



Reluctant Press presents:

JACKY

Dee Dee Perri



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Jacky

By Dee Dee Perri

Chapter 1

Grandma Jacobs gave birth to her one and only son only months before my Mom had me. For Grandma it was the culmination of twenty years of trying to make a boy. Grandpa finally had his heir and the farm, which had been in the Jacobs' name for over one hundred years, would continue under a Jacobs. Poor Uncle Charles, he had eight older sisters, my mother being the eldest, and no brothers. And Grandpa lived only long enough to see his male heir born. A heart attack took him at the young age of fifty-two less than a month later. As the baby and the only male in the household, Charlie never suffered from a lack of attention, or love.

Grandpa Jacobs would have turned over in his grave had he known what happened next to his beloved farm. At first Grandma began to sell off the acreage a little at a time. That land which was closest to the nearby town of Falling Brook bloomed into a small tract of modest homes for even small Midwestern towns in the nineteen-fifties were beginning to create the nucleus of what later would be called suburbs. Additional land was leased by Grandma to a developer who built a shopping center complete with a Kroger's grocery store, a bowling alley and even a drive-in theater. Grandma made sure that she got a piece of that new wealth flowing out of the town. Several new streets soon followed, Jacobs Street was one, and then a whole lot of new homes rose like mushrooms across what had been productive fields. By the time Charlie was ten years old, little remained of the six hundred acres other than the big, square boxy two story Midwestern farm house. The barn remained but it was unused. Grandma was rich and Grandpa's precious farm was history.

At eighteen, Charlie received a brand new fifty-seven Ford. The glowing new car was pink and black and it had an awesome V-eight engine. White buck shoes with their distinctive pink soles and bright pink nylon shirts were 'in' for men along with tight black

slacks. So was rock and roll, Elvis, and slicked back hair loaded with gel to keep the 'ducks' in place. And Charlie had it all.

My circumstances couldn't have been more different. Mom had married a man without social standing or property. Indeed Mom had married Dad very much against Grandma Jacobs wishes and was never really forgiven for that decision. Dad got a job in one of the many factories that bloomed after the war. So I was raised in the industrial city of Akron, more than a hundred miles from Grandma's 'farm', in a little post-war house built on the wrong side of the tracks. At eighteen, my hair looked like what they gave the draftees when first inducted into the service, a butch: no white bucks or pink shirts. Heck in my neighborhood, clothes like that could earn a guy a fat lip and a broken nose. Not that 'pink' said you were a 'homo', pink was 'in' back then, but because the guys in my neighborhood hated those with money and pretensions. Anyhow you would think Charlie and I would have nothing in common. You couldn't have been more wrong.

Growing up I spent most of my summers at Grandma's. While Grandma had yet to forgive my Mom and never accepted my Dad, I was her only Grandson. So for a few months each year, I received that same, almost overwhelming attention that Charlie had been receiving all his life. There were woods to roam in, creeks to play by and, well, Charlie was as hungry for male companionship as I was for the good life. He and I became the best of friends, more like brothers even though he was of a different generation we were of the same age and temperament.

It was the summer of my eighteenth year, I would be a senior in high school come Fall and I was at the threshold of my manhood when Mom and I arrived at Grandma's. Charlie and the three girls still living at home came out to greet us. Grandma wasn't there. She was ill, something was terribly wrong.

I could see it in Grandma's face especially in her eyes when we were finally led to her bedroom in the rear of the house. The windows were heavily draped and the room was dark and stuffy. She'd aged greatly since I'd seen her last. She'd always been remarkably full of life and, almost, youthful. She and Mom could have been sisters even though Mom was only thirty-six at that time. Now she looked closer to a hundred. Her hair was thin like that of an old man, her scalp visible underneath, her skin translucent and discolored with age spots and an army of warts had marched across her flesh since I saw her last. In that day and age, I knew what it was, cancer. It was what old people died of back then. She motioned for me to come forward and then she kissed me on both cheeks and then finally on my mouth. That made me very uncomfortable.

