



Reluctant Press

Sentenced To Sandara

Katrina Susan Henderson



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART

A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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SENTENCED TO SANDARA

By **Katrina Susan Henderson**

1. In the Nursery

The evening air was pleasant as I headed to take up my shift at the hospital that late day in May. The state hospital was an imposing building of twenty full stories and was one of the first constructed of the pink coral used during the initial colonization. It is the year of 4139.5 Ancient Dating System, and I was once a part of the citizenry of the planet Aruba IV. Aruba IV was an associate member of the Galactic Commonwealth and was colonized over a thousand years ago by the League of Sameness.

The League of Sameness was the philosophical basis of the entire colony of Aruba IV. The basic tenets stated that all differences among people had to be eliminated in order for everyone to be equal in the eyes of the state. There was no distinction allowed and all of us had to dress and act alike in order to fit into the idea of the State.

The philosophy of sameness led us to a utopian world of plenty and high technology. There were no differences between me and my fellow citizens. We were all 5' 8" in height, all 135 lb. and all had brown hair and brown eyes. We had been genetically enhanced to have no body or facial hair and we all spoke with a medium-toned voice.

It did not take long for the maglev I was riding in to pull up to the employees' entrance to the main hospital building. I exited the maglev with twenty other citizens. I hoisted my travel bag over my left shoulder and entered the hospital. I went up the main hall and headed for the nurse's desk to report in. Seated at the desk was the morning shift nurse who looked up at me with a smile.

"Good evening, Citizen."

"Good evening, Citizen. What is my assignment for tonight?" I asked in reply.

The citizen behind the desk looked at a computer datapad and replied, "Well CS9872-117, it looks like you pull Nursery for tonight,"

I looked at the nurse expectantly and answered, "That will be nice CS9870-212. I don't mind pulling Nursery. Who will be the evening watch nurse?"

"It will be CS9870-389. You will just need to report every 3 cycles as prescribed in the manual. Your break will be at 01:00 hours and you will need to check the new batch that just came out of Incubator 5. Other than that, have a good shift, Citizen."

“Thank you, Citizen. Have a good evening too,” I answered grabbing my bag and putting on the security badge that was handed to me.

I went through the main doors and down the hall until I came to the room set aside for reporting personnel. Entering the room I walked over to the locker with my citizen number on it and changed into my hospital uniform. I put the mask on and pulled the clear plastic coveralls over the top of my uniform. With a few moments till I had to report, I lit up a Joystick and turned to watch the public Unicom. I quickly lost interest as the state was once again showing a courtroom proceeding involving a young citizen being cited for Conduct Unbecoming to a Same. It appeared that the poor wretch had made some crude paintings and had defaced the public information board across the mall from the courthouse.

Fortunately, at that moment my friend Peki walked in.

“Hi, Peki. How was morning shift?” I asked in friendly camaraderie. Peki was the same CS level as I and could be addressed by brood name.

“Not too much really, Elan. I pulled the Eternal Rest duty today. What duty you got tonight?”

“I'm pulling Nursery.”

“That's too bad, Elan. Well, everybody has to pull that shift sometime. It seems to me though, that you pull it more often than most,” Peki commented.

“I'm sure it just seems that way, Peki. I don't think the duty commander would stoop to such insaneness as to be deliberately shafting me,” I countered, picking up my computer datapad.

“Well, it's off you go, Elan. Have a good shift,” Peki replied changing back into the standard citizen street clothes.

“A good evening to you, Peki,” I answered leaving the shift room.

I entered the hall to take me deep into the hospital complex. When I came to a series of lifts, I took one to the fifth floor where the Nursery was located. When the lift doors opened, my nostrils were assaulted by the smell of the artificial amniotic fluid for the Birthing Machines and the smell of antiseptic. Without the mask, I would have found it hard to work in this area, but I enjoyed the idea of these machines producing fine new citizens for our great civilization.

As I came abreast of Ward 5, I noticed an old repairman exiting the primary Birthing Machine room. He was obviously from off world and had not been genetically enhanced. He had the look of chaotic genes that had chanced to form him and he was obviously not a same. He smelt of oil and an odor I associated with electricity. His hair was covered in artificial amniotic fluid and his coveralls were stained and wrinkled.

