that there's some emails from America arrived?"

"It must have slipped your mind" Rhod emphasised his sarcasm.

Part 6

Countdown

Well my email from Britney was like a full on girls gossip session! It really did seem that I was only getting the significance of about a quarter of what she was saying, another chunk was devoted (I think) to what I assume was the current teen fashions of Grottoes! Apparently plaid (?) was out, short was in and don't you just hate those baggy pants! I was having a bit of a problem with the English translation so I got Bernie to decipher.

"I think plaid is what we call tartan,"

"Ok"

"Short is short I guess, " she continued

"What else"

"And I suppose she means trousers or jeans when she says pants, I'm sure it's not underwear unless she means boxers" Bernie concluded

"Er I think that's clear"

"What are you going to write back Drew?" Ally enquired

"Well I've decided to keep things neutral as regards my sex, so I guess I'll just tell her about the weekend."

Maddy raised her eyebrows at me.

"...No details, just sort of general," I concluded

"I think I'll do that with Dan too" Rhod enthused

So that's what I did. Of course I missed out my tantrums on Saturday but I told her about everything on Sunday. By the time we had all finished the emails it was time for one of Aunt Carol's infamous curries. A home made Madras, lamb for most of us and Rhod got his own veggie version, complete with my favourite Peshwari Nan. That woman spoils us kids rotten!

"While I remember Drew, Mum said for you to come to ours for tea on Wednesday nudge, nudge, wink, wink" Rhod advised me

Wednesday, it was sitting like cold porridge in my stomach.

"Ok I guess"

"What about your dress and stuff Drew?" Maddy asked

"I ah..." I shrugged my shoulders

"I know, I'll take them to school Wednesday and you can take them with you, I'm sure Sylv will help you get ready, right Rhod?"

"Sure, I think she's looking forward to it" Rhod replied

I just groaned.

"Hey Drew, in case I forget later, I got you something" Mad advised me

"I don't think I need anything else after the helmet"

"I won't give them you then!" she feigned hurt

"Okay, okay, I accept whatever it is" anything for a quiet life

"Here you are then!" a miraculous recovery! Mad passed me a small carrier bag while the others gathered round to see this treasure that was bestowed on me. I opened the bag and plunged my hand inside, retrieving a small box.

"Go on open it" Mad urged

I did the deed, which revealed three items. A pair of ear studs in the shape of 'Snoopy' and a silver neck chain.

"I got it engraved specially" Mad enthused

I inspected the plate on the chain more carefully, '*Gaby*' was in script on one side and 'from all her friends' on the reverse.

"The chain is from all of us, I got you the earrings 'cos I thought they were cute!"

I was made up but I'm not sure why. Was it the emotion of the gifts, or that Gaby was not about to go away, well I don't know. Mad insisted I wear the studs, 'to see what they look like' and after that we ended up watching a video of 'Jumanji'.

At least on Tuesdays I got to do a time trial. I kinda hoped that my cheer squad would come out again, they seemed to spur me to great things. I didn't see the girls until chucking out time and then it was only their backs.

"Hey Drew you still lusting after Maddy?" Paul asked as he fell into step with me.

"I am not 'lusting' after her, we're just mates ok?" I replied a little too quickly

"If you say so. At least you're not as bad as Clive" he continued

"Who's he fancy then?"

"Mad's cousin, that's who" he stated

"Mad's cousin?" the penny dropped, "er which one?"

"Which one he says. Well I guess if you're looking at Mad you might miss her! That hot little Gaby, you know, who did that photo thing the other week!"

Shit, shit, shit!

"Oh I know," I hedged, "I didn't see much of her, I was off sick remember"

"Oh yeah" he affirmed, "well got to go, see you tomorrow Drew"

"Sure, see you tomorrow Paul!"

I was getting weirded

There was no Maddy to ride out with this week; at least I could ride at my own pace. John was there already when I arrived.

"Hi Dee, have a good time on Sunday?"

"Yes thanks"

"Sorry I had to rush off, I would have liked to meet your ole' man, number three tonight."

"Thanks"

I went to get myself ready, I know she only did it once, but I was missing Mad's ministrations. I tried to think positive race type thoughts and I sort of drifted into race mode. I must have missed the guys when I rode through the village because when I passed the 'HQ' area Rhod, Ally, Mad and Bernie were there cheering me on. I felt better straight away and pedalled with more vigour.

Although shorter than the outward, the return leg seemed to drag forever but then there was what I was now calling Mad's corner, with all the guys cheering me. I gasped my number out at the finish but after the last week my time looked set to be fairly horrible.

"No personal this week young lady" John called across to me, "25.31"

"Thanks" well it was still pretty ok even if it wasn't a record.

My supporters club arrived just then.

"How'd it go D?" Rhod asked

"25.31 this week" I replied

"That's still good isn't it?" Bernie queried

"Well not too bad I 'spose"

We moved to 'my' bench so I could get dressed

"Drew Bond, no wonder they think you're a girl!" Ally stage whispered

"What?"

She just rolled her eyes at me, "ears?"

I went to grab a lobe and found what she meant, I was still wearing Mad's present, the Snoopy studs.

"That means, oh no, I've had them in since last night, all day at school, I thought I was getting a few funny looks. And even Paul never said anything!" I fumbled to try and get the unfamiliar butterfly back off.

"Here, let me do it" Ally suggested.

She soon had them out.

"There you go, don't lose them, you should wear them tomorrow for the party"

All this time Rhod had been stifling his laughter but he had to let go and he did. Last week jumping up and down, this week hysterical laughter – we seemed to be putting on a weekly show for the other riders, much to my embarrassment.

We stopped in the village for chips, before riding back home. Rhod rode back with Ally and Bernie and I 'escorted' Maddy home.

When we got there she caught me completely off guard by landing a kiss on my cheek.

"What's that for? not that I mind" I stammered

"Just for being Drew!" she stated

"Well if that's what I get for being me, I'll keep on being me!"

"Cheeky!" she turned to go inside, "oh and don't forget your stuff tomorrow"

How could I forget! Sheesh.

When I got home, I got my shower and before I could collapse in front of the box, Jules grabbed me and towed me to her room.

"What's up?" sis

"You," she emphasised with a finger, "need some work tonight before tomorrow!"

"I thought that was what Sylv was doing?"

"Well she won't have long so I'm going to do some pre-Sylv stuff. You shaved this week?"

"What?" I replied stroking my non-existent whiskers.

"Legs and stuff stupid"

"Well not since Saturday and what other stuff do you mean?"

"Drew" she sighed, "pits and pubes. Go and do that now I'll get the other stuff ready"

So I plodded off to do as ordered by the Kommandant. I don't have much body hair yet so it didn't take long to shave under my arms and trim my little thatch.

"Good now lets do your toe nails"

"Do you have to!" I whined

"Of course, everyone else has painted nails, they'll help your disguise" She waggled her own cerise capped toes at me. Somehow the way she said that last sent alarm bells ringing.

"Anna and Charlie know it's me" I stated

"Yes but Kazza, Sonia and Kirsty don't"

I spazzed out



"I didn't know anyone else was going?" I was into panic mode

"Well dur! You didn't think it was just four of us did you? It is a party and your lucky because there's usually more like ten of us." Jules concluded

"I won't go!" I stated

"Don't be daft Drew. Nobody will find out and this'll be the last time right?"

"I guess." I paused in case another excuse came to mind, but there was none, "okay then, go on"

So I sat there while my sister painted my toenails a sort of glittery dark pink and then had to assist her picking 'my' underwear and accessories.

"Oh nearly forgot, you'll need this as it's a sleepover"

She launched that same sheer babydoll set I wore a few weeks ago to me.

"I can't wear this!"

"Why not? Look, you could pull it off anyhow but if you wear really girly stuff there is no way the others will twig. And anyway everyone else will be wearing much the same" she stated

I was defeated. At least this would be the last time.

Once back in my room I packed everything carefully inside two bags so no one would spot it at school, I found the chain and located my studs and gold hoops and put them in my wallet. Ready at last!

Part 7

Sylv 2, Drew 0

The trilling of my phone woke me thirty minutes before my alarm.

"Drew, your up!" Maddy squealed in my ear

"No I'm not, you woke me up!" I stated

"Oh sorry, well anyway, can you meet me at home this morning, I've got loads of stuff for home ec as well as your dress"

"I guess, eight ok?"

"Fine, see you then" there was a squelchy noise on the phone before she finished, "bye!"

"Yeah, bye Mad"

I sat looking at the phone. Had she really just done what I thought? Nah!

The one big advantage to picking the stuff up from the Peters place was that I could stow it safely before I got to school. And I got to walk Mad to school, I know it's a bit of a cliché but I'm an old fashioned guy at heart, besides which I gained a bit of kudos at school by having a girlfriend!

"Well break a leg Drew" Mad stated when we got to school

"Yeah I 'spose"

"Oh come on Drew, it'll be fun and you can tell us mere girls what goes on at one of Anna's little do's"

"I guess"

She grabbed me again and I got another smacker, this time on the lips. I was still stood there in shock amidst the whistles and catcalling as she retreated with a

"Bye Drew!"

Well I managed to get through the rest of the day without incident and I met up with Rhod after the final bell to walk to 'Sylv's'.

"Ah there you boys are" Sylv greeted us

"Hi mum"

"Er hi Sylv"

"Okay Rhod, can you go and start the tea, me and Gaby will be about an hour"

"Sure mum"

Rhod disappeared and Sylv turned her attentions to me.

"Okay Drew, let's get a good look at you."

She spent a couple of minutes inspecting me, hands, face, hair, then a check of my legs.

"First thing is to get you clean and 'ladylike'. Go use the shop shower and afterwards put your breast forms and gaff on, ten minutes and put the robe on that's in there."

I did as she bid except for the breast forms, which I was not confident in fitting myself. When I emerged in the fluffy robe I asked Sylv to do the honours of 'breasting' me. That done she had me sit in one of the salon chairs.

"Okay young lady. I'll do your nails first, then we'll put your hair up and lastly do your makeup okay?"

"I guess so"

"Where's your dress? We want to match your nails eh?"

"It's in the bag"

"Girls today! Get it out and hung up so it's not all screwed up and creased" she directed

That done I returned to the chair where my nails soon replicated the bubblegum pink of 'my' dress. With that done Sylv started on my mop. A lot of hairgrips, spray and 'tousling' later my hair was now 'up' with a few 'tendrils' framing my face. At least when I saw the 'new' me this time I didn't scream! I really did look kind of cute! I tried to imagine Mad with her hair like this, I liked!

"Okay Gaby, lets get your face sorted out" she stated brandishing a pair of tweezers

"What are you doing with those?"

"Tidying up your brows of course" she stated matter of factly

"Oh no, they're only just growing back from last time!" I stated vehemently

"It's just a few strays, Gaby, if you are going to pass tonight you need to be reasonably groomed. You do want to pass don't you?"

"Of course I do"

She twirled the tweezers at me with a questioning look.

"Okay, but only tidying right?"

"Whatever madam wishes" Sylv replied as she descended on me.

Sylv 1 Drew 0

I'm sure they weren't that unruly but she worked on my brows for several minutes before stepping back.

"That's better, let's get you made up like the young lady you are supposed to be. How are you getting there?"

"Well Dad's taking Jules and picking me up from here on the way"

"He knows about this?"

"Well not as such, and done up like this he'll never guess either"

"If you say" she stated

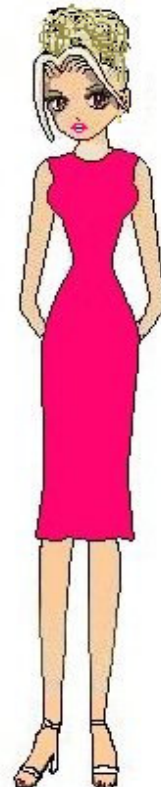
With practised speed I soon had my 'not there' 'less is more' makeup on. Then it was into my underwear, some lacy stuff that Jules gave me, and into my dress.

"You can't wear those on your feet" Sylv stated looking at my usual girls flats, "hang on I've got just the thing"

She returned in short order with a pair of strappy sandals with about a 5cm heel.

"Get these on" she instructed

I was a bit tottery in the heels, last time I wore heels was at Easter but they were quite comfy.



"Quite the young lady now, just the finishing touches. Have you got any jewellery?"

"Just a chain and a couple of pairs of earrings, in my wallet there."

Sylv retrieved the wallet and I extracted my jewels.

"Oh I didn't realise you had pierced ears Gaby"

"Er yes, the result of one of Maddy's games"

"Lets have a look...hmmm"

I didn't like the sound of that.

"Do you trust me Drew?"

"Er, I think so"

"Will you run with me on this, if it'll help tonight?"

"Okay, whatever" I'd come this far

"I'll just pop these in for you, these Snoopy's are so cute"

I couldn't see what she was up to as she was in front of the mirror; there was more tugging than I recalled when Maddy put them in.

"Ow!"

"Sorry Gaby, just a mo"

She sprayed the offending ear then the other.

"That's one, now the other one" she stated, stepping back I could now see what the fiddling had been with.

"You've pierced my ears again! I can't believe you did that!"

"You did say to go ahead" Sylv answered, " and look I've put one at the top of your left ear too, all the girls are getting it done"

Sylv 2, Drew 0

"But I'm not a girl" I whined

"Could have fooled me" I jumped at Rhod's voice, "you look well hot Gaby"

"Thanks I think"

"Dinners ready mum" Rhod told us

"We'll be right there eh Gaby?"

"Yes Sylv" I sighed

"Here, spray some of this on" she passed me a bottle of perfume, "and keep it with you to 'freshen up' later. Take the lipstick and eyeshadow too – Jules can do any fixing up then."

"Thanks for doing this Sylv" I offered

"My pleasure Gaby, now come on lets eat before that sister of yours gets here"

Sylv was just retouching my lipstick when Jules knocked on the door, Rhod let her in.

I could hear the exchange through the open door.

"I've just popped in to get Drew, is he ready?"

"No, go on in"

"Hi Sylv, Rhod said drew wasn't ready yet"

"No he's not, I just had to finish this young lady first"

I turned and smiled at Jules

"Oh hi" Jules mentioned, did a double take then, "Drew? Gaby? Is that you in there?"

"Sure is sis" I stated

"But, but.." she waved her hands about"

"I thought she should at least look a bit older for tonight" Sylv interjected, "go on off with you, have a good time!"

With that she ushered us out side to the waiting car.

Dad didn't even look round as we got in the back.

"Okay girls, ready?"

"Yes Dad, this is Dee" Jules stated

"Hi Dee, you look nice"

How he could tell as I was sat behind him was beyond me. I put my best girly voice on

"Thanks for the lift D.Mr Bond"

That did cause him to look round.

"Drew?"

I was caught!

"Yes Dad" I replied dejectedly, some disguise

"What's this all about? No I don't think I want to know. We'll talk about this tomorrow. Both of you"

"Yes Dad" we chorused

We were at Anna's house now.

"Go on"

Jules got out and I made to follow her.

"Drew?"

"Yes Dad?"

"Just be careful son"

"I will Dad"

I joined Jules on the pavement; Dad waited until we were inside the house before driving off.

Part 8

Girls will be Girls

"Hi Jules, Hi Gaby!" Anna enthused as we crossed the threshold.

"Hi Anna" Jules replied

"Er thanks for inviting me" I offered

"No sweat. You both look terrific" Anna continued, "everyone else is here, so come on through"

I sheepishly followed my sister into the lounge where the others were sat talking over a Madonna CD. I felt a little overdressed what with my hair up and the sandals, they were wearing much more casual stuff.

"Hi everyone" Jules greeted them, "this is my cousin Gaby" she introduced me. Why am I everyone's cousin?

"Hi Gaby" the brunette replied, "I'm Karen but everyone calls me Kazza"

"Hi Kazza nice to meet you"

"Hey what about us?" the blonde called.

"Sorry, Gaby that's Kirsty and that's Sonia and"

"Hi Gab, we've already met Kaz" Charlie cut in.

"Gabs lives in Worksop, she's got a Baker day* tomorrow" Jules filled them in on my cover story.

"You staying over then Gab?" Sonia asked

"I guess so, Jules said to bring my stuff" I replied with more confidence than I felt

"We'll get ready then" Kirsty announced jumping up

"Race you to the bathroom" Charlie called as she headed for the door

After they had gone Anna who was already dressed had us sit.

"Wow Gaby you look really hot" she started

"Thanks I think Anna"

"Well you do, doesn't she Jules?"

"Yeah, pretty cute and when did you get that ring at the top Gaby"

"Sylv's idea tonight"

"Ooh lets see" coo-d Anna who came to have a look, "those Snoopy's are pretty cute too" she stated

"Gab, your mums going to kill you when she finds out" Jules stated

"Well you only live once." I replied

"Did you do your hair Gaby?" Anna pursued

"No Sylv did, and my makeup, I'm not very good at it am I Jules?"

"She doesn't get much chance her mum and dad are pretty strict" Jules filled in while Anna giggled.

The others rejoined us, now wearing much dressier stuff. Charlie had lilac trousers and a single shoulder top, Kazza had a short skirt, gypsy top and boots, Sonia was in black trousers and top and Kirsty was wearing a white mini dress. To me at least we looked all dressed up with no place to go.

"Everyone ready?" Anna asked

"Yeah!" everyone but me replied

"Come on then" Anna instructed.

"Where are we going?" I whispered to Jules

"There's a disco down at the 'Miner's', we always go"

"But you have to be eighteen!" I stated

"So! No one's stopped us yet, just remember you were born in 1984 if anyone asks"

"But I don't look anything like eighteen" I went on

"You're right, looking like that you can easily pass for twenty!" my sister told me

"Come on you two" Charlie grabbed my arm and pulled me along.

Rather than give you the blow by blow, here's the highlights. We got to the 'Miners Arms' just before eight and the seven of us grabbed a corner table and Kazza went and bought a round of drinks, Jules told her I'd have rum and coke like her. A table of giggling girls always attracts male attention and soon there were several lad's eyeing us up. I was not comfortable at all, the others just whispered and giggled and I sort of had to join in.

The disco started at eight thirty by which time we were on our second drink. Things got a bit blurry from then on, I know I started dancing with the others, but ended up dancing with a lad named Dean who I recognised as being in the sixth form.

"Having fun" Jules asked as I slumped on the seat

"S'okay I 'spose" I was feeling the drink somewhat

"We'll leave about ten, sit here if you don't feel well" she instructed as she left to join the others.

She spoke to her friends motioning toward me; I made a feeble wave back as they looked over.

"You ok Drew?" it was Charlie asking

"Shush! Not really, I feel sick" I had to reply

"We'll be going back to Anna's soon, do you want some water or something?"

"Yes please Charlie"

She returned with a glass that I sipped while the others had a last bop.

"Jules told us you don't normally drink Gaby" Kirsty stated

"Never get the chance" I replied

"Well we'll soon get you trained" Sonia added

I just groaned.

We walked back to Anna's via the chippy, I scragged a couple of Jules chips, I really couldn't face a whole bag. It was nearly eleven when we got back inside the house. I was a bit mashed and didn't realise that I was being addressed.

"Oh sure Anna" whatever!

"Come on then, I know just the outfit" she enthused.



Anna dragged me up to her room and in my semi conscious state managed to get me stripped and redressed. I was too far gone to argue or be much help, but what I saw in the mirror really surprised me. Anna had me dressed in a white mini dress with a cut out at the waist and a wide belt and had somehow got me into a pair of white over-knee boots!

"Wow you look terrific Gaby" Kaz stated

"I could fancy you myself" Kirsty joined in

I just grinned drunkenly

"Hands off you two" Jules instructed, "I told her olds I'd keep her out of trouble"

"Spoilsport!" Sonia added

"Can I sit down, please?" I whined

"Next to me" Anna motioned

Well I can't really remember much after that. The others started on a bottle of cider and I fell asleep.

"Get up Drew" Jules power whispered in my ear, "time to get going"

"Errrm" I stretched

"Come on, we have to get home and changed so we can get you to school"

"My head hurts"

"Serves you right, now come on!" she urged

I got up to find myself wearing Jules babydoll, how did I end up in this? Last thing I remember was playing spin the bottle I think!

"Come on get yourself dressed"

Well to cut a long story short, we walked the mile and a half home and Jules had me in the downstairs shower by seven thirty. The shower brought me



round and I realised I still sported breasts. Well after a quick panic I found the right bottle and returned myself to Drew. What a night!

"Drew come and get your breakfast" Jules called

"Coming" I shouted and quickly wished I hadn't as my head still hurt.

"Here let's get those earrings out" Jules offered

At least dad was already off to work.

"I can't get the top one open, you'll have to leave it in for now" she stated after pulling at my ear for a bit.

I was still too far out of it to make much input.

"You look terrible Drew" Maddy stated

"Gee thanks, I love you too" I murmured back

"So what did you do then?" Bernie asked

"We went to the 'Miners' disco" I told them

"Is that all?" Ally queried

"There was some other stuff back at Anna's place but I was pretty well past it by then"

"You lightweight!" Mad exclaimed

"We were drinking a fair bit" I replied in my defence

"Hey Drew you ok?" Rhod asked joining us

"Just about, thanks"

"This guy really looked like top totty last night after mum had finished with her" he told the others

"Did not!" I offered

"You did Drew, you been drinking?"

"You can tell?"

"You look like mum does when she's been clubbing" he replied

"Thanks!" that was not reassuring.

It was after lunch before I felt anything like myself then I remembered Dad's last words last night. I hoped Jules could come up with a good story cos I sure couldn't!

"Ok you two, no bullshit, what was going on last night"

I begged Jules with my eyes and for once she took the hint.

"It's all my fault Dad. Anna saw Drew dressed up a few weeks ago and decided she liked her, I mean him. So I suggested she invite Drew to one of her parties."

"One of your all girl nights?" Dad queried

"Yeah, so she asked him before we went away but he wiggled out of that one. Then we sort of tricked him into going last night and Sylv agreed to help"

"So you tricked your brother into dressing up as a girl to go to one of your drinking parties" dad stated

"We don't drink!" Jules refuted Dads assertion

"Don't you backchat me young lady, I was a teenager once and I bet you were drinking last night"

"Okay, we were drinking, but not much, honest"

"Hmm" he didn't sound convinced, "and you Drew, went along with all this?"

"Well I didn't want to at first, but I thought it might be fun"

"And was it?"

"Er, I think so, apart from the headache"

Dad rolled his eyes

"Kid's!" he sat and watched us both fidget for a few minutes, I knew we were in deep do-do.

"By rights Juliette you should be severely punished, I trust you to look after your brother not lead him astray,"

"Yes Dad" she murmured

"You are grounded for a month with no pocket money" he stated

"Yes Dad" Jules replied quietly.

"And even though you were led astray you're not getting off Scot free Drew"

"No Dad"

"I know you went to the 'Miners' last night, one of the foremen recognised Juliette so it stands to reason you were there too."

"Yes Dad" I admitted

"You could have gotten the owner into deep trouble underage drinking"

"Yes Dad"

"I need to speak to your mother about your punishment, she seems to have a better handle on you young man. In the mean time you are grounded,"

I started to protest " what about training?"

"You are grounded, except for training and going to races for two weeks"

"But the guys are coming here on Monday!"

"Okay, I know it's your turn, it wouldn't be fair on them to cancel. You can do Monday but that's it" he stated

"That's not fair" Jules whined

"You young lady are old enough to act responsibly, you can take your punishment or I could increase it?"

"Okay Dad" she backed down.

Once up in my room I rang Maddy on my mobile.

"So you got grounded too?"

"Yeah, but Monday is still on, Dad said it was only fair on you lot"

"Does that mean you can't race too?"

"No, but I have to go straight there and back"

"That's pretty shitty" she stated

"Yeah but I didn't have to go"

"I guess not, but we did sort of encourage you"

"It's only two weeks, I'm more concerned about what Mum will say"

"Drew! Give me that phone! Now!" Dad was pissed!

"See you tomorrow Mad"

"Bye Drew"

And so I lost my phone too.

Part 9

Punishment

I was feeling a bit sorry for myself on Friday. I mean, I got grounded and it wasn't even my idea. Well I suppose I could have, well should have stood my ground over going to Anna's party. In the end I suppose it was my fault, I shouldn't have given in to everyone's haranguing. Now instead of ending the whole dressing thing I was in the middle of an incident! What was even worse was that I don't remember half the night as I was in an alcoholic stupor.

"Hey Drew!" it was Anna calling me, I pretended not to hear her

"Drew, don't be like that, I want to apologise"

"Why? You got what you wanted and made an idiot out of me!" I fumed back

"Look Jules told me about your Dad grounding you and that, I really am sorry" and to be fair she did sound it.

"It wouldn't be so bad if I could remember half of it" I told her

"Oh boy! You really were out of it weren't you?" she replied

"Look I accept your apology, but I'm still grounded and just for peace of mind I'd like to know what I did or didn't do!"

"Ok, look I've got to get to class now but meet me by the science block at lunchtime and I'll tell you"

"Thanks Anna"

How can you stay angry with someone with hair that colour? I can still barely keep a straight face when I see her.

I tried to concentrate on my work for the rest of the morning but my need to find out about Wednesday was weighing heavily on my mind. Eventually the lunch bell sounded and I joined the mass exodus to eat. I found Anna waiting for me.

"How come you didn't ask Juliette?" Anna started

"She's not talking to me, she blames *me* for getting her grounded!"

"That's not on Drew" Anna agreed

"So what did I do?" I asked as we found a quiet corner to talk and eat.

"Well what *do* you remember?" she queried

"Obviously going to the 'Miners' and the chip shop. But not much after that until I woke up."

"Boy! You really did go! Okay do you remember putting on Mum's minidress?"

My blank look must have been enough reply.

"Well we pulled straws for forfeits, you got off lightly really."

"Why? what did everyone else have to do?"

I could see her contemplating whether to tell me.

"I guess I can tell you. Well Kazza had to shave her pubes, we pierced Kirsty's nose, Jules had to run down to the main road naked." I giggled, "Sonia had to drink three shorts in a minute, you got to dress like my mum when she goes clubbing, Charlie lost her eyebrows to my razor and I had to wear a nappy all night!" she finished.

"Who thought all those up?" I asked

"Well we each came up with one, Jules put in an extra one for you"

"I guess it could have been a lot worse than a dress" I allowed, "what happened after that?"

"Well we sat drinking cider and playing Cd's until about two then we went to bed"

"I didn't do anything embarrassing then?" I asked

"Well some of your dancing was seriously bad, but apart from that no. You want that tomato?"

"Here," I passed her the fruit, "at least I'll be able to look everyone in the eye"

"Yeah well apart from Kirsty, it was 'your' suggestion that got her nose pierced, her mum went ballistic too"

I felt sort of responsible.

"Tell her sorry, but at least she could take that out, I can't get this ring that Sylv put in out" I indicated the hoop in the top of my ear.

"You need special pliers, why don't you go and ask her to take it out?"

"I can't, I'm grounded remember?"

"Oh yeah. Well anyway I've got to go, see you later"

"I guess" I replied half heartedly to her departing back.

"Drew, get yourself down here!" Dad shouted me

With little enthusiasm I joined him in the living room.

"Sit"

Well you don't argue with Dave Bond when he's in this mood. I sat.

"Right young man, I've spoken to Anna's parents, they didn't know you had all been to the pub and I reckon just about now Anna will be getting a talking to. I spoke to your mother earlier and she is not amused either, she was all for flying home straight away but I convinced her that we could sort this out without her doing that. However she thinks I should punish you more"

I cringed in my seat

"Yes dad" no point in arguing

"I on the other hand think that you are being punished enough. I saw the look of fear on your face the other night and I know that it would have been very difficult for you to not go along, especially dressed as you were. Just so you know, Mum wanted to stop you racing as well."

"Thanks Dad. What about Jules?"

"Jules punishment stands but I doubt your Mum will let it lie. Now you had better go do that homework, we have to leave early tomorrow to get to your race"

"Yes Dad"

"Oh you'd better have this back too, but don't tell your sister"

I gratefully received my phone back

"Thanks Dad"

Being grounded for Juliette meant having to come down to Oxford with Dad and me, so she was in a right mood. Dad decided that we would stay down overnight so we were in the camper this morning, me in front with Dad and Jules in the back. The drive down was boring, motorway down to Northampton then across to Oxford, the race was actually at Didcot another dozen or so miles on.

This event was pretty unusual, the venue was the power station and the circuit uses the perimeter road. I was not in the best of humour, today but after coming all this way I had to give my best. We had plenty of time so I decided to polish my bike.

"Drew?"

"What sis?"

"Look I'm sorry about Anna's right"

"Well I suppose it could have been worse, Anna told me about the other forfeits yesterday"

"You won't tell dad will you?" she had real fear in her voice

"I wasn't planning on it"

"Please don't, it was bad enough doing it, let alone half the town knowing" she pleaded

"Alright, I won't tell"

"Thanks"

After clearing that up, Jules became more animated and even helped with my bike.

"The race is thirty minutes plus five laps" the commissar told us, "lapped riders will be pulled out at the judges discretion. The bell will ring the lap before the sprints that will be on laps 6 and 12. The first lap is neutral then the race will start the first time you cross the line. Everyone ok with that?"

We all nodded. Much like I had been in Sheffield the other week I was in a race of 13 and 14 year olds, and some of these looked a bit handy. On the other hand I was the wild card for them too; none of them had met me in a race before so I could at least re-use tactics. We were waved off on the neutral lap and I started to assess my opposition. The circuit was flat all bar a trip over a railway bridge and basically had four corners with long straights in

between. There was a chicane on the back straight and the bridge was on the second straight. Even on this first lap when there was supposed to be no racing, a pecking order was quickly appearing. I kept up near the front but it was clear that despite a good thirty rider field only about ten would be in contention, including me I hoped!

The flag dropped and straight away a couple of energetic types made a doomed attempt at escape. I maintained my position whilst avoiding showing any great talent, it was clear when we approached the chicane that the locals were going to try to give me a hard time. There was a bit of barging through the corners and I lost a couple of places, well two can play dirty!

I regained my lost places during the next lap and this time I was ready for them, cutting inside when they were looking the other way for me.

I managed to keep out of trouble for the next couple of laps then the bell went for a 'prime' (sprint). I could see that a couple of lads were planning something, they were so obvious checking everyone out. When they went just after the chicane, what dozzey's, I clicked straight on the back. The two locals kept looking behind and as they eased before the last bend I took my chance around the outside, hugging the outside kerb along the straight. They wasted time crossing over to me and just got my wheel as I crossed the line. Drew 1 – Oxonians 0!

I sat up to recover and a quick glance confirmed that a core of about a dozen riders were just yards behind. Bide your time Drew. There was some muttering in the bunch and on lap seven they tried to take me out at the chicane again. I could tell something was afoot, I was well boxed but I was on the kerb side which gave me a potential escape route. I realised the plan just in time as they all braked harder than usual into the second corner of the chicane. I could brake hard in the corner and probably crash or do what I did. I heaved up and to the left and just managed to get my wheels on to the pavement, my back tyre skidding slightly on the kerb edge. My momentum barely slowed and I passed the now almost stopped posse who were still waiting for the crash. This means war!

I bunny hopped back onto the road and decided to get my revenge before the race was over. The next few laps whittled the field down, we lapped about ten back markers and I formulated a plan. By my computer clock the half-hour would be up about lap ten so that meant only three laps after the next sprint to the finish. I kept out of trouble making sure I had plenty of space on the corners, another attempt to unseat me was still on the cards.

Ding! Ding! Ding! I was right! Well here goes nothing, I sprinted hard out of turn 1 and over the bridge, I risked a glance behind and the Oxford Mafia were hard on my wheel. I kept the pace up, low over the bars, through two and there was the chicane! I could hear them behind me as we went into the first half, I kept my speed up then did an almost suicidal down change as I braked hard into the exit corner. My pursuers realised too late how much I

had slowed and as I used my low gears to sprint away I heard the cacophony which marks a crash! I glanced back briefly to see the second little bunch passing the fallen and tangled Mafiosi, my plan was working!

I could see a back marker in front and by the time I crossed the 'prime' (pronounced preem) line I was sure I would catch him on the bridge. Another glance behind revealed that I now had most of the finishing straight as a lead, this might just work! I caught the back marker just before the brow of the bridge and stayed on his wheel down the other side.

"Can you do bit and bit" I huffed to what I was surprised to find was a girl.

"Yeah" she replied

"Well I'll keep you unlapped, if you can help me a bit" I offered

"Ok. I'll try"

So we started doing bit and bit, I took longer turns but her short goes on front just let me rest enough. When we went through the chicane there were still a couple of lads trying to get their bikes going again, too late now! I kept my word, dropping a good ten metres back before we crossed the line then rejoining my helper before the bridge. For a girl she was riding really well, I don't mean that how it sounds, but she was taking it seriously unlike most girls I race against. By now we had nearly caught another two back markers, I checked behind for pursuers but they were now all riding for themselves and as a result not making much headway.

We caught the next pair through the chicane and put them between me and the bunch, very useful! I let my helper go ahead before the line then I got the bell, wow less than a lap. It was plain that she was tiring now and I took longer turns on the front.

"If I leave you after the chicane you won't have to do an extra lap"

"Ok and thanks for the help"

"No probs." I was feeling pretty cool

Through the chicane and I took off.

"See you at the finish" I heard her call

I had enough lead over the chasers that I didn't even sprint for the line. Yes!

I found Jules and Dad in the crowd and after my new found friend crossed the line I had time to watch the rest of the decimated field sprint in for the

other places. I left my bike with Dad and headed for the showers. When I emerged Jules was waiting.

"Drew, the judges want to see you"

"What for?"

"I don't know, Dad's waiting with them."

She led the way to where the commissar and the other judges were waiting with Dad.

"Drew, there's been a complaint from some of the others that you deliberately caused that crash." The commissar asked

"Why would I do that?" I am pretty good at innocent.

"Well can you tell us what happened, why did you brake when you did?"

"Okay. A couple of laps before I nearly crashed at the chicane so I thought I'd best keep out of trouble through there. When I got in the lead I was going flat out and realised at the last minute I wasn't going to make the exit corner so I braked hard. I heard the crash but that's all I know."

"Thanks Drew, can you wait with you Dad please"

"Yes sir" a bit of respect never goes amiss.

I stood with Dad fidgeting for over ten minutes. Would they strip me of the win? And if they did would I get a ban or something?

"There you are lad" the commissar greeted us, "the result stands, and some witnesses have confirmed your story, in fact they say you had to do some acrobatics there on one lap. Well done, we had to look into it, but we never thought it likely that someone with your parentage would do something like that"

Little did he know!

After the presentation, I got a trophy and a total of £50; I was surprised when a pretty girl came up to me.

"Hi Drew, thanks for helping me out there" she beamed at me

"Oh that's alright erm?" I answered

"Oh sorry, I'm Kristen, Kristen Oakey"



"Well I should thank you Kristen, I probably wouldn't have won without your help"

"Anytime" she stated, "you really showed that lot up, they're used to bullying everyone round here, they do it every race"

"Well my Mum is always telling me that if you always race against the same people you get in a sort of rut" I informed my new friend.

"I've just realised who your mum is, it's Jenny Bond isn't it?"

"Yeah" I replied proudly

"Wow she is just so cool! She's my hero, I keep a scrapbook and I got an autographed picture from the team too." Kristen was fawning over my Mum!

"Kristen, we're going now" a voice called

"Have to go Drew, see you around"

"Yeah, bye Kirsten"

"Who was that Drew?" Jules asked coming up behind me

"Kirsten Oakey, she helped me in the race"

"I think I ought to tell Maddy you've got a new girlfriend!"

"Have not!" I replied taking a swipe at her which she easily dodged

"Okay, okay" she retreated holding her hands up

"Any way she seemed more interested in Mum when she realised we were related"

"Poor Drew, come on we're going into Oxford to eat"

Part 10

Oxford

We drove the few miles back up to Oxford and Dad elected to park at the Park & Ride, with the camper it would be easier than trying to park in the centre of the city. We caught one of the regular buses for the short trip into the famous University City and Dad was soon extolling us with tales of his student days here. We left the bus in the main shopping street, it was only five o'clock so a few of the shops were still open and Dad let us have half an hour in one of the bookshops. When we re-emerged onto the street there was the familiar bustle of people trying to get home amidst the chaos that is Saturday evening.

"Okay kid's, we'll have a walk around for a bit then we'll eat at 'Pedro's'" Dad informed us

"Can't we eat now?" I whined, "I'm starved!"

"The restaurant doesn't open until six thirty, unless you want a burger" he reposted

Well the threat of missing out on a meal at the legendary Pedro's was enough to stop my complaining. Dad was forever going on about the Tex-Mex food they served and this would be a chance to see what all the fuss was about. So both Jules and I tried to show some enthusiasm as Dad showed us the sights Magdelene (Dad insists you say maudlin!) College, the water meadows, the Ashmolean Museum, all the time with a running commentary from Dad of who did what, where and when!

Eventually Dad led us down a side street and there in all it's yellow and red splendour was Pedro's. It was not much past opening time but already there were a good few patrons seated inside the cosy premises. We were quickly seated and the floor manager passed out menu's to us. I was certainly impressed by the range of stuff on offer, I mean it's not like we have this sort of place at home but anywhere that does offer any Mexican food usually get as far as chilli and tortillas! The menu here covered several different chilli's, enchilada's, tortillas, refried beans, various steaks and other stuff that I couldn't even pronounce!

"Hi I'm Mary, I'll be your waitress this evening. Would you like any drinks?"

"A light beer for me, kids?" dad replied

"Diet coke please" Jules stated

"Root beer for me"

"Ok, one light beer, one diet and a root beer" Mary repeated before going to fetch our beverages.

"Root beer Drew? have you ever had any?" Jules asked

"Well no but I thought I'd try it"

"What are you two going to eat?" Dad interrupted

"I think I'll have the chicken enchiladas with salad" Jules decided

"Drew?"

I scanned the menu again but I guess I was always going to end up with chilli!

"Chilli?" I offered

"Okay but not the hot, the standard Pedro's is hot enough for you" Dad advised

"Ow!"

Our drinks arrived and Mary prepared to take our orders.

"Nine ounce T-bone with skins and a side salad" Mary scribbled Dad's order on her pad

"What'll it be girls?" she asked us

"The chicken enchiladas with salad for me" Jules got in before I could correct Mary

"Drew?" Dad prompted

"Er the Pedro's chilli with rice please" I informed Mary

"Okay everyone, it'll be about fifteen minutes, there's salad at the buffet, if you want more drinks just holler" Mary finished her spiel and took our order off to the kitchen.

"Thanks a lot Jules, now the waitress thinks I'm a girl. I mean do I look the slightest bit like a girl?"

"I have to say Drew," Dad interposed, "in this light you do sort of"

I was definitely cheesed off!

"Oh come on Drew, you know you make a pretty good girl" Jules told me

"I don't and even if that was true, I've had makeup on and stuff" I fumed

"From what I've seen Drew you don't need much makeup, after all they all thought you were a girl on holiday too" Dad reminded me

"I'm getting some salad" I huffed

Thankfully by the time I got back the conversation had turned to what we would be doing tomorrow.

"What do you reckon Drew, we can go to Stratford and perhaps to a castle or two?"

Well I told you about Dad and castles and stuff last week didn't I?

"Ok I guess"

"And Dad said we can go see a film when we finish eating" Jules offered

"You are both still grounded but I don't want to sit in the van with two grumpy teenagers right?" Dad advised us

"Yes Dad" we both chorused.

I won't waste your time with a blow by blow of the rest of the evening but I will make some observations. Dad was right about the chilli – if the standard Pedro's was hot, and it was, the Texan Hot must be mind blowing! Although it sort of tasted like antiseptic I definitely like root beer, Dad started to call me Snoopy, goodness knows why. Avoid eating chilli before going to the cinema, it can be quite embarrassing! We ended up seeing the 'classic of the week' which turned out to be the 'Italian Job'. I've seen it on telly but it was absolutely brilliant on a big screen, I liked the bit where they jump across the roofs. Brilliant! It was late when we eventually found a lay-bye to stop in overnight.

Sunday morning was a bit dew laden but overhead the sky was clear and blue and promised a pleasant summer's day.

"Didn't you bring any other clothes Drew?" Dad exclaimed

"I didn't think I'd need any" I whimpered

"You can't walk round like that, you've got chilli all down your front and goodness knows what that is on your jeans!"

"Tomato ketchup" I replied. I had insisted on having a hot dog at the cinema.

"Well you'll have to sit in the camper while we walk round, I'm not taking you out like that, showing me up" Dad stated

"Daad!" I whined

"I can lend him something" Jules offered

"Well Drew, your sister has offered you some clean clothes – it's up to you, borrow off your sister or sit in here all day" Dad reinforced the alternatives.

"Thanks Jules, I don't suppose you've got jeans and a t shirt?" I asked my sibling

"You're in luck!" she went into the wardrobe and after a couple of minutes returned with an armful of stuff.

"Here you are, jeans, t-shirt and clean undies" she presented the pile to me

"Thanks Jules" I offered

By the look in her eye, I knew I had been set up again. Jules climbed into the front leaving me to get changed. I inspected 'my' clothes as Dad set off for Stratford. They were jeans, that was true but hipsters with a slight flare. The shirt was sleeveless and was a bit like a crop top but with a sort of net bit making it longer. My 'thoughtful' sister had included a pair of her briefs and a lightly padded bra; no way was I wearing that! I suppose it could have been worse like a dress or skirt.

After trying the jeans with my own pants it was clear I would have to wear Jules' as mine were far too high with these hipsters. Jules 1, Drew 0. I got the top on and then realised it was one of those pseudo Goth things, it had a chain hanging between the shoulders and in that sort of gothic writing it espoused 'Bad Girl' to the world! Not only that but it was sort of fitted so it looked kinda weird without breasts inside it, I was doomed again.

"Haven't you got another top Jules?"

"Only this one" she smirked, after all she was wearing a dainty vest top"

"You should have packed for yourself" Dad stated glancing back to me, "and you need a bra on with that top!"

Even Dad was at it now. Reluctantly I slipped the top off and donned the bra before redressing; here I was stuck as a girl. Again! Grrr. Well if I don't want to look like a boy in girls clothing I needed some help from Jules.

"Jules can you sort of give me a hand please?"

"What now?"

"*Make up*" I mouthed

"Tut" she rolled her eyes as she clambered into the back, "sit" she instructed

We were just pulling into the car park at Stratford on Avon when Jules deemed herself satisfied.

"There you go Gaby"

"Thanks sis" I replied unenthusiastically

"Who's Gaby?" Dad asked

"Oh that's what we call her when she's dressed" Jules informed him

"Like on Wednesday?" he queried

"Yes Dad, the others still don't know it was Drew!"

"That's the way I want to keep it too!" I stated with some venom

"Ok, keep your hair on, it won't come from me" she assured

Dad had a thoughtful look on his face.

"Well come on then girls" he addressed us, "lets do the Shakespeare thing!"



So that's what Dad and his two 'daughters' did. We went round Shakespeare's house then the church and round to the huge theatre by the river. It was early for lunch still so we just had toasted teacakes and tea in one of the twee little cafés that seem to fill Stratford these days. That and American and Japanese tourists!

I was feeling reasonably comfortable until the woman in the tea shoppe commented on Dad's lovely daughters. What could I do? Stand up and declare to everyone 'I'm a boy!' That's what I thought too so I just sat through her diatribe in simmering silence.

Next stop Warwick Castle. Dad grudgingly paid the extortionate entrance fee and then spent our whole time inside complaining about 'commercialism' and 'theme parks'. Well I thought it was pretty good, especially when the horse winked and farted! I had to go see that three times. (No it wasn't a real horse, the castle is run by Tussauds, the waxwork people and it was in one of the animated set pieces) We had lunch in one of the town centre pubs, well more precisely the beer garden. We all went for the 'traditional' roast dinner, you know, roast and boiled potatoes, two veg, Yorkshire pud, stuffing and today roast lamb. It wasn't particularly good, the meat was a bit tuff and the veggies boiled to death although the portions were generous enough.

"One more stop kids then we'll head home" Dad informed us

"Where now?" Jules groaned

"Kenilworth, it's not far" he answered

"Another castle?" I asked

"Another castle Drew, but it's not on the tourist trail so no farting horses!" he stated

"Aw, that was ace!" I mentioned

"But it wasn't very ladylike to keep going back Gaby" Jules informed me

"But I'm not.."

She interrupted me, "dressed like that you are, how many people have complimented you on your looks today?"

"Nine" I said without thinking

"See you're even keeping count! No one doubts that you are what you appear" she pointed out.

"She's right Drew, if you are dressed like a girl you need to act like one if you don't want to advertise that you're really a boy" Dad put his twopenn'ath in.

Well it was true enough I guess.

"Okay, but can you drop the Gaby bit?"

"Why? It's a pretty name and it suits you" Jules said

"And its not so weird as calling you Drew when you look like that" Dad added

"Okay, okay Gaby I is" I conceded

"Here we are" Dad informed us pulling up in the car park.

I guess when it comes to it, I am with Dad on this, Warwick was good in it's way but ruins are much more, I don't know, exciting, romantic, oh that's the word, evocative. And Kenilworth Castle fills that niche well. The ruinous great hall sat amongst the banks and ditches of the now silted up defences, no great motte like Pickering last week or high curtain wall like Warwick earlier. Just a brooding presence overlooking the town. Jules decided to give this one a miss but I joined Dad and the other half dozen visitors exploring the dark ruins.

"Gaby, stay within sight please" Dad instructed me

"But Dad"

"No buts young lady, it's for your own safety" Dad went on

"Yes Daddy" I imitated my sister. Dad was really treating me like his daughter, which is kind of scary. We walked the site for a good three-quarters of an hour then, after purchasing ice creams, returned to the camper. We set off for home and arrived back in Warsop a bit after six.

"Right you two, you are still both grounded"

"Yes Dad" I answered

"Yes Dad" Jules was a moment behind me.

Just then the phone rang, Dad picked it up

"Bond household...oh hi honey... just got in, we stopped at Stratford and Warwick on the way... yeah they're both here...okay" he turned to us, "Drew your mother wants to talk to you"

I took the receiver from him and sat on the sofa.

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Drew, how did it go yesterday?"

"Another win!"

"Congratulations"

I spent the next fifteen minutes telling her all about the Oxford Mafioso and how I got the better of them. Then Mum told me about her recent races, another win, this time in Belgium and more top tens.

"Okay Drew, to serious matters, last Wednesday. How about you tell me your side of this?"

"Yes mum" my elation suddenly dampened, "hang on a mo" I motioned for the others to make themselves scarce. "Okay I'm back"

"It all started weeks ago, before we came to see you. Anna and Charlie, you know, Jules friends, saw me dressed up and Anna thought it would be fun if I went to one of her parties dressed up. I dipped out of that but she asked again when we got back from Germany."

"Go on" Mum prompted

"Well everyone, Jules and even Rhod said I should go and I thought it would be the last of this dressing up thing so I agreed."

"Your Dad said he picked you up from Sylv's?"

"Yeah well Sylv said she'd do my hair and stuff"

"She didn't think it a bit strange a boy wanting her services?" Mum queried

"No, she saw me when I did the brochure thing and Rhod told her who it was so she knew anyway."

"So, Sylv prettied you up, your sister took you to this 'party' and then what?"

"Well we went to the disco at the 'Miners'"

"Were you drinking?"

"The others got me drinks and I drank a couple"

"Alcoholic?"

"Yes mum" I admitted

"Go on what then"

"Well we went back to Anna's and played music and stuff, I'm not really sure what we did, I was feeling pretty groggy by then. When I woke up Jules brought me home, I got changed then went to school, I think I must have had a hangover."

"I hope you've learnt your lesson"

"Not to drink?" I ventured

"That too, but it sounds to me like everyone else wanted you to do this but you didn't. I know peer pressure can be pretty intense but in future, think carefully and do what *you* think is right."

"Yes mum"

"So have we seen the end to all this dressing as a girl then?"

"Erm, not yet, I'm wearing some of Jules stuff now" I could sense Mum rolling her eyes

"Go on, why" she sounded exasperated

"Well I didn't expect to need a change of stuff and I got chilli on my shirt and jeans last night. It was either borrow Jules stuff or sit in the camper all day."

"I see, so you borrowed a t shirt and jeans then?"

"Yeah, but I had to wear Jules knickers coz mine showed over the jeans, and a bra because the top looked silly without." I blurted

"Drew Bond. What are we going to do with you?" she sighed

"Well I'm never wearing girls stuff again" I stated

"Okay Drew, put your Dad back on"

Well that was a conversation I never want to repeat. Mum and Dad talked for a bit then Jules was summoned. I joined Dad in the Kitchen, we could hear Jules sniffing and "sorry" carried to us more than once. When she rejoined us she was well-chastened and simply said goodnight and retired to her room.

I realised I was still dressed en femme, this really has to end now, I'm far too comfortable dressed like this. Tomorrow Gaby will be gone forever! Definitely never again!

Part 11

Mess of the Blues

"I don't believe you Drew Bond!" Rhod exclaimed, "after last week as well!"

"Well come on then clever," I retorted, "what would you have done?"

"I guess I might have done it at Stratford, but you could have bought a t shirt there at least, then you wouldn't have had to look like a girl the rest of the day"

Well I guess that was an option I never thought of. I guess he was right, I have, ever since this whole Gaby thing started, made a fuss at the start but managed to miss my opportunities to end things early, repeatedly.

"Anyway it's not going to happen again that's for sure!" I told him

The bell rang and school was in session.

"...won the 400metres relay. Well done everyone." There was polite applause for the athletics squad when Mr Wood paused.

"And last but by no means least, Drew Bond convincingly won his race near Oxford on Saturday despite determined local opposition. Well done Drew" I was blushing heavily as I received the obligatory applause.

"Still on a sporting note, Sports Day is on Friday the 12th of July, that's just over two weeks time." Mr Wood informed us. "You will *all* be taking part unless you have a valid doctors note" there was a general groan in the hall. "If you haven't signed up by this Friday we shall allocate an event for you, so it's in your own interests to volunteer. Okay dismissed"

What a start to the week.

At lunchtime I joined Paul and Clive in throng to sign up for sports day. Now if you are unfamiliar with all this, sports day is a traditional event that happens every year throughout your school career here in the UK, right from infants. Some schools restrict events to athletics, running and stuff; others include 'fun' events like egg and spoon. Here at Warsop Vale there is a very liberal choice of events but despite this there is nearly always one House that dominates sports, that is Chichester currently. (Our four houses, Chichester, Scott, Cook and Rutherford are supposed to represent success over adversity)

"What are you doing?" I asked Clive

"Table tennis if there's space"

"I'm gonna do long jump" Paul volunteered, "what about you Drew?"