She reached up and took my face in her hands even as I was pulling back. One of her nails dug into my right cheek. It must have pierced the skin, for there was blood later. But that was not what captured my attention. A powerful surge of something electrical and simultaneously erotic erupted at that damaged point on my cheek. My cheek and her finger were joined into a single entity like lovers achieving climax. My whole body began to tremble and shake uncontrollably as if I was in terror and yet it wasn't terror. It was a tidal wave of unimaginable power and I was the surfer riding that wave. In an instant I could be destroyed and yet I was exhilarated. It was like riding the grandest roller coaster ever built, the kind of terror that brings a kid back time and time again. I heard my mother's

voice as if she were far away. She was screaming, the sound was equal parts rage and despair.

I was thrown to the floor, that thrilling erotic connection was now broken, I returned to a confusing here and now. Above me loomed my Mom who had apparently pulled me away. Hands on her hips she stepped over my body and stood glaring down at her mother. "Leave us," she said to me.

Aunt June, the youngest of the sisters, gathered me in her arms as I stumbled from the bedroom. It was like I'd been hit by a train and yet there was no noticeable wound other than that small scratch on my cheek. Nor was I in pain. I was still suffering the after effects of the most fantastic ride of my life: the odd mixture of 'near' terror and sexual stimulation. I reached up and touched my cheek as if to still the reverberations from that event. My hand came away bloody.

June was probably all of nineteen and very attractive. "Oh my, Jack, what happened?" I said nothing; I hadn't the foggiest idea, leastwise none that made any sense, as her arm went around my shoulder. She led me into the bathroom and began to dampen a wash cloth. "Let's clean that up," she said as she held the cool, wet cloth to my cheek. Her eyes were wide and full of concern. Finally, after repeated dabs of the now bloody cloth, she pressed and held it against the wound. "Now what happened in there?"

Before I could answer, the energy I'd experience with Grandma bloomed back into life from my cheek through the wet cloth and into June's hand. It wasn't as powerful perhaps because of the cloth, but far more purely erotic. June's eyes, already wide with concern, grew wider still and for a few profound moments she and I shared something we were never meant to share. I'm not sure either of us could have voluntarily ended that unnatural connection. It was Charlie that saved us. "Hey! Sorry," he said having thrown open the door knocking June's hand away even as she and I fell into a confused heap on the floor. "You guys all right?"

My Aunt June and I exchanged a glance. I think we were both mortified, she probably more than me. I could see in her face that she was searching for something to say that would make the last few moments go away and finally found something innocuous. "Ah-there's fresh apple pie in the kitchen." Relief bloomed in her face as Charlie turned and started to leave.

"Cool. You coming, Jack?"

"Yeah," I said as I untangled myself from June. I was all too conscious of her as a woman. And that momentary glance she gave me confirmed that lingering yet forbidden urge.

Later, while in the kitchen with Charlie and June, I heard their voices. Grandma might be on the very brink of death, but she still had sufficient strength to spew out a diatribe of shrill words. I was unable to make out most of what she said but the anger was evident. My mother's voice wasn't as loud but in it I could hear outrage and caustic anger. Charlie finished his last bite of fresh apple pie and then, still chewing, nodded for me to follow him. I think the fight between my Mom and his mother bothered him more than he liked to admit.

I looked at June and she returned my gaze. I think she wanted to talk to me about what had happened. Her look made me uneasy for there was something in her eyes that shouldn't be there. Like Eve after tasting the apple. For me, of course, it wasn't just that moment June and I had shared, there was also that traumatic event with Grandma. I don't think I was ready to deal with either experience. It was easy enough to imagine thinking of June as a sexual object, but certainly not Grandma. I cringed at the remembrance of the ancient old woman. "Wait up Charlie, I'm coming."



What had happened to me today was simply unthinkable: Grandma and Aunt June. It was, as they say in the Bible, 'unclean'. I always thought that sin was about things you wanted to do but shouldn't. This couldn't have been sinful by the simple logic that I had no control over what had happened. Although, looking back, had I chosen to do 'it' with June, which I hadn't, but if I had, that would have been a sin. An eighteen year old has a tremendous capacity for erotic activity even if, by and large, that activity existed at the level of fantasy powering wet dreams and masturbatory images.