“Good evening, Citizen,” I greeted as I stopped near him.

“Yea, hi there. You the duty nurse for this shift?” the old man asked.

“That is correct. Is there anything I need to know in particular?”

“No, nurse. The Birthing Machines are putting out new citizens at a good rate, though I think they will be breaking down more often in the next few years.”

“What makes you say that?” I questioned.

“Well, it is just machinery and it has been operating since the landfall of this colony with off-world repair service. Since the recent Insurgent's War the Scientific Imperium has limited technological services to the technology of the planetary culture. Aruba IV is a Class 3A Technology and your Birthing Machines are Class 3B. They're wearing out and if you Citizens don't want to go back to the old way of breeding, this colony will fail without replacements,” he said taking out a handkerchief to wipe his face.

“I'm sure the Administration will improve our technological class long before that happens,” I answered wondering what the Insurgent's War was. I knew that the League of Sameness had fled the Scientific Imperium over a thousand years ago because the Imperium tolerated the Chaos created by something called “pluralism”. Obviously the war mentioned by the old man was another example of this Chaos.

“What's wrong with the good old fashioned way of women having babies?” he asked in exasperation.

I let out a shocked gasp and protested, “Citizen, if you please! That would be unsame and will not be tolerated here. I may be just a regular Civil Service grade, but I'd appreciate it if you kept such unsameness remarks to yourself.”

“Suit yourself. I don't know if you are a sissy or a girl, so just let me say that I'm leaving this world tonight and I'm proud I'm an individual,” he answered.

At the lift, he turned and said, “There are some magazines on the table in the observation room that I brought from Earth on those Birthing Machines. If something goes wrong with them, they might help in an emergency. No hard feelings, Citizen, and I wish you well. I doubt if anyone will be back to service the machines after me.”

“Good evening, Citizen,” I replied as the lift door closed.

I was relieved when he had left. His anti-sameness left me feeling uneasy, and I must say a bit fixated on the horror of our society being forced to return to primitive sex. Our Herstory led from the fundamental belief that sex was one of the causes of Chaos, because the male used sex to dominate the female. The ancient Feminist Prophets had set forth the Laws of Sameness and primitive sex was a crime requiring the death penalty.. I shuddered at my thoughts they reminded me of the outcries of the rebel youth on the screen earlier. I must be careful..

I walked on down the hall and entered the observation room to take my seat behind the console. I was very distraught, but attempted to calm myself by plunging into the job. I checked all the monitors and everything looked functional. All three Birthing Machines were showing flawless readings and the three incubator rooms were filled with the cries of newly-born citizens. I turned the volume down and leaned back in my chair.

After a few moments, I noticed the large, thick magazine diskette box lying on the edge of the console. I picked it up and looked at it. It contained a technical instruction diskette discussing the Birthing Machines and their basic operations. I was surprised to see that Birthing Machines were used only on newly colonized planets in the Commonwealth to help them get a solid foothold. The magazine was far too technical for

me so I put it down and discovered another magazine diskette was stuck inside the box with the technical one.

The second magazine was not technical, in fact, it was rather readable with the odd title of Nursing 4139.1. It was a magazine dedicated to my profession. As I scanned the diskette on my holo-monitor I was amazed to find that in most of the Commonwealth, nursing was the province of Nonsames known as women.

It seemed strange that the pictures showed them in stances of obvious pride, even in their odd uniforms. The nursing magazine actually had a fashion article on these uniforms and related lingerie. It appeared that in the Reign of Horace Magnus VI, of the Fifty Third Scientific Imperium, the current fashion emphasized by Earth designers was Twentieth Century Revival. I could not believe the array of colors and textures.

In the book was an article on natural childbirth which I found totally fascinating. I memorized the entire birthing procedure.

I must confess that as a nurse I was aware of the biological differences in urinary tract systems. Sometimes, once in a few thousand clones a baby with an external tract system might be produced by the Birthing Machines despite efforts to set the machines so that such freaks did not occur. To my shame, I knew I was such a freak.

