

Transition

by Gracie L. Chandler



Other than wearing new back-to-school clothes, flouncing about in a frilly dress on Easter Sunday was one of my most favorite things in the world to do. The minute the leaves appeared on the dogwood trees, my friends and I began fantasizing about our dresses. The color was very important, since it could never be the same hue two years in a row. Pink last year? Then definitely blue or yellow for the current year. And we had to declare a color quickly because you couldn't choose the same color as did someone else. Or the same style. Competition was fierce and THE Easter dress had to be one-of-a-kind, drop-dead awesome! My Aunt Elizabeth unfailingly sent a dress from Miami each year, so I always had two beautiful masterpieces to model. If one was less ornate than the other, I'd wear that one Easter morning, saving the ritzier one for the much-anticipated Easter Program that evening. I believed that my dresses were always the prettiest; spinning around in those pastel layers of frilly chiffon, I felt like a princess.

But it is the memory of my last Easter dress that remains. It wasn't even pink or yellow, but a sedate aqua made of unyielding taffeta without a ruffle anywhere in sight. Plain short sleeves connected to an unadorned bodice. Tiny appliqued rosebuds anchored the skirt's simple scalloped hem. That was all. The dress my aunt had sent was even more austere—a pale blue A-line, so the aqua dress won out for the evening program. I was around eleven or twelve years old at the time, entering puberty. My folks knew

that a fancy little-girl dress was not going to work with my gangly, budding figure—but I didn't know that. I secretly vowed to have a say in selecting next year's Easter dress, determined it was going to be the best dress ever.

Resigning myself to the adults' blunder, I took solace in the aqua dress's little rosebuds, and its attempt to be pretty. That is, until I entered Shiloh Baptist Church and came face-to-face with Beatrice Phoenix wearing the exact same dress! To make matters worse, the program director thought it would be cute if we shared the stage to recite our speeches. I mumbled through that speech and got off that stage so fast, I left Beatrice standing there. I felt crestfallen throughout the program, hoping no one noticed that our dresses were identical.

By the time next Easter rolled around, I'd graduated from a training bra to an A cup. Even *I* knew that those frilly, lace-dress days were gone forever. The new salmon-pink Easter dress I'd chosen—straight skirt with a bolero jacket—suited me to a "T"! My speech recital days were over, too, having been given a part in the Easter Passion Play, which is the main event and performed by the older kids. Frilly dresses were soon replaced by other more important things. Through the years, that Aqua-Dress Easter has been my metaphor for change, a reminder that even though growth is inevitable, adjustment is a choice.

