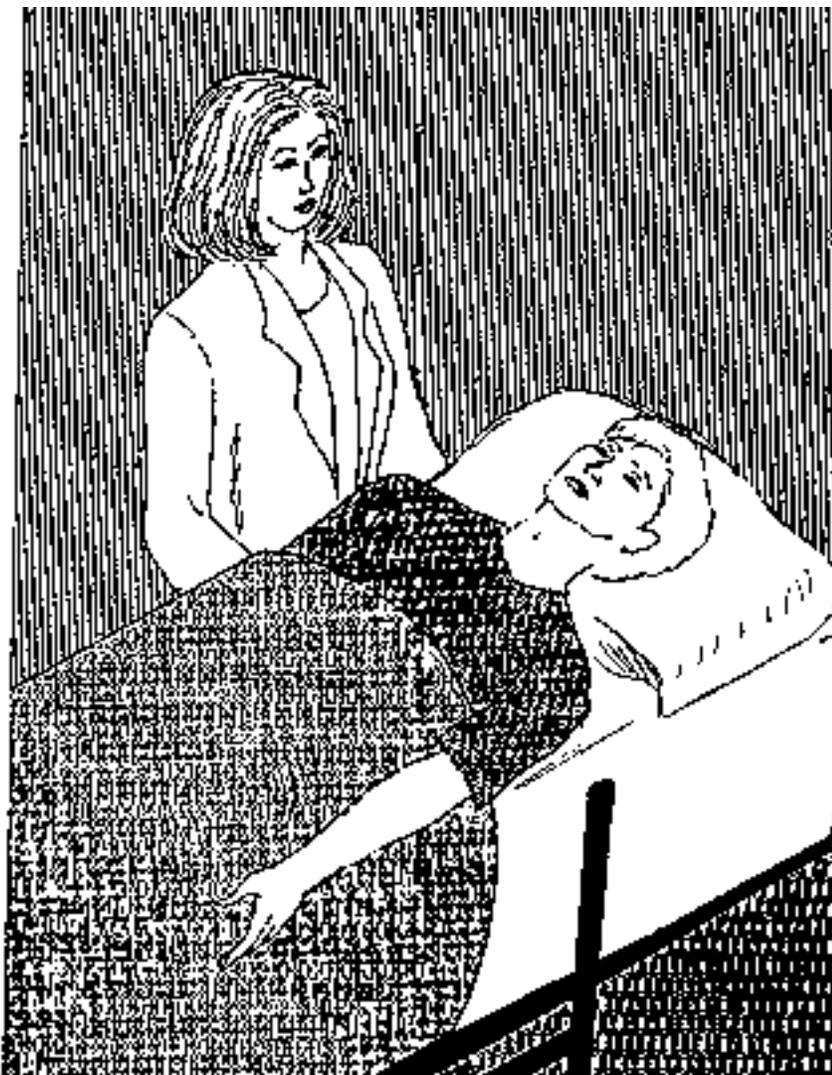




*Reluctant Press*

# Transformed

Olivia Evans



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BRIAN DUKEHART

**A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL**

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## *Reluctant Press TG Publishers*

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# “A GIRL to Kill For”

By Olivia Evans

*Provisional Capitol of the Republic Leadville, Colorado.*

*1457 Hours, 23 September 21 75' (New Calendar)*

“I tell you. Ms. Morgan, I don't like it,” the big man wearing the gray jumpsuit said. The long scar running from his mouth to the tip of his left ear made him look like he was perpetually smiling. It was deceiving, he rarely smiled. He looked around the small circle of three men and one woman which with himself, made up the greatly feared council of five.

Two of the men wore military style uniforms, while the other two men were in the loose nondescript one piece lounging suits favored by bankers and others who felt they were part of the establishment.

The *council of five*, which was always written in small case letters, were the supreme leaders of the political group called the “Republic”, although it was anything but a republic

The big man stared hard at Ms. Morgan. She was wearing a white skirt and Jacket as always, even though blood red would have been more appropriate. It was almost as though by wearing pure white clothing, she was trying to atone for the blood her staff spilled at her request. Her section, the ‘peace keepers” had the well earned reputation of being the bloodiest bunch of killers since the formation of the so-called “Love Squads” in the late 21st century, or the Nazi Stormtroopers in the century before.

