



Reluctant Press

Marion & Leslie

Robin Lee Shelby



ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS

A 'HER TV' NOVEL

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Marion & Leslie

by Robin Lee Shelby

Forward:

According to a 1950's television series, there are 8 million stories in the Naked City; that city being, of course, New York. Closer to where I was born and raised is another large city and I can personally attest that it also has a few million stories to be told. That city has been called many things over the span of years but the one that suits it best is the Crescent City, for in the arc of the Mississippi River is the beginning of many a tale. This story is just one of them.

Chapter One

The twin engine Widgeon slowly descended from a partly cloudy sky and lightly touched down on the macadam strip at Lakefront Airport. Leslie was glad the long trip was almost over. She was looking forward to stretching her legs after sitting for so long in the cockpit. She also was quite anxious to return home and begin her new career, even if it meant working for her father's company. Still, she had a bit of apprehension; for she'd been carrying a secret for a few years now and it had recently begun to prey on her mind in an almost endless daydream. It was her hope that this change would help her to cope with that secret by giving her new tasks to occupy her time and attention.

The pilot smiled at her as he slowly maneuvered the plane down the taxiway to the private hanger of Chancery Unlimited Corporation. He glanced over at the petite young lady sitting in the copilot's seat. Her dark blonde hair fell almost to her shoulders and framed a lovely soft face that was strangely devoid of any but the basic makeup. Her hazel eyes were bright and almost penetrating and her full lips encircled a very dainty mouth devoid of lipstick.

“We’re almost there, Miss Chancery,” he informed her. “Your father has sent a car to pick you up and some assistance to get you settled in.”

She returned the smile to the pilot, Jim Thompson, a long time employee of Chancery Unlimited and a life long friend. She couldn’t begin to count the numerous trips she’d made with her mother in this very plane. “Thank you, Mr. Jim. It’s good to be home.”

“Got tired of the boys at Vassar?”

She looked quickly at Jim and before she could retort, she saw the grin on his face. She knew the reply he expected and she obliged him.

“If Daddy knew they were going to go coed, he would never have had me go there,” she replied and returned the grin. “But it was fun while it lasted.”

“Well, you’ll be meeting a lot more guys from now on. Just be careful. You know how some of the folks in this city are.”

At that she nodded, knowing that’s what he expected her to do.

The plane had come to a stop. Jim quickly shut the motor off and unbuckled his harness. He turned to Leslie and said, “Welcome home, Miss Leslie.”

She smiled at him and gave her thanks. Quickly, they exited the plane and he got her luggage out of the baggage compartment. Near the hanger’s office had been standing a young man of average height with long auburn hair held back into a low ponytail. An obviously custom-made suit hung on his smallish frame. When he saw that the plane had safely come to a stop, he quickly approached them and introduced himself.

“Miss Chancery, I’m Marion Le Blanc. I’m here to help you for the next few days in any way I can to get you settled in. I’ll take your bags to the car and you can freshen up in the office facilities. If you like, I have some refreshments in the car.”

She was shocked by the sudden onslaught. Not only that, but she found her breath had been taken away by the sight of this young man. He was not muscular but lean like a panther, with sleek bodylines hiding under his apparently custom-fitted suit. His hands were long and tapered like those of a pianist she’d once seen perform. His face was that of a much younger person with delicate eyebrows and no sign of blemish or hair shadow. In fact, his complexion and skin looked more like a woman’s, not coarse but smooth and silky. His voice was also soft and light, not deep. For a moment, she’d had an impression that this was a woman disguised as a man and feelings welled up inside her. She fought to regain control.

“Uh, thank you, Mr. Le Blanc,” she finally managed to blurt out.

He shook his head slightly and smiled. “Please, call me Marion, okay?”

“Yes, certainly,” she replied.

As he drove them along, she watched the passing buildings and trees but found that her eyes kept returning to him. It was much later as they were driving down St. Charles Avenue when she noticed that he sat upright with his legs posi-

tioned more like a woman's. The delicate way he held the steering wheel reinforced the first impression she'd made. After a while, she turned to him and asked, "What is your regular job at Chancery's?"

"I work in the data processing department," he replied simply.

She was now curious, "How did you get stuck with this job of helping me?"

