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**When My Son Became My Daughter**

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I knew there must have been something important Daniel wanted to share when he invited me into his therapy session. I was asked to sit next to the therapist and across from Daniel, who was visibly nervous. As soon as he started to talk, he burst into tears, so I joined him on the couch and we both cried as we embraced. I was scared and couldn't fathom the magnitude of something that seemed well beyond my comprehension. My first impulse was to soothe him and make him feel comfortable. I thought it would be the perfect time to tell him that his father and I had always wanted to have two children, a boy and a girl, and that it was a great gift to have a daughter now. Though I must confess, I couldn't even begin to think of Daniel as anyone but my son. It was an emotional day, but just the beginning of a much longer, more arduous journey. When I think of that moment, I still wonder if I did the right thing, if I said enough to make him feel understood and loved. I wish I had told him then how much I recognized his suffering before his coming out and having had the courage to do so.

Three years earlier, Daniel had disclosed he was a gay boy. At the time, his father and I were used to the idea and to his unusual way of dressing. When he was a junior in high school, we admired his decision to invite another boy to his prom, to the surprise of most of the other parents. Daniel and his date were the first to break the school's tradition when he attended that event with a partner of the same sex.

As a child, we never noticed anything obvious that would have indicated Daniel was gay or transgender. He played with cars, dinosaurs, and monsters—like other boys—though he also had other, more stereotypically feminine items, among them a Snow White mask and dress, a Ken doll, and a dollhouse that he played with only at home—never around friends. He asked me to keep his secret, and I did, but without giving it too much weight. I recall his elementary school teacher's impressions that he was "too gentle" and lacked the necessary aggression when dealing with tougher classmates during competitive games like soccer. In retrospect, his difference earlier in life makes more sense now.

Shortly after coming out, Daniel started college at a very liberal institution, one in which LGBT students were highly visible and well integrated into campus