“I don't care if you like it or not! If we don't eliminate him, then our own existence, not to mention the continuation of the Republic is in serious jeopardy.” The man in the military uniform sitting next to the woman said hotly. The pips on his epaulets said that he was only a major in the Army Engineers. In truth, he was the leader of the Secret Police, although only the council of five and a selected

hand full of men knew that. The secret police were only slightly less bloodthirsty and brutal than the “peace keepers”. He looked to the woman for support.

She merely glared at the man who had protested the current plan. “Murder... you mean.” The woman in white softly interrupted the gray haired Major.

She didn’t care for the euphemisms the others seemed to prefer. If it was murder, then damn it, call it murder.

The Major looked sharply at the woman.

“I stand corrected madam Group-Leader, . . .murder... his great grandfather, then the projected odds are nearly 99.9987% certain that the revolution will die with him. If we are not successful...” He shrugged his shoulders.

“The so called revolution’ has been predicted to have a 99.9987% chance of overthrowing the Republic.”

“I’m not sure I fully understand how all of this is supposed to happen. If we were able to go back in time nearly a hundred and fifty years, and kill one of his ancestors, what would prevent Schmidt from being born anyway?” the youngest member of the group asked. It had been the first thing he had said in over two hours, having preferred to just listen and absorb information as the others presented it.

The big man, the number two man in the Republic, looked at the young man with his single medal on his military uniform and sighed.

“Because sir, If we kill the grandfather, the genetic blood line will be broken.”

“But we’ve tried time travel before to perform an assassination. If I recall correctly, it wasn’t entirely successful,” the young man said, referring to the attempted elimination of the current leader of the opposition faction. “What makes you think that it will be this time?”

“There were two things wrong with that particular project.” The heavier of the two men in civilian clothing looked down at the floor in obvious embarrassment. “We underestimated how difficult it was to change history, and the team had no idea when they murdered the father, that he had already had impregnated the mother. We were too late by about hail an hour. When we realized what had occurred, the mother had gone too deeply undercover.”

He failed to mention that when the woman had learned the real reason for the murder of her husband, she began training her child, almost from birth, to oppose the Republic.

No one asked what had happened to the assassination team, by failing, it was obvious that they had joined the ranks of the “disappeared”.

“I see, so now you are proposing that we go back three generations and eliminate the grandfather...”

“Great grandfather.” The woman corrected again.

“Great grandfather..., that the present threat to overthrow the council by Gene Schmidt IV, will be stopped?”

“If all goes well, then by this time next week, we wouldn’t even know who Schmidt the fourth was, because he will have never existed,” the “major” said, as sporadic gunfire erupted outside the heavy bullet proof glass window.

The young man barely glanced up. Schmidt IV and his group were at it again. Nothing serious as usual, but certainly annoying.

It helped make up his mind. “Alright, I say we do It,” the youngest leader in the history of the Republic announced.

The group nodded their agreement.

The woman cleared her throat. “I think that I would like to do this one myself. I really don’t trust anyone else with a project as important as this one.”

The “major” looked surprised. “But I thought that you never did any, uh... dirty work yourself.”

“Normally, I don’t,” The woman smiled and shook her head. “But I want to take a short ‘vacation’ and I can’t think of a better way or time to do it. At least back then, I won’t have to keep watching my back. Also, because my peace keepers seem to have a problem in stopping Schmidt, I feel responsible to do it myself.”

The other members of the council looked at each other and nodded again in silent agreement, she was responsible for not stopping him before it had reached the crisis stage they were in.

Taking their lack of protests as approval to proceed, the woman stood up and walked toward the door. When she reached it she turned back and looked coolly at the rest of the council.

“Unless I am killed in my attempt to eliminate Mr. Schmidt the first, I will see you at the meeting tomorrow,” she said just before she quietly closed the door behind herself.

“Good woman, she’ll get the job done. Too bad we don’t have more like her,” the second man in uniform said, looking toward the closed door.

“If she fails are we going to kill her too?” he asked no one in particular.

“A good woman yes, but I don’t think that she is going back purely out of a sense of duty,” the big man said, passing a hand full of old photographs around. Each member of the council looked at the old fashioned two dimensional still photos before passing them on.

Even though the color had faded badly, the image of the man was still clearly visible.

“Handsome man, wasn’t he. I think Ms. Morgan has more than just murder in mind for him. Poor bastard, I hope he survives what she considers love, long enough for her to kill him.”

The young man chuckled, summing up the thoughts of the others.