"Dunno really"

"Drew!" I turned to see Maddy waving, "hang on"

"Hi Mad, what's up?"

"You signed up yet?"

"No I've not decided yet"

"Will you do badminton with me?"

"I 'spose"

"It's doubles and I don't know anyone else who can play very well"

"Looks like you're hitting shuttlecocks then Drew" Paul smirked

"Okay then" I agreed

"Great, I'll put you down" Mad enthused, "see you later"

"Yeah see you" I replied

Jules was already at home when I got there; she was looking thoroughly fed up so I left her to it. The rest of the gang was coming round a bit later; I had to come straight home on Dad's instruction. As usual when it's my turn to be host, we were having pizza so I put the oven on to warm. The guys turned up just before Dad who had bought a couple of 12" deep pans to cook.

"Half an hour before tea" Dad informed us

"We'll be in the garage" I informed him

"I put you down for badminton Drew" Maddy stated

"Thanks Mad, what's everyone else doing?" I put a CD on while everyone found seats

"400 metres" Rhod volunteered

"I'm doing discus" Bernie advised us

"That's a bit technical isn't it?" Rhod asked

"Well at least I won't have to run around getting sweaty" she answered

"Never thought of that" I put in

"What are you doing Al?"

"Hundred metres"

"I hate sports day" Bernie stated

"Well its only once a year" Mad offered

"I guess"

"What we doing out here anyway Drew?" Rhod queried

"I thought we'd keep out of Jules way, she's in a right mood today"

"I would be if I was grounded for a month, does that mean she's gonna miss the end of year dance?" Ally asked

"I hadn't thought of that" I answered

"That'd be a real bummer" Bernie supplied

"Anna looked pretty pissed too"

"Maddy!" Ally exclaimed

"Well she did. I guess she's got grounded or something too" Mad finished

"It's all my fault" I started

"How do you work that?" Rhod asked

"Well if I hadn't agreed to go to the stupid party.."

"If Anna hadn't invited you, if Jules hadn't twisted your arm" Mad was building up a head of steam

"And if we hadn't encouraged you" Rhod admitted

"I guess," I concluded

After tea we reconvened in the garage and spent the evening listening to music and sifting through a pile of old magazines.

Tuesday was uneventful and at least I had the ten to look forward to. I agreed to meet the girls and ride out with them, at least my grounding wasn't as severe as Jules'.

"Hi girls!" John greeted us

"Hi" I answered

I signed up while the girls, commandeered 'my' bench.

"That's number twelve Dee" John stated passing me the fluorescent number

"Thanks"

"Starts in ten minutes" he advised

"Ok"

Mad assumed the rôle of masseuse again, I'm not complaining, I could have done with this on Saturday! Saturday. I thought about the race as Mad rubbed the oil onto my legs. And Kristen, she was quite cute!

"What are you smiling at?" Ally asked

"Oh just something that happened on Saturday"

"Well?" Bernie queried

"I'll tell you later" I hedged

Conditions were pretty good again this week but it wasn't going to give me a PB. The slight headwind to the turn did its damage; the return trip wasn't long enough to make up the loss. I passed my cheer squad at the last corner and made my last effort before the line, just remembering to gasp my number as I crossed the line.

I got back to the finish just before the girls.

"25.20 Dee!" John shouted across the road.

Well at least I was consistent.

I got myself dressed and noticed as I put my shoes back on that Bernie and Ally were paying a lot of attention to the later finishers, pointing and whispering.

"What's with that pair?" I whispered to Mad

"Sizing up your opposition" she giggled

"Eh!"

"You don't think they came out just to cheer you on do you?"

"Well I..."

"Dur! They're checking out all these fit bods!"

It clicked then.

"Oh, what about you?"

"Looking's ok but I've got one to grope" she dived forward and started tickling my middle

"Get off! Stop! Maddy! Give over!"

By the time she stopped we had attracted an amused audience.

Embarrassed somewhat I collected my stuff.

"Come on let's go"

"Spoilsport!" Mad stated

The others, spotting our imminent departure hurried to collect their bikes and joined us in short order.

"What's up?" Bernie asked

"Nothing," Mad supplied, "Dee here wants to get home"

"We gonna get chips?" Ally asked

"I've got to go straight home" I told them

"Right like your Dad will know?" Bernie suggested

"Come on Drew, my treat" Mad entreated

"Okay then" I gave in.

What a mistake. We were just coming out of 'Hygenic Fisheries', (a spoof on 'Last of the Summer Wine'!) when who should pull up but Dad.

"Drew, girls" he greeted us

"Hi Mr Bond" Ally answered

"I can explain" I started

"At home" he stated sternly proceeding into the chip shop.

"That's torn it," I said to the others

"We'll explain to your Dad" Mad stated

"Yeah, it's not your fault Drew" Bernie continued

We finished our chips and I rode the others back to their houses before returning home to Dad's wrath.

"In here!" Dad bellowed when I got home

"But I need to shower"

"Your girlfriends didn't seem to mind so I'm sure I can put up with you for a couple of minutes.

"Yes Dad" I hung my head

"What were you told?"

"To come straight home after the race"

"So why were you at the chip shop?"

"Bernie said you'd never know and Maddy was buying, I was gonna come straight home honest"

Just then the phone rang, Dad picked it up

"Oh hi Carol...yes...he did?...hmm...yes okay...thanks for calling...goodnight Carol" I just got Dad's side of the conversation.

"That was Maddy's Mum, she said Maddy was upset that she had got you in more trouble and confirms your story"

"Yes Dad"

"You're off the hook this time, but in future if I say straight home I mean it do you understand?"

"Yes Dad" I hung my head

"Look Drew," he took a more conciliatory tone, "I know you don't intend to get in trouble, you are just easily led. You need to be more forceful with people, it's not always easy to say no but you need to start taking a firmer grip. Okay son?"

"Yes Dad"

"Go get that shower"

Wednesday was thankfully uneventful other than Mr Wood calling a meeting about the exchange programme for Friday. All of our teachers were going through final preparations for next weeks SATS tests so it was well boring. The rest of the week was destined to be more of the same except for games where we got the opportunity to practice for sportsday.

"Mr Bond, a moment please" Mr Pilling, the senior PE teacher called me into his office

"Yes sir?"

"I have a problem young man. You've signed up for sports day?"

"Well Maddy Peters did for me, badminton doubles"

He sighed

"Mrs Cole thought it was you"

"Sir?"

"The badminton is not mixed Drew"

"I'll have to pick something else then, I was going to do long jump"

"It's not that simple. Mrs Cole has already organised the tournament and if you don't play that means Maddy can't, which means that Scott House isn't fairly represented and..."

"You mean I have to play still?"

"You don't *have* to, but as head of your House I'm asking you if you will."

"Well I don't see why not"

"Ah, there's just one thing Drew, Mrs Cole insists on the proper attire"

"I've got my tennis kit" I volunteered

"No Drew, it's a girls tournament, you'll have to wear a skirt. Think about it and let me know Monday"

Why me?

At least Mr Wood's meeting didn't spring any surprises; it was mostly confirming the timetable with us and telling us about the social events that were planned. There would be a sort of reception the day after they arrived in Warsop and a barbecue during the third week. Lastly the school was organising a sort of farewell party before they leave. That brought to mind the end of term dance, perhaps I can give it a miss considering how things have been going.

Being grounded was a definite downer! The others were going to Meadowhall today while I was stuck at home.

"Drew, get your sister please" Dad asked me

I fetched my sullen sibling

"Right you two. It's not very good being grounded is it?"

"No Dad" we both echoed

"It's not much fun for me either having to put up with you two moping around. Your Mum really wants you to learn a lesson from this and I do to. Do you think you're learning that lesson? Jules?"

"Yes Dad"

"Drew?"

"Yes Dad"

"Right then. Your Mum's not here and I am. You are both un-grounded from today..."

"Yesss" Jules stated

"Cool" I suggested

"But" Dad continued, "but there are conditions."

"Yes Dad" Jules agreed

"Number one, we don't tell Mum agreed?"

"We won't tell if you don't" I answered for us both

"Number two, any more misbehaving and it's immediate grounding for both of you and no arguments."

"But..." I started

"No arguments, do you both agree?"

"Yes Dad" we both returned

"Okay then that's settled. As a last act of penance you can clean the house then tidy your rooms and Drew,"

"Dad?"

"If the girls want to come in the morning they can OK?"

"Thanks Dad"

"Jules?"

"What?"

"Can I ask your advice?"

"I 'spose but I'm surprised you trust me after the last couple of weeks"

"Well I was partly to blame" I started

"Advice?" she interrupted

"Oh yeah. You know sportsday?"

"Sure. One day a year when we have to do games, a complete drag"

"That's the one" I agreed, "well I've got a bit of a fix..." I proceeded to tell her all about my meeting with Mr Pilling and his request.

"Drew! I thought you were stopping the dressing up?"

"I am, but like this would be the last time and "

"And you feel sort of obligated?"

"Well yeah"

"Look Drew, do it if you want to but everyone at school will know"

"I guess so"

She rolled her eyes

I went on "I suppose I could do it as Gaby, then no one would know it was me then"

"My brother, honour before common sense!"

Well that conversation didn't get anywhere did it?

I continued mulling over the problem as I changed my bed sheets and tidied my bedroom.



'Hmm perhaps I could do two events, one as Drew and one as Gaby? Then people would see both of me and not suspect anything. Might work, I'll have to talk with Mr Pilling see if we can do that. I'll have to borrow some girl's whites. Yeah that's a solution!'

I imagined myself finishing one event and then rushing to change for the second, which way would be better boy to girl or girl to boy? I suppose one last appearance as Gaby wouldn't be so bad would it and perhaps Scott might win the Sportsday Shield. Yeah and pigs might fly!

I rang Mad after tea to see if the crew wanted to come in the morning, Mad checked with the others who were at her place after their trip to Meadowhall.

"I thought you were still grounded?" she queried

"Well Dad sort of put us on probation"

"Cool"

"You guys coming then?"

"Just me and Ally, Rhod's helping his mum and Bernie's going to her Gran's"

"We'll pick you up at six thirty?"

"I've got a better idea. What if we stay over at yours, we could get another ten minutes in bed"

"Good idea, I'll ask dad and ring you back" I enthused

Dad agreed to Mad's plan so Mrs Peters brought the two girls over about an hour later. Ally was going to stay with Mad anyway, so it was only a change of venue. Dad insisted we get an early night so discussions with Mad would have to wait until tomorrow.

Part 12

Good Thinking

"...so you're still gonna play Badminton?" Ally pursued as we walked back to the car.

It had been an early start and this stop at Colsterworth, south of Grantham was only to answer the call of nature. We had about another hour's drive down to Sandy and today's 25 mile time trial based on the A1 trunk road.

"Well Mr Pilling asked if I would"

"But Drew, you said Gaby was history" Mad told me

"I know, but it's just a one off, if I don't you'll have to find something else too you know" I replied

"So what's this other idea then?" Ally pursued a pre toilet thread.

"Well I reckon I could do the badminton as Gaby and say javelin as me and no one would twig it was me" I informed them, they both looked a bit doubtful.

"Come on guys, or we'll be late" Dad called across the car park

"We'll talk later" I whispered

I think I've bored you with my bike riding a fair bit lately so I'll stick to the basics today. I have been looking forward to this ride for weeks, a chance to ride the near legendary (well in time trialling circles!) F1 course on the Bedfordshire / Cambridgeshire borders. It's one of perhaps half a dozen courses that have produced very fast times consistently for many years but due to traffic increases their use has been curtailed to a point where you are very lucky to get into the field. Toadies event is just for under 18's, ladies and 60 of the slowest seniors, a sort of back handed opportunity if you like.

I've told you about my ten times but I rarely ride a 25 on my own so my current best is a not exactly startling 1 hour, ten minutes and twenty-three seconds! I am hoping for much better things today.

"Number 54!"

I rolled forward to the timekeeper.

"Drew Bond?" she asked

"That's me" I confirmed

"Any relation to Jenny Bond?"

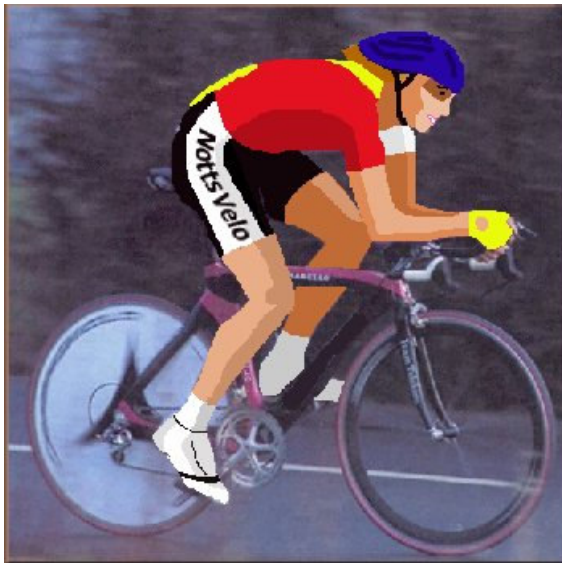
"She's my mum"

"45 seconds, well have a good ride, remember to keep your head up and signal at the turn"

The pusher grabbed my bike and I clicked into my pedals and prepared myself to start.

"15...10...5,4,3,2,1,go!" the timekeeper intoned

I made my usual big effort to get rolling and once I joined the main road I quickly settled down. I passed Dad and the girls about half a mile on; I was concentrating now so I didn't acknowledge their cheers with anything more than a look.



I concentrated on the job in hand and despite the rolling nature of the middle section I found myself moving easily and by the turn no one had managed to catch me. I manoeuvred around the turn island without delay and checked my computer, thirty-five minutes. Well I calculated that with the longer outward leg that should get me a 1.07 at the finish! Cool.

I passed Dad and my vocal cheerleaders a bit further along and Dad had obviously worked out much the same as me.

"You're catching two riders," he yelled as I zipped by.

The last ten miles would I'm sure you recall take about 25 minutes and that's what I was expecting. However I realised that there was something amiss when with five to go I still only had 46 minutes on my clock – had I really miscalculated that much? I hit the last down hill shortly after passing a third rider and there in front I could see at least three more within catching distance. I dug deeper and at the 2-mile marker it was clear I would catch at least one of them if not two. A last big effort, I saw our car flash past, and I was into the last mile.

Just two bends left past one rider then the second metres further on. Big effort to the line.

"Come on Drew!"

"Nearly there!"

My cheer squad were shouting themselves hoarse.

"54" I gasped out as I passed the chequered flag

Dad and the girls got to the HQ seconds before me and were whooping and shouting like mad! In my exhaustion I had forgotten to stop the clock but even now it only said 1.07.30.

"You did it!" Dad hugged me and bounced up and down at the same time

"What, ughhhh, did I, ughhhh, do?" I wheezed

"Well I make it 1.00.20" Dad was beaming

"Uuhh" I replied

By the time I got to the result board there were a lot of smiley faces, I could hear plenty of people talking about PB's and bests but I was still unprepared to see my time. Expecting a 1.00.00+ time I didn't at first spot my time in the list. Number 45 – 1.00.37, number 50 – 58.21, 51 – 1.01.00, 52 – 1.05.056, 53 – 1.06.13, then me 54 – 59.43! Wow! I've broken the hour! Now if you are a cyclist you will know that's no mean achievement for a thirteen-year-old. I just stood there with a bemused look on my face mouthing 'I beat the hour' over and over.

I was joined shortly by my cheer squad.

"I've broken the hour! 59.43!"

We had another bouncy hugging session much to the amusement of the tea ladies. Dad joined us and after checking my time joined the group hug momentarily.

"Well done Drew!"

"Thanks Dad"

"Looking at the times going up now, you stand a pretty good chance of a prize" he stated

"Kewl!" suggested Ally

"There's loads to come in yet" I suggested

"Only another forty" Dad had a twinkle in his eye

"We'll wait outside Dad" I informed him, he was now anxiously watching each result as it was posted.

"Ok, don't go too far"

"I won't be a mo, just got to change" I told my mates as I dived into the gents. I emerged a couple of minutes later in jeans and T.

"What are you going to tell Pilling tomorrow?" Mad badgered

"Well I thought I'd suggest what I told you earlier"

"Hmm, that's going to take some organising" Ally mused

"Erm, I meant to ask earlier Mad, is it all right with you?"

"If you want to do it that's ok with me, but why do two events?"

"It's obvious right Drew?" Ally put in

"Er yeah"

"If Drew isn't at sports day but Gaby is some people might realise who Gaby is, right?" Ally concluded

"That's what Jules reckons, so if people see me and 'Gaby' there, they won't suspect anything"

"I guess?" Mad didn't seem too convinced

I spotted Dad coming out of the village hall HQ.

"I said didn't I?" Dad was beaming stupidly

"Said what?" I had to ask

"You've got the best improvement prize," he told us

"Brill!" Ally agreed

"And you're second under 16!" Dad finished

"Cool" Maddy added to the limited conversation

To be honest although I'm pleased as punch I'm also a bit embarrassed by the attention.

"There's no presentation is there?" I asked Dad

"No not today, they'll post the prize money with the results"

"What's he won Mr Bond" Maddy queried

"Twenty-five pounds in total, fifteen for second place and ten for the improvement, I wish I could earn that an hour" he joked, well I think it was a joke.

"I'm starving" Ally announced

"Me too" I agreed

"How about we go up to Stamford for lunch and then have a look around Rutland Water before we head home?" Dad suggested

"How far's that?" I whined

"'Bout half an hour, it's only just gone twelve" Dad answered

"Okay then" I agreed

Stamford is what I guess some people would call quaint. There was a thing on telly recently about how they used the town for some Jane Austin or Dickens film. All they had to do was take a few signs down and put sand down on the roads and it looked perfect. It's not all that black and white stuff like Stratford, the houses and stuff are all stone built.

We ended up in the beer garden of an old coaching inn, it was a pleasant afternoon and we were sort of celebrating. Afterwards we headed up the valley to Rutland Water, which nestles between England's smallest county, Rutland and Northamptonshire. I wasn't expecting such a big lake, well it's a reservoir really but to be honest the girls and me are not much into looking at loads of water. Dad eventually decided to leave us at the visitor centre while he took a guided drive around the shores in a Landrover.

"You've still got that ring in" Maddy half accused

"I can't take it out, Anna says you need a special tool"

"What ever made you get that done?" Ally asked

"Well I didn't really"

"What do you mean?" Mad questioned

"Well Sylv did this," I fingered the ring in the top of my ear, " and the extra ones at the bottom without me knowing"

"She must have asked you" Ally stated

"Well she asked if I wanted to be convincing and I said I did. Next thing I know I've got these extra holes"

"My mum would kill me if I got all those holes" Ally mentioned

"Mine too" Mad concurred

"Well as soon as I can it's coming out, I think the other holes are healing" I told them

"Let's have a look" Maddy suggested

She moved closer to inspect my lobes.

"Well these at the bottom have healed" she stated

"Great!" I enthused

"Well not really, they've healed I said not closed up" Maddy continued

"Oh sugar!" I exclaimed, " are you sure?"

"Look, I'll try mine in them." So she removed her little blue studs (the same ones she used to pierce my ears at Meadowhall) and quickly slipped them into my 'new' holes.

"There, just a bit of dead skin in the holes" she stated

"Those studs are pretty cute on you Drew" Ally put in

"Well if I never put anything in them they'll eventually close" I stated with more confidence than I felt.

"Maybe" Mad hedged

"Let's go look in the shop" Ally suggested

We walked over to the visitor centre where there was cycle hire, a small snack bar and a shop as well as the information place. I stumped up for a round of Mivvi's then we hit the shop. It was mostly your usual tourist tat, with a few books and other bit's to tempt your wallet. I didn't buy anything but both the girls left clutching paper bags.

Dad's excursion arrived back in the car park soon after, and sensing a revolt if we stayed any longer, Dad had us homeward bound soon after.

"So are you saying you'll do it then," Mr Pilling asked

"Erm, yes" I answered

"Let's check the programme then," he said searching for it amongst the mess on his desk.

"Ah here we are." He studied the sheet for a moment before continuing, "well we might be able to do something, not the javelin but if you did the discus, that's due to be over by ten o'clock which would give you, lets see now, forty minutes to get ready for the badminton."

"That's not long" I stated

"Best I can do I'm afraid" Mr Pilling told me

"Okay then"

"I'll get you 'enrolled' as Gaby and we'll see the two of you on sports day"

"Yes sir"

"And Drew,"

"Yes sir?"

"Take those earrings out before class"

I felt my ears; damn Maddy had left her studs in yesterday afternoon.

I rejoined the others in the yard.

"Well?" Maddy asked

"I'm doing the discus first, then its forty minutes until the badminton" I told them

"That's not long" Bernie echoed my comment to Pilling

"We'll have to get everything ready beforehand" Maddy stated

"These are yours I believe," I said pointedly handing her back her studs

"Oh I'd forgotten about them, where were they?"

"Where you left them, Pilling saw them and told me to take them out" I half fumed

"You mean..." Mad went on

"Yep they were right where you left them, in my ears" I stated

Bernie stifled a laugh

"It's not funny!" I told them

"The look on your face" Rhod grinned

"I give up" I rolled my eyes, "your Mum can take this out later too" I told Rhod fingering the ring in my upper ear.

Part 13

Run for Home

"Well its healed lovely Drew" Sylv informed me, "you sure you want it left out?"

"Yes!" I stated a little harshly

"Okay, okay"

"Sorry Sylv, I'm just a bit touchy today."

We rejoined the others in the living room.

"Come on Drew, your turn" Ally stated passing me the handset. We were playing on the PS2.

I'm afraid our usual jocular evening was a bit soured by my mood. I can't really explain why I feel like I have triple maths next but I do. Okay!

"Tea up!" Sylv called us

"Drew? You coming?" Bernie asked

"Er oh erm yeah ok" I really was a bit out of it

Sylv never claimed to be a cook so tea at Rhod's was usually something straightforward and tonight was no exception, quiche and salad with baked potatoes.

"What's up Drew?" Maddy asked

"Oh, just feeling a bit off I guess"

After eating the discussion moved to Sylv's small back garden

"What are you guy's wearing to the End of Term?" Mad asked generally

"I'm not really sure" Ally commented

"Mum said I could get something new" Bernie threw in

"Kewl!" Mad stated

"What about you guys?" Ally addressed Rhod and me

"I've got a new shirt," Rhod mentioned, "it's a sort of retro paisley"

"Sounds gross" Bernie put in

"Well I like it" Rhod retorted

"What about you Drew?" Mad queried

"Dunno, guess I'll find something"

"Come on Drew, show some enthusiasm" Bernie cajoled

"Sorry guys. I think I'll go home, get some sleep"

So I left Rhod's place well early and wandered slowly home in the evening sunshine. On reflection it was probably a combination of things that had left me so morose. Euphoria from Sunday, tension over the Sports Day arrangements, annoyance over 'my' earrings, well you get the idea.

Tuesday found me in much better fettle. School was ok I guess but I was more than happy enough to head home at the end of the day. Only Mad was coming to the ten tonight, the others had homework to finish.

"You ready Drew?"

"Just getting my shoes on" I told my impatient friend

"I worked out Drew that you raced quicker on Sunday for 25 miles than you do for ten miles"

"Yeah?" I answered

"Yeah," Mad went on, "two and a half of your tens come to about one hour two minutes and a bit"

"So what should my ten time be then?" I queried pulling the garage door shut

"Well I reckon you would do a straight twenty four"

"I've done a twenty four" I stated

We set off for Cuckney

"Not just a twenty four but twenty four nothing" Mad continued

"No way, that's miles faster" I retorted

"Well you work it out then" she suggested

So I did the maths as we rode along and she was right!

"Okay I agree the numbers check out, so how come I'm so much slower for ten miles then?"

"Well I asked Dad and he reckons it's because you can keep going at a steady pace further without having to slow down and stuff"

"I get it I think. I guess if I did ten miles straight out I'd go quicker than having to slow down at the turn" I suggested

"I guess so"

Just then we arrived at John's car

"Hi girls" he greeted us

"Hi" I answered for us

"There's a slight change of plan tonight, there are traffic lights at the turn for some road works so we are doing a straight five instead" John informed me

"Ok, I'm game, what about you Mad"

"Me!"

"Yeah it's only five miles"

"Well I, er, I'm not dressed for it" Maddy was searching for an excuse. In actual fact she was wearing cycling style shorts and a t-shirt, quite suitable for this.

"It's only a bit of fun, come on" I encouraged

"That would be okay wouldn't it John?" I asked the timekeeper

"Why not, we're not taking money tonight" he affirmed

"Go on Mad. Pretty please" I fluttered my eyelashes at her.

"Okay then"

"I'll put you at numbers four and five, girls"

So started Maddy's cycle racing career.

I'm sure Maddy will tell you all about it sometime but here's the abridged version. We started up near the ten turn and although Maddy was not on anything resembling a racing bike she certainly made a good effort. It took me nearly a mile to catch up to her after starting a minute behind, I shouted some encouragement as I passed her to which she just gasped. I was passed myself not long after but the short distance allowed me to avoid further traffic, I pushed harder than usual and stopped my clock at the finish after 12 minutes 15 Seconds. I waited by John for Maddy to arrive and I cheered her in.

"What's she done John?" I queried

"Fifteen ten Dee"

"Thanks"

I went to join an exhausted Maddy sat on the grass verge.

"Well done Mad"

"What'll I do?" she heaved

"Fifteen ten" I informed her, "pretty good considering"

"Considering I'm a girl?" she accused

"No considering it's your first go and what you were riding, I bet you'd be loads faster on a racing bike"

"Thanks I think"

"Let's get back to our stuff and I'll do your legs"

"They are cramping a bit. Ow!" she allowed

So I got to practice the leg rubbing bit on Mad's tense muscles.

"Ooh that's nice, no don't stop, ahhh! That is just so good" Mad stated

"Chips are on me this week" I told her

"Can you just rub my legs a bit longer please?"

How could I refuse such a request? We eventually returned to Warsop via the Hygenic Fisheries about half an hour later. I left the Peter's mansion and got home just in time for Mum's call. Oh I forgot to tell you, Mum's team is riding the Tour Feminin in France and today was stage four.

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Drew, how did you get on tonight?"

I told her about me and Mad's evening

"So is Maddy going to start racing then?"

"I don't think so. How's your race going?"

"Ok I guess, Maria is eighth and I'm twelfth, it's been all big bunch finishes so far"

"Wow! When do you get to the mountains?"

"Friday is the first day"

"Cool" I noted

"Hmmpf, not if you have to ride up them it's not" Mum pointed out

"Guess not"

"I'll ring again later in the week, say bye to Dad and Jules for me"

"Ok, bye Mum"

"Bye Drew"

Wednesday and Thursday managed to pass without any undue stress, Mr Pilling informed me that everything was set for sports day, I must admit to some second thoughts but I couldn't back out now could I?

Mad caught up with me Friday morning

"Drew, what are you going to wear next week?"

"The dance? I don't know"

"No not the dance, well yes, but no I meant sports day"

"Mr Pilling said it has to be girls whites" I answered

"Well I can lend you a skirt" she offered

"Thanks, I think Jules has a top I can borrow"

"You'll need some bloomers"

"What? Like long frilly things?" I started to panic

"No silly, tennis bloomers"

"Oh?" I still wasn't sure what she meant

"Tell you what, we'll go get matching ones tomorrow"

"I'm racing tomorrow" I informed her

"Yeah but not till late on"

"Seven"

"Plenty of time to go shopping beforehand then"

"I guess"

"Hey Bern, Al! You want to go to Nottingham tomorrow?" she called to the others as they came to join us.

"Mum's taking me to get a new dress, we can all go in the car" Bernie replied

"Great" Mad enthused

"Why are you guys going?" Ally had to ask

"To get some new tennis knickers for next week" Mad advised them

"Oh yeah, best get matching ones so you look like a team" Bernie smirked

"Give over" I whined

Mrs Rose picked us up from Maddy's place just after nine and we were parked at the Victoria Centre before ten.

"Okay kids, I've got some shopping to do, we'll meet in the square at twelve, get something to eat then get Bernadette's new dress" she raised her eyebrows in query

"Fine Mrs R" Ally mentioned

"Okay Mum" Bernie added

"Right see you later, look after them Drew"

"Yes Mrs Rose" I replied

We hurried off through the mall and out into the city centre. Although Mad was directing us to the dance shop, I managed to divert us into Waterstone's bookshop on the way. Twenty pounds lighter in the pocket but four new books richer I then allowed myself to be led to 'that' shop.

You remember the place? Where I ended up buying a leotard the other week? I just knew that this visit would be even worse. Once inside the girls pulled me upstairs past the dancewear to the small room that was host to tennis stuff.

"Hi girls, can I help?" a middle aged assistant asked

"We're looking for tennis bloomers" Mad informed her

"We don't sell many so we keep them in the back, what size do you need?" the woman asked

"Twenty four waist please"

"Won't be a minute" the assistant disappeared

"We're just going to look at the tennis dresses Mad" Bernie mentioned

I just stood there like a spare part clutching my books

"Here we are girls. There are some really cute lacy ones somewhere in here" she told us as she rifled around in the box. The phone rang and she left to answer it, returning in short order.

"I've just got to go downstairs for a few minutes, have a root round, I won't be long"

"Thanks" Maddy offered

"What is it with this place, they all think I'm a girl" I huffed

"I guess they don't get too many boys coming in to buy leotards or tennis knickers" Maddy chortled

"Let's get this over and done with" I pouted

So I stood and watched as Maddy pulled various pairs out for inspection. After a few minutes the assistant returned

"Found anything girls?"

"We quite like these" Maddy included me in her answer as she indicated several pairs of the white full briefs, "but we're not sure how they'll look"

"No problem, I've a couple of skirts you can borrow so you can see, hang on and I'll get them"

"Cool" Maddy stated

"Maddy!" I hissed behind my teeth

"Here we are girls" the woman passed a short tennis skirt to each of us, "the changing room is at the end. Oh and best take these too" she passed the panties to me.

"Thanks" I mentioned in my best Gaby voice

How do I get into these situations? When she said changing room that's exactly what she meant, it was one small curtained area with a bench and mirror.

"Do I have to do this?" I begged

"Yes, she'll think it odd if we don't both try them on"

"But Mad!" I whined

"Come on, get those jeans off" she ignored my plea's

I sighed in resignation and removed my jeans revealing my boxers, Maddy tutted when she saw my underwear. She hunted in her bag for a moment.

"Here put these on, she will certainly smell a rat if you keep those horrible things on"

I inspected what she gave me, a pair of pink bikini briefs.

"Mad?"

"Get on with it Drew, I'll not look" she stated

So I reluctantly replaced my Bart Simpson boxers with Mad's spare panties, Mad spirited my underwear away.

"Tuck!" she told me

"Er, oh yeah" I agreed as I remembered that I had a bit of a give away bulge in front

"You girls okay in there?" the attendant queried

"Yes thanks"

Mad helped me into the short skirt then handed me a pair of bloomers to pull on over 'my' briefs. She was soon clad similarly and she ushered me out.



"Nice legs!" Ally informed the rest of the shop

"Lets have a look Gabs?" Bernie suggested

So I had to do the modelling bit, then Mad did likewise. We tried on another two pairs of bloomers each, each time having to model for the others and the shop assistant. I was so embarrassed. Maddy finally settled on some full cut briefs with fairly abundant ruffles across the bum, they were so sissy, I couldn't believe she had gone for them.

"Ooh, they are just so cute" Ally kept repeating as we waited for Bernie's Mum

"She did go on a bit didn't she?" Maddy stated referring to the sales person's comments when she saw Mad's choice for us. I was just waiting to die from embarrassment.

Mrs Rose joined us and we walked down to Littlewoods restaurant to eat. After a light lunch of a cheese and ham Panini for me (I am racing later!) and proper dinners for everyone else we then started to look for Bernie's new dress. Fortunately the choice was pretty much already made, Bernie had seen what she wanted in Top Shop a couple of weeks ago. I trailed around behind the others, as they had to inspect the other options before making the purchase! Girls!

"Excuse me miss, would you mind holding this so I can see what it looks like?" the voice asked

"Er?"

"I can't get near the mirrors" she told me

"Okay"

So there I am, holding this dress up to me when the others decide to look round for me.

"Cheers, it'd look really cute on you" the girl left me a bit bemused

"You looking for a new dress too" Mad smirked

"I was helping a girl, she wanted to see what it looked like" I got defensive

"From where I was it looked real cute on you" Ally joined us as Bernie and her Mum were making the purchase.

I gritted my teeth and did my best to storm away to wait for them outside.

"Are we all done then kids?" Mrs R asked when they emerged

"Yes thanks" Ally replied

"Ok lets get back home then"

I managed to miss the extra bag that Mad was carrying, otherwise I might have been more concerned, somewhere Ally had bought something too but I was now running on extra embarrassment and a desperate need to run for home. At least I had managed to get the new Terry Brook's Shannara book.

"Any of you guys want to come this evening?" I asked

"I will" Maddy volunteered

"Can't tonight" Ally told us

"Me neither" Bernie added

So Mrs Rose dropped Maddy and me off at my place just before four, time for tea before Dad takes us to the race up at Ranby.

Part 14

Racquets

After tea I went to get changed and it was only when I took my jeans off that I realised I still had Mad's pants on, and I was still tucked. Ah well.

Dad drove us up to Ranby, it only took twenty minutes, and I was treated to a leg rub from Maddy. I have to admit that my mind was not really on the job as I rode round to the start. I know it's my fault this time but it's a bit disconcerting nevertheless.

"Go!"

I made my starting effort and joined the main carriageway of the A1. The slight dip past the HQ let me get my cadence up and when I passed Maddy and Dad I was much more concentrated. The very slight tail wind allowed me to get most of the way up the next incline before changing down gear and all too soon I was out on the flattish middle section. I could see the rider in front but I hadn't made any impression on the gap between us.

Over the brow and back into top for the descent toward the turn, and there was the five to go marker. I negotiated the traffic island cleanly and rejoined the southbound carriageway. 12.35 – pretty good, I just need to keep it going into the headwind! Up the 'hill' onto the top and my minute man was obviously fading back toward me! I kept the revs up and along the top I continued to make inroads into the gap.

Whoosh!

I wasn't expecting that, number forty flew past me, that was a clear 2 minutes he'd caught me for and there is still just over two miles to go. I gathered my concentration again and watched as he overtook my minute man too. The final downhill stretch and I continued to catch the man in front, the mile board came up just as I reached my quarry. The rolling climb to the finish was an agony, number forty was still not too far ahead as I crawled past the slower rider.

"Come on Drew!" Maddy encouraged

"Up, up, up" Dad provided the accompaniment

"Nearly there!" Maddy shouted as I passed them

And there it was, the chequered flag.

"38!" I gasped sitting up to gasp some much needed air into my heaving chest

My computer showed 25.01 when I stopped it so a good time; perhaps another PB was on the cards! I rode round to the HQ where my personal supporters club was already waiting at the car.

"What do you think you've done?" Dad asked

"I think a long 24"

"Kewl" Maddy supplied

Dad looked after my bike while Maddy did her masseuse bit, boy is that nice!

"I put your boxers in your kit bag" Mad said conversationally

"Cheers, I'll wash your knickers later with this stuff" I told her

I pulled on a tracky top as the breeze was keeping the temperature down and the three of us walked along to the HQ for the tea and cake ritual.

"High Dee, Maddy" John greeted us

"Hi John" I replied

"I didn't see you on the start sheet?"

"I'm there honest" I told him, " oh this is my Dad. Dad this is John, the timekeeper on Tuesdays"

Introductions made, I slipped off with Mad while Dad and John started talking. I went to hand my number in and fetched the sustenance.

"Drew, Drew! 24.41!" Maddy enthused

"Excellent!" my hands full of cups and cake prevented me joining Maddy's little jig

"How is it then Drew?" Dad asked

"24.41!"

"Well done, is one of those cups for me?"

"Oh. Yeah this one" I passed Dad his tea

"Number 40 did 22.20, but there are a few 21's up" my girlfriend informed us over her shoulder as she scanned the board. We waited around until the last times were put up; some animal managed 20.57, someday, I mused.

The drive home was pretty quick; we dropped Maddy off at home and got home to a ringing phone.

"Bond residence" Dad answered, "oh hi love, how are you?"

I decided I had time for a quick shower while my olds were talking so I quickly used the downstairs facilities. I was still drying off when I heard Dad calling me

"Come on Drew!"

I rushed into the house and took the proffered handset

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Drew, your Dad says you did another personal?"

"Yeah 24.41!" I told her

"Excellent, I've got some good news as well" Mum informed me

"What? Come on give"

"I won today" Mum was obviously still on a high

"Kewl, that's brilliant Mum, tell me about it then" I encouraged

"Well..." mum spent the next twenty minutes giving me a blow by blow account.

"And you won the sprint" I finished for her

"Well more of an exhausted amble really"

"But you still won! I bet you moved up the GC (general classification)"

"The time bonus has put me into sixth place and I'm second in the climbers competition"

"Just wait till I tell the guys"

"Is Jules there?"

My sister had come in while we were talking.

"Yeah, I'll pass you over, night mum"

"Goodnight Drew"

I passed the phone to my sister and went to get dressed.

"You watching the Tour prologue Drew?" Dad enquired, "the highlights are on in ten minutes"

I'd forgotten that the Tour De France started today, what with one thing and another.

"Please?"

"Okay, I'll do supper then"

Well I was glad that Dad had mentioned it, in the end we all were. I put Eurosport on, the end of the saloon car coverage was pretty exciting and then it was Tour time!

"Welcome to our coverage of the 89th Tour de France" the commentator started. He went on for nearly five minutes before we saw rider number one, Lance Armstrong, head down the start ramp. Dad joined me on the sofa as the fancied riders were featured and the highlights continued.

Then came the surprise

"After the break we'll have coverage of the first week of the Tour Feminin and today's win by Britains own Jenny Bond" the adverts started.

"Jules! Mum's on telly" I shouted up to my sister at the same time as grabbing my mobile to call the gang. Dad quickly started the video running. I got through to Mad and Rhod before the adverts finished.

The commentators ran through each stage quickly, maybe 30 seconds on each stage telling us how the fancied riders were getting on and the GC. We spotted Mum and the other Apollinaris riders a couple of times, pointing them out to each other. For today's stage, we got quite a bit more coverage.

"It was threatening rain as the peloton left Gap this morning for the second mountain stage. The bunch remained intact over the first two second category climbs before Apollinaris rider Tina Porsche accelerated away on the lower slopes of today's first category climb." We watched raptly as Tina went away from the bunch. It was clear that this was a team ploy as the other team members, sat on anything that tried to follow. The cameras nearly missed Mum's move. As the road twisted through the trees Mum dropped back a few places in the thinning bunch, then as the cameras were concentrating on Maria sat at the front there was a flash in the top of the screen, a cream flash.

We watched raptly as the cameras now went between Tina, Mum and the rest of the team controlling the bunch. About the point that Mum caught Tina, several riders managed to break the Apollinaris strangle hold to set off in pursuit of the escapees. Mum and Tina rode over the summit next to each other with a 30-second lead over the chasers.

We were all shouting encouragement at the telly even though we knew the outcome already. The chasers caught our riders in the valley bottom making a nine rider break with 45 seconds over what remained of the main peleton. The commentator was telling us about Mum's regional championship win and commenting on each of the others strengths and weaknesses. They started the final climb and Tina was quickly blown out the back, her job done.

The remaining eight kept a high pace peeling off another four riders before the one kilometre kite. And Mum was still there. They all started preparing for the sprint, the others keeping an eye on Mum as she is known as a sprinter. I thought she'd left it pretty late, they had slowed quite a bit and were well within the last 200 when she switched around behind them and made her effort. The others were wasted and mum took it by several bike lengths. We all cheered as the commentator got a few words from her; she must have been confused as she replied in German!



"We'll have further coverage of the ladies tour each night, here on Eurosport. Now back to the prologue."

We finished watching the Tour coverage and ate our delayed supper, all the while discussing what we had just seen.

I got myself up early to go training next morning, heading towards Sheffield then down to Chesterfield before heading home arriving home just before eleven. Me and the guys are doing SATS revision at Maddy's this afternoon so I did the washing.

"These aren't mine" Jules commented

She had got to the washer before me when it finished and was unloading it ready to hang it all out. I realised what she had immediately, I'd forgotten all about them

"No they're Mad's" I informed her

"You borrowing her underwear again?"

"No. Yes. Not really"

"Come on Drew, which is it?"

"Well I had to borrow them yesterday in Nottingham"

"Come on Bro" she obviously didn't believe me so I had to tell her everything.

"So not only are you competing in the girls badminton but they took you to buy some tennis knickers too?" she was almost in hysterics

"Snot funny!" I stated

"Does Dad know?"

"No and I want to keep it that way"

"Okay I won't say anything"

"Erm Jules?"

"There's more?"

"Well I sort of need a top to wear?"

"And you want to borrow mine?"

"Well I was hoping"

"I never dreamt my brother would want to borrow my clothes. Ok, have you got a skirt then?"

"Maddy's got a spare one"

"You'd best borrow my racquets too"

"I've got one" I told her

"That scrappy thing! All the strings are loose!"

"Well a bit I suppose"

"No sister of mine is using that thing, I've just had my racquets restrung, you'll play much better with decent kit"

"I guess?"

"There's no guessing about it. Now is there anything else?"

"No I don't think so, thanks for the loan of the racquets"

"I'll sort out the top later, oh and you'd best take your knickers"

"They're not mine!"

"Whatever" she commented

After lunch I rode over to Mad's where the others were already getting started

"Hi guys!" I greeted them after 'Aunt Carol' let me in

"Hi Drew" Ally returned

"Drew" Rhod offered

"Your Mum was pretty cool" Maddy stated

"Well cool" Bernie added, "Mad showed us the report on the web earlier"

"Let's get this revision done, then we can check the email and stuff"

So that's what we did.

We put the books away just after four and diverted our attention to Mad's computer. We each had mail from our exchangeers; Britney went to great lengths bringing me up to date on what was happening in her little corner of America. So I found out that the cheerleaders were all going to 'cheer' camp the week before she and the others were coming to the UK, that she didn't have a date for next weeks dance. Well you get the picture, she still assumed I was a she despite everything I had hinted at. We each sent our news back, Mad's mum called us to eat a little after six and we made short work of the pasta carbonara and salad that she presented us with.

"You want to watch the Tour de France Drew?" Mrs P asked

"Yes please, Mum was on last night"

"I know, my daughter told me this morning. It starts in ten minutes, just enough time to do the washing up everyone!" it wasn't a question, and to be honest we didn't mind one bit.

You don't need the full commentary after all you are probably watching it too! The stage was the usual Stage 2, no action, just a huge club run really. After the break however, they had a few minutes on Mum's race. They showed Mum's win again then the highlights of today's stage. It ended in a big bunch sprint, Mum took fourth place! That meant that she climbed the GC to fourth, a podium finish is now a realistic possibility.

"Wow Drew, your Mum is really good" Ally gushed

"Where do you think Drew gets it from?" Mad retorted

"What's it like to have a famous Mum Drew?" Bernie asked

"Give over guys" I suggested

"Yeah, give him a break" Maddy started, "we don't want it going to his head!"

She easily dodged the cushion I launched at her

"Okay kids, time to go home. You've all got SATS tomorrow" Mrs P informed us

"Thanks for tea" Rhod told her

"Yeah thanks" I added, "and thanks for letting me watch the Tour"

"No problem Drew" she replied

So endeth another weekend! Exams tomorrow – what a drag!

Part 15

Testing Times

Mrs P was right; the SATS started straight after morning assembly, however that meant actually going to assembly first. Given his previous track record I was dreading Mr Wood's sermon of the day.

"...And I know those of you doing SATS this week will be doing their best." his tone said 'or else'.

He went through various notices, sports day, the dance on Saturday and so on.

"Finally our sportsmen and women have been busy this week. The under 16's cricket team had a 43 run win against Creswell, our athletics team came in second in the Dukeries championship. That means that they go to the county finals in Nottingham next weekend." He initiated a round of applause; most of the schools 'sport heads' are on the squad so this went on for a bit.

"We've also had Melanie Stevens of year ten win the junior cup in the Central region water-ski championships, Melanie?" he indicated she should stand, a ripple of applause went round plus a few wolf whistles, she is after all quite a babe.

"Lastly, Drew Bond has had another good weekend improving his ten mile best by recording 24.41." I took my turn at the embarrassing applause thing.

"I'd also like to mention a former teacher at our school today. Mrs Bond, Drew's mother, will have taught some of you. I'm sure you will all join me in congratulating her for her stage win in the women's Tour de France on Saturday."

I don't know what's worse, having my exploits exposed or being the offspring of a 'famous' sportswoman!

At least I could gain some anonymity back in the classroom.

You've all done tests and exams so I don't want to stir up your nightmares by telling you too much about mine. Suffice to say that by lunch I was all mathed out and not looking forward to chemistry this afternoon.

"I'm glad that's over!" Rhod exclaimed

"Not many" I agreed

"Hey Drew you get number three?" Clive asked as he joined us

"41?"

"Dur" Rhod and Clive stated together

"42 idiot" Clive went on

"You going on Saturday" I tried to change the subject

"Sure, you guys?"

"He's still hoping Madeline's cousin will be there" Paul told us as he sat down

"Well she is cute" Clive blushed

If only he knew, I just about managed to contain my own rise in colour, Rhod gave me a 'look'.

"Yeah we're going, lover boy here's going with Maddy" Rhod told the others

"Ooohwhoo" Clive stated

"Way to go Drewbie" Paul mentioned

This time I really did colour up

"Give over, it's not like a proper date or anything"

"Not a date! Who're you kidding, it's the summer dance!" Clive exclaimed

"What about you? You got a date?" I asked trying to deflect the conversation

"Naw, we're just gonna check out the totty when we get there" Paul answered

"That is so weak" Rhod mentioned

"You got a date then?" Clive was a bit miffed by Rhod's insinuation

"Yeah"

"Who is it then?" Paul asked

"For me to know and you to find out on Saturday" he stated

"You must know Drew?" Clive pursued

To be fair I hadn't a clue.

"No idea guys, he's not told me" I told them

"I bet its Allison!" Paul accused

The bell went before the conversation could go any further and an afternoon of chemistry awaited us.

"You got everything for Friday Drew?" Maddy asked as we walked towards Peter's Acres.

"Yeah, Jules has a spare top and she's lending me her racquets too"

"Come on Drew, you got yourself into this one"

"I know, it doesn't mean I have to like it though"

"Wait up guys!" Bernie called from behind us

"Hi Bern" Mad greeted her

"Ally said she might be late, something about going to the Post Office" she told us

"Yeah she mentioned something earlier" Mad confirmed

"Guess what?" Bernie went on

"That hunk in the sixth form has asked you out" Mad guessed

"I wish, no Mum said I can get my hair cut on Saturday" she enthused

"What for?" I asked

"Come on Drew, it's been like this for ever and it is the dance on Saturday"

"Whatever"

"What're you having done" Mad enthused

"I've seen a style I like, I'll show you tomorrow"

"Hi kid's" Mrs Peters greeted us

"Hello Mrs Peters" I offered

"Hi" Bernie stated

"Hi mum" Mad finished off

Rhod and Ally arrived just in time for tea and afterwards instead of our usual games and music session we ended up doing revision for Tuesdays round of torture.

"Drew?" Mad asked

"Yeah" I was concentrating on the French text we were reading.

"Friday?"

"What about it?"

"We'll need to do a dry run" she stated

"I 'spose"

"How about you bring your stuff round on Wednesday after school and we can practice"

"What about your Mum and Dad"

"Dad's away and Mum knows, you know she's cool about it anyway"

"I guess"

"You two going as girlfriends Saturday?" Bernie suggested

That ended any semblance of study as I initiated a pillow fight.

The tour coverage was a bit mundane; today's stage was almost flat! At least Mum's race was a bit more exciting. Mum made tenth and gained a few seconds on the girl in yellow who finished twenty seconds down.

"Dad? Can the guys come with us tonight?" I asked the following morning

"I guess so, we can take the camper"

"Thanks Dad, see you later"

"Bye Drew" Dad said to my departing back.

Confused? I know its Tuesday but instead of the usual ten, Worksop Velo, who run the tens, have got a twenty-five starting near Blythe and going to Retford and back. Hence dad was taking me.

Before then though we've got French and History SATS!

I think I did quite well and the rest of the guys are pretty confident too. Only Ally and Mad are going to the race, they convinced their parents that they would revise while I'm riding. Yeah that's likely!

"Come on Mad" I called to her as she jogged across to the camper.

"Ready back there?" Dad called out

"Yeah" I answered dogging the door

"I wish we had one of these" Ally stated

"Only until you spend your holiday in it" I stated

"I still think it's neat"

We were soon parked in the lane next to the start. As it's only a club event Dad had volunteered to marshal the turn when he spoke to John on Saturday. With the event on 'quiet' country roads, no records are on the cards tonight.

I started number seven and headed off. Compared to a lot of my time trialling this really is a sporting course, the roads are terrible and it goes through several villages with all the hazards that brings. I felt I was going okay however, number ten passed me as we went into Retford and I spotted the girls helping to marshal the turn island with Dad.

"Go on Drew!"

"Dig in son!"

I looked at the computer, thirty-one minutes – not bad. I concentrated on missing the BMXer's who darted in front of me, then I was back into the countryside. I pretended that I was Mum, on a lone breakaway with just a few miles to go for victory. I honked up the hills keeping the pace going and resumed my aero position as I sped down the other side. The final left turn and fantasy Mum was being chased hard. I checked the clock again, 56 minutes, cool! The last sweeping downhill then a long uphill left-hander to the finish.

I spotted the girls shouting across the road, passing traffic obliterated their cheers and there was John's car and the finish. One last effort and I was freewheeling to catch my breath. I got myself turned around and rode slowly back to where the others were waiting.

"Well done son" Dad mentioned

"What?" I managed to get out

"One hour, fifty seven seconds!" Maddy enthused

Well that was pretty cool, must have been Mum's influence.

On the way home Dad started the conversation.

"Can you three explain why John thinks you are my daughter Drew?"

That was a curve ball I wasn't expecting. Thankfully Mad was a bit more on the ball.

"It's a long story Mr Bond" she started

"In that case we'll stop at the services for a drink and you can tell me the whole thing"

The services were only a mile away so we were soon sat in the cafeteria watching the A1 traffic.

