



Reluctant Press presents:

LENS SHUDDER

Monica James



A 'NEW WOMAN' E-BOOK

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Reluctant Press TG Publishers

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Lens Shudder

By Monica James

and Cara Mia

Prologue

Robin is a quiet, reserved, man with an 8 -5 job as an accountant. He has one passion which he learned as an elective at the University'; he loves photography, in particular, photo work in the wilds—flowers, animals, rustic scenes and changes in the weather. Though a lonely life for a recent college graduate, he has had more luck with pixels than he has with personalities. Girls interest him but he learned early on, 'they' are not in support of what he wants to do in life. So, his quest for a female photographer goes on. This is not to be, however, as one harrowing experience brought down a crisis on the unfortunate and peaceable man. He was in the woods, one day, and ... well, you can hear the story as he tells it to the psychiatrist.

CHAPTER I – At the Asylum

"Please come in; I'm Doctor Dieter Castine," the psychiatrist said. He pushed the ill-fitted horn-rimmed glasses up his nose and glared at Robin Joyner. His eyes were magnified by lenses the thickness of a Mason jar.

Robin timidly approached the desk. He heard the door close behind him. The orderly had left him alone with the doctor. "Thank you sir, you already have my file. When can I get out of here?"

The doctor chuckled. "In due time, *mon ami*, after we are certain you are no threat to anyone or, of course, yourself."

Robin squirmed in the polished captain chair. He ran his hands along the sides. "I've never hurt any living thing in my entire life."

The doctor flipped open the file. "Which is a mere twenty-four years, I see. Tell me about yourself. We'll get to your adventures in the wilds after I hear your version. Self-knowledge is at a premium around here."

Robin was rapidly losing patience. He took a deep breath and launched a mini-history which, he was well aware, the doctor had in his file. He began in high school to outline his poor performance in securing friendships, including with girls. This failure, he explained to the doctor, was due to his independent nature. His college experiences were much the same with the exception of a quiet 'nerd' roommate at the fraternity.

"I have a two-room den in my home covered with photographs I've acquired. I live alone. My parents lost an argument with a truck that ran a traffic light. They never knew what hit them. The contracting company was fully insured as were both my parents. I have ample income in the form of a trust."

The doctor raised one bushy eyebrow in question. "Are you asking to be released in the care of a board-certified mental health counselor since you are apparently financially capable?"

"I need out of here," Robin emphasized. "I am a woman trapped in a man's body. I know that to be true because of what happened to me. I'm in conflict not only with myself but with you, the staff here, and the entire world in general. I must do something to restore who I am and, if I do not, I'll be wearing the latest fashion in straight-jackets in a padded cell. It is critical you take some action, doctor." He released a long-held breath and sat back, waiting.

The doctor rested both elbows on the desk and tapped his fingertips. "Correct me, please, if I've misinterpreted any of your story. You were in the foothills on a photo shoot, near the tree line, when you came across a body. The pool of blood was not yet congealed so you knew the killer had to be lurking nearby. You decided, instinctively I would assume, to photograph the scene from several angles. The newly deceased was a young woman, college age, with no visible reason to be in the wilds alone. You therefore guessed she was brought there by the killer but forensics found no evidence of another presence. No footprints, torn clothing, nothing. Am I correct so far?"

Robin was encouraged. At long last, someone was taking his story seriously. "Yes. I could see she was very pretty, her long legs were bare, slightly parted and she had a thatch of brownish red hair. I did not know, at that time, she had had sexual relations prior to her death. I've been told there were no signs of forcible entry, rape."

"All correct. The forensics people have sent DNA samples for analysis. Takes time. You will remain here until the police investigators rule you out as a suspect. Now, tell me about this fantasy of being a woman trapped in a man's body, as you phrase it."

"Maybe it is a fantasy. Until this unfortunate event, I never felt it to be true. This is what I would like to make clear. When I was at the murder scene, it was late afternoon, I took several photos from different angles. I have a fifteen-megapixel digital SLR.

"There was a slight chill in the air, not surprising for this season. The mild breeze rustled some leaves on the shrubbery around there. I saw nothing until I transferred the pictures onto my computer. Behind one of the shrubs, I clearly caught a shadow. After looking at several exposures, I could see the shadow was moving.

"At one angle, the shadow was raising from the dead body, like a soul or some such. At another angle, it was no longer a shadow but the form of the young woman. I could not believe it but the truth is inescapable. I've been possessed by the essence of that young girl. I feel very strongly that I have, uh, *she* has, an unfulfilled purpose in life which was cut short by her demise. As time goes on, I get messages in my brain telling me what needs to be done. It is maddening."

As Robin related his tale, complete with recent updates, a timer went off and the doctor stood to excuse his patient. "This is all so very fascinating, Mr. Joyner. We must continue later; I have other patients waiting, I hope you understand. One thought for you to ponder until I see you tomorrow morning. Is this young woman sending messages of a sexual nature? We need to look at that very carefully. If we do not come up with a credible story, there is a good chance you will be shipped off to a facility that houses the criminally insane. Please give all your thoughts and impulses serious consideration, make notes if you can, until we meet again." The doctor watched Robin Joyner leave the office, shoulders bent in defeat, the discouraged remains of a once mentally healthy man.

CHAPTER II –The Orderly

After dinner that evening, the orderly came in with a package for him. Robin looked at the man obliquely, wondering what new development was being added. The man smiled.

"This was delivered today. Obviously forwarded from the mailroom at your work. The return address is a Mrs. Czern. Crystal Czern's mother. Did you know her?"

Robin shook his head 'no.' "This is a mystery."

"Not really. Your story is in all the papers, some magazines, tabloids, media in general. It would be an easy matter for someone to get in touch with you. We are suspicious of packages like this, especially since you are something of a celebrity. We opened it and found nothing threatening, so you may keep it." He was making an effort to be pleasant but he burst out laughing when Robin opened the shoe box.

It was full of Crystal's clothes. Robin pulled out each item and draped them on the bunk. Brassiere, panties, fishnet hose with garter belt, slip trimmed in lace and a linen blouse open at the neck; all a complete surprise. Taped to the top of the box, Robin found a

greeting card-size envelope with a photo in it of Crystal Czern. He looked at the portrait photo long and carefully. 'Yes,' he thought, 'I know this girl. I should; she is me.' He nervously opened the letter Crystal's mother had enclosed.

"Dear Robin Joyner. By now you have learned Crystal was not the girl-next-door type. She always had an intense lust for life and for her mission. I never learned what she thought her mission was but I accepted her, grateful for the sensitive love she always showed me. I am aware of your predicament and urge you to contact me if you have any questions. Respectfully, Mrs. J. Czern."

"This nice lady might be the only person in the entire world that understands what happened to me. Well, thanks for bringing this to me. I've no doubt they might be a little snug but I'll try them on anyhow." He shook his head, hopeless.

The orderly turned to face Robin before leaving the room. "Shall I call you Crystal?" he asked, his tone serious. "If you really are a girl, you must like men. Since I've been assigned to you, would you like it if I come back to visit you later? I would like to be your boyfriend."

Initially, Robin was shocked but recovered quickly. "Look, friend orderly, you are in a position to do a lot for me that I cannot do for myself due mostly to the regulations keeping me here. If you do return, we need to talk about that."

The man smiled and left the room. Robin heard the lock click.

Stretching out on his back, Robin put his hands behind his head and snuggled into the pillow. 'The lady is right,' he thought further, 'this is an insane predicament. Impulses of information come to me more frequently now. I might surmise I'm becoming more open to the idea of being a girl. Well, according to the picture, I'm a pretty girl. That might turn around my social life. I don't remember ever being attracted to a guy nor do I know if any guy was attracted to me. That orderly is a handsome, clean-cut type and he is sensitive, I can tell.' He collected a handful of Crystal's underwear and stroked his face. A thrill went through him totally foreign to him.

He dozed and the vivid dreams moved him. These were not new but, somehow, with the acceptance that Crystal was having a firm influence on his being, the dreams were an avenue of ideas. In his dream, a guy was on a large sailing schooner docking in some foreign port. A transfer bus waited for a pretty girl, dressed in gingham and Buster Brown shoes. The side of the bus had lettering: 'Middlesex Clinic'.

He awoke in a sweat. "Crystal wants me to have a sex change," he said aloud so he could hear the words. "Incredible!"

