

# McCLOUD'S DAUGHTER



**Delphinia Longstreet**



A "New Woman" Novel



## **Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers**

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# **M<sup>c</sup>CLOUD'S DAUGHTER**

**By Delphinia Longstreet**

Maxwell “Big Mack” McCloud glared at his empty whiskey glass, wondering when it had gone dry. Why, he’d only had a couple of drinks from the damned bottle, which he vaguely remembered as the second (or was it the third?) (Damned if he could remember!) bottle since he had entered the bar. Slowly, deliberately, he lifted the almost empty bottle in both hands and tried to pour what was left into his glass, his shaky hands managing to spill much of it.

“Hey, bar keep!” he bellowed. “Bring me uh nother bottle uh Irish Whuskey!”

The barman came over to Big Mack’s table. “Don’t you think you’ve had enough?” he asked.

“When I fall offa the damned bar stool, then I’ll have had enough!” Big Mack roared.

I’m sorry, Mr. McCloud, but according to the Law and the management, I am not allowed to serve you any more liquor. How about a big cuppa strong coffee to clear away those cobwebs instead?” the man asked quietly, trying to avoid a fight.

“Ah h’ain’t drunk!” Big Mack roared. “Why, I only had a coupla drinks outta that bottle! Yuh shorted me! You only brung me a part filled bottle!” he accused drunkenly.

"Now, Mr. McCloud, you know I'd never do such a thing!" the barman retorted, stung to the quick. "Come on, have some coffee and take a nap in the back room, then I'll give you another bottle. OK?"

"Not by a damn sight! I want it now, dammit!" the drunken man roared.

"Excuse me," a soft, cultured, velvety voice interrupted, "Let me handle this, please?"

"Yes, Ma'am," the barman agreed, stepping aside.

"Who'n in Hell're you?" Big Mack roared. "Butt out, sister, afore I deck yuh!" he threatened.

"I doubt you could deck a horse fly in your condition!" the woman sneered.

Big Mack stared at her, stunned. "Why you!" The alcohol had taken hold of him and he swung his big fist at her! She dodged his effort easily, grabbed his arm, twisted and Big Mack found himself slammed down onto the chair, his face on the table before he knew what was happening.

Stunned, he gazed up at her through blood shot eyes and decided he'd better sit still and listen.

"Thanks, Ma'am, he ain't usually like this," the barman hurried over to assist. "Think you'll be all right with him like this?"

"I've handled bigger drunks than him when I was on shore patrol in Hawaii!" she grinned.

"Yes, Ma'am!" The barman backed away warily as the woman slid into the booth and waited for Big Mack to straighten himself up and settle himself on the other side.

"You all done being an asshole?" she asked gently.

"Where the Hell did you learn that move?" he asked, a new respect in his voice.

"Like I told the barman, I was a Green Marine shore patrolman in Hawaii for several years," she explained. "Stoned drunks like you are a dime a dozen there and I've put more than one behind bars."

"Holy shit!" he stared at her blearily.

"Indeed," she agreed.

"I needa drink!" he blustered.

"No, what you need is to crawl out of your bottle and face life again. She's gone and she will never come back, but we can help you cope with your loss."

"Bull!" he exploded angrily. "My li'l girl's dead and that's that. So, whyn't yuh jus' go 'way 'n' leave me to my mystery?" he slurred his words.

"Sorry, but I can't do that," she continued. "What I can do is help you find a satisfactory solution to your problem that is guaranteed to make you smile with happiness again."

"Now how'n the Hell yuh gonna do that?" he asked belligerently. "Muh li'l Mickey McCloud's dead. I know, I buried her six weeks ago yestidee! There ain't no two ways about it, she's dead and buried and that's the end of it!" he cried brokenly. "So don't treat me like a fucking mushroom and feed me shit in the dark, 'cause I ain't buying yer crap!"

"I know that," she agreed sympathetically, "but I guarantee you this, if at the end of six months you remain stone cold sober, I guarantee a solution that will be advantageous to your continued happiness and health." She slid a small business card across the table. "Six months from today, if you have been completely alcohol free, call that number and all your dreams can come true." She rose. "Do not lose that card and don't take another drink. In six months, call that number. You will not be sorry!"

With that, she strode from the bar, the glass door whooshing shut behind her leather encased, swinging bottom.

"Well, I be go to Hell!" Big Mack muttered.

He looked around, seeing blurred images everywhere. He shook his head in confusion. "Hey, George," he called to the barman. "Who in the damned Hell was that broad anyhow?"

"Beats me. I've only seen her a coupla times, last time was four, five months ago when Merle Waggoner went on the wagon. She talked to him and he hasn't been back since." Whatever she told him, it dried him out completely.

"Did she give him anything?"

"Coulda, I din' see. Why?"

"OK," thanks, George. I've had enough. I'm going home."

"Let me call you a cab," George offered. "No sense getting a D U I this late in the game!"

"Fer sure, fer sure!" Big Mack agreed.

\* \* \*

## II

### AS TIME GOES BY

Six months later, Big Mack held the creased and wallet-worn business card in his hand, staring at it through clear, fog-free eyes.

"Now where did this come from?" he muttered. Dimly, he remembered something taking place in a bar room somewhere and a tall, forceful Lady telling him he was a common drunk. He grinned wryly to himself. "She was right! I was a common drunk! But I haven't had a drink since that night." He turned the card over. "(1) 340 SOLUTIONS, Ltd.," he read. "OK, so far, so good. But, solutions for what?" he muttered. "And what phone number?"