He glanced over at her for a moment, then said, "I didn't get stuck with it. Your father asked my boss if I would do it as a personal favor. And I'm now glad I said yes. You're very beautiful, you know; even if you're stuck in that business suit get-up of yours. You could use a touch of makeup to bring out the highlights in those gorgeous hazel eyes and a little lip-gloss wouldn't hurt either. And while I'm on the subject, you could have your hair done just a bit longer to frame and flatter your face."

She looked at herself. What he'd said was true and she wondered at his acute observations. How could he know about women's fashions and makeup? She knew she was dressed pretty conservatively in a brown double-breasted pantsuit. But, of course, that was how she liked it. It was what her father expected of her; if she wanted to one day take over the reigns of Chancery Unlimited. To compete in the business world of men, one almost had to dress like a man. There had been a lot of times, when she was younger, that she'd dressed more formally in long flowing ball gowns and such but she'd never really had enjoyed them all that much. Somehow, they never seemed right, even though she knew her late mother had taken so much pleasure in it, often to the point of insistence; an insistence that she still rebelled against.

The thought of her mother brought a touch of sadness to her just then. Marion noticed it.

"Is something wrong?" he asked, full of obvious concern.

She shook her head, "Just thinking about my Mom. She passed away five years ago before I finished high school. I guess I've tried to dress for a man's world since. Dresses make me kind of uncomfortable now. And I very seldom use makeup any more."

"Oh," he said raising his eyebrows just a little as he again glanced at her before returning his gaze to the traffic ahead. "I'm sorry. Didn't mean to pry or anything."

"How well do you know my father?" she asked abruptly.

Cautiously, he replied, "In what way?"

She smiled briefly at his discomfort. "You can be honest. I think I know what you're going to say."

He shrugged, "Well, I don't know him socially, but as a business man, he's a hard-nosed S.O.B. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

She visibly smiled then. "Yes."

He shrugged again. "Even so, I like working for the company. And you...how does it feel to be home?"

The change in tone surprised her a little. "I'm not so sure you could call this home," she replied. "I've spent most of my life away at school. Home is just some place I visited between schools during the summers and on a few holidays."

The rest of the ride was in silence. Looking out the window, she saw the tree-lined boulevard where ran the only remaining streetcar line in the city. Soon they turned onto Canal Street for a few blocks, then made a right turn onto Royal Street. A few blocks later, Marion had pulled the car to a stop at the hotel where her father had his penthouse apartments. The old mansion that had once been home had been sold soon after her mother's death. He turned to her and said, "Well, for what it's worth, welcome home. Your father said I was to help you get settled in. So, just wait right there."

Quickly, he got out of the car and walked around to her side. Like an old southern gentleman, he opened her door and held out his hand for her to exit. Smiling, she accepted his hand, which was extraordinarily smooth for a man, and just for a moment a tingling came to her fingers. It rapidly accelerated to the rest of her body. The touch of this young's man hand had done what no other had person had ever done to her, except Lisa. It literally took her breath away for a moment.

Slowly, she allowed him to show her to the private elevator and to the top floor where he ushered her to a new annex he said was to be her private apartment, complete with its own separate kitchenette and bath. She also noted it had a small clothes washer and dryer combination concealed in what first appeared to be a closet next to the bath.

When he'd finished showing her around, he made ready to leave, saying, "I'll have the staff bring in your luggage. If you need anything, just call the office and ask for me."

With that, he took her offered hand and, like an old-time gallant, kissed it. The touch again repeated that tingle in her and she became a little flustered as the door closed behind him. She had to shake her head to clear it. How could this be happening to her? She was not attracted to guys. Yet that one touch had almost given her an orgasm. She reflected on her first impression that he was a girl disguised as a guy. Could she have been right? This was going to take some further study.

That night, after she'd unpacked, she heard a knock on her door. Opening it, she saw her father standing there with a box of roses in his hand, a broad smile on his face.

"Well, how's my little girl? Getting settled in?"

She wanted ever so much to run to him and give him a hug but she simply accepted the roses and smiled. "Yes, I've just finished unpacking and was getting ready to take a shower."

"You look fine," he stated. "Sorry I couldn't make it to the graduation ceremony. But I've got some good news. I'm taking you out to dinner to celebrate your being the first B.A. in the family. So grab your coat and let's go."

