



*Reluctant Press* presents:

# The Temp

Robyn Vale



GRAPHICS BY ROBYN VALE

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A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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# The Temp

**By Robyn Vale**

## **Part One – The Job Hunt**

Kit hated his job. He hated the stress, he feared his supervisor, he thought the hours were intolerable and the pay was a joke. He had done four years of university to attain this, and he regretted the time and energy he'd spent doing it.

He wasn't cut out to be a nurse. He decided this one day as he was hauled on the carpet for a medication error – it nearly cost him his job and his license, as the patient was quite ill and the error nearly caused the patient to die. As it was, there was a review, and Kit found himself dismissed with a black mark on his record.

A medication error can be a difficult thing to live down.

Kit lived alone in a small, fifth-story apartment in Brisbane, south of San Francisco in California. He really loved his little apartment. It suited him perfectly even though in some places the ceiling came fairly low, but then, he was not tall. It faced the bay – he could see the yacht harbor and the tankers riding at anchor and the sea gulls would come to his balcony to sit and stare at him and think.

He didn't want to lose his perfect little haven. Finding a position as a nurse, however, was going to be quite difficult because of the black mark on his record.

Kit had one good friend in the whole wide world – her name was Grady. She sold fish and lobsters down on Fisherman's Wharf. To Kit, Grady looked like a guy: she wore big, heavy boots and a baggy woolen sweater and even had a few whiskers of which she was quite proud. They'd liked each other when she'd been a patient. At first he'd been a little shy: her masculine traits initially made him a bit uncomfortable, but he had grown to accept them.

"Ya know whatcha should do, there, Kit?" she drawled slowly. She had been watching him out of the corner of her eye as he sat on the milk crate, completely depressed, telling

her what had happened to him the last few days. He didn't look up and she pursed her lips in determination. "You just listen to me, Kit... I've figured something out about you."

"Which is?"

Grady paused, and Kit looked up at her expectantly. Grady nodded. She knew she had him pegged and sincerely wanted to help. She chose her words carefully

"Kit, yer just not cut out for that sort of job, you know?"

"What do you mean?"

"Nursing. It's too much responsibility for ya. People's lives are in your hands and all that. Yer not like that. Yer..." Her eyes went contemplative. "Artistic. That's it. You're artistic."

Kit's hands were small, his features were small, his neck was small. Only his eyes were big and it showed at that point.

"Artistic? What do you mean? I can't even draw stick figures..."

"You know, like an artist," Grady wheezed a little in exasperation. There was an uncomfortable pause, since Grady wasn't quite sure how to explain what she meant by 'artistic' – her impression of him was not so much that he was skilled in some art form but rather that he *seemed* more of that sort of temperament than, say, a carpenter or plumber or empire builder. "You have that *mind*, that *spirit*. Yer not a logical, 'cold hard facts' kinda guy – and *that's* what a medical person *has* gotta be. Yer just not that kinda guy at all!"

Heck, he wasn't even much of a *guy*, really. She vaguely wondered what he would be like in bed. Her lips pursed tighter – she was sure he was still a virgin. A virgin at 22. How pathetic. She wouldn't have minded changing that if he was of the right frame of mind – but right now, she simply wanted to help him.

"Well, whatever. I've just *got* to find something to do," Kit said finally,

almost to himself. "I really don't want to lose that apartment, and I gotta eat so..."

"Help Wanted ads," Grady said firmly, thrusting the San Francisco Chronicle at him. "Something other than nursing, though, Kit. That's what you need!"

She was right. It was time to bite the bullet and start looking. Grady had made her point. Perhaps he should be looking for something *outside* of nursing. Kit liked that about her: Grady was quite direct.

As she served a customer he pored over the paper. In the computer skills area he circled one part-time position that involved Excel programming – something he loved to do and excelled at.

However, force of habit made him focus on nursing jobs.

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Four days and twelve rejections later – these were the days *before* the critical nursing shortage – he found himself opening a sun-drenched door of an older office building in the

Castro district. He was dressed conservatively: black slacks, black shoes, white shirt and his long, dark hair was slicked back.