From the pictures, I discovered that I would have been called a man if I had been born elsewhere in the Commonwealth, due to my being different than the creatures known as women, who were shown giving birth. I put down the magazine, visibly shaken. My profession, while it had a few men, was dominated by women and women were able to do what it took our Birthing Machines to do. What the old man had said was true and was common throughout the Commonwealth. What did that make Aruba IV? A colony of freaks? Totally out of step with the rest of human civilization? I quickly placed the magazine box with its diskettes in my duty bag, resolving to turn them into Administration when I had a chance to copy them, as I wondered what had happened to my utopia.

I sat there watching the monitors lost in thought through the first half of my shift. But this magazine was so explicit that I actually became auto-sexually aroused, therefore I knew this was forbidden material by the Laws of Sameness!

At 01:00, my watch beeped and I put my datapad on standby and went down to the Cafeteria to have dinner. I quickly had a standard dinner with the standard coffee that I had eaten ever since I had gotten out of nursery. As I munched the same meal with the rest of the Sames, I remembered that the nurses in the magazine had each looked somehow unique even in their identical uniforms. It seemed they had done something to their hair, had painted their faces and wore pieces of metal in their ears. These thoughts plagued me as I had my meal, which for the first time appeared to be bland and uninteresting.

After I finished my break, I returned to the observation room and resumed my station. After I had been there for an hour, I saw that an alert was registering in Incubator Room 1. I quickly focused the signal and discovered that Incubator 7 was shorting out. I didn't have time to sound the alarm, so I rushed into the room and yanked open

the cover to Incubator 7. Smoke boiled out of the incubator and the fire detector went off. Reaching into the open incubator, I brought forth the young citizen lying inside.

I ran over to a trolley that was setting in the room and sat the young citizen down. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and put out the fire in the incubator and pulled the plug on the machine. I quickly checked on the young citizen and discovered that it had stopped breathing. Remembering my emergency medical training, I proceeded to resuscitate it.

“Attention, CS9872-117. What is your situation?” rasped out the intercom.

At that moment the young citizen started coughing and began breathing. I picked up the citizen and held it against my chest where it cried loudly.

“Incubator 7 in Ward 5 has malfunctioned. Fire has been neutralized and citizen recovered.”

I reported that I had begun to stroke the young citizen.

“Affirmative, CS9872-117. Call if new developments. Evening desk, out,” crackled the intercom.

I leaned back and sat down on the trolley holding the young citizen against me. After a short time, it became quiet and began to grope around with its small hands on my chest. I carefully carried the tiny one to a new incubator and deposited it there next to the feeder. I watched as it reached out, just as it had on my chest, until it grasped the feeder and placed it in its mouth. After a bit, I heard the young citizen sucking out the food within. I looked down at my chest and wondered exactly what part of me the young citizen had been searching for. A feeder? Strange thought, that.

I went back up to the observation room and took out the nursing magazine diskette. I went through the diskette and discovered that the creatures known as women had two large growths on the front of their chests. These were known as “breasts”. It appeared that the natural feeding of natural birth citizens was done through these growths!

I stopped reading and leaned back in total shock. I had just been approached by a young citizen which was apparently looking for me to feed and care for it. It appeared that the young citizens needed a lot of care to develop properly and normally. What did that mean about us Sames? We were raised by robotic devices and the care of our young citizens was entrusted to them. The “women” in the book seemed to be very happy with their newly-birthing citizens and smiled back at me from the pages.

None of my medical training had prepared me for these revelations. All traces of gender had long been eradicated from most of the medical literature for us lower-grade Civil Servants and even less was given to the common citizenry. I remember seeing the genital area on the human body diagrams being left empty. Until now, I had never thought to question whether everyone had the same organs I had in that area. Sameness would not accept the idea of differences in gender.

But now, having realized this difference, I was in a dilemma. I was obviously not a “Same”, but a man in a woman's profession. I liked the feeling of holding a young citizen— baby, rather—and would have loved to have had a feeder—breasts—in order to

feed the young one. The more I looked at the strange magazine, the more I realized that my life on Aruba IV was abnormal compared to most of the galaxy.