"Right then, lets here it" Dad suggested

"Well Mr Bond, it's really all me and the girls fault" Maddy started

Dad sipped at his cappuccino as between us we went over the detail. You remember the makeup and the training ride? I mean I never tried to deceive anyone did I? From time to time Dad shook his head with a smile. Eventually we got to the end and Dad just sat smirking.

"Dad, did you tell John that I'm a boy?" I had to ask

"Didn't get a chance, he was enthusing over my wife and daughter so much!"

"So he still thinks I'm Dee?"

"Yep" Dad replied

"Cool" Ally added

"No it's not" I snapped

"Come on Drew, there's no need to be like that" Dad admonished

"Sorry Al. But it's really embarrassing"

"Let's get you three home" Dad stated getting up

The drive back was subdued. We dropped Ally off first then Mad.

"Remember tomorrow night" Mad reminded me as we drove off.

"Tomorrow night Drew?" Dad asked

"You don't want to know" I told him

"You're probably right but tell me anyway"

So I had to explain the great sportsday scam.

"Why couldn't I have two daughters!" Dad muttered when I finished, then realising what he'd said went on, "sorry I didn't mean that, Jules is just as much trouble"

"Sorry Dad"

"Come on let's watch the Tour"

Well talk about spooky. The men's TdF resulted in another 180 up sprint but the ladies race was a case of déjà vu! There was Mum, ten kilometres from the finish and out on her own! Just like in my daydream during the twenty-five. We were on the edge of our seats as the cameras went to the chasing bunch where Tina and Maria were doing their best to slow things down. Back to Mum and she was obviously feeling the strain as the five banner was passed, chancing a glance backward. The English commentator was going potty as Mum looked like she might just make it.

The time gap was falling but not quick enough, still twenty seconds at the kilometre kite. We watched as a very tired Mum checked behind, straightened her jersey and did the classic victory salute as she crossed the line. The bunch came home ten seconds later and in the Bond house Dad and I were jumping around like three-year-olds

"...And Jenny how does it feel to take the yellow?" the commentator was asking

Mum looked bewildered, she glanced at George next to her who nodded with a huge grin on his face.

"Fantastic!" she enthused, "my team mates have been brilliant the last few days keeping me in contention."



"Any messages for the people at home?"

Mum faced the camera

"Dave, Drew, Jules thanks for letting me do this, see you soon"

We watched as they showed Mum receiving the traditional stuffed animal and the coveted Maillot Jaune. The view returned to the TdF studio.

"Well can Jenny Bond hold on to that yellow jersey with that five second lead until Sunday? We'll be following the ladies tour with great interest, to see if she can become the UK's first Tour Feminin winner"

As you can guess we were made up and when my sister came in she was just as tearful.

Part 16

Sports Day

Wednesday. Even more tests! Boring.

Not quickly enough for me the final bell eventually rang. Maddy was waiting for me at the gates and we walked back to Castle Peters

"You got everything?" Mad asked

"I think so"

"Well I guess that's why we're doing this" she went on

We decided to try a quick change before tea.

"Okay Drew, I reckon we need to do it in about thirty minutes"

"I thought we had about forty minutes"

"Yeah but we need to get to the sports hall in that time too"

"Okay then, I've brought my PE kit as well as Gaby's, I'll get into mine first"

I used the upstairs bathroom and was soon in my school athletics kit.

"Nice muscles" Mad squeezed my biceps.

"Give over" I shook her off.

"I've set my alarm to go off in thirty minutes. Go!"

Have you ever tried this sort of speed changing? I got tangled up just getting my athletics vest off! It was a disaster.

"It'll never work" I moaned

"Course it will, it's just planning, but I think we need help"

That's how Aunt Carol became involved.

"Okay, what takes longest?"

"Putting on the gaff" I stated, "Mad has to go out while I do it and it takes ages"

"What else?"

"Makeup?" Mad suggested

"Breasts?" I offered

"Okay you need the gaff right?"

"Yeah we don't want Gaby becoming Drew on the court!"

"In that case Drew you need to put it on at home, everyone will be going in their kit on Friday so it won't be odd to be ready."

"I guess I can do the discus ok with it on"

By the time I left for home we had got the whole change thing down to twenty five minutes, and I was reasonably confident that I could pull the caper off. I also had painted toenails and my fingernails were trimmed neatly too.

The tour coverage was a bit more exciting today but best was that Mum was still in the yellow jersey. We did have a short phone call with her but they were on a transfer so it didn't get much beyond hi.

"You all sorted for tomorrow?" Mr Pilling asked after the Geography test

"Yes sir, we've even practised"

"Thanks for doing this Drew"

"Yes sir"

"What was that all about" Paul asked

"Oh just about tomorrow"

I have to say that I was getting nervy about tomorrow, at least there was no revising to do tonight. Our last SAT was English, what a stinker of a test that proved to be.

I decided to go for a ride and really enjoyed a gentle lane stroll out past Ollerton and back. Dad was on the phone with Mum when I got back; she lost a few seconds today but was still in Yellow, if she got through tomorrow and Saturday she would almost certainly win overall. I told her about Tuesday's ride; she always makes time to hear about my riding even when she's leading a major tour!

The tour coverage was more exciting tonight, the breaks and crashes ensured that there was no repeat of the big bunch finishes of the first few days. It was a bit of a spoiler knowing how the Tour Feminin ended but it was still good to see Mum defending that yellow jersey.

"You still going through with your scam today?" Jules asked over breakfast.

"Yes and it's not a scam" I replied

"Whatever"

"Is that the time?" I was running late!

It felt strange walking over to meet Maddy wearing the gaff and my athletics kit, I just hoped that everything went according to plan. My co conspirator took charge of Gaby's kit, we were going to be using Mr Pilling's office for the change, Maddy was in charge of the preparations.



Well my discus throwing leaves quite a bit to be desired! My first throw was a foul and the second got all of ten metres. Mind you none of my opponents were doing much better. My third throw was an absolute fluke. I span low across the pad and heaved the glorified Frisbee away, just staying inside the ring. I watched as it flew seemingly in slow motion across the throw zone to finally bed itself just over the thirty-metre line.

"Well done Drew" Mr Pilling congratulated me

To confirm how much of a fluke that was, throw four managed twelve metres and my last throw was a fowl as I stepped out of the ring!

"Drew Bond?"

"Sir?"

"My office, five minutes" Mr Pilling stated

"Yes sir" I replied

That was the signal for me to scarper!

Mad was ready for me when I arrived at the office.

"Come on Drew get that kit off" she urged

"I am"

"Let's get your breasts on"

"Not the glue" I implored

"Why not, you don't want one flying out on court"

"I guess not"

"Glue?"

"Okay, just get on with it"

Mad soon had my fake mammary's fitted and I got the skirt, sports bra and top on before Maddy started on my makeup. I changed socks, got my shoes back on and I was nearly ready. She finished up by securing the wig carefully and I guessed fitting some earrings in place.

"Hands" Mad ordered

She slipped a thumb ring on my right hand and a pinkie ring on the left then deftly put a coat of gloss on each nail.

"Ta-da! One Gaby ready to play."

There was a knock at the door before Mr Pilling poked his head in

"Drew?"

"Yes sir?"

"Go on girls, you've got ten minutes"

"Thanks sir" Mad stated

We grabbed our racquets and towels and headed for the gym.

The badminton competition worked on a group basis followed by a knockout round. So every pair would have at least three matches, the top two pairs in each group going onto the knockout rounds. I knew most of the girls and a few recognised Gaby from the modelling thing the other week.

"What are you doing here?" one girl challenged

"Playing badminton?"

"You know what I mean"

"Well Mr Pilling asked Maddy if she knew any one to make up the numbers and I got volunteered!"

"Come on Paula, we'll beat this pair anyway"

All too soon I joined Mad on the court to start my girls badminton career.

I'm useless at tennis, but I can just about manage badminton. We won our first match but lost the second. I was a bit disconcerted by my bouncing boobs and the rustle of the lacy bloomers.

"Come on Gab's we can still go through if we win the last game"

"Can't we just lose and take the points for taking part?"

"No way! After all this effort I want to win!" Mad stated

"Gaby and Madeline Peters, court four" the tannoy announced

"Okay, I'll try my best"

We just made a two point win, enough to put us through in second place in the group. There was a break for lunch and my worst nightmare was coming towards me.

"Hey Mad, you seen Drew? Er hi Gaby" Clive greeted us

"Hi Clive" I used my best Gabvoice

"No, we've been playing in the badminton" Maddy told him

"He disappeared before the discus finished, he got second" he stated

"Cool, I bet he'll be pleased" Mad suggested

"Clive! Stop drooling and fetch those drinks" Paul called across the room

Well the biggest effect that had was to make everyone look at our little group. Clive flushed heavily.

"Er well if you see Drew, tell him eh?" Clive said backing off.

"Sure Clive" I replied

Maddy started giggling, which got me going. There was little doubt that we were two girls. The rest of the gang found us and we ate together recounting

our sporting prowess or lack of. All too soon though it was time to get back to either spectating or competing and the Peters girls returned to the sports hall.

I was a bit taken aback by the fact that the bleachers were now out and we were now only on two courts. We were on court three, second match so we sat and watched the preceding games. I was getting a bit tetchy, and the gaff was getting a bit uncomfortable.

"Give over! You're making me nervous" Mad stated

"Sorry, I'm not used to an audience like this"

"Just relax, it'll be okay" she reassured

Well surprisingly we won our match; our opponents just seemed to lose it after the first set. I was surprised by the applause as we left the court; the stands were filling as more of the other activities finished. I had to drag Mad to the girl's room as I was near wetting myself from fear.

"Come on Gab, I never thought we'd get this far" Mad reassured me

"Hey sis, buck up" Jules came in

"That's easy for you to say" I retorted

"Come on Gaby, you're doing ace, let's sit outside for a few minutes" Maddy suggested

"Okay" I agreed

"I'll fetch you when you're on okay?" Jules offered

"Thanks sis"

We sat in the sun and I calmed down using the deep breathing Mum had shown me. Mum. Right now she'll be defending her slim lead, what would she think if she knew I was doing this? Maybe she won't find out and the Pope's not Catholic!

"Mad, Gabs" Jules called from the door

"Coming" Maddy advised

Quarter finals. I checked my racquets, swapping to the tighter strung of the two and joined Mad on court.

If I hadn't been concentrating so much the wolf whistles and the 'Ga-bee, Ga-bee' chant would have really put me off. We lost the first game, then drew the second.

"Come on Gab, we win this and we've got a chance"

Mad took the serve and there followed ten frantic minutes of net play. With one desperate over net smash I managed to clinch the third game. The winners of this next game would be in the final and I now wanted it to be us. The crowd was quite vociferous in their support and for the first time I heard Clive's 'Ga-bee' chant.

"Some one likes you" Mad stated

"I wish he didn't" I replied

"Come on lets wrap this up" Mad proposed

That shuttlecock was well abused as first us then our opponents took the lead. Then we finally broke the deadlock and three straight points gave us the win. We hugged and jigged; we are in the final! We had a half-hour break before the final so we went to sit outside again. We were both on such a high that we barely spoke and all too soon Jules came to fetch us.

"Good luck sis"

"Thanks Jules"

"And you Mad, go get `em!"

We arrived on court to a boisterous reception, both our names were being chanted, seemingly most of our House were there to cheer us including Mr Pilling. I could see Mr Wood as well, all the gang were in, how could we let them down?

We seemed to make a habit of losing the first set and we went down heavily much to the dismay of our very vocal fans. The next set was much closer; we eventually took it to put us back in the game at 1-1. The final was over five games so another win would give us the upper hand but I slipped as I made a turn and went down heavily to a loud groan from the crowd. 1-2 to our opponents.



"You okay Drew" Mad whispered as she helped me up

"I think so, I'll have a big bruise later"

"It's coming out already" she stated checking my side

"You okay Gaby?" it was Mr Pilling

"I think so Sir"

"You want to go on?" he asked

"Yes Sir"

"Okay, but we'll have a look at that straight after okay?"

"Yes Sir"

"Come on Gab, let's finish this!" Mad enthused

I limped heavily back onto court, much to the crowd's dismay. Our opponents were taken in too; I let Mad take most of the flak and kept an eye on the wider shots. Mad really put out and we took the score to 2-2 with a five-point win. I made a big show of nursing my side as we changed ends and the others visibly perked up at my obvious discomfort.

"Okay?" Mad asked

"Fine, let them get a few points then I'll move inside and we can finish them off"

"Okay captain" Mad made a mock salute.

The crowd quieted as we returned to the court one last time.

Thwack!

Poink!

Toink!

Back and forth, back and forth. As we planned, the opposition took three quick points and then we swapped positions. They were confident now, overconfident. Another point to them then we hit back taking us level. My side really was hurting but I made it look even worse as we prepared for the last blitz.

"Lets do it!" I called to Mad as she prepared to serve

They had relaxed too much and we took advantage slamming the shuttlecock to the ground relentlessly.

"Winners of the girls badminton for 2002 are Madeline and Gabrielle Peters of Scott House" Mrs Cole announced

We were presented with the Badminton shield to animated cheering.

Most of the school were in the sports hall now and Mr Wood waited whilst a last few stragglers were ushered in.

"Quiet down everybody" he let the murmuring settle before going on. "I hope you've all had a good day?"

"Yes Sir" most of the auditorium replied

"Well it has certainly been a good day on the sports field, five new school records and a very close inter house competition. So without further ado here are the results. Cook House 1014 points, Rutherford House 1201 points, Chichester House 1395 points and lastly, Scott House 1405 points" the hall erupted.

"So this years winners are Scott House"

Mr Pilling indicated that Maddy and I should collect the cup from Mr Wood.

"Nice to see you again Gaby"

"Thank you sir" I replied

"Congratulations both of you on the badminton"

He passed us the silverware that we then hoisted up in victory!

Part 17

The Suitor

I stayed in my 'Gaby' guise to go back to Maddy's, we were still jumping after the excitement of the afternoon. Mrs Cole had checked that I hadn't broken anything in my fall, the verdict was it would hurt for a couple of days.

"How did it go girls?" Aunt Carol asked

"We won!" Maddy squealed

"The badminton?"

"Yes!" Maddy confirmed

"And Scott won the school Cup too" I added

"Oh well done!" Mrs P told us, "get showered and changed and we'll eat"

"Maddy?" I called from the bathroom, "Ma-ad?"

"What?" she poked her head round the door?

"Have you got the bottle of remover stuff?"

"Isn't it in you bag?"

"I can't see it"

"I'll have a look" she disappeared.

"Is it a sort of flat bottle?"

"That's it" I confirmed

"Erm, I... "

"Come on"

"It's broken" she revealed the smashed bottle bereft of contents.

"Oh shit"

"What's all the shouting you two?" Aunt Carol asked

"The stuff to get Gabs breasts off"

"What about it?"

"The bottle got broken" I dejectedly told her

"I see the problem. Well young lady, it looks like you will be around a bit longer than planned."

I groaned

"But it's the dance tomorrow!" I bleated

"We'll get some remover tomorrow, don't worry" she tried to soothe me.

"You can stay here tonight" Mad suggested

"I guess"

So I ended up borrowing some more of my 'cousins' clothes, a hasty call to Dad cleared my absence from home. I got to watch the TdF coverage, Mum now had a five-second lead, I missed her call of course but tomorrow's coverage is scheduled earlier so I can see it before the dance.

I sat in the Peters kitchen listening to Aunt C ringing around the theatrical suppliers. The news was not good. The type I needed was not the usual brand that wouldn't work and so far no one within a hundred miles had any in stock. They could get it for Monday but today there was no chance.

"It looks like you'll have to stay Gaby for the weekend"

"But I'm racing on Sunday!"

"We can strap them down I guess"

"I spose" I reluctantly agreed

"Any luck Mum?" Maddy came in

"No, it looks like it will be Gaby going to the dance" she told her daughter.

"I'm not going" I stated

"Oh Drew, you've got to" Maddy told me

Flash backs of Anna's 'party' crossed my mind.

"Come on young lady, let's go get you a dress and break you out of this fugue"

"But Mrs Pe" she cut me off

"Aunt Carol remember, and I'm not having you make my daughter miserable for the next three weeks!"

Blackmail. Well I guess I'm stuck with boobs until Monday now anyway.

"Okay! I'll go! But I don't need you to buy a new dress for me, I can borrow one of Mad's" I suggested

"Not so likely, no niece of mine is wearing a hand me down to the dance!"

I shrugged and rolled my eyes skyward.

So I found myself in some of Mad's jeans and a T on the way to Meadowhall.

"I've seen just the thing Mum" Mad stated

"We'll see, it's Gaby's dress so she gets to choose right?"

"Yes Mum"

"Gaby?"

"Thanks Auntie" I still wasn't that impressed with the situation.

There was obviously a budget, and to my relief that kept us out of the likes of Next. If I was going to have to pick a dress it would be something I liked! We toured the various boutiques; Maddy kept enthusing about various frocks, which mostly got the knock back from either me or Aunt C, or both of us. We broke off for a drink and then I saw it, the dress for me! Well Maddy really, it was pretty cool, I thought.

"There over in the Lanes" I pointed

"That pink thing?" Mrs P asked

"The green one?" Maddy suggested

"No. Hanging up at the back"

"The orange velvet?" Aunt Carol queried

"That's the one!" I stated

"Lets have a look then"

We finished our drinks and headed to the small 'alternative' store where the dress hung.

"You sure Gab?" Maddy asked

"It look's a bit heavy for a summer dance" Mrs P mentioned

"Please? Can I at least try it?" I was starting to sound like my sister.

"Okay"

I got my dress and Mad made a change of plan!

Back at Camp Peters we got ready early so that I could watch the tour coverage before going to the dance. Maddy really went to town on her look, she looked quite scary. After my tantrum a couple of weeks ago, Aunt C did my makeup, quite restrained really.



She swapped the cute studs in my ears to a pair of her own drops but left the small hoops in. Maddy put an ordinary stud in the hole at the top of my ear yesterday and that got swapped for a blue crystal stud, with the long wig on I was ready for my public.

I sat entranced during the TdF programme eagerly awaiting the coverage of Mums race. I was on the edge of my seat as today's stage unfurled. The Apollinaris squad were doing a fair job of protecting their position and Mum, chasing down any serious contenders and letting the lesser lights have their head for a while.



One minute they were all riding happily along and the next chaos. A switched wheel maybe and a good number of the bunch were in a heap on the tarmac. Including Mum.

"Nooo!" I shouted at the screen

The cameras were obviously watching for Mum so we could see that although a bit scraped she was quickly back on her bike. But a small but dangerous

group had escaped the carnage, according to the clock she was now no longer the yellow jersey on the road! The race radio soon alerted everyone to the position and the Apollinaris girls started a seemingly futile chase. However it soon picked up momentum as a couple more teams realised the danger to their own positions and with 50km left the chase was started in earnest.

Because it was only highlights, it was frustrating to watch but as they showed the break at the five to go kite, Mums bunch was in the frame behind them. They were in the last 2km before contact was made and in a rehearsed move, Mum took straight off down the opposite kerb. The spent break could do nothing and with Maria and the girls controlling the front no one in the bunch could make an immediate response.

So we watched my bloodied and tired mother cross the line for her third stage victory and enough time bonus that only a real disaster tomorrow would prevent her winning the overall classification.

I was back on cloud nine. I lifted my long skirts to join my girlfriend as we waited for Mrs P to deliver us to the dance.

We clambered into the back of the car, Maddy's tight dress causing nearly as much trouble as my full-skirted affair. We had Mrs P drop us off at the main gates where we could see Rhod and Ally waiting with Bernie.

"Hi guys" Mad greeted the others

"We didn't know you were coming Gab?" Ally mentioned

"I wasn't planning on it but Drew had a last minute hitch" I hefted my breasts meaningfully.

"Like your dress Gaby" Bernie offered

"I thought you were getting your hair done today?" Mad asked

"I was, but Sylv suggested it would be better if I had it done when I wasn't going straight out, in case I hate it"

"Figures I guess" Maddy noted

"Come on ladies" Rhod suggested, " there's dancing to do!"

There being no theme for this occasion, there were kids in the full spectrum of partying gear. A few of the older kids had come in full Goth, at least I wasn't the only boy in a dress, one of the sixth form lads was wearing a spidery affair over lycra trousers and big boots. Weird or what? There were as

to be expected a lot of mini dresses and skirts on the girls and most of the guys were wearing shirt and slacks.

I noticed a few looks my way as we crossed the hall but knowing I can pass as Gaby I wasn't afraid of discovery. No what scared me were boys in general. They were sure to hit on me tonight, Mad reckoned I look a fox, why can't I be ugly! Things got going and we started dancing.

"Gaby!" Jules hissed

"What?"

"Over here a minute" she motioned me to the side, "I thought Drew was coming tonight?"

"So did I" I told her

"Well, Dad got a call just before we left, you saw the race?"

"Yeah! Brill eh?"

"Well the team want us all there at the finish tomorrow" she informed me

"But how, there's not enough time"

"All I know is that we have to be at that airfield near Retford at eight in the morning. So we need to get home fairly early ok"

"Ok. Shit! These boobs are stuck on and I can't get them off"

"I don't want to know how." She mentioned, "I guess my sister is going to Paris tomorrow."

"See you later Sis"

I returned to the dance floor at sixes and sevens.

"What did Jules want?" Mad asked as we boogied down

"We're going to France in the morning" I told her

"But?" she pointed with one hand and covered her mouth with the other to stifle a giggle

"I know" I stated unamused

"Oh come on Gab, loosen up"

We danced for a while then found a table. Rhod and Ally went to get some soft drinks while Bernie; Mad and myself caught our breath.

"I told you"

"I know, but look she's with her cousin"

I caught the end of the conversation and glancing round spotted Clive and Paul. Like rabbits caught in headlamps they froze and smiled at me when they realised I had clocked them.

"Looks like your admirer has spotted you" Bernie stated seeing where I was looking

Rhod and Ally chose that second to reappear saving me temporarily from my would be suitor.

"Never guess what guy's?" Mad started looking at me for permission to tell the news.

"What?" Rhod asked keeping his attention on Al.

"Little Miss Bond here is off to France tomorrow"

"Kewl!" Bernie mentioned

"Miss Bond? Oh you mean you've got to go as a girl?" Rhod suddenly made the connection



"Unless there's a miracle between now and eight in the morning!" I confirmed

"Ot oh, watch out Gab, Clive's coming over," Ally said out of the corner of her mouth.

"Er hi Gaby, would you like to dance?"

My girlfriends giggled and Maddy jabbed my sore ribs

"Go on"

Perhaps I can get rid of him if I dance with him for a bit? It might work I mused.

"Okay, but just one or two songs and no slow numbers!" I stated. The girls goldfished, Clive just beamed.

"Sure Gaby, whatever you say." He replied

Rhod was smiling and shaking his head as my suitor led me back into the enthusiastic if unskilled dance troop on the floor.

I eventually managed to escape from Clive's clutches by heading for the girl's room. I'd forgotten about the queues and what a problem a long frock can be. I re-found the others and sat out a few numbers. I joined the others for another dance fest then I spotted my sister motioning to the time. Seems like Cinderella is leaving sharp at ten!

Part 18

Celebration

Beep beep beep beep beep

Oh, I dragged an eye open and looked at the alarm clock. Six a.m. The events of last night came sharply back into focus.

"What are you doing in a dress?" Dad demanded

"His boobs are stuck on" Jules put in

"Drew?"

"The bottle of remover stuff got broken and we couldn't get any today, Mrs Peters is having some delivered Monday?" I explained quickly

"Why didn't you let me know, how are you going to go tomorrow like that?" he enquired

"I can strap them down?"

"I trusted you to be sensible Drew and you've fouled up again. It's your Mum's big day tomorrow and you pull another one of your stunts." He paused as we turned into our road; "well no son of mine is going to embarrass the family tomorrow."

My heart dropped, he was going to leave me at home, I'd miss Mum's finest hour, as well as everything else. My own fault I guess.

"No," Dad went on, "we're leaving Drew here Jules" he told us

I started to snifle.

"Juliette, you are in charge of making sure you and your sister are packed and ready in the morning. And make sure you've both got something a bit dressy packed, there's a big reception tomorrow night." He stated

Had I heard right? Did he really say what I thought he did? I wasn't sure if I was happy or not. On one hand I was going to Paris, on the other hand I was going as Gaby! Once this is over I am definitely never, ever going to end up as Gaby again! Dad pulled into our drive.

"Come on sis" Jules tugged my sleeve, "let's go pack"

I mutely followed her into the house and upstairs.

"You've really done it this time Drew" Jules stated

"I guess"

"Let's find you some stuff then. You need something to travel in, something nice for the race and then the reception. Hmm, oh and something to come home in"

"Shit!" I exclaimed, "what about my passport?"

"Well if you wear something baggy and no make up that shouldn't be a problem"

"Ok"

"You can wear that dress for the reception, it looks pretty cute on you"

I rolled my eyes

"Come on Drew"

"Best start calling me Gabs" I suggested

"Okay then Gabs, let's find you a nice dress for the race"

"Can't I wear jeans?"

"You heard Dad, and I think I've got just the thing"

I borrowed Jules babydoll to support my breasts in bed and finally settled into a restless sleep a little after twelve.

So that brings us back to this morning.

"Come on Gaby, up and at `em!" Jules breezed in to my room

"Minute" I suggested

"Don't forget to put your night-dress in your bag then?"

"No Jules"

I pulled myself together and dressed in jeans and hoody. I didn't look too girly unless I pulled it tight, ah well!

"There you are Gaby" Dad greeted me, "that what you're wearing?"

"I thought it best if she doesn't stand out too much when we're travelling" Jules told him, she was wearing jeans and a T herself.

"I take it you have something to change in to?" Dad enquired half an hour later when I reached the kitchen.

"Yes Dad" I answered, inwardly cringing at what my sister had selected for me.

"Ok then get some breakfast, I'll load the car so we can leave for Gamston as soon as you're finished"

It was just after seven that the Bond family set out on Drew's amazing adventure, bodacious!

We drove the few miles across to Gamston International in about fifteen minutes and parked outside the departure lounge. Dad went inside to check the arrangements.

"It's not exactly Heathrow is it?" Jules commented

"Hardly!"

In fact Gamston barely rates as an airport at all! Dad told me once that before Sheffield Airport was built this was the only airfield where international flights could put down for miles. International in this instance being not 747's but little 10 may be 20 seater's, private charters and business flights. This was the only airfield with customs and immigration officers required for the international flights.

"Come on you two, our flight is waiting for us" Dad told us when he returned

We gathered our various bags and followed Dad back into the airfield building. I have to tell you, my stomach was doing summersaults in anticipation of the flight, and this was going to be my first flight!

"Over here kids" Dad called

I followed Jules to the desk where we checked our bags – essentially they were put through the x-ray thing and put onto a cart to go out to the plane. I was busy watching our luggage while we did the passport bit and Dad chatted about why we were flying with the guy who seemed to be doing everything.

"Well have a good trip, see you tomorrow"

"Thanks" Dad replied as he led the way out to the little twin engine plane that awaited us.

The crew, Bob and Marina soon had us stowed and belted and we were quickly taxiing toward the A1.

"Okay everyone?" Bob asked through the cockpit door

"Yes thanks" Dad replied

I gripped my seat as the engines changed in tune and we started to roll down the tarmac. Our little plane bucked a bit on the less than smooth surface and then a sudden lurch and the tyre noise stopped and we were climbing steeply into the summer sky.

"You okay 'girls'" Dad asked

"Great" Jules enthused

I just nodded.

It was great looking out of the window, identifying the villages and roads below. The seatbelt light went out and Bob, who I thought was the pilot, came back into the cabin.

"We should land in France about ten thirty, if you want a drink there's a thermos of coffee and hot water for tea at the back, there's soft drinks in the fridge, help yourselves and enjoy the flight"

"Thanks Bob" Dad mentioned

Well I'm sure most of you have flown so I won't bore you with the whole flight. We headed southeast and after a little over an hour we crossed the Channel to France. I didn't like it too much when we caught a bit of turbulence, I was near to losing my breakfast, but the flight across France was uneventful. As predicted it was just after ten thirty when we touched down at the small airfield north of Paris, the French equivalent of Gamston.

The French customs guy was a bit more thorough than his English counterpart but we were soon through the control point and wondering what was next.

"Monsieur Bond?" a scrawny looking guy asked

"Yes, er ah oui" Dad replied

"Please" the guy motioned toward the big Peugeot estate parked outside.

"Come on kid's, looks like this is our transport" Dad told us

The driver helped us with our bags and we piled inside.

We all watched the countryside as we headed toward the buildings of Paris some twenty kilometres away according to the sign at the airfield. The traffic increased as we hit the French capital and our host threaded through various back streets, finally stopping outside a small hotel, the Hotel Metropole.

"You check in, I will collect une heure, ah you say one hour." Our guide advised us.



We followed Dad inside the establishment and joined him at the desk.

"Bond, we have reservations from Apollinaris" Dad informed the clerk

"Ah oui, Monsieur Bond, you will be wit your wife in room 214 and your" he glanced at me," daughters will be in room 322. Jean Paul will bring your bags"

We followed the clerk; his badge advised his name as Gregor, into the lift and up to the third floor where Jules and I were going to share a room again. Somehow our bags arrived before we did and Dad then left with Gregor to find his lodging.

"Okay Gab, time to make you beautiful" Jules declared

I just groaned.

I emerged from our room wearing a light blue dress with a sort of transparent jacket thing and sandals, I was not impressed!

We reached the reception just as our driver walked in the door.

"Please, you are ready? We must hurry, the rue, they are closing soon pour le finale"

I cursed myself, Jules and Dad in that order as I manoeuvred my dress into the back of the car. Me for getting in this fix, Jules for picking this outfit and Dad, well he had to be at fault for something didn't he? As we neared the Champs Elysee, the lampposts were festooned with posters for the Tour Feminin and strings of bunting decorated trees and shop fronts.

Crowds were starting to gather and in the distance, the sound of the PA system could be heard. Our car eventually pulled up just a street away from

the Champs Elysée behind a van covered with Apollinaris decals. Dad tipped our driver and we got out to join the crowds heading towards the finishing straight. It has to be said, we were a little lost but Dad put his pioneer hat on and led us past the Apollinaris van. We were barely beyond the van when a voice I thought I recognised called out.

"Mr Bond, Juliette!" it was Kat Pinger

"Hi Katia" Dad replied

"Where is Drew?" she somehow had missed me

"We left him behind, we brought his cousin Gaby instead" Jules informed our friend whilst pulling me forward.

Kat looked a little confused at first, and then recognition lit her face followed by a big grin.

"Hi 'Gaby'" she emphasised my aka. "Come, we have seats in the grandstand, they will be here soon!"

She led us to a control point where we were checked into the race enclosure, this was just so cool! George Muller stood and greeted us when we reached the allocated seating.

"Hello again Herr Bond, frauleins" we all shook hands

"Your wife Dave, she has been exceptional" he went on

"We think so" Dad replied

We took our seats and I was wrapped up in the excitement. We watched on the huge screen set up opposite as the race wound its way into Paris. Mum was getting a lot of camera time, the French commentary was beyond me but I kept hearing 'Apollinaris' and 'Jenny Bond'. The wide shot then showed the bunch crossing the Place de la Concorde and then we could see the race as it climbed towards us. The crowds were quite vociferous and the Apollinaris camp joined the meleé.

I spotted the Maillot Jaune with a phalanx of protective cream shirts near the head of the field and whooped louder still! The bunch continued toward the Arc de Triomphe then turned to re-pass us to start the first of five laps taking in the Place de Concorde and circumnavigating the Louvré.

The big screen followed the Tour Feminin survivors around, occasional forays left the front, but all the main teams wanted to keep it together at this stage so on the next pass, they were all together again. Four to go. A small group broke away through the tunnel on lap two and when they passed us there

was maybe a five second gap but the determined bunch had swallowed them by the time they descended back to the Place de Concorde. Two down, three to go.

We all knew that barring disaster Mum would be declared the winner in about thirty minutes but even George was nearly wetting himself in anticipation. The crowd watched the screen raptly as the next lap unfolded and this time when they reached us the bunch looked a little fidgety but complete.

Just two laps, twenty minutes to the finish of the ladies tour. Jules was bouncing in excitement and I kept grabbing Kat and grinning. Kat in turn was watching for her own Mum and was vocal in her support of Frau Pinger. The crowd changed note and I watched the screen as a lone rider left the tunnel with a lap and a bit to go. It was the yellow jersey; Mum was making a bid for stage 4! The other team members were working their socks off keeping the pace high enough to deter a chase while Mum gained fifty meters on the main group.

The crowd was going silly now. This was more like the men's tour! Mum was grinning as she headed toward the Arc; her time trialling ability coming into it's own. She held the slender lead back down toward the Louvré; the bunch was now getting quite tetchy! A kilometre to go and she was still out there but the rest of the squad was showing the strain behind her. There was little to do really when finally the dam burst and the sprinters unleashed their effort. Mum could only smile bravely as they drew past but with one last effort she claimed sixth place and victory on the line!

To say it was chaos would be to belittle the scene below us. Officials, spectators, riders all in one morass of humanity! It took a few minutes, but George managed to get our party down to the rail where we were soon reunited with Mum. She looked suitably surprised on seeing me but soon we were all hugging over the barriers. I saw Kat and Maria off to our right greeting each other in similar fashion.

An official got my Mum's attention

"See you in a few minutes" she stated as she went off for the mandatory drugs testing.

Twenty minutes later we all proudly watched as the prizes were awarded. I was unaware that Tina Porsche was in the running for the under twenty-one prize but team joy increased when she was declared winner of that competition. The squad just missed the team prize but second was good! Mum took the same place in the climbers competition, way cool. Then came the overall and Mum's moment of triumph! We cheered ourselves hoarse as she was declared winner by 35 seconds.

The press got their shots then our little family was reunited on the podium. I had forgotten about my appearance until George lifted me onto the block and had to bat my skirts down. Well too late now. The cameras moved in again as Mum hugged me and Jules, "later" she intoned to me as we mugged for the press.

There was a press conference next, we watched as our Mum handled the media's questions. We listened as she answered questions in French, English and German, George and Tina got their turns as well. Eventually, an hour after the race finish we made our escape.

George drove us all back to Metropole where he told Dad the arrangements for later while me and Jules took Mum up to her room.

"Okay" Mum sat in an easy chair, "ahhh, that's good. Now then, will you explain how and why I have two daughters? Drew? Juliette?"

"Well..." I started. Dad had Mum's bath ready by the time I had finished the explanation.

"You do realise Drew that your picture will be seen all round the world," Mum concluded

"I'm sorry Mum, I didn't mean for this to happen."

"I know you didn't, I'll be having words with your father too. If anyone asks, we'll go with Jules suggestion, you are my niece, filling in for Drew who was too ill to travel. I just hope the press doesn't realise who you are. You two go and get changed, everyone is meeting in the reception area, George is organising the transport."

"Yes Mum"

So I followed Jules back up to our room.

"Come on Drew, if we can get you looking really hot, no one will ever find out"

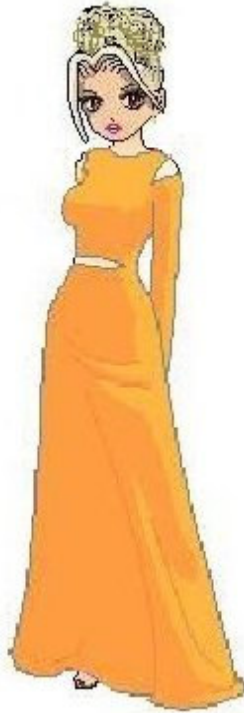
"Kat knows" I stated

"Kat is your friend, she won't tell anyone"

"I guess"

I showered first and unpacked my dress while my sister did the hot water thing. Jules surpassed herself with both her own and my makeup and coiffeur. I looked more than just passable, with my hair up and my frock suitably adjusted I was pretty hot! Jules was looking pretty buff too and I

thought back to the last time that the three Bond 'girls' appeared together. That was a dinner in Mum's honour too.



We joined everyone in the reception area, even Dad looked good for once, he's usually a bit of a scruff! When Mum appeared, George started a round of applause much to Mum's embarrassment.

"Kat" I whispered

"Drew?"

"Shssh! Call me Gaby tonight please?"

"Okay but you owe me an explanation"

"Sure, I'll tell you later"

The reception was being hosted by the team sponsors at a plush venue near the Orangerie. It was rather formal, luckily the food was on a buffet basis, and everyone was having a good, post race relaxation time. Champagne and wine was flowing freely, even for us kids, although none of us looked very much like school children tonight.

"So your friend Maddy?" I nodded, "she broke the bottle?" Kat asked

"Well not on purpose" I replied as we sat in a corner snacking on pastries

"I can't believe you Drew Bond!"

"Shssh!" I hissed

"Sorry 'Gaby', it is just so funny"

"Not from here it's not" I stated

"What happened next?"

"Well..." I went on. Twenty minutes later and Kat had the full story.

"Promise you won't tell any one?" I implored

"Who would I tell? No one would believe me anyway"

"Thanks Kat, you're a real mate!"

"Urgh!" I moaned

"Get up Drew" Jules suggested

"Do I have to? My head is throbbing" I replied

"We're leaving just after nine if you remember, it's nearly eight now" she stated

"Okay, where are my jeans?"

"How should I know, I'll see you in the restaurant" Jules told me as she left.



I searched for my travelling outfit, but my hoody was missing too! Damn. All I could find was Jules long denim skirt and one shouldered top, my race outfit was a screwed up mess and no way am I wearing my velvet dress again. Someone is going to pay for this!

I joined the rest of the family and various Apollinaris team people for a quick breakfast; hmm I could get to like chocolate croissants and coffee.

"Hey Gab?" Jules attracted my attention

"Mum's coming home at the weekend"

"Really Mum?"

"Yes, George said I could get a few days at home before our trip to America"

"Cool"

"One thing though" Mum stated

"Yes?"

"I'd actually like to see Drew when I get there"

"No sweat Mum"

Our trip back was again via Bob and Marina's little plane, I was a little happier this time and spent the flight trying to decipher what the French press had to say about Mum. It was 11.15 UK time when we arrived back at Gamston. The guy at the desk didn't even look up when Dad offered the passports, just as well how I was dressed today.

"You should really go to school this afternoon" Dad suggested

"I suppose" Jules whined

"I can't" I stated, "oh bugger, people will see me when we get home"

"Like who, all the kid's will be at school and there's only old Mrs Duncan at number 21 who's in during the day" Jules advised us

"I guess"

"You going to Mad's tonight Drew?" Dad asked

"Oh I forgot, the guy's are coming to ours"

"Well I've got to go into work for a couple of hours so don't get into any mischief"

"No Dad"

Part 19

School's Out for Summer!

"Hi Mrs Peters, its Drew"

"Hi Drew, did you have a good trip?"

"Yes thanks"

"Everyone I know watched the coverage, I didn't realise it was such a big thing"

"It was pretty awesome"

"But you're ringing about something else?"

"Well er, I was sort of hoping"

"Don't worry Drew, the shop rang me about an hour ago to say that it had arrived, I was just going to fetch it when you rang. Do you want to come with me?" she offered

Well it would keep me out of trouble.

"Thanks"

"I'll be round in ten minutes, see you then"

"Bye"

I put the phone down and realised that I would have to go as I was. I'd done it again!

Aunt Carol arrived and I grabbed the little handbag that now contained my wallet and when I locked the house, my keys. I checked up the street, at least no one would see me.

"Hi Gaby"

"Hi Mrs P" she gave me that look

"Sorry, Aunt carol" I corrected myself, "where are we going?"

"Sheffield, I need to get a bit of shopping too"

"Sure"

"So tell me all about it"

So I told her all about it. The flight out, the race, the reception and this mornings return occupied the drive across to Meadowhall.

"I thought the shop was in Sheffield?"

"It is but I thought we'd catch the tram, it's cheaper than parking in the centre"

We were soon parked and we made our way to the bus cum train cum tram station. A City bound tram was waiting and we found a pair of seats. I like riding the tram, its acceleration is pretty cool and all the other traffic has to wait at junctions and stuff. All too soon we were getting off for the short walk to the costume shop.

"What can I do for you ladies"

"Hi, Mrs Peters, you called me earlier"

"The Jessop remover?"

"Yes"

"Won't be a minute luv" the guy disappeared into the back and I drifted off to have a look around.

This place was something else! There were racks of fancy dress costumes, all your usual stuff in shiny and glittery materials. Further back were racks of proper theatre costumes, various period stuff dominated by several full-skirted Victorian style outfits. Wigs, makeup, it was all here in profusion. I heard Mrs P and the shopkeeper talking as I explored a display of brightly coloured wigs, hmm just right for cosplay!

"Gaby!"

"Coming!"

"There you are, we're off now"

"Bye ladies"

"Thanks Mr Price"

We left the shop, but I was sure I would be back. Instead of going back up the hill we walked a couple of doors down where we entered every sweet lovers paradise, Granelli's. My eyes boggled at the variety of loose sweets on offer, not sold by silly little 100gram bags but by the kilo!

Mrs P placed her order, several litres of ice cream, must be the same Granelli's that have the ice cream vans. I bought some sweets for the guys and then laden with confectionery we returned to the tram stop. We returned to the car to put the ice cream in the icebox before heading into Meadowhall.

"I don't suppose you've eaten since breakfast?"

My stomach rumbled in reply

"Thought not, come on let's eat before we do the shops"

I have to admit this weekend had made me a lot less conscious of how I was dressed and appeared. No one gave me a second glance, other than a few boys who were eyeing me up! Yeagh! What a thought. Unlike our usual trips to the Mall where the fast food joints provided our sustenance, today Aunt C led the way to one of the more upmarket establishments.

"I have to say Drew, if I didn't know I would never guess you weren't a girl" Aunt Carol whispered across the table.

I blushed at the offhand compliment. I don't want to look and act like a girl! Once I get home and get these boobs off, I am never, ever doing it again!

I had cannelloni with salad and we both had 'death by chocolate' for desert. Afterwards I trailed around behind my 'aunt' as she bought some bed linen and a new frying pan. I was taken by surprise when I realised that I was stood in the middle of that male taboo store, the lingerie shop. Mrs P asked me for my opinion on various articles of feminine underwear much to my embarrassment.

Thankfully we left soon after to return to Warsop.

"Won't be a minute, I just need to get a paper" Mrs P informed me as we pulled up at the paper shop.

"I'll wait here"

I checked the car clock, three thirty, school would be chucking out in ten minutes.

"Looks like your Mum's famous" she gave me the copy of Chad.

I opened it out and there on the front cover 'Local Hero – Warsop woman wins Tour'. Cool. I turned to look at the 'full story page 5' only to find my face staring back!



I stared aghast at the photo of Mum, Jules and me taken yesterday on the podium. The tag line was damning too 'Tour winner Jenny Bond (35) on the podium with her daughters Juliette (14) and Gabrielle (13)'. Where did they get their information?

"You all right Drew?"

"I'm in the paper too" I informed her

"That's nice"

"No it's not, look" I showed her the picture which she glanced at as she drove.

"I wonder where they got that from?"

"I'm toast!" I exclaimed, "everyone will work it out, I'll be the laughing stock"

"Calm down Drew!" Mrs P demanded, I sat back in my seat. "It's a simple mistake, we'll get the paper to print a correction. Hmm" she sucked her lip, "even better, your Mums home next week?"

"Yes?"

"We'll arrange an interview with the paper, where 'Cousin Gaby' is dropped into story"

"Hmm" I was more than a little sceptical

"Don't worry, we'll sort it out." We pulled into my driveway. "Don't forget this" she handed me the remover as I made my exit from the car.

"Thanks Mrs Peters, I really appreciate it"

"It's alright Drew, now go and get yourself changed"

I shut the door and waited until she'd reversed out before digging into my bag for the house keys. I breathed a sigh of relief as I collapsed on the sofa. The clock caught my eye. Three forty five. Oh shit, the guys are on their way!

I hit the bathroom and the additions to my chest were soon off, thank heaven! Boy did my chest feel sore though; I checked my bruises, nearly gone thankfully. A quick shower and I felt sooo much better! I spotted my

earrings when I combed my hair and they soon joined the rest of Gaby in a pile on my bed.

Just in time.

"Ding, Dong," the front door bell announced the arrival of the gang.

"Hi Drew" they greeted me

"Hi guys, come in"

Did I spot a bit of disappointment on Maddy's face?

"When did you get back?" Ally asked

"Just before lunch, Jules went to school, I went with Mrs P to get the remover"

"What was it like?" Rhod asked

So I relived yesterday yet again.

"We saw you on the podium on the telly" Bernie informed me

"Cute dress" Rhod mentioned ducking my cushion blow.

"I'm in Chad too, it even says who I am" I advised them

"What? It says you're Drew?" Mad asked

"No, it says something like 'Jenny Bond with daughters Juliette and Gabrielle'"

"Well that's just a typo, it was your cousin wasn't it?" Ally suggested

"That's what Mrs Peters said"

"Clive hasn't stopped going on about dancing with you on Saturday" Bernie dropped into the conversation.

I groaned

"Reckons you two are an item" Rhod tittered

"Come on guys, give it a rest. And Clive will have to get himself another girlfriend!"

Apparently I missed Mr Wood droning on about Mum's win and launching a 'congratulations' card for pupils to sign. I was so glad I wasn't in school today.

We spent the rest of the evening, other than eating pizza, planning our summer campaign of mayhem!

Tuesday and just four school days left. Mr Wood announced an exchange programme meeting on Thursday evening but that was the nearest thing to excitement at school. All the gang announced that they would see me at Cuckney tonight for the ten. The ten. John. I'd forgotten about that.

"I've got a bone to pick with you" John greeted me

Ot oh! Now I'm in for it.

"Hi John"

"Why didn't you put me right weeks ago?"

I must have looked puzzled because he went on.

"About not being Dee?"

I thought he'd finally worked it out.

"It just didn't seem to matter really"

"Come on Gaby, I know I'd be pretty fed up if someone kept calling me Fred"

Nooo! It was even worse. He now thought I was Gaby! I suppose like a lot of people he'd seen the telly coverage and or Chad. Why o why o why!

The rest of the gang arrived shortly afterwards and I sat in a stupor as Maddy administered her pre race massage. Instead of things getting better they seemed intent on getting worse! I rode up to the start and went through my pre race preparations on autopilot.

I determined to do a good ride for Mum, so I shot off from the start and covered the first mile in just two minutes! I concentrated hard, Rhod and the girls cheered me past the impromptu car park and this lifted me a bit too. Through the tree's, and onto the flat middle section my legs started to feel my effort, after all I hadn't been on the bike for a few day's.

The turn came and went I dropped the chain into top and checked the clock, 14 minutes. I could see riders in front of me on the longer straights but then disaster. I hit a pothole and I heard the tell tale pst, pst, pst that heralded a

puncture. Should I stop or go on? It was the back wheel and it wasn't going down too quickly, I decided to keep going. I kept the pace going, I reasoned that the quicker I rode the further I would get before the tyre completely deflated.

I decided to ride to the finish whatever and by the time I passed the guys on the last bend, the tyre was flat.

"Thirteen!" I gasped

I freewheeled to a halt.

"You okay Gaby?" John called out

"Fine thanks, I got a flat" I stated

"Well you've done 25.11"

25.11 with a flat tyre! What would it have been without, a minute quicker? At least I thought. Damn! I crossed the road and had my rear wheel out by the time the others arrived.

"I'll do that" Rhod offered seeing what I was about

"Cheers" I surrendered the tyre levers and wheel

"What happened?" Bernie asked

"I got a puncture halfway back"

"Oh bad luck, we thought you looked uncomfortable when you went by" Ally advised

"It was pretty bumpy"

"What time did you get then?" Maddy enquired as she rubbed my legs down

"25.11"

"That's close to your best isn't it?" Bernie stated

"Yeah, I reckon I lost at least a minute"

"Bad luck Drew" Rhod mentioned

"Not as bad as John thinking I'm Gaby now" Ally giggled, "maybe this interview thing will put things right" I proposed

"Maybe" Bernie didn't sound convinced.

Wednesday and Thursday were uneventful, even Mr Wood's meeting was nothing more than an opportunity to give us each a booklet with the itinerary in. Mr Wood called Jules and I back.

"I know you both went to see your Mum on Sunday, but I didn't see Drew in any of the pictures only his alter ego. Can I have an explanation, I don't want to get you into any trouble inadvertently."

"Well," I started, "it all started after sportsday"

So between us we explained to the head why and how Gaby ended up in Paris and Drew didn't. Mr Wood chuckled to himself a couple of times during the narrative and shook his head when I finished.

"Drew Bond. I know I sort of encouraged, even condoned some of this cross-dressing but I think you need to think carefully about this over the summer. If you decide to continue with being Gaby I'll try to help. Otherwise it must stop completely. Okay?"

"I've already decided that this is definitely the last time" I stated

"You've said that before" Jules mumbled

"We'll talk after the summer okay?"

"Yes sir"

"Now get along, enjoy the holidays and I'll see you when the Americans arrive"

To encourage attendance on the last day, school colours are awarded in the final assembly and then each form has a party after lunch.

"I wish Gaby could of come" Clive said to anyone listening

I'd listened to this and other of Clive's Gaby musings all week and I was more than fed up.

"Maddy said that Gaby was moving over the summer, Scotland or something," I said spitefully

"Nooo! I must see her again, Drew you can find out from Maddy where she lives, please" he begged

"Give over Clive" Paul told him, "you've only met her three or four times"

"But I'm in lurve!" Clive whined

I made my escape and joined some other classmates for a game of Trivial Pursuit.

3.30pm the school bell rang announcing the end of another school year. I joined the throng of teenagers who ran for the gates. Six weeks before lessons start again! That was depressing, no six weeks of freedom, now that I can live with!

Part 20

Snip! Snip!

We agreed to meet up in the morning, Bernie was getting her hair done at eleven so the plan was to meet at Maddy's (it's a good job Mrs P doesn't mind us being around!) then walk Bernie to Sylv's. Then we would play on Rhod's PS2 while Sylv worked her 'magic' then we're off to Mansfield for the afternoon.

Well that's the plan.

Six whole weeks without school! And Mum's gets home on Sunday too!

"Hey Drew!" Jules called from the kitchen

"What?"

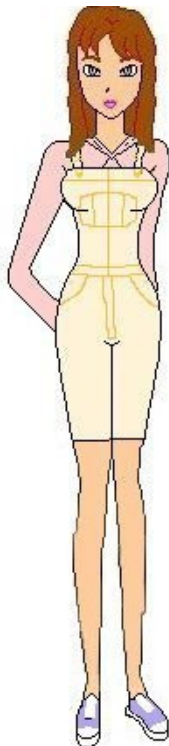
"You doing much today?"