He entertained little hope of landing this position – it was the one requiring Excel programming skills – but he figured before he would start at the unemployment lines, he would try all leads first.

The receptionist was young and a bit over-weight and wore one of those stretchy cotton skirts worn on the hips that showed a lot of baby fat at the middle. Kit thought she looked a bit too Goth to be a receptionist. Nonetheless she was nice enough to him as she handed him a multi-page job application form and told him he needed to fill in *everything*. She seemed to have a curiously secretive air about her.

He surveyed his surroundings.

It was difficult to ascertain exactly what sort of business this was. There were filing cabinets and computers and employees walking in and out of cubicles. 'Harmon Ltd' was the name on the building. The paper had given no clue, nor could he get any idea from what he was able to observe.

The receptionist finally came over to him.

"Miss Bradley will see you now." She seemed somewhat distant.

He was led through a maze of cubicles to a corner office. While the cubicles were modern and efficient, Miss Bradley's office was decorated in plush velour and rosewood, quite Victorian. Miss Bradley rose from her sumptuous chair and extended her hand as the door closed behind them.

"Mr. Inslow, nice to meet you," she said kindly.

Kit timidly took her hand and swallowed. Hard.

Miss Bradley was stunning.

She was a tall woman in her mid-forties, a good three inches taller than Kit, and generously proportioned, particularly in the hips and bosom. She held herself proudly, as befits a self-made woman.

She was wearing a pink lacy top with a short, pink skirt. It was astonishingly short, exposing the white lace tops of her stockings. The outfit was a bit young for her, but she carried it off beautifully. Her perfume smelled expensive, her hair said 'exclusive salon' and her outfit was definitely nothing off the rack at Macys.

"Please sit down, Mr. Inslow... no, here," Miss Bradley said, suddenly and unexpectedly firm. She indicated a much smaller chair next to hers. Kit hesitantly approached his seat. *This is going to be a very different kind of interview*, he mused as he settled into the amazingly soft cushion and looked expectantly up at her.

She settled back into her executive's chair, eyeing him thoughtfully.

"You are probably wondering what we do here," she began. She had guessed correctly that this question was at the top of his list. "Yes, I realize that it wouldn't be very clear to you. Simplified, we're a sort of employment agency."

Kit opened his mouth slightly to speak but she broke in,

“At the most basic level, we provide employment placement for disadvantaged women. You see, Kristen Harmon, our founder, was herself a battered woman. Kristen is a fighter and her spirit was what made this company happen... and succeed! That's why we named the company after her.”

Kit sat expectantly looking at her, but his heart was sinking. Inexplicably, he felt drawn to the place – something about it made him want to work here more than anything else in the world. True, he had just suffered a series of rejections, but although he felt dreadfully out of place, there was just something about Harmon Ltd, about Miss Bradley, even, that drew him like a magnet.

*How would I possibly fit in here?* he mused. This was all about women, for women, by women. He shifted uncomfortably in his seat, steeling himself for another rejection.

Her quick eye observed this and she gave him a side-long glance.

“You wouldn't happen to have a degree in career counseling, would you? That's what we really need, at this point - more than a programmer, to be honest.”

Kit sighed and shook his head, the refrain 'and another one bites the dust' going through his head. She stared at him in silence her eyebrows rose as if with a sudden thought.

“Just how much do you want a job with Harmon Ltd?”



“Very, very much,” Kit said. Then at an enquiring glance from her the whole story of the disintegrating beginning of a second-choice career came tumbling out. He had gotten into nursing at the recommendation of an ex-girlfriend – “you’ll always have work,” she’d told him. As he related the incident and that statement, the hopelessness of his situation overwhelmed him and he felt tears begin to form. Ashamed of the show of weakness, he sat quietly, eyes frozen on the pen she was tapping on the desk. He could not look at Miss Bradley.

She listened quietly, giving no indication that her sudden thought was gaining substance, developing into a plan. When he finally glanced at her, furtively, he noticed a slight smile playing on her vermilion lips.

“You realize that nursing may just be a stepping stone for you, Mr. Inslow,” she observed casually. “Did that ever occur to you?”

“My friend Grady said that I wasn't really cut out for...”

