



Reluctant Press presents:

Lady Caroline

Philippa Peters



ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. HAIGHT

A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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THE MAKING OF LADY CAROLINE

by **Philippa Peters**

I. CONTRACTED

The Director did not look up from reading my report on the loss of mining profits on Ruby Gamma. Typical, I thought sourly, as I stared at her immaculate red hair. She was over one hundred and twenty years old, looked about thirty, and still she played power games with an underling like me.

“Oh, do sit down,” she said, indicating a plushie beside her desk. As if anyone in her position could be so nonchalant or absent-minded.

I sat, easing myself into the welcome embrace of the comfort chair.

“Third time for you,” said the Director.

It took me a moment to realize what she meant. I had been employed as a special contractor thirty times by Internal Security but, yes, this was the third time I had endured bi-osculting. It had been necessary as the Gamma miners had all come from one genetic stock that favored red hair and beards. I would have been out-of-place as my original self, a very ordinary, brown-haired, brown-eyed member of the masses.

“Yes, milady,” I agreed with her. “But, as you can see, I am in my own body now.”

I could have stayed a red-haired, overmuscled Rubian, and gotten a lot more girls. But I preferred my mousier exterior even though the medtechs always laughingly complained when I went back to my original form. It helped me in my occupation. I was an investigator, a detective by nature. I found it easier to solve my cases when I was underrated by the opposition.

In the Nebula Kingdom, biosculpture was common among all classes of people save for the very poor. It was expensive but since life-prolonging drugs were also common, why should anyone waste one hundred and thirty years of life in a shape or facial image not pleasing to the world? It meant, of course, that we had an aristocracy of uniformly thin-faced, big-eyed, aquiline-nosed, firm-jawed, blonde-haired people.

There were, however, many people like me who lived their lives with no other alterations than those that came with fashion and the very slow aging process that the life-prolonging drugs gave. After all, with genetic birth selection and nanotechnology, it really was unheard of for anyone to be born in a rich society like that of the Nebula Kingdom with any defects. Beauty and handsomeness were such commonalities that no one remarked on them. You had to get out on the Frontier if you wanted to see an ugly, obese or gross-looking human being.

"We have a very tough case," said Lady Myra Colach, Director of Internal Security for the Nebula Kingdom and my last employer. She was always that way once we got past the power game of hers, demonstrating that she was in charge by making me wait for her attention. "We have had a leak in nanotechnology science."

I shrugged. Industrial espionage went on all the time. We stole from the Terrans for the wars we were still fighting all across the Nebula. The Terrans sold advanced tech to our enemies, the Shelter Republics, who bought what they couldn't steal, and so they kept up with the advances the War Office was continually developing.

"You do understand nanotech transformations?" queried the Director.

I did. They were enormously expensive and could be extremely painful. While biosculpting was only skin deep and had to be renewed, nanotech transformations were at the root level, so to speak. Inject the correctly programmed nannies and even your bones would turn to mush as they were rearranged to your newly desired height or configuration. Soft tissue would be changed and refitted to the altered bone structure. Only idiots who had to look like a hologram star, and owned a king's ransom, would want to undertake such a transformation.

"We think one of the Republics has stolen the whole technology," said Lady Myra. "Not just theoretics, but every instrument and device that we use, including a nanotech production plant."

"Well," I said. "Any technology only lasts so long." It was a maxim of the Nebula Kingdom Government. It accounted for the continual pressure to do more, to move on and experiment. Rewards were given for scientific achievement, including access to the aristocracy. It made the Kingdom the most lively and exciting place in the galaxy.

"There were only four places in the galaxy capable of nanotech transformation," said Lady Myra, her violet eyes fixing on my face. I noted the 'were' and sat up straighter. "The two we have are military installations. Berenger and Terra have vanity facilities but don't let that title fool you. Both governments control the security of those facilities with an iron fist. Imagine if you will, someone the exact image of King William walking onto a Hammer-class battleship and ordering its admiral to bombard Congreve, say." Congreve was the home to some of the Kingdom's most persistent enemies, exiles from the Kingdom itself. "Well, something like that has happened."

"King William has been replicated?" I asked in astonishment.

Lady Myra smiled. "Not that, thank goodness," she said. "Lord Shipley, however, has been assassinated."

She got up from her desk, poured me a shot of lifewater and took a glass of the green liquor for herself, too.

"You found the killer?" I asked as I sipped on the bittersweet mixture. It was concocted from squid-like sea creatures, distilled exclusively on the water world of Metaxa. Lifewater was its only source of income and Metaxa was 'protected' in its monopoly by the Nebula Kingdom, which also had a huge military base in the system's asteroid belt.

"The killer was Lord Shipley," she said cryptically. "But he was hurt when he assassinated himself. A quick-thinking aide stunned him right away and got the two bodies to the Royal Hospital. Needless to say, the blood scans and genetic markers showed that the dead man was Shipley and the live man was his nanotech-transformed double.