Charlie and I drove around and talked for most of the afternoon. At first it was mostly about his Mom. Of course he was concerned for her. It wasn't exactly like it had happened over night, but in the last few months she'd begun to change. At first it was mostly mental stuff, forgetting where she was or why was she doing, well, whatever. The onset of senility was also the onset of emotionally instabilities and then, finally, the rapid erosion of her physical being. She'd not once gone to see her doctor and had adamantly refused even to consider doing so. "Jack, there are more than a few cards missing from her deck," he concluded. It was obvious that Charlie had accepted the fact that he was going to lose his Mom. It was the 'why' that bothered him so. She was young, fifty-seven and yet she now seemed so very old.

I wanted to tell Charlie the truth or at least as much of the truth as I knew which wasn't nearly enough to talk about. Flying saucers and aliens were very much in the public consciousness back then. Perhaps Grandma was an alien. Maybe there was some kind of spiritual force in the house, like a ghost, and, maybe Grandma was as much a victim as I was. That idea actually made me feel better for a moment until I remembered Aunt June. And nobody had been hurt, right? Nothing really had happened. Maybe it was all in my mind. That last thought went down like a brick to my stomach.

Eventually, as the shadows lengthened, he let me drive his new car. Teenagers have always been peer centered. We stopped at an A&W Root Beer stand at the edge of town. That stand was the central hub of Charlie's social existence and of every other kid in town. If there was a pecking order in his high school, he'd be nearly at the top, he certainly was here at this teenage hangout. The absence of a varsity jacket was readily overwhelmed by the existence of his new wheels. Most of the guys there were driving their Dad's auto or some beat up piece of junk. While his money might earn him some disfavor among the males, that visible wealth was the very essence of a sexual pheromone for the teenage females, the latter of which were present in great numbers at the stand as twilight gathered.

That Charlie was handsome and well dressed only made him all the more significant to those nubile creatures.

Charlie was sexually experienced, though exactly what that meant back then was questionable. Before birth control pills, girls were a lot more careful about doing 'it'. Nor had the sexual revolution happened yet, the cost of 'getting' pregnant was typically a social event that could shatter a girl's standing especially in a small Midwestern town. And the female carried the full weight of that social transgression back then. The dual standard was very much in place. The fifties culture was heady with sexuality, with the likes of Marilyn Monroe on the silver screen and sharply pointed bras under tight sweaters and appliances designed to shape the underlying figure regardless of a female's natural form but that sexuality was, in actuality, highly repressed.

The contrast between Charlie and me couldn't have been greater, especially in the area of 'sowing wild oats'. In my world, I was all but invisible to the opposite sex. I'd yet to get beyond first base back home in Akron. It was obvious however, that simply being with Charlie raised my social position, at least here in Falling Brook, to where reaching second or third base seemed entirely possible. More than one girl who I would naturally assume to be out of my league checked me out. One even caught and held my gaze for a brief instant before blushing and looking away. Had it not been for the events of this morning, I might have been looking forward to the possibilities of this summer.



Mom was waiting for me when we finally got back. She stood in the glare from the headlights on Charlie's car looking at first relieved and then impatient as we pulled up. Her arms were crossed under her breasts. She turned and looked back at the porch. "I'd like some time with my son. Alone," she added.

On the porch and under the light of a single bare bulb sat Grandma and my three Aunts who were still living here. For a moment it looked as if Charlie assumed that 'alone' didn't include him but a glance from my Mom told him otherwise. As they filed inside, my heart flared momentarily as I exchanged eye contact with Grandma. It was the kind of look I'd seen Mom give my Dad from time to time. It was not a grandmotherly message. June's gaze was even more startling, for stark hunger was now evident. Carnality had no place in those sweet eyes, and yet it was there. "You hungry?"

"Huh?" I said looking at my mother as if she'd read my mind. "Ah- no. Charlie and I ate in town."

I followed her up onto the porch. She sat down on the swing and nodded toward the railing where I could sit. I sat down across from her, face to face. We sat there for two or three minutes. The metal-on-metal sound of the supporting hook and the chain that held up the swing my mother was now gliding upon, the sound of crickets that filled the night, and the occasional breeze that stirred the leaves of the oak tree that guarded the front of the house but nothing else. Finally I couldn't take it any longer, "Is Grandma an alien? I mean like flying saucers and stuff?"