"What's so incredible?" the orderly asked. He had entered and locked the door behind him. They were alone. It was the middle of the night; the scenario was getting intense. Robin smiled and swung his legs aside so the orderly could sit.

"If we keep meeting like this, I should know your name. Nobody has tags around here, I've noticed."

"I'm Bruce Reston," he said and forwarded his hand to shake.

Robin grinned. "I'm Crystal. Glad to know you."

They both laughed and there was no tension. When Bruce put one hand on Robin's thigh, Robin elected to accept that. "Do you mind me doing this?" Bruce asked.

"What was the old line? Mae West asked the guy, 'Is that a gun in your pocket, or are you just glad to see me?' I have some things to ask of you that might be awkward but there are questions that keep barging into my consciousness. I'm glad you find me desirable. Not long ago I would have been totally confused. Do we have a deal?"

Bruce moved his hand away, cautious. "What's on your mind, pretty Crystal?"

"I want to learn about having a sex change. Where do I go? How much does it cost? What location options are there? Next, I want you to get me some female night clothes so I can start personal conditioning. There's more but that will get you started. If they would let me have a lap top, I could do these things for myself but, top security and all that."

"If you are serious about learning about this, there will be items for you in the mail. Also, I can download some brochures for you on my home PC. It can be our project and our secret. By that, I mean, don't tell Doctor Castine I am breaking any rules. Disaster!"

"We agree. Maybe I'm being premature, considering the trumped-up charges they've filed against me. Anyhow, this can't go on forever. I've not yet hired a lawyer because the tests are not in. Also, this place is kind of a source of thought for me. I can think about the feelings I'm having."

Bruce stood tall and brushed off his tunic. He leaned over and brushed Robin's brow with his lips. "I'll see you in the morning. With some luck, there will be some answers to your questions."

Robin grinned. "Thanks, but you haven't been specific about what you expect from me. I'd like to know that. My attitudes keep changing. It has something to do with Crystal but I can't explain it."

Bruce grinned and looked seriously at the confused man on the bunk. "Robin," he began slowly, "my attitudes haven't changed much in the past twenty years. I like you a lot and, in exchange for my service to you, I expect service for me. I want your mouth."

In a moment, he was gone. Robin was not shocked or dismayed. Somehow, again something he couldn't explain, he knew that when he became a woman, his mission, yet to be defined, would certainly involve whatever sex the situation demanded. It was time to learn, he considered. He was soon asleep.

CHAPTER III – Final Forensics

"Ah, Mr. Joyner, come in," the doctor said, gushing good nature. "Some results are in that round out the, uh, murder of the young woman."

Robin sat down and held his knees together. He immediately wondered why he did that. He never was aware of his posture before. "What have you learned?"

"A great deal. One, the DNA confirmed that the young lady did have a sexual encounter as the police thought. Also, there is no evidence of violence, no rape or beating. The DNA ruled you out which you have repeatedly told us."

"Nothing more? You have ruled me out as a sexual predator but what about motive and opportunity?"

"Maybe proximity is all that's needed for opportunity. It's clear you did not know this girl. Of course, in most men, sex impulses can override common sense."

Robin smiled. "It would surprise me if you found otherwise. Am I cleared of charges now? May I go home?"

"A hearing is set for the first of the week. Quicker than usual due to the publicity, I suppose. They want to get it over with as soon as possible. Can't stand the heat in the kitchen, so to speak."

"All right; I'll be your guest for now. Is there anything more?"

"Yes. What have you done in the way of soul-searching? I asked you to go into detail about your thoughts, remember?"

"Well, sir, my experience with sex is very limited. Even with the presence of Crystal in my life which is getting stronger every day, I still have an attraction to and interest in women. The difference is that my libido, if that's the correct word, is more active than ever. I see sexual situations in daily scenarios that never stirred impulses before. At first I thought I was going crazy; you thought the same. Now I've entered a phase of confusion but the idea of sexual expression is a new presence." He crossed his legs and leaned forward.

"I have a report that you received a package of women's clothing, Crystal's to be exact. Did that upset you?"

"Not at all; I love the feel of the silks and satins against my skin. Also, Crystal's mother intimated in a brief note that I am not crazy and her daughter did in fact have some inner turmoil that is perhaps being manifested in me. I tend to agree with that. I still feel the female orientation I've told you about. The difference is that I now am determined to investigate this in more detail."

The doctor shook his head in wonder. "I was going to withhold this from you but it seems important. Crystal Czern had a lover to whom she was very close. The lover was Sandine Rocheneau, a beautiful Parisian girl. They met in college, their sorority. She has been asked to comment on their lifestyle, their haunts, other friends, love trysts, whatever. All this activity directs suspicion away from you. There are unanswered questions. I had an interesting chat with the authorities about Crystal and Sandine; very heartwarming. As to the identity of the lover whose semen was found in the dead girl, nobody is coming forward on that one."

Robin shook his head. "I know part of the answer. I wonder if, at this stage after all the abuse, they really want to know the truth."

The doctor raised his eyebrow. "And now Crystal has told you all about it. Who is the killer? Who is the lover? How did all this happen?"

Robin uncrossed his legs and smiled. "Yes, it is known to me. What I am uncertain about is whether or not Crystal wants you to know it. It is very possible that all this is part of the mission."

"Mission? What's this?"

"Crystal had a quest; she felt obligated to see it through. Her mother called it a mission and was not able to find out from Crystal the nature of this compelling feeling."

"But you know about the murder scene? Can you tell us about that?"

"Certainly; your friends at the police department would know it themselves if they weren't so caught up in their own procedures. Since Crystal was positioned for sex, they assumed the sex took place at the scene. It did not! After having a sexual escapade, Crystal walked, by herself, up the side of that hill. The cause of death will answer the next question. May I go now?"

"You know the cause of death?" the doctor asked.

"Yes, I do. You surprise me, doctor. If I tell you how she died, and if that is accurate, the logic is inescapable. I'd be the one to know that, now wouldn't I? Ergo, mums the word."

"Um, yes, I see. The autopsy findings have been withheld. If what you say is true, even some fraction of it, it will be one of the strangest stories in the annals of psychiatry."

"I suspect, doctor, you will be the author of a paper to be published in the journals. It will require a fancy name. It will become known as the 'Castine Syndrome'," he said.

"And the shadows you claim are on the photographs you took of the murder scene; have the police seen them? Is there enough contrast, resolution, to provide a picture? Is it really the girl's soul?"

Robin smiled. "Doctor, I do believe you are coming to your senses. I agree it is all out of the realm of reason. You, are a scientist; evidence is needed. That being absent, the only conclusion is that it is a beguiling illusion dreamed up by the mind to divert interest."

"You may go, Joyner; there will be more queries next time. You have not made your sexual history clear to me and there has to be some answers there."

Robin guffawed. "Again, you hear but you don't listen. Doctor, there is a reason you've not delved into my sexual history. It is next to nil, nothing."

"Twenty-four year old virgins are rare, Mr. Joyner. Now, good day. Tomorrow, same time."

"Thank you, doctor. I've a strong hunch that the history you are seeking is yet to be. Tomorrow, then."

Arriving back at his room, without escort he noted, Robin found Bruce sitting on the bunk.

"I was concerned about your meeting with Castine. Anything happen?"

"Yes, they are finally dealing with the facts instead of their imagination. No doubt that Crystal was murdered. I cleared up part of the enigma by pointing out why they found no evidence of a second person even though she had been recently sexually active. Easy, anyone could have figured it out; she walked to the murder scene by herself. The perp was waiting for her. There's a new twist." He threw his light jacket on the easy chair.

Bruce came forward and they embraced. Robin had never been hugged by a man before, certainly not his father. When Bruce dropped one hand onto his derriere, he felt a feather-tickle thrill. "I've wanted to do that ever since that first day we met," Bruce said.

"You coming back after your shift? And, more important, did you bring me some answers?"

"Yes, more than asked for." He went out quietly.

Robin plunked down on the chair. 'Not sure I can bluff my way out of this one but I sure can raise a smoke screen,' he thought idly. 'When in Rome...' He made an effort to come to terms with his growing curiosity about Bruce. 'How can a guy like that get it on without a girl? He is virile, handsome, sensitive and apparently experienced. Why am I wondering how big his cock is? He did say he wanted my mouth, not the other end.' He threw some water on his face and went to stand in line in the cafeteria.