Then it came to him, sure, S O L U T I O N S, a number for a letter! "Damn, how stupid could he get?" He picked up his phone and dialed, one three four oh seven six five eight eight four six six seven, held it to his ear and heard it ring four times. He was about to hang up and try again when a soft, sultry, velvety voice answered. It stirred a dim memory, but he could not remember where nor why.

"You have reached the corporate headquarters of SOLUTIONS, Ltd. How may I help you?"

"I was given this card and number six months ago and. . ."

"Oh, then you must be Mr. Maxwell McCloud. Am I right?"

"Well, yeah, but how did you. . ."

"Believe me, Mr. McCloud, we know everything about you! I do not have to ask you if you've been sober these past six months because we know that you have.

“As our Ms Koch told you when she talked with you, we have a solution to your deepest desire. It is now up to you to follow through. Tell me, Mr. McCloud, do you have one million dollars in U S A funds available to you?”

“Well, yeah, but it’d take me a coupla days to get it together, why?”

“All will be revealed to you in due time, Mr. McCloud. In the meantime, are you free to travel? In particular to Charlotte Amalie, American Virgin Islands? No passport is required.”

“Well, I suppose so, but why?”

“In due time, Mr. McCloud. Watch your mail closely for a pink edged envelope that will arrive in the next few days. In it you will find a round trip, first class ticket to Charlotte Amalie on flight 0096 Virgin Airways, leaving your local airport on Tuesday next, plus added instructions. You should find everything you will need enclosed in the envelope.

“Please do not miss your flight because there will be no other offered and there are no refunds.

“Good bye, and thank you for contacting and trusting in SOLUTIONS, Ltd.” There was a sharp click and the line went dead.

Angrily, he redialed only to get a recording by the same voice saying, “We’re sorry but the number you have dialed is not in service at this time. Please check your number and try again later. Thank you.”

“Well, I be a sum-na-bitch!” he stormed. “The nerve uh that broad!”

But, he was just intrigued enough to know that he would be on that plane, come Hell or high water!

And, he was!

The instructions with the tickets were brief. “Bring your birth certificate and drivers’ license. Do not bring clothing as proper attire will be furnished to you if you decide to stay in Charlotte Amalie. Bring no personal property, money, credit cards, nor the like. They will not be needed. All you will need is a cashier’s check for one million dollars in US funds made out to SOLUTIONS, Ltd. Everything or anything else required will be furnished at your destination.

“Have a pleasant flight.”

And that was it.

More intrigued than ever, he was at the airport several hours before the scheduled departure only to discover that his flight was called a "Special," meaning it was an addition to the regular schedule of flights. He was further surprised to find that he was the only passenger in first class. And when he went aft to use the facilities, he discovered that he was the ONLY passenger on the whole plane. There was one stewardess, a pilot and a co-pilot, him, and that was it.

"Somebody's got money to burn somewhere!" he thought out loud.

About then, the smiling stewardess stopped by his seat and asked, "Would Sir like a drink? We have a wide selection of brands and. . ."

He started guiltily and interrupted, "Yeah, coffee black, if you have it."

"Certainly Sir, coming right up!" He watched as her swaying bottom disappeared behind the barrier, then stared almost open-mouthed as she returned, her blouse open to her naval and her bouncy tits threatening to burst their flimsy confines. She leaned in close, her breast slopes mere inches from his face. "Will that be all, Sir?" The implication and invitation was obvious.

"No, thank you, I think I'll catch twenty winks while we're in flight," he croaked.

"Veddy good, Sir," she grinned sardonically. "Just ring if you need anything. . . *anything* at all!"

Big Mack wiped his forehead as she wriggled forward. "My good God!" he whispered reverently.

Now he did need a drink after that!

He lay back, closed his eyes and came awake when the overhead squawked, "Please fasten your seat belts. We are twelve minutes from touch-down at Charlotte Amalie, US Virgin Islands. We hope you have enjoyed your flight and we thank you for flying Virgin Airways!"

A scant moment passed before the stewardess was leaning over him, her fingers checking the fastening on his seat belt, her nearly exposed breasts brushing erotically against his face.

"There," she whispered, "all comfy and cozy!" She smiled knowingly at him and with a guilty start, he re-



alized that she had searched his person thoroughly while he slept.

And he had never felt a thing!

She disappeared and soon the tires screeched as the plane touched down and slowly made its way to the parking area. A thump, doors opened and Big Mack was walking down the entranceway to the terminal. To his vast surprise, the woman from the bar was waiting to greet him!

“Good morning, Mr. McCloud. Did you have a pleasant flight?” she greeted.

“Er, yes, I did. . . er, aren’t you the Lady from the bar. . .

She laughed merrily. “I’m surprised you remember! You were pretty smashed, as I recall. Yes, I’m Alice Koch. Welcome to Charlotte Amalie!”

He blushed. “I am so sorry for the way I behaved,” he started to apologize.

“No need to apologize, Mr. McCloud. You were going through a pretty rough spell!”

“Still am,” he admitted ruefully.

“Well, that’s what we’re here for, Mr. McCloud.”

“I don’t understand,” he began.