*Provisional Capitol of the Republic, Leadville, Colorado.*

*0730 Hours 24 September 2175 (New Calendar)*

“Good morning. Madam Group-Leader. Going hunting?” the old man said as he looked at the head of the “peace keepers” through his small window.

The sign above the window said “armory”, and the name plate on his chest said “Jake”. The little gold star next to his name, indicated that he was one of the few men allowed to carry weapons in the presence of the council of five. He was, despite his advanced age of nearly eighty, the best armorer in the “republic”. There wasn’t a weapon made, past or present, that he couldn’t disassemble, repair and reassemble blindfolded. While he was a master at the modern energy weapons carried by the “peace keepers”, his real love was the powerful old projectile weapons common during the 20th century.

“You might say that, Jake,” Group-Leader Morgan said. “I would like two easily concealed hand weapons, manufactured after 1950 and before 1990, with a bore size of not less than 38 hundredths nor more than 45 hundreds of an inch.”

“No problem. I have just what you need. Wait here a minute.” Jake disappeared back into the dark confines of his armory. Five minutes later, he returned carrying two hand weapons, and laid them on the counter. They gleamed an ugly dull blue in the harsh light of the armory.

Group-Leader Morgan picked up the larger of the two, and pressed the magazine release. She deftly caught the empty clip before it hit the counter top. “Ammunition?”

Jake ducked out of sight for a second and returned with a plastic box. He slid it toward the tall woman. “.44 magnum. I loaded them myself. Guaranteed to fire and guaranteed to knock a charging rhino down with one shot and kill him with two.”

Morgan looked up from the gun she was holding.

“What’s a rhino?” she asked, bewildered.

“A rhino was a large animal with a couple of horns attached to it’s nose,” Jake started to explain. He was stopped by the look in her eyes. It was colder than the steel weapon in her slim, delicate appearing hand. A slight bead of sweat broke out on his forehead when he realized that she thought he was making fun of her.

People who made fun of Ms. Morgan didn’t live long to tell of it. Rumor had it that she had murdered her last lover when he laughed at her when she had broken the heel on one of her shoes and had fallen on her rear.

“It’s a large extinct mammal. It lived in the central plains of Africa,” Jake said hastily.

Ms. Morgan could vaguely remember hearing something about the large animal when she had been a little girl in the state run school. There were no more, having all been killed for the medical qualities of their horns. She nodded as the cold look left her eyes.

Jake sighed silently knowing how closely he had missed joining the ranks of the “disappeared”.

“Would you like to try it?” Jake asked, clearing his throat and indicating the weapon she was holding. “You should fire at least a few rounds with it. It kicks like a mule... uh, I mean there is a strong recoil.”

“Kicks like a mule?” Morgan laughed. “I’ve always wondered where that expression was used. Get some ammunition for the other one and let’s go to the range. I want to see what a Thule’ can do.”

*Provisional Capitol of the Republic, Leadville, Colorado.*

*1030 Hours 24 September 2175 (New Calendar)*

“Now I know what ‘like a mule’ feels like.” Morgan said, rubbing her sore wrists. She had fired the entire box of shells for the .44 magnum. Despite the heavy recoil, she had managed to keep her groupings to less than an inch in diameter. She knew that if she hadn’t been wearing ear protection, she wouldn’t be able to hear properly for a long time. “Show me how to clean these, give me some more ammunition and then I’ll be leaving.”

She watched closely as Jake disassembled and cleaned the weapons. He was about to reassemble them, when she put out her hand and stopped him.

“Let me,” was the quiet command.

Jake stepped back and watched closely as the woman quickly put the weapons back together.

She was almost as fast as he had been.

“Uh, if you ever need an honest job,” Jake offered nodding toward the assembled weapons and smiling. He placed the weapons in a fiat metal box and added two boxes of shells for each.

“I’ll take that as a compliment” the Group-Leader responded, smiling with her eyes and mouth for the first time since she reached the armory. She picked up the box, turned and started to walk away. She had gone about three steps before she stopped and returned to the window.

“Yes ma’am?” Jake asked.

“I almost forgot, I need a ‘Re-Former’.”

“Full or partial,” Jake asked, looking at his stock. The little device changed the appearance of the person needing to disguise themselves, either on the surface or down to the molecular level depending on the model used.

“Full. I may need to change my appearance completely after I’ve... when I’m done,” Group-Leader Morgan stated, all business again.