“Well, he knows what he’s talking about.” Miss Bradley set her pen down carefully on her desk, and before Kit could correct her as to Grady’s gender, leaned forward and said earnestly:

“You have applied for the position of Excel programmer. While I do need a programmer, I can't really afford to hire one for just that purpose. Besides, there are lots of highly skilled programmers out of work these days – hungry programmers, experienced programmers, programmers that could write brilliant solutions for me on a contract basis: I wouldn't need to place them on the payroll as full-timers. You, on the other hand, are looking for full-time work. Am I right?”

Kit nodded.

“Yes, well, I...”

“From what you’ve told me, you are basically self-taught. You don’t have an IT degree, and by your admission only limited experience as a programmer. Tell me, why should I employ you?”

Kit stared into middle space, hoping for a quick end to this. She continued:

“I have this perception about you, Mr. Inslow. If I am right, as strange as it might sound, I do feel you have skills that I'm looking for. I'm sure you do realize, though, that if I hire you, you would have to do more than just programming. Is that acceptable to you?”

She leaned back in her chair, gazing at him unwaveringly. He cast his eyes downward and nodded. *He has such long, full eyelashes, she thought. What a pretty boy.* Her lips pursed in an almost imperceptible smile. *I want to see him beg. Come on, beg, sweetie.*

“With my lack of experience I would probably work for less than any other programmer, and would work any hours you needed me to,” he offered desperately. It sounded lame.

*He’s begging. Let’s turn the screws a little.*

“I need a bit more than that,” Michelle Bradley said clearly, leaning towards him. He caught a whiff of her perfume – it was elegant, feminine... expensive. “No, actually, a lot more. I need commitment – *your* commitment – to accept any job I need doing. I require

complete dedication from all of my girls. If I hire you I will expect that. Are you prepared to do that?"

"Oh, yes!" he said almost too quickly. "I mean, I'm skilled at a lot of things, not just Excel. I know Word and Linux and..."

"I'm not just talking about computer tasks." Michelle peered at him keenly, thinking now. *He's mine. I can ask anything I want, but let's take it easy. I don't want to scare him off.* "I'm very big on multi-skilled employees. One doesn't grow a business like this by hiring staff that are selective about what sorts of tasks they're willing to do." She paused and raised an eyebrow at him. "I need staff that are flexible, resourceful, eager to be part of the team. I don't want yes-men – but they better do as they're told unless they can come up with a compelling reason."

Kit swallowed and nodded distractedly, his big eyes fixed on hers. Michelle was suddenly confident he had no idea where this was going.

*Like a lamb to the slaughter.*

"So, if I asked that you organize a women's meeting in the city, you'd be able to handle that?"

Kit blinked a few times, but he nodded again.

"Sure. I could do tha..."

"...and help out with crisis support sessions?" she broke in.

He sighed a little, but then smiled gamely.

"Absolutely. I'd need some background on what was considered a crisis here. Otherwise not a problem. I might have to read up a b..."

"You wouldn't have a clue how to do any of that, would you?" Her eyes twinkled as she folded her arms under her ample bosom. She studied the document on her desk for a moment. He sat wordlessly looking at the floor in front of him. How long was she going to torment him? It was perfectly clear to him that she didn't think him suitable for the position.

She rose, her body moving in the powerful manner of a ballerina, and stepped behind his chair. His senses were again caressed with her delicate fragrance, slightly mixed with something else, something earthy, unfamiliar, intoxicating. He thought he felt her warm breath on his neck.

"Live alone?" Her voice *was* right next to his ear, soft yet strong. He started as he felt her warm breath on his neck, his eyes wide.

He nodded.

Her perfume surrounded him like a mist, his senses were dipped into a sweetness shower. He felt her hands on his arm and when he turned to the right saw – with some surprise – her sitting on her haunches next to him.

"Are you dating or in a relationship with anyone?"

It was a bold question – but she asked it so searchingly, so seductively that he forgot momentarily this was a job interview.



"No," he admitted meekly.

"Are you gay?"

Kit looked a bit quizzical and a little aggravated at the question, but shook his head. She rose regally and settled on her desk in front of him. If she was aware that her skirt was pushing up and away, exposing a bit more stocking top, she gave no indication.