“All in due time, Mr. McCloud. Let’s get you out to the farm, installed in your suite, have a bite to eat, rest up a bit and all will be revealed,” she coaxed.

It seemed like a long ride as the stretch limousine, driven by a woman dressed attractively in all black chauffeur’s leather livery, drove them carefully across the lush island paradise to a series of low buildings far from the city of Charlotte Amalie.

“Ah, here we are, at last!” The door was opened by a young woman wearing an almost sheer summery frock suited to a very young girl but that looked to be exactly right for her. “Michelle! There’s a good girl!” the woman praised. “Would you please show Mr. McCloud to his suite?”

The girl curtsied politely. “Of course, Madame!” She smiled at Big Mack, reached in and took his hand in hers. “Just follow me, Sir, and we’ll have you squared away in no time!”

"Make sure he is suitably dressed for dinner, Michelle," Ms Koch warned.

Again the polite curtsey. "Of course, Madame." Big Mack noticed a wicked grin on Michelle's red, red lips and he felt a shudder of trepidation wash over him as he followed behind her swinging bottom to his room. . . followed, but not unwillingly.

Her high heels tap tapped merrily on the stone walkway as she led him between two buildings and into a sort of park where several girls were gathered in a chatty group. They stopped as the two came abreast. This is our newest guest, Ladies," Michelle spoke quickly. The four girls curtseyed quickly as Michelle led him away.

"Don't worry, you'll meet them all later tonight. For now I've got to get you to your suite and see that you take a nap before dinner."

"It's only about ten in the morning!" he thought to himself. But, he said nothing as he followed her into one of the buildings, up the winding staircase and down a short hall way to a door marked, L-33. Without hesitation, Michelle opened the door, and at Big Mack's inquiring gaze, explained, "Oh, there are no locks on dormitories or personal suites. You will find very few locks anywhere at SOLUTIONS, Ltd.!" she exclaimed. "One must always knock before entering someone's suite!"

"Er, what time is dinner?" he asked.

"Usually around seven, so I'll get you a snack to tide you over. OK?"

"Sounds like a plan!" he enthused with a quiet chuckle.

He entered the suite behind Michelle and gazed around him in wonder.

"There must be some mistake," he thought. "This is a girl's room with all those pinks and whites and pastels and frilled curtains!"

"Ms Koch will change the décor if you wish," Michelle explained. "In the meantime, try to bear with us. OK?"

"Sure, no harm, no foul," he agreed.

Before he had time to sit down, there was a knock at the door and when it was opened, there stood a young girl pushing a tea cart and he smelled the delicious aroma of food and fresh coffee.

“Ah, nectar of the Gods!” he whispered reverently as he sipped the rich, aromatic coffee. “My stomach thinks it’s died and gone to Heaven!”

Michelle and the girl tittered at his strange choice of idiom and set the food on the near-by table, standing aside as he tackled the scrambled eggs, bacon, home fries and hot, buttered toast. Finally, he had consumed everything the girl had brought and he sat back, sighing with satisfaction. “Oh, that was so good!” he exclaimed. “If that’s any indication of the food here, I won’t miss a meal!”

He yawned as the girl cleared the remnants away, then curtsied and left the room.

“Does everyone curtsey around here?” he asked, yawning anew.

“Pretty much,” Michelle agreed. “But only the girls. I can see you’re tired from your flight, so why don’t you lie down on the bed and take a nap? Nobody will bother you and if anyone comes to see you, they will knock until you answer. OK?”

“Good idea!” Big Mack yawned as he lay out atop the satin coverlet and closed his eyes. “I’ll just take a little snooze and. . .”

He awoke several hours later feeling different, but not unpleasantly so. It was warm in the room, but he still felt a slight breeze on his skin and he wondered in passing what had happened to the suit he had been wearing when he arrived. He opened his eyes and looked around.

It was the same room, but now it looked just right to him and he smiled to himself. “Must be getting soft in my elderly age!” he teased himself.

He yawned, slid his legs over the side of the bed and into the waiting mules, stood and almost fell flat on his face!

“Oh, dear,” he heard Michelle gasp, “I forgot you’re not used to high heels, are you?”

“Hell no!” he tried to growl, and stopped in amazement. “That” was not his voice! It was too high pitched and too feminine, like a boyish soprano! “What happened to my voice?” he asked, bewildered.

“Nothing permanent, just a small shot of helium to temporarily shorten your vocal chords and give you a

more feminine voice. It'll clear itself in a few days," she continued.

For some reason, this seemed to be entirely apropos to Big Mack and he accepted her blithe explanation without further comment.

"Take shorter steps," Michelle told him. "You'll get the hang of it quickly."

Surprisingly, by the time Big Mack had walked to the bathroom, he was moving easily and the high heels on the mules felt right at home.

Entering the bathroom, he caught a glimpse of himself in the full-length mirror and he stopped short, gazing at the reflection in utter disbelief!

It was a woman!

And yet, she looked very familiar!

He took a closer look.

Why. . . she was he!

Big Mack had always worn his blonde hair rather longish and he saw that it had been recoiled into an attractive pixie cut that brought out the femininity that he had worked so many years to conceal. His tiny Van Dyke beard was gone and his face was made up lightly with cosmetics. He looked closer, his red, red lips oh'd with astonishment. Hoop earrings dangled from his now pierced ear lobes and the effect was extremely girlish and feminine.