Jake leaned out of his window to watch the woman walk down the hallway. He knew better than to wonder what she was going to do with the guns. She was one of the most attractive women he had ever seen, but she was also the most cold blooded killer he had ever met. There was no doubt in his mind what she intended to do with the weapons, she was going to kill someone. If she used the magnum, it would be a messy and brutal death.

*Warehouse Redevelopment Project, Seattle, Washington.*

*2315 Hours May 5th, 1995 (Old Calendar)*

Briefly sheltered by the overhang of the doorway, the tall well built man turned up the collar on his raincoat and shuddered, watching the cloud burst flood the gutters. He had barely made the doorway in time before the storm hit. The rain that had been falling off and on for the last three days was from one of those cold nasty storms off the Pacific Ocean the city sometimes got in the late spring. Winter like storms that produce rain that chilled you to the bone, taking most people by surprise, and dropping the temperature by as much as thirty degrees in an hour. There were more cold spells in this month than any other. The man shivered again, but not from the cold. For the last three days, he'd had the uneasy feeling that someone was watching.. .or stalking him.

He counted to ten and quickly looked both ways down the empty street. Nothing but silent parked cars greeted his searching look. He ran across the street and into another doorway, this one was the entry to his three story converted warehouse in the center of the urban renewal project.

The foremost thing on his mind when he had reached the outer security door was to get inside, out of his wet clothing, and into a hot shower.

Ordinarily he wouldn't have gone out on a day like today had been. But then again this was not an ordinary day. He had just completed and mailed the final report of the his Investigation into a company that should have been making money, but wasn't. The report wasn't very complimentary and had In fact identified half a dozen people who had been stealing from the company.

He removed his rain soaked clothing and stepped into the shower, intending to stay under the hot water until he'd warmed up. Half an hour later, he had reached the point that he could no longer justify wasting the water.

He'd never cared for mirrors, but conceded that one in the bathroom is necessary, if for no other reason than to shave in front of. However, the architect that custom designed the remodel of the warehouse into a townhouse had for some strange reason, felt the need to make one entire wall in the bathroom a mirror. For no other reason than because it was there, he had fallen into the habit of watching himself in the mirror as he dried off. The reflection was always the same, the man in the mirror was tall, just over six feet. His graying hair implied that he was older than his forty years. His shoulders and chest were broad, muscular and marked with two bullet wound scars.

"Alright, Mr. Gene Schmidt, what new scars do you have this time?" he asked himself as he inspected his naked body.

Of course there were no new ones, they were souvenirs of a much wilder time, a dozen years ago.

Back when he had been an undercover agent for the DEA, with the idea that he could rid the world of the scum that pushed drugs on kids. The larger scar on his shoulder was from a .357 slug that had hit on the very edge of his soft body armor. A third of an inch to the right it would have torn his shoulder off. Because it had been slowed down by the Kevlar fabric of the armor, the slug had turned and pushed itself backwards below the surface of the skin. It looked far worse than it had actually been, and instead of taking his life, It had knocked him unconscious and had saved his life. The gunman, a hit man hired by the powerful drug dealer Schmidt's testimony had convicted, had taken one look at his bloodied body and fled seconds before the patrol cars arrived.

The smaller of the two wounds had been far more serious. And had been the most embarrassing. He had been shot by a woman who had mistaken him, as he crawled through a window during a drug raid, for her ex-boy friend and shot him in the stomach with a .32 automatic. What had been even worse than being shot by the woman, was that he had been crawling through the wrong window in the wrong house. The raiding party had been given the wrong address. The dealer had been captured days after a bloody gunfight. A total of seventeen men had died trying to apprehend the dangerous man. Schmidt had the satisfaction of being the key witness at the trial.

There were no new wounds after the second one. He had resigned from the DEA deciding to go into a less risky business. "Something like bomb disposal.. ." He had half seriously joked to his supervisor. He didn't stop carrying a side arm though, he'd made too many enemies when he had been undercover. Most of them had sworn revenge, making a gun and enrollment in the Secret Witness Protection program both prudent and necessary.

That had been twelve years, three moves and three different names ago. He was living under the fourth and hopefully the last assumed name he would need. For a while after leaving the DEA, he'd missed the excitement of the work. Now he was content just to read about it in the newspapers.

Gene threw a bathrobe over his naked body and walked down to his bedroom. The noise of opening the dresser drawer woke the figure sleeping in the bed.

"Gene, honey what is it?" the blonde asked, stretching her slender figure sensuously.