"Me an' the guys are going to Mansfield this afternoon, why?"

"Dad wanted to see if we can get a print of that picture" she informed me. Dad is working today so that he can have a couple of days off next week with Mum.

"I suppose we could go to Chad"

"It would save me going, Charlie and Anna asked me to go swimming at Pond's Forge and I said I'd go"



"Okay, I'll go to the paper"

"Cheers, Dad said to order a 10" x 8" if they can do it"

"Fine"

I don't know if I mentioned it but it's the summer holidays!

Bernie and Ally were already at Mad's place when I arrived just after nine thirty.

"Drew what do you think?" Ally asked

"About what?" I countered

"Should Bernie have her hair cut short?" Mad went on

That's putting me on the spot! I mean, what do I say? Yes, I always thought you should cut it, no, I like it long?

"Looks okay as it is to me"

Mad rolled her eyes.

"Well I think you should go for it" Ally told Bernie

"I'm not sure" Bernie was obviously having second thoughts.

"It'll soon grow, look how short mine was last year" Mad advised her friend

"I guess" Bernie agreed

I decided to change the subject

"I've got to go to the Chad office this afternoon" I informed them

"What for?" Ally enquired

"You know *that* picture? Dad want's to get a copy"

If you managed to miss it, I ended up in the paper at the beginning of the week with Mum and Jules, with me dressed as Gaby! The good news is that as far as I know no one made the connection so I'm not quite as paranoid now.

We left the Peters mansion about ten fifteen and made our way over to Sylv's Salon for Bernie's eleven o'clock appointment.

"Hi kid's" Sylv greeted us when we entered her shop

"Hi Sylv" the girls chorused back, I kept schtum.

"Take a seat Bernie, I wont be a minute." she advised, "Rhod's in the front room, go on through" she told the rest of us.

We settled down to play on the console until Sylv finished with Bern. Ally was thrashing us all again, I reckon she must practice in her sleep.

"Anyone want to come to the race tomorrow?" I asked

"Can't tomorrow" Ally advised

"Count me in" Maddy enthused, "where is it?"

"Over at Lincoln again, what about you Rhod?"

"I've got to go to my Dad's" he moaned. Rhod and his Dad don't get on but visiting rights is visiting rights I guess. Rhod was only a baby when his parents split and his Dad only reappeared last October.

"Can't you duck out for once" Ally suggested

"Mum won't let me, I've tried before" he informed us

"I win, I win!" Ally squealed gleefully

"You cheated" Maddy accused

"Did not" Ally retorted

"Hey guys, what do you think" Bernie stood in the doorway

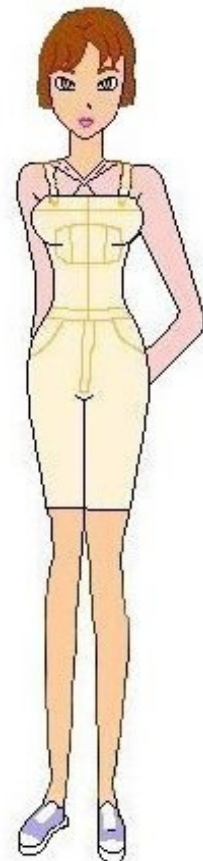
"Wow!" Mad exclaimed

"Cool" Ally agreed

Bernie's shoulder length hair was now transformed into a casual ear length bob; it really transformed her appearance.

"You like?" Bernie enquired

"Suits you" Rhod stated tactfully



I wasn't really sure myself

"Do you like it?" was my get out

"It's taking a bit of getting used to, I've always had it long"

"You coming to Drew's race tomorrow?" Mad asked Bern

"I'll have to check with Mum"

"We're not going till after ten" I told her

"Come on let's go to Mansfield, the bus is in ten minutes!" Rhod reminded us

I really couldn't get used to the 'new' Bernie, it didn't seem right somehow. We just made the bus, and we arrived in the buzzing metropolis that is Mansfield just before one.

"Let's go to the Chad office first, get it out of the way" I suggested as we headed into the shopping precinct.

The others agreed and we detoured to the paper's office.

"Look they've got the school sportsday pictures" Bernie pointed to the window

"Won't be long" I advised

"I'll come with you" Rhod volunteered

Well it turns out that the picture was an official release, they could get a copy for us but it'll take a couple of weeks. I decided I'd best order it anyway.

"Hey Drew, there's a picture of us winning the Badminton" Maddy informed me when we returned to the street, "I'll tell Mum, she'll probably want a copy"

"Ring her now while we're here" I suggested, "you can use my phone" I offered

"Cheers Drew" she accepted my mobile

"Just press 02, your number's on speed dial"

"Did anyone else get in?" Rhod queried

"You can just make me out on one picture" Bernie told us

"Sure Mum" Maddy finished her call

"Well?" Ally asked

"She said to order two copies, thanks Drew" she handed me back my phone

"We'll wait on the bench over there" Rhod advised

"Won't be long" Mad suggested following the others into the office.

"You look miffed Rhod"

"Yeah, I really hate going to my Dad's"

"I thought you said it wasn't too bad"

"I lied. It's sort of like this duty thing with him you know"

"At least you only have to go once a month"

"I guess. It still sucks though."

I could only guess what it was like for him. I know there are lots of divorces and stuff these days but Rhod is my only friend who doesn't live with both parents.

"I think he's taking me out somewhere tomorrow, Mum said something the other night"

"Come on you two!" Ally shouted across to us

"Coming" I returned

We joined the other Saturday shoppers, the girls insisting on visiting every shoe shop and dress shop in sight. Rhod and I followed along, the dutiful boyfriends! So cynical so young! After my recent experiences the last thing I was interested in was girl's clothes and stuff and Rhod was equally unenthusiastic.

We did manage to grab a few minutes in a record shop. I managed to get a copy of Aerosmith's 'Rock in a Hard Place' for £3.99 so I was pretty chuffed. I also got Mum a CD of Mike Oldfield's 'Tubular Bells', she really likes that sort of thing.

"Let's have a look in 'Shoe World'" Bernie suggested.

Shoe World is where in the past Sarah has thought I was a girl, why I don't know but I wasn't keen on another visit.

"Do we have to?" I groaned

"Oh come on Drew, we'll eat afterwards, we can go to Mama Leone's" Mad tempted

Once inside the store I joined Rhod to look at the trainers whilst the girls went to look at the rest!

"Hi Gaby" I nearly jumped out of my skin

"Oops sorry Gaby, I didn't mean to make you jump" Sarah apologised

"Er hi Sarah"

"Who's the totty then?" she quizzed pointing with her eyes towards Rhod

"Just my mate Rhod, we're just checking out trainers while the girls are looking"

"We've just got some cool new Adi trainers in" she led me to a display, "they only came out on Monday. Aren't they neat?"

Well in truth they were pretty cool.

"Go on try a pair on" Sarah urged, "still in a five?"

"Yeah" I replied

I was soon shod in this summers must have trainer.

"What do you think Gaby?" Sarah asked, she really was good at this selling lark!

"I wasn't planning on buying any shoes today"

"I can put them aside for you" she cajoled

I was breaking and she knew it!

"Can Sarah come to till 2" the announcement boomed

"Won't be a minute" she told me

"You getting them Drew?" Maddy startled me as much as Sarah had

"Don't do that" I admonished

"Well are you?"

"I was thinking about it"

"They do boys ones as well you know"

Shit. Not again, Sarah thinking I was a girl had me trying the girl's version on and I hadn't noticed.

"Naw" Rhod came over from where he'd been checking out the men's display, "the men's don't go small enough, they start at a six"

"Sorry about that Gaby, where were we?"

I really did fancy a pair of these and I did have the money in my pocket. And the girls ones look the same to me.

"I'll take them" I told her. She smiled a little wider; I had fallen to her selling charms yet again and for another pair of girl's shoes! I left fifty pounds lighter in the pocket and still Gaby in Sarah's mind. And I'm sure she thought I was 'with' Rhod as well. In the end we ate at Burja King, no one wanted to eat too much as we were invited to tea at Chez Peters!

We got back to Warsop and descended like a pack of hunting dogs on the spread that Mrs P had ready for us. Tonight we had various pasta options tortellini, ravioli, cannelloni, pesto, cheese and bolognese sauces - to finish we had some of the ice cream that we fetched from Sheffield on Monday. What a feast!

We cleared up and then camped around the computer to check on the emails and stuff. I had another one from Britney, so I sent a reply telling her about this week's news. It was pretty clear that the impending visit was the cause of much excitement on the other side of the pond, I guess we aren't quite as full of it at the minute, we've or at least I've had too much going on to really think about our visitors arrival.

"See you in the morning Mad"

"Ten o'clock right?" she replied

"Yeah, Dad wants to leave by quarter past"

"Pity that Bernie couldn't make it" Mad stated

"I could have done with the full squad" I joshed

"Come here" Mad requested

I stepped forward and she took me by surprise by grabbing my face and planting a kiss on my lips.

"What's that for?" I managed when she released me

"Just for being you"

"Oh. I better get home"

"Bye Drew, see you tomorrow"

I left to walk home still a little taken aback by Maddy's unexpected assault on my lips. Did this mean anything? It was certainly more than a friendly peck. 'Just for being me', ah well.

Part 21

Summer Lovin'

When I got home, the house was in turmoil. Dad was hoovering like crazy and Jules was busy dusting.

"You're back then" Jules stated flatly

"Yeah, what's going on?"

"Mum's back tomorrow?" she told me

"I know"

"The place is a mess so we're cleaning"

Now don't get me wrong here, our house is not exactly a palace, nor is it a pig sty – and Mum is hardly the house-proud type either! In fact since she's been in Germany the place has been tidier than usual, we've had a cleaning rota and apart from a bit of surface mess, magazines and stuff, it's looking pretty good.

"Drew?" Dad stopped the vacuum

"Yes Dad"

"Can you have a go 'round the kitchen"

"I spose" I replied unenthusiastically

So I finished the day in rubber gloves wiping down the (already) clean kitchen.

Dad was loading my bike onto the car when Maddy arrived.

"Morning Mr Bond, morning Drew"

"Hi Mad" I replied

"Hi" Dad mentioned

"I'll just get my bag and I'm ready" I informed Dad trotting back inside.

"Lock the door on the way out then, we'll get straight off" Dad replied

Five minutes later and we were on our way.

"When's your Mum get back?" Mad asked

"She gets into Manchester just after five" I told her

"Are you all going to fetch her?"

"No, Dad's going on his own after he drops us off this afternoon"

"You want to come to mine for tea then?" she queried

"Dad?"

"What?" he was humming along to the radio

"Can I have tea at Mad's?"

"Don't see why not, me and your Mum will eat on the way back. I can ring your mobile to let you know when we'll be back"

"Great" Mad enthused

I just had a sneaky suspicion there was more to the invite than just feeding me but what I had no idea.

The day was turning out nice, blue skies, sun shining but with a stiff breeze which when we got to the airfield, was sweeping across the circuit mercilessly. I recognised several of my soon to be adversaries, the big lad I beat last time was riding again – he'd be out for blood!

I was already in my kit so getting ready was a quick job. Maddy insisted on doing the masseuse bit much to Dad's amusement and my delight. I mean, you can get used to this leg rub business especially when it's a girl doing said rubbing. There was a slight stirring in my loins that brought me back to the here and now, I don't think Mad noticed anything.

I set off to warm up before my forty-lap event; the wind was going to be a fair nuisance today. All too soon I was lining up with another couple of dozen riders and we were waved off on the warm up lap, I looked for Dad and Maddy but couldn't spot them.

It was clear pretty quickly that no one really wanted to leave the comfort of the bunch willingly with this wind. The wide concrete roadways allowed the formation of one long echelon, get on the wrong wheel and you could lose metres easily. I spotted Dad second time around at the start of the finish straight, he gave me a cheer as we passed, but where's Mad?

A couple of the younger kids dropped off the back on the wind assisted leg but I was quite comfortable. I heard Mad before I saw her

"Come on Drew we want you!"

She was jiggling up and down and instead of the jeans she was wearing earlier it looked like she was wearing her tennis skirt and was waving a load of streamers. I mentally shook my head; she's finally flipped!

I wasn't the only one to see her

"That your sister?" one of the older riders asked as we plodded along

"Girlfriend" I wheezed back

"Cute" and he moved ahead



Ten laps gone and the field was down to fifteen, the wind seemed to be picking up and I was looking out for Mad each lap. Of course no one would admit it afterwards but Mad caused the crash. She picked the moment of our passing to try a back flip; fifteen sets of eyes followed her movements and then Crash! There was a touch of wheels and the fifteen were reduced to five and a pile of bikes! Luck was with me and after taking avoiding action I joined the remaining upright riders as the rest started to pick themselves up.

I found myself in the company of four of the oldest riders, all were a lot bigger than me so I was getting plenty of shelter but offering very little. As is often the way in schoolboy events, the remounted riders behind had essentially given up and left our little group to get on with things. The laps dragged by, Maddy was a bit more restrained waving her streamers and cheering away.

I couldn't think of any way to get away from the group before the finish, after last time they would watching for me making a move. My tactic settled on 'wait and see'.

"Come on Drew, one lap to go" Dad shouted

"Go Drew Go!" Maddy yelled as we passed

I found myself at the back of the echelon; the others seemed to have just about forgotten about me as they started preparing for the fast approaching finish line. All I could really do was have a go, and then an idea struck me. With about five hundred metres to go I struck out across the circuit putting me parallel to the others but about ten metres away. When they looked for me I wasn't in sight, I obviously hadn't passed them so I was gone heh! Heh! It was tough with the wind but I managed to hold position and watched as they started to jockey for position. One of them decided to make his move with two fifty to go and as soon as they were committed I went too. I was out of their minds so I just went with it.

The small crowd was cheering for their favourites and then too late my rivals spotted me. At the line I was clear by a wheel! Woo, woo, woo!

"No doubts this time son" Dad enthused

"You were brill!" Mad gave me a hug

"Cool" I managed to gasp.

"What's with the getup?" I asked as we sat eating sandwiches half an hour later.

"Well you keep referring to us as your cheerleaders so I thought I'd dress like one" Mad told me

"Where did you get the streamers?" I was curious, as they were clearly not home made

"Dad got them in America a while a go, don't know why. They're real cheerleader ones"

"You ready kids?" Dad asked

"We can finish eating on the way" I informed him.

He was a bit agitated, I suppose he was worried about getting to Manchester on time.

"You fancy going to Obicon in a couple of weeks?" Mad asked as we walked over to her house.

"What's that?"

"Only the biggest anime and cosplay fair this summer!"

How should I know?

"Mum and Dad are going and Mum suggested I ask you"

"What about the others?"

"Bernie's away in Scotland, Rhod's staying with his Dad and Ally doesn't fancy it"

"So I'm last choice then?"

"Don't be daft, we both knew about Rhod and Bernie being away and I rang Ally this morning, Mum only came up with the invite this morning"

"I'll need to check with the olds"

"Please, please, please come. It'll be brill!"

"I'll check ok!"

After another one of Mrs P's meals, special omelette and salad followed by cherry pie with cream. Hmmm.

"Did she ask you Drew?" Aunt C asked

"Yes I did" Mad interrupted

"The fair thing?"

"Obicon, yes"

"I'll need to ask Mum and Dad but it sounds okay, what's it going to cost?"

"We've got an accommodation deal so you just need the entry which is £20 for the weekend and some spending money"

"Is that your phone Drew?" Mad queried

I grabbed my phone and answered it

"Hi, Dad?"

"Hi Drew"

"Mum!"

"We're just leaving Glossop so we'll be home about eight"

"Okay"

"Bye Drew see you shortly"

"Bye Mum" I finished the call

"Your Mum?" Mad enquired

"Yeah, they'll be home at eight" I told my audience

"I'll drop you home in about half an hour then" Mrs P offered

"Thanks" I replied

Jules and I sat watching telly while we waited. Just after eight we heard the car pull onto the drive, we were out of the door before the handbrake was on.

"Mum!" I just beat Jules to the car

"Hi kids"

We both hugged Mum

"Come on you two, let your Mum get indoors, Drew get a couple of these bags" Dad instructed.

Mum and Jules went inside while I got lumbered with the luggage.

"Right kids, there's some stuff we need to sort out then the rest of the week we can enjoy ourselves" Mum started

This sounded ominous.

"Things have been moving quickly since last weekend, I'm not sure I really believe it all." She went on

"Believe what?" Jules asked

"Firstly the federation have offered me a place on the World's team"

"The Comic* said they should" I put in

"That's great Mum" Jules added

"Well they have offered me one of the road race places and I've accepted"

"Cool" I stated

"What else then?" Jules prompted

"Well the team have offered me a new contract for next season"

"Brill!" I mentioned

"It's not that simple Drew. It means I'll be away most of the time again in Germany. I've talked to your Dad about this and I have his blessing but I want you kids to be okay with it too"

"We're not little anymore" Jules stated

"You still get into trouble" Dad mentioned

"You won't be away all the time?" I queried

"No I'll be here from mid October until the New Year, then we have a month long training camp in Australia before we start the early season events. I missed all that this year. Apollinaris are upping their sponsorship so that everyone is full time and we'll be doing a fair bit of promotional work between races. Think about it, can you be without me for that long"

"You should go for it Mum" Jules advised

"Jules is right, we'll be okay and you'll be home for Christmas and stuff" I finished

"Okay then, me and your Dad will talk some more about that. Now then, we didn't get a chance to really talk last Sunday, what's your news"

"No one guessed it was me in the photo, it was in Chad and they called me Gabrielle"

"The look on his face Mum" Jules mentioned

"Most of the team still think you're a girl from Whitsun, they think you're a tomboy" Mum advised

Jules cracked up

"Muuuum! I thought we sorted that?"

"Well I did too until you turned up in a dress last week" Mum stated

"But Maria and Kat, they know I'm a boy" I pleaded

"I've even shown them photo's Drew, they think I've got two daughters *and* a son, they've just never seen my son!" Mum finished

The conversation turned to other things before it took another turn my way.

"Drew's got a girlfriend!" Jules announced

"Have not!" I snapped

"Have so, everyone's seen you two playing tonsil hockey" she went on

"Lay off your brother Juliette" Dad suggested

"Who is she Drew?" Mum asked

"Maddy" I mumbled

"Maddy Peters!" Jules exclaimed, "she even goes to watch him race"

"She's not my girlfriend!" I stated

"Sounds like it to me" Mum mentioned

"Muuuum!" I whined

"Okay"

"Oh I need to ask you and Dad something"

"He's creeping again" Jules put in

"What Drew?"

"I've been invited to go to some fair thing with the Peters, it's the week before the Americans come. I said I'd ask"

"You'd best ask your Dad, I'll be in Italy then." Mum advised

"Dad? It's only twenty pounds"

"I don't see why not"

"How come he gets to do stuff?" Jules moaned

"Because his friends ask him" Dad retorted.

Jules sulked

"Your Dad said you won again today" Mum picked up the conversation

So I told Mum about today's race, by the time I finished, Mum was yawning and it was time to hit the sack.

* The Comic – otherwise known as Cycling Weekly, the bible of UK racing cyclists.

Part 22

As Girls Go

It was just gone nine when my brain registered consciousness. First day of the holidays! Mum's home!

"Okay Carol, I'll see you in an hour, bye" Mum was just finishing her call when I surged into the kitchen.

"Morning Mum, why didn't you wake me?"

"Morning Drew, I thought I'd let you sleep in, what are you doing today?"

"Hadn't given it much thought"

"Well I'm going to see Carol, Maddy's mum this morning, how about we go for a ride this afternoon?"

"Yeah that'll be excellent!" the cog's whirred, "can I come to the Peters with you, I need to talk to Maddy."

"I don't see why not, Carol and I are going into Mansfield, *on our own*, so don't even ask"

"Where's Jules?" I asked

"She's gone to Worksop with Anna and Charlie, something about needing to get something"

"I think she's a bit pissed at me"

"Less of that language young man!" Mum retorted

"Sorry Mum, but she is"

"Hmm, I'll have to have a talk with her later, but right now you need to get your breakfast if you're catching a lift, I'm leaving at quarter to"

"Okay"

I ate a quick breakfast and dived back upstairs to change, pausing only to ring Mad to tell her I was coming.

"We'll be back about one" Mum shouted after me as I passed Aunt C on the way to her door.

"Kids!" I heard Mrs P state with a chortle.

"Hi Drew" Mad greeted me

"Hiya Mad"

We went through to the lounge.

"Well?" Mad enquired

"Well what?"

"Der! You were in a rush to get here to tell me something?"

"Oh yeah, Robot Wars – cool" Craig and Phillipa, the hosts appeared on the screen.

I wasn't quick enough to avoid the cushion she aimed at my head

"Hey!" I exclaimed

"Tell me" she threatened

"Okay, I can go to the fair thing"

"Kewl!" she exclaimed, "we'll have to sort out some costumes"

"Costumes?"

"Well dur, you don't think we're gonna wear jeans do you? Even Mum and Dad are dressing up" she informed me

There was a bright flash from the screen as Matilda pushed a competitor into the pit.

I slumped back into the sofa.

"Come on, we need at least three costumes, maybe four" Mad enthused

Half an hour later I was starting to regret agreeing to go.

"There's not much choice is there?" I whined, "I mean if you're a girl there's loads, but most of the male options are big he-men"

"Hmmm" Mad mused

The look she gave me was not comforting.

"Drew?"

"What?"

"How about doing girl costumes? Lot's of guys do at the cons"

"Oh no! I – am – not – doing – that – again," I said with some deliberation

"But Drew" she started, "we could use the stuff from Easter for one set,"

I interrupted her

"How about if you use the costumes and I go in jeans?"

"No way!" she stated brooking no argument

I could see by the look in her eye that I was fighting a losing battle here.

"How about if we did Harry Potter?" she offered, "I could be Hermione and you could be Harry. Then if we used our Chii costumes we only really need one more."

"Why do we need so many costumes?" I had to ask

"Well we're there for three days and on Saturday there's a costume party too. Only total dorks wear the same costume all weekend!" I was informed. Sounded a bit harsh to me.

"What about something like Star Trek?" inspiration hit me

"Earth to Drew, this is Obicon, not a Trekkie convention. You wouldn't get in the door. Come on Drew, be a sport" she gave me *that* look.

The thoughts flashed through my mind. *Change my mind and don't go – I don't have to dress up but I also don't get to be with Maddy. Go and dress up, hate myself afterwards but have a good time with Mad. Option three – there is no option three!*

"Okay, I'll do it" I eventually agreed

I was smothered by Maddy and received a smacker on my cheek too.

"There's conditions," I continued, "we do Harry Potter, I'll go with the Easter costume but anything else has to be more restrained"

"Yes!" Mad punched the air.

We spent the next hour trying to decide on at least one more costume each and I was getting pretty cheesed.

"I'll probably regret this, but what if I leave the costumes to you. I'll help if you want but this is getting us nowhere" I finally declared

"Okay, I'll get Mum to help"

"Right, now that's settled, you got anything to eat? I'm starving"

"Where are we going" I asked Mum some time later as we headed towards Ollerton.

"I thought we'd ride down to Newark, we can stop for a drink then come back through Southwell (pronounced *suthall* people!)"

"Sounds good"

"So what's it like, winning all these races?" Mum asked

"It's only four! You've won loads!"

"Doesn't matter how many it is" she stated

"Well I guess it does feel really good, especially when I've beaten the older riders"

"Nice feeling?"

"Yeah"

"Adrenaline." Mum stated

"I guess so"

"You get so high on it that you want to repeat that feeling, often"

"I guess"

"The time to worry is when you don't get that 'high'. Did you feel the same on sports day? Carol was telling me earlier all about it"

"I suppose I did, I kept trying harder because it felt good when we won"

"If you don't get that high, it's not bad, it just means you're tired, going through the motions"

We dropped down to Ollerton roundabout and slipped into single file to negotiate the junction.

"Are all the girls off this week?" I asked when Mum arrived back next to me

"Yes, George thought everyone should get some relaxation after the excitement of the Tour"

"So everyone is hungry for the adrenaline rush?"

"Got it in one!" Mum agreed

The road rolled along towards our destination and we kept a comfortable, for me, pace going. Then the tractor pulled out in front of us.

"Come on" Mum told me as she dropped a sprocket

"Where?"

"The tractor dummy" she informed me as she stood up to chase the farm machinery.

I could do little other than give chase to Mum's fast disappearing rear tyre. Mum quickly crossed the gap and snook in close behind the trailer and settled back down. It took me somewhat longer to get there, but I made it thanks to a bit of uphill slowing the leviathan. The tractor was one of those Fastrac things, so it has a fair turn of speed but we were just comfortable in the trailer's slipstream. The road became wider and we could smell the beet factory on the wind, a glance up confirmed that was where our host was headed.

The engine note changed as we started to descend and the speed started to pickup, I glanced at my computer, wow nearly 35 miles an hour! The road flattened out and finally we heard the tractor change down gear and start to slow. Mum started to freewheel along and following her lead we fell back from the trailer so that at the junction we were about twenty metres behind, far enough that we could safely negotiate the island.

We sprinted back up to the tractor but he was in no hurry now as he was approaching the sugar factory. We pulled around him as he turned to join the queue at the weighbridge and I'd just about got my breath back when we got to the bypass. Another couple of minutes and we were crossing the Trent into Newark. Mum led the way around the town finally stopping outside a small tea-room on the bottom of the market place.

Once inside and seated, I felt much better. Mum on the other hand had hardly broken sweat!



"You ok?" Mum asked seeing my flushed face

"Fine, I'm not used to that sort of speed, we were doing thirty five plus down that hill!"

"I might have got a bit carried away, we usually race close to that speed or faster unless it's uphill"

"What would you ladies like?" the waitress asked

I gave Mum a look!

"Tea for two and two toasted teacakes* please" Mum ordered

The waitress departed with our order.

"Mum! Why didn't you say anything!"

"Oh come on Drew, no one else seems to worry about it, why should I"

"But I do!"

"Okay, when she comes back"

"Here we are ladies" the waitress appeared with a tray of tea things, "mind the pot's they are scalding hot" she advised before leaving us arranging cups and saucers.

I was too preoccupied to notice her departure, so another opportunity was missed.

"What did you do last week?" I asked Mum

"Well we drove home on Monday"

"To Bad Neunahr?"

"Yes" Mum confirmed while checking how the tea was mashing**, "then on Tuesday we had a presentation for the German press in the morning and the local Sports Council threw us a small reception in the evening."

"Two teacakes" the waitress announced depositing the plates and departing all in one fluid movement.

Mum poured the tea and I started on my teacake.

"We had a training session on Wednesday" Mum went on

"Training? After two weeks of racing?"

"No rest for the wicked and they all seem to think I've been very wicked"
mum winked and smiled at me.

"I thought you'd be resting"

"No such luck, on Thursday we had an evening criterium in Frankfurt as well!"

"Did you win?"

"No, I only did a few laps, just to show off my champion and yellow jerseys to the crowds"

We both returned to our food and drink before Mum went on pouring a second cuppa.

"Then on Friday, we all went to the Kursaal, where we had that meal remember? to sign temporary extensions to our contracts, you want another teacake?"

"Please"

Mum turned to catch the waitress's attention

"Everything okay?"

"Fine thanks, can we have another round of teacakes please"

Our top up order went on its way and Mum was interrupted by my phone beeping

"Hello? Oh hi Dad...Newark...a couple of hours...seven thirty, I'll tell her...bye"

"Your Dad I take it"

"Yeah. He said to tell you that he's booked a table at Salvatore's for seven thirty"

"He said he'd take us all out but I didn't think it would be tonight"

Our second plate of teacakes arrived interrupting our conversation again

"So what have you got planned for the holidays?" Mum started a new track

"Not much I guess. There's the thing with the Peters and then the exchange people come the week after so there's really only this week and next to sort out."

"Well I thought I'd take you and Jules to your Gran's on Thursday, I've got to go to Manchester tomorrow, I guess you could tag along"

"Cool!"

"Okay that's settled then. I want to take Jules out on her own on Wednesday and on Friday the Comic is coming to do an interview"

"Wow" I stated dribbling melted butter down my chin

"Come on finish up, I know it's not far but we'll need to get ready as well when we get home. We'll need to leave by seven to get to Worksop!" Mum advised

We were soon re crossing the Trent to start our ride home. Instead of retracing our outward route we bore off towards Southwell and our cross-country route back home.

"So what's with you and Maddy?" Mum asked once we were clear of the busy junction.

"Nothing!" I started to colour up

"Come on Drew, I'm your mother and despite what you might think, Carol isn't blind either!"

"We're just friends"

"Carol seems to think you two see a lot more of each other than the rest of your group"

"Maybe" I allowed

"You went to the end of term dance with her"

I thought I could scotch this conversation now.

"I was wearing a dress! I hardly went as her date in the end"

"Maybe she likes you in a dress?"

"Get real mum! Why would she?"

"Some girls like girls" Mum stated

We rode up into Southwell and past the pretty Minster and then the steady climb out of the town. Mum was comfortably spinning the pedals but by the top I was breathing heavily.

"You mean like lesbo's?" I was amazed at what Mum was hinting at

"That's not a very nice expression, but yes like lesbians"

"Maddy? Give over Mum!" I stated

"Well I'm inclined to agree with Carol, you make a very good girl as girls go"

I was stunned to silence by my mother's statement.

A few minutes riding later and we picked up the road to Mansfield through Blidworth and Rainworth. Mum directed me around some back streets to avoid teatime Mansfield and we were quickly on the A60 back to Warsop.

"So you think Maddy is a lesbian?"

"I didn't say that. She might just like boys that look like girls"

I wasn't sure how I felt about this revelation. I like Maddy, no scratch that, I really like Maddy, she's cute, fun supportive and a great friend. On the other hand she does seem to constantly find ways to get me to appear as Gaby. But there again Ally and Bernie don't exactly discourage it! Maybe they are all the same, what if Ally starts getting Rhod to dress up?

"You okay Drew?" Mum asked

"Just thinking"

"Maddy?"

"Yes. What do you think?"

"I think you've got a really good friend there. If I were you I'd play it by ear, Carol's keeping an eye out for both of you, if you feel uncomfortable, talk to your Aunt Carol or you can always ring me you know"

"Thanks Mum, I guess I don't want to lose her as a friend and I do really like her"

We rode up our drive straight into the garage where Dad was tidying up.

Salvatore's is an excellent Italian restaurant. Monday night anywhere is pretty quiet but tonight we were at one of only two occupied tables. The speciality at Salvatore's is the pasta buffet, straight, long, curly, short, green, white, wholemeal – well you name it, it's on offer. And they do pizza. Not only that but the choice of dressings and sauces is incredible too, we don't come very often but it's worth the wait!



"Here's to Jenny Bond, may the rest of the season be as good as the first half!" Dad toasted Mum. We all clinked glasses and started our meal. One of the waiters kept giving us a funny look though, quickly turning away when he spotted me watching him. We were waiting for our desserts when he came over to us.

"Every thing is a okay?"

"Yes thanks" Dad replied for us

"I am sorry to disturb, but I have to ask, are you the ciclista Jennifer Bond?" he asked Mum

Mum looked a bit taken aback

"Er yes"

"I tell Guido, he no believe me!" he went on excitedly, "we watch you race, benissima!" he dramatically kissed his fingers. "I am sorry, to interrupt your meal, is a unforgivable"

He left a bemused table of Bonds and the other customers looked at us strangely. Dessert arrived and we were onto the coffee when the first waiter and a second who I presumed was 'Guido' came up to our table.

"I am sorry for my earlier behaviour Mrs Bond. This is Guido and I am Stefani, we are big fans of you riding. Please would you sign for us?" he proffered a ten by eight picture of Mum winning that mountain stage.

"Er okay" Mum took the picture and Guido supplied a pen.

Jules and I started beaming like idiots, which brought a stern look from Dad. Mum finished with the picture and handed it back to Stefani

"Thank you, thank you, we will hang in the restaurant, pride of place you say?" Guido nodded to Stefani's statement. When the bill came a short time later it was much less than Dad was expecting but as they say, never look a gift horse in the mouth!

"Ah please a sign theese" Jules mocked as we walked back to the car a few minutes later

"Less of that young lady" Dad admonished

"Well you have to admit it was a bit strange Dad" I put my twopence in.

"It happens all the time on the continent" Mum informed us

"What? Like strange men asking for autographs?" Jules asked

"Men, women, kids – there's often a crowd at the finish and last week in Frankfurt, the polizei had to control the crowds" She stated matter of factly

Until then I hadn't really realised the significance of Mum's race wins. In Europe she was fast becoming a sporting icon, at home she was still unknown outside of the cycling world.

* Teacake – can either be, as in this case, a fruited sweet roll usually served toasted or a chocolate covered marshmallow affair

** Mashing – North Midlands / Yorkshire term for making/brewing usually tea but sometimes coffee

Part 23

Tracking

Mum and I left home around nine thirty, she was due to meet with Team GB officials at eleven thirty so two hours should be ample to drive over. Mum explained that today she was being given the full treatment – cardio vascular testing, strength testing, full medical – the works!

She let something else slip, something I hadn't thought of. Like many sports cycling has a world ranking system based on performances over a couple of years. In Mums case she only had a few months of ranked races counting but she was already lying in 18th place! Maria Pinger is currently in fifth and Tina Porsche is eleventh and overall the squad was third.

On top of that, there is the World Cup. Mum missed a couple of the early season events; she was still at home when they were run. But good consistent results in the other three so far run have put her in with an outside chance of gaining that title too. No wonder the GB team wants her!

We arrived in good time and soon Mum was whisked off leaving me to wander the stands of the velodrome. I've never ridden a fixed wheel bike, let alone ride on a track and this place looks frightening. Imagine a wall of death with two short straights and you get the idea! A couple of riders were carelessly doing laps around the bottom of the track and the pit area was starting to accumulate bikes and equipment.

"Hello youngster, what are you doing in here?"

I jumped slightly as I'd not heard the speaker approach

"The girl at the desk said it was okay. If I watched while I wait for Mum" I explained

"And who's your Mum" my inquisitor asked

"Jenny Bond sir"

He stiffened a bit, obviously reassessing my presence

"I didn't know she was coming today hmm, well okay then, the pursuit squad have a session in a few minutes, I'm sure they won't mind an audience"

"Thanks"

The official left me and soon reappeared in the track centre. He searched out another track suited man and started talking then pointed to where I was sat

overlooking the finish straight. The second man scanned the stand for a moment then spotting me smiled and waved cheerily, he looked a bit familiar but I couldn't identify who from up here.

A whistle sounded and the now circling group of riders came down off the track where the two trainers held a pep session. The riders returned to the track and started circling, splitting into two four man squads. The team pursuit is similar to relay events in athletics; the team can be any combination of a named squad and can change between rounds of competition, hence the eight riders on the track now.

The two groups were soon circling on opposite sides of the track and the serious work started. They formed up line astern and assumed their aero positions, the pace almost immediately shot up. I sat fascinated as every half lap the front rider peeled off to rejoin the back of the line, these guys were good! Their tyres were almost touching and they rode as one, lap upon lap.

A whistle sounded again and they sat up but continued circling. Instructions were shouted and two riders from each squad set off to catch and join the group in front. This took a couple of laps, then when they joined the slower riders they in turn set off so that there were always two sets of chasers and two pairs resting.

"There you are"

Mum's voice broke my concentration

"Impressive eh?" she asked

"Sure is"

"You want to get something to eat?"

I checked the big clock on the score board, it was nearly one o'clock.

"I didn't realise it was that time"

"Come on, we can eat in the cafeteria" Mum told me

We were eating our healthy quiche and salad when the trainers from the pursuit session came in.

"Jenny!" my inquisitor exclaimed causing Mum to turn to see who it was

"Martin, I didn't know you worked here?" Mum greeted him

"I wasn't expecting to see you here either"

You don't want to hear that conversation and anyway the other trainer came over with his lunch then and I recognised John the timekeeper.

"Hi young 'un, come to see what we do eh?"

"Mum's come for testing so I tagged along"

"What do you think then?"

"Pretty cool, I'm not sure I could do it though" I told him

"Come on, we have eight year olds and eighty year olds ride on here, I'm sure you'd be just fine"

"Maybe" I allowed

"Is your mum finished today?"

"No there's some more testing to do, Mum reckons we'll be off about three"

"Well there's not much happening after lunch, most of the riders are out on the road and the public sessions don't start till four. No schools with the holidays either." He paused before turning to his colleague, "Martin would it be okay for Gaby here to have a go on the track?"

I forgot, John instead of thinking I'm Dee now thinks I'm Gaby even wearing baggy jeans and a t-shirt like I am today. The look on Mum's face was priceless I have to say, I just groaned inwardly, one day.

"No problem John, you gonna look after her?"

Now Martin thought I was a girl too. Jeez

"I've not got any shorts or stuff" I tried to defer this particular treat

"You can use my spares" Mum offered

I was sort of cornered

"That's settled then, meet me in the track centre in half an hour and we'll give you a go"

With a new mission, he joined Martin who was also now leaving.

"Mum!"

"What?" she asked innocently

I was not going to get any support at that door.

"Come on, drink up and we'll get you dressed"

"Yes Mum"

Ah well, once more unto Gaby!

I walked self consciously up the slope to the track centre. Mum had insisted I wore a sports bra sufficiently stuffed with socks to give me small breasts, the bra obvious through Mum's Apollinaris skinsuit. I looked like a slightly smaller version of my mother as I stood nervously waiting for John.



"Sorry to keep you Gaby, I was just checking this over for you" he stated wheeling the track bike up to me.

"Nervous?" he asked

"A bit, I've never used fixed wheel before" I told him

"The only thing to remember is don't stop pedalling!" he advised, "okay let's start down here"

Fifteen minutes later I was circling the bottom of the track and starting to get into it. John then took me through some track craft skills getting me to ride higher and higher up the bankings. There is a speed where you stay there, below it you just fall off and one scary moment told me where that point was!

It was really cool dropping off the banking onto the straights, the acceleration was fantastic! I had forgotten how I looked and was just enjoying myself.

"Okay Gaby let's have a go at a Kilo then you can have ten minutes to warm down"

For those of you who don't know the kilo or kilometre time trial is a classic track event, one rider on his or her own going as fast as possible over 1000 metres. At Manchester that is four laps of the 250 metre wooden track. John set the timing board and then held me up ready to start. The timing system started beep, beep, beep, beep, beeeep! I pushed down on the pedals and started up the straight. Now I've done a lot of time trials but those four laps were hell! Trying to stay at the bottom of the track when centrifugal forces are pulling you up the banking and the featureless nature of the track mean

it's a real job. After two laps I could hear some cheering and board slapping, seems I had an audience!

"Keep it going Gaby" John shouted as I passed him

"Up, up, up"

"Dig in"

"Go for it girl"

Up the back straight I glanced up at the board, one minute fifty!

I concentrated on keeping on the pursuit line and John rang the bell as I passed again, to more cheering from the stands. That last lap was interminable; I glanced at the scoreboard again, two minutes thirty seconds. Then it was over and I sat up to the clapping and cheering of the small gallery. There it was on the scoreboard, Gaby Bond two minutes fifty one! I circled the track back to John slowly getting my breath back.

"Well done lass, that's not bad for a first attempt, do a couple of laps to cool off then I'm afraid it's time to stop"

I quickly recovered and had time to look up into the stands where Mum was talking to some of the guys I'd seen doing pursuit training earlier. She waved as I went past and I pottered round to the pits and came to a stop.

"You enjoy that?" John asked taking the bike off my hands

"It was hard work" I stated

"Not as easy as it looks eh?"

"No, but it's good fun"

"Well done D...Gaby" Mum greeted me, "you gonna start track then?"

"Maybe, I really enjoyed that"

"Come on then time to go, thanks for that John, we might see you later"

"No problem Jenny, see you later Gaby" John replied

"Thanks John" I told him

We didn't get very far as we got stopped in the reception area before I could even get changed.



"Jenny, Phil Eaton, Cycling Weekly. Can I just get a couple of pictures of mother and daughter?"

"You'd best ask her?" Mum put it on my shoulders.

Well the adrenaline was running, everyone here thought I was Gaby what the heck. I shrugged my shoulders.

"I guess" I told the man from the Comic

Ten minutes later he had his pictures and it turns out it was he who was coming on Friday to do the article on Mum.

"Just put your jeans on, you can shower at home" Mum advised

We were sat in traffic leaving Manchester when I realised I was sat there wearing a tight skinsuit and a bra with my hair still up in a ponytail! I grabbed my sweatshirt and pulled it on and released my hair much to Mum's amusement.

We got home just after half five and amazingly Jules had made tea. Admittedly it was only pasty, chips and beans but I was not about to turn it down, Mum only ate a few of her chips but Jules at least seemed in a better mood today. My attire didn't get past my eagle-eyed sister however.

"Drew, what are you doing wearing Mum's skinsuit?"

"He borrowed it to ride on the track" Mum advised

"So what's with the bra then?" she pursued.

What did I say, doesn't miss a trick!

"Seems they all thought he was a girl before then so we didn't enlighten them"

"You two are just so weird!" Jules stated

Mum decided to ride the ten at Cuckney so we rode out together, Maddy was there when we arrived.

"Made it then" John greeted us

"Yes I thought I'd have a go, just to keep in practice" Mum told him

The other riders seemed a bit shy about approaching Mum, it was sort of 'wow I'm riding against Jenny Bond!' you could see it on their faces.

Maddy got the details of my day as she paid her usual attention to my legs; much to Mum's apparent amusement. Well I've told you about a few of these events so I won't bore you with another right now. Biggest thing this evening was that Mum passed me, she started three minutes behind, I suppose swept would be a better description as she left me standing!

I crossed the line to stop the clock with 25.03, I nearly fell down there and then with Mum's time though, 20.58! It's true I swear! The best of the rest managed 22.11; Mum was well and truly pinging!

"You should ride the National twenty-five" John suggested to Mum as we were preparing to head home.

"I've got a pretty full programme so I doubt if I can fit it in, but I'll have a look"

"And you young lady, another impressive ride" John went on

Mum just shook her head in amusement

"You coming round tomorrow Drew?" Maddy asked after Mum went on home.

"I suppose so, Mum's taking Jules shopping or something"

"Great! I've been working on the costumes all day"

"Do I get any hints?" I asked

"No they'll be a surprise tomorrow" she parried

I knew it was a mistake giving her a free hand, I could still wimp out. And what about what Mum said yesterday. As I rode home alone I thought on that a bit. It was Maddy who pointed out Ally and Bernie's attraction to Tuesday evenings, she didn't give any indication what she felt then. I couldn't think of anytime that she went out of her way to be with boys, mind you the converse was probably true as well. Whatever.

Tomorrow's another day.

Part 24

Hermione!

I was still eating breakfast when Mum and Jules left for the day, they were off to Leeds and I'm off to the Peters! I decided to walk over to Maddy's and I thought I'd box clever, I usually ended up having to 'borrow' underwear for these dressing up sessions, but today I was already wearing 'Gaby' knickers. Well its embarrassing borrowing underwear!

"Hi Drew" Mrs Peters greeted me a short while later.

"Hi Mrs P, I've come for a costume fitting" I pointlessly told her

"That daughter of mine was at it all day yesterday, I can't wait to see what she comes up with" she informed me

"Is that you Drew?" Maddy called from the dining room

"Morning Mad" I greeted her

"I'll leave you two to it then" Mrs P advised

"Hi Drew, I hope you like them" Mad answered my greeting

There were several piles of clothing on the table, which I took to be our costumes.

"Okay then Drew, this is what I thought we'd do. On Friday you can wear your HP outfit and I'll wear this Sailor Moon one. On Saturday you get to do Sailor Moon and I'll be Evangeline." She indicated each costume in turn.

I wasn't going to get through this easily was I?

"Why don't we both do Sailor Moon together?" I had to ask

"I've only got one pair of boots" she advised

"Well I could borrow that pair I got for Jules at Easter" I offered. I'd feel more comfortable if we were doing the short skirt bit together.

"Kewl! Yeah that would be great." Mad enthused, "I'll swap round then. Then on Saturday evening for the contest we'll wear our Chii costumes"

The thought of wearing that get up again didn't fill me with joy!

"Then on Sunday I've got an excellent costume for me and yours is quite restrained by comparison" she finished

"Deep joy" I intoned, "lets get on with it then" I suggested

"Well we shouldn't need to put on the Chii outfits, I've let yours out a bit so you can have a bit of cleavage"

"Just what I need" I replied sarcastically

"Dreww!"

"Sorry, go on. Lets get this done with"

"Well your Harry Potter outfit is all normal stuff so you don't need to put that on"

"What is it?" I asked

"Just school uniform and a gown thing"

"Okay. What do I need to try on?"

"The Sailor Moon, do you prefer the white or the yellow?"

"Yellow I think"

"Come on then get stripped, you'd best borrow some suitable undies though"

"No need, I had some at home, I'm already wearing them"

"Drew Bond, I do believe you like wearing them" she teased

"I do not! I just thought it would be easier to do this" I explained

"Well you'll need a bra"

"I never thought of that," I admitted

"You start stripping and I'll fetch one"

She was out of the door in a flash. I started to take my shirt off then realised I was on display. It was only a cat looking in but I pulled the curtains to and as a result I was still be-trousered when Mad got back.

"Come on Drew, we'll be here all day" she chided

"Okay, okay!"

I was quickly down to my knickers and Mad helped me put on the bra, stuffing it with socks for now.

"We'll use your falsies when we go but this will do for now" Mad advised.

I pulled the yellow top on and followed it with the navy skirt with its net underskirt. There were no sleeves on the top but Mad handed me what looked like long yellow gloves but without the hand bit! I pulled the white boots on and Mad fussed for a bit.



"Hmm, with some make up and a wig you'll look pretty good"

"If you say so"

I was feeling a bit exposed, I'd forgotten how a short skirt would feel, I mean this felt nothing like the tennis skirt the other week what with it's net petticoats and drop waist.

"Come on Drew, a bit more enthusiasm" Mad sounded a bit put out

"Sorry, but I vowed I wasn't going to be Gaby again"

"Well your not. You're Drew wearing a costume" she stated

"If you say so" I allowed, what's this other mystery costume then?"

"It's a sort of Final Fantasy outfit" she informed me, you only really need to try the skirt on"

"Another skirt" I whined

"It's just a plain one" she pouted

"Go on then, let's get it over and done with"

I was soon down to my underwear and pulling on another ridiculously short skirt. At least this one was straight cut, although the two side splits made sure that it was just as prone to underwear exposure!

"What do I wear with this?" I asked

"This and this" Mad waved two garments at me

"Let's do it all then" I sighed.

Soon I had on a hooded t-shirt and a coat style garment which at least made me happier about the skirt! I felt a little ridiculous wearing this getup and trainers but that wasn't going to be a problem.

"You'll do. With my black sandals and tights you'll look brill!" she enthused

There was a knock on the door

"Can I come in?" Bernie asked

"Come in B" Maddy encouraged

Why me?

"Oh hi Gab, didn't know you were here" Bernie stated

"Didn't think you were around this morning?" Mad queried

"I wasn't" Bernie mentioned sitting herself down, "but had to go to my Nan's, something about the gas, anyway I like that skirt Gaby"

"I'm not that keen" I indicated the side splits

"Yeah but the coat covers you pretty well Drew" Mad mentioned

"I guess"

"What else are you wearing?" Bernie asked

So Mad went through all of our costumes in turn to the ooh's and aah's of Bernie.

"Let's see you as Harry Potter then Drew" Bernie suggested.

"Erm, I've got a confession to make"

I didn't like the sound of this.

"Go on" I encouraged with dread.



"Well I thought that instead of Harry you could be another character, there'll be loads of Harry's"

"Phew! So I get to be Ron then, or Draco" I sighed with relief

"Well no" Mad hedged

"Who then?" it clicked as I said it, "oh no, you don't mean, you do mean"

"Well I thought you'd be a good Hermione" Mad told us

Bernie was having trouble containing her laughter

"Ma-ad," I whined, "why can't I be Harry? I mean, just one day"

"Please Drew, you'll look really ace, I promise" Mad advised whilst fluttering her lashes at me.

I threw my hands in the air.

"Okay, okay, I'll be Her-me-one" I gave in

"Hermione!" the two girls chorused.

"Lunch!" Mrs P called, "and open those curtains!"

I did the honours with the drapes and the three of us joined Mad's Mum at the garden table for an impromptu buffet lunch.

Nice outfit Gaby, is that for Obicon? Mrs P asked

I'd forgotten what I was wearing.

"Er yes Mrs P" I mumbled

"I've told you before Gaby, it's Aunt Carol"

"Yes Auntie" I murmured

I just wanted to crawl in a hole! Mad and Bernie were in hysterics.

"Stop it you two, that's no way to treat a friend" she admonished

"Sorry Drew, it was just the look on your face" Bernie explained

I sulked through the rest of lunch and exited as soon as I could to get changed back into my own stuff. When I rejoined the others I was somewhat

happier and more comfortable, not physically, the skirt was quite comfortable really. No I was mentally more at ease.

"What do you guys want to do this afternoon?" I asked

"Dunno" Mad replied

"You got any ideas Drew?" Bernie followed on

"Not really, go for a walk?"

"Where to?" Bernie asked

Aunt Carol must have overheard the conversation, because she made a suggestion.

"If you three are bored, you can come into Worksop with me, I need to go to the bank and then Sainsbury's (do a web search!), I could do with a hand"

We looked at each other, Bernie shrugged her shoulders, I made a non-committal nod and Mad answered for us.

"Okay I guess"

"Well if you're coming be ready in five minutes"

The girls rushed inside to do whatever girls do on these occasions, I went around to the front of the Peters Pile to wait by the car. Ha! One big advantage to being Drew! The others took ten minutes to arrive, late as you might expect, and we all piled into the car.

There are two ways from Warsop to Worksop; Aunt C took the quieter road that comes out virtually in the High Street.

"Okay kids, I've got to go to the bank and post office so be back here at three please" Mrs P instructed

"Yes Mum" Maddy replied as we walked into the town.

"Where are we going?" I asked

"Lets have a look in 'The Willow Garden'" Bernie suggested

"Yeah, there's something I want to show you in there Bern" Mad enthused

"Erm, where or what is the 'Willow Garden'?" I asked

"Oh you'll like it Drew, come on" Bernie ordered

So I tagged along behind the girls as they negotiated the way across the town and out over the canal. 'The Willow Garden' turned out to be a cross between a clothing store, novelty shop and Ikea! I suppose most reasonable size towns have a similar shop serving the curious like us and the 'alternative' market.