"How do you get along with your mother?"

His mouth gaped in astonishment. *My mother? What did she have...*

"You are going to be working in a predominately female environment here at Harmon Ltd. I feel strongly about the safety of my staff. The last thing I want to do is hire some prowler, some predator. I need to know who you are, deep inside."

Kit blinked and shrugged.

"I get along fine with her. Oh, she's a bit bossy at times, but I guess I don't mind that so much. She's been very good to me... she supported me all through nursing school. I suppose she must be a bit disappoi..."

"What about your father?"

"I don't know him. I never see him. I couldn't say..." He faltered.

Michelle nodded understandingly, smiling at him kindly. This was better than she had hoped. The extensive job application form he'd filled out had helped a lot in making up her mind about him, but it was in the course of the interview that she saw what his role was going to be. She sat for a moment, pondering her next question.

"Originally, the position we advertised was for a temp."

Kit nodded despondently.

"It's just that I can't offer you full-time work as a programmer right at this moment. What else are you good at?"

He stared at her feet, and shook his head in resignation, his spirits in the toilet. This job was gone now – that was certain. He wasn't any good at anything else, really.

"I'm up here, Mr. Inslow!" Michelle said sharply. Kit looked up, and quailed at the fire in her eyes. He had never been so intimidated by anyone in his life.

"I guess I'm not really much good at anything, Miss Bradley," Kit said quietly. Unable to look her in the eye, his gaze dropped down to her generous bosom, then quickly back at her face, realizing suddenly that staring at her breasts was rude.

"Well, at least you're truthful," Michelle said with a mischievous smile. *I have him where I want him.* "I am going to hire you on a trial basis." Kit's heart leapt with joy at this, and he looked up gratefully at Miss Bradley's face, who smiled generously down on him. "What that means to you is this: we will let you know the evening before if we need you the next day. If you prove yourself useful, rest assured you will have full-time work. If you don't... well, I guess it will be up to you how much we keep you here, won't it? You'll be on a 3-month probationary period, and if your performance is up to scratch at the end of that, I'll extend that period to six months until your skill level and productivity meets my standards and the company's needs. Here is the contract."

She handed him a formal, multi-page legal document, leafing quickly through to the pages that required his signature, softly mumbling something about “just a bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo to keep the company lawyers happy” until he had signed everything.

He hurriedly signed, lest she change her mind. As he put the pen down, she pointed to a paragraph on the last page.

“I just want to call your attention to my name on that page there. Read it carefully.”

*“Any breach of contract will result in the undersigned being liable for the sum not exceeding \$450,000, to be paid in yearly installments of \$100,000, for a period of four and a half years.”*

Kit stared at her in consternation, his mouth agape.

“But I’m broke,” he began and then laughed tentatively, with a weak smile. “I mean, I figure that you probably *know* I’m broke. It’s just that I could never produce that kind of money. Not only that, ma’am, I understand your need for a temp – but I do hope that you realize that I need a job pretty quickly. What happens if you only want me one day a month? I would starve – and if I picked up the terms of this contract correctly, I can’t go looking for other work.”

“Honey, you have nothing to worry about,” Michelle said soothingly. “The job is yours – you can start today! – and as long as you keep to the terms of the contract, you’ll be fine. I wouldn’t worry my pretty little head about it, if I were you. I think you will find your salary here quite a bit above the norm.” She named a surprisingly high figure.

Kit would normally have bridled at her condescending tone, but when she told him what his salary was going to be, all indignation evaporated, replaced with a profound and humble gratitude. Not only had he secured the position, but he was going to be paid twice what he made as a nurse. His apartment was safe and his livelihood assured as long as he met Miss Bradley’s expectations. He smiled bravely and extended his hand to her.

“Thank you for this opportunity to work for you,” he said, offering his hand. She took it in both of hers, and caressed it gently.

“Such soft hands,” she smiled. “You’re a nurse, did you say? Are you any good at foot rubs?”

