



Reluctant Press

Gloria

Elizabeth Anne Nelson



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART

A 'YOUNG ADULT TV' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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“GLORIA”

By Elizabeth Anne Nelson

“Robert Gleason, you're a schnook!”

The bedroom door slammed, leaving me alone to consider my sister's anger. One sister is a problem; but five sisters is Hell! If she had left the shoe box on the living room table alone, she would not have been frightened by a mounted specimen anyway. Sure, tarantulas aren't very pretty, but it was dead.

Now, you would think that a fellow could learn how to understand girls, especially a guy with five sisters, a Mother and an Aunt in the same house, but I don't. Well, I guess that'll cure her of poking her old nose into any boxes sitting around the house.

Leaning up against the wall, I propped my feet atop my desk and took a cigarette from my jacket, using Bill's going away present to light it. It was a nice idea for Bill to give me a lighter. And the gang back in L.A., oh, well, maybe I can find a few guys here in Blainsville. Wonder how a guy finds some fresh smokes in this littlesville anyway. I'd better go easy on the habit until I find a way to get more. And I had better watch the ashes, Mom's promise to give me a new car for graduation could really go bye-bye if she found me smoking!

Of course, I'm perfectly safe in my own room with Mom and Aunt Lena both back in L.A. clearing out the old house and business. One week free from them. I wish she hadn't sold the store in L.A. to buy the Blainsville Department Store though.

Not that I mind this new pad. I've got a real nice room of my own with a TV., hi-fi and FM radio combo built right into the wall. And the house did have a big swimming pool out back.

It was a swell setup.

Suddenly, the door burst open to reveal Jane with her camera, and the blinding light of the flash bulb that forced me to close my eyes. Just as suddenly, the door slammed shut.

Somewhat stunned, I rose to glance at the cigarette in my hand...

“Oh, God! I had better get that picture or she might show it to Mom and I can kiss the car good-bye!”

Putting out the cigarette, I stormed out of my room to discover an empty hallway. I could hear their voices and laughter from the kitchen, so I ran down the back steps and opened the swinging door, revealing all five of them sitting around the kitchen work table.

“Well, well, Beatle Boy,” Barbara greeted as though nothing had taken place, her voice bringing an amused silence among her companions in crime.

“I want that photo.”

“What photo?” Jane looked at the others with mock innocence.

“Ah, come off it. You know damned well what I mean...”

“Don't you swear at me, Robert Gleason! Just because you're a boy, is no reason to be rude!”

“I want that picture!” I demanded flatly as my eyes searched the room for a possible hiding place. “Is it here?”

“No, I ditched the camera,” Jane smiled. “I knew you were smoking, so I just waited until you got careless. You might be able to bluff Mom, but a picture is real evidence! And I took care to hide it well. It's invaluable!”

“Ah, come on,” I half-begged, “a joke's a joke.”

“Look at him squirm,” Angela giggled.

“OK, Beatle Boy, I have you in the palm of my hand. If you want to keep that car, you're going to jump when I say.”

Now I like the Beatles; they're orbitville! That's why I let my hair grow for a Beatle cut. But, she was pushing her luck. So I decided it was up to me to search the place until I found it. A camera couldn't be hidden too easily. Without replying to her threat, I began to search the kitchen as the delighted girls watched my efforts.

“You're cold,” Angela laughed, to be joined by the others in her game of “hot and cold” just to add to their fun.

Soon, I discovered the kitchen was clear of any camera. Logically, it had to be someplace between my room and the kitchen, so with Angela and the others following me, I searched up the back stairwell and down the hallway, stopping in front of Jane's room.

“Go right in; it's not there, but if you want to ransack my room too, you're welcome to it,” Jane announced, opening the door to her room.

The room revealed nothing except a lovely Hollywood bed covered with a blue satin spread, a vanity, a bureau filled with dainties that caused me to blush and the girls to laugh, and a closet full of the feminine junk that a seventeen-year-old girl wears and uses.

“Give up?”

“Please, Jane, let me have the picture?”

“No dice! You've had your fun lording it all over us, little man, and now it's our turn to call the tune for you to dance to.”

Shrugging, I left the room to cross the hall to search Barbara's room. It wasn't any better than Jane's, containing just the things all sixteen-year-old girls use. When I latched onto her diary in hopes of bribing her, they all closed in on me and I had to surrender it. Even though I was a boy, I had no way of staving off five determined girls, especially if four of them were bigger than I!