Shaking his head in disbelief, he went about his self-imposed tasks and without thinking about it, put on the clothing that had been laid out for him. He was fully dressed before he realized that something was different. . . not strange different, just different different. He stopped and gazed into the full length mirror on the back of the door.

His eyes slid downward, across the semi-sheer breast coverings to his now nipped in waist (he could see the outlines of a waist cincher beneath the gown's material) and down across his softly rounded tummy to the floor length skirt slit clear to the tops of his thighs! The high heeled mules had meanwhile been exchanged for a pair of white opera pumps with four inch heels and to his great amazement, he was walking easily atop the unfamiliar heights.

He looked closer at the breast coverings, seeing what appeared to be miniscule breasts with long, excitable



nipples that had also been pierced and had a thin silver chain connecting the rings through his nipples. Too, he felt the absence of undies and the slippery feeling of the fabric on his skin when he moved. Strangely, he felt right at home in this outfit under these circumstances and he wondered vaguely how it had come about and he blushed. He had involuntarily erected!

"My, aren't we the vain one?" Michelle asked softly.

"What happened?" he asked.

"You're not angry with me?" Michelle asked with obvious relief.

"I probably should be," he admitted, "but I'm not. Somehow I feel that this is right for me."

"That's the effect of the medicine I gave you in your coffee," she admitted, blushing.

"I see," he mused. "You are a very naughty girl, Michelle."

"Yes, Ma'am, I am," the girl admitted sheepishly.

"I'll have to think about that," he continued. "Now, what time is it?"

"Almost dinner time and Ms Koch is awaiting your entrance even as we speak."

"Well, let's not keep the Lady waiting, shall we?" He placed his hand with the red tipped nails on her forearm, allowing her to precede him down the stair and into the main dining area.

His clicking heels heralded his coming, and upon entering, all conversation stopped as Michelle led him to a chair and seated him at table.

"Thank you, Michelle," he whispered.

"Da nada, my Lady," she replied.

Strangely, her new appellation did not seem to bother the man at all.

"Ah, Ms McCloud," Ms Koch greeted. "So happy you could join us. I trust everything is to your satisfaction?"

Surprising even himself, Big Mack smiled and replied, "Yes, Ms Koch, everything's just peachy!"

"Good!" she smiled. "And is your gown acceptable?"

Surprisingly, it was. "Yes, Ms Koch, it is delightful."

She smiled winningly. "Let me introduce you to our guests this evening, shall I?"

"By all means, Madame," he replied in his new, softly feminine, almost soprano voice.

"To your left is Andrew *Annette* Malloware and her soon-to-be husband, Ms Herman Herbert Malloware," she pointed out.

"Good evening," Big Mack greeted.

"And to you, I'm sure," the addressed evening gown wearing gentleman answered.

"To his left is Mr. Brigit *Butch* Hamilton and her consort, Miss *Fairy*."

He saw an obviously masculine female person wearing a formal dinner tuxedo with her arm draped over the back of the chair occupied by Fairy. She nodded curtly.

'Bull dyker all the way!' he thought snidely.

"Next is Marianne and her sponsor, Ms Hellene Schultz."

Hellene nodded curtly. It was obvious she did not care for men, even those in evening gowns!

'Another dyke!' Big Mack thought derisively, forgetting his own objectification.

"And, last but not least, to her left is Ms Henry *Hank* Hennesey and his child, Nicolas *Nikki* Hennesey. You may rise and curtsy to our new guest, girls," Ms Koch smiled. It was not a statement!

Hastily, the three "girls" rose and curtsied politely.

"Hello, Ms McCloud," Annette greeted sweetly, a welcoming smile on her painted lips. He saw that the "girl" was clad as a pre-teen aged girl in a white silk confirmation dress that had no liner and he could see that beneath she wore only a snug corset leaving her pink skin showing plainly. "I'm Annette."

"Good evening, Miss Annette," he replied.

"And I'm Nikki, Mr. McCloud," that one greeted shyly. Like Annette, he saw that she too was wearing a white silk confirmation dress and like her companion, wore nothing beneath but a snug corset.

“Good evening, Miss Nikki,” he greeted.

“And I’m Fairy, Ms McCloud,” the youngest of the three gushed. Like the other two, she wore a white silk confirmation dress with a skirt that barely came to the tops of her thighs. Like the first two, she wore nothing beneath except for the ubiquitous corset. All three wore four inch high heels and all three were equally at ease atop them. “Butch is going to take me to Sturgis and I’m going to ride the cunt seat!” Fairy gushed excitedly.

“Now, Fairy,” Ms Koch cautioned, “I’m sure Ms McCloud doesn’t want to hear about that!”

Big Mack smiled at the excited girl. “You can tell me all about it after dinner,” he invited. Suddenly, he had developed an avid interest in Butch because he, too, was an avid biker. He smiled at the woman. “What kind of bike do you ride?” he asked.

“’86 Harley soft-tail,” the woman replied, her eyes lighting up. “You ride?”

“Is the Pope Catholic?” Big Mack smiled. “I ride a ’74 Harley soft-tail myself,” he confessed shyly.

“Hey, great! You ever been to Sturgis?” she demanded.

“Now, Butch,” Ms Koch broke into their conversation, “not all of us are bikers, dear.”

“Don’t know whut yer a missin’!” she drawled. To Big Mack, “We’ll talk later, Sweetie.”