Suddenly, I heard a noise behind me which broke my concentration and I realized that my shift was coming to an end, so I carefully put the magazine diskette box into my bag. I rose from my chair and turned to face the open door. In it walked a Same to take over my shift.

“Good morning, Citizen,” it greeted me.

“Good morning, Citizen,” I replied.

“Anything to report?” asked the citizen.

“No, nothing to report. We had an incubator catch fire about 0300 this morning, but nothing else has happened,” I answered approaching the door.

“Just my luck, you had all the excitement on your shift. Mine will probably be boring. Well, have a good day, Citizen,” it said dismissing me.

“Yes, good day to you, Citizen,” I replied as I exited the room.

I quickly went out into the hall, but stopped and looked into Ward 5. In the far incubator, I could just make out the small form of the young citizen I had saved and I noticed that it had fallen asleep. I was happy that it had come through its ordeal intact and safe, and I felt strangely protective of the small fragile form. Sighing softly so as not to attract the state loyalty monitors I went down to the lifts.

Exiting the lift on the main floor I went into the shift room and changed into my standard citizen street clothes, after a quick sonic shower. As I put on my Same clothes, I couldn't help but think about the dress of the nurses in the magazines. Their uniforms had looked so nice and each was bright and cheerful. The Same clothes were dull and drab by comparison. Their shoes had been different, their underclothes were soft and lacy, their legs were clad in sheer material and their over clothes and hats were of pure white.

How plain I felt in comparison!

I walked out of the hospital and got into a maglev. I can't say exactly what I was thinking, but I suddenly found myself ordering the maglev to take me to a shopping area. I was suddenly compelled to do some shopping. The magazine cover kept appearing in my mind as I rode to my destination.

2. Trial Transformation

The shopping center was full of Sames today so I continued on until I entered the Imperium Star Port area. The star port bustled with business as two Commonwealth trading ships were currently in port. The maglev dropped me in front of the port's main shopping area. There were many people there, some of them from across the Commonwealth stopping on their way to make a connecting flight from Aruba IV. It was fortunate for our world that we were at a crossroads of the great trading fleets or we would probably be a society on the brink of collapse. I was stopped as I entered the main trading level by a Sameness League guard.

“Halt, Citizen. What is your business here?” asked the Same guard roughly.

"I'm going to see about some medical supplies for the hospital. They were to arrive today," I replied quickly.

"What is your grade?" questioned the guard pulling out a datapad.

"CS9872-117," I stated steadily.

He pushed a few buttons then said, "I have you here, but I have no data on medical supplies. Still you may enter. Prepare yourself, Citizen. There are Nonsames inside. Try not to show your disgust at their lowly condition."

"I'll try my best, Citizen," I replied.

The guard grunted and moved to one side.

I walked past the guard and into the huge trading area that was the size of a large spacecraft hanger. There were rows and rows of tables loaded down with goods from across the Commonwealth. There were fine liquors alongside house wares as well as technological items superior to the ones I was used to on Aruba IV. The tables nearest the door were being patronized by Sames, so I drifted toward the back of the trading area.

As I worked my way back, I saw fewer Sames and eventually found myself at the rear of the building. In the alleyway behind the trade building, I saw a series of small stands. These stands were selling cloth of an unusual shine and softness. These fabrics were forbidden to Sames by planetary law.

I was very nervous as I approached one of the stalls. As I came up to it, I saw a citizen—one which would probably be called "woman" on her world for she looked similar to those I had seen in the strange magazine—look at me with a very peculiar smile.

"Can I help you, miss?" she asked me in a friendly voice.

I recognized the greeting from something I had seen in the magazine as being related to these "women" I read about. "Yes," I answered softly, surprised that she had assumed I was one of her kind.

I pulled the nursing magazine diskette out of my street bag.

She looked at the pictures that I indicated as they appeared on her monitor and she smiled. "You'd like to purchase a Nurses uniform then?"

"Yes, and I need the other things in this picture," I said indicating the clothes, jewelry and make-up.

