



Reluctant Press presents:

Spousal Reassignment

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY MISTY MALVEAUX

A 'HER TV' E-BOOK

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SPOUSAL REASSIGNMENT

By Sally Wild

Chapter 1

Larry Boswell stared at his sobbing wife, Marge, with a look of disbelief on his face. He couldn't remember hitting her but the savage looking welt on her left cheek was ample evidence that he had done just that.

They had been married for just over three years and in spite of numerous spirited arguments there had never been any physical abuse by either of them until just a few seconds ago. As usual they had been arguing about money. Something that had occurred more and more regularly as the reality of Larry being laid off six months before from his well paying management job had seeped remorselessly into every aspect of their relationship.

At first it had been easy to pretend that nothing had changed. His severance package would carry them through until he could land another job. Even the large mortgage on their new, two-story house located on a quiet suburban street would be manageable.

But finding another job offering equivalent remuneration proved more elusive than they had anticipated and it wasn't long before Larry started to drink too much and gradually give up trying as hard as he should. As he began his downward spiral into despondency he became more and more belligerent towards Marge who had not only kept her job as a secretary at a large, local company but had managed to get a promotion to executive assistant for one of the senior managers.

Normally Larry would have been genuinely excited for his wife to do well but in his present depressed circumstances it had seemed as if she was mocking his ability to be the

main breadwinner in the household. An extremely macho man in his outlook he took it personally that he no longer controlled the purse strings in their relationship.

To make matters worse, Marge started to demand that he take a greater part in doing the housework. Her new job meant longer hours at work and after several months of trying to balance those extended hours with the still onerous domestic duties Larry demanded of his wife, she had had enough.

At first, she only gave gentle hints that she would truly appreciate some help around the house. Hints that Larry, falling ever more deeply into a crushing depression, had missed entirely thereby causing her to resort to a more forceful, indeed shrill, approach to garnering some support from her reluctant husband.

Unfortunately this only further infuriated Larry as he now thought that not only was she usurping his rightful place as the main financial provider for their family but she was also trying to force him into what he considered to be the female role in the household. The more she cajoled him, the more stubborn he became in resisting what he perceived as a direct assault on his manhood.

Finally he had snapped and during one of their ever-increasing arguments he had slapped her across the face. Marge instantly broke into heart-rending sobs and looked at him with eyes full of a potent mixture of recrimination and hurt that he could act so badly.

Larry tried to stutter out an abject apology but found his overwhelming bitterness at an unjust world and the alcohol-induced rage still roaring through him were more than a match for his true feelings. Instead he stomped out of the house, jumped in his car and roared off into the night.

He had absolutely no idea where he was going but intuitively felt that he couldn't stay near Marge for another minute. The urge to lash out and hurt her even further was much too strong for him to be confident that he could control what he recognized as completely irrational emotions. For the moment his love for her had been overcome by dark and deep feelings that were normally completely alien to him.

It was a gloomy night and shortly after leaving the well-lit subdivision, Larry found himself speeding along a narrow road full of twists and turns and lined by large trees as he headed further into the countryside. Normally he would have taken great enjoyment in pushing his vintage Mustang along this particular route but tonight he was too full of alcohol induced rage and a burning anger at life in general to feel the usual thrill associated with hurtling around tight corners.

How could his life become so screwed up in such a short time he wondered as he blasted along trying in vain to leave all his ever-increasing troubles behind him? Six months ago he had a great job, a new house and a fantastic home life with a woman he truly loved. Now he was unemployed, drinking too much and in danger of losing everything because he had blindly lashed out without thinking of the consequences.

Tears began to roll down his cheeks as he allowed his black thoughts to take complete possession of his struggling mind. It just wasn't fair that everything was going to hell in a hand basket and there was nothing he could do to stop it. Even Marge was starting to turn against him now that she was their only source of income. How could she even consider

that he should become the little homemaker of the house? Couldn't she see that a man had his pride even if he was going through a rough patch?

Larry was so preoccupied with his problems that he didn't even notice the rain. As often happened in this particular area, it was a sudden, violent downpour and he automatically switched on the windshield wipers. Unfortunately, as his Mustang was an older one, they only had one speed and in seconds it was obvious that they were woefully inadequate in keeping the windshield clear enough to see out of properly. Everything became nothing more than a flashing blur.

