

from the family **Physician**

A Boy Named Chantal by Dr Tan Su Ming

I'll call him Adam, though that's not his real name. But Adam has always insisted on being called Chantal, and so that's how my clinic staff and I addressed him. I've had the pleasure of knowing Chantal for the past 10 years. He is now 36 years old, and comes to my office every few months for sleep difficulties.

Chantal is a pre-op transsexual. He has breasts from the hormonal treatments he received from doctors and other dubious sources, but he has not had the income, I suspect, nor the complete resolve to have the surgery that would give him the complete physical appearance of a woman.

I have seen him through his ups and downs – when he was as high as a kite from a relationship with a new man, to when he was in the nadir of despair when his no good bum of a boyfriend threw him out of their rental flat and he had to go grovelling back to his grandma (he is estranged from his parents), who made him cut his lovely locks short like a boy, and threw out all his make up and women's clothes. I've heard his depressing and demoralising tales of the boyfriends from hell; two in particular, Mannie (not his real name) and Daddy (shudder).

So, that day, when Chantal came through the door of my consultation room, I wondered what he would tell me this time.

"I've had it with men, Doctor!" he said dejectedly, almost in tears.

"Is it Mannie again?" I ventured to ask.

"No, it's Daddy." Chantal lowered his skinny jeans to reveal a huge bruise on his thigh where Daddy had kicked him.

"Never mind dear, this bruise is not permanent. It's going to fade. But aren't you tired of the Mannies and the Daddys? Don't you want to break out of this recurring pattern of these abusive boyfriends who only use you?"

"Yes, Doctor," he said as he wiped a tear away. "I've had it with men, I'm going back to women."

WOW, I thought, you're going back to being a man?

"I'm going to be a lesbian!" Chantal announced, beaming, as if he had just had an epiphany.

I wanted to say, "But you're a boy..." but held my tongue because I know that everyone is looking for love and acceptance.

Chantal just has a much harder time than most of us. **SMA**