"Come with me. Julie, take over for me while I'm with this client." She motioning for me to follow her.

She led me out the back of the stall and down the causeway to a small independent merchant ship. She opened the hatch and led me inside. We came to a room marked Beauty Parlor and she asked me to sit down in one of the chairs. Then she tied a plastic apron on me that covered my clothes. She began to apply a soothing cream to my face.

"What is your name, dear?" she asked conversationally as she put the cream on.

“We citizens are not allowed to discuss personal nomenclature outside of our service grade,” I replied, casting about for a loyalty monitor.

“Nonsense, honey. I don't count since I'm an alien,” she replied as she began to apply some flesh-toned lotion to my face.

“What is YOUR name?” I questioned back.

“I asked first, sweetie. All right, it's Alicia.” She smiled as she spread and blended the lotion on my face.

I quickly tried to remember a name from the strange magazine, finally blurting out, “Elana. Yes, my name is Elana.”

She laughed a little and said, “A pretty name for a pretty girl.”

“Am I really—pretty?” I asked, not quite sure what the word meant. I could tell, though, she intended it as a compliment.

“Yes. If you girl Sames just took a little care in your appearance, you could all be beautiful,” she answered.

“What are you doing?” I asked.

She puckered her lip and replied, “Well, I've just put some cover-up over the moisturizer and blended it and now I'm going to pat some powder on you. After I've brushed off the excess, it will be time to blush you.”

Her words sounded strange but somehow secretly exciting to me.

With that, she picked up a sponge and some translucent powder and applied it to my face. “Blush” soon followed and then she did my eyes in a beautiful shade of red. Lastly she applied some substance which was a bright cherry red to my lips and on top of that something glossy which made them shine. She held up a mirror when she was done so that I could see. I gasped in amazement! Looking out the mirror at me was a person every bit as—was “pretty” the word?—the women in the magazine. Seeing my hair, however, I remembered how long most of the women's hair was compared to my nearly-shaven head, the standard for all Sames. Twice a month, we reported to a citizen-barber who rendered us hairless. Looking at the improved image staring back at me in the mirror, I decided that I wanted to see what having long hair was like.

“I wish my hair was like that, Alicia,” I half asked pointing to one of the pictures of a nurse with long brown hair.

“I think we can do something about that, Elana. I have several wigs that may just suit you. Wait right here and I'll get some for you to try on. By the way, is your hair curly or straight?”

“Um, I'm not sure. Straight, I think.”

She just laughed and departed the room leaving me gazing in the mirror.

I couldn't believe what I saw there. Was I really becoming like the women in my magazine? What was I doing? This was all contrary to Sameness, but I couldn't understand how something this exciting and harmless could be wrong. The old man had said he was proud to be an individual. If this was what being an individual was, then for the first time in my life, I no longer wanted to be a Same. Still, I would have to be

very careful or else the Sameness League would hear of it and have me arrested. After a few moments, the woman returned with two wigs, one wavy and straight, while the other had loose curls.

“I think either of these will do. Let's try them on. This one is called Gidget,” she explained, placing the wavy wig on my head.

I looked at myself with it on and was pleased with what I saw. Alicia fluffed it for me and brushed it lightly. She then stepped back to look at me. She frowned a little and put the other wig on me. She then proceeded to fluff it lightly and then stepped away so that I could see myself in the mirror.

While the other wig had been nice, this one was strangely exciting. I gasped with pleasure at the vision of myself in the mirror. I felt a warm and pleasant feeling deep inside me as I sat there looking at myself.

“I think Bridget suits you the best, Elana. It makes you look hot and sexy,” she observed.

“You think it makes me look sexy?” I asked, unsure of what the word meant.

“Yes, most men like a woman with long hair and like to make love to them. I think you could get a man, if you set your mind to it,” she replied.

I looked down in embarrassment, as much by the thought of what her words might mean as my realization that I didn't exactly know just what she meant and asked, “What's next?”

Alicia smiled and said, “I'm going to pierce your ears, and then we're going to get clothes and jewelry for you. After that, we can settle up the tab and you can explore around for the rest of the afternoon. Then, you can come back here and change back into a drab Same.”

