

Unwind

BY AMY LANE

Jenny hated the way her work clothes felt by the end of the day. She hated the stiff, unyielding leather shoes, the prickly collar. She *really* loathed the tie. But she had somewhere to go tonight, so that gave her a little bit of oomph to her step as she trotted up the stairs to her flat and began to shed her male attire—the clothes that ‘Jonathan’ wore.

Oh, for the joy of satin on her skin! The occasion was informal, so she chose a bra with gentle cups and a soft v-neck teeshirt. Comfortable, form-fitting jeans. She checked her appearance in the mirror, tweezing a few stubborn five o’clock whiskers from what was becoming, with hormones and laser treatment, a soft, hairless face. She added some makeup—eyeshadow, mascara, lip gloss—and combed her hair from the part on the side, adding some jeweled clips to keep back the long, dark strands from her eyes. The real Jenny looked back out from the mirror, freed and exultant.

Only a few more weeks before she would have the operation that would change her life, change her body, and then she would return to work as Jenny, the woman she’d always been underneath her skin. The tension was killing her. She needed to be with friends tonight.

With a giddy twirl, she slid on her rose-embossed sneakers, grabbed her knitting bag, and ran out of the flat. Her local yarn store was only three blocks away. She arrived, breathless, hoping she hadn’t missed Cliff and Kyle’s arrival. Cliff had been planning to propose at the county fair, and she wanted to hear all about it.

“Jenny!” The chorus of voices as she came through the door warmed her.

She’d forgotten a jumper, and the late autumn air was brisk.

“Hey guys,” she said, giving them her happiest smile. The ten or so people who made up their knitting group had become her touchstone over the last year as she’d entered her transition, and seeing the familiar faces soothed all the raw places in her heart.

Jenny. They’d *always* known her as Jenny, because she’d told them that was who she was. She sat down on the comfortably worn couch in the back of the store and pulled out her project—a tailored, yet uniquely feminine cardigan, done in a pale lavender. It had eyelets and a picot trim, and would hug her waist and develop chest, and make her feel womanly and desirable and perfect. She caught a flaw—a dropped stitch—and grimaced. Well, not perfect. But *nobody’s* work was perfect, was it? Every knitter was a work in progress who improved as they progressed, right?

“Oops!” said the gray-eyed young man next to her, and Jenny gave Kyle a wry smile.

“Can’t get rid of the mistakes,” she admitted.

“You should have seen the reverse side of the sweater I submitted to the fair,” he told her ruefully. “Compared to what the women had submitted, it was a mess.”

“It got Highly Commended,” Cliff said stoutly from his other side, “and it will keep me warm next winter, and that’s important.”

Before Jenny could even ask, Kyle—practically vibrating in his seat—held out his left hand, with a simple white gold band on the finger. “And it got us engaged!” he announced, and she laughed with the rest of the group as he launched into the story.

The two hours of knitting group flew by, and by the time it wrapped up—and everybody had eaten at least one of Cliff’s lamingtons—she felt as though a spring had uncoiled in



the pit of her stomach. She got home feeling loose and happy, hummed as she fed her cat, sighed deliciously as she sank onto her couch and kicked off her shoes. She answered the phone vibrating in her pocket on automatic, not even stiffening when MUM flashed across the screen.

“Jo... Jenny?”

“Mum?”

“Hi, sweetheart. Just... been a while is all. Are you doing well?”

Their last conversation had been two months ago, when she’d told her parents about her surgery date. Things had been... tense, since.

“Doing great, Mum. Just got back from knit night. Some friends are getting married—everybody’s happy about it.” *Please, Mum, be happy for me.*

Please. Please.

“That’s wonderful,” her mother said softly. “I didn’t realise you were knitting now.”

Jenny bit her lip. “Well, grandma taught me, you know. I’ve been doing more lately.”

“Oh.” There was a pause, and Jenny feared for a moment. So far things had been so pleasant. “She’d be happy,” Mum said, voice a little wobbly. “You know. To have a granddaughter who picked it up. I was never any good at it myself.”

Jenny took a deep breath and fought back tears. “I’d be happy to teach you,” she offered, her heart in her throat.

“Thank you, sweetheart. I’d be... I’d be proud to learn.”

Not just one spring uncoiled. Thousands did.

Jenny wiped carefully under her eyes with her thumb, and began to talk about knitting. 