



*Reluctant Press* presents:

# TV Singles Cruise

Monica James



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AN 'ADULT TV' E-BOOK

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# TV Singles Cruise

**By Monica James**

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## **Chapter I The Idle\_Unemployed**

It was Friday afternoon. Ariel had just picked up her pay envelope and was mentally planning an active weekend with her boyfriend, Colin. Her manager, Ruthie Ray, called her into the office.

“Close the door, Ariel. Sit down. We need to have a chat.”

Ariel carefully shut the door, pressed it until she heard the lock snap, and turned around. “Yes, Miss?” she asked. “Is there something I’ve not done that needs attention?”

Ruthie Ray looked her up and down as if appraising her. “I have a directive, came in this week, from corporate. There is a ten percent cut in personnel effective immediately. I’ve no complaint at all about your work here and everyone is pleased to have you as a team member. However, the personnel cut includes you. There is an extra week’s pay as severance in your check today. Your benefits are paid through the end of the month.” She stood up and extended her hand. “I hate to be the bearer of ill wind but there is little I can do. I hope you understand.”

Momentarily shocked, Ariel sat staring at her manager as if not comprehending what the lady had just said. “Uh, yes, Miss. Am I the only one?”

Ruthie Ray shook her head, “no.” She looked sad a moment before answering. “Your friend, Rachel, in the mailroom is also affected. Mail deliveries have been halted in favor of a departmental mailbox. Somewhat impersonal, I know, but that seems to be the way to go without cutting productive help. I’m sorry.”

Ariel stood, clutching her severance envelope, somewhat frantic. She fought off the impulse to faint, sighed and turned to go. Outside, Rachel sat looking anxiously at Ariel. She just shook her head. "You're next, I suppose. I'll wait for you. It's the Guillotine."

Rachel looked bewildered. She waited until Ruthie Ray called for her. She went in and, as Ariel had done, closed the door behind her. In just a few minutes, she came out tapping her arm with the envelope as if it had a life of its own. "We just got canned," she said. "At least there is some money to live on until we find something else. One thing is certain, there are changes ahead. Coffee?"

Ariel nodded and stood up. Changes, indeed, she thought. That's an understatement. The two girls walked out together, stepping bravely past the rest of the office crew who were, all of a sudden, busy doing something other than speaking to them.

At the coffee shop they slid into a back booth. Ariel reached across the table and touched Rachel's hand. "Where do we go from here?" she asked. "Oh, wait; I have to call Colin. I don't feel up to fast food and a movie tonight." She made the call, promised to get in touch later and put the phone back in her purse. Rachel took out an ad she had clipped from *The Advocate* newspaper. She showed it to Ariel.

"Special this week, first come first served. Cruise now forming on 100-passenger liner catering to folks, young and old, interested in getting away from it all. Meet your own kind of friends; gay, lesbian and transvestites only."

Ariel laughed. "Afraid we don't qualify for that but it does sound like fun. We could go somewhere with people who don't hassle other people." "You missed the good part," Rachel said pointing to the advertisement. "See there? Ten day cruise; \$165 single, \$200 double. All meals and amenities included. We can go, \$100 apiece. What do you say?"

Ariel was doubtful. "I can't just pick up and go tramping around Central Latin America. It's insane."

Rachel frowned. "You can't live the next ten days for \$100. Why not?"

"Well, that's true. I'll call them and see if there's an opening. How old is this ad?"

Rachel was excited. "Look, do you object to sharing a stateroom with me? We've been friends but only on the job. Plus, I know you have Colin and, I suppose, he's important."

Ariel sighed. "I better run this by him."

"First, let's find out if we can make reservations."

"Oh, right." She dialed the number and spoke to the travel agent.

"We're in," she said, finally. "Now, Colin."

Ariel pressed Colin's number. After she told him what had happened and what the plans were, she listened for a long while to his tirade. When she put the telephone down, she looked distressed.