"Heavens no Jack. More like a witch."

"Huh?" I sat up straighter. "A witch?"

"I said, more like a witch, not that she is one. Not just her, all of us." She had my full attention now. "I don't think there have ever been witches Jack, not like in the fairytales or in Hollywood movies. No hocus-pocus magic, no flying on broomsticks. None of the neat stuff you might say."

"What then?"

"It goes back long before written history, before churches, before even agriculture. When men and women and children sat around a fire listening to the night like we are doing right now, they were there."

"Who?"

"Women, mostly the old ones who had spent a life time surviving and learning: Healers, using what was available, roots and herbs, strange concoctions created mostly by trial and error to keep a sick child alive, to heal a wounded hunter. Remembering what worked and what failed. They passed on that knowledge from mother to daughter, across tens of thousands of years, from camp fires to medieval cities. Awareness that women, some women at least, possessed such powers was the very foundation of the witch in the fairytale. Since their work was as much metaphysical and spiritual as it was medical, they drew the unrelenting hatred and fear of men. Males created organizations to sustain their power over women since brute force wasn't always enough. But principally women were opposed by the religious powers of whatever society existed, all under male authority of course. Worship of the Devil was certainly a modern Christian myth used to isolate and hopefully destroy a woman's belief in her natural powers."

"More like witch-doctors?"

My Mom laughed, "If you like." She became more serious. "Most of the old knowledge has been lost. Most women have no resident belief in their special nature, males have largely won the contest. A few, your grandmother being one, has retained some of the ancient feminine knowledge. And the male myths were not entirely false. Some of that power could be used for the benefit of the user even if it causes great discomfort, even harm, to others."

"What did she do?" I asked. "To me."

Mom waved her hand as if to say later. "She was dying and she was afraid of death."

"She's not dying now?"

Mom held out her hand and made a fist. "This is your inner soul, the natural feminine." She looked at me, "We all have an inner feminine soul, even you." Mom covered her fist with her other hand. "Unlike me or your Aunts, you also have an outer soul, its male. You following me so far?" I nodded. She lifted her little finger away from the hand covering the fist she'd formed. "This is what your Grandmother did this morning. She peeled away a bit of the outer soul from you and took it for herself."

"Why?"

"To heal herself. She couldn't peel away part of my soul without destroying me and it would do her no good anyhow. Only you and Charles could have saved her, you are both

males and of her blood. She should have asked me Jack." I looked at her. "I would have said no and I'm she knew that. If she were to take one, it should have been Charles, her own son."

"Oh," I said softly. "Why?"

"Because that's why she had him."

"Huh?"

"Eight daughters, Jack? She didn't have nine children because she was inordinately fond of children or in love with large families. She would have stopped as soon as she had a son." She looked at me, carefully. "Your grandmother is very old. I can't even guess how old. Centuries? Easily. And she's had many children by many men. She almost died because she hadn't been able to create a male blood relative soon enough in this period of her long, long life. Trust me, this isn't the first time she'd done this. She took the old knowledge and corrupted it and herself. Endless life is a heady promise. I can't say that I've been unaffected Jack. I can't say that."

A cold chill ran up my spine. "Am I going to die Mom?" She didn't respond. "MOM?" She stood up and walked to the edge of the porch. She wrapped her chest with her arms as if she were cold but the night was warm and humid. "MOM?" I was becoming terrified.

"Die?" She laughed. "You are the very essence of life for her and my sisters. They would feed from your soul until it was utterly empty and then refill it to feed again, more like vampires than harpies. As they draw down your male essence you will become feminine and when the last drop is drawn, you will be a woman-like creature ever seeking male essence, a hollow vessel to be filled only to be tapped for their need." She reached out as if to touch me, "They shall not have you my son. Take the car, the keys are already in the ignition, and go back to your father. I will return as soon as things are done here."

"Done?"

"Charles must serve as their vessel for they will have one now. Mom demands it to complete her feeding and the girls must surely hunger for it, that essence, your essence, it lingers in the air and acts on us like blood in the water to a shark."