"Nothing, sweetheart. Go back to sleep, I'll be in to join you In a minute or two," he replied, hoping it was true.

A short while later, dressed comfortably in a pair of jeans, a bulky pullover sweater and a pair of thick wool socks, he sat in a darkened room watching the street in front of the townhouse.

*Warehouse Redevelopment Project Seattle Washington.*

*0015 Hours May 5th, 19~92 ('Old Calendar)*

Morgan watched the building from across the street for an hour after Schmidt had gone inside. She had been following Schmidt for three days, trying to determine the best way to force a meeting. One that appeared entirely accidental, and natural. She thought that she had the answer, his townhouse shared a common entry with an identical dwelling. It was currently occupied, but that wasn't a problem all she had to do was to kill the owner, an unmarried blonde woman about her own age and take over the house. She nodded, satisfied that the plan would work, and stepped out of the doorway she had been hiding in.

She quickly walked across the wet street to her vehicle, opened the door and drove off. She didn't notice that Schmidt had been sitting in the deep shadows of the unlit room on the second floor, watching the street and her.

*Warehouse Redevelopment Project Seattle, Washington.*

*0015 Hours May 5th, 1992 (Old Calendar)*

He had been right, he decided. Someone had been watching the house and following him. He watched the man who had been partially concealed in the shadows of the doorway run across the street toward the townhouse, enter a car and drive away. He hadn't recognize the muscular man wearing a short leather Jacket and Jeans, but his close cropped hair and the way he moved spelled danger as clearly as if he had been wearing a sign. He wondered briefly who the man was and who had sent him.

His thoughts were echoed by a soft voice behind him.

'Gene, who is he? And why is he watching the house?'

Startled, Gene spun around fast, automatically dropping into a combat stance, hands at the ready. Ready to instantly and silently kill the intruder.

The woman in the short nightgown stepped back quickly, frightened by the hard look on his face.

Gene relaxed when he saw who it was.

"I thought I said to stay in bed, Diana," he stated a little more sharply than he intended. He was annoyed that she had surprised him like that. He compensated for his sharpness by putting his arms around her and giving her a kiss. He wasn't surprised to feel her slim and shapely body shiver.

"Gene, who was he?" Diana repeated, still obviously frightened.

Although it wasn't clear if it was because of Gene, or the man in the street, Schmidt turned away from her and closed the drapes, there would be nothing more to see tonight.

"I don't know," he said truthfully. 'All I do know is that he means trouble.'

He smiled and gently turned the girl around facing her toward the doorway. He gave her a gentle pat on the rear.

'But it isn't going to be half as much trouble as you're going to have if you don't get back in that bed right now.'

She gave a little squeal of delight and headed toward the third story master bedroom, Gene following right behind her.

The gentle sway of her hips under the short nightgown almost made him forget his concerns. Before he went to bed he made sure that his 9 mm automatic was fully loaded, and that it and his spare clip of ammunition were close at hand. He would have 29 chances, the number of rounds in the two clips and the chamber, of stopping whoever had been watching him. He hoped it wouldn't be necessary to use even one.

Diana had watched him prepare his weapon with wide eyed wonder. She hadn't even known that he owned a gun. From the confident and familiar way he handled it, it was obvious that he knew how to use it. She realized that there was a lot of things she didn't know about this gentle and kind man she had fallen so deeply in love with. Gene had a difficult time falling asleep.

This had been the first time in the three years since he had moved into the townhouse that he had felt threatened.

*The Quiet Inn Motel Seattle Washington.*

*0015 Hours: May 5th~ 1992 (61d Calendar)*

Group-Leader Morgan pulled the rental car into the space in front of her motel room and stopped the engine.

*'Home sweet, home,'* she thought with some amusement.

She locked the car and making sure that her gun was easily reachable, entered her room. Other than the bed having been made, there was no sign of anyone having been in the room since she had left over 12 hours before. She threw her leather Jacket on a chair and sat on the edge of the bed to remove her shoes.

The gun she had been carrying in the waist band of her Jeans dug into her stomach as she bent over to pull on laces. She removed the small .380 automatic and hideout holster from her waist and placed It under one of the pillows.

She laid back on the firm motel bed and stared at the small cracks in the ceiling for a few minutes, thinking. She would start on her plan tomorrow, she decided. There was no hurry, with her portable time machine, she literally had all the time in the world.

Right now all she wanted to do was to take a shower and get dressed in some dry clothing, find an all night diner, get something to eat, and go to bed. She stripped off her rain soaked clothes and walked naked into the bathroom.