"Now, I have the best, most thorough, police and military intelligence service in the known galaxy. Three months of intensive investigation has only brought us this far. The assassin was not produced in the Military, on Terra or on Berenger. The head of Nanotech Research at the Royal Hospital explained it to me most carefully in his jail cell. There are certain markers in the nannies that reveal where they were produced. The assassin's nanomarkers were from Royal. But that was impossible with the records they have kept."

"You say the assassin lived?" I asked.

The Director grimaced. "We injected him with truth drugs and he had an extremely adverse reaction."

"He's dead," I said and she nodded, watching me. "So you examined him and found out what?"

"He was a frontier mongrel," said the Director flatly. "Before the nanotech transformation, he would have been a natural. No lifer drugs. Nothing."

"And you want me to find what the galaxy's best intelligence service can't?" I asked.

She smiled. "You just got drafted," she said.

I stiffened. I was too old to be drafted. I had just had my sixtieth birthday, though I know I looked like a 'natural' twenty-two or -three.

"At the usual rates," she said.

I relaxed. "This assassin," I said. "Was he intended to replace Lord Shipley?"

"We think so," she said, pressing a button on her desk. She flipped the recorder that had appeared on the desk to me. "So we asked, if he was, was he the first?"

That jolted me. Nanotech doubles all over the place? Who could you trust?

"We've been running tests on everyone we can in any position of importance and we are still going on, sweeping the military," she said. "We found four, the highest placed being my superior." She smiled as I gaped at her. "From testing the corpses, and the Shipley assassin, their disease antibodies suggest they all spent time on Carmichael, a backwater planet. I want you there with those sharp eyes and ears you've always shown. I want the

source of the assassins, I want the machines, I want the people who are doing the scientific work and I want the traitors who sold them our technology.”

II. DECEIVED

I protested but I had to give in, in the end. At my height, I would have stuck out on Carmichael, a planet that had just recently begun to make technological purchases from Terra that indicated a great increase in wealth. Colach’s experts had found nothing to account for such good fortune. It was a likely spot to begin even if it was six months away.

Six months that I would spend mostly asleep being transformed into a ‘frontier mongrel’. I was to be awakened on Frank, the medtech who gave me the last injections told me curtly, a notorious Hub station where civilized and uncivilized worlds met on the edge of the frontier.

Awakening was an agony. I could hear the soothing voice of a female medtech who seemed to have accompanied me on station, me still in a medshell. I could understand that. Better for me that no one recognize me. Better for me that no one would see me leaving the fast, military courier on which I had travelled. I would have agreed if I had been conscious.

I was blind as I stumbled, naked, out of the warm security of the medshell. “Hold on, dear,” came that soothing, lilting, female voice. “I just have to unplug you.”

I shivered in the cold as I felt cords and piping sliding across me.

“There,” she said and a hand under my elbow guided me through blinding whiteness into a bathroom area and then a cascade of warm water hit me. When the water poured over my face, I realized that I didn’t have a beard as I expected. That made me a little cross. I felt like I had been dragged through a sewer behind stampeding riverbucks and they hadn’t even tagged my nannies correctly to give me a six-month beard. The men of Carmichael didn’t shave once they were adult. I would stand out if I didn’t go in there with at least a little stubble on my face. On Carmichael, they kept both their hair and their beards short but most men wore both.

Marissa, as the medtech called herself, swathed me in a robe, giving me mouth cleaners and then, drops for my eyes. My hair was wrapped tightly in a towel, like a turban. My hair seemed awfully long to be going to a place like Carmichael. I became aware as I sat on a commode, and Marissa began to dry my long hair, that I wasn’t myself. The nanotech transformation had taken place.

I tried to open my eyes and look at myself but I couldn’t see well in the brightness of the room. I did catch a glimpse of someone else and realized that I was not alone. I saw a young woman working on another young woman away from me, drying her long, honey-gold hair.

I stood when Marissa asked me and swallowed a cool, soothing drink that made my burning throat ease much. The voice was always the last thing to come back, Vanyon, the doctor who had explained the process at Royal, had told me. I had a vision then of the pretty girl standing across from me. I tried to smile at her and she tremulously smiled back at me. It looked like we were both recovering from medical traumas.

It didn't occur to me to question why she was in the same station as me or why I had a female medtech attending me. As it was, through slitted eyes, I could see that the girl had dark, heavily fringed lashes and bright blue eyes despite her fair hair. Then, Marissa took my robe from me at the same time as the medtech attending the girl took her robe from her.

I couldn't follow why that medtech turned her to face me as Marissa was turning me also so that I could see her lovely breasts and her narrow waist, her wide hips and hairless, shapely legs. Just a little tuft of honey blonde hair between her legs spoiled her soft and baby smooth skin.

