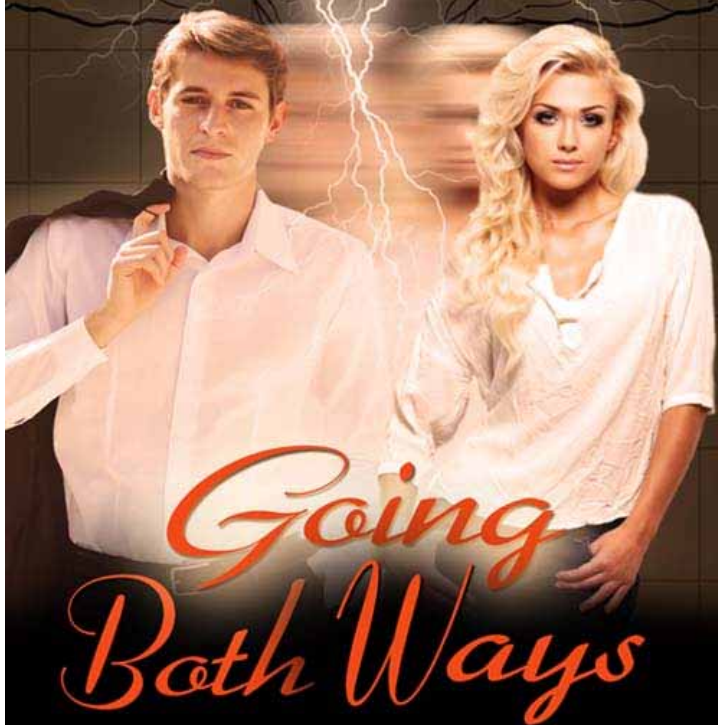


Phil Fragasso



Chapter One

I had to pee. Now needing to pee when you first wake up is pretty normal for most people, and I was no exception. But I was surprised by the urgency of the need and jumped out of bed.

I shuffled to the bathroom, lifted the toilet seat and began to pee. “What the hell?”

Instead of hearing the splash of urine hitting water, a warm stream ran down my legs. I had a momentary thought that my penis must have somehow gotten tucked behind my scrotum during the night. I reached down to reposition myself.

That’s when I screamed. A high-pitched girly sound.

In place of my cherished man gland was a soft void.

That’s when I fell backward into the bathtub, bringing down the shower curtain and rod with me. My head hit the tile wall and bounced forward so I was looking down onto a chest that was unmistakably female. I instinctively raised my hands and saw ten newly polished, French-manicured fingers. My butt was sitting on the base of the bathtub and my legs were draped over the edge. I say “my” legs but they really weren’t mine. Unlike the gnarled and hairy limbs that had served me reasonably well for twenty-seven years, these legs were unblemished and clean-shaven. I bent

my knees upward and was greeted by painted toenails that nicely complemented their northern counterparts. As the final test, I slid my right hand down my torso and felt what could only be described in mixed company as lady parts. *My lady parts.*

That's when I fainted.

I don't know if I was out for a second or an hour, but when I came to I realized with unprecedented clarity that I had gone to sleep as a man and awakened as a woman. I had a flashback to reading Kafka's story about the man who woke up to discover he'd been transformed overnight into a giant bug. At first he believed he was dreaming but gradually came to the conclusion that the situation was real and his life would never be the same. I'm certainly not comparing womanhood to the insect realm, but my metamorphosis was just as shocking and my life would be changed just as dramatically.

I sleep in the nude. I like having easy access to scratch, reposition, or otherwise handle my most cherished of possessions. So when I pushed myself up from the tub, I was able to see the upper half of my new naked self in the bathroom mirror. My mop of mousey brown hair had been replaced with shoulder-length tresses of strawberry blonde. My eyes were blue, but that was the only part of my face that remained unchanged. My scruffy beard, twice-broken nose, and bushy eyebrows were now represented by the kind of wholesomely plain, girl-next-door features that are the mainstay of stock photographers. My aforementioned breasts were pleasantly perky though, to my practiced eyes, a bit undersized. I moved my gaze downward and saw that my figure was more pear-shaped than

hourglass. That disappointment, however, was offset by a respectably taut stomach and a perfectly formed innie navel that stood in for my incipient beer belly and a lint-collecting outie that looked like the result of a knot-tying contest between toeless sloths.