Going through the bathroom that connected Barbara's room with Alice's, I proceeded to search her room too, as the smiling girls looked on, occasionally offering suggestions or taunting me when I picked up a particularly feminine item to continue my search. But her room was clean, so I crossed the hall, entered her twin sister's room and found that it too was empty. Jackie even helped me in my search of her room. But her aid consisted mostly of taking out a bra or a pair of panties from a drawer and asking me if that was what I was searching for...

“But, my dearest, she is much too little for a bra,” Barbara taunted. “Although she's fifteen, she's still childishly flat-chested!”

The girls all laughed at this new game, delighting over my embarrassment.

“Maybe she will find the right clothes in my room,” Angela offered. “She isn't any bigger than I am, is she really?”

“You know, I think you're right, Angel. I bet she could pass as your twin sister. I bet that's why she's searching our rooms. She wants to know what big girls wear,” Alice suggested, taking my thirteen-year-old sister and standing her close by my side. “Why he isn't any taller than Angela, Girls!”

Ignoring her taunt, I left the room to go to Angela's room which was across from mine. Opening the door, I entered a room far more feminine than that of her older sisters. The bedroom had pastel pink walls, a canopy bed with a white satin spread and a canopy trimmed with lace frosting, a similarly skirted vanity, and a white and gold trimmed bureau. Along the lace curtained window was her toy and doll collection. And her closet revealed nothing but her preteen clothes and things.

No camera.

Not even in her laundry hamper in her private bathroom.

“Give up?” Jane asked.

“OK, where is it?” I asked again, knowing that somehow they had found the perfect hiding place.

“I think you have had plenty of time to think over the facts. I have the picture, so if you want it back, you have to bargain with us all. I think we have a few scores to settle with you. So, we'll retire to the kitchen and figure out our terms. Until then, you go to your room and sweat it out.”

“Please, I promise not to tease you girls anymore,” I offered, causing them all to smile. I could see that they had planned the whole thing together and they knew that I was over a barrel. “OK, you win for now,” I conceded with ill grace.

"You bet, little man," Jackie noted as they all left me in Angela's room.

Shrugging, I crossed the hall and went into my room to await their decision. Sitting by my window, I watched the passing cars, which reminded me of Mom's promise and of how easy it was for them to blow up the whole thing. Damned stupid... that's what I was to ever smoke in the house. Slowly, the time passed, causing me to pick up a western I had been reading. Just when it got to a shoot out, Angela knocked and entered my room.

"Well, what's the deal?"

She looked at me in silent thoughtfulness and then shrugged with an amused smile. "They'll tell you. Come on down to the kitchen."

"Come on, Angela, tell me?" I prodded hopefully, but she merely shook her head and left the room to lead the way back to the kitchen where the girls were waiting for me.

"We have come to a decision, Bob," Jane began in hushed tones while the others tried not to look at me. The kitchen was strangely silent, almost as tense as I felt.

"Come on, let's get this farce over with. What's the pitch?"

"Well, Bob, well..." Jane paused uncertainly as she studied the others before looking back at me with a faint smile. "I want to know if you think the picture is worth a week's strict obedience to our wishes?"

"A whole week? I guess so... why not?"

The girls all smiled.

"It's not going to be easy, Kiddo. A whole week from now until next Sunday when Mom and Aunt Lena return. You must do everything we tell you without the slightest protest. If you quit before the time is up, the picture goes to Mom and you are out that new car she promised you."

"I don't like the idea one bit," I muttered unhappily. "But, I want that car and you know you have me over a barrel."

"So, do you agree to our terms then?" Jane insisted, a bit impatiently.

"Sure, I guess so."

"Yes or no, no hedging."

"Yes, I agree to do what you gals want for a whole week."

"OK, that's all for now."

"What about school?" Barbara asked.

"Yes," Jane added as an afterthought, "since you're going to be a bit busy around the house today, Barbara will take care of your registration at Blainsville High.

Go get your registration materials."

"She can't register for me."

"All she has to do is turn in your forms. I called and checked."

Without further protest, I went back to my room and picked up the registration forms that Aunt Lena had gotten from the school. It had completely slipped my mind that today was school registration day. Checking the folder, I brought it back to the kitchen and handed it to Barbara.

“Now that that's settled, this is the plan for today, girls. Barbara, Jackie and Angela are to take care of the school registration thing. Alice is to take care of the shopping. And I shall stay here to fix supper and take care of our little slave.”

The girls nodded and in a flurry of skirts, they left me alone with Jane.