"Come on Drew" Maddy admonished as I hovered on the threshold of the heavily scented interior.

I followed the others through the front shop and up a flight of stairs to the 'boutique'. I now knew where all the local Goths shop! The place was packed with everything a Goth could want, lots of velvet, net and lace all in regulation black with a good selection of studded belts and accessories too. The girls went through into a second room where instead of black a cacophony of colour greeted us. A full rainbow of colours, lots of tie-dye, more velvets, Chinese style patterns on silk, Indian cottons – you get the picture?

"Ah brill, they've still got it" Maddy exclaimed leading the way to a rack of multi coloured velvets. She pulled out a hanger and held it up to herself.

"What do you think?" she asked

The top was in cherry red, a sort of laced bodice with a ruffled neckline and net sleeves

"It's a bit..." I started

"Kew!!" Bernie stated

"And there's a matching skirt too" Mad told us

"The tops good but it needs a black skirt" Bernie advised

"What do you reckon Drew?"

"S'okay I guess"

"Show a bit of enthusiasm" Maddy chivvied

Well much as I tried, after my morning I couldn't get up much enthusiasm and after the girls started working through the racks I found a chair and sat this particular shopping experience out. Long ago I worked out that these sessions rarely resulted in a purchase and this one was no different. I always feel guilty at not spending anything but the girls seem to have no such hang ups.

"Come on Drew, we've just got time to look in Smiths (WH – books, music and stationery)" Bernie mentioned.

As if it was me who just spent best part of an hour *not* buying anything at 'The Willow Garden'! Well after browsing the magazines for ten minutes we returned to a waiting Mrs P at the car.

"Come on then, we'll get a drink at Sainsbury's" Aunt C suggested

After a short restaurant visit we did the supermarket bit as Maddy's Mum did the weekly shop. A stop for petrol on the way out and we headed back home to Warsop. Although I was invited for tea I decided to head on home to eat with the family.

"Hello?" Mum called up the stairwell

"Hi Mum" I returned

"Where's your Dad?" she asked as I poked my head over the banister

"He said he was going to get some charcoal for the barbecue"

Mum rolled her eyes, "I guess we're having charred meat for dinner then"

"I guess" I sighed. We both knew that whilst Dad could manage a reasonable meal on the stove, get the barby out and any skill went west!

"Have a good day Drew?" Mum asked

"Okay I guess, how did your shopping go?"

"Fine but the traffic around Leeds was horrendous, loads of roadwork's everywhere"

By now we were in the kitchen, Mum putting the kettle on for tea.

"Where's Jules?"

"I dropped her at Charlie's, she'll be back for dinner though"

Dad returned and soon the smell of the grill started to permeate Bond Acres. Jules and our burnt food turned up simultaneously. We had chiselled and joked our way through the main course before I realised that Jules was playing with her hair more than usual.

"Jules, you've got your ears pierced" I stated

"God, you and Dad are so slow" Jules mentioned

"I thought it was about time I let her get them done," Mum supplied,
"particularly as you've got yours done Drew"

We spent the rest of the evening talking and just generally hanging out as a family – I went to bed with warm feelings rolling round inside and looking forward to going to Gran's in Nantwich tomorrow.

Part 25

Gran

The drive across to Gran's was a bit slower than usual, being the summer hol's there was a fair bit of grockle* traffic meandering about the Peak District. We eventually arrived at Gran's house at nearly eleven, full twenty minutes later than expected.

"Hello kids" Gran greeted us

"Hi Gran" Jules and I echoed

"Jen"

"Mum"

Gran and Mum had a longer than usual hug before we all made our way into the house,



"You're looking very nice today Juliette" Gran mentioned

Well I have to say, for a sister she was looking pretty hot. Of course shopping in Leeds had extracted more than a couple of piercings from Mum's purse! Well a complete new outfit, which she was wearing today. I was a little bit envious, I'm not sure what of though, the expenditure or the clothes themselves. Whoa! It most definitely is not the clothes. Well maybe just a little.

"Mum got it in Leeds yesterday" Jules modelled for Gran, "and look" she showed off her newly pierced ears.

"Very nice Juliette, you've caught up with Drew" Gran joked

"Urm, sort of" Jules agreed

"Everyone for tea?" Mum called from the kitchen

"It's already brewing, Jen. I put it on when I heard your car" Gran advised

"Yes please" I advised

"Can I have squash please?" Jules asked

"Sit down you two. Tell me what you've been up to" Gran directed

So we each gave the edited highlights of the last few weeks, in my case very edited but not much gets past our Gran.

"Did you have a good time in Paris?"

By now Mum was sitting listening too, she had missed a couple of months of our lives and was doing some catching up.

"It was brill Gran" Jules started, "the atmosphere and people was fantastic"

"Yeah it was really cool actually being there" I went on

Then Gran surprised everyone

"How would you know Drew, your Dad told me he took your cousin Gaby as you'd been misbehaving"

"I ah, ah" I spluttered

Jools started to laugh and I noted so did mum

"Drew, I was watching on the telly, I saw your sister and Mum on the podium, the other person there was most definitely not you but a pretty girl"

At this point Mum and Jules were breaking into hysterics at the look on my face.

"But, but Gran..."

"No buts Drew, how can we trust you if you fib so blatantly to your Gran?"

"I ah" was starting to tear up

"Come on Drew, stop that snivelling," Mum ordered, " your Gran's just having a bit of fun"

"Snot very funny" I mumbled

"Oh come here Drew" Gran suggested, "your Dad told me the whole story when you got back. I must say from what I saw on the telly you make a very pretty young lady"

"You fancy going to Chester for the afternoon Mum?" Mum asked Gran changing the subject deftly.

"Ooh that would be nice, Jen"

"Kids?" Mum asked

"Okay" I replied

"Kewl!" Jules mentioned, "two days shopping!"

We finished up our tea and we were soon driving across to Chester best part of an hour away.

For the few of you who haven't been, Chester is pretty cool. Half-timbered shops, a fairly intact city wall and various bits of Roman masonry make this the north-west's

Best attempt to duplicate Lincoln or York. Mum got us parked in the multi-storey on the ring road and we walked into the bustling centre. Whilst the place itself is fairly neat, walking around with three generations of women was not.

"Mum? Can I meet you later, I'm not really into this shopping lark"

"Okay I guess, meet us at the cross at four o'clock, you know where I mean?"

"Just up from the car park?" I replied, "and I've got my phone"

"That's it, now take care and we'll see you later"

Gran came over to me before we went our separate ways.

"Here, get yourself something with this" she pushed something into my hand

"Thanks Gran"

"See you later Drew"

They had all disappeared into a shop before I checked out what Gran had pressed into my hand, wow twenty quid!

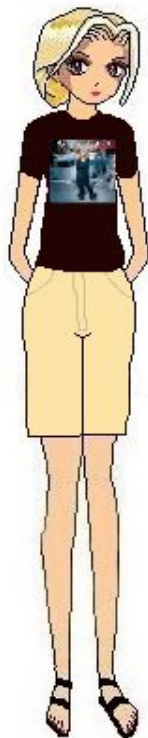
I'd been wandering around for a few minutes when a card shop triggered a vague memory. What was it now? Someone's Birthday, not Jules that's still three weeks away, not Rhod his birthday is in October, Mad - that's it! Flip, it's on Monday!

I had forgotten all about it, Mad is the youngest in our year although you'd never know it and on Monday she becomes a terrible teenager like the rest of us! A plan formulated in my head, I'd spend the afternoon in search of a suitable present! That decided all I needed to come up with was what, I bought an ice cream and found a bench whilst I contemplated the subject.

After some thought I came to what I thought was a great idea, get her some nice undies!

I set off on my quest, window shopping as I walked through the famous arcades and noting prices so that I had got it down to a couple of options by the time I emerged once again onto the street. Window-shopping was one thing, buying anything was going to be more of a challenge. As regular readers of these pages will know, I've done a fair bit of shopping for girls stuff, even for myself, but I've always, except the shoe shops, had a posse of girls with me. Today I was on my own.

I returned to 'Blossom's', where I had seen a nice, and affordable, cami set. Nerves overcame any sense of purpose, so much so that I couldn't bring myself to approach the door to this emporium of female under garments.



"Miss?"

I stood still as the other shoppers navigated around me

"Miss? Are you okay?" the voice was coming from nearby

I glanced about to see who was being addressed

"You look a bit pale, young lady, come on inside and sit down for a minute" the speaker, it now clicked, was talking to me!

"Er I'm okay, really"

"Well it won't hurt to sit a minute will it" the still concerned shop assistant mentioned

"I guess not" I let myself be guided into 'Blossom's' and directed to a seat. It struck me then that once again someone thought I was a girl, why? I mean, today I've got on cargo shorts and a baggy 'Avril Lavigne' t-shirt, hardly girly is it?

"There you go?" the woman passed a glass of water to me and her tone suggested a question but what?

"Thanks er"

"Mary and you are?"

To save lengthy explanations I decided to go with

"Gaby, Gaby Bond"

"Feeling better now Gaby?" Mary asked

"Yes thanks"

"Used to happen to my Gail, panic attacks, she was prone to fainting too" Mary rattled on.

"Sorry?"

"Don't worry luv, I saw you looking in the window then you sort of froze, just like my Gail, happened every month till she was sixteen" she went on.

I hadn't got a clue what she was on about.

"Seeing as you're here now, is there anything I can help with?" Mary it seemed could spot a punter a mile off.

It occurred to me then that I was indeed inside the lingerie store, in fact that was where I wanted to be, to buy Mad's present.

"I, er, I'd like to look at the peachy colour set in the window, it's for my girlfriend's birthday" I told Mary

She gave me a slightly odd look, probably at my choice of words, then went to a display and called me over.

"This the one?" she asked indicating a hanger

I nodded. It was a lace and satin confection of a fitted camisole, full cut knickers and what I presumed was a bra, I couldn't tell for sure as it was mostly hidden by the camisole.

"What size is she, your friend?"

Damn! I had no idea, and then it struck me

"The same as me, I often borrow stuff off her" well it's hardly a lie is it?

"And you are?"

I racked my brains to think of my chest and waist sizes and came up wanting!

"I'm not sure, Mum usually buys my stuff, it usually fits okay"

Mary was not one to be put off by such a lack of information

"Well pop your top off and I'll measure you"

I started to panic

"I er, haven't got a you no what on" I mumbled

"Girls!" Mary rolled her eyes, "here, put this on, I think it's about your size, it'll do for now any way"

There was no escape; I went into the changing cubicle clutching the lacy bra. There was just no way that Mary wouldn't realise I was a boy when I emerged was there? I pulled my t over my head and after a minute working out how the bra went, it was a front fastening affair, I was ready to meet Mary's wrath. I suppose I could have just made a hasty departure but fight or flight seemed to be disengaged.

"There you are Gaby, what a nice figure"

Huh!

"Let's get you measured"

Mary expertly ran the tape around me keeping up a commentary.

"Hips 32, waist 24, chest 32 and lets see, yes you're an A cup!" she told me

I risked a look down at myself; the bra I was wearing did indeed give the impression of a cleavage, small, but certainly there.

"Is your friend"

"Maddy" I offered

"Is Maddy the same size on top as you?" Mary asked

I thought for a moment, trying to envisage Mad's chest.

"I guess she's a bit bigger, I need a bit of help to fill her bra's" I surprised myself by that insight.

"I think a 32B should be okay then" Mary informed me

"Okay, I'll take that then"

"There's a two for one offer on *Gossard* this week, why don't you get one for yourself too, it would be a shame to miss out."

By this time I was getting a bit fidgety.

"Okay"

"You go put your t shirt back on and I'll wrap these up" Mary ordered.

I pulled my shirt back on and found Mary at the counter.

"There you are, that's twenty four ninety five"

I pulled my wallet out and counted the notes onto the counter.

"Ten, twenty and five"

"There you go, five change"

I spotted one of those charity coin drop things on the counter and popped the coin in the slot, watching as it descended to join the pile at the bottom.

"Thanks Mary"

"My pleasure Gaby, and remember, deep breaths" she intoned as I rejoined the shoppers outside.

'Cute kid' Mary mused, 'he was in such a state, if he's not done that before I'll be surprised. Mind you I could have sworn he was a girl when I saw him outside, that hair and shaved legs, he looks really cute. Even when he was out of the t-shirt he looked like a young girl. I'm sure he was buying for himself, I'm certain he'll appreciate the stockings, and the bra he's wearing. Two for one!' she shook her head and went in back to make some tea.

'Phew! I'm glad that's over. But at least I got Mad's present, I'll give her both sets, funny though I didn't see any signs for that offer'. I shook my head. I had budgeted forty pounds so I still had fifteen to spend on her so I returned to the main street where I'd spotted a teen store earlier.

"Is that Drew?" Jules asked

"Where?" Gran queried

"Over there with that pink 'Blossom' bag" Jules replied

"It looks a bit like him I suppose" Mum mentioned as they watched the figure go into 'Teen Queen'.

'Teen Queen', what a name! I felt more confident going in here, I've been in several of these places with the gang, so I knew the general layout and I

headed to where my prey was situated. Aha! There it is, I homed in on the dress I saw earlier in the window. Mad will really like this, it's sort of black net over a peachy colour so it shows through, she can wear the dress and underwear together! Armed with my new sizing information courtesy of Mary at 'Blossom's' I went through the rail until I found the right size. Then I'm not sure what came over me. I can't actually believe I did it. I, no I can't tell you. Well I put it against me to check it out in the mirror!

Aargh! Well I guess it looked okay even against me. I look forward to seeing Mad wearing it anyway. I took it to the desk and the assistant didn't give me more than a glance as I parted with the money.

The church clock announced four just as I arrived at the cross. I spotted the others outside of a teashop and crossed to join them.

"Hi Drew"

"Hi Mum, we going in?" I motioned toward the tea-room.

"Just for a quick cuppa, your Gran's got tea ready back at the house" Mum advised

We went inside and were soon seated; I managed to wangle a cream scone with mine.

"What've you been buying then?" Gran asked eyeing my bag.

"It's my friend Maddy's birthday on Monday, I got her birthday present"

"What did you get Drew?" Jules asked

"A dress and stuff" I told them

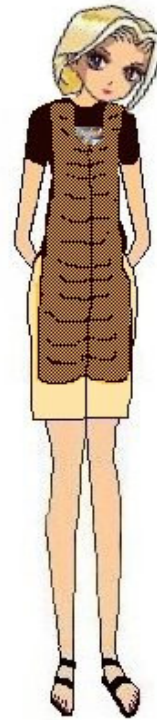
"I'm impressed young man" Mum mentioned, "can we see?"

"Some of it's already wrapped," I reached into my anonymous carrier, "here's the dress" I presented Mum with the gauzy garment.

They all three oohed and aahed at my choice.

"Can I hire you as a boyfriend?" Jules joked

"It's very nice Drew, I'm sure if everything is as nice Maddy will be well surprised on Monday" Mum suggested



I blushed to my roots.

We finished our tea and I walked back to the car with Gran while Mum and Jules popped into a bakery to get some cake for tea.

"You're turning into a fine young man" Gran advised, "but why are you wearing a bra?"

I told you nothing much gets past her! In truth I'd forgotten I had the thing on! I've been walking around Chester half the afternoon with a 'Blossom's' bag and a bra on, no wonder no one said anything in 'Teen Queens'!

"What do you mean?" I flustered a reply

"Come on Drew, I've been wearing one for a lot of years and I know how it looks under a t shirt, and anyway I could see a strap in the tea room." She told me.

I'm dead, I'm dead! If Gran knows, Mum and Jules will too!

Seeing my panic Gran steered me into an alley.

"I'll teach you a trick, stand there" I don't know how but she managed to get the bra off me without taking my shirt off.

"Ta da! Now put it in your bag, I'm sure your Mum and Jules didn't notice. It was you we saw earlier going in 'Teen Queens' wasn't it?"

"That's where I got Mad's dress," I admitted

"Well come on, they'll be at the car before us if we're not quick."

The drive back to Gran's was uneventful and just after six we sat down to the salad; Gran had waiting for us. Jules and I watched some telly while Mum and Gran talked in the kitchen then a bit before eight Mum announced it was time to go home.

"Bye Gran"

"Bye Drew" Gran kissed my cheek

"G'night Gran" Jules followed receiving a similar offering from Gran

"Behave for your Dad young lady"

"Yes Gran"

We both got in the car while Mum and Gran said their farewells

"Now take care Jen, and call when you get there"

"Yes Mum"

Our drive home across the Peak District was a bit quicker than this morning, all the holidaymakers were either in a pub or locked inside their holiday cottages, they certainly weren't driving around. We got home about ten after stopping at Sainsbury's in Chesterfield for a bit of shopping. Dad pulled the camper onto the drive minutes later; he'd been to some historical club or something in Creswell.

I was lying in bed a short while later going over my day when it occurred to me that tomorrow was Mum's last proper day at home until the autumn. I dropped off dreaming of wearing a bra over my t- shirt, strange!

* Grockle – tourist, sightseer

Part 26

One more Jenny!

"You okay Drew?" Mum asked when I arrived in the kitchen

"Bad dream" I told her

"Well get your breakfast, Phil Eaton will be here about ten" she informed me

"The 'Cycling' guy?"

"You met him Monday" she stated

"Er perhaps I ought to play dumb Mum? I was wearing a bra when he saw us"

"Hmm, you're probably right. Are you going to come with us?"

"Where?" I mumbled round my *Weetabix*.

"Phil wants to go on a ride with me, you've seen the sort of thing they do" she advised

"I was going to see the guys later"

"You could go afterwards, we'll only be out about three hours including the café"

"Where are we going?"

"I thought up to Bawtry then down to Beckingham Café, then come home the usual way via Dunham Bridge."

Phil Eaton was a few minutes late arriving, apparently the signs up here are in a different language to those around Slough – he missed the Warsop sign in Mansfield.

"Come on in Phil" Mum welcomed the hack in

"Thanks"

"Phil, this pair are my eldest, Juliette and my son Drew" Mum made the introductions

"No Gaby today?" He asked

Quick as a flash mum answered "no she was at a sleepover last night. Jules can you make some tea please?"

After twenty minutes of small talk Phil gave us his suggested itinerary.

"If we do the ride first, then get a few picture and do the interview proper this afternoon?"

"Sounds okay, do you mind if Drew tags along for the ride?" Mum asked

"No that's fine"

Mum and I got toggled up while Phil got his bike ready, he'd arrived *en cycliste*, and we left the house a bit before eleven. With Mum and Phil in front, I happily sat in their slipstream as we headed up to Worksop. Phil was a bit loaded up with a bar bag that contained his cameras, and after a few miles Mum adjusted her pace to one that was comfortable for everyone.

Although a lot of today's route is on main roads, they are generally pretty quiet. We made good time up to Blyth where instead of taking the direct road to Bawtry we turned right towards Retford.

"I usually come this way" Mum told us, "it saves trying to get across the A1"

"And more pleasant" Phil commented

"Come and have a ride with Phil, Drew" Mum suggested

I swapped places with Mum and rode along chatting to him for the next couple of miles along to Bawtry. We turned onto the Gainsborough road and a short way further along, after Everton Café, took the Clayworth turn. Phil called for a photo stop as we entered the village, so me and Mum rode back a short distance so he could get his pictures. It didn't take long and we were soon climbing the biggest hill of the day. At the top Phil called a time out and this time Mum dropped part way down on her own for Phil's picture taking.

"What's it like Drew, having a famous Mum?"

"It's great most of the time but sometimes it's embarrassing, like on Monday we went to a restaurant and the waiters wanted Mum's autograph"

"I don't suppose any of your mates get that?"

"No, they're pretty cool about it. Here she comes" I advised him

I watched as Mum rode up and past us, Phil happily snapping away.

Fifteen minutes later we were in the Café, it being a weekday most of the clientele were lorry drivers, only two other bikes were parked outside. I grabbed a table while Mum and Phil ordered our supplies. I looked around at this Sunday Mecca for local roadies. The plain white décor was relieved by framed prints of trucks, Mercedes, Scania, some American thing, all chrome and stuff. Interspersed with that element a number of pictures of cyclists, I recognised a couple David Baker, Mums friend Caroline the mountain biker and hey, Kewl there's one of Mum!

"Mum, they've got your picture up" I enthused

"Where?" she asked

"Next to that red truck" I pointed out

Phil seemed impressed by this and disappeared up to the counter again. The end result was that Mum ended up signing the picture and Phil had some excellent pictures. By the time we got back to our seats, double egg and beans on toast were awaiting my consumption! We chatted while we ate, Phil taking a few notes when Mum told us some anecdote or other. It was getting towards one o'clock when we left the café and headed towards the Trent.

Mum and Phil kept up an almost non-stop conversation as we made our way down the side of the Trent. I mused about the last time I'd done a similar ride with Mum, a lot has happened since then! We turned onto the A57 and the bumpier terrain the other side of the Trent hove into view soon after the toll bridge. Last time Mum had ridden me hard from here but today we kept the same comfortable pace. I did another couple of turns with Phil and a stretch with Mum too. At Tuxford, Phil took a few more pictures, and then we were headed towards Ollerton and home. It was good bit after two when we got back to Bond Acres.

"Do you want to stay for dinner Phil?"

"I'd best not, I need to get home to baby-sit"

I know it was a quite reasonable invitation but I was glad that we would have Mum to ourselves tonight!

"At least stay until my other half Dave gets home, he should be back about four thirty"

"Okay"

"Drew use the upstairs shower, Phil can use the one down here" Mum advised

Mum caught me as I exited the bathroom.

"Are you going out now?"

"I was going to go to Mad's, why"

Mum was fidgeting

"You know I don't really approve of this dressing up thing?" she started

"Uh huh"

"I don't know how to put this"

"Put what?"

"Well I wouldn't be upset if Gaby and 'her' friends turned up a bit later"

"What! No way!"

"I won't force you but I've got a spare pair of Campag wheels looking for a home, I was thinking Gaby could do with them"

This was manipulation of the highest order!

"If, and it's only if, I do this, why?"

"Come in here" she pulled me into my parents room, "lets just say I fancy tweaking a few noses"

"What have I got to do with it?"

"You've never intentionally pretended to be a girl at a race have you?"

"Well if you discount Tuesday and the Christmas twenty five, no" I replied

"That's what I thought, but still everyone on Tuesday night thought you were my daughter and some of them I know have seen you racing elsewhere and know you are a boy. I thought we could have a little bit of fun, after all Phil has seen you both and still thinks I've got two daughters and a son."

"Campag wheels?"

"Zonda" she mentioned

There is just no way that I could turn that down!

"Okay it's a deal" I agreed

"Give me a call before you come back and say bye to Phil before you leave"

I returned to my room and rang Mad.

"Oh hi Drew, you still coming over?"

"Yeah but I need to ask a favour"

"Go on"

So I told her what Mum had suggested.

"So she wants you to be Gaby to wind this guy up?"

"Well not just him, but yes"

"You'd best bring all your 'stuff', we'll have to do it properly and we won't have long, Ally and B will help. See you in a bit, bye"

"See ya"

I shut my phone off and dived into the back of my wardrobe to find the bag of prosthetics and underwear. I picked the box that my assorted ear ornaments reside in and shoved everything into my backpack.

I found Mum and Phil in the garage.

"I'm off now" I mentioned

"Bye Drew, see you again I hope" Phil advised

Sooner than you think!

"Yeah bye Phil"

"Don't be too late" Mum instructed

"When are the girls home?" I asked

Taking the hint Mum answered my question

"Gaby should be here about five, Jules will be a bit later"

"I might catch a word with Gaby then" Phil opined

"Well bye then" I called as I exited stage left.

"Your Mum suggested this" Maddy bit her lip as she placed the pre glued breast in place.

"I told you on the phone"

"You have one weird family Drew" Bernie stated

"There you go, get your other stuff on and we'll be ready to do your hair and stuff"

I dived into the spare room and with some effort got the gaff in place and pulled on a pair of panties. I'd brought the bra I acquired yesterday and discovered the effects an uplift bra has on 'real' breasts. Whoa!



"Come on Drew, sit here" Ally motioned to the dressing table chair.

"Bernie you do his nails, Ally you sort his hair out and I'll start on makeup" Mad ordered.

I sat there, for all intents and purposes, a girl in bra and pants while my friends painted and primped me into Gaby.

Twenty minutes later the four of us left the Peters mansion for the walk over to the Bond residence. Ally had put my hair into a high ponytail and Maddy had managed a restrained makeup job. Maddy thought it best if I wore a dress, however I was less than chuffed at the one I was wearing – bright yellow and short, just screaming out 'look at me!'

"Well you wore it before" Mad said

"Only round your house" I countered

"Well no one is ever going to mistake you for a boy wearing that" Ally advised

"Great! Oh damn, I'm supposed to ring Mum"

I retrieved my phone from the dainty handbag Mad had insisted I use.

"Mum? Oh hi Jules, can I speak to Mum...hi Mum, we'll be about ten minutes... okay bye"

My nervousness was not helped when a car full of lads pulled alongside and started making comments. Fortunately our route took us through a gennel at that point and we escaped their comments.

Dad was home when we arrived and was talking to Phil in the Garage.

"Hi girls" Dad called out, recognition dawned on his face, "Gaby your Mums inside with Jules" he recovered well!

We trooped inside the house to find Mum and my sister.

"There you are Gaby" Mum said, "thanks girls"

"No problem Mrs B" Mad replied

Just then Dad and Phil came in through the kitchen.

"Phil, you've met Gaby, these are her friends Allison, Bernadette and Madeline, girls this is Phil, he's been out with Drew and me today" Mum made the introductions.

"Hi girls, nice to meet you all"

"Where is that boyfriend of mine?" Maddy asked playing up to the situation.

"I think he was going to meet Rhod and the guys" Mum replied

"I wonder Gaby, if I could have a quick chat? I've spoken to everyone else, I'd like to get your views."

"I guess so" I replied. This was after all part of the deal.

"Take Phil into the garden Gaby" Dad suggested

"Okay"

I led Phil out back and we sat on the bench by the barbecue.

"You have a good time Monday?" Phil asked

"Yes thanks, it was my first go on a track"

"From what I saw you were doing pretty good, following in your Mums wheeltracks eh!"

"I don't think I'll be that good"

"You've got plenty of time, you're what, fourteen?"

"Thirteen"

It was a bit déjà vu – as myself I had already given Phil answers to these same questions earlier. The only difference was that this time he thought I was my sister and I was wearing a dress. We talked for about fifteen minutes before he announced that he needed to get off. We returned to the house where Jules was showing the girls her new shoes.

"Well thanks Jenny, Dave and you kids, thank Drew for me to. I really enjoyed today"

"No problem Phil, we'll have to do it again when I'm really famous" Mum joked

"When will the article be printed?" Dad asked, "we'll have to order extra copies!"

"It should be next week as long as there's space" Phil advised us

He gathered his stuff up and started to leave

"Bye girls, nice meeting you all"

"Bye Phil" a chorus of girl's voices rang out which, being thirteen ended up being *really* funny

"Girls" Mum intoned

Mum and Dad went outside to see Phil off leaving 'us' girls inside.

"Okay Drew" Jules started

"Gaby!" Mad insisted

"Okay 'Gaby', what's going on?"

"Mum'll explain, we're gonna hang in my room"

With that I led the others up to Drew central which for a change was pretty tidy.

Some time later

"Are you girls eating with us? We are going to the Berni" Mum asked from the door to my room

"If it's no trouble Mrs B" Ally replied

"Maddy, Bernie?"

"Yes please"

Seemed like we were having company for dinner after all.

"And Gaby, put something else on, your Dad's eyes were out on stalks earlier"

Damn, damn, damn! I've done it again, forgotten what I'm wearing.

"But, but"

"No buts young lady, hang on" she dived out and returned with what I recognised as one of my sisters dresses that I'd 'borrowed' before. "Here, wear this, and change that bra!"

"Muuuum" I moaned

Her look brooked no further argument.

"I am not being shown up when we're out! Half an hour girls" Mum informed us before leaving.

"Why can't I wear jeans?" I asked no one in particular.

"Oh come on Drew, at least you get your wheels" Bernie placated

"I guess, can you give me a hand?"

With seven of us, Dad elected to take the camper. We had a good time at the restaurant, and it was late when we got home. With everyone, including my parents, calling me Gaby, I stopped worrying about my appearance; at least this nonsense would be over tonight.

I went upstairs to bed with my parents cuddling on the sofa, yeugh! Well I guess it was kind of sweet really. When I got to my room I realised that I'd mucked up again, yep you got it; I left the remover bottle at Maddy's again!

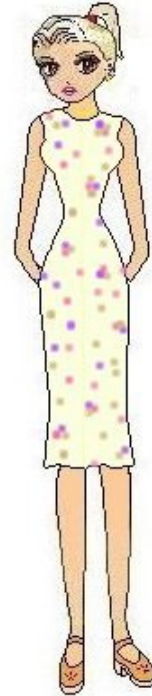
"Knock, knock"

"What?" Jules asked from inside

"It's me, er could I borrow something to sleep in sis"

"You've done it again haven't you" she said opening the door.

"I left it at the Peters" I told her



"Here, I think you ought to keep it, you wear it more than I do anyway" she proffered the babydoll I've borrowed before.

"Thanks"

"Don't forget we have to leave early in the morning"

"What for?"

"Mum. Airport. Remember?"

I groaned, Gaby would be around a bit longer.

Part 27

Airport

"You've what!" Dad bellowed

"Left it at the Peters" I mumbled

Dad shook his head in disbelief.

"Jen!"

"Uh huh" Mum's voice came from the bathroom

"You'll never guess what your son has done?"

"What?" she asked arriving at my door, "Drew what are you wearing?"

I sat, head bowed, on my bed wearing Jules babydoll.

"Sorry" I snivelled

"Dave, go and get the coffee on" Mum ordered Dad

Dad shook his head again as he left Mum and I alone.

"Now then Drew, an explanation please?" Mum requested

"It's all your fault!" I accused

"What is all my fault?" Mum kept her cool under my outburst.

"This!" I spat indicating my current attire

"Calm down and start at the beginning" Mum ordered

I took a couple of deep breaths and settled myself.

"I hate pretending to be a girl!" I started, "when the girls got me and Rhod to dress up for the Easter dance, it was sort of fun I s'pose, but it was only meant to be a one off thing. Then I had to dress up again for the bank"

"Whoa, hold it! Why did you have to dress up for the bank?" Mum asked

"Well Mad had entered me as Gaby and I won the fancy dress and"

"Okay, okay we haven't got a lot of time" Mum interjected

"Then after you went to Germany I did the modelling thing at school? You told Mr Wood it was okay and I know I agreed but I was getting paid after all" I reasoned. "Then there was the whole thing in Germany, you dressed me up instead of explaining to everyone!" I moaned

"But you agreed" Mum mentioned

"Well, I guess but I didn't enjoy it"

"Okay so I admit that was my fault, what about the party at Anna's and Paris?" she asked

"Everyone said I should go to the party as Gaby"

"Me and your Dad didn't"

"Well no"

"So that wasn't my fault"

"I guess not"

"And the Oxford weekend, you didn't take any spare clothes" she mentioned

"No" I mumbled into my falsies

"And why were you dressed as a girl in Paris?"

"Because of sports day, because I agreed to compete in the badminton" I half whispered

"So Drew, you volunteered again, I know it wasn't your fault you ended up stuck for the weekend, Carol and your Dad have explained, but it started with you agreeing to it" Mum was being quite reasonable.

"Yes"

"I do admit that this week is mostly down to me. I thought you enjoyed the dressing up, you always look like you are anyway and you look prettier than a lot of girls I've known."

"Muuuum!"

"Sorry but you do. Why didn't you just say no?" she queried

"I don't know Mum. I thought you'd hate me if I didn't do it"

"Oh Drew!" she hugged me close and kissed my head. "Me and your Dad, well let's just say we thought it was what you wanted to do. You always looked so happy as Gaby"

"It's been fun sometimes I suppose" I mentioned

"So do you still blame me?" she asked

"Sorry Mum" I cuddled up to her.

"Are you two coming?" Dad shouted up the stairs, "we have to go in twenty minutes"

"Coming" Mum called back, "now Drew why are you still like this now?" she indicated my attire.

"I left the remover at Aunt Carol's, I only realised when I came up to bed"

"And the night-dress, it's your sister's isn't it?"

"I borrowed it off Jules, it's more comfortable to sleep in with these" I indicated my boobs.

"Well we can hardly get Carol up at this time (five thirty!), it looks like you are gonna be Gaby until you get back from the airport. Come on, it's not that bad" she chuckled my chin. "If you are going to see me off at the airport you are at least going to smart so hang on and I'll get you something of your sisters to wear"

"No dresses please" I begged

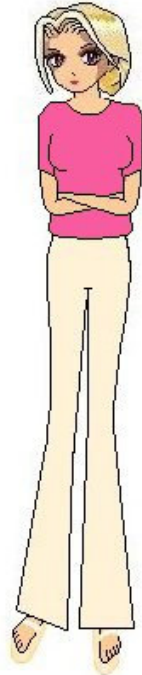
"Okay" she agreed

She returned a couple of minutes later with a pile of stuff.

"Here, get dressed and get downstairs before your Dad blows a fuse"

It could have been a lot worse. Mum had found a loose pink t shirt and a pair of trousers, with 'my own' bra and pants, I looked okay without being too girly!

"Come on Gaby, shake a leg" Dad chivvied when I got to the kitchen. Clearly Mum had spoken to him, as he was much calmer than half an hour ago.



"Here you go sis" Jules plonked some toast in front of me which I quickly buttered and Marmite'd.

We left only ten minutes late for the drive down to Stansted for Mum's nine forty five flight back to Germany where she was meeting the rest of the squad at Frankfurt Airport for the flight to America. Luckily the traffic was light and we made good time across to Newark and the A1. We followed the Great North Road south to Huntingdon where we picked up the A14 and then the M11 at Cambridge. The traffic was starting to build up by the time we reached the Stansted turn a little after eight thirty.

Jules and I got out at the terminal with Mum and her bag to check in while Dad went to park the car. Even at this early hour there were a lot of travellers milling about but we found the *Ryanair* book in desk easily and joined the queue. We didn't have to wait long and Mum was checked in before Dad found us just leaving the desk.

"Let's get a coffee before I go through" Mum suggested

So we walked round to the *Costa Coffee* outlet and us 'girls' got a table while Dad got the drinks.

"Now you two, behave for your Dad, especially when the Americans come over" Mum instructed us.

"Yes Mum" Jules replied

"And you young man. If you don't want to do this" she indicated my current appearance, "don't. Tell the girls no. And you young lady can keep an eye on him too, understand?"

"Yes Mum" we both replied

"Here we go" Dad mentioned as he arrived with the Drinks.

"Dave can I have five minutes please, wait here girls" Mum got up and steered Dad out of earshot.

"Wonder what that's all about?" Jules mentioned

"Me probably" I told her

"More like they want a private snog!" she replied

"Urgh! Gross!"

"You want that biscuit?"

"No"

The Olds returned and we spent our last few minutes together. We escorted Mum round to security where we all said a tearful goodbye, even Dad. The week had gone by so quickly, well five day's really. Mum joined the queue to get to the departure areas and we stood and waited until she cleared the metal detectors and passport control. Mum gave a last wave and then we lost sight of her as she went for the monorail to the terminal that her flight departs from.

"Well kid's, do you want to wait until she's taken off?"

"No let's go home, we won't know which plane she's on anyway" I mentioned

"Okay, we'll stop at Huntingdon then" Dad told us.

We made our way out to the short stay car park and with heavy hearts we left Stansted, and Mum, behind. The traffic was much heavier now than it was an hour ago when we arrived. Still, most of it was heading into London rather than away so we were quickly back past Cambridge and heading towards Huntingdon.

Just before Huntingdon Dad pulled us off the main road and round into Godmanchester services, essentially a glorified transport café! We've stopped here before, it's cheaper than the big chain services and it's a sort of look into another culture. I know it's a stereotype but I always think of lorry drivers as being middle-aged men, usually a bit on the 'heavy' side and maybe a bit intimidating. For some reason today I felt a bit nervous as Dad led us into cafeteria.

"You okay?" Jules whispered to me

"I guess so"

"I always feel like everyone is watching me in these places, I wish we could stop at the regular services" She went on.

"Come on you two, what are you having?" Dad asked from the counter.

"Tea and toast for me please" Jules told him

"Dr-Gaby?"

"Full breakfast please" Jules gave me a look

"What?" I whispered

"Nothing"

"Go get a table girls" Dad instructed

We scanned the room and I spotted a table overlooking the car park that we soon claimed. Half ten on a Saturday morning is not exactly busy in here so the rest of the clientele consisted of four blokes sat at one table and about half a dozen lone diners.

"Have you rung Maddy yet?" Jules asked

"No"

"Well don't you think it might be a good idea, before we get back?"

"I guess" I pulled my phone out and made the call.

"Hi Mad...no we've been to the airport with Mum...yeah...near Huntingdon...are you in today...what time...bum! We won't be back until about twelve...I forgot the remover yesterday...yeah...no I'm not wearing the yellow dress...a t shirt and trousers...so when will you be home then...okay, give us a call when you get in...okay, see you later... bye" I ended the call.

"Well?"

"They're going out in a few minutes and won't be back till sometime this afternoon."

"Looks like you're gonna be Gaby all day then" Jules mentioned

"You look a bit down Drew" Dad whispered as he arrived with our drinks

"The Peters are off out for the day" Jules advised him as she put sugar in her tea.

"In that case there's no rush to get back" he noted

"I guess not" I agreed

"Jules?"

"I s'pose"

"Forty three!" came over the tannoy

"That's us" Dad advised

A couple of minutes later our food was on the table.

"You gonna eat all that?" Jules asked.

"Yeah" I replied although in truth I wasn't sure I was going to be up to it. Dad chuckled as I stared at my plate, two fried eggs, bacon, sausage, black pudding, fried tomato, baked beans, mushrooms, fried bread, kidney and a round of bread and butter! Out of the corner of my eye I could see one of the other patrons laughing to himself at my reaction, I knew it was me because every time he glanced my way he grinned to himself.

"Come on sis, give us some bacon and mushrooms" Jules requested and I was pleased to oblige.

We ate in near silence, only the sounds of the local radio station playing in the kitchens supplying counterpoint to the murmur of conversation. In truth even after Jules nicked some and Dad too I still struggled to finish my food, I gave up on the last few mushrooms and slice of black pudding.

"Urgh" I exclaimed as I collapsed back in my seat.

"It's only a short detour" Dad advised us

"What is?" Jules asked

"Fotheringhay Castle"

"Never heard of it" I mentioned

"There's not much left but it's where Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded"

"Gross!" Jules stated

"Kew!" was my reaction.

Dad left the A1 to the south of Peterborough and we joined the lanes towards our destination. It was a matter of ten minutes before we arrived in the sleepy village of Fotheringhay overlooking the River Nene (locals say *nen*, for everyone else *neen* will do!). We parked opposite the church and Dad rescued his camera from the boot of the car. It was only a five-minute walk back to the castle mound and it was not impressive!



Dad did his David Bailey act, taking pictures of every lump and bump while Jules and I wandered around finally climbing to the top of the motte. Well at least there was a decent view!

"Where did they do it then?" I asked Dad as he joined us

"Legend has it on top of here, remember there was a tower up here then"

"You'd have thought there'd be a plaque or something" Jools mentioned

"Yeah" I agreed, "heads chopped here", I barely ducked my sister's incoming palm.

"Let's have a quick look in the church before we go" Dad suggested

"If we must!" Jules sighed

So Dad told us all about how important this sleepy little place was five hundred years ago. Birthplace, and burial place of Kings, home to the House of York for several hundred years. Dad's 'little' excursion ended up lasting well over an hour before we rejoined Ermine Street to head home.

Jules, I could tell by her fidgeting, was beyond fed up and I was just dog-tired, in fact I dropped off not long after we rejoined the A1. It was getting on toward two when we got back as far as Mansfield. Dad parked behind the shops.

"I won't be long"

"Why we stopped?" I yawned

"Dad's gone to pick something up" Jules supplied

"Fine" I dropped off again.

I awoke when dad shut the car door on his return.

"Come on Drew, wakey wakey. We're nearly home"

"Yeah"

"Hey Drew, that lad over there keeps looking at you" Jules mentioned

I glanced over to the bus shelter.

"Oh no! It's Clive!"

"You mean *that* Clive?" Jules asked

"Am I missing something?" Dad asked as we pulled into the traffic.

"Er not really, he's in my class at school" I told him

"Yeah and he fancies Drew" Jules supplied

"Does not!" I exclaimed

"Well okay, he fancies Gaby"

"Drew?" Dad enquired

"Well he's got a crush on Gaby, he's no idea we're one and the same though"

"Humph!" Dad mentioned, "as if having the boys sniffing around one daughter's not enough."

"I'm not doing this ever again" I told the car in general, "well once I've got these things off."

"I've heard that before" Jules noted.

"You want a look at this before you go to Maddy's?" Dad asked

"What is it?"

"The photo you ordered for me the other weekend" he advised

"Go on then"

He opened the envelope and extracted the glossy 10 by 8.



"I'll get it framed" Dad enthused

"Daad" I whined

"Give over Drew, you look very nice in the picture, you're even sort of smiling"

"I'm off" I told him

"Do you want a lift, you don't really want to walk there dressed like that do you?"

"I guess not," I admitted

"And it might be an idea to take a change of clothes?" he suggested

"Yes Dad"

I went upstairs to grab some jeans and one of my own t-shirts, and quickly joined Dad back out at the car.

"Are any of the others coming in the morning?" Dad asked

"I'm not sure"

"Well find out and let me know." He requested

For what I truly intended to be the last time, Gaby arrived at the Peters house.

Part 28

Gone, Gaby, Gone

"Hiya Gab" Mad greeted when she opened the door.

"Hi Mad"

"You okay?"

"So, so I guess"

"You staying for tea Gaby?" Mrs P asked from behind her daughter.

"Dad's not expecting me straight back"

"I'll take that as a yes then" she countered

"Come on Gab," Maddy started pulling me upstairs, "Dad's got me a mobile for my birthday"

"I thought your birthday was Monday?" I managed as I was dragged into her room.

"It is but we went to get it today, that's why we were out earlier"

I breathed a sigh of relief.

Mad's new bit of 21st Century hardware was a dinky little pink and white thing that made mine look like the incredible hulk!

"Have you rung the others yet?" I asked

"No, I was just putting everyone's numbers in first"

"Dad wants to know if any of you guy's want to come in the morning"

"Where are you going?"

"I've got a ten in the morning, Dad mentioned going to the coast afterwards"

"I'll ring the guys to find out" Mad enthused, immediately reaching for her new phone.

Well you know what the female of the species and phones are like! Three calls and two of them were over ten minutes to ask one question and give out one number! Sheesh, I hope she's on a good tariff.

"Well apparently Rhod and Ally are going to Ally's Nan's but Bernie's up for it, I said I'd call her back with times and stuff."

"Rhod and Ally are seeing a lot of each other" I mentioned

"Hmm like us I suppose" Maddy stated draping herself around me and kissing my neck. Hmm that was quite nice.

"Give over, what if your Mum comes in?"

"Spoilsport" Mad pouted

"Anyway have you got the remover?"

"Here you go" she reached behind her and retrieved the bottle.

"You doing that here?"

"Well I was planning to. And I'm never doing it again" I told her

"What? Sticking them on?"

"No, this whole Gaby thing." I replied

"What? Never?"

"Never" I affirmed

"Why?" Mad asked calmly

"I'm just not comfortable with it, I never was really"

"But you're so good at it" she stated

"That's part of the problem, even when I'm not trying people think I'm a girl"

I'm sure Mad was going to say more but Mrs P called us to tea just then.

"I'll get changed after tea"

"Yeah, ok" Mad answered

We joined Mad's Mum and Dad in the dining room where Mrs P had a terrific spread waiting. Salad but not your bog standard variety, no sirree, there was mashed potato, various cheeses, cold cuts plus the usual lettuce, tomato, onion, cucumber and so on. To be honest I was still a bit stuffed from that monster breakfast, so I was glad this was self-service.

I can't remember whether 'Gaby' had met Mr Peters before but he addressed me in the femme, as did Aunt Carol. I helped Mad clear up afterwards and then we returned to 'home of Maddy'

"I'd best change" I started

"You need any help?" Mad asked

"I think I can manage, I'll use the bathroom"

"Okay" she agreed

I was just disrobing when I heard Mad at the door.

"Drew?"

"Yeah"

"You really mean it? About being Gaby I mean"

"Yep, you've seen the last of Gaby Peters or Bond or whatever"

"I'm gonna miss her" Mad mentioned then went quite.

I finally got the breast forms off and after a quick wash I started to extricate myself from the gaff.

"Drew! What about Obicon?"

"What about it?" I naively asked

"You are coming still?"

I was concentrating on washing my nether regions so I was not paying all the attention I should have been.

"I guess so"

"What about your costumes?"

"What about them?"

"Well they are all sort of Gaby costumes" Mad hinted

"Yeah?" I replied as I pulled my jeans up

"Nothing" Mad mentioned

I emerged a couple of minutes later now fully Drew, I'd even remembered to remove the earrings.

"That's better, what should I do with these do you think?" I hefted the bag with the breast forms in.

"Leave them here, I can probably find a home for them"

"Well I might as well leave the bra and stuff too, I won't need it again"

I left just after nine to walk home. 'Yes! That's it. No more Gaby! No more dressing up as a girl! Just me, Drew Bond. I'll tell John the truth on Tuesday and I'll email Britney and lay it out for her'

"Where are we off to?" Bernie asked

"Up near Grimsby I think, Dad?" I queried

"Yeah not far away, it's a place called Great Limber"

The girls exchanged a look of incomprehension; I have to admit I was no wiser. Although it was further round, Dad elected to go via the motorways, A1 (M), M18 then M180 most of the way to our destination. The day was fine, just a few high clouds sullied an otherwise clear blue sky and a gentle breeze stirred the treetops. We arrived at the village hall headquarters with plenty of time to spare so we had a walk up the village before I got ready. The start was a fair walk away so Dad and the girls drove up while I rode the three-quarters of a mile.

"Three, two, one, go!"

I pushed down on the pedals and barely glimpsed my supporters as I tried to make the most of the slight downhill start. I was soon into my stride and almost overcooked the very sharp right hander that we were warned about at the start! That fright over I regained my cool and settled down with a slight crosswind on my left shoulder.

The course is fairly flat, and straight, but that doesn't necessarily make it a fun ride! I kept checking my computer, I had gone four miles before I was overtaken by number forty starting a minute behind me. I could see riders coming back towards me, and recognising a couple I knew the turn couldn't be far off.

"Come on Drew, over half way" Dad shouted as I approached the roundabout that formed the turn.

"Go, go, go!" Maddy shouted to the accompaniment of "whoo, whoo, whoo!" from Bernie.

Number forty was just exiting as I went onto the island, I checked my clock at the same point, he'd made twenty-five seconds on me. My supporters club shouted encouragement again when I crossed them and I got back into my stride, now with a slight headwind from the right. I started doing race arithmetic, *'my thirteen minutes to the turn was not terrifically impressive, but it was the longest leg. If I can keep this pace though I should get a short twenty five or long twenty four'*

The breeze was more of an annoyance than anything else and I kept plugging away, then, catching me by surprise again was the sharp corner, the finish was less than a mile to go! The change in direction put the breeze over my right shoulder and I could feel my pace quicken some. The chequered board hove into view and I made my last effort to the line. Somehow my support squad were there already, I'm certain I didn't see the car go past. I'm not sure what they were shouting, I was going into red fog land but finally I crossed the line.

"Thirty nine!" I gasped

I freewheeled along for a bit before changing to a low gear to ride back to the village. I arrived at the same time as the car; they must have come the other way round. I parked my bike and collapsed on the grass overlooking the village pond.

"What have you done?" Bernie asked

"Erm, I'm not sure, I forgot to turn my clock off."

"You must have some idea"

"I think it's a short twenty five"

Mad was unpinning my number after propping me into a sitting position.

"What do you want to drink Drew? I'll fetch it for you" Mad offered

"Orange or lemon if they've got it"

"Well done Drew" Dad said when he joined us

"Have you seen my time yet?"

We were interrupted by excited squealing coming from the hall behind us.

"Drew, Drew" it was Maddy making all the noise

"What's up?" Bernie asked as Mad appeared

"24.31!" was all the reply we got

"Who?" I can be so dumb sometimes

"You of course!" Maddy advised, "here you go" she handed me a plastic cup of weak orange.

I put the cup down after a quick taste revealed it was as bad as it looked. Both girls hugged me much to Dad's bemusement and onlookers' amusement. Five minutes later I was able to confirm the news, *'39, D Bond (juv), 24.31 (PB)* a whole ten seconds off my best!

We hung around after I'd changed just to confirm that I had also got the prize for second juvenile, it might not seem much but it's worth five pounds.

"Okay kid's, the coast?"

"As long as it's not Cleethorpes" I put in

"I was thinking more like Mablethorpe or even Skeggy"

"Skegvegas!" I pronounced as my choice

"Girls, that okay with you"

"Anywhere's fine" Bernie suggested

"Skeggies fine" Mad agreed

"Skeggy it is then" Dad agreed as we got into the car.

It's just as well that I spent the drive down the coast reliving my ride, as there was nothing to see. The sea wall stops you seeing the sea and the country is an unrelieved expanse of flat fens. We bypassed Mablethorpe and Chapel St Leonard's and finally arrived at the bustling town that is Skegness.

Dad claimed that when he was a boy the beach only went to the end of the half-mile pier, but as we walked past the 'sea front' amusements, we could barely make out where water and sand changed. Rather than sitting in for a meal we settled for gritty burgers from a kiosk before heading into the low dunes to do some sun bathing. For a change everyone, including me, had come prepared with sun block, towels, swimming costumes and Dad even had a big umbrella!



The girls slipped off their skirts and tops to reveal their costumes, I was soon down to my cozzie and with some haste we applied the factor 30. With Dad looking after our stuff, the three of us went in search of the sea. We eventually reached an inlet where we joined a few other like-minded souls, paddling and generally larking about. It was the on shore breeze which eventually forced us back to the dunes where we found Dad dozing under the umbrella.



The three of us larked around with a Frisbee for a while then we joined Dad on the sand and sat and talked. Dad eventually woke up and checking his watch announced that it was time to go. We reassembled our clothing and made our way back to the car. The girls made an excursion to the ladies to change out of their

swimsuits and by the time they returned giggling the car was otherwise packed and ready to go.