Bruce came in promptly at seven, the end of his shift. "I have some info you asked for. Every year, many guys submit to a sex change. Every one of them feel like you've said, like a girl trapped in a man's body. There are some basic steps to take. They start on hormones, then get facial surgery and then complete sexual reassignment."

Robin was thoughtful. "Face surgery? I already have some changes, subtle but obvious; I look like Crystal's brother. The family resemblance is clear. I wouldn't want to change that. When things are all over, I want to be Crystal. I will look like her, walk like her, talk like her, remember the adventures in her life. It is a mystery but she has already taken over important parts of me. Why not? I'm not like most men; let me be a woman."

Bruce sat on the bunk and stretched. "I hope you're not looking for an argument from me. Tell me, is this what you asked for? I have the names of several psychologists, also social workers who have training in transgender issues. It seems logical you would want guidance from professionals already working with transsexual clients and crossdressers."

"I am impressed. I did not expect you to be so thorough. I realize you want to keep this job because it brings you in close contact with guys like me who can give you an occasional romp. I want to learn; Crystal is pushing it. One area you cannot help with is called girl-on-girl. That's what Castine told me and it hit a chord someplace in my brain. Crystal liked girls; it appears she was bisexual. Um, makes sense."

Bruce unbuttoned the side buttons of his hospital tunic and shrugged out of it. He had on an undershirt that showed his muscled shoulders and arms. Next he kicked off his

trousers and left them in a white pile on the floor next to Robin's bunk. "Come lie with me," he said softly.

Robin approached to stand next to the bunk. "I'm not sure what you want me to do."

"Strip to your boxers. I like to see what I'm getting." He reached out and stroked Robin's thighs.

A new attitude ran through Robin's brain. Looking at Bruce, he saw the masculine body. 'Crystal is going to like this, I just know it,' he thought and carefully undressed as Bruce watched him with an eerie glare. 'Like a spider,' he thought. Clad only in white boxer briefs, Robin carefully stretched out next to Bruce on the bunk.

Bruce lost no time. He pulled Robin's naked shoulder until they were face-to-face. He nibbled at Robin's lips and pressed to insinuate his tongue into Robin's mouth. It was another new experience. He pulled away, hesitant. "Give me some time, guy," he whispered. "Maybe I'm not ripe fruit yet."

Bruce grinned. "Sure, we have all night. Give me your hand."

Robin let Bruce guide his hand to the waiting erection. "Now Crystal has felt a man's cock. Not so bad, is it?"

Robin gulped. "Not at all. I guess I should call on her experiences; my own are woefully inadequate."

"Whatever works," Bruce said. "You have never had your cock in a warm, adoring mouth?"

"That's right. Have I that to look forward to this evening?"

"Why not? Maybe you will be more direct if I show you what to do."

"Oh, OK," Robin said. He wondered why he felt out of breath.

He raised his hips to assist Bruce in removing his shorts. Experienced hands and fingers deftly captured his genitals and urged an element of rapture. As Bruce stroked the length with his fingers, Robin came to life in full. Bruce leaned over close enough for Robin to sense the warm breath.

"You ready for this?" Bruce asked.

"All new to me. I can feel an urge totally unfamiliar. Bruce angled his body and captured the firm penis between his lips, kissed the corona and fondled the testicles with a tender touch. With a 'Um, good,' he jockeyed the throbbing meat into his throat. Robin started responding by throwing his hips up and frantically catching Bruce's head in his hands. The stirring in his loins was upon him.

Abruptly, Bruce stopped and withdrew. Robin had to quell a frantic rush before he could speak. "Hey, is that fair?"

Nothing more needed to be said. Bruce captured Robin's head between his hands and forced until his straining cock was working Robin's lips. Robin parted tentatively, then, in a wave of complete abandon, sucked Bruce's engorged tool against the moist bed of his tongue. He then began working, in-and-out, up and down, until Robin was caught up in the rhythm. When Bruce pulled partially out, ready for the next plunge, he grabbed

Robin's hand and had him jerk his thick shaft to keep up the growing sensations. In a very few more minutes, Bruce bucked, called out and began ejaculating in Robin's mouth. Robin dutifully swallowed.

Bruce sat up. "Well, is Crystal proud of you or what?"

Robin, still out of breath, could only shake his head. "What are you going to do now?" he asked.

"Nothing; lessons will resume tomorrow." He dressed and left his forlorn lover unrequited on the bed. The door closed and locked.

CHAPTER IV – Back to Basics

In the morning, Bruce stood next to Robin's bunk a long while contemplating the client who was, in a fascinating way, making so many life changes. Finally, he

tapped the bed frame with his shoe until Robin woke up.

"Hi. Is this first call for breakfast?" Robin asked, his eyes owlsh with sleep.

Bruce smiled. "I should ask if your adventure last night caused you any concern or, of course, indigestion." He smiled and sat at an angle on the side of Robin's bunk. He pressed Robin's hip.

"If you mean a possible hangover of some kind, no; all is well. I thought about what we did before I went to sleep. I'm glad it happened. I now trust you and trust is another 'first' for me. Why this early call? Are you horny?" Robin grinned and sat up in bed.

"You are sassy; I like it. To the business at hand, as promised. This will surprise you but I have to confess I have a girlfriend. She was once a guy and has a more intimate scenario for you. I explained what the doctor calls your 'fantasy'."

Robin yawned. "You might have opened a can of worms last night. I don't know yet. What does this charming lady have to tell me?"

Without pause, Bruce went into TG detail as he understood it. "First on the agenda, I've brought more reading for you. Ellie, once named Elliott, has volunteered more information than I knew was tucked in her pretty head.

"When they release you, it is strongly suggested you begin cross-dressing right away. The idea is to get comfortable with your feminine side. This is a necessary step, Ellie would have us believe. You can call on a therapist early on; you'll probably need some expert guidance. Streetwise TG hopefuls call their therapist a 'gatekeeper' with the same reverence a successful prostitute reveres her pimp.

"Next, you can expect the lifestyle change, daily habits as well as impending surgery, to be disorienting. After all, you've been Robin Joyner for a long time. Is this sensible?"

Robin squirmed. "Yes, and thank Ellie; I owe you guys a dinner if I ever get out of these royal duds." He pointed to the hospital gown.

Bruce laughed. "Let me finish and I'll go with you to breakfast. You'll probably have some questions after a cup of coffee."

Robin kicked the covers away and swung his legs off the bed. "You can look if you want."

Bruce's eyes went wide. "What's this? Why, you old hussy. You shaved your legs."

Robin burst out laughing. "Yes, last night I woke up and decided to surprise you."

"You succeeded. Now, come on, let's go eat, I'm hungry if you're not."

They found a private table in the dining room next to the window. The scene, as Robin saw it, was not idyllic but he felt good about it. After a third cup of coffee, he looked at Bruce with a stare. "So, what's the next topic?"

Bruce took a deep breath and, after glancing at the clock, continued his sex change run-down. "First thing, when you get home and situated, contact the local transgender help line. I think Ellie knows where the community center is that has group meetings of folks with common interests. You can feel your way through all that."

"I thought I would resist, be embarrassed, but I'm not. Anything more?"

Bruce raised one eyebrow. "You don't know what you just asked. What I told you will be an immense undertaking. There will be obstacles, some of them with others in your life. You will surmount them, I feel certain. Web sites can help you locate clubs or groups, like that. A link, like IFGE.com, can get you a list of qualified therapists to contact."

"It seems I hooked up with the right counselor when I found you."

Bruce glanced again at the clock. It was nearing time for him to report for work. "By the way, Ellie put me in touch with a lawyer as you asked. Please read the materials I left for you. We can discuss any questions when I come in after seven this evening. By the way, you used the phrase 'hooked up' a minute ago. You were right about that. See you."

In a moment he was gone.

"Ah, Joyner, come in," Doctor Castine said. His attitude seemed expansive to Robin which immediately put him on guard. Nevertheless, he knew the doctor was the key to his release.

"You asked to see me," Robin said and sat down. Though he was wearing the standard hospital shirt and trousers, he caught himself wishing he had a skirt to adjust and a body to show off. He was amused remembering Bruce's surprise seeing his shaved legs.