Dinner was at Antoine's in the Quarter. She'd enjoyed being alone with her father and he seemed to be truly interested in her future plans.

"Take a week off, Honey. Look around the city. If you want, I can have someone show you around. There've been a lot of changes in town. Why, they've even begun construction of a new football stadium for the Saints. I'm sure Edna can spare someone from her department for a few days."

She wanted to protest, "But, Dad, I really want to get started right away."

"Nonsense, you deserve some time to yourself before you put your nose to the grindstone. When you're ready, just come in and check with Maureen."

She knew further argument was useless so she agreed but declined the offer of a guide. It only took one day of sightseeing before she grew bored, so she reported to the office the following day, quite anxious to take up her new duties in the family business.

She was quickly ushered into her father's office. Once there, she said hello to her dad's secretary, Maureen Bourg, whom she'd known for most of her life.

"Your father will be here in a few minutes, Leslie," Maureen greeted the young woman. "How was your flight?"

"Fine, Ms Bourg," Leslie responded. "I know Dad told me to take a week off, but I really would like to get to work."

Ms Bourg smiled, "Well, we'll just have to get you settled in then, won't we?" With that, she made a few intra-company phone calls to various departments, including Personnel.

All too soon, Leslie had been assigned an office and was busy signing a sheaf full of papers sent there by the Personnel Department. Her office had a window that looked out towards the River. She saw a Tidewater supply vessel slowly making its way downstream when she first looked at the view.

The cityscape that stretched out before her wasn't all familiar but she did recognize several buildings and the bridge across the river. The city was strange to her. Even though it was her home, she'd not really grown up there. As she'd told Marion, she'd spent most of her life away at boarding schools.

Around 11 o'clock, she heard a knock on the door frame. Looking up, she saw Marion. The sight of him again brought the feeling that he looked like a girl disguised as a man. She had to find out the truth, especially since he had aroused her so.

"Free for lunch?" he asked.

She smiled, "But it's only 11."

"I take the early shift to beat the crowds. Come on, I know a little place that serves a mean sub."

Surprisingly, he didn't offer her his hand. In fact he had almost doubled the personal space between them he'd exhibited that first day. Once they exited the

employee's elevator and walked out of the building, he led the way to a little al fresco bistro a few blocks down.

Marion helped Leslie to her seat before he sat in his own chair, a heavy but fragile looking piece of wrought iron that scraped against the concrete of the sidewalk as he moved it. The waiter who served them appeared to know him personally. "Ah, Monsieur Le Blanc, I see we have a most charming guest today. And what will we be having?"

Marion looked over at Leslie and asked, "Do you trust me?"

She nodded.

"Jacque, two of your best seafood subs, ci vous plait. White wine for me, and..." he looked over at Leslie in inquiry.

"Tea for me, please," she responded.

"Very well," Jacque replied, then left to bring the order to the chef.

Marion smiled at her then and said, "You're going to have to learn how to sling the lingo around here. The tourists expect us to parlez vous le Cajun, you know."

She grinned at that. "Oui, I've heard that."

Over lunch she watched him carefully. He had delicate eyebrows that showed a girlish arch. His fingers were long and tapered with surprisingly long fingernails for a man. They were not excessively long but they extended over a half-inch and were very well manicured. His face was smooth-shaven and showed absolutely no sign of stubble or shadow. His mouth had an upswept curve that would have been more at home on a mature woman.

His manners were almost impeccable even though they were eating submarine sandwiches, which were surprisingly delicious. She could distinctly taste the various flavors, from fried catfish to Gulf shrimp with a hint of boiled crawfish that had been prepared in Zatarans seasonings. It'd been a long time since she'd tasted it; since before her mother had passed away.

After the meal when Marion rose, she noted that he had a very narrow waist. The obviously custom-fitted suit concealed the rest of his body but it was apparent that his upper body was either very muscular or was hiding a pair of female breasts. The notion that he was a woman disguised as a man just wouldn't leave her mind.

As they walked back to the office building, she noted that he walked with shorter strides than men normally use. And the way he lifted his feet gave her the impression that he was more used to walking in higher heels than the dress boots he was wearing. The tendency to walk toe and heel instead of heel and toe was also evident in his stride. He also displayed a tendency to sway his hips just the slightest bit, even though there was an obvious attempt on his part not to.