"What?" Rachel asked. "Bad news?"

Ariel sighed. "Seems my job was more important to Colin than I was. No job, no Colin. The cruise plan was merely an excuse. He bailed on me."

Rachel reached across the table and pressed her arm. "I'm so sorry. But, since you two have defined your opposite values, is this not all bad?"

"You're right. So, water under the bridge, all that. Come on, let's get our act together. We catch the bus for New Orleans. Robin Street Wharf, here we come."

Rachel was quiet and Ariel sensed there was something more that needed said. "So, what is it? Have you changed your mind now that you talked me into this insanity?"

"Not at all. I have to confess to you one small item that might make you change your mind."

"Small? By whose measure? Explain, please."

Rachel looked tense. "The reason we have so often moved on different planes is that I'm different than you are. I'm attracted to you; you are very pretty and so pleasant to be with."

Ariel drummed her fingers on the table. She smiled. "Let me be the measure, then. You're allowed to be attracted to me; the feeling is mutual."

Rachel was encouraged. She shook her head, then raised her chin bravely. "I'm not who you think I am. There is an explanation, of course, but you'll have to understand that I'm not really Rachel, I'm Ralph?"

Ariel blinked. "I didn't hear you correctly."

"You would have found out sooner or later. My passport says Ralph Aranson."

Ariel was silent as she studied him. Clear skin, feminine lips, arched eyebrows, coiffeur, nice full breasts, slim waist, and gorgeous legs. "I'm missing something here," she said after a long moment. "You are a transvestite? How did you pull that off? I think it's brilliant."

Rachel seemed relieved. "It's been a lot of years. Guys made fun of me when I signed up for secretarial school type courses; bookkeeping, filing, like that. Shall I go on or do you not want to hear this?"

Ariel hunched forward, shoulders angled, face intense. "I want to hear it all. If you think I feel any less of you, as a friend, then you just don't know me."

"I was debating with myself, for a long time actually, how to tell you. I'd no idea this whole adventure was going to fall on our mutual laps. I'm delighted it did. Now I'm in the open being honest with you"

"I see no reason for a biography right now. We'll have plenty of time later. Let's get our act together and, as the saying goes, get the hell out of Dodge."

They laughed and hurriedly made plans to meet in the morning early.

At her apartment, Ariel phoned the friends and family to tell them what happened and where the cruise 'love boat' was going. She filled her suitcase and, at the last moment, threw her passport on top. Then the reality hit her. What, she thought, is Rachel, née Ralph, going to do at customs? The ad they responded to gave plenty of warning to the ship's crew so, she reasoned, there should not be a problem. Hope, she whispered to herself, is getting thin. The telephone rang.

"Ariel? It's me, Rachel. I'm all set to go. Are you OK? I can't go by my lonesome, you know. Can't afford it. So, if you are going to withdraw, now is the time."

She just sighed. "Sure, I'm OK. Are you suffering from paranoia? How do you handle the passport problems when the ID doesn't match."

"I have a document on U.S.State Dep't. stationery describing my gender and appearance. It is due to a mild psychosis, it says, and is recommended by my personal physician."

"That seems clear enough. Leave it to me to be the worrier."

"You are wonderful to have thought it through. We'll have plenty of time to catch up on details. See you in the morning."

## Chapter II Ship Ahoy!

The taxi lurched around the corner. They were in the New Orleans warehouse district being jostled on a bumpy street by a frantic cab driver whose apparent skill was in the constant use of the horn. One final rush brought them over the railroad tracks into the faded structure fronting the river. "Robin Street Wharf," the driver called out. He stopped the cab near an onramp next to the gangplank. Uniformed stevedores were milling around, waiting to assist arriving passengers.

Ariel's eyes went wide. "Wow," she said and shook Rachel's arm. "Look at that ocean-going leviathan. I expected something smaller with only a hundred passengers."