Kit nodded uneasily. This was a bit touchy-feelie, but this *was* a woman-focused business. Women were like that, he remembered hearing somewhere. Nurses certainly weren’t, but Miss Bradley wasn’t a nurse. *They would never treat me as nicely as Miss Bradley does*, he decided. *I’m darn lucky to have a chance at this job!*

She held on to his hand for a moment or two longer than he felt necessary, caressing it gently, gazing at him kindly. She finally seemed to detect the growing embarrassment and uneasiness in the way his eyes flickered and she smiled knowingly.

“You’d better get over to Denise’s desk and finish the rest of the paperwork. You are expected to have a physical – we provide that service for you. I’ll have Denise make an appointment with my gynecologist. You’ll like her: she’s very nice and very gentle.”

“Gyne...”

“Oh, yes. That’s right, gynecologist. You must have a physical – there’s no getting around that. It’s required by state law to work here. We might as well get that taken care of right away. No time like the present. You’ll be cleared to work immediately.”

“But...”

“No buts. You’re going and that’s final. Refusal to submit to a physical by a corporate physician is grounds for dismissal. Not a good way to start, is it?” She stared at him steadily, an ominous light in her eyes. He nodded in acquiescence - he got her point. “This concludes this interview. Any questions? No? Alright, then let me introduce you to Denise.” He followed her wordlessly out through the secretarial cubicles to a large one in the other corner of the third floor where Denise sat glaring at her computer screen.

“Damn thing crashed again,” she growled and then suddenly – artificially – smiled sunnily at them. “Can I help?”

“Kit here is coming aboard today – he’s a bit of a computer whiz. Perhaps he can help *you*. As a small test,” Michelle suggested, “why don’t you two change places? See what you can do with it, Kit.”

Kit handily fixed the problem and then went on to show Denise what she needed to do to prevent it from happening in the future. This was unlike any other computer guru Denise had ever met, who all kept their knowledge as a closely guarded secret. Not only that, his explanation was in English – not computerese. All of a sudden she could see what she’d been doing wrong – and knew that she would never make that mistake again.

He had secured Denise’s respect.

“Where did you find him?” she asked Michelle later that afternoon over a cup of coffee. “He’s wonderful!”

“Well, whatever you do, don’t let him know that,” Michelle told her firmly. “Don’t forget why we hired him in the first place.”

Denise smiled shrewdly. Just about the time Kit was being hauled on the carpet for his medication error, Harmon Ltd was experiencing it’s own ennui: some nosey legal beagles were sniffing around for a way to put together a class-action suit against the company because of it’s unspoken policy to only hire women. Fortunately, Denise had been tipped off by one of her previous secretaries who’d been fired from one of the legal firms and was a bit disgruntled.

Michelle realized she had to hire a token male and, at the same time, felt that he might be able to be the toy she was looking for, to satisfy a deep, personal desire to make a male taste femininity. Kit came knocking at the door looking for a job at roughly that exact moment – the timing could not have been more perfect.

However, it wasn’t until the interview that Kit’s role became clear to Michelle. The women sat in Michelle’s office for over an hour as Michelle spelled out to Denise what Kit was going to be doing there at Harmon Ltd.

Michelle had no secrets from Denise – they had been friends for many, many years, and Denise knew Michelle better than Michelle realized. Even as her boss was speaking, Denise was already coming up with a plan to establish Kit in the feminine milieu he’d found himself in.

“Well, I better go make that appointment for Kit with Dr Young,” Denise said finally with a smile as she picked up the empty cups. “I think that’s a great idea, by the way, making him submit to a physical by your gynecologist. Brilliant stroke of genius, that! Do you think Mabel will be upset?”

“Are you kidding?” Michelle snorted slightly. “She’s been dreaming of making a little man submit to a gynecological exam since medical school, when that guy she was seeing ran off with the ballet instructor! He was even shorter than Kit – she should have known he was too scared of her for a relationship to last. She didn’t know at that time what she really wanted, but she and I got talking in a bar one night and I could tell – even though I think she’s forgotten most of that night – she was pretty drunk.”

Denise pursed her lips. “Is she going to molest him? I don’t know that I want to be a part of...”