She made a promise to herself that she would find out, one way or another, the truth about Marion Le Blanc. Was he a girl disguised as a man—or something else?

Chapter Two:

Marion Richard Le Blanc was shaken to his very core of his being. After he'd taken Leslie's hand that first day, he was confused beyond explanation. He could still feel the tingling in his fingers. He sensed rather than knew that she was someone who excited him. How could he even hope that she would reciprocate those feelings? If he explored anything further with her, the truth would come out and he wondered if she could handle it. With some effort, he put her out of his mind and decided that he would take her out to lunch the following day to see if it would lead to anything.

It had come home to him again the night after he'd taken her out to lunch when he'd returned to his apartment in Metairie. After dropping his keys and wallet on the nightstand, he looked at himself in the mirror. He peered at his reflection intently as he slowly removed the band holding his ponytail and took up a brush to pass it through the sensuously full auburn strands. They now framed his face and rested on his shoulders. The image he saw was that of an obviously pretty young woman without makeup.

Deliberately, he took off his jacket and hung it on the nearby valet. Slowly, almost sensuously, he then removed his tie and shirt, revealing a white longline satin minimizer bra. Reaching behind him, he unhooked it and let it drop to reveal two feminine breasts complete with full nipples and areola. He knew that they would be tender to the touch but he reached up and cupped them both to air them out after their confinement. For a long time he just stood there and thought about the past.

It had happened the year he was in the sixth grade. An accident had put him in the hospital for more than eighteen months. When he was released, he was no longer a whole boy but not quite a girl either. His hormones had gone completely haywire, causing his breasts to grow, his waist to narrow, his hips to broaden, and his body to acquire just about every attribute that really belonged on a young girl his age. His skin was silky smooth and his face had never sprouted any hair. His voice, so they told him, would not change very much. The doctors had called it a chemical imbalance at the time. At least that's what they'd told his parents.

He lay there like a broken doll, his legs trapped under the heavy tires of the large Case tractor. At first, there was no pain, just a fuzzy feeling in his brain. Off in the distance he could hear people shouting at one another about moving the contraption off his legs. Later there were the sounds of two different sirens, a minute or so apart and someone trying to ask him a question. He tried to answer but somehow his tongue wouldn't respond. After what seemed like a hundred years, he felt his body being strapped against something and then being lifted. His eyes wouldn't quite focus to see where he was being taken and by whom. Soon, he began to feel a sharp pain. Slowly at first, then it became almost unbearable as he

tried to move but found he couldn't. Before long, blessed sleep came and there was only darkness, then nothing.

The bright light flashed in his face and he quickly moved his head to the side. He was strangely numb all over and still groggy. His right arm refused to move. He could feel a strange object taped to the right side of his face and something in his right nostril. He found he could move his left hand and tried to swat away the light that was bothering him. His eyes opened when he heard a familiar voice.

"You've decided to rejoin us, young fellow?"

His eyes now open, he saw Dr. Vice standing over him. He tried to sit up but found he couldn't. Then he saw both his legs fully encased in plaster casts and hanging from an iron contraption suspended over the hospital bed he was in. He wanted to scream as he closed his eyes, hoping it was all a bad dream. Then he remembered.

"Doctor, I fell..."

"Yes, we know," Doctor Vice said soothingly. "You were pretty banged up. Get some rest now. We'll talk in the morning."

Marion began to notice other things. He saw a tube coming out of his right nostril. It was taped to his forehead and led toward something on the side of the bed. He couldn't quite make out what it was but he noted a soft humming sound from the area where the tube led. His right arm had been taped to a board and there were three plastic tubes connected to a needle in the vein. All tubes led to IV bottles hanging from an IV rack. His chest began to feel itchy, as though there was something growing there. There were other things that his brain simply couldn't categorize but it all made his body feel different, changed.

"Doctor, how long have I been out?"

The doctor hesitated before answering, "You've been unconscious for a little over three months."

For a while, he just lay there, soaking in that information. Then he said, "Doctor, I feel strange. My body doesn't feel right. Does it have to do with the accident?"