“We surely will,” he promised as he shook her rough, work hardened hand.

“Can I sit in your lap while I tell you about my cunt seat?” Fairy asked hopefully.

“May I, dear,” Ms Koch corrected. “May I sit in your lap, Ms McCloud?”

“Well, may I sit on your lap, Ms McCloud?” Fairy demanded.

“Yes, you may,” he conceded. “And you can tell me all about it!”

“Goody, goody gum drop! Ain’t she the most?” she asked Butch.

“Be quiet and eat your dinner, girl,” came the rumbling, tolerant command.



Surprisingly, dinner went well even though the guests were all cross-dressed, some, like Big Mack, for the first time in their lives. Still, no one felt any shame nor apprehension about their evening's attire.

Conversations were started between certain persons who had discovered mutual interests and shy smiles soon became wide grins of acceptance and approval.

After the dinner was completed and the adults were sipping their after dinner coffees, the girls cleared away the dishes and made themselves useful in the kitchen.

"Ms McCloud," Ms Koch began, "as you may well have ascertained, everyone here has a similar reason to be here. Each of you had suffered an inconsolable loss and in your despair, turned to the whiskey bottle for solace. Each of you has discovered the same truth, there is no solution to be found in a whiskey bottle. All you find there is more misery and your depression only deepens until it seems there is no way out but death. The worse you felt, the more you drank and the deeper you slid into an abyss from which only the most determined of persons can ever escape.

"Each of you has suffered those doldrums and each of you has overcome your despair.

"I congratulate each and every one of you!" She raised her cup in salute.

"Without going into the specifics, each of you lost a loved one. Some were lovers, some were daughters, some were beloved wives, but each and every one of them were a vital part of your life.

"Until the day your losses occurred.

"And that sent you into an almost fatal spiral into your personal drunken oblivion.

"Which is where we at SOLUTIONS, Ltd. come in. Through methods we have developed over decades, we are able to reproduce a perfect facsimile of the person you lost.

"Some of you have already met your facsimile. Tell me, Mr. Hamilton, Ms Hennessey, Ms Malloware, are you happy with our product?" she asked.

There were nods of approval from those addressed.

"Except for you, Ms McCloud. But, never fear, we shall probe your sub-conscious and do an in-depth analysis of your deepest, most secret desires, and once

we know what you really want, we will go to work on your perfect facsimile.”

“God!” he laughed. “You make it sound like some sort of science fiction resurrection or something like that!” he exclaimed.

“In a way, Mr. McCloud, it is. It’s close, but no cigar.”

“I love to smoke cigars!” Fairy exclaimed, coming in and sitting at Mr. Hamilton’s knee, his head resting lovingly against her hard thigh. She caressed his face absently while he purred with contentment.

“We have discovered certain benign substances that in and of themselves pose no danger to humans in general. Some humans are more susceptible to these substances than others. By using them under very controlled conditions, we have been able to shape compatible persons into virtual perfect reincarnations of lost persons. It is not something to be undertaken lightly because once started, it is almost irreversible.

“Therefore, we test and probe and compare and ask the same questions of our subjects over and over again. If we are satisfied with the answers to these questions, we make an assumption of suitability and successful transition on the parts of both subjects.

“You see, Ms McCloud, we include both subjects. One can never achieve full compatibility with an unwilling or reluctant subject, whether the subject is the sponsor or whether the subject is the sponsor’s hoped for replacement.

“No one is ever forced into doing anything he or she does not wish to happen. To do such a thing would be to negate our primary objective, harmonious interchange!”

Privately, Ms Koch knew this was not the exact truth, but since these adverse circumstances were not germane to Ms McCloud’s needs, she felt no other explanation was necessary.

She smiled benignly at her “victim.”

“I see,” he murmured, although he suspected that if the price were right, her “rule” would be the last thing to be considered. “Have you selected a possible subject for me?” he asked lightly.

“Possibly,” she admitted.

“Do I know this person?”

"I'm not sure," she weaseled, knowing full well that the intended "daughter" for him was the very same Michelle who had attended him since his arrival. Michelle already had the right name as Mr. McCloud's lost daughter who had been named "Michelle" too. Her Michelle had the same general features as his Michelle, features that could be remolded to fit his recollections of his daughter.

So far, none of this resemblance to his late daughter had occurred to the man.

Ms Koch kept these morsels of information to herself.

"We still have to do an in depth study of your hopes and aspirations," she smiled.

"Ready when you are, My Lady!" he enthused, curt-seying as well as he knew.

She smiled. "All in due time, Ms McCloud, all in due time."

"I am at your disposal," he twittered happily.

"Indeed," she replied, smiling with satisfaction.

'Oh,' she thought, 'this is too easy!'

\* \* \*

### III

#### Michelle

Twenty-three year old Michael Fogarty stirred uncomfortably in the back of the police cruiser, his wrists cuffed behind his back and his head buzzing from the roughing up the two big cops had given him.

He had tried to explain to them that he was just standing there waiting for the place to open when those three ruffians had come charging up with drawn weapons, threatening to kill anyone who moved!

Several women in the line had screamed when one of the men had shot his pistol into the air and as the sounds of an approaching police cruiser siren cut through their resolve, the man with the gun had thrown it to the ground right in front of Michael. Stu-

pidly, he had bent over and picked it up. He was still holding it in his lax hand when the police arrived and they had immediately thrown him against their cruiser, telling him to, "spread 'em, scumbag!"