We stopped just outside Horncastle to eat; after all we hadn't really eaten since breakfast! It was about an hour from there back to Warsop and the girls and I spent much of that dozing.

"Drew?"

"Um, yeah" I replied stretching

"You are coming tomorrow?" Maddy asked

"Course I am, two o'clock right?"

"It doesn't matter if you're a bit earlier" she advised

"Who else is coming?" I asked

"Well I've invited about twenty" Mad replied

"Any boys other than me and Rhod?"

"There's a couple, if they come"

"We'll have you two at our mercy!" Bernie gleefully mentioned

Oh boy!

We dropped the girls off at home and arrived home just before eight.

As I lay in bed later, I reflected on the weekend's events. Seeing Mum off at the Airport was a low but that was countered by my ride today. Another ten seconds! Then this afternoon at Skegvegas – Rhod and Ally would have enjoyed it. And Gaby. But Gaby is gone now, for good! No more wearing dresses! I guess it was fun sometimes but I never really wanted to do it. Perhaps now I can live a normal life?

I'll have to wrap Maddy's presents in the morning, probably just Rhod and me with twenty girls at the barbecue! Ah well!

Part 29

Happy Birthday!

"Do you know what time you'll be home?" Dad asked from the doorway

"No idea" I told him, "I'll have to ring you when I find out"

"Well I'll see you later then"

"Okay Dad"

"And stay out of trouble"

"Yes Dad" I sighed

A few minutes later I heard the car leaving, a glance at the clock announced it was seven thirty, Sleep!

"Are you getting out of bed today?" Jules asked

"Uh, yeah. What time is it?"

"Gone nine"

"Sod!"

I am not usually one for expletives but I remembered what I need to do this morning. I exploded from under my duvet and scrambled into some underwear before heading to the bathroom. Ten minutes later I joined my sister in the kitchen.

"What are you doing today?" she asked

"Maddy's party?"

"Oh yeah, I forgot"

"I've got to get a card and wrapping paper this morning, so I'm going up the village"

"I'll come with you, I'm going over to Charlie's"

So after breakfast the two of us walked into Warsop.

"What time do you have to be at Maddy's?"

"About two" I replied

"Did you say it was a barbecue?"

"Yeah, and I think me and Rhod will be the only boys" I advised

"Sounds more like your birthday than Mad's"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you know, all those girls, just you two boys, they'll be all over you"

I groaned.

"That's all I need!"

"I thought that was every schoolboys dream?"

"Dream maybe" I allowed

"You could always go as Gaby" Jules suggested

"No I couldn't!" I almost shouted, "I am not doing that ever again!"

"Keep your hair on"

"Sorry Jules. But I'm never dressing up as a girl again"

"What's brought this on?"

"I'm fed up with people, you, Mad, Mr Wood, Dad, Mr Pilling, even Mum wanting me to be a girl. It's not right and I've had enough."

Jules went quiet for a minute then queried

"What are you doing with all that stuff in your wardrobe?"

"Dunno, you can have it if you want"

"I doubt if it would fit me properly"

"I've worn your stuff" I mentioned

"Yeah but I'm bigger than you in certain areas"

I wasn't sure what she was alluding to.

"I think you should give it all to Maddy, even the shoes are her size aren't they?"

"I'm a half size bigger"

"There you go, I bet half the time she ends up with the same size as you, they don't make many half sizes"

"I dunno"

"Why not take everything with you later, if she doesn't want anything she can give it away to charity or something"

"I could do that"

"Yeah but she's your friend right? And friends always get first dibs when you get rid of stuff"

"I s'pose it won't hurt any"

By now we were in Warsop centre.

"Look there's my bus, see you later" Jules called as she crossed to where the minibus that runs the circular was waiting.

"See ya"

I walked along to the newsagent cum stationers to get what I needed. Half an hour later I emerged with two gift boxes, a pack of tissue paper, a box of *Roses* chocolates and a ridiculous birthday card. This girlfriend / birthday business is expensive! It was nearly eleven when I got back home, only about two and half hours before I need to leave.

I was quite proud of my wrapping efforts, I know I cheated a bit with the boxes and the lingerie was already part wrapped by the woman in the shop but I did the ribbons and stuff. I decided to sort out Gaby's stuff before getting a shower.

Mum had hung the school uniform and my orange dress up, by the time I had it all collected together there was quite a pile. I must admit that there was perhaps more than a modicum of regret at my decision. As I packed everything into a laundry bag I started daydreaming.

'Bernie took up the reins, "We want to go in costume, there's prizes and stuff"

"Still with you so far" I sarcastically put in

"Well the point is we want to go as Manga girls, you know like Sailor Blue and that"

"What will us guys go as?"

"Erm that's just it, you'll be Manga girls too"

"What, no way!"

"Come on guys, your kidding right"

"No we're deadly serious, we've even sort of sorted some costumes"

"You are serious aren't you"

"Of course we are"

I chuckled to myself as remembered that conversation. We really fell for that, hook, line and sinker! I went to pick up the small collection of Gaby's footwear that I, I mean Gaby acquired. I thought back to that first trip to the shoe shops and Sarah.

"Are you looking for anything in particular"

I'm sure that they all go on the same course or something. Before I realised what I was saying it was out,

"I need to get some shoes for a dance"

"What colour is your dress"

What?

"Eh?"

"What colour dress are you going to wear miss?"

Then it clicked, despite my combats sweatshirt and short haircut she thought I was a girl. Mixed emotions roiled around my head

"I'm not" she cut me off

"Not sure yet?"

I decided to roll with it.

"No, I mean yes, it's sort of off white"

"Heels?"

Not getting her meaning I just nodded.

"I'm Sarah,"

"Gaby" I mumbled

"Just sit over there, I'll bring some over for you to try."

I shook my head and chuckled to myself. I've certainly done some strange things this year! Yeah nothing as strange as the school brochure! Now that was weird, and yes, it was fun. I stripped off to get a shower but my mind was on that week as I climbed into the tub.

"Oh right. They're so real" I told Sally

"Great aren't they" she replied proudly. "With those on your chest no one will ever guess you're not a girl. The glue will last until the weekend; I'll give you some solvent to take them off then. Now young lady you'd better get dressed before Mary, Mrs Johnston gets back"

"Oh right. You mean I'm stuck with these until the weekend?"

"Of course silly, John will be taking pictures of you today, tomorrow and Friday so this will save a lot of time. Mrs Johnston will do your make up the rest of the week."

I remembered that first day wearing the breast forms, weird but nice too, in a weird way. I washed my now collar length hair, enjoying the sensation of the lather washing down my body. Hmm, I suppose I'll have to get it cut this week.

I found myself smiling as I revisited some of the episodes of the last few months. Am I doing the right thing? Do I really want to give up Gaby? What if people still think I'm a girl? And what about my friends, what about Mad? I thought back to that conversation when we went to Ladybower.

"Well what do you think of her?" I asked, the syntax (big word!) didn't seem right.

"Like?"

"You know..."

"Well I guess I like her"

"More than Drew?"

"No! Well differently. It's like, well, you're my friend, we do stuff, have fun but you're a boy, there's stuff we can't talk about or share."

"Uh huh" I nodded

"Well Gaby is like a girlfriend. You know like Ally and Bernie. We can talk about clothes and stuff and have loads of fun, there's no barriers you know?"

"I think I get it. Even though you know she's me, you can relate to her better" '

I got myself dressed, combed my still damp hair and got ready to leave for the Peters. Checking the clock I realised I was running a bit early despite my daydreaming but I decided to set off anyway. I locked the house up and hefting the laundry bag in one hand and the prezzie bag in the other I set off to Mad's birthday celebration.

During the walk over to the party I kept thinking about Gabysodes. Anna's party, maybe that wasn't one of the high points, the trip to Germany? Hmm, I guess that was quite funny really and Paris! That was some trip, I remember being a bit annoyed at the time, but after all I had got myself into that one,

just as Mum said on Saturday. In balance, being Gaby hasn't been bad, in fact just the opposite. What was it she said, oh yeah.

"Oh Drew!" she hugged me close and kissed my head. "Me and your Dad, well let's just say we thought it was what you wanted to do. You always looked so happy as Gaby" '

I always looked so happy as Gaby; does that mean I look miserable as myself?

I arrived at my destination, the front of the house was decked out with balloons and bunting, there was no doubting this was the place!

"Hi Drew" Maddy greeted me, "come on through"

"Happy birthday Mad" I gave her a peck on the cheek, "here you go" I proffered the bag of gifts.

"Ooh presents! Thanks Drew." I got a kiss on the lips in return.

"Aren't you going to open them?"

"No. Mum says I have to wait till later, what's in the other bag?"

"Jules suggested you might like first refusal on this stuff"

"What is it?"

"Gaby's stuff"

"You were serious then?"

"Yes" I answered flatly, "Mad can I ask you something?"

"I suppose so"

"I don't know how to put this. I said I *was* serious, now I'm not so sure"

"You know I'll support whatever decision you make"

"Thanks Mad. I just don't know anymore. I've been thinking about it most of the morning and I just don't know. I know it's a bit strange, and I know I protested a lot but it was kinda fun, wasn't it?" I asked

"Yes it was Drew" she seemed to be holding back some.

"But?"

"No buts, I shall really miss her"

"Me too" now where did that come from?

"Come on you two, less of that" Mrs P mentioned from the back door, "your other guests are about due, Drew can you give Maddy's Dad a hand with the barbecue please"

"...Happy birthday to you!" we all sang

"Three cheers for Maddy, hip hip" Ally suggested

"Hooray"

"Hip hip"

"Hooray"

"Hip hip"

"Hooray"

"Can I open my presents now?" Maddy asked her Mum

"Go on then"

We all found seats on the lawn with Mad holding court from a wrought iron garden chair. Did I mention how Rhod and I were the only boys from fifteen attendees to the soiree? Mad opened the gifts in reverse order of arrival; my boxes were at the bottom of the pile. Seeing what everyone else was giving, I realised that I might have overdone the present bit. I could hardly withdraw a package at this stage though; this was going to be embarrassing!

I watched as various items of perfume, makeup and accessories were revealed and presented to the audience for inspection. I seriously contemplated making a run for it as the pile decreased towards my gifts. Instead I just tried to hide in shrubbery!

"Oh Drew it's lovely!" Mad exclaimed

"What about the other one?" Bernie asked

"Oh yes" it went quiet as Mad unwrapped the parcel of lingerie

"I want one of those!" I heard

"It is gorgeous"

"I bet Gaby bought them" Ally mentioned

"Who's Gaby?" another voice asked

"Drew's cousin" Bernie filled the others in

"Where did you find a boyfriend like that?" one of the others asked

"Just lucky I suppose, where is Drew"

"Behind that yellow bush" Rhod welched on me

"Drew? You alright?" Mad asked when she found me

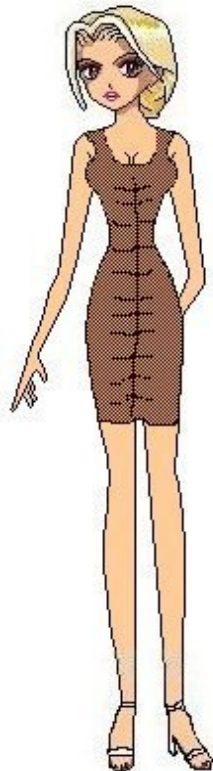
"Um, yeah, I went a bit overboard didn't I?"

"Maybe, it's all lovely though, thank you"

"Sorry Mad"

"What for?"

"For embarrassing you with the underwear"



"Who's embarrassed? Come on, let's get some cake and I want to try that dress on!"

The dress looked great on Maddy, I must have been having a Gaby moment when I bought it!

"Drew, can we have a chat?" Mrs P asked some time later

"Sure"

"Come inside, it's a bit private"

I followed her into the dining room where we each took a chair.

"Maddy told me what you said on Saturday"

I wasn't sure where this was headed but I didn't like it.

"Did you mean it? never being Gaby again?"

"Yes I did"

"But?"

"But I'm not so sure anymore. I had an argument with Mum before she left and I thought that's what I wanted"

"And now?"

"I don't know"

Aunt C changed the direction a bit then.

"That dress is very nice, did you pick it out yourself?"

I brightened some.

"Yeah, I got it in Chester on Thursday"

"There's not many boys your age, or any age for that matter, who'd risk trying to buy a dress for a girl, let alone get the right size in a nice style"

I blushed at the compliment.

"I saw that you brought Gaby's clothes over?" she went on

"I thought Mad might want some of them" I explained

"Why would she want them? Surely she could just borrow anything?"

"Yes, no, I don't know"

"Tell you what Drew, we'll store them here for Gaby and if she wants them she can just come over. Mad can borrow stuff and you haven't got someone else's stuff in your closet!"

"I, I guess that's okay"

"That's settled then, lets go and join the others"

I'm not sure what was settled but Mrs P thought something was.

The party broke up about seven and I departed before the rest of the gang, leaving Mad with another kiss.

Some day! I wandered home, thinking more as I walked. I've done a lot of that today. I'm not sure if it's got me anywhere though. What am I saying?

I've made my decision haven't I? I should have known that life is never that simple!

Part 30

Pear Shaped

"Miss, miss!" I could hear the insistent voice but I ignored it. Hmm, it feels all floaty and squidgy, all those colours.

"She's coming round" a female voice mentioned

The squidgyness was replaced by intense pain that seemed to come from just about everywhere.

"Wha'? Where?"

"It's okay dear, an ambulance is on its way"

I tried to move but that just intensified the pain.

"Whoa girl, just lay there, don't move"

"Not girl" I mumbled

"There, there, you're in shock. What's your name?"

"Drew"

"That's a pretty name"

I could hear the approaching ambulance as the siren dopplered towards us. It all went fuzzy again and I passed out.

The next time I can remember being conscious was some time later.

"He's coming round Mum!"

"Shssh, Mad, how are you doing Drew?"

"Where am I?"

"In the 'General, you were knocked off your bike"

"Oh Drew!" Maddy leant over and hugged me.

"Your Dad is on his way and your sister has just popped to the ladies"

"What happened?" I asked

"You were very lucky, from what the police have told us, do you remember anything?"

"Not really"

"Well it looks like a car came out of a side road and you went straight into the side of it, you landed in the road and luckily the traffic coming the other way managed to stop"

"It feels like every bone is broken" I mentioned

"We'll get you some more painkillers" Aunt C suggested

"No, no. So what is broken?"

"As I said you were very lucky, you didn't break anything"

"So why do I hurt so much?"

"Well you've got some massive bruises and some grazes"

"Oh Drew, we thought you were dead!" Mad told me

"Now Madeline, less of that."

"Oh Drew you're awake!" Jules exclaimed from the doorway.

Mad moved to let Jules into the bed area.

"When they rang, I thought, I didn't know what to do"

"It's all right Jules" Mrs P comforted my sister with a friendly hug.

"We're going to keep you in overnight, young man. Then if everything is alright in the morning you can go home okay"

"Yes thanks doctor" I was quite heavily sedated and I didn't see sleep coming.

Apart from being black and blue, and being a bit doped up with painkillers, I was okay next morning and Dad drove me back to Warsop.

(Note from the author: Drew doesn't mention it, he's too doped up I guess, but the doctor suggested that he wear one of those hospital gowns that tie at the back. Reason being that with all the bruising, he was quite swollen and

putting on trousers etc would be painful and uncomfortable. Hence Drew goes home in a borrowed gown and his dressing gown!)

"You okay son?" Dad asked after I was settled on the sofa.

"Well as good as it gets at the moment. What happened to my bike?"

"I'm afraid it's completely wrecked Drew, the police have it at the moment, they said that we can pick it up later."

"The doctor said I can ride again as soon as I feel up to it, does Mum know" I wasn't exactly coming out with coherent sentences!

"I spoke to your Mum last night, she sends her best wishes, I had to talk her out of flying home" Dad informed me.

I have to admit that the rest of the day went by in a blur of kids TV and snacks interspersed with sleep.

"Drew? You awake?" Dad asked that most stupid question

"Yeah" I started to stretch and then realised it was gonna hurt a second too late.

"I told your friends they could come over for a while this afternoon, that okay?"

"I guess"

"Oh and I spoke to people that donated the frame you won the other week, apparently they were having trouble getting the right size, but after I told them what happened they agreed to an upgrade which they already have in your size" Dad told me

"Cool!" I mentioned

"We can pick it up on Saturday, he said if we take your other bit's over they'll build it up too, how's that sound"

"Brill" I enthused

The guys, Rhod, Ally, Bernie and Mad arrived just after three.

"Remember, the medication is quite strong so don't over do it"

"No Dad"

"How are you feeling Drew?" Ally got in first

"Rough, I hurt everywhere"

"Great outfit" Bernie commented

I looked down and realised I was still wearing the hospital gown under my dressing gown.

"The doctor thought it'd be more comfortable being loose and all" I told them

"Well you look better than you did yesterday" Mad mentioned

"I must have been rough then, I feel like shit now"

"We got you some sweets" Rhod advised

"Oh and I brought some of Dad's Manga for you to read" Maddy finished

"Thanks guys"

"How long will you be out of circulation?" Bernie asked

"The doctor said I can do stuff as soon as I feel up to it"

"So do you fancy going to the pictures on Friday then? Mum said she'd drive us to Sheffield"

"Sounds good, what's on?" I asked

"If we go to Centertainment they're having a Manga season" Mad opined

"*Final Fantasy's* on this week" Bernie suggested

"*The Italian Job's* on at Meadowhall" Rhod mentioned

"Well at least we've got a choice" I put in, "oh yeah, you remember I won that frame?" I asked changing the subject.

"That day we went to Lincoln?" Ally asked

"Yeah. Well I'll get it this Saturday"

"Well don't hit anything with the new one!" Rhod quipped

"I didn't plan on hitting anything yesterday"

"That's not fair Rhod!" Bernie advised

"If you'd seen him in the General you wouldn't make jokes like that" Mad stated, "I thought he was dead when I saw him first"

"Gee, I needed to know that" I told them

"Well you did" Mad replied

"You kids staying for tea?" Dad asked from the kitchen

They all looked at me with the unasked question in their eyes.

"Fine by me" I advised

"Yes please" Mad answered for all four of them, "if it's no trouble"

"Pizza okay?" Dad asked

"No meat remember Dad, Rhod's veggie"

"He can have the Napoli with me, Hawaiian okay for the rest of you?"

"Yes thanks" Bernie supplied

Dad left us again to get the pizza's started; he's a dab hand at home made so it would take a while.

"Oh yeah Drew, Mum said you could come to ours tomorrow if you like" Mad offered

"I haven't got anything planned" I joked

"What about you guys?" Mad asked the others

"I said I'd help mum at the salon tomorrow" Rhod told us

"I'm helping too" Ally mentioned

"What about you Bern?"

"I'm working at the stables every Thursday"

"Since when?" Ally queried

"I start tomorrow, I get twenty pounds a day" she supplied

"Cool" Mad stated

"You'll be as rich as money bags Bond here at that rate" Rhod easily avoided my feeble swat.

"Can some one set the table please?" Dad asked

"Sure Mr B, how many places?" Mad queried

"Just six, Juliette is eating at Charlie's" Dad informed us

The others made short work of the place settings, they'd all eaten here before and we keep all the eating irons on a side table in the dining area, so it wasn't rocket science.

Dad brought in salad and plates shortly after so we all made our way to the table to await the glorified cheese on toast that is pizza.

"Mrs Peters has offered to baby-sit me tomorrow" I mentioned to Dad

"Mum said she'd pick Drew up in the morning and bring him over" Mad confirmed

"Well that would be a help, I really could do with going into work, at least for a couple of hours." Dad told us, "That okay with you Drew?" he went on.

"It'll be better than sitting here all day" I stated

"I'll ring Carol after tea to confirm the arrangements then" Dad finished

A short while after tea Dad hinted that the invalid, me, could do with some rest and the guys left a short time after six. I must admit that I was bushed by then! Dad helped me up to my room where I was soon in bed and in the land of nod.

"You awake in there?" Jules voice woke me

"I am now"

She came in with a breakfast tray.

"Don't get used to this"

"I thought that's what older sisters did for their sick brothers"

"In your dreams!" she stated, "do you need a hand getting dressed, I take it you are getting dressed today"

"Course I am, I should be okay, I feel much better now" in truth better was relative, I still hurt like hell, but less than yesterday.

"Well holler if you can't manage" she instructed, "oh I nearly forgot, Gran rang last night, she says to get well and she'll ring again tonight"

I managed to eat breakfast without depositing it in the bed and then painfully got out of bed. I eventually selected a t-shirt, jeans and underwear then managed to slip the tapes on the hospital gown that I then shucked off. I gave my bruised and battered bod the once over in the mirror, sheesh if I look like this now what must I have looked like yesterday? I was still pretty swollen and my bruises! My bruises were an impressive range of colours from yellow through to purple and everything in between! Fifteen minutes later I was dressed and uncomfortable – not just uncomfortable but in more pain than before.

"Jules?"

"What?" she called from her own room.

"I can't go, it hurts too much with these jeans on, I'm gonna take them back off"

"Haven't you got anything looser?" she asked joining me

"These are my loose ones"

"Where's it hurting?"

"Pretty much anywhere they touch"

"I guess that does rule out trousers then"

"I'll ring Maddy and stay here"

"Hmm, does it hurt round your middle?"

"Well not too much, it's my legs that really hurt, they're really sensitive"

"Would you go if I have a solution?"

"I guess"

"How about wearing a skirt?"

"You are kidding right? After what I told you on Monday?"

"Calm down"

"Calm down? I am not gonna do the Gaby thing again!"

"I'm not suggesting you are. All I'm saying is it's a solution. You can't wear trousers but you could wear a skirt and be comfortable. Maddy's not gonna say anything and no one else is going to see you."

I guess put in those terms it was a solution, if I wear a skirt I can go to the Peters, if I don't, I'm stuck at home.

"I suppose I can live it just for today"

"Great! Now I won't have to baby-sit!"

I knew there had to be some reason why Jules had made such an effort to get me out of the house! Ah well! My anti dressing plans are certainly going pear shaped!

When Mrs P arrived at nine o'clock I was wearing a knee length cotton skirt, my Buffy T shirt and my hair was pulled back into a low ponytail, Jules reckoned it made me look less girly – go figure.

"How are you feeling Drew?" Mrs P asked

"Still pretty sore, but generally better" I told her

"Good, are you ready?"

I grabbed my backpack from the kitchen table,

"I am know" I informed her

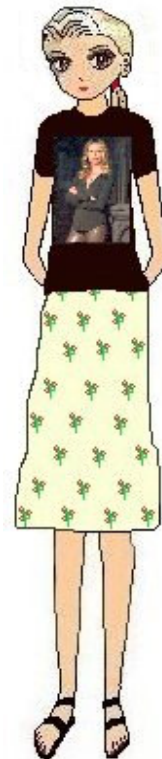
The look on Mad's face when we arrived and she saw how I was dressed was priceless.

"Before you say anything, yes I'm wearing a skirt, I know what I said at the weekend, but this is different."

"How? You're wearing a skirt" she stated

"Yes but I'm not pretending to be a girl"

"Well for someone who's not trying you're doing a pretty good job" she mentioned. "So why are you wearing it?"



"My legs are too sensitive at the minute to wear trousers, even loose ones, and I have tried! So Jules suggested the skirt. It was either the skirt or stay at home with Jules – no contest really!"

Mad didn't look convinced

"What about your hair then?"

"It's just to keep it out of the way, I was going to get it cut this week"

"Hmm, if you say so."

"I do"

"I know this might seem a bit odd, but I just can't call you Drew when your dressed like that. Would you mind if I call you Gaby?" she asked, "just for today, while you're wearing a skirt" she clarified.

"I said I wasn't doing that thing again"

"I know, it's just me, please?"

She gave me one of those puppy dog looks. Do girls take lessons or is genetic? Whatever it gets me whenever one does it!

"Okay I guess. But just today right?"

"Yes!" she made to give me a hug

"Whoa! Careful, I've got bruises everywhere" I told her

"Sorry Gab" she gave me a peck on the cheek instead.

I hope the rest of the day goes better!

Part 31

Is That You Gaby?

"So what are you two up to today?" Aunt Carol asked

"Not really sure?" Mad answered

"I've got to go out in a while, just into the village so I shan't be long, you two going to be okay? Drew?"

"I guess"

"I'll have my mobile if you need me"

"Okay Mum" Mad confirmed, "can we go online please?"

"Yes but don't spend all day on there" Mrs P agreed

"Come on Gab" Mad was in control, I am but a puppet!

I wanted to send a mail to Britney so it wasn't such a hardship. No the hardship was the wince inducing pain of having anything touch me, particularly on my arms and legs.

We surfed for a while before Maddy handed the controls over to me while she went to organise some drinks.

'From Drew Bond

To Britneycheer@alo.com

Subject latest news

Hi Britney,

Sorry it's been so long since I wrote to you last. I hope you are well. So much has happened at this end, I don't know where to begin.

Mum is famous now – she won the Ladies Tour De France three weeks ago, Jules and me went to Paris to see the finish, we even got to go to a fancy reception afterwards.

I nearly forgot, we finished school for the summer!

The week after, she came home for a break, she's been picked to go to the World Championships and she's got a new contract! Cool. I hadn't realised how much I missed her being around. We went to the track at Manchester on Tuesday and I had a go – scary! On Thursday we went to my Gran's and then shopping in Chester, which is near Wales. I got

Maddy, you'll meet her when you come, I got her birthday present there, a new dress and matching undies!

On Friday, we had a guy from the cycling magazine come to interview Mum, that was fun, it should be in this weeks magazine!

We took Mum to the airport on Saturday; her team is racing in New England this week. On Sunday I raced and did a personal best, then we went to the coast for the afternoon, Maddy and Bernie were with us, it was great fun.

On Monday it was Mad's 13th Birthday, she had a barbecue, I was a bit off colour but we had a good time!

I ended up in hospital on Tuesday; some idiot wasn't looking and pulled out in front of me! I spent Tuesday night in the hospital, luckily I didn't break anything but I'm covered in bruises and I'm too sore to wear trousers, my arms and legs are a bit swollen still. I should be okay by the time you get here.

That's about it – I'll write again next week.

Bye for now

Drew'

I hit the send button as Maddy came back in with some crisps and two glasses of dandelion and burdock *.

"What are you up to?" Mad asked

"I thought I'd email Britney, I haven't done it in a couple of weeks"

"Oh I nearly forgot, you are still coming to Obicon next week?"

"Unless you don't want me to"

"No nothing like that, I just wanted to make sure"

"Hi kid's!" Aunt Carol called, "you all right?"

"Fine Mum" Maddy answered

"Gaby?"

"Yes thanks Aunt"

"I picked this up at the Newsagents" she brandished a copy of this weeks *Cycling*, "I know you probably get one but your Mum is on the cover so I thought I'd get one"

"Cool" Mad mentioned

"I've not seen it yet" I told them

"Let's see then" Mad demanded

Mrs P flicked through to page twenty-one and laid it on the dining table for us to see. The banner headline was suitably tabloid, 'England's own Longo', I had to explain to the Peters who Jeannie Longo is (if you need to know, do a search!). I skimmed the text and checked out the pictures, Mum on the great mountain stage, on the podium in Paris, then, oh no he used that one from Manchester! The other pictures were from Friday's ride, Mum signing the picture at Beckingham and another one with me and Mum riding along.

"Is that you Gaby?" Mad asked pointing to the Manchester shot.

I didn't get a chance to answer as she read the caption out,

'We caught Jenny at BC HQ where daughter Gaby was having her first track session'.

Anyone looking at the picture would think I was a girl!

"Gaby? Drew?" Mad insisted, "you okay?"

"Er yeah, I didn't think they'd use that one"

"So it is you" she stated

"Who else would it be, I thought I said"

"No you only told us that you went, not that Gaby went too"

Mrs P just shook her head and left us to it.

I took a pull on my drink.

"It was John's fault, he suggested I have a go on the track"

"So how's it his fault that you look like your twin sister?"

"Well I didn't have any kit so I borrowed some off Mum, she thought it would be fun to keep the Gaby thing going."

"Well it's hardly John's fault then is it"

"I guess not, it was Mum this time I suppose"

When I thought about it, Mum had now got most of the cycling community convinced she had a daughter named Gaby *and* son Drew, both of whom rode. Someone was bound to put two and two together! It made me more determined than ever to end this masquerade, well it was ended wasn't it? Wearing a skirt today is a medical emergency so it doesn't count!

"Drew you've made *Chad* too!" Aunt Carol called from the kitchen

"What's it say Mum" Mad called back

Aunt C came back to the dining room with the paper

"It's just a short bit about your accident Drew, lets see, yeah here we are 'a young cyclist was taken to Bassetlaw General Infirmary after an incident involving a car at Cuckney crossroads. The driver of the yellow Citroen Saxo, Mark James, 23, of Langwith Jct. was taken into custody at the scene but has since been released on Police bail. The victim, thought to be the daughter of local international cyclist Jenny Bond, is understood to be doing well and is expected to make a full recovery.' It then goes on about it being an accident blackspot and so on." Aunt Carol concluded.

"Where do they get their information from?" I exclaimed

"They probably talked to the police and maybe the hospital" Mrs P suggested

"So why do they think I'm a girl?" I insisted

She shrugged her shoulders, "no idea"

"Oh come on Drew, let's listen to some music upstairs" Mad suggested

My mind was pre occupied for the rest of the day. What if people realised it was me and not this 'daughter' who had the accident, or more to the point asked who it was? What if – Mum was right, you can't live your life based on what if?

"Come in number one, your time is up!" Mad intoned, "the purple gibbon is eating custard with the queen."

"Eh? What? Oh sorry, I was day dreaming"

"You don't say" Mad stated, "you've not heard a word have you?"

"Something about tomorrow?" I guessed

She rolled her eyes theatrically.

"Mrs Rose is going to pick you up from here in the morning, we're not going until ten"

"Okay"

"You okay Gab, you look a bit out of it"

"I still hurt everywhere"

"Are you going to be okay for tomorrow then?"

"Yeah fine, hopefully most of the swelling will be gone in the morning"

"Come on you two, time to take Drew home" Aunt C hollered up the stairs.

When I got home, our copy of the *Comic* was waiting for me so I made myself comfortable on the sofa and started to read the article.

'Taking a well-deserved break back home, I managed to catch up with UK cycling's new darling of the bunches, Tour Feminin winner Jenny Bond. I joined Jenny and her thirteen-year-old son, Drew, for one of their favourite training rides around their north Nottinghamshire home. Our route took us from their home in Warsop, through the Dukeries to Worksop. Then north to Bawtry before heading east to that regular stop for north Midlands cyclists, Beckingham Café.



PE so Jenny do you do this ride very often?

JB when I'm home, I like to do it about once a week

PE So you have several circuits you train on?

JB Yes I tailor my ride to my programme, if I'm racing locally I'll use my Peak District circuit, after all everyone else will be.

Just then, Drew, Jenny's keen young son spots a picture of his Mother on the wall of the Café. This prompts an impromptu picture signing much to the amusement of the lorry drivers sharing the cuisine.

PE so does that sort of thing happen a lot now.

JB That's the second time this week actually, we went to an Italian restaurant in Worksop last weekend and the waiters were race fans. So I ended up doing the autograph bit then too.

PE What about where you are based in Germany, rumour has it you are quite a celebrity.

JB I don't know about that, since I won the regional championship back in May, I do get recognised quite a bit. The event was televised and having a local sponsor means we are always in the local press too.

(Jenny was the first foreign national to win a German regional title back in May this year)

PE so how are you coping with the European scene, it's a lot different to the UK.

JB Well, the team is great, and the management and sponsors have been really supportive. Of course there was a bit of a leap from the domestic ladies programme to World Cup events, but I've settled in now.

PE The word is that your ride in the Wight Circuit at Easter was what got Apollinaris interested in you?

JB I don't know about that, but it was certainly a turning point in my form.

The three of us left the café and took the east bank of the Trent south as we headed back to complete the circuit. Back over the Trent and then a series of B roads brought us back to the Bond residence.

PE I suppose you miss this sort of ride in Germany?

JB Well a couple of us, myself, Maria (Pinger, the team leader) and Tina (Porsche) usually go for a hundred K once a week around the Eifel mountains. And twice a week the whole team go for a couple of hours, practising tactics and stuff, just like the big men's squads do.

PE So with the training and racing they keep you busy?

JB Well we do a lot of PR stuff too, so there's no time to get homesick!

PE What do your family feel about your career?

JB They are really supportive, I seem to have become a combination of 'cool' Mum and embarrassment!

PE What do you think of your kids racing? I saw Gaby on the track at Manchester and Drew has already won a couple of races.



We caught Jenny at BC HQ where daughter Gaby was having her first track session.

JB I'm really proud of them, I didn't push them to race, they wanted to. Dave (Mr Bond) and I support them and advise them, but whether they do the training is up to them. So their results are down to their efforts. They both do other things besides cycling; Gaby won the School badminton championships last week. My eldest, Juliette is not sporty at all!

PE I saw you at Manchester a few days ago, can you tell us what that was about?

JB I was over for a testing session, I've been put into the worlds squad, they think I might do well in the road race!

PE A little bird told us that you did a twenty minute ten the other evening.

JB Well only just, 20.58 on the Cuckney course.

PE That's not far off the national record.

JB I thought Beryl (Burton) did a fairly short twenty.

PE No you are only a handful of seconds off the record. Any other news for our readers?

JB Well it looks certain that I will be riding the full World Cup series next year, my contract is being extended for next season with a further option for 2004.

PE That's good news Jenny, thanks for talking with me. *Phil Eaton'*

The rest of the article consisted of the highlights of Mums racing career and this years main results. There was a map of our circuit so people could follow it if they wished and it finished with the main highlights left in Mum's season.

If you ignored the bits about 'Gaby', it was, I thought a nice article. Mum will be pleased anyway. The bad news really was the report in *CHAD*. It's a fairly small community, a lot of people 'know' me and Mum by sight at least. The paper just about declared me to be Mum's daughter, just the other week, I was in the paper as Gaby with Mum *and* Jules. If I appear as myself, injured, people might put two and two together and I am in deep doo-doo! Let's just hope I'm all right by tomorrow.

"Hey Drew, you made the paper" Jules mentioned when she came in.

"I know, now everyone thinks I'm a girl"

"How do you figure that?"

"Well the paper says it was what was it now? Oh yeah 'the daughter of local cyclist Jenny Bond'."

"So. It could be me"

"What? When everyone's seen you since and I bet someone saw me today!"

"I'm sure there's not that many people read those bits in the paper."

"You did, so did Mrs P. I bet a lot of people read them"

"You worry too much"

That helped a lot. Not!

"Anyway, how are you now?"

"Better generally but my arms and legs are still very sensitive"

"Those bruises are corks!"

"Don't remind me"

"Hi kids" Dad called

"Hi Dad" we chorused in reply.

"How are you Drew?" he asked coming into the lounge.

"Better thanks, but I still hurt like hell"

He spotted what I was wearing; I could see he was about to say something but thought otherwise doing a goldfish instead.

"What?" I asked

"Doesn't matter" he replied

"It was my idea Dad" Jules supplied

"I don't want to know"

"Drew's legs were too swollen to wear his jeans, so I lent him a skirt so he could go to the Peters today"

"More than I need to know" Dad protested

"The interview is in the *Comic*" I mentioned

I passed him the magazine.

"I'll make some tea" Jules volunteered.

"Aargh!" I exclaimed as the water hit me. It felt like needles hitting my still swollen and tender body. I finished my shower rather quicker than usual, it was just too uncomfortable to stay in. I didn't sleep well either and it looks like today is going to be a wash out too!

"You okay Drew?" Jules asked through the door, "I heard you yell"

"Yeah I'm fine"

I determined to make the best of the situation so I dressed in my baggies and went to get breakfast.

"You sure you're okay?" Jules queried

"I'm still pretty sore," I said wincing

"What are you doing today?"

"Pictures, Bernie's Mum is taking us"

"She collecting you?"

"From Mad's"

"How are you getting there?"

"Walking, why?"

"I'd best come with you, make sure you get there okay"

"I don't need baby sitting"

"Let's just say, after Anna's I don't want anything happening to you"

"Whatever"

"What time you got to be there?" she asked

"Ten I think" I mentioned around my Cornflakes.

"We'd best leave soon then"

"Why? It's not even nine yet"

"The way you're shuffling it's gonna take ages to get there"

"I guess it might take a bit longer" I allowed

Jules was right. It took a lot longer than usual and every step was painful as my baggies moved over my tender legs, it was pain but not like stabbing pain, it just built into extraordinary levels of Aargh! By the time we got to Mad's I was ready to rip my trousers off there and then!

"You can't go out like that Drew" Maddy observed

"I'll be okay, really"

"Come off it Drew, I can see how much pain you're in"

"Yeah okay I admit it, I hurt like hell, it's my legs still"

"Well" Mad started

"No!" I stated

"You don't know what I was going to say"

"I am not wearing a skirt!"

"Why not? it worked yesterday"

"Okay I admit it worked yesterday, but I was only here and at home. Not at the cinema"

"You've done it before" Mad mentioned

"Yeah well I'm not doing it now"

"Oh come on Drew, you can't go to the pictures like that"

"I won't go then"

"Now you're being daft, it's not like the guy's don't know or anything"

"What about Mrs Rose?"

"Tell you what, you wear a skirt and I'll sort out Bernie's Mum" she offered

Okay, I know what I said a few days ago. But this is different. It is!

* America has root beer, in England we have dandelion and burdock, I've no idea exactly what's in it but I guess the name is a clue!

Part 32

Where's Drew?

Maddy, to be fair, didn't make a huge fuss. Well she'd won hadn't she?

"Hmm, I think you need to be thoroughly Gaby, Drew"

"I suppose so, and you just happen to still have everything?"

"In my wardrobe" she smiled apologetically.

"Alright then" I sighed

Over the next half an hour I was transformed once more into 'Gaby Peters'. I drew the line at sticking the breast forms on, I've been caught that way before but I was soon wearing the gaff, bra and a gauzy top above one of Mad's skirts.

"You can't go out like that" Mad stated, "your legs look terrible"

"Well sorree for living!"

"I didn't mean it like that Drew. It's your bruises"

"What about them?"

"Well everyone will see them if you wear that skirt. You could wear tights?" she suggested

"That would be worse than trousers!"

"What about my long denim skirt?"

"Yeah. Okay"

She retrieved the skirt I wore on that first Meadowhall trip and I gingerly stepped into it.

"It's no good Mad, it covers my legs but it's nearly as bad as my baggies"

"Bum, I've not got anything lighter that long." She thought for a moment.

"Wait here a mo!" she sprang into action and returned a minute later with another skirt.

"Ta da! It's Mum's but she wont mind" she told me shaking the garment out.

It was long, white and cotton with a button fly.

"Mum wears it to keep the sun off, it should be okay on your legs"

"Come on then" I suggested. Now there was another problem!

"I forgot that Mum's bigger than me"

"Even with a belt it's loose" I mentioned

"I know, if we can get it to sit on your hips, we can say it's the latest fashion"
Mad noted brightly

I was not convinced, or happy but our options and time were running out.

Five minutes later the doorbell went.

"Hi Mrs Rose"

"Hi Maddy, where's Drew?"

"He, er, rang earlier to say he wasn't coming"

"That's a pity, I suppose he's still a bit bruised and battered poor luv"

"Yes, that's it, his legs were hurting"

"Well come on then, the others are in the car"

"Erm, Mrs Rose, er, would it be okay if my cousin came?"

"I guess so, is she here?"

"Yes, I'll just call her down"

"I'll see the two of you at the car then" Mrs Rose stated turning away

"Drew!" Mad hissed up the stairs

"I heard"

"Well come on then"

"I am!"

We joined the others waiting in the SUV.



"Morning everyone, Drew didn't feel up to it so Gaby's coming instead" Mad informed the gathered masses

"Hi Gab" Ally ventured

"Nice outfit" Bernie mentioned

"Hi guy's" I replied

"You look a bit pale dear" Mrs R suggested

"She's had food poisoning" Maddy put in

"Well I hope you're alright now, we wouldn't want you sick in the car eh?"

"I'm fine now thanks Mrs Rose" I gave Mad a dirty look

"Get in then" Rhod instructed

The drive across to Sheffield doesn't take long and soon we were approaching Meadowhall.

"Which cinema are you going to?" Mrs R asked

"There's a better choice at the *UCI*" Bernie told her Mum

"That's easier to park at anyway" Mrs R replied

We were soon parked behind the cinema.

"I'm going to leave you here and catch the tram into Sheffield" Bernie's Mum informed us.

"I thought you were gonna see the film too?" Bernie mentioned

"I've got some stuff to pick up and I'm meeting a friend for coffee"

We walked around to the front of the cinema with her, I was trying hard not to wince too much, and even the light cotton skirt was aggravating my legs.

"What are we going to watch" Ally asked when we got inside

"The *Lion King*" Rhod joked

I surveyed what was on offer with the rest of them, eighteen screens does give a lot of choice!

"*Final Fantasy* looks favourite to me" I suggested

"What times that on?" Ally asked

"Eleven forty five" Rhod told us

"We could wait to see Space *Morons*" Bernie put in

"That's not on till one fifteen" Mad mentioned

"Make your minds up" Mrs R cajoled, "I want to get off"

We looked at each other and made a mutual agreement.

"*Final Fantasy!*" we all echoed

We waited while Mrs R bought our tickets.

"I should be back about three, Bernadette get everyone something to eat out of this after the film." She handed Bern a twenty pound note.

"Cool" Rhod whispered

"Okay, I'll see you all later"

"Bye Mrs R"

"Thanks Mum"

We had a bit of time to kill before the film so we found a corner to camp in.

"What's with the skirt and stuff?" Bernie asked me

"It's a long story" I replied

"We've got twenty minutes" Ally mentioned

So between Mad and myself we brought the others up to speed.

"Poor Drew" Ally replied to our explanation.

"Are you supposed to be showing everyone your pants?" Rhod asked

"It's the fashion!" Mad quickly interceded

"The skirts a bit big" I added

"Well I think you look nice" Bernie put in, "and by the look of it so do those boys over there"

"I need the ladies" I told them getting up

"Yeah it's a good idea before the film" Ally supplied

"Will you get some drinks Rhod?" Mad hinted

"Okay" he sighed back at our departing backs.

"I couldn't tell whether some of that was real or not" Rhod advised as we rode the escalators back to the ground floor.

"Some of those effects were totally awesome," I added

"I couldn't follow the story" Ally mentioned

"I'll lend you the comics" Mad advised

"What shall we do now guys? it's only one thirty" Bernie asked

"Food?" I suggested

"There's a *Pizza Hut* round by *Toys'R'Us*" Rhod suggested

"I don't think we've got enough for that" Bernie lamented

"I've got twenty, that should be enough" I offered

"You sure D?" Rhod asked

"I wouldn't offer would I?"

"Guess not" he conceded

"Pizza it is!" Ally declared as we started the short walk to the retail area.

Surprisingly for the school hols, we got a table straight away and we opted for the lunch buffet. In the end I only had to put five pounds to Mrs Rose's twenty. As we still had time to kill we ended up skimming *Toys'R'Us* for thirty

minutes; I trailed around behind the girls with Rhod. To be truthful I hate the place but the girls seemed to find something interesting around every corner.

"There you are" Mrs R greeted us

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Mrs R"

"Have a good time kids?" she asked, "you look a bit better Gaby"

"Thanks Mrs Rose" I answered

"Ready for home?"

"Yeah" Bernie agreed

Barely forty-five minutes later we were back at the Peters.

"Bye" I waved to the departing car

"Come on Gab, you wanna stay for tea?" Mad suggested

"I ought to get home really" I told her

"Hi er girls" Mrs P greeted us

"Hi Mum"

"Hello Mrs Peters"

"I've told you before young lady haven't I?"

"Yes auntie" I sighed

"And is that my skirt you're barely wearing?"

"Sorry Mum we were in a rush this morning and Gab needed a long skirt"

"Hmm"

"Can she stay for tea?"

"If 'she' wants to, Gaby?"

"I don't want to be too late, Mum's ringing from America later."

"They're hours behind us Drew" Mad advised

"I guess"

"So you're staying?" Mrs, I mean Auntie Carol queried

"Yes please"

I arrived home still a la Gaby a bit after seven thanks to a lift from Mrs P and just in time for Mum's call.

"Hiya kiddo, how are you doing? Everyone in the team has been asking after you"

"Okay Mum, I'm still sore and tell them thanks"

"Well that's to be expected, your Dad said you were having some soreness"

"Yeah my arms and 'specially my legs are really tender"

"It should get better in a few days, kiddo"

"I hope so, I've had to wear skirts because trousers hurt too much"

"Your Dad did mention that"

"I didn't want to really Mum, but it was either a skirt or sit indoors all day"

"Don't knock it if it works" she mentioned, "what did you get up to today?"

"Pictures, Mrs Rose took us"

"Bernadette's mum?"

"Yeah. How have you done this week?"

"The racing is a bit different to back home but we've done okay"

"Like?"

"Without trying to be smug, we've got the first three or four places every race"

"Kewl!"

"We have just finished the Tour, they hardly race more than forty miles most of the time, so we have had some advantage."

"But still" I put in

"They're mostly really friendly though, mind you I don't think they realise I'm English or that the others might understand it"

"How come?"

"Well we are the *German* Appolinaris team, I've heard some of the Americans talking about us, making comments and stuff."

"Didn't you say anything?"

"Well we've kept schtum, they talk a lot in the bunch, you know stuff like 'Mary, you attack on the back straight', they think we're brilliant because we are waiting for the move! After all, they genuinely can't understand German!"

I nearly fell off the sofa in hysterics.

"That is just so funny" I eventually told her, have you got any more races before you come back?"

"One later on today and another tomorrow in Washington, then we fly back to Germany on Sunday"

"Good luck then, oh I nearly forgot, Dad's taking me to get my new frame tomorrow"

"Oh that reminds me, I'll get George to send those wheels over for you, I did promise"

"Thanks Mum"

"Speak to you next week then Drew"

"Yeah bye Mum"

"Bye Drew"

This morning I awoke to find that most of the soreness that I've had for the last few days has abated. My legs and arms are still black and blue but I've got a pair of shorts on and yes, they're a little bit uncomfortable but nothing like yesterday.

"You ready Drew?" Dad called upstairs

"Minute"

We were soon heading down to Grantham where the shop with 'my' frame is situated.

"I've rounded up most of the bits Drew, you just need handlebars, pedals and shifters"

I guess I'll have to wait to get the rest

Dad went on however, "the guy in the shop is going to cut us a deal on anything we haven't got so you could ride it tomorrow if you feel up to it"

"Oh did you ring about not riding this afternoon?"

"Yes I did, the organiser said he'd transfer your entry across to the next Askern ten in September, he's got a reserve to fill your slot"

We arrived at the shop and I was introduced to my new steed. Ooh it's gorgeous! Suffice to say that apart from going round the corner for egg and chips, we stayed in the shop while Nigel, the mechanic, put it all together. When we left sometime after two I was beaming all over my face, Dad was a fair bit lighter in the wallet and I think Nigel was just glad we were gone!

When we got home, I got changed into cycling kit for the first time since the accident and with Dad keeping an eye on me I rode up and down our road for half an hour checking my new bike out.

"Well?" Dad asked

"It's brill! Thanks Dad"

"It's Nigel you should be thanking"

"I did, but you paid for the bits and stuff, thanks Dad"

I gave him a hug; I was pretty made up.

"Are we going to Lincoln tomorrow then?"

"I dunno"

"You're Mum thinks you should, even if you don't finish, just to get back into it"

As you may have noted if you've read much of this epic, I take great score by what my Mum says.

"Okay, can the girls come?"

"Sure"

That settled I got in some serious polishing and drooling!

Part 33

Race Ready

"What are you three up to?"

"Nothing!" Bernie told me

"Hmm" I didn't believe them

"Are you finished polishing that thing yet?" Mad asked

"Er yeah" I guiltily stopped my rubbing

"Come on Drew, you need a warm up before the start" Dad advised

"Yes Dad" I rolled my eyes at the girls

Mad slapped my bum as I passed

"Get orf!"

"Well it's nice" she stated

"See you in a bit" Ally mentioned

"Yeah"

"Good luck" Mad added

"Thanks"

Although my bruises were still making themselves felt I actually felt pretty good all things considered. I guess the new bike helped psychologically too. I made my way to the stretch of tarmac that on race days became the warm up zone and joined the small number of like minded individuals already there.

"Nice bike Bond" I was surprised by the comment

"Er thanks" I replied looking to see who had made the comment. I was surprised to find my 'arch rival' here at Metherringham alongside.

"You know what they say though" he went on

"What?"

"It's not the bike but the rider" he stated

"I guess so"

"See you on the circuit Bond" his tone was a bit confrontational

If he intended to phase me, he failed. If anything his comments had the opposite effect, firing me up even more!

The race started easy enough and I eased myself into race mode. The only thing to upset me on the first lap was the realisation that the wind was blowing from the direction of a nearby pig farm and we would have to put up with a pretty nasty pong each time we got to the bottom of the circuit!

By the time things started hotting up on lap five I was in full race mode, although in I was being more cautious than usual. There was a little voice at the back of my head saying 'careful, you don't want to fall off again' and the only way to get rid of it was to ride.

I hadn't seen the girls yet, if they weren't cooking something up I'm not Drew Bond! Well maybe that's not saying much eh? Next time past the start / finish area I discovered what they were up to, right alongside the circuit was a banner with 'Go For it Drew' painted on. And the conspirators were right there too.

No one seemed particularly interested in making a race of it today and to be honest I wasn't feeling up to any heroics myself. However fate was to play a hand and with ten laps to go it started to rain, I shouldn't have been surprised, it was forecast. I thought I was cautious today, as soon as the road got damp half the field gave up and I found myself in a small group with the usual shakers and movers.

Each time I passed Dad and the girls they started shouting encouragement and in the now damp conditions, it really did keep me going. Still no one was interested in doing more than get to the finish, so despite some reservations I decided to stir it up a bit. A quick down change, look behind, and Wang! I was off! After about 500 metres I risked a glance under my arm, damn! They were all just about on my wheel. I sat up and tagged on the back as they came past, at least I'd tried.

The rain stopped with two laps to go and the smelly breeze started to dry the road quite rapidly. I assessed how I felt and realised that I didn't actually feel too bad, the slow pace for much of the race certainly helped me today. So if I'm ok that probably means the others are too, I looked at my companions, all bigger, older and no doubt smarting after the last couple of times we met! Well, finishing today was the aim and I'd do that, I'd just play the finish by ear.

