A Life of My Own - 3

by J. Mykell Collinz

We bought a new house in a gated community. I didn't think I would like it but, when my father's not home, it's comforting to know there's an armed security force dedicated to protecting me, ready to respond immediately if I signal distress. All the houses around us are brand new and differently designed. The spacious landscaping between houses is still being worked on. There's even a new golf course, a swimming pool, and a clubhouse, although I've never used them.

My father seems anxious about my gender orientation. I grew up looking like a boy, acting like a boy. He bought dresses and girly stuff for me but he avoided making an issue of it until recently. My girl friends from school dress according to fashion, imitating models or pop devas. So now, unless I'm at home by myself, I feel compelled to dress like that, also. I know it makes my father feel better to see me looking like a sexy young woman, especially when I go out with him to visit his friends.

He wants me to use a professional tutoring service, with a combination of individual, online, and group instruction, using what he calls a social constructivist approach.

"That's like going to a school," I say.

"Yes, it is, of course it is," he says: "That's what we want. The only reason we're doing this is to avoid your school's drug testing, isn't it?"

"Originally, yes, but it's more than that now. I actually think better here at home. And I'll learn better here, too. Because I feel more comfortable here, not having to worry about how I'm dressed or who I'm hanging out with. All that BS is a waste of time and energy."

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"That's life, dear, get used to it."

"I tried, it didn't work."

"You're too young to say that. Of course you feel more comfortable at home, everybody does. But you can't always be at home."

"Why not?"

"See, this is what smoking pot can do to you."

"It's not the pot. Getting high just helps me think better, to understand what I've been going through all my life, who I am today, where I wanna go from here."

"That's what you think it does, honey."

"If that's what I think it does, that's what it does."

"So? Where do you think you want to go from here?"

"I wanna be a writer."

"A writer? Well, that's great. What do you want to write about?"

"I don't know yet. That's what I need a tutor for. A writing tutor and a mentor."

"Okay. But you'll also need social skills and real life experience. You won't get that laying around the house smoking pot and reading books. To go along with your personal tutor, you'll need group activities. It's important to learn how to work with others, how to build things together, make decisions based upon a consensus of

opinion, about business and community and government. Just because you own valuable stocks and have money in the bank, it dosen't mean you can retreat from the world around you. Our financial situation could change very quickly in today's business climate."

He reads my silence to mean I'll go along with his group suggestions. If I do, it will only be to please him. Because I really don't want a structured group activity in my life right now. I like the feeling of being free to do whatever I want. To read, to think, to dream, transformed by a novel from beginning to end without interruption except to eat or sleep.