Rachel paid the driver and lined up their luggage. She glanced aft to a freight area. "See that? We're delivering cargo, that's why they have room for only a hundred. Lots of goodies going to all kinds of places. I'm getting excited. This is going to be fun."

Ariel's stomach turned into a nervous knot and she suppressed a belch. The modest booth with a table beside it was manned by the ship's purser. They stopped there, showed their tickets and the man, dressed in starched white, processed the credit cards. He handed them a paper with instructions and an orientation booklet. He only glanced at their passports. "Very good," he said, smiling. "Enjoy your trip. Keep your passports handy as you will need them if you tour ashore along the way."

Ariel's voice almost left her. "Thank you, sir," she squeaked. But, she reasoned, no problem with identification if the money man isn't interested. "I'm being silly," she said to Rachel as they followed the porter along the deck to their stateroom. "I was sure they were going to call the port police or something. Maybe the immigration."

Rachel laughed. "As long as they get their money, they ask no questions. Quit worrying."

There were two bunks, two-thirds size, each built into opposite walls of their stateroom. The porter had stacked their luggage in the center of the room and opened the two portholes to let in the scented flavor of New Orleans.

Ariel claimed her bunk, stretched out and kicked off her shoes. "This is a delight. When do we eat?"

Rachel chuckled. She couldn't restrain herself and almost laughed aloud. Her good fortune, sharing a cruise experience with Ariel, made all her resentment against Ruthie Ray disappear. Stroke of luck, she thought. She stood up and poked her head out the porthole. She had a panoramic view of the city with the rushing traffic and lumbering freight carriers. Further to her right, "forward" was the word she had to remember, she could see the tall buildings of the financial district and the upper spires of the St. Louis Cathedral. Turning around she smiled her indulgence at seeing Ariel, eyes closed, relaxing on the bunk.

Ariel had elected to wear her patchwork cardigan jacket to conserve space in her suitcase. She had left it unbuttoned and randomly shifted her shoulders so it didn't bind. The white mock turtleneck gathered at her throat. Her firm breast line was visible enough to arouse Rachel's further interest. She sat down on the bunk next to Ariel.

"Come on, let's put on some nautical clothes and scope out the dining room. Bet we get a chance to meet some interesting fellow shipmates. See how I catch on to that ship talk?" She tugged at Ariel's shoulder.

Ariel smiled at her friend's enthusiasm. "Right, Captain," she replied in good nature. "Lead me on."

"Careful, I'm more likely to lead you astray."

"Imagine. And I thought it would be the other way around."

They both laughed.

The dining room, they learned immediately, was the right place to be. All kinds of interesting people were milling around the welcome table sampling the *hors d'oeuvres*.

The bar at the end of the serving area was giving out punch and little paper cups of trail mix. The general hubbub of mixed conversation had a friendly overtone; all stress forgotten.

Rachel was in her element. The gathering of transvestites was dominant. Further, she noted, the variations in dress, the obvious levels of experience, and social mannerisms made for a panorama far out of the league at the local singles bar at home. With so much cross-dressing, Rachel considered, there could never be an identification crisis at some foreign port. If so, it was obvious, they would have been warned ahead of time. Nothing in the literature or the attitude of the ship's personnel gave any intimation of a problem.

The ship's public address system came on with a welcome from the captain and instructions for the lifeboat drill to take place as soon as they were away from the wharf.

Just as the light was fading over the old city, the *Cordova Island King* dropped the mooring lines and turned its nose, caught by the currents of the Mississippi River. The ship was a gleaming white with flowing lines, trimmed in black, and led a forming wake. A steady hum of the engines would easily lure them to sleep. The adventure was upon them.

### Chapter III The Budding Transvestite

Ariel came out of the shower with one towel wrapped around her to hide the well-formed figure from neck to mid-thigh. She had carefully stacked a smaller towel in tiers to keep her blonde hair from falling.

Rachel grinned. "Look, it's the Queen of Sheba; or is it Cleopatra reincarnated?"