Suddenly, the notion of being nothing but a Same, something I had previously cherished as the very core of my being, was repellent to me.

“Well, just lean back, dear. Put your head on the rest,” she said to me soothingly.

As I rested, she swabbed my ears with a substance I recognized as a local anesthetic. She pierced my earlobe with a needle and put a metal hoop in to hold the hole open. She then repeated the procedure on the opposite side.

“It may be sore for a day or two, Elana. If no one looks close, you'll still pass for a Same although you and I will both know you aren't.”

A thrill ran through me as she spoke.

“Come with me and we'll get you dressed,” Alicia said, taking my hand and leading me into an adjoining room.

In the adjoining room were rows and rows of clothing of various colors and descriptions. I had never in all my existence seen so many different clothes. Alicia led me to an area of huge tables with boxes of smaller articles of clothing in them. She reached into her pocket and took out a long cloth measuring tape. She circled my chest, twice, one below the other, once about my waist and once about my hips. She wrote the

numbers down on a small datapad and reached into one of the boxes. She pulled out an article of clothing and then got three more out of separate boxes.

“Go to that small changing room over there and put these on. Set your Sames-garments on the bench,” Alicia ordered, handing me the clothes she had gotten out of the boxes.

I entered the changing room and took off my Sames-garments. I picked up and examined one of the articles of clothing. It was underwear, but like none I had ever seen. They were a pretty pink and were oddly soft and silky. I noticed that the tag in the back identified them as “panties”. I put them on as I had my Same underwear although the feeling was totally unfamiliar. They were soft and sheer. I felt a wave of pure pleasure as I put them on. I then put on what the woman had told me was called “hose”. It went on easily and afterward my legs looked like the women's in my magazine. The next item I put on was something called a slip, and it was just as soft as the panties but white with a fragile fabric on the trim.

Next, I tried to put on something called a bra. I remembered seeing these holding the female chest growths, breasts rather. I tried to position it on my chest like I had seen in the pictures and then tried to connect it in back.

At that moment, Alicia walked in with an arm load of clothes.

“Here, let me help you with that, dear.” “Thanks, Alicia. It's going to take me a while getting used to fastening this,” I replied.

She just laughed, “You'll get used to it, dear. Here is the uniform you requested. It should fit you well. Get it on and then we'll see how we did.”

“All right, Alicia,” I replied as she left me in the changing room.

I was full of excitement as I took the uniform out of the box. In it was the nurse's dress with belt, a nice undershirt, the white nurses hat and a pair of white shoes that had a one inch-high heel. I put on the undershirt first, it was silky and lacy. It clung to the bra as I lowered it over it. I frowned a bit since the growths on my chest were rather low, unlike those on the women I had admired in the magazine's pictures. I reached into the box and took some of the padding I found there and stuffed it into the bra until I looked about as well grown as one of the women in the magazine.

Then I put on the dress and belted it tightly about my waist. I then slipped on the shoes and sat the hat on top of the wig. I used the two pins that Alicia had included with the hat to pin it to the wig.

I carefully stood up on the shoes. I was a little wobbly at first, but soon got comfortable atop them. I then made my way out of the changing room.

There, waiting for me, was Alicia and she had wheeled a large full size mirror in front of the changing room entrance. I gasped with amazement at the vision in the mirror. It was just like one of the photographs in the nursing magazine. I was astonished and pleased with the way I looked.

“Very nice, Elana,” complimented Alicia, coming over to me.

“I feel very excited,” I replied.

"It's just a uniform, dear. Nothing like a nightgown or naughty lingerie. Still, you do make it look very nice. We'll just get you some accessories and you can go out and mingle with the star port folks. We'll settle up and when you come back this afternoon, we'll make you a Same again and you can go home. Come with me, Elana," ordered Alicia.

I followed Alicia and soon she had me decked out in large diamond earrings, a pearl necklace, a trio of bracelets, a ladies' watch and a sapphire ring. She then stuffed a set of cosmetics into a leather bag with a floral pattern pressed into it and handed it to me.