That was as much as I could see in the mirror even on tiptoes, but I needed to see more. I ran to the kitchen to retrieve a chair and carried it back to the bathroom. I stood on the chair and studied my newly acquired lower half in the mirror.

I placed my hands on hips that seemed wider than necessary to support a rather meager bosom and slight torso. From this perspective, looking down into the medicine cabinet mirror, it was clear that my pear-shaped figure was really more akin to a bowling pin. I was slim on top but decidedly “big-boned” on the bottom. I smiled to keep from crying. I hoped I at least had a good personality.

I continued my visual inspection of my feminine physique and, like any red-blooded American male (albeit one suddenly trapped in a woman’s body), I focused my attention on the nether regions. I was truly delighted to see that my female counterpart eschewed the indignity of landing strips or Brazilian waxes gone wild. Instead, my privates were graced with the simplicity of a traditional *au naturel* trim. From my point of view there’s enough weird shit going on down there that there’s no need for women to further complicate our search for that Holy Grail of sexual congress, the G-spot. I mean if the damn thing even exists—and it sure seems to change its hiding place from one woman to another—then I’d suggest women spend less time grooming their pubic hair and maybe

invest in a groin-area tattoo with specific instructions and detailed directions. Just saying.

My legs, though unblemished and smooth, struck me as too short and a little chubby. Now, as a guy, I would have looked on the positive side and rationalized that this babe sported a powerful pair of legs that could tightly wrap themselves around my waist giving the missionary position some extra sizzle. As a woman, however, it felt like a flaw. Not a fatal flaw, but a flaw nonetheless.

That's when I felt like my head was going to explode.

Despite possessing a woman's body, I was still thinking like a guy. But not completely. I'm reluctant to say I was hearing voices in my head because that's usually the first sign of severe psychosis; but there was something weird going on with my mind. I was actually assessing my new physical form from two disparate perspectives—as both male and female. And I wasn't at all sure which perspective was winning.

I twisted myself to the right and looked over my shoulder at a rather bodacious ass. This was a booty that could go cheek-to-cheek with the likes of Jennifer Lopez and Shakira. The first thing that popped into my head was that I now possessed a body designed for stiletto heels that would lengthen my legs, divert attention from my rather pedestrian chest, and tilt my butt for optimal viewing pleasure. I wondered how hard it would be to learn to walk in heels without wobbling.

All in all, if I'd been me, I would have tapped this girl right on the spot.

That's when I got creeped out.

Self-gratification via masturbation is one thing, but

thinking about screwing yourself, with your own penis in your own vagina, is a whole other level of depravity. I was actually giving myself a serious once-over and grading my new attributes. I've always had an unapologetically frat boy attitude toward women. Like video games, beer, and Doritos, women were put on Earth for my enjoyment. Sure it was great if they could hold a conversation and maybe pick up the occasional tab, but it was the superficial stuff that mattered most in my book. I remember someone suggesting that "they all look the same in the dark," but I never bought into that line of reasoning. Sure, I've been known to chase the occasional ass attached to a just slightly better than coyote-ugly face, but that was only in the most dire of circumstances. I was convinced that allowing myself to routinely settle for anything less than a solid B would start me on that slippery slope from Sotheby's to "Pawn Stars"—and eventually I'd get stuck with a piece of merchandise no one else wanted.

I stepped down from the chair and stared into the mirror, trying to determine if my insides had also changed overnight. I searched my memory and tried to recall specific moments from my childhood and recent past. It was all there. I might have been a babe on the outside, but my brain and thought processes still belonged to me, Patrick Morelli, the quintessential guy's guy.

A guy's guy with undersized boobs and chubby thighs.

That's when I remembered last night's conversation with Sarah.

Chapter Two

Sarah and I spent a lot of time together, especially over the last couple of years after our parents died. It was usually in larger groups so I could hit on her friends and she could check out my work buddies, but once a month or so we reserved a night just for the two of us. That's what we were doing the night before I traded my rock-hard pecs for a puppy-soft rack. We were eating and drinking in a booth at Charlie's Kitchen in Harvard Square. A Beyonce-like ass walked by and my eyes followed its jiggling journey.

"If you drool any more," said Sarah, "it's going to look like you came in your pants."

I pointed at the departing booty. "Those are the pants I want to come in."