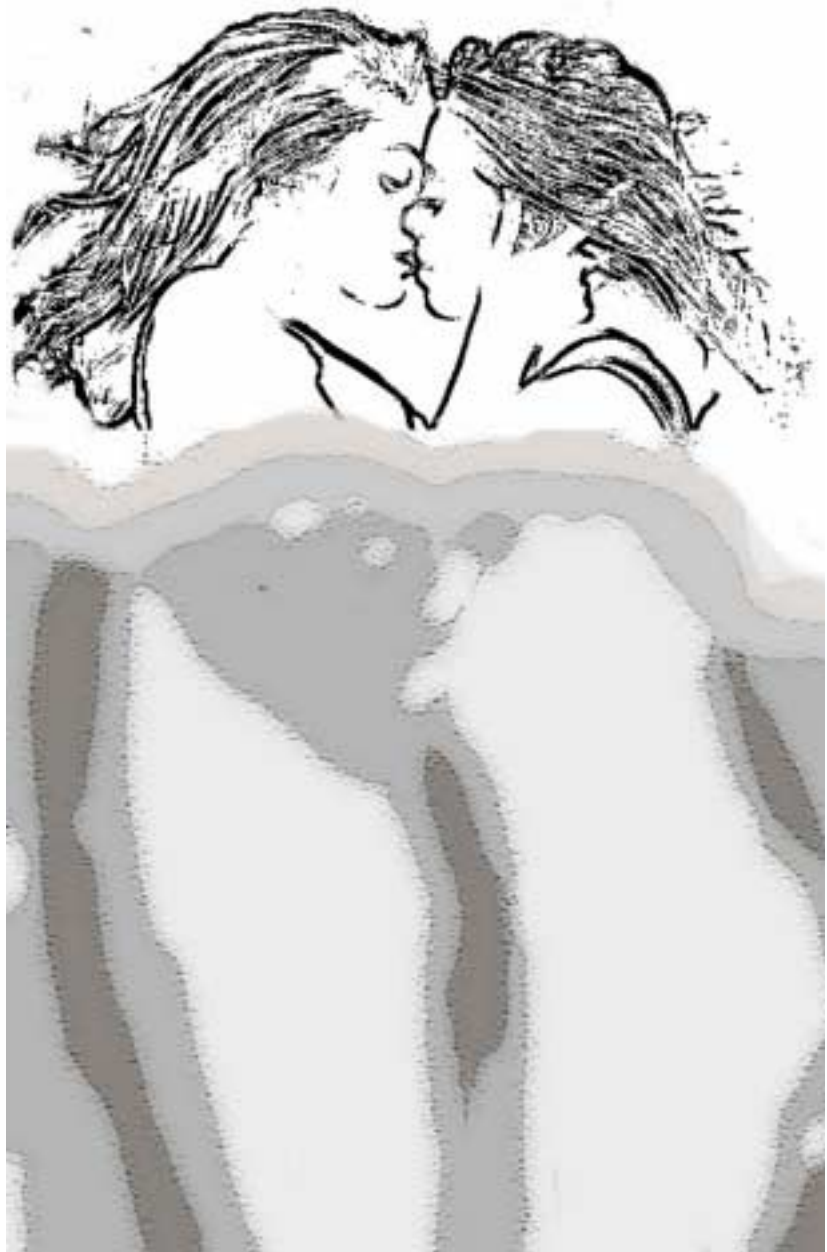
Ariel snapped back. "The only word I have for you, funny boy, is that the shower is all yours and I will not lower myself to peek."

Later, with both girls snuggled into bed, Ariel clicked off the cabin lamp. The only light making their room visible was fixed to the lifeboat stanchion just outside their porthole. "So, Rachel. How did you, being such a reasonable and practical person, get into this semi-condition you call transsexual?"