Even more unfortunately, the time his churning brain took to process this particular fact was too long! He had barely lifted his foot from the accelerator when his vehicle began to aquaplane on the wet road. His heart thudded loudly as a burst of adrenaline flooded through his body while he fought to keep the car from veering off into the ditch.

A gnarled tree suddenly flashed into prominence as his headlights picked it up through the heavily streaked windshield and he gave a short scream of fear as it became obvious that he was headed directly for its thick trunk. A scream that was cut short as the Mustang careened into the immovable oak giant.

There was a gigantic bang, an excruciating flash of pain that seemed to encompass his entire body and finally a welcome oblivion.

Chapter 2

Marge trembled in a newfound combination of fear and anger as she heard the door slam behind Larry. The sound of his car's engine racing and tires squealing as he roared off into the night made her clench her teeth in frustration. She loved her husband dearly but his recent behavior was inexcusable. He was turning into a booze-loving, petulant whiner instead of the caring, hard-working man she had married.

There was no doubt that he was letting himself go and didn't have the gumption to pull out of his pathetic, self-inflicted case of victim hood. Even when she asked him to do a bit or work around the house he reacted as if she had told him to put on a dress and heels to carry out the domestic duties. *Hum, maybe not such a bad idea,* she thought with a giggle. *That would certainly blow his tiny, macho brain.*

The ache in her face reminded Marge of the fact that the situation she found herself in was nothing to be laughed about. Larry had lashed out and hit her. It was obvious that he was drinking too much and was losing control. She would have to do something about it before things got worse. There was no way that she was going to let him get away with that type of behavior.

Picking up the phone she placed a quick call to her parents. Walter and Bev Stanton lived only twenty minutes away on the outskirts of town. They had moved there two years ago when Walter had retired from the local police force.

The Stanton's were well aware of Marge and Larry's latest trials and tribulations as she had always been close to her parents and routinely discussed most aspects of her life with them. They in turn had proven understanding and supportive in helping her through any

rough patches she had encountered since her birth twenty-five years ago. And there had never been one as rough as the one she was going through at the moment.

"Hello," Marge heard her mother's familiar voice answer the phone.

"Oh, Mom," Marge replied as she broke into a fresh bout of tears while explaining Larry's shocking behavior of a few minutes ago. She had hardly managed to get the story out before her mother assured her that both she and her father would be over in less than half an hour.

The next thirty minutes seemed to drag forever as Marge paced around the living room vainly trying to compose herself. Although she didn't expect to see him for many more hours she trembled at the thought that Larry might return before her parents arrived. Did she want to stay here, should she throw her husband out, could they make it work? These and a thousand similar thoughts rattled around her head like hail off a tin roof.

Finally the doorbell rang and Marge raced to admit her mother and father before almost throwing herself into their protective arms. Even in his fifties, Walter was a great bear of a man who dwarfed his petite wife and daughter. It was extremely comforting to cuddle up to his massive chest in the knowledge that Larry was closer to her than her Dad in size.

It only took a few minutes for Marge to regain her composure and to explain the latest problem with Larry's escalating violence and self-destructive behavior. Walter growled quietly to himself as she spoke and it was obvious that he would like nothing better than to smash his son-in-law into the ground. However, he had seen this sort of situation many times during his career and he was much too clever to give into his emotions. Bev was also made of sterner stuff and although her heart broke to see her only daughter so distraught, she didn't give into useless hysterics.

"Larry has acted like a complete idiot and it's obvious that he is falling apart before your eyes, dear," she stated once Marge had stopped talking. "What do you want to do? There is no way you can carry on with the way things are going. If you stay here, there is every chance that Larry will only get more violent."

"Your mother is right," Walter agreed. "Once men like Larry start down the path of bullying and trying to control everything it is hard to sort them out. You have to decide what you want to do and know that we will be behind you 100% of the way. But there is no way that I will allow that little creep to lay another finger on you so we had better come up with some way of making sure that doesn't happen."

"Mom, Dad, thank you for your support. I know that I can depend on you and I'll gladly take your advice but I have to let you know that I still love Larry and want to stay with him," Marge replied with a tentative smile as she gently rubbed her tender cheek. "Whatever we come up with in the way of a plan will have to include that fact."