"You're like a twelve-year-old trapped in the body of a sixteen-year-old. At some point you need to grow up and stop acting like a Neanderthal."

"The critical phrase being 'at some point,' I've got plenty of game left. Way too much to entrust to just one woman."

"That's where you make your mistake. You can play the field and bed all the women you want without acting like a pimply teenager. It's creepy. And disgusting. And it's gonna get your ass kicked some day when you check out the wrong girl while her UFC boyfriend is standing right behind you."

I tipped back the last of my Sam Light and waved to the waitress for a refill. “And a shot of Jack for her. She needs to loosen up.”

Sarah rolled her eyes but nodded at the waitress. “Make it a double. My brother is in rare form tonight.”

“Your problem,” I said when the waitress left, “is that you don’t understand men. You’re this gorgeous Princeton grad with a hot-shit job making more money already than Dad could ever have imagined. You can get any guy you want anytime you want. I, on the other hand, have to work hard at it.”

“And this is what you call working hard? Sniffing every ass that walks by and leering at every hint of cleavage or exposed thigh? That’s not a turn-on for women, even the sleaze-bag women you seem to fixate on.”

“Don’t say anything bad about Krystal. She was only stripping to help pay for her mother’s liposuction. That shit ain’t cheap.”

“Actually I was referring to Angie, the blow-job queen who borrowed your MacBook to finish her GED dissertation and was never seen again, but Krystal is another good example.”

I wagged my finger at Sarah. “In my defense, how was I to know the GED doesn’t require a dissertation? And secondly, that girl could suck the chrome off a trailer hitch while humming the *William Tell Overture*.”

“I’m sure that’s featured on her résumé.”

“The point is that you and every other woman out there have it easy. You hold all the cards.”

“Fascinating,” said Sarah, “because I’ve always heard it’s a man’s world. Plus, if women had it so easy, why do we still earn seventy cents on the dollar

compared to men? And how come there's just a handful of us in Congress, or heading up corporations? You are truly delusional, Patrick. Seriously deranged."

The waitress brought over my beer and two shots of Jack Daniels for Sarah. I took a sip from the bottle and watched Sarah down the first shot of her Tennessee nectar in a single gulp.

"If I were God," said Sarah, "and I oftentimes think I should be, I would swap your dick for a vajayjay just so you could see how easy it is for women."

"As we both know, but only I will admit, there is no God. Like Emerson said, 'religion is the opium of the people,' and I ain't a user."

I'd embraced atheism shortly after receiving confirmation. In the Catholic Church the confirmation sacrament signifies the recipient as a soldier of Christ who gathers strength from the Holy Spirit. None of it really made any sense to me but the kicker had been when the Vatican decided that Limbo no longer existed. For those of you unencumbered by Catholic indoctrination, the "Limbo of Infants" is the place somewhere between Heaven and Hell where unbaptized babies go to spend the rest of eternity. Families who'd long grieved that their deceased infant children would never know the full grace of God now understood that all that grief was for naught. A clerical error or misinterpretation by previous Vatican administrations. That got me thinking about some of the other weird shit I'd been taught. The whole Noah's Ark story was bizarre if you really thought about it. I mean if God is truly all-knowing, then He had to have known way back in the Garden of Eden that he'd eventually kill off every man, woman, and child except for Noah and his family.

That doesn't seem very god-like. Plus, I noticed the only animals described in the bible were animals native to the Middle East and North Africa. If this really were the Word of God, maybe He could have mentioned a bison or panda bear or kangaroo. And don't get me started about the whole circumcision scam. If God was such an intelligent designer, why did he add foreskin to the penis and mandate that true believers remove it? In my book, either God messed up or He didn't exist. I chose the latter; you do want you want.

"It was actually Karl Marx who said that," said Sarah. "But in any case you'd better be careful because one day God is going to get sick of your smack talk and He's going to crush you like the bug you are."

I raised both arms above my head and toasted the heavens with my bottle of Sam. "I dare you, Big Guy. Bring it on."

Sarah raised her second shot glass of Jack toward the heavens and, with eyes pressed shut, made her own toast. "Please, dear Lord, for my sake, and the sake of women everywhere, turn this asshole's dick into a vagina for one month. That's all I ask. Just one month."

Sarah opened her eyes and tossed down the whiskey.