Other than the convenience of being able to go to the bathroom without removing half of her clothing, being a man didn't have much going for it, she decided as she rubbed the two day growth of whiskers on her chin. She would have to shave again while she took her shower. She debated about using the "re-former" to change back into her own body, but decided not to. She didn't want to bring attention to herself by walking out of a room rented by a male as a woman.

She knew that the motel staff would merely think that the man who had rented the room three days earlier had availed himself of one of the dozens of young

women who she had seen on the street corners. There had been no doubt in her or anyone else's mind that they were practicing the world's oldest profession. Second oldest, she corrected herself. The oldest was hunting, much like she was doing now. But her main reason for not wanting to use It was that she was too hungry to wait the half hour It took to recover from the initial unpleasant side effects of its use.

Changing the molecular structure of your entire body wasn't exactly a painless process. Few people did it Just for recreational purposes. A few minutes later she was in the shower, shaving her two day growth of whiskers off, silently cursing the task. A short while later she walked back to the bed, wearing only a towel and feeling as refreshed as she ever would be as a man. She reached over to the small portable radio that wasn't a portable radio.

She wanted to review the file on everything they knew about Gene Schmidt, the first. It wasn't much, no one kept good records in the past, at least not anywhere near as good as they did in the future.

She pushed the 'play' and "stop" buttons on the cassette recorder. A few seconds later she was rewarded with a display of the first page of his file suspended in mid air. She checked the hologram likeness of Schmidt in the upper right hand corner of the "page for the fifth time since she had spotted him. There was no question in her mind that she had the right man. Punching the off button she stood and dressed to go out to eat. She was pleased with her positive identification of her prospective victim. It had been a hard three days brought to a successful conclusion.

And success deserved a reward.

She had already decided on the perfect reward. She would treat herself to a big thick steak, baked potato and all of the trimmings that went with it. She realized with a laugh that there was one other thing about being a man that was even better than not having to pull her pants down to go to the bathroom. Being a man does have ONE advantage, she thought, as she pressed her hand on her hard and lean stomach, she didn't have to worry about gaining weight every time she ate!

The steak had been delicious, as had the apple pie she ate for desert!

*The Quiet Inn Motel Seattle Washington.*

*0900 sours: May 6tA, 1992 (bid Calendar)*

The next morning she arose and dressed in a pair of slacks and sports coat. She needed to check the tax records In City Hall to determine who owned the townhouse next to Schmidt, and when it had last changed hands. She had decided that it would be easier to buy It than to murder the owner. While she was not opposed to a murder to achieve her goal, it would be less messy this way.

It had taken her two hours to find what she wanted, fortunately the last time someone had bought the place had only been 5 years ago. She wasn't surprised to see her assumed feminine name listed as the purchaser. It Just proved that she was/had been successful in her attempt to buy the place. What did surprise her,

was the addresses. She had not only bought the town house next to Schmidt's, she had bought the entire building

Morgan returned to the motel and took the portable radio, with the files and the miniature time machine from its hiding place. The next thing she had to do was to Jump back in time about six years, rent a post office box and open a checking account. She needed to establish herself as a creditable individual. The first Jump took her back to springtime, six years earlier.

*The main branch of the Seattle National Bank Seattle.*

*1042 Hours: June 22nd 1986 (Old Calendar)*

"Yes, sir." The teller looked nervously at the stack of hundred dollar bills. The amount laying before him was nearly twice what he earned in a year. "You want to deposit all of this, into a checking account?"

"Yes. One that pays Interest, if you have one," Group-Leader Morgan said, smiling. The ten thousand dollars laying on the counter was only a tenth of the counterfeit money she had in the small briefcase by her side. She had no fear of it being detected, one of her "peace keepers" had printed it using the original printing plates recovered from the ruins of the old Washington Mint.

"Uh, you realize of course, that the bank has to report to the government any single deposits of \$10,000, when It's in cash?" the young man said, counting the money for the deposit.

'Damn ' Diane thought, she had forgotten that detail.

"Oh yes, I'm sorry. I forgot that I needed a couple of hundred for lunch today," Diane observed, removing two hundred dollars from the stack. "Now, it's only \$98 hundred. Is that reportable?"

The teller shook his head. "Uh, No sir. Two hundred. That must be some lunch."

"Well, I owe a friend a lunch, and I thought that I would take him to a drive through," Diane said, smiling. "And since neither of us has a car, I'll need to rent one."