"That's horrible. You too, Mom?"

She raised her eyebrow. There was that look I'd seen in June's eyes, that carnal hunger grown ripe. Perhaps that is why she'd avoided coming close to me. She spread open her arms, "Stay and I cannot save you. Stay and I will feed on you as one of them."

"But Uncle Charlie..."

"Your essence is still leaking out Jack, its driving me half crazy. Go... or stay. Now."

~oOo~

Dad was sitting in front of our new color TV when I got home. It was the news and in black and white. There wasn't much programming in color yet. I told him Grandma was sick and Mom had stayed behind. That seemed to satisfy him.

I told him I needed to call Mom and let her know I was safe. "Just don't talk long." He warned me. It was a long distance phone call and back then Ma Bell took her share of blood. Anyhow, it was a short and very strange call. My Mom seemed agitated, even distracted. Truth, I felt like I was talking to some ghoul who'd come to the front door asking for some brains. Blood in the water, that's what she'd said on the porch. Finally I got to the real question in my mind, "Mom, what's going to happen to Charlie?"

"It's already done."

"Done? What?"

"I already told you Jack. Eventually he'll be mostly like a girl, a woman."

"Oh."

"Well not really."

"Not really what Mom? Can I talk to him?" I looked up. Dad took the phone from my hand.

I retreated up to my room. Even from here I could hear my Dad on the phone. One tended to talk louder on a long distance call back then. There was nothing from Dad's side of the conversation that suggested a major event had happened. So Mom was keeping mum. I went into the bathroom and started to get ready for bed. I pulled back the band aid to examine the wound that had nearly destroyed my life. There was no wound. Instead there was a vivid mole: black like midnight, round and about the size of a number two pencil lead and an inch down from the top of my cheek and directly below my right eye. And it wasn't above the surface like a proper mole. It looked painted on, like a beauty spot some women applied to their face. I rubbed at it. It wasn't paint and it wasn't a good idea to do so. I got a jolt of erotic stimulation that left my face flush and my heart racing. I wondered if Charlie had a mole like that now. Poor Charlie must be going crazy at this very moment. Like a girl? I wonder what that meant.

A few minutes later, I was lying in bed staring up at the ceiling. Light leaked in from the street lamp outside, just a pale slash of brightness against the dark gloom. There was a lot to think about. How bad could it be? I mean Mom was female and she didn't mind. Charlie could adjust, right? What did she mean like a girl though? I mean you either were or you were not, right? I jerked upright. My heart raced. "One plus one equals three?"

You have to understand, back in the late fifties there were gays, right? Homosexuals have been around at least since recorded history and probably a week after Adam and Eve got created, if you get my drift. But in the fifties we didn't have 'gays' or gay rights, we had the so called blue laws. You see it was a crime in many states if not to be a homosexual it was a crime to practice homosexuality. One could go to prison and many did, for years. Homosexuality was produced by people who made bad choices, evil, sinful decisions. They were the very scum of the earth. Each and every one of them were, at heart: child molesters, predators, and biblical monsters. Did I believe that, you bet ya.

I was a product of a society that had no concept of a homosexual as anything but a moral slime bucket. While it was not a crime to be homosexual, it was also not a crime to victimize such creatures either to show them the error of their ways or simply to pass judgment and execution on the spot. Hitler systematically murdered homosexuals as he

did other 'undesirables', by the tens and hundreds of thousands. Was this holocaust ever formally recognized? Never. Why? Because most Americans I knew growing up would have applauded the act so long as they didn't have to watch.

Eventually Charlie would be some homo-predator lurking in restrooms and watching men's pricks as they urinated. In nineteen fifty-seven to an eighteen year old, this might surely be worse than death. How could my Grandma do this to her own son? Hell's bells, she'd been willing to do it to me. Where was the love? My essence was 'leaking out', right? In time would I become feminine, a Nancy? Homosexual? Even the slight possibility was devastating.