"Yes, Joyner. I have a full schedule today so we need to be brief. First, I've been informed by the court liaison that releasing you is up to me. They use words like 'back into society' as if you are some monstrous, untamed threat. Are you?" His brow wrinkled in question and concern.

"Sir, please cite the evidence. I did not have sex with that girl. When the cause of death is learned, they will quickly see I have neither the expertise nor the skill to carry that off."

Again, the knit brow. "You are telling me you know the cause of death."

"I'm also telling you I have this message from Crystal, not from any personal knowledge. I'm relying on our doctor/patient privilege here. I want that release so I can get on with my life."

"I believe you to be a clean chap, Joyner," the doctor continued. "There is very little opportunity here for sexual expression unless you do it yourself." He chuckled as if over some secret joke. "What about your sex life before you came into our custody?"

"I'm a virgin. I admire girls, especially their bodies but so far most girls do not include me in their sexual menu. There is one young lady where I work, currently pregnant, who has feminine allure. I'd like to bed her down but she has other interests in her life."

"Do you feel safe lusting after married women because they are no threat to you?"

"Maybe; that would take some psychological probing, I suppose. Tell me, doctor, is it unusual in your experience, to talk to a man, such as I am, who lusts to have oral sex with a woman but not the genital contact most men crave?"

He pushed his glasses back up his nose and stared at Robin. "Not unusual but I've learned that sometimes a man goes down on a woman only when there is emotional involvement. Sure, a one-night-stand might qualify for a brief relief from some tension or other. In the main, however, love is in the equation."

"I see. I do not love the pretty and pregnant lady I know but I feel myself capable of being in love with her. An interesting chapter in my personal psyche probably."

"You are old enough to have been approached by male homosexuals. Has that happened to you and how did you react?"



"My reaction might hit a one on a scale to one to ten. The word you're looking for is 'loser'."

The doctor smiled. "It's likely you were hit on and didn't know it. So, moving on, you have no brothers or sisters. Do you attribute that to some conflict your parents were dealing with?"

"I've no such knowledge. Both my mother and father not only loved me but were supportive all the years I can remember. Their loss is, even today, still felt deeply."

"Many gay men express an unusual attachment to their mothers with very little paternal bond. Would that describe you?"

"No, sir. I don't believe that to be the case."

"Did you kill Crystal Czern?"

"No sir, I did not. Asking such a question out of the blue amounts to either impudence or arrogance, neither of which strikes me as professional."

The outburst didn't phase the doctor. They both paused as if to regroup. Next, the phone buzzed.

"Yes, he's with me now ... I see, probably to be expected." He held his hand over the mouthpiece and looked sternly at Robin. "Joyner, did you engage the services of an attorney? What do you want?"

"Release with no contest. I'm aware you are doing your job and I respect that. You people have no cause to detain me. Tell whoever that is that I want to go home; nothing has been proved that indicates I'm a threat to anyone."

The doctor returned to his call and listened. "Very well; that's agreeable from my viewpoint. Thank you, goodbye." He faced Robin and smiled. "This is Friday, it's too late to process the paperwork so you may plan to leave on Monday. Please call off your watch dog."

CHAPTER V – So This is Sodomy

Bruce entered a few minutes after the hour. "Castine tagged me this afternoon," he began. "He sure asked a lot of questions. Did you tell him anything? From what he asked, I don't think he suspects we are enjoying sex with each other but, he might have sensed some vibes; he's good at that."

Robin laughed. "Nothing to say. We went a few rounds in the verbal boxing ring today. Your lawyer contact called at exactly the right time. I'm to be released on Monday."

"Wow! That's service, I say. One phone call did it? Great!"

"Habeas Corpus or something. They have tricks we don't know about."

"I'm happy because you invited Ellie and me to dinner. Do we get to pick the place?"

"This isn't a duel; choice of weapons. Yes, a nice restaurant with some peace and quiet and a good wine list. You guys OK with that?"

"Ellie wants to meet you; she feels you are 'one of the clan.' I think you'll like her but don't try to seduce her with your feminine body and flashing eyes. Yes, I'm kidding. Now, to the required reading for today."

They went carefully over some of the brochures Robin had reviewed during the day. They discussed items and Bruce made a separate list of topics to go over with Ellie or a therapist. In a few hours, they had exhausted the project.

"I'd like to hit the shower before I change into the night clothes. I guess we should do that."

"Right; I'll be back in a while. We have an orderly squad locker room, showers and so forth."

Robin pulled the covers up to his chin and waited. He amused himself with being the bride while the groom is away. The ridiculous dream made him smile. He soon dozed off, not to awaken until Bruce raised the covers and let in the cooler air.

"Where were you?" Robin asked. He then gasped when he felt Bruce's naked body meld against him.

"Duty telephone calls, nothing more. You feel terrific."

He moved his hands in a slow, teasing motion over Robin's naked back down to the hips. He easily captured the half-erect penis and began a stimulating stroke until it was full and ready. He moved one knee onto Robin's thigh.

"Are you going to let me finish this time?" Robin asked. He could not forget the night before. As he felt Bruce's strong cock poke him, he reached down and returned the gentle caress. "You're big," he whispered.

They kissed and fondled each other for a long time. When manipulating brought Robin close to a climax, Bruce seemed to sense it so he withdrew. Finally, he rolled away and began to nibble at Robin's abs. "You want my mouth, don't you?"

Robin was on the cusp of passion ready to scream his frustration. "Yes, anything. I'll do whatever you, oh, want."

"My need is as great as yours. Turn over on your stomach; go to all fours."

Robin positioned himself and buried his face in the pillow. He felt a soothing emollient being spread on his anus. Next, Bruce's finger slipped inside and moved gently. He expected severe pain, an inability to cooperate, but it didn't happen. Bruce's finger was skilled and Robin only flinched when a second finger entered.

"You're going to get a lot of this when you're the beautiful girl I expect to meet one of these days. Spread your knees a little more; yes, OK." The corona, the size of a ping-pong ball, was being shoved into his rectum.

“Ugh, right; go ahead,” Robin said. He still had his face buried in the pillow.

Bruce went deeper. He began a gentle movement of his hips, in and out, tender in the motion, until he had reached enough depth to titillate Robin’s prostate. With doing that, he reached around Robin’s trembling body and grasped the erect cock with thumb and forefinger. “You can come when I do; you will know,” Bruce said as he kept exciting Robin with his fingers while at the same time plunging deeper into his rectum.

Finally, Robin called out in his passion and began a series of deep-felt ejaculations. At the same time, Bruce’s hot semen filled him. They both fell back, satisfied.

“So that is sodomy,” Robin said rolling to one side.

“You were wonderful,” Bruce answered with a sigh. “Now, get some rest; I’ll be gone when you wake in the morning. Not because I want to but I can’t risk getting caught. We’d both be compromised for no good reason.”

“Agreed. Thanks. My best to Ellie.” Robin was soon asleep.

Saturday was Bruce’s day off but he returned on Sunday. They took turns with fellatio. The fellatio was mutual.

CHAPTER VI – “Dinner at Eight; Don’t be Late”

After his release on Monday morning, Robin headed home to see what he needed in the way of supplies to start his new life. The mail was stacked below the slot in the door.

The official letter, from his employment, was first to be opened. He scanned it. “We apologize...,” it said. It told him his unstable history, demonstrated by the murder of Crystal Czern, left them no option but to drop him. A severance check was enclosed.

He telephoned the lawyer and thanked her for the prompt handling of his release. He gave her the address for billing.

He checked in at the number Bruce had given him and made a lunch date with Ellie Ellisor. Her business was in commercial art. She was free lance, which gave her time to break away for an occasional outing.

They agreed to meet at the Barbary Coast Café. Robin waited outside on a wrought iron bench. He wore a new, very stylish, dark brown leather jacket. His milk chocolate-colored slacks gave him an elegant look. He was nervous that he might be overdressed for a casual luncheon but noted the other customers were equal in their fashion statement.

Ellie was a smashing redhead with an artist’s smock daubed with paint scraps. Her half-length mini-skirt flashed shapely legs clad in full-length cotton hose.

Robin stood up; they embraced briefly and soon were head-to-head in girl talk. Robin was enjoying himself immensely. Finally, he brought up the topic of TG, knowing that Ellie had been through the surgical procedure. By her appearance, even a veteran cross-dresser could not guess she was originally a guy.

"I can see why Bruce is so captivated by you," Robin said to the young girl. "You are an absolute charmer."