"We'll talk in the morning, Marion," the doctor replied. "You go back to sleep now and get some rest."

But sleep didn't come immediately. As he became more aware of his surroundings, he noticed other wires and tubes attached to his body that ran to various monitoring devices beside the bed. In his penis he could feel a tube, which led off to the side of the bed. He noted that the room was filled with monitoring devices. Once, a pretty young nurse checked the readouts on some of them, but she didn't seem to notice that he was awake. Later, she came and stuck a hypodermic into the IV bottle and injected something. After she'd left, he found his eyes were getting heavier and he finally went to sleep. But it was a troubled sleep in which he had a series of nightmares about being a girl.

It was an office cluttered with shelves of books and magazines. A slightly beat-up couch was against the outer wall. A large mahogany desk took up most the remaining room behind which the doctor sat in an overstuffed chair. The two people sitting on the other side of the desk in beat-up office chairs were tense as they listened to the doctor speak.

Matt Le Blanc was a man who'd seen his share of grief, as a young man growing up during the Depression, then serving a time at a CCC camp. After that he volunteered, as had so many others, for the Army during the War. The sights and sounds he'd heard in North Africa, Sicily, Normandy and Bastogne he never really conveyed to anyone but there were as much a part of his life as the typhoid fever that erupted every so often in his body. His careworn eyes and weather-beaten face were testaments to his experience.

Rebecca Le Blanc was a handsome woman who had seen her own share of adversity. She was a short woman whose auburn hair hung almost to her shoulders. Her face bore just the barest of makeup and, as an accessory, she wore a simple pearl necklace. She'd served in the Red Cross during the War, folding bandages. After the war, she met her husband-to-be at a bar in the nearby town of Thibodaux. They had settled down in the little town where Matt had grown up, or rather in the rural area that surrounded it. There little Marion was born and grew up. There was a bayou to fish in and a forest to hunt in, a true "sportsman's paradise" as the state license plates proclaimed.

The speaker was the family physician, Dr. Vice, who was well into his fifties. He was of average height and a little stout. His hair had already turned quite white with just a touch of the former brown it had been. His face showed the signs of many medical battles with crow's feet at the eyes and wrinkles on his brow. He was now trying to inform Marion's parents of his condition.

"The facts are these, Mr. & Mrs. Le Blanc. Sometime during Marion's treatment, his body started to create the wrong mixture of chemicals. This chemical imbalance caused the body to receive the wrong signals and instead of telling it to grow like a boy, it sent signals telling it to grow like a girl. That's the simplest way I can explain it to you in layman's terms. That's why he is developing the breasts you asked about. And I must warn you that he will develop other feminine body traits as time passes."

"This is my son we're speaking of, Doctor," Marion's mom said angrily. "I want to know what can be done to correct this. What are you doing to correct this?"

The doctor hesitated a moment before replying. "There is very little we can do until his body stops growing. When he reaches eighteen or nineteen, there are some surgical procedures we can undertake to remove the breasts and take some fat off his hips. We can also start him on a course of hormone therapy. But I counsel against this. Hormones in the dosages required could cause other damages, particularly to his heart."

Marion's father then spoke, "Does he know what you're telling us, Doctor?"

"No, not yet, I wanted to explain all this to you before I went any further. He can continue to live as a boy but the breasts will show and his voice simply won't deepen. His hips will be broader, his waist narrower and he'll develop no facial hair to speak of. Or, he can learn to live as a girl with these features. In either event, there will be difficulties in others adjusting to this change, due to the prejudices they've been taught by a xenophobic society. How he will take this is still unknown. A psychiatrist will see him, of course, to get an evaluation."

Marion's father stood up restlessly. He went to a window that looked out onto a private garden and stared. Without turning, he asked, "Will he be able to father children, Doctor?"

"We can keep monitoring his sperm count, but as of now I see no problem with that."

Marion's mother again spoke, "What about his legs, Doctor?"

"We'll continue to reevaluate but we should be able to remove the casts in about 6 weeks or so. After that, he'll be fitted with leg-braces and will undergo intensive therapy. Once he can manage on his own, he'll still have to use crutches for a while and a wheelchair when he becomes too tired. After that, he should be able to carry himself well enough without either," he replied, more sure of that diagnosis than the one before it.

