

TANGLED UP IN BLUE

BY SHERYL KRAFT

For just one night this past October, my 13-year-old son became a girl. "It's just a Halloween party," I assured my nervous husband. "It's not destiny, it's dress up!"

My eyes lingered a second too long on my son's face—once handsome, now pretty. A wig gave him long tresses, and eye shadow complemented his green eyes. He refused to be caught on film, so I filed the image away in my memory and joined my husband and my other son in laughter. But silent tears soon followed, tears of longing for the daughter I'd never have.

Growing up, I always planned to have children. I was a "girl's girl," and filled my life with all things beautiful: delicate pink tutus, Barbie dolls, nail polish. I was saving my hard-earned knowledge and possessions for my future children, my heirs, my clones—my daughters. I tried to imagine what they'd look like. Would their eyes be blue? Would they pursue my former passion and dance with the finest ballerinas at Lincoln Center? They became more real as I let their names roll off my tongue: Alexandra, Gillian, Zoe, Juliet.

I first became pregnant at age 31. As my due date approached, I grew more impatient to see my little girl. With no ultrasound or amnio to challenge me, I was certain this baby would be female. "It's a Boy!" was greeted with sounds of weeping—not the baby's, but mine.

I experienced alternating episodes of depression, elation and confusion. What to do? Tutus, nail polish and ballet were replaced with overalls, toy trucks and baseball. Pink became blue and red; Alexandra became Alex. Twelve

months later, when I became pregnant again, it felt like a second chance. This time, I thought, I would get it right. This time I would have a sister for my firstborn, Daddy's little girl.

Due to an abnormality in my blood screening, I had to have an amniocentesis during the pregnancy. When the phone rang five days later with my doctor's reassurance that the baby was healthy, my sigh of relief was cut short by the words, "And, by the way, it's a boy." How quickly my feelings gave way to disappointment, then guilt.

It's been nearly 15 years since I became a mother. I swim so deep in my love for my two boys that at times I feel the need to climb out and dry off. I've given up my career in advertising to raise them, and I'm glad I did. They are solid citizens, good people and deep thinkers. At times, they are my salvation. The qualities I once thought impossible to integrate into a boy's psyche—tenderness, thoughtfulness, sweetness and caring—have all anchored themselves in my sons. I now have three men to fuss over me; I regularly get flowers from them without

cause. Today, when I returned home, a beautiful bouquet of pink roses sat upon my kitchen table.

See? I still have pink in my life.

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