Rachel frowned. "One day soon, I hope to complete my gender reassignment. That means I'll be a real woman with all the standard equipment. Does the lifestyle I've cut out for myself fascinate you? I sure don't want you to be uncomfortable."

"This is really hard for me. I think you are a stunning woman for all the right reasons. If, beneath all this deception, you have male equipment, I'd like to know how you hide it. Is it not true that testosterone keeps your hormones in balance?"

Rachel was quiet for a long minute thinking about what to say next. She knew there would be consequences either way for making the wrong move or no move at all. She then decided what to do. If, she reasoned, Ariel was interested in sex, she would have clearly avoided such an admission. That would be the girly





thing to do, keep the unmentionable at bay. She moved across the cabin and sat on Ariel's bunk. Her satin pajama slacks touched Ariel's naked leg. "How many times," she began, "have I admired you from my workplace? You were the unattainable everyone wanted. I've no doubt you're the subject of many fantasies."

"Including Ruthie Ray?" Ariel did not try to put any distance between them.

"Maybe; why bring her up, an ex-boss?"

"Just a feeling. She really did not want to dismiss me. Often I'd catch her looking at me or going across the office to come back so she could glance at my legs."

Rachel sighed. "Not hard to understand. You're hot, Ariel. H.O.T., hot."

Ariel laughed. "Face it! That boss is a control freak and, as luck would have it, she could seduce any one of us."

"What would you have done if she came on to you?"

"Panic, I suppose. She doesn't interest me in that way. I might ask myself why she would take such a risk."

"Who does interest you 'in that way'? Boy or girl?"

"I said a minute ago this is really hard for me. I have feelings, too. You are skirting around some very basic issues that concern me."

Rachel rested one hand on Ariel's waist. She pressed there very gently. "Ariel, have you had sex with a woman?"

Ariel was direct. "No, but that doesn't mean I've not seen something attractive, even sensual, about some women. Guess I could be seduced under the right circumstances. How about you? You are so pretty, it seems to me you would easily interest one of us unsuspecting weaker souls in getting intimate."

"Right now I'm trying to make you realize how very much I'd like to have sex with you."

"That sounds gross, like a teenage declaring he can perform sexually if just his acne would clear up."

"You aren't pulling away from me, are you?"

"Nor am I offering any intimacy. Can you answer some questions?"

"Yes, anything you wish."

"Start at the physical beginning. How do you hide your genitals? How can you have such elegant looking breasts, soft skin, lustrous hair, sexy legs? What exactly is a gender reassignment and how do you go about it?"

Rachel laughed. "First item. I've known for many years that I'm a girl trapped in a guy's body. My attitude is definitely bi-sexual because I'm aroused by a pretty girl as well as some guys who, to me, seem attractive. I'm told that after my surgery, I will settle on one sex to express myself."

"And which one is that? Or, do you flip a coin every morning to find out who is on the admiration list that day?"

“Don’t be sassy. Like the 98-year old woman who was asked at what age one might lose interest in sex. She answered, “I’ll let you know.” My time will come, soon I hope. Meanwhile, I have you beside me, as beautiful as you are, in this bed. That in itself is blowing my mind.”

“Go on; what’s next. If I peek, what will I see?”

“Oh, that. Most transvestites wear what’s known as a pussy-gaff. It’s like a specialized jock-strap that holds the genitals back between the legs. Even tight fitting slacks are possible. I take it off when I relax in the evening or to go to sleep. Everything works OK until I get an erection and it has no place to go. Mother nature didn’t foresee that happening.”

His conversation was so glib, Ariel laughed. “You joke about yourself. You take drugs to enhance the breasts, right? Doesn’t that have an adverse effect?”

“You are quick. Yes, continued hormonal drug therapy, finasteride is the name of one, tends to reduce the male sex organs but they don’t disappear entirely. You can imagine how awkward that would be.”

“That’s what I’m trying to do, imagine. What do you do if you’re with a girl who is willing? For example, a girl not aware that you have masculine capabilities?”