She laughed. "That's one in my favor; he has much more to recommend. When we first met, I was a screwed-up loser hustling back alley blow jobs for a living. Each painful year left me with no ambition, no motive, to change my ways. Bruce took me in, worked with me. We went to counseling; eventually we were able to scrape together enough cash to get me the operation. We did this through his earnings at the hospital, plus what I could get selling comic art. Commissions were slow in coming but now I keep pretty busy. I'm told I'm good and I guess the checkbooks reflect that."

Robin grinned. "That is a success story to rival Pygmalion; oops, not sure where that came from."

Ellie chuckled. "You probably missed that class or slept through it. Pygmalion was a king that carved a female statue, like a doll, out of ivory. His need for the girl was so great that Aphrodite turned the doll into a real girl. That, in effect, is what Bruce did for me. I am forever indebted to him."

"So, my fair lady, what pointers might you be keeping stitched under that crown of flaming hair? I'm more determined than ever to give up my male status and be a girl. I would only hope to be as successful as you obviously are."

She looked at him carefully. "There are no secrets, really. And, by the way, Bruce told me about your shock at finding the dead girl and how, in some paranormal way, she is slowly taking over your body. We discussed it. For some reason, Crystal selected you to carry on her mission."

"You are well informed indeed."

"Bruce collects stray cats and finds a home for them. It's his way. He became very interested in you and what happened. We visited Crystal's mom and had a most interesting discussion. We now take the position that everything you say happened is the truth. If there are some flaws in your logic, so be it."

Robin was exasperated. "How wonderful of both of you."

"Oh, he also told me about the sexual escapades that helped you in your decision. Must be the Luck o' the Irish."

"Explain, please, a rational course to take to be accepted in the transsexual surgery program."

"More than we can cover here. By first-hand knowledge, I recommend the Middlesex Clinic on the island of Martinique. They have a reputation for quality transformations, not only sex change but obesity, plastic surgery, and so on. The work they've done with severely burned victims is really outstanding. Their administrative offices have Before and After pictures in the lobby. Bruce tells me you are an amateur photographer. This new adventure you are carving out for yourself should add some dimension to your photo/portrait archives. And, wait until you meet DeDe Devine."

Robin guffawed. "DeDe who? You have to be kidding."

Ellie giggled. "For true, and she is beautiful. No surprise that she was once a guy. She is the jack-of-all-trades at the clinic. If she doesn't seduce you early on, she'll get you later. I believe she collects notches on her douche bag strap."

He just shook his head in wonder. "You make it sound so easy."

Ellie turned very serious, a change from her affable self. "Tell me, how rapid is this manifestation of Crystal Czern? What is taking place that will have an effect on your future plans?"

"Not only do I feel and act more feminine, I'm bombarded with messages telling me what to do, informing me of past events, and so on. I resisted at first, which slowed down the process. Once I accepted the direction, I began to look critically at my own life. I now harbor no doubt that becoming Crystal Czern is the correct course for me."

"In a way this is kind of scary. Bruce told me Crystal left a bereaved girlfriend who lives across town. Are you going to see her?"

"I plan to. The force that I call Crystal is pushing me to go to her. Without being otherwise informed, I know her name and how to get to where she is. That's something I wanted to discuss with you."

"Me? She's not my girlfriend."

He laughed. "No; I want to dress as a girl when I go to meet her. Will you help me with that? I don't know how much of your time to ask for but I'll pay you whatever you ask. This is really beyond me."

"I'll be happy to oblige. I know Bruce wants us both to be supportive. But, be aware, don't ask for a blow job. I'm not in that business any more." She waved a pointed finger at him and they both laughed.

CHAPTER VII – Sex and Sandine

Robin pressed the apartment buzzer. A girl's voice answered.

"Sandine Rocheneau, please," he said trying to control the excitement.

The buzzer sounded and Robin let himself into the foyer. He climbed the stairs two-at-a-time to find Sandine waiting for him in the doorway.

"Welcome. Crystal's mom told me you would probably visit. Come in."

"Uh, I hope you realize this is extremely awkward for me. I know you've been through a very trying time. I wanted to meet you. Something happened to me up there on the hillside when I discovered the body. I'm still coming to grips with it."

Sandine was without doubt, very French. Her dark hair, flashing eyes and light tan skin was Parisian and alluring. She said very little and motioned Robin to the comfortable sofa on the sun porch. Finally, "Mrs. Czern told me not to be shocked but I can't believe it. You look like Crystal's twin." Her accent was instantly charming.

Robin was dressed in the chic raiment of the day as dictated by Ellie. His Capri charcoal turtleneck gave him a feminine flare. He was aware he should feel silly being 'in drag' complete with metallic jacket, beaded necklace and brushed linen slacks. Light makeup, blush and eyeliner, completed the picture. It was working.

"You look terrific, Robin," Sandine said. "We have to discuss some issues, I believe."

Robin was nervous; his voice cracked. "I don't expect you to believe what is happening to me. I hardly believe it myself."

"Perhaps but one issue I do know for certain. Crystal had an immense drive, a will of purpose that even death couldn't stop. If you tell me you have in some way come to share or harbor Crystal in your psyche, I will not scoff."

"It's obvious you two were very close."

"We were lovers; her loss is immeasurable to me. Please, Robin, tell me why are you here?"

He took a deep breath to strengthen his resolve. "OK, here it is; believe it if you can. Some energy, call it soul or essence, transferred from Crystal to me up on that hill at the tree line. Every day I become more and more like her in my thoughts and actions, even my posture. She is part of me and, truly, I've not ever been very much to begin with. Actually, Crystal's influence in my life is moving me in directions I never knew existed."

Sandine pursed her lips. "Again, Robin, why are you here?"

"To ask you for any of her clothing you have. I need to add to my crossdressing repertoire. I'm losing weight in a studied attempt to appear as the girl I believe myself to be. You probably think I'm ill-advised. That's all right; do you mind terribly? What clothes do you have that belonged to her?"

Sandine looked stressed. "Two suitcases. I was going to take them to the Goodwill Store but, for some reason, I kept putting it off. Now, I know why."

"So do I. Crystal wants me to have those things."

On the verge of tears, Sandine led Robin into the bedroom.

The luggage was stacked against one wall. Robin hefted them onto the king-sized bed and flicked the latches. The zippers whirred when he moved them to release the different compartments. He held up a dress and marveled at the thin waist.

"I sent that package to your work. Mom Czern told me you received it at the asylum. I saw your picture in a magazine and, can't say why, I felt you should have the connection with Crystal. Maybe that prompted your interest in these other things. What are your plans?"

"To become Crystal Czern in body and person. I'm convinced it can happen and, as Dame Fortune has smiled upon me, I can afford it."

Sandine was skeptical. "Crystal is in you and guiding you; I can't dispute that. But you are a guy, though right this moment you are a stunning transvestite. Are you confident about this? Might you be reading too much into the shock of finding the beautiful girl dead on the hill that day? Did you kill her? Did she surprise you doing something very private, whatever? Did you have sex with her?"

Her rapid attack, he realized, was born of longing to understand.

"The discovery was accidental. I know there is an independent source of some kind at work here. The killer was there; I took pictures which I have shown to the police. They thought me crazy, accused me just as you have done, and shipped me off to a mental hospital for a rendezvous with destiny. Crystal slowly, methodically it would seem, took over my body, my thinking, my reactions. I did not have sex with her. Necrophilia, I believe is the term, is abhorrent to me."

Sandine sat down heavily on the wide bed. "You're right; it is difficult to believe. With no solid evidence, I can see how the investigation went astray."

"I can give you evidence, lots of it. To begin with, when I left after a brief visit with Crystal's mom, I came here without asking directions. I knew which apartment number to look for. Nobody gave me a detail on your name, address or what you look like. My steps and thoughts were being guided in ways I do not understand."

"Right; I think you are nuts. Anything else?"

'OK, here goes,' Robin thought in desperation. "You and Crystal met in the Performing Arts class at the University. She told you she liked your looks, especially your legs. You laughed at her. Later, on your first date, Crystal went down on you without hesitation, an eagerness she couldn't control. It was a first time for her but not for you. You have an odd birthmark in the small of your back, like a half-crescent. Crystal used to kiss it and make up stories about your aristocratic past. Shall I go on?"