“Oh, Denise, she’s not going to *hurt* poor little Kit,” Michelle rejoined, shaking her head dismissively. “She’s well over her anger, I’m pretty sure. I think she’ll just have a little fun with him. You know, put him in stirrups and rattle a speculum and all that. Poor Kit – he’s really in for a real girl experience. You realize this is all gold – it’s going setting him perfectly into our matriarchal hierarchy. I’m sure you can see that!”

Denise couldn’t hide a smile.

Dr Young was able to fit him in that afternoon, if he hurried right over. Denise called a cab, and Kit found himself on his way to his first visit to a gynecologist.

It was not to be his last.

## **Part Two – The Gynecologist**

“Ah, Kitty! Do come in!” The doctor’s office nurse was spry and lithe, with a fast tongue and a twinkle in her eye. “I can just *tell* you must be looking forward to this. Don’t worry, sweetie, it’s nothing other women don’t face at some point in their lives.”

Kit puzzled mildly what she meant by ‘other women’. He smiled weakly and took the forms from her to fill them out.

“When was the last time you saw your gynecologist?” she asked in that professional tone that nurses take in doctor’s offices.

“I’ve... um... never been...”

“Never been!” she exclaimed, ostensibly appalled. “My, my, that’s naughty! You need to take better care of yourself, honey. Why, you could get cervical cancer and never even know it. You should have a pap smear at least once a year!”

Kit stared at her, open-mouthed. *Pap smear?*

“But, I...”

“Look, I don’t have time to stand here and discuss this with you, but Dr Young *will* lecture you about this, believe me! So when she suggests you come in to have your shots and

everything, I suggest you go along with whatever she suggests without arguing, if you know what's good for you."

She had that no-nonsense way about her, that 'don't even try to mess with me' look. Kit decided it wasn't worth the struggle, and submissively nodded.

"Is Kitty here? Show her in!" a voice boomed from the examining room. Dr Young appeared at the door. "Come on in, honey," she said kindly, smiling at Kit. "You've nothing to be afraid of." Suddenly she stopped, and did an apparent double-take. "Oh my! I've goofed, haven't I? I'm *so* sorry. It's just that from Harmon, we always get **girls** and with a name like 'Kitty' – well, Pam and I just made a natural mistake. I'm very sorry!"

"Oh, that's okay, I guess," Kit mumbled.

Dr. Young smiled nicely. "You will forgive us if we forget you aren't really a woman, honey? I'll try not to make that same mistake but you see, we have to work these silly forms – and they're almost exclusively for women. You *do* understand, don't you?"

Kit nodded resignedly.

Where her nurse was small and slender, Dr Young was large and imposing. She was not fat, but certainly voluptuous. She moved with easy grace over to Kit and grasping his hand led him firmly into the examining room.

"Now, I want you to remove all of your clothing, even your panties," she said firmly, indicating a chair where Kit was to place his clothes. "You may leave your bra on, if you wish."

"Um, I'm not wearing..."

"Not wearing a bra?" Dr Young clucked absent-mindedly. "I just don't know about you young people these days. I couldn't imagine going out of the house without a bra." She cupped her large breasts and stared at them thoughtfully. "These babies would give me all sorts of grief if I didn't treat them right." She looked over at Kit's flat chest. Then laughed. "Did it again, didn't I? Well, I guess you don't really need a bra, do you?"

Kit sighed and removed his clothing timidly, feeling exposed and vulnerable. No one would have ever described him as fit. 'Short', 'slightly over-weight', 'not much to look at' would about sum it up.

The doctor was looking around her, almost speaking by rote.

"Well, we can help you with that, you know. I know a fine surgeon in the city. The implants wouldn't even be that big." She looked at him then, and smiled ruefully. "Sorry. What was I thinking? Of course you wouldn't want breasts, would you? Must be age! Getting silly in my old age!"

She stopped, looking at him thoughtfully.

"Or perhaps you would? I mean, my breasts are very important to me! I can't imagine myself without them. I can't imagine how a person could feel good about herself without breasts. A woman's self-image is very much focused around her breasts. I would hate for you to go through life feeling bad about your body – it affects so many parts of you: relationships, your work, even how you get along with your friends. You know, jealousy and all that. OK, now lie back, honey. Pam, could you help her into the stirrups, please?"