He had tried to explain what had happened, but they did not want to hear any explanation. As far as they were concerned, Michael was the shooter and they did not want to hear anything to the contrary, especially from him!

He looked up as the car door opened and one of the cops beckoned for him to get out. "OK, you're clean. That lady said you were in line and had nothing to do with the shooting."

"I tried to tell you that, officer," Michael snapped, "but you wouldn't listen."

"Yeah, well, you were holding the gun," the cop wheeled.

"And that automatically makes me the perpetrator, right?" Michael snapped angrily.

The cop looked down at him momentarily, then turned and walked away.

Michael Fogarty, four foot nine inches tall, weight eighty two pounds, long blonde hair, blue eyes, no body hair to speak of, soft spoken, a real little person, had been misunderstood all his young life of twenty-three years.

For sure his parents didn't understand him. His older sister made fun of him every chance she got. His younger brother towered over him at well over six foot and called him, "Squirt."

Oh, how he hated that epithet!

Was it any wonder he was trying to get a job that would take him worlds away from his hated environs?

The position offered was vague in form, but somehow he sensed that it was aimed directly at him and that was why he was standing in line with other very short people equally intrigued by the vagueness of the little reader ad tucked away in the personals column of the local newspaper.

Muttering to himself at the abuse he had received from the police, he waited for some time as individual people went in and came out later with looks of disbelief on their faces, but none would explain their dissatisfaction other than muttering, "Can't talk about it."

Finally, it was Michael's turn and he entered the small office apprehensively. What was it that had dissuaded so many before him? 'Probably illegal,' he told himself.

He was given a form to fill out, listing his name, address, phone number, hobbies, education, work experience and some, what he thought, were rather personal questions. But, he answered each and every one as per instructions and handed it to the woman behind the desk. Then he sat and waited for a few minutes and when the person ahead of him came out, shaking his head, he was told to go right in. He was ushered into the bright inner office to be greeted by, "Bonjour, M'sieur, je m'appelle M<sup>me</sup> Alice Koch, et je représente SOLUTIONS, Ltd. de Charlotte Amalie, des Islès Vierge d'Amerique."

"Er, I'm sorry," Michael replied uncertainly, "but I do not speak French."

"Ah, c'est tres dommage," she murmured. "Heureusement, je parle Anglais. Won't you please have a seat and we can get started?"

Michael smiled. "Certainly, M<sup>me</sup> Koch."

They shook hands and she started asking questions, "Are you dissatisfied with your present circumstances?" she asked.

Michael admitted that he was becoming more and more frustrated as time went on and he was unable to secure equitable employment in his chosen field.

"And that would be. . ." she prompted.

"Teaching pre-school or kindergarten kids. I just completed my master's in child development and I love little kids. They don't make assumptions about your worth just because you're their height!" he blurted angrily. "To them, you are what you seem to be and they accept it without question."

"You've experienced otherwise. . ." she coaxed.

Suddenly, he was pouring out his frustrations in detail. She listened as he described the put-downs from his father, a football hero in college who still played semi-pro, a younger brother who was the very image of his father and being courted by the Pro teams even before he finished high school. He went on about his hated older sister who, like her mother, was a star athlete in college and had married the football star of her college team. They had two boys who were built like

brick walls and, in Michael's estimation, had brains to match!

Finally he summed it all up. "My life sucks donkey dick! I'm too big for the pee wee league and way too short for adult pastimes! My dad says I'm too heavy for light work and too light for heavy!"

When he paused in his tirade, she nodded. "Have you ever thought you'd like to be somebody else?" she asked. "Somebody entirely different?" Her voice was soft, caressing, tempting. . .

He thought a moment. "Yes, there was a time when I wanted desperately to be a little girl."

"And?"

"Well, I'm still a boy," he replied, blushing with shame.

"Yes, I can see that!" she laughed. "But what if you could be a little girl, what would it be worth to you? Could you walk away from your present life with no regrets?"

"I'm not sure I understand. . . ." he admitted slowly.

"What if you could become a pre-pubescent girl and live a life of luxury for the rest of your life?" The carrot dangled temptingly.

"I . . . I . . . don't . . . know," he admitted slowly. "This is a different approach," he thought. "What would it involve? And is it legal? I'd hate to get caught up in an illegal situation."

She laughed. "My dear Michelle, may I call you Michelle?" she dimpled prettily. She used the Continental pronunciation and Michael liked it better than what he had been called before.

"Yeah, sure, it's my name," he replied off-handedly.

"What we do at SOLUTIONS, Ltd. is definitely legal, as before we could do anything, we would have to investigate you, 'vet' you as the saying goes, do an in depth examination of your background. We would have to determine if you were compatible to and with the various aspects of our special programs and your suitability and adaptability to other persons thereof."

He laughed. "Sounds ominous and mysterious!" he joked.

“Not at all,” she laughed in return. “Just standard procedure and nothing to worry about.”

She looked at him steadily and he began to wriggle with embarrassment.

“Is something wrong?” he asked.

“No, not at all. I was just appraising your suitability before hand, as it were.”

“Oh.” He had no idea what she was talking about.

“Make sure we have your address and a phone number where we can contact you, if need be.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” he replied, knowing he had already given that information in his initial encounter

“We’ll be in touch,” and he knew he was being dismissed when she added, “A bien tôt.”