"Doctor," Marion's mom continued, "what do you recommend we do?"

"I can only give you options, Mrs. Le Blanc. The decision you make must be yours and Marion's."

"Mon Dieu, Jason," Marion's father shouted, "Il est un vraitment anormal. Comment est-ce que nous le rendons normal?"

The doctor sighed, realizing his friend's frustration. "Matt, I've been a medical man for forty years now. I've seen all manner of conditions that can be inflicted on a person. I've seen polio decimate all too many young men and women. I've seen other diseases waste a person's body away until there's nothing left. There've been accidents where we've had to remove an arm or leg, or worse. I wish I could tell you that this condition of Marion's will go away. I can't. No matter what we do now, he will continue to grow as a young girl. That is inevitable. Yes, it's a rare occurrence but it does happen. Once, a long time ago, I saw a case similar to this one. What he needs now is your love and understanding more than anything else."

"But the neighbor's..."

"Hang the neighbors. If they weren't so hidebound by the mores of their superstitious religions, they would understand. This is a medical problem and has nothing to do with their clay-footed God. Is that all you're worrying about? Think about your son's health and his feelings and quit worrying about those hypocritical so and so's."

“Oui,” Matt said angrily, “They’ll see a big strong healthy boy who’s been turned into a damn wimp of a girl and will want to condemn us all as tools of the Devil. And I *am* thinking about my son, who’s now a damn circus freak. Thanks, Jason, thanks for nothing.” With those words, he stormed out of the office.

Rebecca Le Blanc stared soulfully after her distraught husband before looking again at the doctor with pleading eyes.

“I think you’re unduly being harsh about our neighbors, Doctor. Some would understand. At least I’d like to think so. You know how Matt is, he doesn’t much care for the Church and I can see that you don’t either. He also blames himself for the accident that put Marion in the hospital in the first place. All I’m asking is that you do whatever you can. I want my son back but if I can’t have that then, please, let my daughter be healthy.”

A sense of helplessness descended on him as he lay there day after day in the antiseptically sterile hospital room. Even the daily programs on TV became boring after a spell and he’d stopped watching altogether. His discomfort was compounded by changes he knew were occurring in his body. His chest constantly bothered him and lately he’d begun to experience times when he simply wanted to cry for no apparent reason. His entire emotional makeup had somehow been turned into an unordered series of peaks and valleys he was unaccustomed to.

His Mother spent a lot of time at the hospital with him and he could not convince her that it was unnecessary. The worry in her face was very evident to him and he was concerned for her health. He found out the reason for it one morning when the doctor made more than his usual rounds.

After looking at Marion’s chart, the doctor lifted up his wrist and started to check his pulse. After he checked the feeling in Marion’s toes, he sat in a chair beside the bed and said, “Well, young fellow, your legs are mending but I’m afraid you’ll be with us for a while longer.”

“Why is that, Doctor?” he asked.

Glancing at Mrs. Le Blanc, the doctor answered, “There’s been a complication in your case, Marion. I’m here this morning to try to explain why you’ve been feeling, well, sort of strange, these last few weeks. Your father was supposed to be here for this, but it seems he can’t get away from his job. So, I’m going to go ahead without him because I can’t put this off any longer. There are some decisions you have to make very soon. Now I’m going to try to make this a very simple explanation for you, so if I use a term you’re not familiar with just let me know, okay?”

Marion said simply, “Okay, Doctor.”

The doctor exhaled and said, “Fine. Well, your body was pretty banged-up. But, I suppose you already know that. We spent a long time in the operating room trying out best to wire the bones in your legs back together so they’d knit prop-

erly. Even so, it will be quite some time before you regain full use of them. We also had to give you quite a bit of pain medication and other powerful drugs in your IV's and through shots and pills after you regained consciousness.

“Well, to make a long story short, your body developed a sort of chemical imbalance during all this and it caused your body to start changing. The itching in your chest area was part of that change. The reason for that itching...well, to put it bluntly, Marion, your body is not developing into that of a young boy anymore but rather that of a young girl. That itch you feel is your breasts growing. Not only that, but your hips are starting to get wider and your waist may even shrink from its present size. There are other factors as well. Because of your age, you won't develop any appreciable body hair, especially on your face. Your voice will stay pretty much the way it is now and your height will probably top off at five foot six or so. So, to all outward appearances, you will look and sound exactly like a young teenage girl.”