Walter and Bev exchanged troubled glances at this statement but both of them knew that Marge could be a very determined young woman when she made up her mind about something. It was obvious to both of them that Larry's destructive nature would have to be brought under control if he was going to continue to live under the same roof as their daughter.

Marge made some coffee and for the next hour the three of them discussed how to bring Larry back to being a normal human being while making sure his violent temper didn't get the best of him again. No easy solutions presented themselves and they all had to acknowledge that the situation was made even worse by the fact that the young couple would be on the verge of bankruptcy once Larry's benefits ran out in another month. Marge's salary, although it had improved considerably with her last promotion, just wasn't enough to maintain their earlier lifestyle.

"And if that wasn't bad enough, Larry won't even help with the housework," Marge complained. "You'd think that I'd asked him to dress as little Molly homemaker the way he carried on when I asked him for some help."

Walter chortled at the image of his less than sterling son-in-law prancing around in a skirt and Bev joined in with an amused giggle until she suddenly stopped and a mischievous twinkle appeared in her eyes.

Marge, who had been happy to lighten up the atmosphere a bit with her comment, noticed the twinkle and knew instinctively that her mother had just had a startling thought. "What is it Mom? I know your evil mind is working overtime when you get that look in your eyes," she blurted.

"Well I don't know if it's a good idea but I've read about something called 'petticoat punishment'. You know, where men are dressed up as women until they learn to behave themselves properly. It's probably not so common now but there were definitely a fair number of boys and young men who were tamed into acting in a civilized manner through such punishment around a hundred years ago."

Walter started to look a little uneasy with such talk but Marge gave her mother an appraising look while a hard smile appeared on her normally friendly face as her mind raced with the new possibilities introduced by Bev's observation. *Now wouldn't this petticoat punishment bring that stupid oaf down a few notches? It certainly beat any of the ideas they had been batting around earlier and if she could just reeducate her husband into a more civil behavior they could get on with their marriage. But this time she would be the one in charge and wouldn't that be a good thing. Larry had proven that he was incapable of being responsible so maybe it was her turn.*

Walter looked at the two women as if they were crazy. He knew them well enough to know what had started as a joke was rapidly becoming an idiotic idea they were seriously contemplating.

"I hate to rain on your parade, ladies, but that is the weirdest idea I've heard in a long time," he blurted. "For starters, you can't just force Larry to wear a dress unless I beat him senseless first. Not that he doesn't deserve it and not that I wouldn't enjoy doing it but unless I live here full time you wouldn't be able to keep him here all by yourself, Marge. He'd be long gone and you wouldn't ever see him again and you've already said that you didn't want to happen."

Marge wasn't all that certain that she couldn't control her rotten husband if she did get him into skirts but she did realize that it would be difficult to do so and she certainly didn't want her father feeling that he had to move in with her to make it happen.

Before she could verbalize these thoughts, Walter's cell phone rang and he pulled it out of his pocket. He glanced at it before saying, "I'd better answer, it's Bill and unless I'm mistaken, he's on duty tonight."

Bill Stanton was Marge's older brother and he had followed his father into the police force. It wasn't like him to call his sister or parents while he was working so they all knew that it must be something important if he was on the phone.

"Yes, Bill. As it happens we are with Marge right now. I understand. We'll bring her over right away. See you soon."

Marge followed her father's cryptic remarks with a growing sense of dread. She just knew that something was wrong.

Chapter 3

Larry slowly began to hear slurred noises and detect fuzzy shapes as he drifted upward toward a bright light. He groaned in frustration as he struggled to leave the cozy, dark place he had inhabited. He was torn between staying in the comfortable cocoon his body and mind occupied and moving toward the barely recognizable world promised by the sounds and sights constantly shifting above him.

As he moved forward, the voices and shapes gradually began to become more discernable as he rushed toward full consciousness. A process that would have moved even faster if he hadn't begun to detect a faint burn of overwhelming pain as he exited the drug-induced blanket of oblivion that had encompassed him for so long. Although it was little more than a shadowy promise of the potential agony that could flare into prominence over his whole body, it was almost enough to make him turn back into the darker depths and stay there permanently.

"Come on, Larry, you can do it. You're almost there!"