"Yes sir. Now then, what name do you want to have on the account?"

"Hum, why don't you make it Miss Diane M. Young," she stated thoughtfully. She would need It in her own name, or at least a female name, in order to go on to phase two. She had chosen the last name of 'Young', because it had been her great-grandmother's name.

"Your daughter, sir?" the teller asked glancing at the powerfully built middle aged man, pen poised carefully over the form, ready to fill it out.

Diane looked at him for a few seconds, wondering if this was a normal question he was asking or if there were some other reason. She decided that he was being just nosy.

"No, that's my name, or at least It will be when I finish my sex change this afternoon."

The startled teller looked up into the face of the man standing on the other side of the counter. He would make a very homely looking woman he decided. *'Oh well whatever turns you on,'* he thought.

"Yes, ma'am, I understand," he replied with as much aplomb as he could muster.

Satisfied that she had gotten her point across to the teller about being nosy, she went to the post office and rented a postal box, the largest one they had.

The last thing she did was to subscribe to a financial newspaper, giving the box number as her address. Once the papers started coming in, she would make twice monthly trips back to retrieve them. From there it was a simple matter of bouncing back and forth while "playing" the Stock Market.

Although there would be little play with the knowledge of what had occurred in the past.

*Warehouse District, Seattle, Washington.*

*1345 hours: June 22rd, 1989 (Old Calendar)*

Diane made her next Jump five years in to the future, about three months before the sale date on the Tax Register. The first thing she did was to call her bank to check her account balance.

She was a little surprised to find out that she had over \$3 million. And that didn't even include the balance of the bearer bonds she had stashed in a safety deposit box. She now had enough money to do what she wanted to do, and could start on phase two.

She had to convince a man by the name of Johnson, who still lived in a small apartment of the warehouse, to sell. She was surprised at the condition of the structure containing the warehouses and how run down the neighborhood was. They were a stark contrast to the way they would look five years in the future, the first time she had seen them.

Right now they looked like they were ready to fall down.

"Mr. Johnson?" Diane asked the elderly man as he opened the door.

He looked as seedy as the place he was living in.

"Yes?" he replied, eyeing the middle aged man suspiciously. He looked like a government man, most likely one of those damned tax collectors.

"I have a proposition for you about your warehouse, if you're interested," Diane inquired.

"My warehouse? What about it?" Johnson asked.

"I would like to buy it."

"It ain't for sale." Was the quick reply. "Besides, even if it was, I couldn't afford a place with this much room for the price I could get for it. And then there's the

rental fees for all the storage space that I would lose.” Johnson started to close the door. “Wait., you haven’t heard my offer yet,” Diane insisted desperately, she wanted to avoid bloodshed if possible. Murdering the old man would unnecessarily confuse the title of the building.

Johnson sighed, knowing that he wasn’t going to be able to get rid of the persistent man on the steps until he heard the offer.

“Alright, what’s your offer?”

“A check for \$350,000,” Diane stated, knowing that it was the price shown on the register.

Johnson shook his head. It was as much as the place was worth, but hardly what he would consider he needed to buy another place to live. He shook his head “no” again, and started to close the door. “... and three million, tax free, in cash.”

Johnson opened the door wider.

“Would you like to see what \$350,000 is going to buy you?”

“Yes, Mr. Johnson, I would like that very much.”

She was shocked when she saw the condition of the inside of the warehouse and apartment. The only thing being stored in the cavernous building was an accumulation of dust and trash. It didn’t appear as if the warehouses had been rented for years. As for the condition of the “apartment”, actually a poorly remodeled office suit, if she had been asked to describe what a slum looked like this was the place that would have come into mind. It would take a lot of work before either of the two attached warehouses were anyway presentable.

“Alright then, it’s a deal,” Diane agreed as she and Johnson shook hands after the tour. She washed her hands three times after returning to her motel room.

*Warehouse Redevelopment Project Seattle, Washington.*

*2315 Hours June 3rd, 1992 (Old Calendar)*

Three years and another million dollars later, the warehouse had been converted into two huge townhouses. They looked exactly like she remembered them. She felt justifiably proud of the hard work she had put into them. Even the neighborhood had improved.

When word got out that she was converting the structure into what could easily be luxury homes for next to nothing, other investors began to buy up and restore the abandoned warehouse around hers.