The others all looked ready for a sprint finish and I just sat at the back to get there. Like the rest of the race, the finish was lack lustre, no one moving until

the two hundred flag. I made my effort but in the end it came down to power and I did well to snatch 4th place about five lengths down.

"Well done Drew" Mad offered

"Good ride son" Dad added

"I'm glad that's over" I told them

"You okay" Ally asked

"Yeah, I guess. A bit sore"

"Get yourself a shower and get that wet kit off" Dad instructed

"You kids want to go into Lincoln?" Dad asked as he loaded my bike into the car

I shrugged; it was okay with me. The girls looked at each other and in a single chorus declared,

"Shopping!"

"I'll take that as a yes, Drew?"

"Yeah, 'sfine with me"

So we pootled the few miles into Lincoln and parked at the railway station. We all walked over to the shops together, then as I suspected Dad called us together.

"You lot okay on your own?"

"Course we are Dad"

"Just checking. Let's see, it's one fifteen now, how about we meet back at the car at three?"

"Okay"

"Right see you later" and with that he set off towards the cathedral.

"What 'r we gonna do?" Ally asked

"Well I'm starving" I offered

"Looks like it's food first then" Mad observed

"Maccy D's?" Bernie asked

"I dunno, I prefer BK really" I told them

"Well they're both up here somewhere" Ally mentioned.

We set off through the shops and as luck would have it, it was BK that we found first. A round of burgers and drinks later and we returned to the street for a bit of shopping. I recalled the last time we did this; I ended up with that stupid 'Babe' t-shirt, that is not going to happen today!

Being Sunday not all the shops were open but most of the big chains were so we still had plenty to go at.

"I need to get some stuff for next weekend" Mad advised us

"What's next weekend?" Bern asked

"Obicon!" Mad enthused

"You still going Drew?" Ally asked

"Yeah"

"Sound a bit more enthusiastic about it" Maddy pouted

"Sorry, but you know how I feel about the costumes"

"Why, what's she got you wearing?" Ally enquired

"Some weird stuff" I told them

"Like what?" Bernie pursued

"Well he's got the costume from Easter," Maddy started

"Ah" Ally nodded sagely

"...a Harry Potter outfit," she went on

"That's okay" Bernie mentioned

"Yeah, it's not Harry or Ron though, tell them what it is" I urged

"Mad?" Bern queried

"Hermione" she winced as she told them

"I can see why you're not too enthusiastic" Ally supplied

"There's more, tell 'em Mad" I suggested

"Sailor Moon"

"Mad!" Ally exclaimed

"And the other one Mad" I encouraged

"Yeah okay Drew. The other ones a Final Fantasy thing" Mad concluded

"I get to wear skirts all weekend" I stated sarcastically

"Well you did agree" Mad mentioned with a hurt tone

"Come on you two, let's not have you falling out" Ally interrupted before we started to argue

"Okay, truce?" I asked Mad

"Truce. But I still need to get some stuff" Mad agreed

"What do you need to get?" Bernie asked

"Just bit's and pieces really, tights and makeup really" Mad told us

"Well *Boots* are just up there" Ally pointed to where the chemists* shop was.

So we walked along to the store, me doing the bored boy shopping with girls.

"I'm just going to have a look at the cameras" I told them, spotting the distant display.

"Okay Drew, see you in a bit" Mad replied

The girls found me about fifteen minutes later.

"Get everything?" I enquired

"Yep, got your tights and some cool nail varnish" Mad answered

"Mad!" I hissed

"Oops, sorry Drew"

"Come on you two, let's have a look in *Top Shop*" Bernie suggested

"Yeah, I saw a real cool top the other week" Ally agreed

I tagged along behind, resigned to an afternoon of girl shopping.

I reckon girl's boutiques should have a waiting area for all the guys dragged in by their girl friends. I found a corner to lurk in while the girls raided the rails, there were at least four other guys doing similar 'I'm not really here' impersonations! I occupied myself by checking out the shop fittings and decorations.

"Stop looking at the cashier, what do you think?" Mad asked

"Eh?"

"The top?" she huffed

The top was red in a sort of lycra material with net sleeves, the main feature however was a sort of slit above her boobs with a row of sparkly bits around it.

"Erm nice" I offered

"But?"

"Well it shows a lot of cleavage"

"Not really, it's just a peek really, I'd be showing more if it was a sun top" she stated

"If you put it like that, it does look nice on you"

"But a bit tarty?"

"Sort of" I allowed

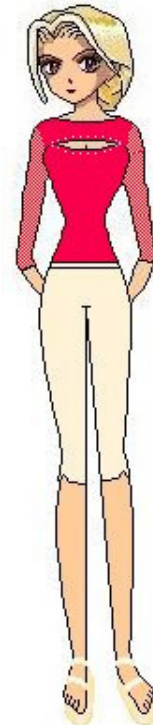
"Excellent" she grinned heading back to the changing rooms. Women!

"Come on Drew" Ally called a few minutes later

"Oh, right"

"I got you that top Drew" Mad mentioned

"What top?" I can be so blonde!



"Dur, the red one you were ogling" she replied

"What do you mean you got it for me?" I started to bristle

"Well you seemed to like it when I showed you" she stated

"Oh give the boy a break Mad" Bernie interrupted

"Well it is for Drew – to look at" Mad giggled

"Your face Drew" Ally chortled

"Come on, lets have a look in TQ" Bernie suggested

We all trooped up the precinct to Teen Queen for another boutique session. There was nowhere to hide here so I tagged along; carrying the bags as my friends once more descended on racks of clothing. I don't think I'll ever get used to the way girls do this stuff, me I'm in, look round, select something, try it and buy it. Not this lot, no every item on every rail is inspected, compared, discussed; well I'm sure any fellas out there know what I'm saying.

"Excuse me miss, is this yours?"

I span around to find a shop assistant proffering a carrier bag. My mind must have been on auto!

"Sorry?"

"Is this bag yours?" she repeated

"Oh," I checked what I had in my hand, discovering I was short of said bag, "I think so"

She handed me the bag; I glanced inside to check the contents. Yep looked like Mad's stuff.

"Er thanks" I managed

"No problem miss"

A moment later Mad joined me.

"What was that about?"

"Oh she was just giving me this," I indicated the bag, "I'd dropped it without realising" I explained.

Mad replied with a smacker on the cheek.

"Not that I mind, but what was that for?"

"Just for being you Drew"

The shop assistant gave us a funny look on the way out; I've no idea why.

"Hey look they've got Harry Potter wands" Bernie pointed to the display in the next window.

"I knew I'd forgotten something for Hermione" Mad exclaimed

"Come on then" I shrugged leading the way into the discount bookstore.

We hunted about for a bit without finding the grail of a wand.

"You girls looking for something in particular?" a lad of about eighteen asked

"Oh yes, we're looking for a wand" Bernie advised him

"You want a magic shop" he laughed

"We saw a Harry Potter set in the window with one" Ally told him

"Oh yeah," he replied then called to his colleague, "Mary, we got any of those Potter sets left?"

"No, we sold out yesterday" Mary called back

"Sorry girls, we're sold out" he apologised

"Damn, that would've been perfect too" Mad stated

"What about the one in the window?" Ally suggested

"What about it?" the youth asked

"Well couldn't we have that one?" Ally went on

"I guess, I'll have to ask"

"Thanks" Ally smiled at him

"You little flirt" Bernie mentioned

"What was all that about Al" Mad asked

"Well you want the wand thing, I'm just getting it for you" Al replied

"If you can hang on a couple of minutes, Mary will get it for you"

"Thanks" Ally fluttered her eyelashes

"Pleasure girls"

We trooped up to the front desk to wait for Mary to rescue the damn wand. I was smarting a bit at being included in the 'girls' then it dawned on me that the girl in TQ's had called me miss too. If it's never happened to you let me tell you it sucks. I mean if I was wearing girly stuff that's one thing but I've got shorts and t-shirt on! I wish I could grow a beard!

"There you go girls, that's four ninety nine" Mary stated

Mad paid and we trooped out.

"It looks like Drew's getting into a strop" Bernie mentioned

"I'm not! It's just, just"

"What?" Mad enquired

"Well do I look like a girl?" I asked them

"No, well perhaps a bit" Ally suggested

"You and Mad look like sisters when you're together," Bernie added

"That's all I need, even my friends" I moaned

"Come on Drew, at least your pretty" Al smirked

Mad was stubbornly silent on the subject; I took that as agreement with the others.

We did another couple of shops without incident before it was time to meet Dad at the car.

"Enjoy yourselves?" Dad enquired

"Okay I guess" I answered

"Great thanks Mr B" Ally put in

"You okay Drew" Dad asked

"Yeah fine, just tired I s'pose"

"You girls eating with us tonight? Dad queried

"I've got to go home" Bernie advised

"Me too, my Gran's over" Ally mentioned

"What about you Maddy?"

"No thanks Mr B, I told Mum I'd be home for tea"

"Looks like just the two of us then Drew" Dad stated.

After agreeing to tomorrow's plans we dropped the girls off and returned home.

"You sure you're alright son?"

"Yes Dad"

"As it's just us two, how about we eat out?"

"Sure"

So it was that 'The Star of Kashmir' fed the two men of the Bond family. We took our time, Mum wasn't due to ring tonight and my sister was staying over at Charlie's. Somewhere between the popadoms and the tikka massala Dad struck up the conversation.

"What's up Drew?"

"Nothing"

"Don't come that one with me, what is it?"

"Really it's nothing"

"But?"

"Okay, but it's nothing really. It's just that it doesn't matter what I wear, people are always mistaking me for a girl."

Dad just nodded sagely.

"Well it just gets annoying, do you think I look like Mad? Bernie reckons we look like sisters when we're together"

"Of course you don't, but I can see what Bernadette means"

"Not you too Dad" I hunched

"From a distance you do look quite alike I suppose, mind you she is about a fourth cousin"

"You mean we're related?"

"On your mothers side, I think you share great great grandparents or something"

"So Aunt Carol really is my Aunt?"

"I suppose so"

I wasn't sure if this new information was good, bad or just plain weird. I mean logically I've got distant relatives but we're not really a close family, we visit Gran a few times a year, most of my aunts, uncles and cousins get together at New Year but that's about it.

"What about me and Mad?" I'd heard that you shouldn't date family members.

"Oh don't worry, you're what's called 'kissing cousins'," he explained, "it's okay honest. Do you think we would have let you two get so involved otherwise?"

"I guess not," I admitted taking a lump of my Peshwari Naan.

"Back to your problem?" he prompted

"Oh yeah, well the thing is, it happens all the time. And Mad doesn't help"

"Well you're not dressing up anymore are you?"

"No. Well sort of."

"What is sort of?"

"Next weekend? The Con? All my costumes are girl characters."

"You had a choice though?"

"Yeah I guess" I hedged not wanting to admit to Mad's railroading tactics.

"Look Drew they're only costumes, you won't be pretending to be a girl like you were as Gaby will you?"

"I s'pose not" I allowed

"So dress up, have fun, and don't think about it too much. Do you want dessert?"

"Sag Aloo please"

Dad's arguments made sense but I still wasn't 100% happy.

* In this context a chemist is a general term for a pharmacy which in the UK generally sell a full range of personal hygiene and grooming products – nappies to perfume. *Boots* are the UK's largest chain and bigger stores do a range of household / kitchen goods, photographic stuff, toys and even strollers!

Part 34

Over The Edge

It was with more than a little trepidation that I set out Monday morning for a training ride. Was it really only last week that I had the accident? I deliberately chose a route that didn't go along the Worksop road and just took it steady, yesterday's race was ridden on adrenaline and I'm still quite sore. At least it looked like the weather would be better today, not that we'd got much planned, not much more than hanging out really.

I pootled along, being exceedingly cautious at any side roads, and contemplated just why I did this. Of all the sports out there, why did I pick on one of the most dangerous sports going? Well it's not the cycling that's particularly dangerous; it's the interaction with other traffic really. If I really thought about, I was fairly immune to the 'close calls' that I have nearly every time I go out, cars cutting in, pulling out, drivers on their phones or just driving too fast for narrow lanes.

So why do I do it? Mum's influence? Well although she encouraged me when I started, she never pushed me into it; it was more a natural progression from our family bike rides. Did I mention before that I hate football? And I'm hardly rugby material, I get bored running and I have trouble hitting small balls approaching at high speed. So I picked something I enjoy doing. Am I having second, nervous thoughts? You bet! I mean I could do track, I really enjoyed that session at Manchester but even they go out on the roads to train. Mountain biking? It wouldn't be the same and there wouldn't be any cars, just big rocks to hit!

I chortled to myself; all those Beckham wannabes would shit themselves doing my 'sissy' sport. 'Ooh it's hard, that car was close, you mean push harder?' the national obsession, a sport worth millions, and it's kids kicking a ball about! And if they hurt themselves they chwy and make a fuss, bike riders, even plebes like me, just get back on and keep going – now who're the wimps?

A particularly bumpy stretch of tarmac made me concentrate on what I was doing a bit more. I heard a car behind me and with the oncoming coal truck imagined it would wait the ten seconds the truck would take to pass. No way Jose! Dive past me and then cut straight to the kerb to avoid the now hooting truck. Me? Oh I'm just the bike that has to jam the brakes on and almost end up in the ditch to avoid the now almost stationary car! See? Hopefully that's today's attempt to kill me done with. Ha! I laugh in the face of danger!

I remember Mum once telling me of a similar incident back when she first started riding. She was out with her club one Sunday and a car did a similar trick forcing several riders onto the verge. One old geezer came out smiling though, it was before click in pedals, so every one had what Mum called quill

pedals, you know with toe clips and straps. Anyway this old bloke was gleeful because the car came so close that his pedal made contact and left a great spiral motif in the paintwork! Well they say every cloud has a silver lining!

I turned back into our estate and was soon in the shower. All this excitement, and before breakfast too. I checked my various aches and pains out while I dried myself off, the bruises were now mostly in the more yellow phase although a few darker patches stubbornly remain. Dressed, I joined my sister in the kitchen to get some breakfast.

"Morning Drew"

"Hi Jules"

"How did your ride go?"

"You mean apart from the mad assassin?"

She raised her brows at me. I went on

"The ride was okay I guess, I don't hurt as much as yesterday anyway"

"That's good. What are you doing today?"

"Just going to Mad's, hey did you know we're related?"

"Course, didn't you?"

"No, Dad told me last night"

Before I go on, I think I need to explain something for you. I know it seems that the gang spends a lot of time at the Peter's house, even more this summer. Well there is a reason; Aunt Carol has sort of assumed 'baby sitting' duties as the only non-working parent. Bernie's Mum works shifts at *Sainsbury's* in Worksop, her Dad is on the council works, I think he's an electrician. You already know what both Rhod and my parents do which just leaves Ally's Olds. Her Mum works in an office somewhere and her father runs a garage over at Langwith Junction. So, although she's not there 100% of the time, she is our 'responsible adult', remember she was first to the hospital last week? Any way, back to this morning.

"I thought you were at Charlie's last night?"

"I was but I decided to get a lift home with her Dad this morning, there's some stuff I need to do here today"

Sounded like they'd fallen out to me!

"Anyway, what brought up the rel's?"

"Oh we were just talking" I didn't really want to enlarge beyond that, "what's so urgent here then?"

"I thought I'd get the spare room ready for next week"

"Next week?" a blonde moment!

"We have guests. From America!"

"Oh yeah, who's sleeping where?" already having some idea what was coming.

"You get the spare room, Debbie and Britney go in your room" she stated

"Why do I have to move? Couldn't they use the spare room?"

"Hardly. Where do you propose two of them sleep, there's barely room for one bed, your room has plenty of space to put the pullout."

"Debbie could share with you, you've got a double bed"

"As if! If you think I'm sharing with a stranger!"

Looks like I was going to be evicted.

"Need any help?" I half-heartedly offered

"No, it's mostly tidying stuff up so you can get in, but you can do the washing up"

"Okay" I sighed

"And you could run the Hoover round down here"

"Yes mistress" I mocked which got a strange look from my sibling.

It was getting on for ten when I grabbed my mobile and headed out to Mansion Peters. On the way over I thought about whether I should mention my newly found information regarding our families. Does Mad know already? If I didn't, why would she? I was still undecided when I arrived.

"Morning Drew"

"Hi Mad"

"Everyone else is already here" she told me as we walked through to the back garden.

"Hi Drew" Rhod mentioned

"Hi guys" I greeted them collectively

The girls chorused a "hi" in reply

"What's doing then?" I asked

"Not much, Rhod was just telling us about his Gran's cat getting run over" Bern advised me

"Don't let me interrupt then" I sighed

"Go on Rhod, it landed on the bonnet" Ally prompted

"Yeah bonnet, that's right, it landed legs out like this" he sat back to demonstrate for us. "Sort of Tom & Jerry style! By the time the car stopped, Ging was off across the road"

"Wasn't she hurt?" Mad enquired

"Probably, she only reappeared just before Dad and I left to meet Mum, Gran was going to take her to the vet this morning" he concluded

"I hope she's okay Rhod" Ally offered

"I don't suppose there's too much the matter, I mean she took off like a Ferrari"

"Still" Ally mentioned

"Talking of relatives, did you know me and Mad are related"

"Course we do" Bernie replied

I was stunned. Did everyone else know but me?

"Yeah we all know Gaby is Mad's cousin" Rhod put in

"No, I mean really related"

"You mean like for real?" Ally asked

"Did you know Mad?" Bern asked her

"Yeah, Mum told me a while ago but it's not like we're close family, my great great aunt Doris was Drew's great great Gran. I think Mum said we're fourth cousins or something like that" Mad explained, "what brought that up Drew?"

"I just found out last night, that's all"

"Well *Cousin* Drew you fancy going up the village?" Mad proposed

"Sounds good" I replied

"I need the chemists" Ally mentioned

"We gonna be long?" Rhod asked

"Dunno, we need to be back for lunch anyway. Why" Mad queried

"I was gonna ring Gran about Ging"

"Do it before we go" I suggested

"You're not just a pretty face are you?" Ally riposted

I just blushed. Rhod and Maddy went inside to organise the call.

"Are you three coming or what?" Maddy called from the back door

"What" I reflexively replied. Well I thought it was funny.

We joined the others and set off with a shopping list from Mrs P, Aunt Carol as well as our own errands.

"So how's the cat?" Bernie asked Rhod

"She'll live, nothing broken and the vet couldn't find anything else"

"Only eight left then" I mentioned

"Eight what?" Rhod queried

"Dur. Lives of course"

"Oh yeah, I guess" he replied absently

"Something up Rhod?" Bernie suggested

"Not really, Gran just reminded me that I'm going again this weekend"

Knowing how Rhod felt about his visits to his Dad we all let the subject drop. We were soon in the great metropolis of Warsop and our first stop was the chemist's for Ally. Rhod elected to wait outside citing the limited space in the little shop. I elected to join him after a couple of minutes inside; they were looking at women's stuff. Rhod was muttering to himself when I returned to the street.

"Mfanwy tidy your room, Mfanwy put on a dress, Mfanwy this, Mfanwy that" his tone was mocking

"Hey Rhod what's up?" I interrupted, "who's Merfanwee?"

Rhod jerked to attention at my voice.

"Oh hiya"

"Who's Merfanwee?" I repeated

Obviously a bit flustered, Rhod replied

"My er, ah, cousin. In Wales."

"You never said you've got cousins and stuff"

"Never came up" he mentioned

"Guess not" I shook my head

"What are you two up to?" Mad queried

"Rhod was just telling me about his cousin Merfanwee"

I wasn't quite sure, but I thought Ally shot Rhod a look.

"I wasn't really, I just said she was my cousin" Rhod stated

"Where next?" Bernie asked

"Bakers and the supermarket" Mad told us looking at her list

We trooped along the pavement to the crossing, waited for the lights to change and dove into the bakers on the other side.

"Hi girls"

It was Mrs Jenkins from the bank, just my luck!

"Oh hi" Ally replied

"Didn't hardly recognise you Gaby without a skirt on" she joked

I blushed again, embarrassed and relieved at the same time. Maddy quickly picked up the conversation.

"Shorts are more practical for doing stuff"

"I suppose so" Mrs Jenkins allowed, "still, you always look pretty, whatever you're wearing"

Rhod and Ally started to smirk and Bernie decided the contents of the hot cabinet were very interesting. Me, I was even redder now.

"Er thanks" I replied

"Well I have to get back, early lunch" she indicated the cup and bag she was holding, "bye girls".

"Bye" we sort of chorused as she left

Mad got the bread and pastries on her list and we headed back towards the supermarket.

"Why me?" I mentioned to no one in particular

"It could have been worse" Ally suggested

"How?"

"Well she could have spotted you for a boy" Ally went on

"You'd be in deep doo doo then," Bernie added

"I guess"

For once being mistaken for a girl has a plus side!

Well I have to say that after the trip up the village, the rest of the day was pretty normal! We got back to Maddy's just as Mrs P was serving out our lunch, sandwiches, crisps and stuff followed by home made fruit salad with ice cream – not gourmet stuff but enjoyed just the same! The afternoon was spent playing badminton; I tried to emulate my skills of the school tournament a couple of weeks ago, however it seemed that as a boy I suck at badminton!

After tea we variously got collected, dropped or otherwise returned home where I, for my sins set to polishing my new bike, again!

Tuesday morning. Was I hearing Mad right?

"You want to ride tonight?" I clarified

"Why not? She asked defensively

"Hey, if you want to ride I'll come and cheer you on Mad"

"Aren't you riding then?" she probed

"I thought I'd give it a miss after last week"

"Pity"

"Why?"

"I wanted to compare our times"

"Yeah well"

"It's that road isn't it?"

"That obvious?"

"Well you'll have to get over it sometime" Mad mentioned in a softer tone

"I know, but not just yet"

"Do you think you could check my bike then?" she asked

"Sure, you coming over?"

"Half an hour?"

"See you then"

"Byee"

I put down the phone. There I'd admitted it. I was afraid to go down that damned road, past that junction. Logically I know the chances of a repeat are zillions to one, but still...

Maddy wheeled her bike into the bicycle land that is our garage.

"Hiya Drew"

"Hi Mad, you want to get a drink while I do your bike?"

"Thanks"

"You know where"

Mad went into the house while I put her bike into the stand. I'll be straight; Mad's bike is not a racer, not by any definition! I was checking that her gears were working when I got the idea.

"How is it?" mad asked returning with two cans of pop

"S okay but it's never gonna fly" I joked

"Well it will have to do for my short race career"

"What if I had an alternative?"

"What do you mean?"

"Another bike"

"Eh?"

"What if you borrowed a bike for tonight?"

"I suppose," she creased her brow in thought a moment, "you don't mean yours?"

"No not mine, Mums"

"Get real Drew, it's right fancy with all those gears and stuff, and it's your Mum's" she stated

"Humour me eh? Just try it, Mum wouldn't mind. It's only collecting dust at the moment."

She contemplated the idea a while as I opened my can.

"Okay, but if I don't like it I ride mine"

"Deal"

I took Mad's clunker out of the stand, retrieved Mum's bike from it's hook and gave it the once over, just a little more air in the tyres and it was ready. I stood it on the floor next to the workbench and indicated for Mad to get on.

"The saddles a bit high isn't it?"

"Stand on the pedal and push up"

She was soon perched atop the machine but not looking very comfortable. A couple of minutes with an Allen key and at least her position was right.

"I'm not sure about this" Mad stated nervously, "and I can't use these pedals"

"If I put your pedals on will you give it a go?"

"Okay"

So that's what I did. Ten minutes later, with me riding alongside, Mad was getting to grips with Mum's race bike. Half an hour later she had mastered the Ergo levers and was starting to enjoy herself! We returned to the garage.

"Okay I'm convinced" she enthused as she carefully propped the machine up.



"If you're riding that you need to look the part too"

"I am not wearing one of those suit things!" she stated

"Let me have a look to see what I can find"

"Okay"

An hour later we both rode over to Mad's place.

"I thought I was seeing double" Aunt C mentioned

I had managed to round up a full set of kit for Mad, mitts, shorts and jersey and convinced her to try toe clips without the straps. She looked like she'd been doing it for years.

"Drew leant me some kit for tonight" Mad pointlessly told her

"And a bike?"

"It's Mum's, she gets a team bike now so I said Mad could use it tonight"

Mrs P, although not a cyclist was obviously aware that the sparkly machine her daughter was parking was not a *Halfords* £99 special!

"You take care of that, remember it's not yours" she told Mad

"Yes Mum, I know"

"So you're both racing tonight then?" Aunt Carol asked

"Just me," Mad replied, "Drew doesn't feel up to it"

"I'm the support tonight" I informed her

I was nervous as I followed Mad along toward Cuckney but by the time we passed the site of my accident I was busy alongside her giving her tips.

"Hello young Bond, feeling better?" John greeted me

"Yes thanks, a bit sore still"

"You both riding?"

"Just Mad tonight, I'm the masseuse" I joked

Mad sorted the paperwork and joined me at 'our' bench. I returned the favour that I'd previously received from Mad, her legs felt really nice, I think I like rubbing girls legs! I kept enviously looking at everyone else getting ready, but I'm not riding. John had put Mad off number three so she nervously rode off towards the start. I could stand it no longer, I mean I had all my kit, heck, my girlfriend is riding, why wasn't I riding?

"John can I get a ride please?"

"Sure Gaby, you're just in time"

I got twenty-nine, last off. By the time I was fully ready I was just in time to cheer Maddy past. For a complete novice she was looking pretty stylish even if she wasn't going that fast. I made my way to the start and waited my turn.

"Go!"

I was quickly up to speed and in just over a minute I was past my bogey junction, Maddy riding had just taken me over the edge, giving that extra push that I needed. Well I concentrated on turning the pedals and I only just spotted Mad as she headed to the finish, I reckoned she had about a minute to go, so that's under thirty minutes! Pretty cool. By the time I reached the same spot, my earlier fears were long gone and my computer was still running in the 23's.

"Come on Drew" Mad shouted as I passed her about a hundred metres from the line.

I heaved myself over the line unable to even gasp my number. Mad was waiting when I got back to the 'HQ'.

"I didn't think you could resist it once we got here" Mad told me

"What did you do?" I managed between gasps

"I don't know yet, it was so much easier on your Mum's bike"

For once the bike did make the difference!

"Gaby!" John called out

"Ye-ss"

"Ah there you two are," he mentioned coming over to us, "well done both of you. Madeline, you've done 29.31 and Gaby another excellent ride, 24.45!"

"Thanks John"

"Pleasure ladies"

"Weeee!" Mad mentioned

"Well done Mad, that's quicker than my first go"

We celebrated with a bag of chips and a pickled onion on the way home. I've got a sneaky feeling that Mad riding tonight was a ploy to get me to, if it was she certainly didn't spare any effort. I'm pretty impressed with her time; perhaps it's in the family genes? Back home things were not gonna go quite so smoothly!

Part 35

On Thin Ice

"Dad's gunning for you" Jules told me as I dumped my sweaty kit into the washer

"Why?"

"Dunno, he was muttering a lot though"

"There you are! In here, now!" Dad bellowed

Jules shrugged her shoulders and I followed Dad into the lounge with no idea what was up, other than trouble.

"You have some explaining to do young man. Just where is your mother's race bike?"

So that was it.

"The Peters" I told him

He relaxed a little but his tone didn't soften.

"And just what is it doing there?"

"Mad borrowed it to ride tonight" I mumbled, "I'm picking it up tomorrow, honest"

"And just why did Madeline think she could use it?"

"Because I said so. It's not her fault Dad. It was all my idea"

"And?"

"I thought she'd enjoy riding a proper race bike instead of her clunker, really Dad it was me"

"Well did she?"

"Yes, well I think so, she did 29.31!"

"Drew, I got home tonight, your mother's bike was missing, the garage wasn't locked properly, I thought it had been stolen. I know you meant well but you could have at least left a note. If the Brown's (our next but one neighbours) hadn't seen you two outside earlier, I would have had the police here."

"Sorry Dad" I apologised

"Look son, you have to start taking a bit of responsibility for what you do."
His tone had softened somewhat.

"Yes Dad" I mumbled

"I know you didn't mean to do anything wrong but you really should have asked before taking the bike, it's your Mum's not yours and it's only polite to ask"

"But you weren't here"

"No but you could have rung me at work, that would have saved me from panicking and you from getting bawled out"

"Yes Dad" I agreed

"Consider yourself told off. Now how did you get on if Madeline did a 29?"

With the wind gone from my sails I admitted my time,

"24.45"

"Well done. Now if Maddy wants to borrow the bike again, ask ok"

"Yes Dad"

"Off to bed with you, an early night won't do you any harm"

So I shuffled off up to my room.

I awoke to the incessant buzzing of my phone.

"Yeah" I managed

"Drew?"

"Oh hi Mad"

"Sorry you got chewed out over the bike"

"How'd you know?"

"Jules rang last night"

"Yeah well, it was my fault. What's up?"

"Oh nothing really, just thought I'd remind you to borrow Jules boots"

"Oh yeah" I replied with less than any enthusiasm, "I'll bring them over later"

"Remember your skates too"

"Sure"

"See you later"

"Later" I put the phone down and checked the time, urgh eight o'clock!

Rhod's Mum is giving us a lift into Sheffield later, she's going to the wholesalers, we're going skating, ice skating that is. I decided to get up, I'll never get back to sleep now! An hour and a half later I arrived at the Peters mansion on Mad's bike.

"Hi Drew"

"Morning again"

"Did I wake you up?"

"Only partly, I borrowed the boots" I advised, handing my rucksack to her.

She looked inside to confirm the contents.

"Didn't you bring your skates?"

"Damn I knew I'd forgotten something" I sighed

"We've got time for you to go back for them"

"Nah, I'll hire a pair when we get there. Let me sort the bikes out so I don't have to do it later"

"Did you get in a lot of trouble?"

"Not really, I just got sent to bed in the end" I mentioned as I wheeled her bike into the garage.

It only took me a few minutes to swap the pedals about so that I could ride Mum's bike home later. I rejoined Mad inside where she had some toast waiting for me.

"Cheers Mad"

"No probs. Bikes done?" she asked around her own bread.

"Yeah. Where's your Mum?"

"Hoovering up stairs"

I realised I could hear the thrum of a cleaner somewhere in the house.

"We gonna go then? You can bring your toast" Mad suggested

"Fine"

"Bye Mum" she called up the stairs. The hoover stopped above us.

"You kids off then?" Mrs P asked from the landing.

"Yeah, we should be back about four"

"Okay, see you later"

"Bye Mrs P" I offered

"Bye Drew"

We walked across to Sylv's getting there a bit after ten thirty.

"There you are, we nearly went without you" Rhod greeted us

"No we didn't" Ally mentioned from behind him, "Bernie's not here yet"

"Yes she is" Bern stated coming in to the salon behind us.

"Hi kids" Sylv enthused as she appeared from the house. "Everyone here?"

"Yes Mum" Rhod told her.

"Well come on then, times a wasting!"

We all piled back out front to where Sylv's RAV waited. Sylv locked her shop up behind us and we all piled into the little 4x4 for the drive across to Sheffield. It's funny how you get used to things, like the route you take to get from A to B. I was a bit thrown when Sylv didn't go the way I expected, instead taking a more direct route to the main road via the lanes.

There was a constant banter from Sylv that included everyone in the car and before I realised we were negotiating the traffic of Sheffield. We followed the tram tracks down towards the city centre, not the line that we've ridden some

times from Meadowhall but the southern line. Sylv pulled into the car park at the skating rink and we all piled out.

"Got everything?" she asked

"Think so" Rhod told his Mum

"Where are your skates Drew" Ally asked

"I forgot them"

"Okay then, I'll meet you round at *Macdonald's* at three"

"Yes Mum" Rhod agreed for us

"Bye kids"

"Bye Mrs Morgan" we chorused

Sylv left on her errands and we joined the short queue waiting for the first session. Once inside the girls headed off to change, Rhod went to find some seats and I went to hire some skates.

"Size 5 please" I asked when I got to the front of the queue

The girl went to get a pair of skates for me but returned empty handed.

"Sorry but all the fives are out"

"All of them?" I asked. This was a real bummer.

"Well all the boys ones, I've got some girls fives" she offered

What choice have I got? Either sit and watch the others or wear girls boots and have some fun.

"Er okay then"

Some girls waiting behind me sniggered as she handed me the pink skates.

"There you go," she said smiling

"Er thanks" I winced as I took the boots to more sniggering from the girls behind.

I found Rhod down at the rink side putting his skates on.

"What have you got there?" he asked

"This is all they had left in my size" I told him

"Well no ones gonna really see them under your jeans are they" he consoled me

"I guess not" I agreed sitting to put the skates on.

The girls joined us a few minutes later bedecked in their skating outfits and already wearing their skates. The girls always make an effort to look the part when we skating, short skirts and tights for them rather than the jeans that most of their peer's favour. They always look pretty cute and attract a lot of attention.

"Nice skates Drew" Ally stated

"It's all they had in my size" I started to explain.

"Come on you two" Bernie encouraged, "let's get on the ice"

We walked down to the gate and slipped the covers off of our blades and joined the other skaters on the rink. It took a few circuits to get used to the ice, I haven't skated for a while and I'm not exactly an expert! The girls and Rhod are all a bit more accomplished than me so I contented myself to just doing circuits while they started doing a few figures.

I was enjoying myself watching Mad trying a toe loop when I was knocked over.

"Oi watch it!" I exclaimed trying to pick myself up

"Or what poofta" my assailant challenged.

"Who you calling a poof?" my blood was up!

By now several other kids were gathered around.

"You" he shoved at me again.

"Give over Danny, you'll get us chucked out again" it was one of the sniggering girls

"It's not his fault, they were the only skates left" the other girl joined in

Danny came to a decision.

"Okay poofta, just keep outa my way"

"Come on Danny"

The little group broke up and I muttered unsavoury ideas under my breath before following them.

"What was all that about?" Mad joined me and linked her arm with mine

"These" I pointed to my skates

"Come on lets get a drink" she proposed

"Okay"

We skated round to the gate and left the ice joining the others who had already got us drinks.

"What was that about Drew" Rhod asked

"Moron wanted to make something of these" I told them indicating my footwear

"Like you say, moron" he agreed

"You all look really professional doing those figure things" I mentioned

"It's not that difficult Drew" Bernie stated

"Wow she's good" Ally drew our attention to the ice.

A girl wearing a mauve skating outfit was skating at a fair old rate around the rink then breaking into a complex combination which included several moves I've seen them do on the telly. We all watched as she continued her routine and joined several others in applauding her performance when she came to halt. She waved at us before heading off the ice herself.

"I wish I could do even half of that" Ally sighed

"Lots of practice I suppose" I mentioned

"Yeah, I bet she's here every day to get that good"

"I guess" Ally lamented

"Come on then, lets get back out" Bernie enthused

We returned to the ice and after a few laps, the others moved back into the middle to practice their moves again. I looked around to see if 'Danny' was

on the ice but thankfully he wasn't. I tried a turn and nearly landed on my butt.

"You my girl, look like you could do with some help" a girls voice stated from behind me. She offered a hand and I was soon upright again. It was the girl doing the fancy stuff earlier.

"Thanks, you're pretty good and that outfit looks really good on you"

She blushed a bit

"Well not really, my coach says I should practice more, that's why I'm down here during the public session"

"Well you look good to me, I can't even do a simple turn"

"Thanks. Tell you what, I'll teach you how to do that turn, I'm Jessica by the way"

"Really?"

"Sure, every girl should be able to skate!"

"I I'm not..." she cut me off before I could go any further

"You don't have to be very good girl, just good enough so you don't end up on your bum" Jessica stated

"Okay. Lead on"

She led me into the quieter middle of the ice, the opposite end to the rest of the gang.

"Okay, just practice this for a minute" she showed me how to move backwards, then seeing me looking down the ice asked "friends?"

"Yeah, they're all a lot better than me"

"I won't be a minute, keep practising that"



She took off down to the others. I concentrated on the exercise I was doing, she was right it's not really that difficult. With a whoosh of ice Jessica was back.

"Okay Gaby, let's try the turn"

"Who said I was Gaby?" I asked

"I just told your friends that I was teaching their girlfriend and they said that Gaby would appreciate it, why?"

"Oh nothing, but you can call me Gab if you like" I'll get them back later!

"Okay Gab, watch this"

Well you don't need to have every single minute described but Jessica was a pretty good teacher. When she showed me a move it looked so easy, when I tried I more often than not ended up on my derrière! But as the afternoon went on I got more proficient, she even had me doing some simple figures and I could do the turn too. The hooter sounded for the end of the session.

"Thanks Jess"

"No prob's Gab, I really enjoyed it. I needed a break from serious training"

We skated over to the gate and left the ice.

"If you're coming over Gab, give the desk a ring and ask for me, I'm here nearly every day, we can do some more"

"That'd be cool" I agreed

"And wear a skirt next time, it's so much easier to skate in than jeans" she finished

"I'd best go, the others are waiting"

I wasn't sure of the protocol but Jess gave me a light hug and kissed my cheek, I returned the hug but not the kiss.

"Bye Gab

"Thanks again Jess"

"Huh, I can be jealous you know" Mad surprised me

"What you want a kiss?"

"Well it's not compulsory"

I gave her a quick buss then sat to remove those troublesome boots.

"Did you enjoy your lesson?" Ally asked joining us

"Yeah, I learnt lots"

"We saw" Bernie commented

"And who told her I was Gaby?" I demanded thoughts of revenge forgotten, for now.

"Sorry Drew that was me" Rhod admitted

"Why?"

"Well she came up to invite us to join you, but we thought you'd be better off one on one then she said something like 'what's her name? I forgot to ask', and I sort of said Gaby" he concluded

"She was talking as though you were a girl Drew" Maddy pointed out

"I'll just return these then we can get a burger" I suggested

We had half an hour before Sylv was due to pick us up so we walked around to Maccy D's to grab some burgers and drinks while we waited. The girls

hadn't bothered to put their jeans back on so they attracted quite a bit of attention in their short skirts.

"Good day?" Sylv asked when we'd all clambered into the RAV.

"Brill!" everyone enthused

"Drew's got a new girlfriend" Bernie was stirring

"Have not, Jess is just a friend" I denied

"Jess is it? And on the first date" now Mad was mixing it

"Give over" I stated

"Hey Drew are you gonna stay over tomorrow night, we're leaving pretty early on Friday." Mad asked

"I guess I can, it would make sense I suppose"

"Are we doing anything tomorrow?" Ally asked

"Like what?" Bernie asked

"I dunno" Ally admitted

"I've got to cut the grass" I mentioned

"How about you all come round for tea in the afternoon" Sylv offered

"Sounds good to me" I agreed

"Well I'm there anyway" Ally confirmed

The others nodded their agreement.

"See you tomorrow then Drew" Mad stated

"It'll be about twelve I think, I'll bring my bag"

"Well you won't need much, you'll be in costume most of the time remember"

"Thanks for reminding me" I grumped getting onto Mum's bike

Mad grabbed me for a quick kiss before I left.

So endeth another 'exciting' day!

'Mad was right', I thought as I packed my bag. 'If I'm in costume all the weekend I only need night clothes and the stuff I'm travelling in.' On one level I'm really looking forward to this weekend, on another I already hate it!

When Mum rang I told her about Tuesday, she seemed okay with it, especially when I said how well Mad had done. The team is riding a three-day in Sweden this weekend, so they are travelling tomorrow so I won't miss a call by being at Mad's tomorrow night anyway.

I fell asleep doing double axel's and double loops in my mind, my mauve dress flying around me. What? It must be Jessica skating not me.

Part 36

Gabicon!

Dad starting the car woke me up and the sunlight streaming into the room ensured that sleep would not be returning. I glanced at the clock, urgh, half seven! I decided to go for a ride before the day warmed up too much and I didn't think the neighbours would appreciate me starting on the lawn at this hour either.

I was at least in a better mood this morning and I was quickly into a pleasant mile-eating mode. Perhaps it's the weather but even the motorists are being more considerate this morning! It was just before nine when I got home, plenty early enough to shower, breakfast and cut the grass – not necessarily in that order.

"What are you up to today?" Jules enquired joining me at the breakfast bar.

"Cutting the grass this morning then going over to Rhod's this afternoon" I told her

"You're not in for tea then?"

"Nah. I'm staying over at Mad's, we're leaving for this costume thing pretty early"

"Oh yeah. I'd forgotten you were away this weekend"

"That's what I wanted the boots for remember?"

"So that's what you wanted them for. I did wonder"

I rolled my eyes in exasperation.

"You doing anything much?" I enquired

"I think a bunch of us are going into Worksop. Can you change your bed clothes before you leave, I'll do a big wash tomorrow"

"Yes mum" I mocked, then had to dodge Jules swipe.

This developed rapidly into several minutes of my sister chasing me around the house to exact her 'revenge'.

"I give up" I panted

"Right get that bed stripped" she ordered.

I was still working on the lawn when Jules left to meet her friends at eleven thirty; this grass cutting was taking a lot longer than I thought it would! Still the day was pleasantly warm and I was enjoying the smell of the new mown grass, it made the day seem really, I dunno, fresh. I eventually finished the green swathe and set to cleaning the *Flymo* up before putting it away.

My delayed shower was all the better as I washed a combination of grass cuttings and sweat from my scalp. I decided that my legs could do with a quick seeing to but looking at the clock I was now running decidedly late, the legs would have to wait. I dressed in shorts and a t, grabbed my phone charger and rucksack and after locking up, left for the Peters place.

On one level I was really looking forward to this weekend, three whole days away, with my 'girlfriend'. Then there was the down side – three days of dressing up in stupid costumes and worse, girl costumes! I mused about all this as I walked over and realised it didn't bother me as much as I thought. What bothered me more was stuff like yesterday, the reactions of that Danny kid and Jess? Why did one think I was a girl and the other not? I suppose those two girls might have sicced Danny on to me, a boy wearing white girls skates. And I guess Jess saw the skates and saw what she wanted to see; the guys didn't help naming me Gaby to her.

"Hello! Anyone in?" Mad's voice broke my daydreaming.

"Oh hi Mad"

"I came looking for you, you said twelve and it's gone one now" she mentioned

"Sorry, the grass took longer than I thought"

"Come on, let's get back to my place, Mum said she'd drop us off at Sylv's"

"Okay" I hadn't noticed that we were still a couple of streets away from the Peters residence.

Aunt C dropped us outside the salon, promising to pick us up about five.

We went into Sylv's where the woman herself was at work on someone's hair.

"Hi you two, the others are already in back, go on through"

"Thanks" Mad answered

I always feel a bit uncomfortable in the salon although I've been in there hundreds of times. We joined the rest of our gang in the lounge where there was an all out PS2 battle going down.

"Hi guys, who's winning?" I greeted them

"Well it's not me" Rhod bemoaned

Despite the pleasant day outside, everyone seemed content to be inside. Ally went to help out in the salon after a while leaving us to Bernie's tender mercies. I'd just been trounced for the second time and was idly inspecting my legs when Sylv came through.

"Anything interesting Drew?"

My head snapped up.

"Anything interesting on there kiddo?" Sylv enquired

"Er no, I was just checking for spots" I coloured up as I admitted what I was doing.

"Looks like they need doing" everyone I know knows I shave my legs for my cycling.

"I didn't have time when I showered" I told her

"You'll need to do them later Drew" Mad advised, "you can't have hairy legs this weekend"

"What's this weekend?" Sylv asked

"Me and Drew are going to Obicon with my parents"

"What's Obicon?" Rhod's Mum pursued

"A sort of costuming convention" I supplied

"Yeah and Drew is gonna be wearing skirts all weekend" Mad went on oblivious to the shade of crimson my face was assuming.

Sylv looked thoughtful for a moment.

"Come with me young man" she instructed

"Where?" I said automatically getting up.

"The salon silly, come on"

I shrugged and followed her out into the shop.

"Let's do those legs for you," she stated motioning me into the small curtained area she used for privacy.

"Well if I can borrow a razor" I started

"Don't be daft, I've got a gap in appointments, I'll give you a wax. Now pop those shorts off and lie on the table"

I remembered last time, I had fallen asleep!

"Well okay I s'pose"

I should have run screaming, instead being conscious this time I just screamed as each strip ripped the hair from my legs. I was in so much shock I didn't realise she was spreading the gunk up my arms too. After the first strip I didn't have much choice but to let her finish, I mean I'd look totally stupid with just one hairless strip on one arm wouldn't I?

"There you go Drew, all nice and hairless"

"Remind me never to volunteer for a wax job" I mentioned as I pulled my shorts back up my now smooth legs, I shuddered at the delicious feel.

"What was all that screaming about?" Rhod asked when I returned to the PS slaughterhouse.

"Your Mum decided to wax my legs for me"

"Oh cool!" Mad exclaimed

"And my arms" I advised

"You let her do that?" Bernie queried

"Let is a very relative term" I stated

"Yeah, give Mum an inch and she takes a mile" Rhod agreed

"Well I wouldn't want to agree for her to do anything" Mad mentioned

Ally rejoined us, followed in short order by Sylv. We all trooped out into the back yard for tea, which was a salad that Rhod and Ally had prepared earlier, when did Rhod start with the food bit? What with my 'beauty' treatment, the afternoon had flown by and we had barely finished eating when Mrs P arrived. Mad and I bade our farewells and departed the tea party.

"Drew? You know how you'll be dressing as a girl most of the weekend?" Mad started

"Yes and whatever it is no!" I stated

"You haven't heard yet" she pouted

"Alright, what?"

"Well would you mind pretending to be a girl as well?" she asked with that slightly pleading inflection.

"I s'pose not" I allowed

"Great!" Mad enthused, "erm I don't suppose you'd let me stick your breast forms on"

"Aren't your boobs big enough" I tried to deflect where she was going with this.

"Not on me silly, on you"

"What about travelling there?" that'll catch her out

"What about it?"

"Well they are sort of obvious, especially on a boy. Like me" I suggested

"Dur, you'll travel dressed of course!" she threw at me

Of course I knew that was what she was hinting at all along.

"Please Drew, it would be so much easier too if you're a 'girl' all weekend" she begged

Annoyingly I could actually see her logic; it would be less embarrassing if I was a girl wearing these costumes, and it's not as though I hadn't done it before.

"I said I wasn't doing that stuff again, remember?"

"I know but please Drew, pretty please" she fluttered her eyelashes and looked coyly at me.

"If I do it, it's positively the last time" I asserted

"You'll do it?"

"Okay I'll do it" I agreed

"Brill!" she enthused, grabbing me in a bear hug.

"Give over"

"Sorry Drew"

"If I'm doing it lets get it sorted" I suggested

An hour later I was sat watching telly with my cousin, aunt and uncle wearing a denim miniskirt and a silky pink top with spaghetti straps, fashionably showing my bra straps. Deep joy! The unfamiliar feeling of the breast forms tugging at my chest disturbed me just enough to put me off the Blackadder repeat we were supposedly watching. So much for no more Gabrielle Peters! The elder Peters family members were totally unfazed when I joined them; I got the feeling they were expecting my appearance as Gaby.

Next morning we drove down to Dunstable where the 'con' is taking place, I was feeling more 'Gaby' like and with everyone referring to me as Gaby I was pretty relaxed. Instead of going straight to the con we drove up to Whipsnade Park, the country retreat for London Zoo. I'm not a great fan of Zoo's but Whipsnade is a very open place, neither a full cage affair nor safari park, rather somewhere in between concentrating on breeding rare animals. Mad and I walked round arm in arm like girlfriends, well I guess that's what we are! We had lunch there then took a circuitous route, well I think we got a bit lost actually, to the hotel hosting the con and where we are staying.

We registered for our rooms and I joined Mad in lumping our luggage up to the eighth floor! I had forgotten what we were supposed to wear by way of costumes today, I was not a happy bunny when I realised it was Sailor Moon day! Bum!

It was nearly three when we joined the now costumed Peters seniors to go and register for the con itself. Mrs P was wearing a long diaphanous white frock and pointy ears, I thought she was supposed to be from Lord of the Rings. Mad's Dad made a pretty convincing LOTR wizard; the Peters never do anything by half measures! With Mad and I in our Sailor Moon outfits we joined the short queue for registration in the hotel reception area.

The girls doing the registration used a mini Polaroid camera to get a passport sized picture, which they laminated onto our con id cards. All weekend my id would show me wearing Mad's long wig and a 'cute' hair bow. Yeagh! Once inside it was an eye opener for me as a con virgin. Mad had tried to explain the format to me but to be honest I hadn't really been paying attention.

"Okay you two, meet your Dad and I here at six and we'll go for dinner" Aunt C suggested

"Kewl!" Mad agreed, I was still bewildered looking around the main hall.

"Come on Gab" Mad pulled me along into the hall proper.

"Where're we going?" I asked

"Lets have a look round the stalls first"

I was surprised and a bit embarrassed the first time someone stopped us for a picture. Mad gleefully posed and I imitated her position much to the delight of the David Bailey wannabe. What worried me most was that lots of people would have pictures of Gaby by the end of the weekend, if this was anything to go by.



"Does that happen a lot?" I asked my girlfriend

"Oh yeah, loads, " she told me, "sometimes you get like loads of people taking pictures and sometimes you get pulled into group shots as well."

"I wish you'd said before"

"I thought you realised, you've seen all the pictures on the net"



Mad temporised

"You mean they could get on the internet too?"

"Course, I'd be surprised if someone hasn't got pictures posted by next weekend" she advised me.

"Just what I need" I sighed

"There are spot prizes as well, so smile a lot" she advised

I was less than keen on this aspect of the weekend but it was a bit late to wimp out now. We strolled around the sales stands; you could get some

really cool stuff and some pretty weird stuff too! Comics, posters and all that sort of show spin off stuff was on offer next to costume accessories, even full costumes. One guy had a little booth where he was taking professional portraits of costumers.

I was amazed at the range of costumes, just about everyone, including the stallholders, was in costume. I recognised some, others were a little more obscure, and the one thing that marked all of them was the enthusiasm and effort behind them. And everywhere people were taking photos!

"Hey, they've got Final Fantasy running in five minutes" Mad pointed out

"I need the toilet first" I mentioned

"Come on then, they're over here" Mad led the way to one of the most bizarre sights I've ever seen.

We joined the queue (there is always a queue at *any* ladies lav!), where we waited with a variety of elves, super heroes and anime characters. One girl drew my attention, her hair was dyed bright orange and it was not a wig! I then recalled the picture of Mad with green hair from the last one of these things she attended.

"Hey Mad, you remember when you dyed your hair green?"

"Of course, that was so cool!" she enthused

"Well how come it wasn't green afterwards, I mean Pinkie's hair is taking an age to grow out."