Shaking his head, he left the building and walked slowly along the street trying to make sense of what the woman, M<sup>me</sup>Koch, had told him.

But, try as he might, he was totally unsuccessful.

‘Oh, well,’ he thought, ‘if’n they call, they call. If’n they don’t, they don’t!’ He shook his head fatalistically and walked on.

A sudden thought came to him.

In the words of the immortal Alfred E. Newman, “What, me worry?”

He giggled to himself and walked on. . .

\* \* \*

## IV

### SOLUTIONS, Ltd.

Ms Koch leaned back in her chair and went over the very short list of potential candidates she had interviewed that afternoon. From all those she had seen, she had garnered three names that would bear closer scrutiny.

One person in particular stuck in her mind. After interviewing him, she had felt an emphatic aura about him that portended great potential. That one would bear closer scrutiny than most.

The only question in Ms Koch's mind was, 'Would he take homosexuality in stride and accept it as an integral part of his transformation into a pre-teen girl? After all, his ambition to teach small children was definitely in his favor. With a master's degree in child development, he was predisposed to life as a little girl. He just had to be convinced of it, and they could do that easily! No, dear Michelle,' she told herself, 'I lied. We can and do manipulate those we choose until our ideas become their original ideas and each one smilingly accepts what one is faced with.'

'Ah, Michael, and if I am right about you, you will become a lovely Michelle!'

Smiling to herself with satisfaction, she began to punch in numbers on her cel phone and was soon deep in conversation with some of the references her three possibilities had given her.

Before long, she had discarded one of the names whom she found had lied on the application. She wanted truthful candidates, not some who bent the facts to put them in a more favorable light!

Working steadily, and making copious notes as she worked, she became more and more sure that her original assessment of Michelle was the correct one.

Punching in numbers, she was soon talking to the chief executive officer of SOLUTIONS, Ltd., Ms Harriet Langdon, and the more they discussed Michael, the more convinced Ms Koch was that Michelle would be ideal for the person she wished to pair him with.

Some people had the latent inclinations to same sex couplings, while others had a deep seated prejudicial view of such a relationship, even if it was outwardly, at least, a normal male/female pairing.

Some of this feeling could be overcome, but it always remained just below the surface and was not something she liked to contemplate.

Still, she had not gotten to the position of authority she had by cutting corners! All information, no matter how trivial, had to be checked and verified before continuing.



Finally, Ms Koch reached Michael's father and discovered that the man to be just as Michael had described him, cold, unfeeling, interested only in what he was interested in, disregarding all else as not worth his consideration and well beneath his masculine dignity. He was quite adamant about his anger about Michael's height, or rather, his lack of same.

Mr. Fogarty, senior, felt it was a personal affront to his masculinity that he had sired such a son as, he felt, the failure as a son he considered Michael to be. He went on at some length about Michael's lack of athletic ability, citing his own accomplishments as a semi-pro footballer and major league baseball pitcher and praising his other son for being a "true he-man!"

Ms Koch smiled to herself. The more the man raved about Michael's "short comings," the more convinced she was in her basic assessment of the lad as a prime candidate.

Accordingly, when she finished with her conversation with the condescending Mr. Fogarty, she immediately called Charlotte Amalie and had her call patched through to HQ. She and Ms Langdon then talked for over an hour discussing possible scenarios to entice *Michelle*.

Finally, Ms Langdon gave Ms Koch the green light to go ahead with her investigation into his life in depth and to report her findings daily, which Ms Koch promised to do before hanging up.

For the next several days, Ms Koch spoke with many people who knew Michael, and for the most part, got nothing but rave reviews. Those who panned him were the obvious jocks who regarded anyone "non-jock" with disdain and scorn.

Them, she discounted out-of-hand, much in the same manner they used to dismiss Michael.

Finally, she called Michelle and arranged a lunch date to discuss his further involvement with SOLUTIONS, Ltd.

He was surprised when she handed him a thick packet of papers that she asked him to look at. He saw that the papers were questionnaires, crammed full of questions that were extremely intimate in their subject matter and he silently questioned the wisdom of answering some of them as those questions seemed to be aimed directly at females.

He blushed when he realized that he was obliged to answer truthfully!

'I mean,' he thought, 'when did you start your menses?' And, 'How regular is your flow?' He looked at her in surprise. "All of them?" he croaked.

She nodded. "Yes. Why? Is there a problem?"

"Well, some of them seem to be more female oriented. . ." he whispered shamefully.

"Oh, I assure you, all are important in order for us to develop an in-depth assessment of your psyche, your likes, your dislikes, and the like," she cooed delicately, her soft breath maddening as it caressed his cheeks. He blushed deeply.

"Well, I'll certainly try my best," he equivocated.

She smiled brilliantly. "Fine! Now, enjoy your salad and I'll be in touch." Saying this, she rose and left him alone.

He gazed after her swiveling bottom, her delicate sway enhanced by the tight leather and for one mad moment, Michael wished it were he who was wearing that skirt!

Then, he blushed, finished his salad, and going to the cashier, discovered Ms Koch had already paid his check.

Smiling and shaking his head, he walked to the public library, rented a private cubicle and locked himself away while he filled out Ms Koch's questionnaire.

At some of the more intimate questions, Michael was glad he was locked in and could not be disturbed. The questions were disturbing enough without interruptions to disrupt his concentration!