“First I have to really like a girl before I try anything. Those few I’ve dated were more interested in me giving them satisfaction than the other way around. I go down on a girl and with a skill born of minimal experience, work her to orgasm. Don’t ask me for any references.”

Ariel grinned. “You amaze me. How can you joke about those girls?”

“Because they only exist in my imagination. I’ve no experience. That’s why I’m trying to make light of your questions.”

“The word is virgin. You are cute. If you haven’t had a girl, how about a guy? Anything of that nature I should know?”

“Dear love, I’m not sure there’s anything you should know about. You already have too much info to process.”

She looked at her, eye-to-eye, for a long moment. “You’re right. Kiss me goodnight, please. There is so much to think about.”

Rachel leaned closer and brushed her forehead with her lips. “Just because we are on the edge of opportunity here, doesn’t mean we are obligated to each other in any way.”

“I agree but there is one thing you haven’t considered.” She raised her chin and leaned forward. Their lips met in a warm and gentle kiss. “I want you, too,” she whispered.

## Chapter IV Inevitable Confusion

Ariel was up early the next morning to watch the sun come up to bring colors to the Gulf waters. She was just as happy that Rachel was sleeping late because it gave her a chance to think through the discussion of the previous evening.

She began by defining what it was that so attracted her to Rachel. She did concede that her feeling for the guy/girl had deepened considerably since her boyfriend Colin's rejection. She had to evaluate how strong a bond could be formed being on the rebound from a love connection not strong enough to endure in the first place. Rachel, she thought collecting all the interest and charm she felt, was the most fascinating person she'd ever met. Going all the way back to the company mailroom, Rachel was more than a pretty girl who worked there. She had a devil-may-care attitude coupled with a sharp sense of humor that made her popular. For Ariel, Rachel didn't show her beguiling side until they were fired and, as destiny would have it, thrown together by a common problem. Two impulsive girls, unemployed, running off in a fetish adventure before settling down to the reality of making a living and paying the rent.

And Rachel being really Ralph? How does that play out? The questions nagged her. She asked herself, "Do I really care?" Doesn't everyone have a weakness they have to come to terms with? The Greeks wrote plays about tragedy stemming from a weakness. How was this any different? Tragedy? So, she concluded, that's the key to my concern. What will our tragedy be? Will we both need to build a serious, long term relationship, only to learn to our dismay that it just will not work? The odd feeling, like an incomplete sentence steeped in ambiguity, forced her to make a decision. Let the cruise go on, let us enjoy each other, explore the possibilities and take one step at a time, one day at a time. "Yes," she whispered as if talking to the audience of white caps spread out like a carpet in front of her. "We'll wait and see."

She felt arms around her but didn't turn to look. "Who is it?" she asked. Her voice was tempered with concern but sparked with a note of amusement.

"Rachel," was the answer. "I want to tell you about something I saw."

"Then do," she said turning to face the taller girl.

Ariel touched Rachel's shoulder lightly with her fingertips, then looked up. She searched until her gaze settled on Rachel's lips. The attraction was indelible. "There are a lot of our fellow passengers who cross-dress. Are you shocked?" Rachel asked.

She giggled. "Not at all."

"I signed us up at the Fantail Lounge for the dance competition tonight. We can enter together. That's no guarantee we'd end up that way, of course."

Ariel smiled. "Now, that's progress. We started with nothing, let my feeble story unfold, grabbed a maybe from the box of hope, and now the dismiss-miss dance."

Rachel hugged her. "I'm told the winner receives a bottle of chilled champagne for their stateroom. If both winners happen to be in the same room, like we are, everyone assigned to their dining table gets champagne as well. Neat, huh?"

Ariel was playful. "I would think a toss on the mattress with that cute room steward might be more appropriate."

"Maybe but, if I see the action correctly, we'll have to get in line. Think of that, a hundred people on the cruise all come down with the same strain of the clap."

They both laughed.