The shock of what the doctor had just told him left him without anything to say. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. It had to be a nightmare that he would soon wake up from. Things like that didn't happen in real life, only in fiction or on TV, like *The Twilight Zone*. Yet the reality of the hospital bed and the plaster casts on his legs and the itching in his chest told him that this was reality. He looked at the doctor imploringly. “Doctor, is there anything you can do to change or stop this?”

The doctor shook his head sadly. “No, I'm afraid we have to wait until you finish growing. Say about the time you turn eighteen or nineteen. At that time there may be other options for you to consider but for now you need to adjust to these changes. I have you scheduled to see a psychiatrist this afternoon. It's my hope that he'll help you to accept yourself and answer any questions you may have. We're all here to support you, and we'll do whatever it takes to help you adjust to your new circumstances.”

Randy looked out the window. The news he'd been given wasn't what he'd expected. How could this be? How could his life have been turned upside down so quickly? All his plans, all his hopes had been shattered like a drinking glass falling off the kitchen table onto a hard floor. His tears started to flow and he did nothing to stop them. He wanted to run away and hide but knew he couldn't. The bed now felt like a prison from which he couldn't escape. He looked at his mother. There was pain in her eyes and he knew, without question, they were for him.

Mrs. Le Blanc rose from her chair suddenly and went to sit on the bed beside her son. She reached out and grabbed his hand and held it tightly. Marion then hugged her as much as he could; confined as he was. He rested his head on her shoulder and let the flood of his grief flow, while she held and comforted him. The doctor decided that it was a good time for him to leave.

“Oh, Mom, how could this have happened?” he cried.

“I don't know, Honey,” she said running her hand through his now long hair. Hair that she now realized was much fuller and softer than it normally was. “I'm here for you, my baby. Together we'll work through this. That's a promise.”

“I don’t want to be a girl, Mom. How can I make it stop?” His cry tore at her heart.

She said soothingly as she held his now trembling body, “Honey, don’t do this to yourself. You can’t change what’s happened and it’s not your fault. I’ve already asked everything there is to ask. We’re all going to have to accept this. Whatever you want, my baby, that’s what we’ll try to do but we just can’t change your body back to what it was. I wish to God we could!”

“Hold me, Mom. Just hold me,” he said as he cried. In his mind he wondered why he couldn’t hold his emotions in like he had in the past.

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The orderly wheeled his chair into the office of the staff psychiatrist that afternoon. His mother had not accompanied him because it was explained that the therapist wanted to speak to him alone. He sat sullenly there while the doctor read through the chart. From the nameplate on the desk he saw that the doctor’s name was Alvin Sims.

“You have a girlfriend, Marion?” he asked suddenly without preamble or introduction.

“Not really,” he muttered, more to himself.

The therapist pressed on, “But there is somebody, isn’t there?”

“Sort of,” he replied in a dull monotone, thinking of his infatuation for Karen Dupont.

“And you think that if she saw you now, she’d laugh at you, or do something worse.”

Marion looked at the doctor sitting in a chair beside him. He could see a look of genuine concern in his face. He responded, “Something like that; but not just the girls, the boys too. They would think I’m a freak.”

“Do *you* think you’re a freak?”

Marion didn’t want to be there and the questions were forcing him to think about things he didn’t want to think about. But the doctor was patiently insistent.

“Yes, Doctor. I’m a freak. I’m a boy that’s going to be trapped inside a girl’s body. Even my penis seems to be shrinking. I don’t want to be a girl!” The last was almost a painful cry of pain and agony.

The doctor continued after a moment, “But you know you can’t be a boy now, at least not on the outside. I know this is hard for you to understand and accept but the only other alternative is for you to live as neither. I think the Bible refers to that condition as a eunuch. You might not find that any better.”

Marion didn’t have an answer or reply to the Doctor’s statement so he sat and waited.

Realizing he wasn't going to get a response, the doctor forged ahead. "Okay, Marion. I'm going to give you and your parents some literature I want you to read. They're about other people who've experienced events similar to what you're now going through. I'd like to see you again tomorrow after you've had a chance to read them. I think you'll find that you're not alone.