I had a huge amount of empty time on my hands. Dad was gone all day at work. I could have laid around watching TV, since there was no school. Most of my friends during the school year weren't guys I'd associated with during the summer, not until this year. I knew a lot of them got jobs, some, the worst, hung out and got into trouble. Trouble mostly meant getting beer illegally, getting drunk and eventually getting into a fight. Sometimes they found a girl that was willing. Sometimes it was just a whore if they had the money. This wasn't the suburbs or the better part of town. This was just the kind of place a fag could get stomped to death. I was of three or four minds of what to do. Hide here at home and go slowly crazy waiting for the new me or what?

I spent the better part of the next three days at the public library reading about homosexuality. Actually most of the 'good' stuff was under lock and key. Aside from the fact that I'd be embarrassed to ask for such a book, I wasn't old enough, twenty-one was the legal age for booze and access to restricted books. What I learned was little to nothing. Certainly I learned that a lot of major historical people had been either homosexual or had been at least inclined in that direction. There were even periods in history in which such people were tolerated. There was a Royal Governor in colonial times that openly wore women's clothing. I discovered a new term, transvestism and I was off and running again.

By the end of the third day, I'd exhausted my interest in the library. I knew that some homosexuals attempted to 'pass' as female but, much to my surprise, most 'passed' very well as ordinary men, so much for common beliefs. One could be a raving homo and have the body of a weight lifter. What the Hell was that all about?

It was on the fourth day, just after Dad went to work that Mom returned. Actually, it was Mom driving Grandma's big Cadillac. I think I was ready to pee my pants and more than a little inclined to shoot out the front door as she entered. I couldn't get that look she'd given me out of my mind. It was scary stuff.

"Jack, where are you?"

I stood there still not sure what to do. Finally I said, "Here." And then I walked toward the back of the house. "Mom?"

Her eyes brightened, "It's ok, now." She spayed wide her arms inviting a hug.

One can run only so long and her eyes looked normal. In fact, I stopped and took her image in. She looked, great. Young like I'd never know her. Trim, bright eyed and, "What happened to you?"

She turned, showing off her figure. "Richard is going to love me like this, don't you think?"

"Yeah," I said, now very leery. "So what happened Mom?"

"When Charlie found out exactly what happened, he felt responsible."

"Responsible?"

"It should have been him, not you. Anyhow, Grandmother is fit as a fiddle and looks hardly more than eighteen herself." She looked at me as if seeking an apology, "There was no sense wasting it," she said. "Under the present conditions it wouldn't be wise for you to return this summer. I'm really sorry, Jack. I know how much you enjoyed going there..." She leaned forward and looked at my mole. "Oh, my."

"Oh my what?" I said in some alarm.

"Oh." She looked distracted. "It's... nothing."

"And Charlie?" I asked. "How is he?"

"We were all pleasantly surprised Jack. Things worked out better than anyone of us thought they could. Charlie's just fine. He came with me."

"Charlie? Where?"

"In the back yard I suppose."

I started past her and she grabbed my arm. "Don't be too shocked at what you see and not too judgmental, ok? Charlie's adjusting."

"Is he ah- homosexual?"

"Oh lord." She said rolling her eyes.

"Well?"

"I have no idea what that means Jack, nor, I suspect, do you." She paused, "Go out and say hi to Charlie and don't make a big deal out of it, please?"

Chapter 2

One has to go back to that first moment that Grandma began to rip my male essence from my body. That thrilling 'Hell Ride' and awesome exhilaration, in modern technical language, suggests the release of copious quantities of endorphins and a cornucopia of synaptic transmitters in both my brain and probably, eventually, in Grandma's. Even without the erotic components that soon followed, one has the conditions for a potent addictive experience, something like cocaine and speed feed directly to the brain. The erotic aspect was more like reaching climax or at least near climax while shooting down a roller coaster 'drop' which suggests extensive limbic activity. While the first phase was clearly related to the familiar addiction cycle, the latter was ideal for traditional conditioning. One has to remember that Grandma Ester was but the principle recipient of Charlie's essence. They followed, but not necessarily in order: my mother Carol, Mary, Jean, May, Betty,

April, Kathy, and last but not least June. One might be concerned what that experience might do to any of them, but to Charlie, there could be no doubt he would be profoundly influenced. Of course I didn't know that then. I was eighteen and hadn't even started my senior year in high school. Besides, it was nineteen-fifty-seven and neuro-science was just beginning to explore such issues.

