

# The Understudy: She knows what she wants... *Amanda Hawkins*

## THE UNDERSTUDY

Bob? Is that... Look, I need to say this. Your cross-dressing is getting out of hand. Lord knows, I appreciate what you've done for this family, filling in for your mother the way you have. No one in the neighborhood, or at work, or even in our circle of friends knows that she ran off with that damn plumber two months ago. I would never have gotten that promotion if you hadn't fit in with the other wives so well and flirted with my boss the way you did. Family is so important to him... You know how it is.

But I'm starting to wonder... is it still *you* in there? You haven't spoken, or acted, like Robert in weeks. Not one word out of place. It's truly amazing how much you look like her. Perhaps a bit younger, but Laura was always so fussy about her makeup. She seemed younger than she was. How long are you planning to keep this up? I can't force you to stop... I can't come out and tell people who you really are; how would that look? We'd have to come up with some plausible excuse to send you away and bring Robert back from wherever he's been. You keep saying he joined the army, but isn't the usual term of service four years? Is that how long--? Oh god.

Y—you never used to wear such low-cut dresses before either. They look so real... you didn't... oh my god, you *did*, didn't you? Implants? And you're probably on hormones too; you haven't had to shave since you became... other than your legs, of course. How far are you going to take this? You're already so much like her, it feels like she's...

All right... Your real father was Laura's first husband; I've only known you a few years. But what does that have to do--? Good lord, you don't mean... you and me?



*Amanda  
Hawkins*

## A note from the author: Amanda Hawkins

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Hello. By now you'll have noticed the subtle way I introduced the true relationship between the two characters in the above caption. This was necessary. The scenario depicted in the story would naturally lead to an assumption that the speaker was the biological father of the young man who has taken the place of his mother, and hence that any intimate relations between them would be no less than incest. I can't stress how *wrong* such an act would be. (I shouldn't have to spell out *why*.)

Far too many TG captions, in the writer's zeal to fully insinuate their hero into the feminine role, in particular that of the mother, gloss over the deeply disturbing implications. I understand how this can happen, most likely unintentionally, but it has to be called out for what it is: sloppy writing. As illustrated in this caption, it isn't difficult to give the reader (and the author) an out; you simply have to be fully aware of what you're writing and what the implications are.

Of course, it's also natural—particularly for non-cross-dressers—to ask this: Why the mother? Why are so many cross-dressers drawn to the notion of becoming their own mother? I've posed this question before, but I confess to not knowing the full answer myself. I can safely say that I've never consciously thought about being *my* mother in any literal sense. In fact, the idea strikes me as rather odd and borderline disturbing. She was a wonderful lady, of course, but still... it feels wrong.

And yet! I find myself drawn to, and also writing, stories where the main character somehow takes the form, or even replaces, *his* own mother. It really does beg the question *why*. Here's my best guess: Our mother is our primary female role model; in fact, her clothing often plays a critical role in our becoming cross-dressers in the first place. In that sense, it seems natural (at least to the cross-dressing mind) for us to seek to emulate that role model during our first tentative forays into the female world. In other words, we *identify* with our mothers—and because this happens at such an early age, that feeling can stay with us even as adults. Normally this isn't something we think about, but it's always there in the background. In fact, the most likely place for this inclination to show itself is in our literary fantasy life.

Put that way, it would be odd indeed if mothers *didn't* play a starring role in cross-dressing fiction, at least some of the time. And please don't misunderstand: this is not to *blame* mothers in any way for their sons' interest in ladies wear; no woman ever set out to turn her boy into a cross-dresser (in spite of what some stories might suggest). It's accidental, it's inadvertent, it's a simple consequence of the familial dynamics of being raised by women. In real life, no one is *ever* to blame.

So let's all give ourselves, and our mothers, a break. She didn't do anything wrong, there's nothing wrong with cross-dressing, and all these son-to-mother stories are simple fantasies that don't mean a darn thing. But incest is still wrong, regardless of what body your character is in. My advice: be more aware of the implications of what you're writing—and give your hero an *out*. It isn't difficult. ■