“Well, slave, we'll start by cleaning your room,” she announced at last, then rose from behind the kitchen table. Opening a cabinet drawer, she took a lacy bib apron and handed it to me. “Here, put this on.”

Taking the dainty thing into my hands, I protested, “But, Jane!”

“No hedging! You promised to do what we say. Put that apron on and be quick about it. We have a lot of work for you to do.”

Seeing no escape, I put the apron on, tying the nylon ties into a large bow in the back. Trying not to think about this taunt, I followed her up the back stairs and soon found myself completely involved in the task of cleaning up my room, a task which one of the girls usually did since Mom felt that I, as a man, should not do housework. Under Jane's demanding control, I changed the bed, dusted the furniture, swept the floor, and in general straightened up the room until she was content to assign me to scrubbing up my bathroom. In a few minutes, she observed that I should do quite nicely as a maid. With this taunting compliment, she led me to Angela's room where she left me to straighten out the results of my search and clean that room too.

For the next few hours, I was kept busy with house cleaning while Jane went downstairs and made some phone calls. Once the rooms were all cleaned, I took the bed sheets and was about to drop them down the laundry chute when it dawned on me where Jane must have hidden the camera. Eagerly, I ran down the stairs to the kitchen and from there I dashed down the basement stairs. There, on the laundry table, was Jane's camera!

Without care, I opened it to discover the film was gone!

“I see you found the camera, darling. But, you have too many duties to take care of to be playing with my camera.” Jane came down the stairs to confront me, placing her hands on her hips. “The film went with Alice.”

“OK, you win,” I muttered, placing the camera back on the laundry table.

“Obviously, you like the laundry room and since there is so much laundry to do, I think we shall start it for your next duty.” With this, she permitted me to go back upstairs with the camera to be placed in her bedroom. After I threw the rest of the sheets down the chute, I returned to the laundry room where Jane waited. In a few minutes, she had explained how to start the washer and then she left me to my solitary chore. From time to time, she would come down to show me how to operate the dryer and the roller press. But most of the time, I was alone to consider how such work had to be done, and then doing it. The twins usually did the laundry and it wasn't until now that

I fully realized just how much work they had to do. No doubt they planned for me to do all their household chores for the week. It would be hard, but I guessed I could do it.

"OK, you can come up for supper," Barbara shouted down the back stairs. "How's the washer woman?" she laughed when I reached the kitchen.

"Tired," I answered, too exhausted to argue. "I think I'll clean up."

"Use the kitchen sink, dearest. Upstairs is off limits for you until you finish the laundry. If you want to use the bathroom, you can use the kitchen bathroom." Jane opened the bathroom door. "Don't take all day. You must eat and get back to work. Barbara will show you how to wash and iron our pretty things. When that's done, you can go to bed."

Nodding, I washed up and joined the girls at the kitchen table. The meal was strangely silent and the girls seemed as if they were suppressing some secret amusement. In fact, every once in a while, Angela would giggle to herself, only to be admonished by the stern glances of her sisters.

"What's the big mystery?"

"Nothing, darling. She just thinks it's funny for you to be wearing a pretty apron, don't you, Angela?"

"Oh, yes," Angela replied, dutifully lying.

"You did a nice job cleaning our rooms," Alice noted, as if to change the subject. "I think you make an excellent maid."

"Perhaps we should put her into a maid's uniform," Jackie suggested with a twinkling smile of impish delight in her eyes. The girls burst into happy laughter.

"Ah, come on," I protested.

"Yes, I think he's right," Jane scolded. "He's doing a good job."

"Besides, he isn't old enough to fill a maid's uniform!" Barbara concluded to their renewed laughter.

Blushing, I finished my dinner, thankful that they had returned to their previous amused silence. After the meal, Barbara took me back to the laundry room where she showed me how to separate the various items of clothing in the hamper. While she taught me how to work the hand iron, I could hear the front door bell ring from time to time and noises that sounded like men carrying things.

"What's going on?"

"Nothing, child," Barbara replied with a tolerant smile. "If you're to finish all this work, you should pay attention to it instead of things which aren't your concern, at the moment."

"OK," I countered with a shrug. "I never knew that there was so much work to do around this house. I guess I've had it pretty easy."

"Yes, you were a bit spoiled," Barbara frankly agreed, "but maybe during this next week, we can help you to understand how much work you have dodged by being a boy. I think that is why we decided to trap you. We wanted to teach you a lesson."

"I'm sorry about the spider. He wasn't alive."

She shuddered. "I almost died. You are very cruel."

"I didn't leave it there on purpose, and if you hadn't been so nosy..."