"Dur! I only used a temporary dye of course. You comb it in then it shampoos out."

"Right!"

"You thought I really dyed it? Mum would have a fit!"

"I guess," I admitted

"Tell you what, we'll get some this weekend and you can try it"

"I don't think so"

"Come on we can just get the start of the film."

Indeed we did get back to the film room just as they started the tape. I like that film, you are often not sure if it's real or animation, Mad gave me a prod

when she saw my FF costume, it looked real nice on the screen, I'm not so sure about with me wearing it though!

We got back to the entrance just before six to find Mad's parents waiting.

"Enjoy yourselves?" Aunt Carol asked

"Yeah, we've just been watching Final Fantasy" Mad told her

"Come on then girls, lets go eat" Mr P suggested.

We trooped through to the hotel restaurant where we joined several other conventioners who were already seated. I had almost gotten used to my brief costume but was reminded of it when the waiter seated us. We must have looked a strange sight, an elf, two Sailor girls and a wizard sat eating breadsticks.

"So what do you think Gaby?" Mrs P asked over the main course

"It's certainly different" I allowed

"Tomorrow is a lot better, more people, more events and the competitions tomorrow night" Mr Peters mentioned

"Great" I tried to sound more enthusiastic than I felt

By the time we finished eating, the con had shut down for the night, me and Mad went back up to our room while the Peters senior joined a crowd of conventioners in the hotel bar.

Back in our room, (two single beds!), we stripped off our Sailor Moon outfits and replaced them with shortie pyjamas. We spent the rest of the evening watching MTV and stuffing our faces with chocolate and crisps! Mad insisted on painting all my nails with a pale pink varnish 'ready for tomorrow night'. At least for most of Saturday I would be dressed a lot less showy; Mad on the other hand was going to be hard to miss!

We finally collapsed into bed about midnight after a smoochie goodnight kiss. *How odd can you get – here I am wearing girls pj's, with falsies sharing a room with my girlfriend who is more than happy to smooch me looking like this. Perhaps Mum's suggestion holds some water; perhaps Mad does fancy girls! I can live with that as long as I'm the girl. Hang on what am I saying?* I glanced over to where Mad was softly snoring in the gloom of our room. How many boys my age get to share a room with their girlfriend? Precisely none. With that thought I dropped off.

Part 37

Costumes R Us

I awoke more than a little confused. Where am I? Who's snoring? What am I wear... Aargh! I've got tits! I came fully awake and everything slotted into place. Obicon. I slumped back into my pillows and lay wondering what today would bring. The gentle snoring from the other bed stopped and I watched fascinated as Mad stretched, a smile covering her face and finally opened her eyes.

"Morning Mad"

"Hmm morning"

"You want the bathroom before I shower?"

"No, but don't be all day"

An hour later we were both dressed for the day and just organising ourselves when there was a knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Mad called

"Mum"

"Oh hang on a sec"

"I'll get it," I said opening the door to Aunt Carol who was not in a costume this morning.



"You girls ready for breakfast?"

"Can you just pin my wig in place Mum?"

After a bit of fussing she stepped back to reveal a totally transformed Mad. I am so used to seeing her blonde tresses that I was really surprised how the dark wig transformed her. She deftly fixed a headpiece in place and gave us a twirl.

"What do you think?"

"Wow!" was all I could muster

"You'll do. Come on your Dad is waiting downstairs."

The Con doesn't open until ten but even at half eight there were plenty of 'players' in the corridors and lifts. We found Mr Peters already nursing a cup of coffee.

"There you are, I thought you'd got lost"

"I had to finish getting ready" Mad pouted

"And very nice you both look too"

"Thanks Dad"

"Thanks Mr Peters"

"How come you and Mum aren't in costume anyway?"

"We're not going to the Con until later, now go and get some breakfast."

"Come on Gab" Mad instructed tugging me in the direction of the buffet

I have to admit that rather than being concerned about being identified as a boy, I was more worried about my costume! We mingled with an assortment of strangely dressed individuals as we collected our repast but I had to admit, Maddy's efforts far exceeded some of these! We decided it was a good idea to stock up on the calories this morning as food in the Con would be thin on the ground and expensive. It was a good job it was a buffet! We eventually finished stuffing our faces and got our selves ready to leave.

"Okay girls, you've got your room key?" Aunt C asked

"Yes Mum" Mad dangled the key card

"Good, we won't be gone long, we should be back by about twelve"

"Where are you going?" Mad queried

"Just along to Tring and Ivinghoe"

"Your mother and I have some places we need to look at" Mr P finished

The look on both their faces indicated that that was all that would be said right now.

"You've got your phone?"

"Yes Mum"

"Okay Gaby"

"Yes Aunt Carol" I replied

"Okay we'll catch up with you later, have fun girls" Mr P suggested

"We will" Mad told her parents

We waved them off and returned to reception where a growing crowd of elves, wizards, Sailor Moons, robots and other characters waited for the Con to open.

"Have you got anywhere to put these" Mad indicated her phone and the room key.

"I've not got any pockets either" I told her, my money is in my sock"

I watched the cogs tick over in Mad's head for a moment

"I know, come on"

She dragged me into the ladies and into a cubicle

"Slip them into your pants" Mad urged

"What?"

"Put them in your pants, we can't lose them there"

"You've got to be kidding?"

"Course not, I often do it with my house keys"

"Why can't you do it now then?"

"Well dur, I'm a bit exposed in this outfit and my purse is already there, no one will be able to tell under that skirt of yours"

"Hmm okay then but what if the phone rings, everyone will be looking at my ringing crotch!"

"I'll set it on vibrate, if it goes off you'll be the only one to know, we can always ring whoever it is back"

Mad reset her ringer and then I slipped the key card and phone down the front of my pants, over my faux vagina. That job sorted we left the cubicle and joined the now burgeoning crowd outside. The door was opened just before ten and we all surged into the hall. As we had already covered a lot of

the stalls yesterday we just had a quick scoot round, running the photographic gauntlet again. I got caught for a picture with a girl in a Harry Potter outfit, how ironic; the boy is a girl and visa versa! Mad was in more demand in her more exposing costume; those thigh highs were turning me on so I guess that's why she was getting a lot of attention!

We joined a discussion group in a side room for a while, Maddy was enjoying herself but I was a bit bored.

"I'm just gonna go for a wander" I whispered to her

"I'll come with you" she offered

"No you stay here, I'll be back before you finish here"

"Okay"

I returned to the main room and started a slow trawl around the stalls again.

"Cool outfit" a boy of about 16 commented as I passed him, "Hermione from HP right?"

"Thanks. Er yes" oh shite!

"James" he offered his hand.

"Er Gaby" I told him shaking his hand

"You look a bit lost Er Gaby" he mentioned, "you on your own?"

"It's just Gaby" I told him blushing, "my cousin is here with me, I'm just taking a break from the board we are at"

His face sank a bit, now I was certain, he was trying to hit on me!

"Maybe we can meet up later?" he suggested

"I'm not sure" I countered

"Are you going to the HP board later, of course you are in that costume, I'll see you there"

This is totally new territory for me and I'm pretty sure I don't like it! I beat a retreat back to where Maddy's board was finishing.

"Hiya Gab"



"Hi Mad, did you know there's a Harry Potter board later?"

"Yeah at two o'clock, I've heard a rumour that J.K.Rowling's gonna be there"

"Cool!"

"You look a bit flustered?"

"Well I think I was just chatted up"

"What do you mean think?"

"Well okay," I allowed, "I was chatted up"

"Ooh tell me more?" Mad enthused grabbing my arm and steering me to a vacant windowsill. "What's his name? What's he like?"

"Mad!" I complained

"Come on Gab tell"

"Alright, his name is James, he's about 16 and he looks like a computer geek" I told her.

"Ooh an older man, Gaby Peters you sly vixen"

"Give over!" I implored

"Just mucking about Drew"

"Gaby!" I hissed

"Sorry Gaby. Come on let's get a drink"

We got our drinks and sat to watch a group of costumers re enact an episode from some anime series I've never heard of. It was just finishing when I felt an odd vibration down below, it took a moment before I realised it was Mad's phone. I manoeuvred it through my skirt so that it dropped into the folds of my cloak.

"Here, your phones ringing" I told Mad

"Cheers Gab, hello? ...Oh hi Mum...yeah great...yes she's here...one o'clock? ...Oh right, see you then, bye"

"Are they back then?" I asked as she handed the phone back to me.

"No, about one Mum reckons but she said they'd meet us for the Harry Potter session"

"Damn James is gonna be there"

"We'll soon get rid of him"

"I hope so, he didn't want to take no for an answer"

"We'll see"

By the time we met the Peters senior outside the Potter room we were both posed out, Hermione's wand was I felt, starting to wilt!

"Okay you two?" Mr P asked

"Worn out!" I mentioned

"Everyone wants pictures" Mad mentioned

"Come on you three or we won't get seats" Aunt C mentioned.

We joined the hundred or so people already in the room and found seats off to one side. I don't think any one knew what to expect in this session, if the rumour mill was right it would be truly memorable! It started with the Chair, a pretty young woman who introduced herself as Clare Symmonds welcoming everyone and introducing the board. They started a discussion on the characterisations within the Potter books that went on for about ten minutes before a grinning Clare called a halt.

"Perhaps we should ask the author about that one John? Ladies and gentlemen please welcome our special guest this afternoon, J.K.Rowling!"

So the rumours were true! The room went wild as the millionaire author made her way to the dais.

"Thank you everyone" the room quieted

"It's so nice to see so many of you, and some in costume too, I can see three Harry's, a Ron, two Hagrid's and one Hermione! Well done. I want to start off by reading you an extract from '*The Goblet of Fire*', then I will enlarge on what the board were discussing."

The room erupted into an excited hum. What a treat! J.K. read for all too short a time and afterwards joined the discussion until the supposed end of the session. Well it was the end but lot's of people wanted autographs and the writer was happy to oblige. I only had my crumpled programme but no

way was I gonna miss this opportunity so I joined the queue with Mad. I got my autograph and waited for Mad.

"Excuse me" it was Clare.

"Oh hi"

"We, that is I was wondering if you'd mind coming and doing some photo's with Miss Rowling?"

Is the Pope Catholic?

"Me?"

"If you don't mind"

"Wow! Of course I will, wait till Mad finds out"

"What's your name?"

"Gaby, Gaby Peters" I excitedly told her

"Well Gaby can you meet us in the garden in fifteen minutes, I'll tell the security to let you through"

"Wow, yeah sure" I told her

She left to be replaced by Mad.

"What was that about?"

"You'll never guess" I told her as we walked to where her parents were waiting.

"No I won't so what was it?" she asked

"They want me to have my picture taken with Miss Rowling!"

"Did I hear right?" Aunt Carol asked

"Yep, in the garden in," I checked my watch, "ten minutes!" I enthused.

"You're not winding us up Gaby?" Mr P asked

"No of course not, Clare Symmonds from the session came and asked me"

It was clear they were all three a sceptical but we walked through to the door that led to the garden where we were met by two bulky security types.

"My niece Gaby here has been asked to do some photos" Aunt Carol mentioned to them.

"Gaby Peters?"

I nodded.

"Clare said to expect you, go on through they are down in the rose garden"

"Can we go to?" Aunt C enquired

"I don't see why not, George?" he addressed his colleague

"That should be okay" George replied.

Our little party made our way to where we could see Clare and Miss Rowling along with the girl I met earlier dressed as a pretty convincing Harry and the boy in a Ron costume.

"Ah there you are Gaby!"

"This is my cousin Maddy and her parents" I introduced my 'family'

"Nice to meet you all, we won't keep Gaby long"

"No bother, take as long as you need, I'm sure the girls won't mind"

Well I can't really remember exactly how the next twenty minutes really went. The three of us in HP costumes joined J.K. for one on one and group portraits much to our delight. At the end of the photo taking we had a chat with our hero (heroine?) and were each presented with a signed copy of '*The Goblet of Fire*', I was on cloud nine!

"You jammy thing Gaby Peters" Mad mentioned as we rejoined the throng in the hall.

"Yeah well!" I allowed

The Peters senior left us to have another look around; Mad and I found a corner to sit in.

"Hi Gaby, I missed you in the Potter session" James mentioned

"Oh hi James, this is my cousin Maddy"

"Hi Maddy"

"I was with Mad and my Aunt and Uncle"

"Great session yeah?"

"Er yeah"

"You girls entering the costume competitions tonight?"

"Try keeping us away!" Mad stated

"I'll see you later then"

"Later" I allowed

James left with more than one glance back.

"He's cute!" Mad stated

"So's Kermit the frog and he's a green puppet!"

"Gab!" she admonished

"Well I prefer girls remember" I told her

"Hmm me too" she whispered in my ear, I just rolled my eyes up.

This evening's entertainment was in two parts; a meal followed by the costume competitions and skits all taking place in the main hall. A lot of the younger attendees took the non-food option, it was mostly families, stall holders and old (er) Obiconites that we joined later for dinner. We had all changed into our 'evening' outfits, Dad Peters was a Tom Baker Dr Who, Aunt Carol was a pretty good Padme from Star Wars and of course Mad and I had our Chii outfits on.

The meal was nothing great but adequate. We finished eating just after seven and then the hall was cleared to allow the non-foodies in and the competitions to commence. It was great fun, Mad and I did our little playlet and with so many other skimpy outfits on display, I didn't feel so silly in my short dress and stockings.

I think we went down reasonably well, and I was quite relaxed until I saw James down in front giving me the thumbs up. It occurred to me then that he would be able to see up my dress from down there! I coloured up and was only too glad to leave the little stage.

Well this outfit must be lucky or something, we were voted best anime, a punter's choice with a small ten pounds each stipend. Aunt Carol was the big winner though taking best costume overall, she looked just so cool! Wow what a day!



After the costume competitions a local Goth Rock band 'Hand of Oberon', took the stage and the party took off. Mad's parents retired to the bar at about eleven leaving us two 'girls' to party. James sought us out and tried to dance with us but he was worse than me! However I mellowed towards him, he was actually pretty good fun to be with as long as he didn't try the luvvy dovey stuff. I think Mad leaning over and giving me a long snog put him off on that level but the three of us sort of hung until the band finished just after twelve.

"See you tomorrow" James stated as he got out of the lift on the third floor.

"Yeah, later" Mad agreed

We almost fell into our room after I retrieved the key from my underwear.

"What a day!" I exclaimed collapsing onto my bed.

"I told you it would be fun"

"You didn't mention J.K.Rowling"

"Well I have to keep some surprises for you" she mentioned avoiding my swat aimed at her behind.

"Look Mad, I know I wasn't that keen to dress up as Gaby again but thanks for convincing me, today wouldn't have been half as good if I'd been dressed as a boy"

"Well I don't think you'd have had James lusting after you anyway" she chortled.

We quickly changed into our Pj's and collapsed into our beds, well my bed anyway! We snuggled up and were soon out like a candle.

Part 38

Wheelie Nice

I awoke to Mad's light snore coming from somewhere very close, in fact from on my chest! What happened last night?

"Hmm morning Drew" Mad purred snuggling into my breasts.

"Erm Mad?"

"What?" she replied sleepily

"I er think we should get up?"

"S too early"

"Well I'm getting up" I told her easing out from under her

"Spoilsport" Mad mumbled

By the time I had finished my morning ablutions my bedmate was up and sorting today's costumes out. I silently thanked god for not giving me Mad's pink and frilly confection, my outfit could even be passed off as normal street wear if I remember correctly.

"There you are, here's your costume," Mad handed me a pile of stuff, "get dressed while I'm showering then you can help me with mine"

"Okay"

I quickly spotted a problem, no tights! I'm sure Mad said I'd be wearing black tights with this silly little skirt.

"Mad?" I called through the bathroom door

"Yeah"

"Where are my tights?"

"What do you want tights for?"

"My costume?"

There was a loud thump.

"Damn"

"You all right?"

"Yeah, look just get everything else on and I'll sort it out in a minute"

"Okay"

I don't know where Mad gets this stuff! My underwear for today was all black lace, and instead of a normal bra I had a sort of cross between a bra and a corset! I was still trying to work out how to put it on when Mad came back into the main room.

"I thought you'd be dressed by now"

"How do you put this thing on?"

"Come here" she instructed.

"Why can't I wear a normal bra?" I asked as she hooked the garment together up my back.

"This bustier will give you a better shape," she stated, "there you go"

"If you say so"

"Now what was it about tights?"

"There's no tights here"

"Oh I just forgot to get them out, hang on," she shuffled in her case, "oh bum!"

"What?"

"I've picked up the wrong things"

"What do you mean?"

"Well I've brought stockings instead of tights"

"You're kidding right?"

"Sorry Drew"

And things were going so well.

"Look put the stockings on for now, use my suspender belt from last night, then we'll see if we can get some tights before the Con starts."

I wasn't a happy bunny but it seemed a reasonable idea. Ten minutes later I was done bar makeup and feeling pretty exposed! Mad meanwhile had got her costume on; I laced the bodice up and helped her pin her pink net cape in place.



"Wow you look hot in that"

"You don't look so bad yourself, let me get my wig on and I'll do your makeup"

Mad was applying eyeliner when a rap at the door signalled parental presence.

"Hang on Mum"

Mad went and undid the door to let Aunt Carol in.

"Morning girls"

"Morning" we both echoed

"You just about ready?"

"Just finishing Gab's makeup" Mad returned to her task

Aunt Carol looked around the room and quickly spotted that only one bed had been occupied. Images of these two kids having sex flashed through her mind. Would they? Have they? 'The kids are acting normally so maybe I'm just jumping to conclusions. A talk with Maddy is in order, but it can wait until we get home'

"Well you both look very nice"

"Thanks"

"Now remember, you need to pack after breakfast, we have to check out before we go to the Con"

"Yes Mum" Mad confirmed

"Come on then, let's eat"

Breakfast was a repeat of yesterday and then it was back up to the room to pack. By the time we rejoined Mr & Mrs Peters in the reception area it was quarter to ten.

"Lets get the bags in the car girls, then we can go straight in to the Con" Mr P stated

Aunt C sorted the checkout while we took the cases out to the Peters car. The morning was already bright and warm and I revelled in the sun on my face. We returned to where this morning's crowd were now filtering into the hall and joined Aunt Carol. Once inside we split up agreeing to meet up at twelve.

We had been in the hall for twenty minutes and having our photo's taken for the third time already when Mad started.

"Oh! I forgot. We were going to get you some tights after brekkie"

"I forgot too"

"Do you want to see if one of the costume stalls have any?"

I shrugged my shoulders, "I've got these on now, I'll live"

"Cool" Mad gave me a hug.



We did a panel on European anime and Mad more than me had our photos taken. I mean in that outfit she looked stunning, I still couldn't get over what a difference the black wig made!

"You two look brill again"

"Oh hi James" Mad greeted him

"It's all Mad's work, I just get to wear some of them" I told him

"Well you still look hot" he stated

That's just what I need, a boy thinking I'm hot and hitting on me!

"Give over James, you're embarrassing her" Mad admonished

"Sorry Gab"

"S okay"

"Well anyway, I've got to leave in a few minutes, my train leaves at twelve thirty"

"That's a pity, you're missing the whole afternoon session" Mad mentioned

"Look, here's my address and email, maybe we can meet at another con or something" he suggested

"You never know" Mad replied taking the proffered bit of paper. I was relieved when Mad didn't offer a reciprocal exchange.

"Have a good trip" I offered

"Thanks Gab, it's been a really good weekend"

"Bye James" Mad concluded

"Bye girls, see ya!" and with that he was gone.

"Give me my purse Gab"

"Here you go" I retrieved it from the pocket in my coat.

She put the note in side.

"You're keeping it?"

"Why not, he's pretty cute, I might be interested if we break up"

I rolled my eyes skyward.

"Come on let's get a drink"

We rejoined the parental units and we all watched some anime that was running in one of the side rooms. Another board on 'Anime in popular culture' was pretty good and it was nearly three o'clock.

"One last look round and we ought to get off, meet us in reception at four okay" Mr P advised

"Okay Dad"

We both had our eye on things to buy and so we started on our shopping. We mooched along, Mad bought some stage makeup and other bits and pieces, I got myself a couple of t-shirts and a poster of that blonde geezer from Buffy for Jules.

"Excuse me" it was Clare from the organisers

"Oh hi" I mentioned

"It's your cousin I want today" she smiled

"Me?" Mad queried

"Yes, you've won today's prize for best costume"

I've never seen Mad act quite like this before, jumping up and down like a five-year-old.

"Can we get an official picture?" Clare asked

"Sure"

We followed her to the portrait booth; the photographer was the guy who took the pictures with J.K.Rowling yesterday. While he was arranging Mad, Clare spoke to me.

"You enjoyed yourselves?"

"Yeah it's been great"

"Give me your address and I'll send you a copy of Maddy's picture and your J.K. picture"

"Cool"

"I'm sure there'll be loads on the web soon too"

"Yeah, loads of people have taken our pictures this weekend"

We exchanged the information and Mad rejoined us.

"Ooh, nearly forgot, here you are Maddy, it's not much but we're on a tight budget"

"Thanks Clare"

"Maybe see you two at the next one"

"Yeah maybe" Mad agreed

"Bye girls"

"Bye Clare"

We made our way back to the stall where Clare had found us.

"Clare's going to send us copies of your picture and mine from yesterday"

"Brill! Come on I've still got some money burning a hole in my purse!"

We joined Mad's parents about five minutes late.

"Looks like you two have bought the place up" Mr P observed

"Not really. Guess what? I won today's best costume!" Mad enthused

"Well done, you two've had quite a weekend haven't you" Aunt Carol mentioned.

"You girls getting changed?" Mad's Dad asked

"I need to but I didn't think Gab needed to"

"I'll live I guess" I agreed

We finally left Dunstable just after four thirty and headed back north to Nottinghamshire. We stopped half way back to eat, none of us had eaten since breakfast and I for one was famished! I felt a bit uncomfortable going into the *Harvester* in this outfit, to make matters worse, I forgot to put the long jacket on, as it was so warm. I got some funny looks, I mean you don't usually see girls my age wearing stockings and mini skirt.



After eating it didn't take long to get back to Warsop, it was just before eight as we arrived.

"I'll drop you straight home Drew okay?"

"Thanks Mr Peters, thanks for taking me, I've had a really good time"

"A pleasure Drew, it wouldn't have been the same without you"

'Certainly not,' Mrs Peters thought to herself, 'I need to have that chat with Madeline later.'

"You got everything?" Mad asked

"Think so" I replied as I stood on the drive with my bags, "see you tomorrow"

"Bye" Mad waved as they drove off

"Nice legs!" a lad shouted out as he rode his BMX past.

Damn! I hurried up to the house and went inside.

"Hi!" I called out

"Cute outfit!" Jules mentioned from the front room

"Drew?" Dad turned his attention from the telly, "what are you wearing?"

"It's my costume from the Con"

He just shook his head; "did you have a good time? It looks like you've spent up"

"It was brill" I started.

Well you already know what I did so I'll not repeat it all again here. I told them all about going to Whipsnade, the boards, meeting J.K.Rowling, the photos, winning the costume prize, the party afterwards and then today's events. Jules was a bit green over my signed Harry Potter but the poster softened her attitude a fair bit, she seems to have a thing for that geezer. I picked Dad up a book at Whipsnade and he was chuffed with 'Walks Through Britains Past'. By the time I finished it was well after nine.

"How did Mum get on"

"Second" Jules stated

"Cool"

"There was about a tyre width in it she said" Dad advised, "she'll call sometime tomorrow"

"I think I'll go up to bed, I'm shattered"

"G'night Drew"

"Night Dad, 'night Jules"

I took my stuff up to my room and started to undress. Bum! She's done it to me again! The remover is at the Peters; I'm stuck with these damn breasts again.

"Jules!"

"What?"

"Can you come up a moment?"

She joined me in my room.

"What's up? Oh don't tell, she's done it to you again hasn't she?"

I nodded, "can I borrow something to sleep in and can you er undo this bra thing?" I lifted my hoody to show her.

"That's gorgeous Drew, hang on I'll find you some pj's"

"Thanks"

"Ooh that's better," I said rubbing my ribs a few minutes later

"I must be the only girl whose brother wears nicer underwear than she does!"

"Thanks Jules, don't tell Dad eh?"

"Okay"

I put Jules pyjamas on and collapsed into my bed.

I awoke to a rapping at the front door. I got up and looked out to see who could be knocking at this time, sod it's half nine! It was a delivery van, I opened the window.

"Won't be a minute!" I called down to the driver

I made my way down to the front door and opened it to the driver.

"Just one miss" he handed me his delivery sheet, "sign and print on number four please"

I did as requested and passed his sheet back.

"There you go, I'll pop it inside for you" he hefted the box and slid it into the hallway.

"Thanks" I told him

"No problem" and he was off.

Who'd be sending us a big box like this? I looked for a label, the address indicated it was for me! Ah well lets have a look. I dragged the box into the kitchen and started to open it.

"Who was that?" Jules asked joining me

"Delivery man"

"What is it?"

"Give us a chance," I finally got the top open, "oh wow, it's my wheels!"

"Oh" Jules was clearly disappointed

"Hang on there's a packet for you too" I passed it over to her.

She carefully opened the package.

"Cool! Thanks Mum" she shook out what even I thought was a gorgeous dress. There was a card inside, of course it's Jules birthday in a couple of weeks time. Jules disappeared upstairs to try on her dress.

I concentrated on getting my new wheels out of the box. This is so cool! I'll get Dad to sort out the cassette when he gets home; Mum had supplied tyres and tubes fitted. I checked the box for a note but instead found another packet addressed to me. I ripped it open to reveal an Apollinaris team strip the same as I had borrowed from Mum, there was a note inside.

*'Dear Drew,
Hope you like the wheels. I thought you'd like your own strip, you looked good in it the other week!
See you soon*

Mum'

"Drew you look so cute sat there!" Jules stated.

"Give over, wow!" Jules new dress was stunning, "that's something else!"

"Thanks sis" she said giving a twirl.

I suppose you'd like to know what it looked like? Well it's sort of white with sequins all over it in a sort of rainbow pattern; I'll get you a picture some time.

"What're you doing today Gab?"

"Getting back to being me again! Ooh, I'd better get Mad to bring the remover over"

"Mad?...can you come over?...I need the remover...okay, I'll see you later"

"She coming?" Jules asked

"Yeah, she's got a doctors appointment this morning, but she'll be over afterwards"

"The gang are coming over this morning, shit they'll be here in about ten minutes! Drew you'll have to be Gaby, some of the girls still don't know"

"Jules!" I complained

"Come on, let's get you dressed"

Part 39

Wood Smoke

Jules grabbed my arm and just about dragged me up to her room.

"But Jules!"

"Stop complaining and go get washed up" Jules was in dictator mode and to be honest she scares me!

"Come on Gaby, hurry up!"

"Why can't I just stay up here?"

"And when Maddy gets here?"

I could sort of see where she was coming from which is worrying in itself.

"Okay I give in"

"Good girl, lets get you into that underwear you had on yesterday"



By the time Jules was done, to my disgust 'cousin' Gaby was very much back. I'd been wearing the small gold hoops that Mad bought me all weekend, Jules added a pair of white crystal studs and another hoop in that hole at the top of my ear. Apparently her friends thought that was cool and would expect me to still have a ring in it.

At least she went a bit easier on the rest of my attire! A pair of her jeans weren't too bad but the cropped t that revealed the black bustier underneath was a bit much. A high ponytail, a bit of light makeup and some of Jules jewellery completed my 'look'. "Go and wait downstairs, I wont be a minute" she ordered

When she joined me in the kitchen a surprisingly few minutes later, she was wearing her 'Leeds' outfit and had put her hair up. Not a moment too soon either, the door bell went announcing the girls arrival. Jules opened the door and Kazza, Kirsty, Sonia, Charlie and Anna poured in.

"Guess who's here?" I heard Jules ask

"Who?"

"Gaby!"

"Brill!" Kazza exclaimed

The girls came through to the kitchen.

"Hi Gaby" Anna mentioned

"Hiya" Kirsty mentioned, I noticed she was wearing a ring in her nose today

The others variously greeted me and I did my best to give an upbeat return performance.

"Er you've kept the nose then?" I mentioned to Kirsty, sorry about that"

"Well my Mum was a bit pissed but I really like it"

"I guess I got off lightly" I mentioned

She whispered in my ear

"Charlie's eyebrows still haven't grown back" she giggled

I risked a quick look at Charlie; yep her brows were drawn on her hairless forehead!

"What are you two giggling about?" Jules asked

"Nothing" I told her

I forgot to mention that Anna's hair was back to its natural white blonde but with a carmine stripe on one side. So I guess I won't be calling her Pinkie anymore! I guess those extra couple of year's get you a bit more license

"We were just talking about the forfeits from Anna's party" Kirsty added

"Lets sit in the lounge" Jules suggested leading the way

This was really weird; I was included in the group as though I always hang out with them. I was however a bit shocked when Jules piped up a bit later.

"Hey Gab, show the girls your bustier"

"What?" I panicked



"Come on Gab" Kazza encouraged

"Yeah you've been teasing us with it all morning" Charlie agreed

"It's not as though that dweeb Drew is about eh Jules" Sonia mentioned to which Anna smirked

"Just pull your top up" Jules instructed

Shit, shit, shit! I was backed into a corner. With a sigh I pulled the top up to reveal the lacy bustier and my falsies.

"Oh cool" Kirsty stated

"I don't know why you're wearing that t shirt, that is just so brill" Sonia mentioned

"Where'd you get it?" Kazza asked

"It was a present" I replied carefully

"She's even got matching pants" Jules supplied

"That is just soo sexy" Anna told everyone

To say I was frightened and embarrassed would be putting it mildly! Frightened that one of them would spot that the breasts they were looking at were not real and embarrassed that I was stood there showing off my underwear.

"Well I reckon Anna and Gaby got off too lightly at the party" Sonia of the shaved pubes stated a bit later.

"What do you mean?" Anna asked

"Well, Charlie lost her eyebrows, Kirst got her nose done, I had a erm, intimate experience with a razor and Jules did that streak. Gab only had to dress up and you just wore that nappy, it's hardly the same is it?"

"It was equal chance Sonia" Kirsty tempered

"Well I guess" Sonia allowed

I breathed a sigh of relief. But not for long.

"Tell you what," Anna started just to show we were up for it me and Gab will do an extra forfeit today"

"I'm not..." I started

"Ooh that's a brill idea" Jules jumped in cutting me off.

I was done for now!

"So what are the forfeits then?" Charlie asked

"Well we can't do the streak thing and the ones they already did are out" Sonia mentioned

"So that leaves, what? Shaving bits and piercing bits" Kazza filled in.

I was getting real worried now.

"I know, the four of us make a list and Gaby and Anna each pick a number and they get that forfeit" Kirsty suggested

"Sounds fair" Jules agreed

"Okay with you two?" Kazza queried

"I'm up for it" Anna enthused

"I guess" I reluctantly agreed.

Jules ushered Anna and me into the kitchen.

"Don't worry, I'll make sure there's nothing too bad" she whispered

"Come on Jules!"

"Coming"

"Sorry Drew, I said it without thinking" Anna admitted

"I don't suppose we could just do a runner?" I proposed

"They'd only get us later"

"I guess" I allowed, totally forgetting that Gaby wouldn't be around later to get.

"Okay you two" Charlie called through

We returned to the living room to discover our fate.

"Jules insisted that everything on the list we'd all do if it was us" Kazza advised us

Somehow knowing this bunch that was cold comfort.

"Pick a number between one and ten" Charlie invited

"Seven" I told them

"I'll go for three" Anna stated

"What have they got?" Kazza asked my sister who was apparently in charge of the list.

"Let's see," Jules consulted the paper, "three that's ... ooh head shave!"

Anna gulped and went pale

"It doesn't have to be all of it, we'll settle for part" Sonia allowed

"What about Gaby?" Kirsty enthused

"Okay, seven that's... "

Brrrrng! Brrrrng!

Yesss! Saved by the bell. I scampered to the door.

"Oh hi D.." I cut Mad off

"Jules friend's are here" I whispered, "they think I 'am' Gaby"

"It's Maddy" I informed my tormentors

"Hi guys" Mad greeted the older girls

"Oh hi Maddy" Jules replied

"I've just brought some stuff for Drew, is he about?"

"Yeah where is that little pipsqueak?" Sonia asked

Sonia really seemed to have it in for me today.

"I think he's out on his bike" Jules stated

"Come on Jules, what's Gab's forfeit?" Charlie demanded

"Seven wasn't it, It's one of yours Charlie. Gaby you're not allowed to wear knickers or trousers of any kind for a week. If any of us see you wearing any you have to do another forfeit"

Mad giggled

"What am I supposed to wear then?" I enquired

"Well dur, skirts and dresses" Kazza mentioned

"Yeah short ones too" Sonia enthused. What is it with her?

"You start straight away" Charlie told me

"You can borrow one of my skirts Gab" Jules advised me

"Thanks cuz"

"I'll help you pick one" Mad offered

"That okay Jules?"

"Good idea, you know where my room is"

I led the way upstairs

Once we were safely out of hearing Mad started the questions

"What's all this about then?"

"Sonia reckoned me and Anna got off too lightly at Anna's party"

"Off what?"

"Forfeits"

"Forfeits?"

"Yeah you know like having to pay a penalty"

"I know what a forfeit is dumb!"

"Well we each had to do one at the party, I thought I told you"

"I don't remember you saying anything about that"

"Oh well guess I can tell you. Kazza had to shave her pubes, Kirsty got her nose pierced, Jules had to run down the road naked and Sonia had to drink

three shorts in a minute. Charlie had her eyebrows shaved off I had to wear Anna's Mum's clubbing dress and Anna had to wear a nappy all night!"

"Wow! That explains a few things though, like Kirsty's nose"

"Yeah well things got a bit heated before you came and Anna suggested that me and her do another forfeit today"

"So what's Anna's then?"

"She's got to have at least some of her head shaved, I'm just glad I didn't choose three!"

"So I suppose we'll have to do this for now at least"

"Everyone will find out who I am" I panicked as the reality sank in

"No they won't" Mad mentioned, "we've only got to convince them for a short while and that gaff thing is pretty convincing. Come on get those jeans off" she instructed



When I returned with Mad to the front room the others had literally tied a now struggling Anna to one of the dining chairs.

"We thought you'd got lost, lets see then" Sonia instructed

I picked up the front of the denim mini I was sort of wearing to expose my crotch.

"Nice beaver" Kazza mentioned

"I bet it would look nice shaved" Sonia stated

"Leave her alone, that wasn't the deal" Jules told her as I returned the skirt to a more modest position.

"What are you doing to Anna?" Mad asked

"Didn't Gab tell you? We're shaving her head" Sonia informed her

"Guys!" Anna implored

"Deals a deal" Kirsty told the captive

"Jules?" Anna looked hopefully at my sister

"Best get it over with" Charlie consoled

"Who's gonna do it?" Kazza queried

"I reckon Gaby should" Sonia suggested

"Yeah that's a good idea" Kirsty agreed

"Higher!" Sonia urged

I carefully moved the clippers up Anna's neck

"Come on Gaby, you've hardly got any off" Kirsty complained

"Let her be" Jules tempered

I continued the task I'd been forced into, slowly moving higher up her head.

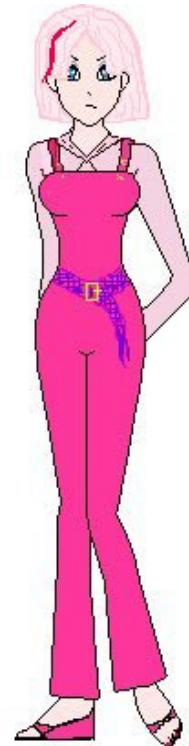
"How's that?" I asked

"Well it'll do I suppose" Sonia allowed

"We just need to shave it clean now" Kazza noted

"Well you can do that" I told them

Half an hour later they freed Anna with her new hairstyle. I'm sure Anna realised that I'd become involved under duress. From a distance you couldn't really tell but her head was shaved up to the top of her ears, the longer hair on top covered it but if it was put in a ponytail there would be no mistaking the semi punk cut. I really did feel for her, her Mum was sure to go ballistic!



All the time I thought Anna was the leader of this little posse, instead it's actually that bully Sonia. I heard from Jules later on that Charlie's continued lack of eyebrows was because Sonia insisted she wax them off and she'd even put superglue on Kirsty's nose ring so she couldn't take it out. Oh and Kazza had to keep her pubes hair free too, Jules, Anna and the others were sort of in thrall to her.

"Come on lets go up the rec." Sonia ordered

"Gaby and me have got to finish getting ready for the weekend" Jules told her

"Okay, see you tomorrow then and don't forget no knickers Gaby"

"I won't"

The others followed Sonia off up the street

"Okay you two, how did you do it?" Jules asked after she closed the door.

"What" I asked innocently

"You know what"

"Oh that!"

"Well we sort of improved Drew's gaff thing, it looks pretty much like a thingy we just used a bit of tape and a few bits of hair so it looks like a bush!"

"Just out of interest Jules what else was on the list?"

"Well it could have got messy, Sonia wanted all sorts of gross stuff but she didn't know what order I'd got stuff on the list. Yours was the best chance not to be found out or get extra holes, I made sure you got that, whatever number you said."

"What about Anna?" Mad mentioned

"Well like I said there were several chances for piercing different bits, tongue, lip, eyebrow and belly button, I think Sonia's a sadist! Then there was dyeing your hair some bizarre colour, going down the rec. in just your undies, wearing nappies for a week or being treated like a dog all week"

"You girls are weird!" Mad stated

"Sonia wouldn't really insist you do that piercing stuff would she?"

"I think she would, she's getting a bit out of hand," Jules admitted

"Let's get these off my chest" I suggested hefting my bosom

"Okay, I've got the stuff in my bag" Mad confirmed

What a day! Mad helped us with our removals after I returned to Drewism and stayed for tea, Dad dropped her home about eight. I didn't sleep too well, all I could think of were Sonia's potential tortures, all happening to me!

"Morning Jules"

"Hi Drew"

"I've been thinking, do you think the others would help if we came up with a plan to take Sonia down a peg?"

"Might do, got anything in mind?"

"Not yet but I hate bullies"

"I suppose she is a bully really"

I went for a ride, only about twenty miles but its race night tonight! Afterwards I met the others at Mad's and we went for a walk and swim at 'our' spot. I did at least remember my swimming cozzie this time. We had tea courtesy of Mrs P and Maddy walked back home with me, we had a race to go to!

This time everything's official, Mad's borrowing Mum's bike again and I get to use my new wheels for the first time.

"You both riding again?" John asked as we pulled up

"Yes please"

"Okay, number nine for you Madeline"

"Thanks"

"And twelve for you Gaby"

"I might just catch you Mad"

"Not if I can help it" she enthused

The weather being a bit flat and humid was not really very good for racing and it was quite surprising that our times were so close to last week. I caught Mad half way back but she was tenacious and while I did 24.50 despite my new wheels, she held on for an improvement to 29.10!

"Well done!" I exclaimed when John shouted our times over, "you'll make a racer yet"

We made our way back via the chippy as usual and Mad came back to mine, one of Dad's loan conditions was that the bike stayed in our 'secure' garage! To that end, he landed himself with chauffeuring Mad home again.

"Hello everyone, it looks like you are all having a good holiday" noted opening the exchange meeting on Wednesday morning.

"Yes sir" we all replied to Mr Woods statement

"Okay, has anyone got any problems?"

No one seemed to so he went on.

"I'll try to keep this short, our visitors will get here about six thirty on Friday so I'd like you and your parents here about six please. If everything goes to plan you should be off again by seven with your exchange partners. There's a programme here for each of you, if there are any problems, my home number is on there. If you don't tell us, we can't fix it!"

There was an uneasy laugh.

"Drew can you pass these out please" he indicated the pile of booklets, "then we'll have a quick run through"

Well the quick run through took over an hour!

"God he goes on a bit!" Ally mentioned

"You're not kidding" Anna added

"What happened to your hair?" Rhod asked

"I just fancied a change" she lied

I thought now was a good time to mention revenge!

"Come on Anna, tell them the truth" I suggested

"Okay, well it all started..."

"Bummer!" Bernie declared from her seat above us in the tree house.

"Are you up for getting some revenge" I addressed the older girls

"You bet" Charlie agreed, "I hate having to draw eyebrows on every day, I'm not sure they'll ever grow back"

"Mum reckons it takes quite a few goes to get that far, if you've only done it once they should grow back" Rhod advised

"Okay, here's the plan"

Well I'm not telling you lot, you might tell Sonia!

Everyone agreed the plan, the only potential problems were Kazza and Kirsty, they were both victims but where are their loyalties?

Part 40

Britney Spears

Thursday dawned a bit overcast, British summers! You can't guarantee the weather for two days on the trot!

With Ally helping out at Sylv's Salon and Bernie at her Gran's for the day, after an early training ride, Rhod and I joined Mad at her place.

"Hi guys"

"Hi Mad"

"Hiya" Rhod agreed

"What are we gonna do? It looks like it's gonna rain later" I queried

"How about coming and giving me a hand with the shopping," Mrs suggested from the doorway, "with the Americans coming I'm sure I'll need to be stocked up"

"I suppose you're going to *Sainsbury's*?" Mad asked

"Well, tell you what, how about we go to Meadowhall, I can do *Sainsbury's* there then we can do the shops, maybe the cinema?" Aunt C offered

"Sounds better than sitting around all day" Rhod mentioned

"Yeah, that sounds okay" I agreed

"Looks like you've all agreed" Mad started

"Well?" I started

"Sounds good to me too" she finished

"In that case we'll leave in about half an hour" Mrs P stated.

"I'll show you the pictures from the weekend" Maddy enthused

"Wow Drew, you really did meet J.K.Rowling" Rhod exclaimed

"I did say! Didn't you believe me?"

"Well it did sound like a bit of a tall tale" he admitted

"Pity I had to be dressed as a girl at the time" I remarked

"What do you mean pity? You make a very nice Hermione" Mad told us

"Come on kids, let's go!" Aunt Carol stopped the conversation before I could get all uppity.

"Coming" Mad answered

Well I think I've told you about Meadowhall before. Because we were hitting the supermarket first we parked round by the west entrance instead of the more usual East end at *Debenhams*. I'm not going to bore you silly with an account of supermarket shopping, suffice to say, Mrs P filled two big shopping trolleys! I mean, that is a serious amount of food! Rhod and Mrs P took the trolleys out to the car and Mad and I went to claim a table at *Massarella's*, the coffee shop hiding under the escalators. The aromas of the fresh coffee always make me sort of drowsy so I wasn't really concentrating.

"It's quite exciting isn't it?" Mad started

"What is?"

"Dur! The girls coming tomorrow"

"I guess, I wish I had a lad coming though" I moaned

"Oh come on Drew, Britney seems really nice"

"I never said she wasn't, I just wish that it was a boy that was coming"

"Hmmpf" Mad snorted

"Sorry we were so long, I didn't realise there was so much there" Aunt C mentioned as she and Rhod grabbed seats, "have you ordered?"

"Yes mum" Mad replied

Right on cue our coffee's arrived, the waitress unloaded the drinks and left us.

"Are you two organised for your visitors?" Aunt Carol asked

"Yeah Dan's sharing with me" Rhod told us

"What about you Drew, you've got two girls coming haven't you?"

"Yeah, Britney and her sister Deborah or Debbie, something like that" I answered

"So you won't be sharing then" Mrs P stated

"Not likely, I'm moving into the spare room and they're having my room because I've got more space"

"Poor Drew" Mad commiserated

We finished our drinks and headed upstairs to *Smith's*. I reckon just about anyone can spend an hour in there! Books, magazines, Cd's, well you get the sort of idea. I went to look for the new Terry Brooks book, Mad went to check out the music department, Aunt Carol went to look for a cookbook and Rhod set off to browse the magazines. We each migrated around the store and as if carefully choreographed all arrived at the tills just about together!

"Lets have a look to see what films are on" Mrs P suggested

"I wouldn't mind seeing that" Rhod mentioned

"What?" I asked

"American Pie 2, but it's a PG" he moaned

"Well I'm game if that's what you want to see" Mad's Mum told us

"Cool! Mad?" Rhod enquired

"Why not, might as well make the most of having you here Mum!"

Rhod was really chuffed that we were going to see the film, Sylv never seemed to have a moment off work and apparently his Dad thought the film 'inappropriate'. When we left the cinema two hours later we were all laughing, especially Aunt Carol!

"Come on, let's get you home" Mrs P stated

"Oh Muuum!" Mad pointed towards the shops and pouted

"You can come over next week with Sabrina" her Mum suggested

"Ooh goody!" Mad smiled and did a silent clap

"Girls" I mentioned, which earnt me a hard stare from Mad, Rhod said nothing.

We walked through the centre to get to the car, then had to dodge the rain to cross the car park. After leaving the car park and joining the almost constant queue of traffic for twenty minutes, we eventually reached the

motorway and headed back home. Mrs P dropped Rhod off at home first and then took us back to Peters Towers.

Mad and I unloaded the car while the parental unit put all the stuff away.

"Phew! Thanks kids, you want tea now?"

"I can wait, how about you Drew?" Mad queried

"Whenever thanks"

"Okay we'll wait until Mr Peters gets in then"

"Come on," Mad started dragging me out of the kitchen, "lets finish looking at the Obicon pictures."

The official Obicon site had loads of pictures, attendees, events; a page devoted to J.K.Rowling's visit and loads of other stuff. It was great fun going through and spotting ourselves in the pictures and we were happily discussing our personal favourites when Mr Peters got home.

"Ah checking out the weekends pictures" he stated leaning over to look at the screen

"There's a good one of you here Dad" Mad told him as she retrieved it from the cache

"I look quite dashing as The Doctor" he put on an attempt at a Tom Baker voice that reduced the three of us to tears!

"I suppose there are lots of pictures of you two on there?"

"A few Dad, Gaby, I mean Drew has got more than me though because of the Harry Potter thing."

"Come on you three, tea's nearly ready" Mrs P informed us

A warm pasta salad followed by strawberries and cream later, Mad and I returned to going through not just the Obicon pictures but Mad's already burgeoning file of Con pictures. I stayed until just after eight when I realised Mum was due to phone tonight.

"See you tomorrow"

"Ten at the bus stop" Mad confirmed

"Night"

I got home to find Dad already talking to Mum on the phone.

"He's just come in now...okay I'll let you know...take care, love you...yeah here he is"

Dad handed me the phone.

"Hi Mum"

"Hi Drew, you okay now?"

"Well I've still got a few bruises but I feel okay"

"How did your weekend with the Peters go?"

"Great!" I started and spent the next ten minutes telling her all about it

"So you got through wearing skirts and dresses again then?"

"Well I sort of forgot what I was wearing, everyone else was in costume and no one took any notice" I admitted

"Changing the subject, did you ride on Tuesday?"

"Yeah I did another 24 and Mad did a short 29!"

"You'll have to look to your heels if she keeps this up" she joked

"Dad said you came second at the weekend"

"I lost it in the photo, less than a tyre width"

"Wow!"

"Are you guys all sorted for your visitors?"

"I think so Mum, I'm gonna use the spare room and Debbie and Britney will be in my room"

"I hope it's tidy then?"

"It just needs a Hoover in the morning a change the sheets and stuff"

"Don't you dare show me up!" this from the least house-proud woman I've ever come across!

"No Mum" I sighed

"Okay, I best get off this phone, take care"

"Yes Mum"

"Bye Drew"

"Bye Mum"

I put the phone down and after making Dad and me some *Horlicks*; I retired to my bedroom for the last time for several weeks.

"So he tries to wipe his hand" Rhod was trying to explain one of the highlights of yesterdays film to Ally and Bernie.

"You need to see it really" Mad advised

"Yeah probably" Rhod allowed

The bus taking us into Mansfield was running a bit late but we were still well early for our bowling booking. Early enough that we had time to hit BK for a shake first! The *Superbowl* was packed, it's a good job Bernie booked our lane on Wednesday, we wouldn't have got in 'on spec'!

With less skill than enthusiasm we had a great time and I even managed a strike out! Mind you we nearly got turfed out when Rhod started doing *Fred Flintstone* impressions! In the end Bernie won our mini league, maybe one day I will get the hang of it and not have to rely on luck! Instead of going round Mansfield as we usually do, we headed home to finish getting ready to receive our American 'cousins'.

"Good you're back" Jules stated

"I said we were coming straight home afterwards"

"Yes but you've said that before and ended up not getting home for hours"

"I guess," I admitted rather sheepishly

"Well you can start with the vacuum in here"

No rest for the wicked! It took us nearly three hours to finish cleaning and then moving my stuff into the spare room.

"Well kids, the house looks nice" Dad mentioned when he got home, "what time are we supposed to be at the school?"

"Mr Wood said six o'clock" Jules volunteered

"Just time for a quick shower then" he told us heading upstairs

"I thought we'd never get done Jules"

"I still don't see why we had to move all your clothes"

"Well just in case"

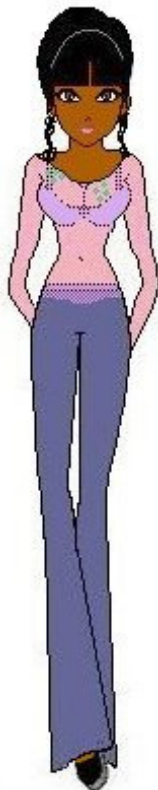
"Not again!"

We got round to the school five minutes late but we weren't the last!

"Everyone's here I see" Mr Wood noted, "as soon as we've got you paired up, you can go, I'm sure they will want to get settled in as soon as possible. Now tomorrow we have organised a welcome party at the council offices, I'm sure you and your families will all be there! There's nothing organised for tomorrow otherwise so you can get to know each other. Well it looks like they're here"

We all turned to watch the coach pulling into the car park.

"Right, if you kids want to come over, we'll get you paired up then we'll sort out the luggage"



A guy who was obviously in charge of the American party stepped down and Mr Wood went over and introduced himself. We couldn't hear what was said but while the driver started unloading cases the students dismounted and gathered around their official.

"Sabrina Jones"

"Here"

"You're with Madeline Peters"

Mad waved and Sabrina was soon hugging Maddy. The rest of the party was dispersed in short order; the Walters sisters were the last students waiting.

"If I've got my sums right you two are staying with the Bond's"



"That's us," I volunteered, "Hi Britney!"

Jules greeted Debbie too and we joined the meleé at the cases.

Dad came over and after the introductions we took ourselves, guests and luggage across to the camper for the short trip home.

And so Book 2 comes to an end! For more of Drew and the gangs adventures read Book 3.

Maddy Bell ©2004