The words suddenly rang clear and commanding through his mind and he found himself being drawn back into the world of the living with a small squeal of disapproval. Noises were no longer vague and his eyes squinted against the suddenly blazing light, which seemed to encompass his prone body.

He tried to speak but found that his mouth was too dry and he could only croak hoarsely instead of being able to say anything intelligible. Blinking against the harsh light he let his eyes move slowly back and forth in their sockets - the only movement that he seemed capable of as the light burn of pain throughout his body began to become more pronounced.

Suddenly a smiling face loomed into sight only a few inches from his flickering eyes. It took a few seconds but he finally recognized it was his wife, Marge. She seemed genuinely pleased to see that he was conscious.

"Larry, thank goodness, you're awake. I've been so worried about you. Can you speak?"

Larry tried to reply but could only make an inarticulate mewling noise.

“Gosh that doesn’t sound very good,” Marge announced with some concern in her voice. “Tell you what, honey; just blink once if you can hear me.”

Larry groaned in frustration at not being able to communicate more effectively but saw the reasonableness of her request and gave a slow blink in reply - a gesture that made Marge’s face light up with delight as she saw that Larry really was aware of what was going on around him.

“Very good, honey. Let me call a doctor to check you out before we do anything else. You’ve been in a comma for over a month and we were starting to wonder if you were going to pull out of it at all.”

Before Larry could even begin to assimilate what Marge had just said she had disappeared and at least three people dressed in white were fussing around him. As they did, the faint pain he had been feeling earlier seemed to blossom into a more pronounced form and he began to moan with trepidation. Handling any kind of pain had always been something he would much rather not deal with and this promised to be an extremely unpleasant bout of suffering exactly that kind of misery.

Hearing his moans, the white-clad trio seemed to become quite agitated and one of them fiddled with the IV line going into his left arm and he thankfully dropped back into the depths of unconsciousness. The thought of not knowing what was happening to him was troubling but not enough to stop him from welcoming his escape from what could well be mind-numbing agony.

Larry’s restful break from reality slowly spun away as he was once again propelled vigorously toward the world of light and noise. At first he couldn’t understand what was causing him to rise so rapidly but it soon became apparent someone was shaking his shoulder and calling out to him.

“Larry, you stupid dolt, wake up and stop hiding down there in a drug induced paradise. You aren’t hurt that badly.”

Larry screwed his eyes open in an attempt to see who was being so aggressive and gave a nervous gulp as he recognized the grim visage of Marge’s father staring down at him in a cold, calculating manner.

“Back in the world of the living, are we sunshine,” Walter stated with a thin smile. “Can you say anything?”

Larry had always been afraid of Walter. His sheer size compared to Walter’s barely average height and slight build had always seemed to be completely intimidating. To make matters worse, Marge’s brother Bill was just as imposing in physique as their father.

His mouth was just as dry as before so Larry could only make a strangled grunt in reply to Walter’s question.

“Here have a sip of water and try again,” Walter commanded as he held a small glass of water to Larry’s parched lips while holding up his head with surprising gentleness for such a big man.

Larry took a few sips of the precious liquid and sighed in appreciation as he swirled it around his mouth before swallowing with a gasp of pure enjoyment. He couldn’t remember when he had tasted anything so exquisite.

“What, why...” he croaked after the water had loosened his dry tongue.

“Here, have a bit more,” Walter commanded before placing the glass back in position. Larry was only too happy to oblige as only muttering a few words had seemed to be a draining experience.

“You are in hospital after crashing your car. Lucky for you someone found you fairly quickly so they managed to get you here in time to save your worthless hide. Your injuries were extensive so you’ve been here for five weeks in a comma. With me so far, sport?”

Not sure of Walter’s aggressive tone but eager to find out what else had happened to him Larry gasped out, “Yes, can’t remember anything.”

“Maybe you don’t remember anything but I know what went on that night,” Walter growled. “You were drunk again, hit Marge and then drove off in a big pout until you managed to run into a tree. Now I know that you’ve been feeling down on your luck since losing your job but I’m here to tell you that you’ve crossed the line. No man, including a skinny runt like you, hits my daughter and gets away with it.”