"See," said Marissa and the dark-haired medtech opposite her seemed to say the same thing though I couldn't hear her. "The nannies worked perfectly."

The medtech opposite said the same thing. She raised the girl's hand as Marissa raised mine and we touched hands, hers long and soft, her nails clean and manicured, a girl's hand. I touched a mirror.

What was a mirror doing between us? I wondered, and then the medtech in the mirror said from behind me, "I should really get you into a bra and panties in case someone else comes in."

She let me go and I staggered as the girl opposite me was let go and staggered, too. Then I felt the movement on my chest and I looked down in amazement. My hair fell about my smooth face and my breasts. Yes, I had breasts. My eyes went lower and something was missing. Comprehension flooded through me. I stared dumbfounded and appalled at my reflection in the mirror and she stared back at me, as dumbfounded and appalled as I was.

I was a woman! The nannies had turned me into a woman.

I turned to look at Marissa who was smiling at me as she started to put a bra over my shoulder.

"I'm a woman," I croaked, forcing words through my painful throat.

"Of course you are," she said brightly. Then she must have seen the panic in my brand new blue eyes. "Didn't they tell you?"

III. BETRAYED

I wasn't *completely* a woman. I think Marissa was trying to console me or something as she explained what had gone on with my penis and my genitals, how they were still there, shrunken. It had been a simple biosculpting procedure, she explained, that there had been no need to awaken me for, to fold and tuck everything away neatly and leave me with the appearance of female genitalia.

"It will be very easy to reverse," she said brightly as I sat shaking in a woman's bra and panties, my long hair cascading over my shoulders.

"I didn't sign on for this," I said stupidly.

"You didn't?" she asked, turning to the outer door at the sound of the communication chimes.

"Lieutenant Taggart and briefing party," said a male voice.

"Taggart?" Marissa asked, turning to me after inspecting the entrance vid. There was more than one person there but all were in naval uniform. "Do you know a Taggart?"

I shook my head. Big mistake. Ringlets of curly, blonde hair fell over my bare shoulders and face setting me off to convulsive shivering which only made the light, tickling sensations increase.

"Well, better see them," Marissa said, handing me a white, frilly robe that was silky to touch. It only made my shaking worse to realize it was a female's robe and I had to free my hair and push it over my back to fit the robe about me. I looked down at my figure and pulled the robe about my legs as I sat again, shocked and totally dismayed at what had been done to me. I was no pervert, like the inhabitants of Shalimar Station, who advertized 'fantasy' holidays as biosculpted video stars of the opposite sex. I did not want to see myself as a woman.

The chimes called again. "All right, all right!" said Marissa, pressing a key on the comm unit that released the door lock. The three men came in like a well-trained commando insertion team, which I suppose they were.

Marissa didn't have a chance and I was too groggy to do more than squeak as she was killed expertly and quickly by the man with the nametag, 'Lt. E. Taggart', on his chest. He smiled as he pushed the heated cutter-beam against my robe. I thought I was dead, too, but he only smiled at me, his finger resting easy by the discharge tab.

One of the people was reprogramming the console I could see. The entry of the three men was being spun backwards and then a new program from a databox he had inserted into the dataport was added. I had done that often myself and his equipment looked right up-to-date, Nebula Security issue.

The third person who came in was Marissa. She went right into the bathroom and whisked out the medshell.

"Very well," she said in Marissa's voice. "I'm back to His Majesty's ship, *Vituperance*." That was the ship I had arrived on. "Package delivered on time." She smiled at me as she said it. Numbly, I watched her depart.

The console engineer spread out a large bag on the floor and thrust the real Marissa's body into it. The smell of scorched flesh seemed to recede as he closed the tabs over her body. All the time, 'Lt. E. Taggart' pressed the cutter under my breast, staring into my eyes and studying every line on my face from my full lips to my narrow eyebrows and thick eyelashes.

Two more men entered. One was dressed like a station servicer, in green uniform with 'Frank Personnel' stencilled everywhere on him. He whisked the bag with the body away. Taggart then pulled back from me and I gasped at the last man to enter the room. I knew him!

I was supposed to be John McDonald, an itinerant communications worker from Carmichael, currently at work for the Kingdom, two years away by the fastest courier, in the

Metaxa system where he had been at work for the last ten years as a civilian contractor. I was supposed to be this McDonald, homesick and coming back to Carmichael, looking for work. Now I looked up and McDonald was looking down at me.

“Lovely,” he said, staring at me. I clenched my teeth and my jaw hurt as I felt awful at the words. Men did not describe other men, not a man like me, as ‘lovely.’

“We should kill him,” said Taggart and fright began to take over again as I looked up at him.

“No,” said John McDonald, smiling the crooked grin that I had studied so hard before I had been over come with the agony of the transformation and had thankfully been shelled. “Sutcliffe has to see this one. He won’t believe it otherwise.”