I laughed. "Why just one month?"

"I kind of like having a brother. Girls can be awfully bitchy."

Sarah and I talked a little more, yada-yada-yada. We said goodbye, yada-yada-yada. I went to bed, yada-yada-yada. I woke up, yada-yada-what-the-hell-yada.

Chapter Three

Rather than calling Sarah, I decided to use a FaceTime video so she could see the full impact of what she and the Lord Jokester had wrought.

“Who are you?” asked Sarah.

I tossed back my hair with a flirtatious flick of the wrist. “Why it’s me, silly.”

“You who?” She had that bitchy vibe she’d mentioned the night before. “Where’s Patrick?”

“I’m right here.” I leaned closer to the laptop screen. “No shit, Sarah. It’s me.”

“Yeah, and I’m Lady Gaga. How much did Patrick pay you to do this?”

“I’m serious. Remember what we talked about last night?”

“Look, sweetie, I’m sure Patrick is right in front of you laughing his ass off. So you’ve had your fun, now just put him on and I can tell him to screw off to his face.”

“Ask me anything. Something only I would know.”

“Patrick!” shouted Sarah. “Enough is enough. I have a plane to catch. I don’t have time for this nonsense.”

“Sarah,” I paused and chose my words carefully. “I swear on Anna’s tooth.”

“What did you say?”

“You heard me. I swear on Anna’s tooth.”

Sarah shook her head. “That’s not fair, Patrick. You know the rules.”

“And I’m not breaking them.”

Our Aunt Anna was without a doubt the sweetest person I’d ever known. She also had the worst teeth of any mammal of any species. She usually wore a set of upper and lower dentures, but as she got older and dementia kicked in, she’d frequently take them off at the dinner table or go without them altogether. Her denture-less smile consisted of a single crooked tooth protruding from her upper jaw.

When Sarah was eight and I was ten or eleven, we were simultaneously intrigued by and terrified of that tooth. We stared and giggled and made beaver faces at each other whenever Aunt Anna was around. Our mom caught us one day and was furious that we would make fun of such a dear old woman. Sarah started to cry. She said she was sorry, but the tooth really frightened her. Mom explained that Anna’s single tooth was very special. It was something to be honored and appreciated rather than feared. She said Aunt Anna had lost all her teeth when she was still a young woman. There had been a rare virus going around and Anna almost died from it. When she learned she needed to have her teeth extracted in order to save her gums and jawbone, she prayed to God to let her keep just one tooth. “That was all she asked,” our mom explained. “She felt that a single tooth would serve as a powerful reminder of how precious every piece of our body and every aspect of our soul were to our overall wellbeing. God granted Aunt Anna’s wish, and to this very day Anna is proud of that crooked little tooth and has never regarded it with embarrassment or shame. It was God’s gift, she

said.”

By the time mom finished telling the story, I'd started to cry, and Sarah's tears had turned into wailful sobbing. We never forgot that story, which I guess was Mom's intent, and from that day forward Aunt Anna's tooth was viewed with reverence and respect. In short order, we began using Anna's tooth as a sacred totem invoked only in times of dire need or, as I did on this particular day, to signify the most solemn of promises.

“On Anna's tooth?” Sarah repeated.

“Yes. On Aunt Anna's tooth.”

“Holy. Shit.”

“I think those were my words exactly.”

Then she laughed.

“I'm glad you think it's funny, but this is a disaster. My life is ruined.”

“Shouldn't you be happy?” Sarah was laughing so hard she actually spit on the screen. “Now you get to live the free and easy life of a woman. Think about it. You can have any man you want. Whenever you want.”

That freaked me out. If I was a woman and I wanted to have sex, it would have to be with a man, which would seem kind of gay. On the other hand, I could have sex with another woman, which would actually be gay. It was all too confusing.

“You need to come over,” I said.

“I can't. I really have to stop talking. I'm flying to New York with my boss for a big meeting. I can't be late. I'll check in with you later, and I'll come over tonight right from the airport.” Sarah paused and moved closer to the web cam. “On Anna's tooth?”

I nodded.

“Okeedokie then, I'll see you tonight.”

Phil Fragasso

Sarah closed the FaceTime app, and I was left staring at the image of me—or the me I'd awakened to that morning. The good news was that I wasn't a bad looking woman. The bad news was pretty much everything else.