Without intentionally trying to do it, she had single-handedly started her very own urban renewal project. As the restoration work progressed, she found the demands of the ‘Republic being pushed further and further to the back of her mind.

It had been months since she had carried the small automatic, something that would have been unheard of had she still been “up there”.

Despite her distaste of being a male, she’d had found several opportunities to use the Re-Former, once when she helped move a new water heater into what she had come to think of as “his” place. The only other time when it had been neces-

sary to use It, she had surprised some young punks who had broken Into what they thought was a young defenseless woman's home while she was In the past to pick up her newspapers. Fortunately, she had returned from the past and had been able to use the re-former without them seeing her. She hadn't had time to do more than remove her blouse and bra before she changed partially into a man.

She could still remember their look of confusion as they were confronted suddenly by a tall broad shouldered man wearing a mini skirt and high heels. Diana had used that confusion to beat the pair with in an inch of their lives. When the police showed up nearly an hour after she had called them, she had already changed back, and was stand-trig over the semiconscious pair holding a frying pan. She had never been bothered again.

**-0-0-0-**

Diane was on the front porch, enjoying the warm sun and touching up the paint on an ornate wrought iron railing when out of the corner of her eye, she saw the man stop his car and get out.

Feigning disinterest, she returned to the painting.

"Uh, excuse me lady." The man said from behind her.

Diana turned and brushed a stray hair away from her face with the hand holding the paint brush. The tip of the brush left a streak of white paint in her blonde hair.

"What is it?" she asked, while she coolly looked him over.

It was Schmidt. just as predicted. The last time she had seen him was from a distance on a rainy night, three years in the future. He was even more handsome in daylight and close up.

"Uh, I understand that one of these are for sale, that true?" he asked, looking up at the front of the townhouses.

There were no "For Sale" signs visible in either of the two bay windows.

"Mine isn't, but I think that the other one might be. You need to talk to the owner, although I doubt if you will be successful," Diana said, appearing to be trying to give him the brush off. "Besides, you probably couldn't afford It," she added, looking at the man dressed In clean and neat, but obviously well worn work clothing.

Schmidt was not to be put off, however by the woman's brisk nature. He was beginning to like the tall blonde, in spite of her rather casual dress of paint speckled jeans and a man's white long sleeved shirt.

"And where can I find the owner?" Schmidt asked, barely containing his amusement when he saw the splotch of paint in her hair.

"I have no idea." The woman shrugged her shoulders. "In his office, I suppose."

"And where might that be?" Schmidt asked patently.

“My front room,” the blonde said, finally smiling. “I’m the owner.

**-0-0-0-**

Schmidt had been pleasantly surprised with the relatively low cost of the completely restored townhouse.

He moved in a week after escrow closed. Because he had moved out of a small apartment, most of his half of the building was void of any furnishings. For a while it didn’t matter, he had been busy setting up his office.

After a month of going from room to empty room, he could stand it no longer, he had to go shopping for more furniture. The problem was, he had absolutely no idea what to buy. The most logical idea would be to enlist the help of the young woman next door.

She answered the door on the third knock.

“Yes, Mr. Schmidt, what can I do for you?” she asked.

He looked the woman up and down, frankly liking what he saw.

She was dressed in what was almost a uniform for women in hot weather in the city. She was wearing thin strapped thong style sandals, bare, well tanned legs, a pair of short, tight shorts and a short sleeved shirt tied in a knot just under her breasts. Her bare midriff as well as her bare legs, showed that she spent a lot of time on the roof working on her tan. He could see by the slight outline of her nipples, that she was braless as well. He wondered briefly if she sunbathed in the nude, and if she would mind if he joined her.

“Uh... I was wondering if I might take a little of your time,” he began apologetically.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know anything about the plumbing,” she replied.

“Plumbing?” he asked startled. Now that she mentioned it there had been a small leak in the bathroom next to his second floor “office”. He had discovered, and repaired it on the day after he had moved in.

“The plumbing’s fine.” He laughed. “No, I came over to ask if you would like to help me buy some furniture for this barn you talked me into buying.”

She considered for an instant. This might be the opening she had been hoping for.

“I... I would like that,” the blonde replied softly. “Let me put some clothes on and we can go shopping right now, if you would like. I know a great little store on the east side that is always having bargains.”

“Sounds fine. And if you would allow me to, I’d like to take you to dinner as kind of a payment for taking up your time,” Schmidt said.

She looked shyly down at the floor.

“I would like that, thank you,” she responded.