Sandine was in tears. "Nobody could possibly have put that all together; I don't think of those things often myself. I am forced to believe you; Crystal has taken over your body." She looked oddly at Robin. "Uh, this sex change. Middlesex Clinic? Crystal knows about that because she had an experience with a transsexual. Not a sexual experience, she said, and I didn't question it. Did she have sex with that transsexual?"

Robin answered quickly. "She told you the truth," Robin answered firmly. "She did have sex with him the day she died. He is the killer."

"Oh, my gosh, please; don't say that. I know her, the guy/girl I mean. Has the autopsy been released? What are you saying?"

"The tee-gee is passing for a girl to this day, no doubt. The male genitalia are still functioning. As a guy in that respect, he was able to force Crystal onto her back, and maneuver her into accepting him. Thus the semen of the unidentified man. Girls don't leave semen deposits. The detectives would discount the perp as an error in the analysis. He/She is free of worry. I don't know any of that; Crystal does."

"In a strange scenario, it does make sense. The newspaper said there was no evidence of another person anywhere around the murder scene. Can Crystal answer that?"

"She already has. It's quite simple. Your TG actually did follow her up the hill that day. Because he is rather slight of build, he merely stepped only in Crystal's steps in the sandy loam soil. There was a slight breeze which I showed the investigators in the photographs. At the tree line, there usually is a wind whipping up little sand funnels. It appeared, therefore, that only Crystal went up that hill. The killer simply retraced his steps and disappeared.

Sandine started to cry; sobs wracked her body. Robin moved quickly to embrace her to offer comfort. "Crystal did not leave you, Sandine. She will be with you always. It was just sex at first but, with some time and consideration, self-knowledge and observation, she fell in love. You are part of her mission, the quest her mom told me about. I do not know in what way but I feel certain that, when the time is upon us, Crystal will make it known."

"I can't handle this," Sandine sobbed. "I believe everything you've told me. I am deathly afraid of coming face-to-face with Crystal's killer. He probably is the serial rapist on campus. Cops don't see him; he's out of the loop. Please, take the clothes and leave."

Robin carefully closed the luggage and moved into the living room. "When Crystal returns from the Middlesex Clinic, she will come for you. Don't be freaky. It is part of your shared destiny. Call it the price of love rather than the debt of loss."

He left without looking back.

CHAPTER VIII – Double Destiny

Robin's next stop was Campus Housing. Several studio/patio garden apartments were scattered on side streets near the stadium. He considered it might be really noisy there on Saturday afternoons.

He knocked. A very pretty blonde coed in a short fleece robe opened the door and looked at him, eyes wide and owlish. He had apparently wakened her.

"Sorry to disturb you, Miss," he said, admiring the sleepy girl. "I need to speak to Darcy Davis."

She smiled as if in recognition, then went blank. "Darcy is in the back pruning her flower bed. Who shall I say?"

"Uh, just tell her Crystal Czern's sister wants to talk to her."

He heard Darcy Davis scream at the girl. "Imposter! Crystal didn't have a sister." She came charging out to meet Robin who was still standing in the doorway. "Who the hell are you?"

"Take a closer look, Darcy. You see the resemblance, don't you?" Darcy had on denim bib-coveralls. The wide shoulder straps rode on her ample breasts. Her body, small for a guy, petite for a woman, answered an important question. There was no way Darcy, as a guy, could get along on the football field. The phrase 'hundred pounds soaking wet' applied. 'This is a lesson in transsexual behavior,' Robin thought. 'Doesn't look dangerous to me; maybe just a tad unhinged.'

"All I see is a cross-dressed guy looking for trouble. Amscray, if you remember your Latin."

Robin laughed. By this time, the cute blonde had retreated to the kitchen to put on coffee. "My name is Robin Joyner; perhaps you've heard of me. I'm the guy they tried to pin Crystal's murder on but it didn't work out. They're still looking for you, Darcy."

There was a long silence, so quiet it was deafening. She stepped back from the threshold. "Come in. Maybe I've been too hasty. Coffee?"

Robin nodded and walked directly to the kitchen table. He took the chair next to the pantry. There could be no doubt Robin had been there before. "I am here on a serious matter, Darcy," Robin began. "Sandine tipped me as to who you are and, with some luck, I had no trouble finding you." He looked around the small kitchenette as if speculating. "Is that nice-looking girl with the pretty figure Crystal's replacement? Maybe you've had several since that day on the hill."

"You're damn smug, I'll say that for you. Sandine has no way of knowing

Crystal visited me here. I don't know what she told you." She cracked her chewing gum and watched Robin, very aware of the threat.

"Oh, very little, actually. She does know you and Crystal were acquainted because she asked Crystal if she had sex with you. Crystal denied it. At that time, it was the truth, right up to the day Crystal died, as you well know."

Darcy's eyes closed to suspicious slits. Her voice was level and controlled. "You better tell me what this is about."

"I'll take that coffee black. Very generous of you."

There was an extended tense silence while the stunning coed poured the coffee. Darcy removed the cud of chewing gum and wrapped it neatly in a cocktail napkin. The napkin had advertising on it for a local bistro. Robin faked interest in the name of the place, took the napkin, looked at it and stuck it in his shirt pocket.

Darcy had no way of knowing it was to be a DNA sample. She had other matters on her mind. "You have walked into a hornet's nest, Joyner," Darcy said after a long pause. "Not many hornets left, not so?"

"Apparently enough to package a lethal dose of venom. Did Crystal's disinterest in you as a lover justify doing that? You surely knew she was in love with Sandine. It was a strong bond; not one you could surmount, not so?" He liked using the 'not so' in place of *n'est pas*.

"You don't know what you're talking about and, if you did, proof is way beyond your reach."

"I didn't have the entire scenario in mind until meeting you. The transvestite act is well developed. You've been on hormones for a long time, I can see. There is only the one remaining masculine trait to consider. When you get some luscious young college girl alone for an ostensible girl-on-girl session, they are probably in shock to feel that giant cock invade. Little guys have big penises."

At this juncture, Robin looked up to see the blonde with her back to the kitchen sink. Her face was contorted in mild terror; the 'secret' she harbored about her lover had been

broadcast and she wasn't comfortable with that. "Can I warm your coffee?" the girl asked, stammering.

"You know, Joyner," Darcy began. "You've put yourself in danger. That's what I meant about the hornet's nest. How do you think I should react, knowing you are wandering about shooting off your mouth?"

Robin stood up to go. "Believe me, Darcy, you are the one who is in danger. You better think twice before you murder some other willing female. Damned if I can see your allure; maybe one day I'll understand. So, good day, young sir." He emphasized the word *sir*. He moved toward the door, the first time he had shown his back to the unnatural rapist. It was 'now-or-never' for Darcy Davis. Nothing happened.

Outside, Robin walked briskly away from Darcy's cozy studio. That was when he heard the rapid footsteps behind him. Someone was running to catch up to him. He waited until his pursuer was almost on top of him, then swiftly turned and raised both hands to send the attacker sprawling. It was Sandine Rocheneau. He smiled, relief washed across his face.

"Please, Robin, wait," Sandine said, out of breath. "Where are you going? Take me with you. How much more can you tell me? You've already put my mind at ease somewhat. This panorama of insanity is upsetting me. I thought I had control; I do not."

Robin embraced her. "Do you want to do a favor for Crystal, uh, for me?" He handed the folded napkin to her. "Give this to that nice detective. He has to have left you his card. It's chewing gum straight from the killer's mouth. The DNA will match the forensic records."

He led her to the car which he had parked about a block away so as to intrude without warning. That part of the ruse had worked to perfection.

"Are you angry I followed you here?"

"Angry? No; put me down as informed. You knew where I would be. I did not know if you were willing to help Crystal clear up this awful chapter of her life." He held the door for her and admired the flash of legs as she sat inside. He wasn't sure if it was his motivation or Crystal's but it didn't really matter. He had come to understand that, in the not too distant future, 'he' would be a 'she' by the name of Crystal Czern. That was all that concerned him.

"Nice car," she said absently. "Where to from here?"

"I'm dropping you off at police headquarters. If I go in there and give the detectives this evidence, they would either laugh me out or lock me in. You will have their attention as soon as you go up to the desk. Guys appreciate your beauty; you already know that."

"All right; I don't mind. After that you have to feed me. I'm hungry."

He raised one eyebrow in surprise. "Are you really human or merely humane?"