Larry swallowed nervously as Walter continued on in a low, threatening tone. “There are going to be some big changes in your life if you want to continue living with Marge. I’m not sure why she would want to stay with you but if she does then so be it. However, I want to make sure that you understand that you will bloody well do as you’re told in the future. If you don’t then I’ll make you think that running into a tree was a minor event. Got it?”

“Yes,” Larry rasped as he stared in fear at his large tormentor. There was no doubt in his mind that Marge’s father would do exactly what he promised.

“Excellent,” Walter stated with a satisfied smile on his face. “Just make sure that you remember our little chat when you get out of here. What Marge says is law, no exceptions!”

Larry breathed a sigh of relief as Walter lumbered off. He wasn’t sure what he had just agreed to but it had been worth it to get rid of the big ox. His words had brought the events leading up to the accident back into focus and Larry knew that he had made a big mistake in hitting Marge.

Chapter 4

“Are you ready to go home, Larry,” Marge said with a big smile. “You’ve been in the hospital for six weeks now and the doctors have agreed that some home care would be the best thing for your continued recovery.”

Larry still felt as weak as a new-born kitten but after a week of lying around in the hospital since recovering consciousness he was more than ready to leave the confines of his boring room. He was still barely able to get out of bed by himself but had recovered enough strength to walk around for at least short periods of time. A physiotherapy program had also been instituted to make sure he regained full mobility. But he found it demanding work, although he had managed to take an ever-increasing number of steps by himself almost from the first day.

Marge had mentioned nothing about the night of the accident and had been loving and supportive during all her visits. None of the rest of her family had been back to see Larry since he and Walter had had their little chat. Something that Larry had certainly not forgotten.

"Sounds good to me, babe," he replied in the strangely high-pitched voice that had plagued him since walking up from his coma. Something that he wasn't the least bit pleased about but had assumed had been caused by his injuries on the fateful night of the accident. "This place is deadly. How about my rehab program though?"

"I have all the information about that and you'll be doing daily sessions at home with some appropriate supervision. If there are any problems, we'll bring you back here," Marge replied. "I hear that you haven't been all that keen on exerting yourself though."

Larry couldn't help himself from whining, "It's really hard and I'm still in pain from my injuries."

"Don't be such a baby," Marge snapped. "You're injuries are almost healed and it will just take some dedicated work to fully get back on your feet. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and everything will be fine."

Taken back by his wife's shrewish remarks, Larry couldn't come up with an appropriate reply so just sat in sulky silence as Marge bustled around the room and packed up his few possessions. He was already dressed in a shirt and slacks, which hung loosely around his shrunken frame. It was obvious that he had lost a lot of weight since the accident, even his shoes felt like they were too large.

Without another word, Marge helped him to his feet and into a waiting wheelchair. Larry slumped down and in the next few minutes they were exiting the hospital and he was eased into her car.

"Hey, we're not taking the right turn off to our house," he exclaimed after sitting in a quiet sulk since they left the hospital. "Are we going somewhere else? I don't think I'm up to anything but going home and climbing into bed."

"Oh, be quiet, Larry," Marge replied. "I know where we're going and everything will be explained to you once we get there. Until then just keep your silly mouth shut."

Larry couldn't believe that his loving wife was being so brusque with him. There had never been any doubt that he had ruled the roost before the accident. Now she was treating him as if he was the subordinate in their relationship.

A snappy retort was on the end of his tongue when he suddenly remembered Walter's comments during their little chat. Discretion seemed to be the better part of valor and he really wasn't feeling up to a confrontation at the moment. Maybe it would be better to sort everything out later.

It became increasingly difficult to keep quiet as they turned off the main highway into the area where his in-laws were living. He didn't really want to see either Walter or Bev until he was feeling better. However, he still managed to maintain a quiet decorum until they pulled into a driveway of a house located at least a few minutes from the Stanton's much larger residence.

The house was a modest bungalow situated on a large lot and well screened from view on all sides by a profusion of trees. A pleasant enough piece of real estate he thought but not much compared to our place or the Stanton's for that matter.

"What are we doing here? Why aren't we at our place? You know I have to rest," he queried in a trembling voice.

"Stop nattering, Larry," Marge ordered. "I'll explain everything when we get inside. Here, let me help you out of the car and into the house."