"I think we're ready now," said Alicia. "The fee is 300 credits."

I got out my credit card and she put it in the machine where it was dutifully taken out of my account. The price was a little steep, but I knew the risks she was taking letting me come here. She escorted me out and told me to be back in four hours to reclaim my Same clothing.

She wished me well and returned to her stall.

I stood motionless for a minute, not knowing quite what to do. I observed some out world women passing by and since I was dressed as they were, I followed them and tried to emulate their movements. I soon discovered that by leading with my thighs, rather than my feet, it was easier to walk on the heels in a swaying hip motion. I heard several calls my way referring to me as a pretty nurse. Now that I had determined that this was definitely a compliment, it made me feel good, especially when one woman told the man she was with to stop staring at my ass.

I spent the rest of the four hours buying different things in the trading hall and was always referred to as "Miss" and not once as "citizen". I bought several items I thought would help camouflage the non-sameness clothes I was wearing when I carried them by the Sameness guard.

I must have been running a little late for Alicia was at the entrance to her ship tapping her foot when I came walking up.

"About time you got here, girl. The Sameness Patrol will be through here in half an hour and we have to get you transformed back, or there'll be hell to pay. Hurry up and follow me," Alicia demanded nervously, motioning me to follow her back inside.

My feelings about being a Same again were mixed. I really didn't want to be a Same anymore. I didn't want to conform to the dictates of Same society. I wanted to be free to be who and what I am! "Who and what I am??" Such blasphemous thoughts! So thrilling at the same time, though.

Unfortunately, reality hit me suddenly and I knew that I had no choice, but to become a Same again. I had no travel pass to leave the planet and not enough money to bribe someone to risk taking me along.

Alicia transformed me back into a Same, commenting how much she regretting having to do it since I was very pretty as a girl. After about fifteen minutes, she had removed the last vestiges of make-up and I had changed back into my drab Same clothes. She carefully folded the clothes and placed all the women's things in the bot-

tom of a box and then set the rest of the stuff I had bought on top of it, with a large fruit basket setting on top.

Alicia showed me out through the stall saying, "Good luck, citizen. I hope you find what you're looking for."

I smiled and replied, "So do I. Good bye and thank you, citizen merchant."

I walked off carefully, breaking myself of the swaying movements that had so quickly become natural for me. I worked my way past the tables, which were still conducting a lively bit of business and got in line to pass out of the trading area in front of the Sameness guard who was conducting a baggage check.

It was a nervous moment when I finally got up to it.

"Anything to declare, citizen?" the citizen asked perfunctorily, while looking into the box.

"Nothing, citizen. It was a typical market," I answered as sincerely as I could.

"Hmm," the guard said as it spied the fruit basket setting on top.

I realized the guard must have been hungry, standing there all day so I said, "Would you like some fruit from the basket, citizen? I see that you're hungry from your long work shift."

"Thank you, citizen, you may go on," answered the guard who quickly took two fruits out of the basket and began eating one of them.

"Good day to you, guard," I replied as I hurried away.

I couldn't believe my good fortune, the guard had been so preoccupied with the fruit that the lower part of the box had escaped exploration. I caught a maglev and was soon back at my domicile. I put the box on the bed, took the perishables out and went into the living room to watch the public channel.

Again, it was the same trials and sentencing of unsames. This time though, I paid close attention to how they were caught and why they had perpetrated their crimes against society. I was astonished to discover that these citizens felt the same way I did!

There were others like myself!

This was a total revelation. All this time, I had been blind to the persecution going on around me every day.

I switched off the screen and turned off the lights in the apartment. I began preparations for bed as I would have to show up on shift later. I was extremely tired, but determined that at least in the privacy of my own apartment, I could be an individual and not a Same.

I put away my newly-acquired things in the top part of the bag, set out the nurses uniform, hat, purse and shoes in a chair near my bed. I then put on the wig, bra, panties and hose and put myself beneath the covers. The feeling of the bedclothes against the soft fabric and therefore to my naked skin felt so soothing and good that I fell asleep much quicker than usual.