"Those guys were correct from the start; you are insane."

When she came out from the police headquarters, she hurried to let herself into his car. "They weren't sure but they took it. Sort of like protocol with the police; if it isn't Florida, it isn't an orange. Something like that."

They were soon at the Ham-Haven drive in. "And you say I'm crazy. We are a pair, I do believe. Uh, how do you see things? You and me, I mean."

She looked at him with a stare that was long and hard. "I don't know. The more time I spend with you, the more I can see Crystal; little things remind me. Does her personality, her being or soul or essence, whatever you call it, come and go like the tides?"

"No, she has organized all the clowns and is taking over the circus. Stronger all the time. Want me to prove it?"

Sandine munched on her burger and teased a dill pickle with her tongue. "Yes, I want to learn more."

"Could you just cooperate for a minute and forget what you see when you look at me? Think of Crystal and, this will be easy for you, tell her—through me—what you want her to do. I already know the answer."

Sandine blushed, closed her eyes and sighed. "Take me someplace. I need you."

"That's how I feel as well," Robin said. He was suddenly aware of the stir in his trousers and wondered while his brain was idling if he was being disloyal to Bruce. "That's crazy, for sure," he whispered.

Sandine heard him. "I don't think it's crazy, not at all."

He grinned. "Oh, I didn't mean you and me. There is someone else."

She looked crestfallen. "Isn't it always the way? If you are going to continue being Crystal, you better dump her and come to me. Let's have some justice here."

He pressed her arm. "Not a girl, a guy and only a couple one-night-stands at the asylum. I was a virgin up 'til about a week or so ago; the ward orderly seduced me. I loved it."

She looked pacified. "So, a little fellatio never hurt anyone, I should think. Thanks for telling me. Does he know about Crystal?"

"Yes, in detail. I had several sessions with the resident shrink. He knew even less and would not believe what I told him. He considers my beliefs, my feelings, to be pure fantasy."

"I didn't know there were twenty-something virgins running around loose. You are an endangered species."

He drove the car to his apartment. "It's a locker room joke. One guy would ask another if he was a virgin. The answer was usually, 'Yes, left arm pit.' Then everyone would laugh, no matter how many times it was told. Part of the game."

"Do you have a girlfriend that knows about all this?"

"That is one phase the shrink got right. Not only do I not have a girlfriend, I've never had one, seldom even a date. She is a fantasy. But, I know her; she is an amateur photographer who likes to tramp around the woods."

Sandine grinned. "So that's what you were doing up on that hill? You were really there to take some pictures of any subject that got your attention. That's how you got so many shots of Crystal. I'd like to see them."

"I'm taking you there. If you are expecting some sex action, Crystal is in lust mode right now."

She waited quietly until he came around and opened the car door for her. He immediately saw the solemn look on her face. 'Um, she's thinking that one over,' he thought in the quiet moment. He popped the trunk and retrieved the two suitcases Sandine had given him. He could tell, from her silence, that she was having second thoughts.

"I'm having trouble with your dual persona. When I recall what Crystal did to me with her mouth and fingers, I break out in the sweats. Wow!"

He unlocked the door and motioned her into the den area which had the elaborate panorama of photo-art. A dozen pictures of Crystal were stacked near the printer. He watched as she carefully thumbed through them.

"Do you see what I see?" he asked. He stood directly behind her and looked over her shoulder.

"I see her naked, beautiful legs and her stacked hair highlighting her head. I see, from one shot to the next, what you mean when you speak of the winds so high up. Ah, here is one with a shadow. I can tell it's a short man. Maybe not a man, a woman." She took one photo, different from all the others, and handed it to Robin. "Here is Crystal, in her paranormal form, walking toward you. It's a wonder you had presence of mind enough to get this. It's priceless."

"The last shadow, the specter you thought was a short man or woman, is Darcy going back down the hill. There was a windy dust cloud about then and some cloud cover. I didn't have time to get any more pictures. Actually, I'm a coward; I knew the killer was there and would shortly do me in. Silly, now that I look back on it."

"Self preservation is not silly. I did not know why she went to meet Darcy that day. You, uh, Crystal, are secretive to a fault. Do you know why she went there? Why did she allow that crumb-bum freedom with her elegant body?"

"Yes, I know, sort of, but I don't get the entire scenario, not yet. It will come in time. Crystal is communicating with our world, telling me things I don't need to know. It is my mind that blocks the thoughts." He sighed and waved at the walls in both rooms. "Please, make yourself at home; there is a lot of photo-art to entertain you. Also, fix yourself anything to eat or drink; the kitchen is well stocked. I'll be right back."

Robin lugged the suitcases to his bedroom. He knew she was rummaging around in the other rooms. He heard the picture window drapes open. Sandine called out her surprise at the panorama—a swimming pool, manicured lawn and a copse of trees in the distance.

When he returned to the den, he softened the amount of light on the rheostat by the door. She shrieked when she saw him standing in the center of the room.

He had piled his hair on top of his head, held by a scarlet ribbon. He wore a printed Merino wool cardigan, fixed at the neck. The skirt was black wide-knit corduroy cut severe at the hem to hug the knees. She recognized the finely-wrought fishnet stockings that belonged to Crystal. He stood with firm resolve on the leather slip-on shoes.

"Oh, Robin, you are beautiful," she said softly, her voice ragged. She walked toward him, seeing in the subdued light the vision of her lover waiting for her. She broke down and cried. He rushed to her, embraced her with both arms and held her shaking body.

"You might have to help me," he said softly. "First we'll indulge your penchant for a hot bath and, only guesswork, a firm back scrub."

She stepped away from him, still slightly shaky. "You really know how to treat a girl, especially for a male virgin."

He led her to the bath and collected some towels, scented soap and added a sprinkle of bath gems. "How could I ever know, getting out of bed this morning, what that buzzer on the front door would mean? OK, I'm in; I'll play your game, Crystal. While I luxuriate, I want to watch you shave. That includes the legs, you know."

He grinned. "Surely, anything to please the resident damsel. I can see very clearly why Crystal loved you. Even now, after all this trauma and drama, she does love you; will always, just as I promised." He allowed the gorgeous girl the needed modesty by turning his back to the spacious tub. He was soon covered with shaving lather. He looked like a circus clown rather than the provocative guy-girl he thought himself to be.

She purred happily while he scrubbed her back and shoulders. A few daring forays beneath the sudsy water to cover her firm derriere brought no objection. Sandine had her eyes closed as if in a reverie. She raised her arms to let him caress her breasts with the sopping sponge. "You do that so well. It is easy for me to make believe it is truly Crystal doing what she did so many times knowing how it arouses me."



He wrapped her immaculate body in the oversize Terrycloth towel. She smiled, eyes sparkling as she watched him, took a moment to tuck the towel in folds under her arms and licked her lips provocatively. His naked body did not distract her.

Under the covers, Robin puffed up the pillow and laid her head gently next to his. "This is what I've wanted ever since I met you," he said and caught her lips with his own in a tender kiss. "Are you surprised?"

She snuggled against him. His erection made itself known but she didn't show any concern. "Let's make that a trade," she whispered. Her voice was atonal, deep, lusty, brushed with passion.

They kissed again for a long, gentle and caring touch until she parted her warm lips. He caught her lower lip with his tongue tip. Without guile, as if to avoid his masculine impulse to play caveman macho, he realized Crystal was the force responding to this tryst. Crystal knew as did Sandine, when Robin slowly, with sensitive kisses, fondled her breasts and nipples with his lips and tongue.

"Your body is a bundle of rapture," he said.

The voice Sandine heard was feminine, tinkling, serious but oddly playful. She captured the strong shoulders with both arms and urged him lower. "Go down on me," she said breathing the words.

"Repeat what you just asked of me but add the name to it."

Sandine's eyes popped open, clouded with a mist of tears. "You don't mind?"

"It is true that a third person is here who also loves you."

She sobbed and threw her hips against him. "Darling Crystal, go down on me. I need your touch so much."

Robin gently pushed her knees apart and began a kissing trail along her thigh. When he went high enough to touch the swollen vagina with his kisses, Sandine all but dissolved, no longer her independent, controlled and personal self. She was a complex of nerves, all sexual, demanding satisfaction. For her, it was indeed Crystal who was there with caresses and fondling, clit licking, sucking, fingers invading her to address the spot only Crystal knew existed.

