

by Amanda Hawkins

## The Addiction

I knew it was wrong. Very wrong. How can a man becoming a woman ever be anything but wrong? It's unnatural. It's a crime against God.

But it feels right. Very, very right.

Mere words cannot capture how it feels to become a woman. Your body—male and painfully ordinary—contracts into its new shape: smaller, lighter, more slender. But your hips are wide enough to give birth and your chest is top-heavy with female flesh.

It kind of hits you in the face, that. You're just not a man anymore—you can't be a man, not with female breasts. Then your junk disappears, sucked up and into your body like dust into a vacuum cleaner.

So you're female. You're a woman. You turn the words over in your mind, but they sound so weird. You're a *woman*. You're *female*. How can that be?

Your facial hair (such as it is) vanishes. The hairs on your arms and legs disappear. Your skin clears up; it's soft and creamy, like you bathed in milk. A wave of fluffy hair hits the back of your neck.

You're not just any woman, you're *beautiful*.

And the world looks different—brighter, cleaner, more vibrant colors. You notice that you no longer need glasses, but it's more than that. When you're a woman the world is a different place, a better place.

And that's when I knew: this was meant to be.

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To some men, womanhood is a drug. I was one of those men. Only I never knew it until the day I found the perfume in my late mother's bedroom.

The bottle was cut glass, antique and unmarked. No telling how old it was, but it was still full. I thought that was kind of odd.

I took out the stopper. A musky scent arose, full-bodied and womanly, so dense I could almost taste it. Exotic, yet familiar. I put it away, that first time, but the flavor stayed with me, like an old friend.



That night—God knows why—I tried it on. A little behind the ears, a swipe on each wrist. In an instant, I was transformed. I was a woman.

And I recognized myself. “That’s Aunt Sylvia,” I said, pointing at the mirror, and it was *her* voice that laughed gaily in my ears as the knowledge hit me.

She wasn’t my real aunt, of course, just a friend of my mother who came to stay with me while Mom was off on one of her trips. She was glamorous, and

nice, and fun to be with—in other words, the exact opposite of my plain old mother.

Sure, I never once saw them together. But you don’t just assume from that that two people are one and the same. For as long as I can remember, she was part of my life. What did I know? I was just a kid.

Eventually, I got old enough to stay on my own. I didn’t see much of Aunt Sylvia after that, but Mom still went off on her trips. Now I know why.

So, Mom had been transformed by the magic of whatever the hell was in that bottle, same as I was now. Which meant, in a way, that I had turned into my own mother. At least, Mom as she envisioned herself. What she wanted to be. Her true self.

Magic, alien technology, a gift from the future, it didn’t really matter. What it did for her, it could do for me. And it did—many times. Yet through it all, the bottle remained full. For that much, I was grateful. It would be cruel indeed to be shown the gates of heaven, only for the supply to dry up and leave you with nothing but sweet memories.

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It was always the same.

The dry mouth, the pounding heart. The dizziness. The twisting in your gut until you think you might throw up. You can’t think straight, you can’t think about anything else. You have to do it.

Whatever issues you might have about turning into your own mother, none of that matters. It’s a drug. It’s an addiction. You have no choice.

I lock up the house. It’s all mine now, one of the few benefits to being an only child. I take off my clothes and enter the master bedroom.

Needless to say, I’d kept her things. The dresses, the lingerie, the shoes. The skirts and blouses, the cosmetics and jewelry, the perfumes. Although I did redecorate: soft fabrics, bright colors, more light.

It was Sylvia's room now. My room.

I pick up the bottle. I'm nearly doubled over, so sick I can barely stand. My stomach is in knots and I'm sweating. I say to myself: Not very ladylike.

But I have the cure. Gently, so as not to spill it, I remove the stopper. A quick dash to wet my fingers, then I rub behind my ears like I'm trying to claw my way inside. Another dash and I grind my wrists together. In these places, wrists and ears, the blood is close to the surface. I need it in my blood.

The relief is nearly instantaneous.

I stagger as my center of gravity shifts upward. (I never wonder where the extra mass goes. It doesn't seem important.) My back arches, my breasts grow. My whole skeleton changes: smaller skull, shorter torso, wider hips, leaner legs, smaller feet.

For a moment, I can't see a thing—that's when my face transforms: big eyes, high cheeks, small nose, soft skin. Perfect symmetry. I'm beautiful.

My hair explodes into curls. I toss my head, cup the weight on my chest with tiny fingers and long nails, and suddenly the whole situation seems so bizarre, and so amusing, that I laugh out loud. Such is my laughter, and my oohes and aahes, that anyone listening would surely think I had taken a lover.

I am myself again. I'm Sylvia.

I pick my underwear with care. A firm-control half-girdle, with garters. Old-fashioned stockings with a seam up the back, which I'm careful to get straight. A strapless brassiere and a half-slip, both in white. An off-the-shoulder blue dress that my aunt and my mother used to wear on dates. Now it's my turn.

I have a date with a nice man I met in a wine bar. A sweet kiss on our first evening together, followed by a long makeout on the second date—where I waved him in to second base, and even touched him down *there*. Tonight would be our third date.

I will be his instrument in the music of love.

I imagine him playing my lips like a mouth organ, fingering my breasts like the keys on a saxophone. That thought alone is intoxicating beyond belief.

My hands shake a little as they apply the lipstick, the blush and the mascara that enhance the feminine beauty of my new face. I step into the heels that bring me up to his level. I like to look my man in the eye when I kiss him hello.

Later, when the shoes are off, that's when I'll turn my face up to his, let him take me in his arms and feel his hand cup the back of my head. That's when I'll press my body into his and sink into his mouth like willing prey. That's when we'll undress each other and I'll lay on the bed (where my mother once slept), and he'll run his strong fingers through my hair, across my chest and all down my body.

That's when I'll play the female to his male.

In the morning, I awake in my lover's arms. My breasts are gone, my junk is back, I'm ugly again.

Luckily, he doesn't move while I grab the bottle and dash into the bathroom. As Sylvia, I return to bed, wake him up by stroking his member, and together we ride into the day—me on top, with his hands cupping my breasts like a safety harness.

I know it's wrong. But it feels so very right.

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So that got me thinking. Since one dose only lasts about twelve hours, perhaps a second hit while I'm *still female* would extend the transformation, so I could awake the following day as a woman.

So one evening I become Sylvia, wait an hour—for whatever reason—and then re-apply the perfume to ears and wrists. Suddenly, my body shudders and my guts twist. I'm changing again, but into what?

I'm in bra and panties, so I watch the new me take shape. My stomach flattens, my skin clears, my breasts rise, my face tightens. Thick dark hair sweeps over my shoulders and down my back.

I'm a young woman, I realize, years younger than Sylvia. And I know her. "That's Cousin Katie," I say to the mirror, and *her* sweet voice giggles as I realize where she's been all this time.

I reseal the bottle, afraid of what another hit might do. I have no desire to be a little girl.

I brush out my hair, wondering where I might go to meet some nice young man—a man who will treat me like a lady, whose fingers can play my youthful body like a bass fiddle, and who won't need a third date to send me to the moon.

Just so you know: being a woman is addictive. ■