"Well, you'll learn not to leave your things about the house by the end of this week," she promised icily, "and you'll certainly be much too busy to be involved with your nasty old bugs." She unfolded one of Angela's blouses and placed it on the ironing board. "This one irons from the inside. And be careful with the lace."

"She certainly goes for all that lacy stuff, doesn't she?" I observed, operating the iron carefully.

"Mom wants her to get out of the tomboy phase. Nothing cures a girl of climbing trees quicker than lace and latex and silks. One spanking for dirty and torn clothes is enough."

"Angela doesn't seem to mind."

"Her spankings?" she asked quizzically.

"Yeah, those too," I confirmed snidely.

"She doesn't have much choice in such things as far as Mom and Aunt Lena are concerned," Barbara replied with a faint smile. "Besides, it's not so bad once you get used to being all dolled up and being careful. She does have a pretty room, doesn't she?"

"Pretty isn't the word for it. It looks like a fairy princess's bedroom with all that satin and lace!" I turned the blouse in my hands, feeling the soft, silken fabric brushing against my skin and wondering secretly what it must feel like to wear such dainty things. Do girls like to wear such pretty clothes?"

"Sometimes, it's fun, sometimes..." and she smiled, glancing at me. "I wonder if you would like to get all dolled up like a little girl?"

"I'm fifteen, and I'm a boy," I laughed at her comment. "I don't think I'd like the idea at all. I don't even like wearing suits."

"Sure, but what about a nice lace and satin dress? Come on, you can tell me... you would like to see what you would look like as a girl, just once, wouldn't you?"

"Well," I began, looking at the blouse beneath the iron, "I guess I have thought about it. After all, with five sisters, and Mom, and Aunt Lena around all the time, and all..."

She smiled as if quite satisfied. "I thought so. I'll keep your little secret." Growing serious, she examined the blouse and handed me another one. Soon, I was back at work and from then on, she spoke of nothing but how to best perform my new duties.

About two hours later, I was almost done when Jane appeared at the head of the stairs. "We're ready, Barbara. You can bring the child up whenever you're done there. It's almost ten."

“OK, dear, we'll be up right away.” Barbara allowed me to finish the slip I was ironing and then unplugged the iron before wrapping the other items into a couple of damp towels. “I'll finish these in a little while. They are waiting for us upstairs.”

“Now what?” I asked, but she ignored my question by pointing me towards the stairs. “OK,” I mumbled, and we went up to the kitchen where Jane and the twins stood, for no doubt Angela was already preparing for bed.

“How does it feel to do girls' work?” Jackie asked.

“I guess I'll survive,” I replied, feeling a bit uneasy as I looked about the room at the four girls who all seemed highly amused. “OK, what's the joke?” I demanded angrily.

“Nothing, child, nothing at all,” Jane observed, causing me to react in anger.

“And would you stop calling me a child!”

“Oh, but of course, baby,” Jane laughed, causing me to realize that I had only made it worse. “Now you can undress,” she commented casually as she pointed to one of my bathrobes that lay on the kitchen table. “And put on your robe. You can undress in the bathroom, if you wish.”

“Undress?” I asked stupidly, looking at her in disbelief. “Why?”

“Because you promised to obey without a murmur of protest.”

Shrugging, I picked up the robe and the slippers that were under it and headed for the bathroom.

“I want you to take a hot shower and use this brush to scrub yourself from head to toe,” Jane stated, handing me a hand brush and a bar of laundry soap. “I want you to scrub until your body glows bright pink and your hair is thoroughly clean. I will inspect your knees and elbows, and if you're not clean enough, the twins will bathe you in a tub like a baby. Do you understand?”

Swallowing hard over her threat, I nodded and entered the bathroom.

While I was in the shower, I heard the door open and close, but I was too involved with scrubbing myself to be concerned with anything else. I had no desire to be bathed by the twins, for even if I fought all the way, I knew that between the four of them, they could subdue me and the twins would carry out Jane's promise to the letter.

The laundry soap was painfully thorough as was the stiff brush and in a few minutes, my skin was almost red from their influence, combined with my desires to avoid a worse torture.

Once the shower was completed, I emerged into the bathroom to discover that they had taken all my clothes and underthings, leaving me just the bathrobe and slippers and a stack of towels. Drying myself off, I wondered about what they had planned for me, but my thoughts were disturbed by Jane's knock on the door and her insistence that I hurry it up.

Putting on the robe and slippers, I walked out into the kitchen to discover Jane and Barbara waiting for me.