According to Grandma, soul shapes physical form and not the other way around. No soul is entirely male or female. That mix of male and female is seen even in the most basic aspects of endocrinology. Male sex hormones provide the primary driving force for both men and women. It gives their sexuality direction and focus. Charlie and I, with our typical male segregated male-female layers, we could, under the right conditions, become far more perfectly female than one would normally encounter. In some ways the results would be all that more startling given that our cognitive programming, our minds so to speak, would still reflect knowledge, view point and awareness appropriate to a eighteen year old male of this era. I would find Charlie as incomprehensible as he found himself. Note the term 'he', for if there is a use for personal pronouns it must lie in that pin point of personal self awareness.

"Charlie?" I called out as I walked out of the back door into that small yard. To my left, in the driveway, sat that huge Cadillac. It was unoccupied. "Charlie?" I called out again. The yard was empty and then I saw movement out of the corner of my eye. Someone was behind the Maple tree. "Hey," I said softly as I began walking that way. "It's just me Charlie."

An improbable little girl voice answered. "I... I know. C... Could we just talk first, huh?"

I stopped. "Sure, ok. Ah- Mom says you're doing just fine. Are you fine, Charlie?" I already knew the answer to that question. Charlie wasn't 'fine' at all. "I'm setting down now Charlie, right here on the lawn." I eased down and waited and waited. I wasn't good at that. "Mom says you made Grandma well."

"Uh-huh."

"Gosh Charlie. I feel bad about this. Since she started with me, had I not left..." I didn't know where I was going with this. I doubt very much that I would have been willing to do what he did. "I think you were pretty brave." Which was dumb. But I couldn't say that. What I should have said was that Grandma was a monster. There was still no response. "Mom says that in time I could be just like you if I'm not careful. My 'stuff' is still leaking out." I saw the corner of Charlie's head peeking around the tree trunk but only for a moment and what I saw wasn't Charlie.

"You don't look any different Jack." There was curiosity in that spunky little girl voice. And then the head appeared fully exposed from behind that tree trunk. Charlie's dark reddish brown hair had been cut into a short but feminine pattern. Bangs in front, parted in the middle and, curls had replaced the normally swept back 'ducks', a whole head full of tight little curls. There had been an obvious attempt to feminize his hair but there had been too little hair to do an adequate job. And then Charlie's head disappeared again behind that tree. And I began to laugh. Perhaps it was simply the need to release the tension that had built up inside me but I think not. Tears streamed down my cheeks as I fell backward.

I tried to speak but all that came out was something like 'hubb-ah baa,' and other discourteous noises as I rolled from side to side.

"Jaaaaack stop it!" she half screamed.

"Charlie," I said now that I was back on my knees with my hands thrown forward supporting my weight. "it's just..." And I lost it again. Finally, between 'hee hees' and snorts, I started singing the only song that I could have sung. "M—I-C—K—E—Y—m-o-u-s-e."

Charlie rushed around from behind the tree, his face in a grimace and his fists clenched as he were going to attack me. A tiny bearcat, a peewee with knockers. Heavy, dark eyebrows over brown eyes and a square chin but not overly so. Mediterranean ancestry written in every detail: Annette Funicello.

"Gosh, you're so mean Jack." I could hear him take a big breath. "I'm so, messed up Jack. You can't imagine just how crazy this has been for me. I feel like I dreamed of eating a big juicy hamburger only to discover I was eating myself." He was talking faster now, "I look in the mirror and I want her, you know, real bad. But I can't have her because..." He was wearing one of his sister's angora sweaters, in spite of the warmth of that summer day, and a full skirt that came down to a few inches above his ankle, a wide black belt and black and white saddle shoes. Prominently presented were a set of breasts that formed perfect cones under the soft, fur like angora. His little girl voice shrilled, "And I don't want you to say how pretty I am Jack. I swear I'll punch you if you do." He was trembling all over. "THIS-ISN'T-ME!" His arms went up and covered those breasts as his face brightened into a huge blush and his eyes grew wild. And then he was gone again behind that tree.