"Now, do you have any questions for me?" the doctor invited.

Marion asked simply, "Why did this happen to me, Doctor?"

For a moment the Doctor appeared to be lost in thought, and then replied, "Are you a religious person, Marion?"

He shrugged, "You know..."

The doctor gave a wry smile, "Can live with or without it, right?"

"Going to Church makes my Mom happy. You know," he said shrugging his shoulders.

"Well," he continued, "I'm sure you've had the usual catechism courses and such."

"Yes."

"Then to try to answer your question, I don't know why, myself, but sometimes I feel that God doesn't consult us about the plans He has for us. What happened to you may be part of His grand plan for an event he didn't consult with us about. Some people call it 'fate', and I believe the Founding Fathers called it *divine providence*. Whatever you call it, it's part of our lives and quite often results in some very strange occurrences."

All his life Marion had heard that same old line and he simply wasn't going to accept that as an explanation. He said so to the doctor.

"Well, Marion, all I can say, then, is that you may be fortunate enough one day to find out the reasons behind it. I hope so, for your sake. Until tomorrow, then?"

Marion was still sullen but he managed to say, "Okay, Doctor Sims. Tomorrow..."

As Marion was wheeled back to his room by an orderly, the doctor made a notation on the chart and slowly shook his head in a negative manner. But there remained a stubborn look on his face that said he wasn't going to give up.

The sessions continued daily for a week. Marion had sunken even lower into despair and he barely responded to the Doctor's questions. Then one day he was wheeled in and there was an older girl sitting in the office. She was wearing a ruffled white blouse with three-quarter-length sleeves and a denim skirt that came just below her knees with a pair of mid-calf high-heeled dress boots. Her dark brunette hair had been put up into a bun behind her head and her face had been expertly made-up with just a touch of eyeliner to highlight her blue eyes. She smiled at him as he was wheeled in.

The doctor looked up as he came in and smiled as well. "Well, here we are again. Marion, I'd like you to meet Margo Bourque. She's going to be sitting in

with us today. Margo, this is Marion Le Blanc, the young man I spoke to you about.”

She smiled and extended her hand to him with her wrist held in the fashion women use to greet others. “Pleased to meet you, Marion.” Her voice was very pleasant; almost like a small bell whose tone was not too loud or harsh.

He took her hand hesitantly and said, “Yeah, me too.” He noticed that her hand was very soft, smooth and silky, almost like that of a baby. He wondered why she was there.

“Marion,” the doctor began. “For about a week now I’ve been trying to get you to release your feelings with the hopes of getting you to accept your body as it is. You’ve been very resistant and that’s why I asked Margo here today to speak to you. You both have a lot in common and I’d like for you to spend a little time together.”

Marion was sullen, “I don’t think she’d want to be seen with a freak like me, doc.”

The doctor stuck his face in Marion’s and exclaimed, “Look here, Marion. I’ve just about had enough of that. As it just so happens, neither Margo nor I think you’re a freak. You need to get that nonsense out of your head right now. Yes, you’re different. But we’re all different one way or another. You’re going to sit there and listen to Margo.”

Marion felt as though he’d been slapped in the face. His emotions welled up then, as much as he didn’t want them to, and he started to cry. Margo came over to him and dried his eyes with a tissue she’d taken out of her purse. He looked at her closely and her blue eyes revealed a deep concern. There was something else in them as well, something he couldn’t quite figure out.

Her musical voice again spoke, “Are you okay now?”

He nodded his assent.

She stood and turned to the doctor, “I think I’ll take Marion on a little walk, Doctor.”

He nodded as he said, “I think that would be an excellent prescription, Margo.”

She went behind the chair and wheeled him out of the office to the solarium where she took one of the chairs there and faced him. For a long while, she just sat there and let him sulk.

“Tetu! So, you’re going to wallow in self pity,” she stated flatly. “Well, I tried that, bucko, and believe me, it leads nowhere. In fact, my little girlish friend, it sucks.”

“You tried...” he asked, both puzzled by what she said and amazed by how she said it.

“Yes. You see, Marion, I was born a boy and was forced by circumstances to become a girl. Something I didn’t want, either.”