Leaning heavily on his wife, Larry let out a squeak of indignation when he saw that the furniture in the small living room was some of the better pieces from their home. It wasn't all of it because there wasn't enough room, but it was obvious that something wasn't right.

Marge let him slip down onto the couch before taking a seat in one of the large arm-chairs. He stared at her with a look of incomprehension in his eyes while she coolly appraised him as if he was some sort of specimen under a microscope.

"I suppose you are wondering what is going on," she finally stated. "Yes, this is our furniture and the reason that it is here is simple. While you were in the hospital, I sold our house and bought this one."

"You did what," Larry squeaked in astonishment. "How could you do that? What ever processed you to sell our lovely home?"

"It was either that our declare bankruptcy," Marge responded. "Your benefits ran out and my salary wasn't enough to carry our debt load. This house cost a lot less than our old one, which was sold at a tidy profit. As a result our mortgage payments are now much more manageable."

"You still shouldn't have done it," Larry cried in distress. "How could you go ahead and do something like this without asking me?"

"You were in no shape to ask about anything at the time," Marge retorted. "I had to take control of our finances which were a disaster mainly due to your incompetence. With the help of my family I have us back on an even keel and I intend to keep it that way. My salary is more than adequate to sustain us and you will have a new role to play in our relationship since you managed to make such a mess of trying to run things."

"What are you talking about," Larry squealed in his high-pitched voice. "What new role? I'm not doing anything that I don't want to do!"

"Father mentioned that you might be stupid enough to be difficult," Marge stated coolly. "He lives only a few minutes from here and said that he would be more than happy to drop over at any time so that you could continue your little chat. Shall I call him?"

Larry sank back in the couch at Marge's comments. There was no way that he wanted to continue his last conversation with Walter. He would just have to find some other way of regaining the upper hand.

"No, no, that's fine," he mumbled. "I am tired though. Can I go to bed now?"

"It's early afternoon on a lovely Saturday and you want to go to bed? Normally I would say no but as it is your first day home, I suppose a short nap isn't out of the ques-

tion. Here let me help you up. The bedrooms are down this way. Here you go, I've put you in one of the guest bedrooms for now until we get things sorted out."

Larry looked around the small bedroom with a critical eye. It was clean and freshly painted but almost over full with a double bed, bedside table, dresser and what looked like a small desk or vanity with a chair. The window overlooked the large backyard with its numerous trees.

Feeling tired and overwhelmed he merely slumped down on the bed once Marge slid her arm from around his waist. He just couldn't seem to summon up the energy to argue about anything even though he was extremely unhappy about the circumstances he now found himself in.

"Here, let's get those clothes off. They hang off you like you have shrunk to half your size," Marge giggled. "My goodness you certainly aren't very manly looking any more are you. Your shoulders and arms aren't any bigger than mine and with my breasts I probably have a bigger chest than you."

Larry didn't like the direction her comments were going or the tone of her voice. He was more than aware of how vulnerable he was in his present weakened state. If Marge wanted to she could put a good beating on his emaciated frame and there wouldn't be a thing he could do about it.

"Seeing you are such a pathetic, little sissy, I think you should put this on before you get into bed," Marge stated flatly. "There is nothing else for you to wear anyway as I sold all of your clothes before moving here. Not that I got that much for them but seeing you were too lazy to get another job, there didn't seem to be any point in keeping them."

Larry stared in shock at the long, pink silk nightgown that his wife was holding out. He was so astonished at what she was suggesting that he barely registered the fact that Marge had told him that she had disposed of his extensive wardrobe. Had the woman gone completely mad he wondered?

"Are you crazy, that's a...a"

"I know what it is," came her curt reply. "But with you looking and acting more like a Linda than a Larry I think it is exactly what you should be wearing for your little nap. Now lift your arms. That's a good girl. There you go. Doesn't that feel nice and slinky? Climb into bed and I'll pull the covers up and you have a well-deserved rest. I know you must be finding this a bit overwhelming. See you in a bit, dearest."

Larry heard the bedroom door close and in spite of all the thoughts racing around in his feverish brain he quickly fell into an exhausted sleep.

Chapter 5

It seemed like only minutes later that someone was shaking his shoulder. With a snort of indignation he came out of the comforting world of quiet dreams.

"Come on, sleepy head," he heard his wife croon. "It's time to get up and make use of what's left of the day."