He ordered me to dress and supervised every item I put on. He insisted I put on stockings, watching avidly as I slid the flesh-colored items over my smooth, hairless legs. He found a dainty, female undergarment, I think they called it a teddy, and I had to put it on, leaving off my robe and hearing a gasp of appreciation from the tech as he looked at me. I was flaming in heat and embarrassment as I put on the garment. Then McDonald had me put on a fashionable dress just like any young girl might have worn.

The bodice hugged my figure tightly, even more so when McDonald tightened up the cords at the back and my breasts were almost forced out at the front. Short, silky skirts swirled over my hips and about my legs, dancing and caressing me just like my hair. I had worn costumes before on investigations. But that was nothing like this. I was jiggling everywhere and the tech was looking at me with hungry eyes.

I couldn’t walk in the high-heeled boots McDonald put on my feet and he cursed me while the tech tittered. “Take small steps,” McDonald fumed at me as I wondered if I could ‘accidentally’ fall into Taggart and get the cutter away from him.

“You need makeup and jewellery,” said John McDonald, spraying me with a cloying female perfume that made me want to gag, “but first and a little on account.” He kissed me. He put his arms on my bare shoulders, tilted me back and kissed me full on my new, full lips. His soft beard tickled my cheek and chin.

I yelped and pulled back, struggling in the grip of a taller man, who was much stronger than I was. He smiled at me. It was a smile I had practised often. “Ah, my little Caroline,” he said with a sigh. “Is that any way to treat your future husband?”

Taggart snorted behind him and the techie gasped. John McDonald just smiled at me and tried to hug me as I squirmed in his grip and tried to attack him, even in the rustly dress and with my chest bobbing.

“You see, Dar,” he said over his shoulder to the tech. “You could take Taggart here. Run him through the Nannie Hospital and he could be just like this one. Then you’d have to tame him as I’m going to do with this one and then she will be the most loving of all your wives. You’ll want her in your bed every night, as I shall have my lovely Caroline.”

I knew why he was talking like that. It was a technique I used myself. Just by being matter-of-fact and conversational about terrible things, you can terrify even the most hardened criminals. John McDonald was very good at the technique. He was terrifying me. The

way the tech slavered and drooled at me was really scary as well as he didn't seem to be acting.

"Hold her," McDonald said to the other two men and they came and took my arms. "She has to wear some makeup," he said. I still struggled and suddenly he came behind me, lifted my skirts and smacked my ample bottom. It stung and the men laughed as I let loose a torrent of unladylike language.

I didn't have a hope. I was leaned over a chair and my bottom was soundly spanked. My hair cascaded all over my face as if I was in a shower as John McDonald paddled me. And he didn't stop. I kept thinking he would but he didn't. I gritted my teeth and I don't know why but I started to cry. I never cry.

"Hey, John," said Taggart in disgust. "Why don't we just rape her?" I felt a hard, calloused hand on my aching buttocks. "She's got the equipment for frontal as well as rear engagements, doesn't she?"

He kept exaggerating the feminine pronouns. I was given more stinging blows and then suddenly pulled up straight by my hair. My rear ached even worse now that no one was beating on me. McDonald smoothed my skirts about me and I had to grimace at the soft touch of silk on my wounded backside. He leaned forward and kissed my neck and then studied me as I shuddered and looked back murderously at him.

"Much better," he said. "See," he said to the others. "She didn't attack me this time."

McDonald held out a lipstick to me. "You have to put this on," he said. "No self-respecting girl, which is what you are, would go anywhere without it."

I got to look in a mirror. I couldn't believe the beautiful girl in the mirror was me. But she pursed her lips as I was doing; John McDonald's hand on my back suggested I had better. He loomed behind me, putting his arm about my tight-bodied waist. I couldn't believe the cleavage I had and it was all hanging out there for anyone to see. The dress he had made me wear had seen to that.

McDonald made me carry a shoulder purse in which he put the lipstick, perfume spray, other articles of women's makeup, an ID card and money. He put a woman's frilly, sequined jacket about me. Dar, the tech, ran a new program and I was tugged after McDonald into the hallway. It led to lifts that went up and down the huge, fifteen-story glass frontage of the Maidenflower Inn.

Taggart held the door as Dar pushed me in. I wobbled in my heels and fell in a heap to their great mirth. They made debasing comments about my reddened backside and my pretty white panties as we travelled under privacy seals into the bowels of the station, John McDonald having stayed behind.

I was beginning to get it. I was supposed to be John McDonald. I was supposed to leave that room. He would. He would be me, taking on passage to Carmichael and the Giant's Rim worlds. When Colach's agents contacted me for reports, it wouldn't be me they would be contacting. It would be this other John McDonald. I wondered if he was the real one or if he had nanotechnology in him as I did.