



An AB Discovery Book

Where Julie Lives

For those who were always themselves,
even before they had the words

ANDREW STEPHENS

Where Julie Lives

*For those who were always themselves,
even before they had the words*

Andrew Stephens

First Published 2026

Copyright © AB Discovery 2026

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher and author.

Any resemblance to any person, either living or dead, or actual events is a coincidence.

Title: Where Julie Lives

Author: Andrew Stephens

Editor: Michael Bent, Rosalie Bent

Publisher: AB Discovery

© 2026

www.abdiscovery.com.au

Contents

Chapter One: The Name That Waited.....	5
Chapter Two: Claire and the Cousin.....	9
Chapter Three: Growing Up Different.....	13
Chapter Four: The Drive to Meadowbrook.....	17
Chapter Five: Peter and Margaret.....	20
Chapter Six: The Others.....	24
Chapter Seven: What Julie Found.....	28
Chapter Eight: The Conversation with Peter.....	31
Chapter Nine: The Last Week.....	34
Chapter Ten: Coming Home.....	37

Chapter One: The Name That Waited

The name had been offered once, very quietly, when Jamie Whitmore was just seven years old.

He had been standing in the children's section of a department store in the centre of town, transfixed by a dress on a small mannequin: white cotton with a broad pink sash at the waist and a skirt that flared out in layers, the kind of dress that seemed to contain its own occasion. He had been standing there for perhaps two minutes, which was long enough for his mother to finish looking at the rack of school trousers she had been examining and come to find him.

Claire Whitmore was not a woman who responded to things before she had thought about them. She stood beside her son for a moment, looking at the dress, and then looked at his face: the specific quality of wanting there, unguarded and entirely genuine, the wanting of someone who does not yet know they are supposed to want it privately.

"It's pretty, isn't it?" she said. Not a question.

"Yes," Jamie said.

She looked at the dress again. Then she said, as though it were a thing she had been thinking about for some time and had simply been waiting for the right moment to say.

"If you were a girl, I think I'd have called you Julie."

Jamie had looked up at her then. Something in his face changed. Not dramatically, not with tears or with the particular brightness of a child who has been given a surprise. Something quieter than that. A settling. As though a word had been placed against something, it exactly fitted.

"Julie," he said.

Where Julie Lives

“Mm.” She took his hand. “Shall we see if they have it in your size?”

They did. It came home in a bag with the tissue paper that department stores use for things that are a little precious. Claire hung it in Jamie’s wardrobe without ceremony, as though this were simply how wardrobes worked, with the school trousers on one side, the white dress with the pink sash on the other.

He wore it rarely and at home in his bedroom. His mother helped him with it the first few times, and he did a twirl that resulted in a huge smile.

She had never explained herself. She had never needed to.



Jamie Whitmore was eighteen years old, sitting in the passenger seat of his mother’s car on a Thursday morning in late June, when Claire told him about Meadowbrook.

They were on the dual carriageway heading toward the retail park, which was where Claire did the weekly supermarket shop when she needed something more than the local stores could offer. The radio was on low. The morning was grey and not unpleasant, the kind of English summer morning that promises better things by afternoon without making a binding commitment and usually results in low-grade disappointment.

He was wearing, under his jeans and his soft grey hoodie, a terry cloth nappy pinned at each hip and a pair of white plastic pants. This was not an unusual Thursday morning for Jamie. He had been in cloth nappies and plastic pants every day for as long as he could reliably remember, which was some time around the age of four. He had a faint memory of the brief experimental period before that, when Claire had tried ordinary pants, a memory characterised mainly by the quality of wrongness: the sensation of nothing between him and the world, the uncontained anxiety of it, the feeling of something essential being absent. The nappies had come back. They had not left again.

Where Julie Lives

He was also wearing, under his hoodie, a soft white vest. Not a girl's garment in any technically specific sense, but one Claire had chosen from the women's section because the cotton was softer and the cut was closer, and it sat against his skin in a way that the men's equivalent did not. Small things. Private things. The internal architecture of who Jamie was, assembled each morning with care and a privacy that he had maintained, with increasing skill, across every context of his eighteen years.

Or almost every context. Home was different. Home had always been different.

"I found something," Claire said, in the tone she used when she had been thinking about something for a while before she said it. "I want to tell you about it properly, so you have all the information, and then I want you to know that there's no pressure of any kind."

Jamie looked at her. "Okay."

"It's called Meadowbrook. It's a residential programme over four weeks, in the summer. It's specifically for young adults eighteen and over." She paused. "Young adults who wear nappies, or who identify as baby or toddler age, or who are... exploring their gender in particular ways. Or any combination of those things."

Jamie was quiet for a moment. The dual carriageway moved past them steadily.

"All of those things," he said.

"Yes. I thought that." She signalled to change lanes with the calm of someone who has practised not reacting to important things in ways that cause accidents. "It's run by a couple. Peter and Margaret Hollis. They've been running it for twelve years. I've read a great deal about them. They seem... exactly right."

"How did you find it?"

"The internet. And a little persistence." A pause. "I've been looking, on and off, for about two years. I wanted to find the right thing, not just something."

Jamie absorbed this: the two years of quiet, private looking. His mother, in the evenings after he was in bed, searching for

Where Julie Lives

something that might give him what she could only partly provide. He felt the particular weight of being loved carefully.

“What do you think?” Claire said.

He looked out at the road. The grey morning had begun, as promised, to lighten at the edges. “I think I’m terrified,” he said. “And yet... I think I want to go.”

Claire nodded, as though this were the answer she had expected. “Good,” she said. “That’s the right answer. I only want the best for you, you know.”

“I know, mum. Sometimes it all seems scary. Like not wearing nappies.”

“Who says you need to stop wearing nappies? I certainly don’t.”

“I just wonder sometimes...” Jamie began.

“Well, there’s no need to wonder. You belong in nappies, and I realised that a long time ago. Toilet training just isn’t for some people.”

Jamie smiled thinly as he sighed in contentment. Toilet training truly hadn’t worked for him, and he knew it was primarily because he truly didn’t understand its purpose. Wetting his nappy occurred day and night without any real awareness. And soiling was something he could hold off during the day if he was not at home, but other than that, the nappy was always the right place for that too. And if he woke in the morning having soiled overnight... it brought a smile to his face because it was so... babyish.