Finally, he had answered most of them in depth and truthfully as he could, as she had requested. Those he felt inadequate to respond to, he wrote, 'I am not sure of my reaction to this question and have, therefore, left it unanswered.'

"Well, I can't do any better than that!" he told himself. "If they don't like it, they can lump it!" He smiled to himself, folded the questionnaire as directed, placed it in the manila envelope Ms Koch had provided, sealed it, and leaving the library, walked the two blocks to his local Post Office where he mailed it to Charlotte Amalie, American Virgin Islands.

He haunted his mail box at the Post Office for several days, then gave up. 'If they respond, they respond!' he told himself. 'If they don't like what I wrote, then to Hell with them!'

Finally, on the eighth day after mailing the questionnaire, he received a short letter telling him to meet Ms Koch, 'at the usual place at noon the following Friday.' 'Why, that's tomorrow!' he realized with shock. 'They're fast when they want to be!' he chuckled.

He was surprised at the brevity of the missile, but took great pleasure in the fact that they had responded to him! Apparently they were not put off by some of his responses!

Michael was prompt the next day, wearing his best suit, a white shirt and tie, trying to appear as an up-and-coming young executive. He arrived at the restaurant at the same time as Ms Koch and he struggled to hold the door for her. She smiled and caught the heavy door, swinging it wide so that he could enter first. He blushed at his inability to open the door, but preceded her to their table escorted by the smiling maître de, her hand on his shoulder guiding him as though he were a young child.

Again she ordered salads for the both of them, Caesar for him and anti-pesto for her. Then she quizzed him about what he had been doing and watched him closely as she made several veiled remarks about how "lovely" he looked, how apropos his "frock" was to the setting, and so forth.

Most of these remarks slipped right over Michael's head but he did appreciate the compliments nevertheless.

Finally, she spoke, "And have you come to a decision about SOLUTIONS, Ltd., Michelle?" she purred, deliberately slurring her use of the feminine version of his given name.

Michael smiled. "I don't see how I could make any decision about your company since I know nothing about it," he replied questioningly.

She smiled. "Yes, there is that," she admitted.

"Then, no, I have made no decision about SOLUTIONS, Ltd."

"Fine," she smiled. "Then we shall have no preconceived notions or ideas to contend with, shall we? No

bad habits to remedy, so to speak,” she dimpled, taking a sip of her tea.

“I guess not!” he quipped. “Pure as the driven snow, that’s me!” holding his cup up in a mock salute to his short comings.

“Seriously, Michelle,” again she slurred his name, “We are about to make you an offer. It is a one time offer and will require a decision by 2:00 P.M.”

“You mean 2:00 P.M., today?” he asked in disbelief.

“Exactly.”

He started with shock. “That’s pretty sudden, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I suppose. . .”

“I mean that’s only twenty minutes or so from now!” he protested.

“Have you anything pressing that requires your presence coming up?” she asked.

“Well. . . no, not really,” he admitted. “Just the awarding of my Master’s. . .”

“Which, as we both know, is just a formality.”

“Yes, they could mail it to me, I suppose. . .” he mused.

“Well then, you need bring nothing with you. We will provide everything you will need. And I do mean everything. Bring no identification except your birth certificate. Bring no wallet, no money, no credit cards and nothing of value. We will take care of everything. Wear just the clothing you are now wearing.

“We are prepared to offer you a salary of twenty-five thousand American dollars per annum, with increases based on performance. Since we will provide you with everything you will need in the way of housing, food, clothing, entertainment, and so on, your personal expenses will be at a bare minimum. That means you can save your money and at the end of your contract in five years, you will have enough money to do as you wish, when, how and who.”

“Sounds almost too good to be true,” Michael murmured, “and I have always been told that if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is, too good to be true, I mean.”

“Yes, I’ve heard that,” she admitted, “but in this case, it is true. You’ll just have to take my word for it. I promise you, you will never regret going with us!”

Michael thought for a long moment, then nodded his head decisively.

“OK, I’ll do it!” Michael enthused. “My life’s in the toilet the way I am now anyway!”

“A rather dismal view, I must say,” she laughed.

“Lady, you don’t know the half of it!”

‘Oh, but I do, Michelle, I’ve dug deep into your life these past few weeks!’ she smiled to herself.

Aloud, “I have my limousine right outside, so we can leave immediately. I have a chartered plane waiting for us at Logan Airport.” She rose, “Shall we?” Her hand hovered momentarily over his tea cup.

“Right!” He drained the last of his tea, stood, and promptly sat back down. “Oh, I don’t feel so hot all of a sudden!” he mumbled.

Ms Koch smiled, picked up his cup and slipped it into her purse. It would not be good to leave the dregs of his drugged tea behind as evidence!

She held him easily as she guided his limp form out to the waiting limousine and deposited him in the back seat, sliding in beside him.

“Logan Airport, VIP terminal,” she ordered the driver.

“Yes, Ma’am,” and nothing was spoken the whole ride to Logan.

How could they?

Michael was out cold.

And the limo driver had her screen up.

Working swiftly, Ms Koch removed the contents of Michael’s pockets, leaving nothing behind.

For better or worse, whether he liked it or not, he was committed irrevocably to SOLUTIONS, Ltd. for the duration.

She noticed the wide smile on his face and wondered briefly what was so funny.