He pressed and pushed, sensitive to her need and willing to bring all he could to her satisfaction. Her body was an instrument. Her perfect legs were thrown apart in wild abandon. Her scent and taste were an elixir.

Sandine screamed, grabbed his head with both hands, pushed her hips up and jerked as if levitated, a joyful orgasm released from the celibate prison she had endured. She fell back. She breathed in short gasps, closed her eyes and abandoned her body to the comfort surrounding her.

Robin slipped carefully out of bed and quickly toweled himself off where he had spilled a glob of ejaculate that only moments before had pulsed in unison with Sandine's passion.

The epiphany brought them both to tears. Robin embraced her, reveling in the beauty of her nakedness and the knowledge of what had just happened. It was over. Robin preferred to entertain the mystery; it was an exciting beginning.

CHAPTER IX – Cross-Dressers Ball

Within a week, Robin completed a frantic collection effort to ‘upgrade’ his wardrobe. He took Ellie Ellison’s advice literally and was cross-dressing every day, all day. More and more, Crystal became a part of his life, not only in dress, but in thoughts and, after the erotic sex romp with Sandine, sexual attitudes.

Ellie was delighted at Robin’s progress and made a positive effort to be available when Robin slowed or faltered. The goal kept moving closer.

“Ellie, you have been wonderful these several weeks; I can’t avoid the question. Why?” Robin asked.

They were at the Barbary Coast Café, chasing a veggie lunch with non-alcoholic beer. Robin complained, mildly, of discomfort due to changes in his breast line. They discussed hormone therapy as outlined by the therapist. Otherwise, he was happy with the progress. He wore a daring flip-side jacket, burgundy and shimmering with deep purple inside. The v-neck tee was decorated with sequins at the throat. With progress on the weight loss, he still preferred stretch slacks for comfort. When Ellie introduced him to the ‘pussy-gaff,’ she explained he was to wear it when he wanted to hide the genital bulge.

Ellie played with her napkin, folding and unfolding. “I can answer your question. At first it was a game and my man came through with full support. When he arrives from work, he has to know all the action. It’s fun to have a real-life project.”

Robin crossed his legs and leaned closer. “I’m not criticizing, you and Bruce are wonderful people. Maybe it’s my latent inferiority complex; you both are too good to be true.”

“I’ve come to care a lot about you. Maybe, being close, I see the transformation taking place in your body. You have the physical as well as the mental changes Bruce and I both find fascinating. Becoming Crystal is more and more evident.” She paused and winked back tears. “I know one day you will leave us to take advantage of the change, like I did, and I’m certain you won’t regret it.”

Robin reached across the small table and pressed Ellie’s hand. “Thanks, I hoped that. I love you too and, speaking for Crystal, I find you extremely attractive. Maybe I shouldn’t say that.”

“Why not? Bruce and I have discussed this, knowing how we both feel about you. Crystal liked girls and the evidence indicates her need to consummate a large store of sexual energy was active. I can’t ignore that.”

Robin sighed. “I just got the message; you’ll find me attractive when I’m a girl. When you were a guy, you liked girls. It isn’t difficult to understand that you still do.”

They both laughed. "I'm not one to ignore Mother Nature," Ellie answered. "Say, have you been back to see Sandine?"

"No, but Crystal is giving me occasional urges. Sandine is so incredibly sexy. I can't believe I just said that. You're right, there are changes and they are to be reckoned with. I'd like to see Sandine again. I have telephoned several times; she is always friendly."

"And always at home? What does she do?"

"I heard her mention once that she processes health claims. It's an 'at home' job and she seems happy."

"You know what I'm getting at, don't you? Let's plan a dinner party for the four of us. Bruce mentioned it some time ago. Maybe Sandine would like to get a glimpse of the bizarre world we've created."

Robin grinned. "My house or yours?"

Ellie laughed. "Your choice. You are the one to be honored."

Robin was thoughtful, considering the complexities of a gathering he'd no clue how to manage. "My place and I'll pay the expense. But, I feel deficient in the social skills. Will you help?"

Ellie sipped her beer. "Will Sandine freak when she meets a transgendered lesbian?"

"I don't think so. She is anxious about Crystal's return to brighten her life. She should be thrilled. It's been a short time since we had that one-night-stand. I'm still tingling over it when I recall. She might be curious about the changes you've been watching."

"It's settled then. Is Friday too soon? Bruce has Saturday off so he can sleep in. He likes to drink at parties."

Robin punched Sandine's number. "Pretty girl, Robin again. It's approaching about a month since Crystal moved into my body. I'm happy to hear your cheerful voice. I'm with Ellie at the Barbary Coast Café. Is this Friday all right for a dinner party and sleep-over at my place? It's time you met the two mentally delinquent friends of mine." He winked at Ellie. "Fine then, go back to work. I'll be in touch, love you."

Ellie arrived at Robin's flat. It was late afternoon and Robin had just finished his house-cleaning. Ellie went right to work tossing the salad and spreading the lasagna in the baking dish. She uncorked two bottles of wine, one red, one blush, and set out the goblets.

"How do I look?" Robin asked whirling around so his pleated skirt allowed a glimpse of shapely legs.

Ellie applauded with a gesture, one hand in the palm of the other. "I totally think Sandine will be pleased. That *is* what you have in mind, isn't it?"

Robin elected to be devious. "Who can say? I'm going to wait and see but dressing like this, all the way to my pussy-gaff, makes me feel like the sex object of a flock of night dwellers."

Ellie laugh. "Well, you're beautiful. Can we announce tonight that the therapist has released you and you are ready to plan your trip? It would make for a super-festive moment."

"How do you know that?"

"Prison walls have very few secrets. The therapist counseled with the shrink at the asylum, Castine, and word soon spread. Bruce called me right away but I guess you were so busy you didn't see the blinking light on your answering machine." She pointed at the phone console.

Robin sat heavily on the sofa. For a long moment he looked forlorn like a man contemplating suicide then changing his mind. "It's really important, isn't it? I think I'm ready. I have a feeling I've been released from my masculinity already. I'd like to ask you this question since you have the in-depth knowledge. Right now, true to my male ethic, I desire several girls I know in a male-female relationship. Will I, after the operation, feel the same when Crystal comes into her own? I often feel your interest in pretty girls and, from what you've hinted at, you pursue one from time to time. Am I making sense?"

Ellie patted Robin on the knee. "I've not met Sandine but I am guessing she is as excited about your transgenering as I am. She probably sees the operation as restoring your true self. In either event, it's likely she will welcome you with open arms. As to how long she will remain celibate is, no doubt, a matter of concern. If her greatest weekly social action is a trip to the super market, you can count on nature melding with rapture somewhere along the way. The same can happen to you. One reminder and I'll shut up. Whatever you decide, however this evolves, we love you and want to see you happy and fulfilled. Your life to this virginal age of twenty-something has led you to a reward. We want you to have it."

Robin gasped. "You make so much sense. Where did you say I was going? Where is this Middlesex Clinic?"

Ellie grinned. "Martinique, in the Caribbean. It's a French state, they call their states 'departments.' Anyhow, the people there are of all nationalities, including American. Language is rarely a problem but don't avoid reviewing your high school French so you know that 'sortie' means exit and 'ne pas fumer' means no smoking."

Robin looked at Ellie with a firm, serious stare. "May I ask one more thing before the guests arrive?"

Ellie remained open but with a quizzical smile. "Yes, of course; anything."

"May I kiss you?"

Ellie answered by swooping across the sofa and embracing Robin; one arm across the shoulders, one at his waist. She stopped when their lips were inches apart. She waited.

Robin closed his eyes, ran his fingers along Ellie's elegant features, and pressed a loving kiss on those adored lips. When he opened his eyes, Ellie was crying tears of joy, of appreciation, of sincere affection. "Thank you," she whispered. "That was beautiful."

They remained in the embrace until Bruce came bustling in, waving a bottle of champagne. "Celebration libation for your edification," he called out. He kissed Ellie and next Robin. "This is a great moment; are you packed?"

Robin looked momentarily confused. He then smiled, eyes sparkling playfully. "I'm not a girl yet which means there is no sense 'packing.' As for packed, as in 'suitcases,' I'm ready to start. It's exciting."

Bruce grinned and looked at them. "I believe we have created a monster; maybe that applies to both of you."

Ellie checked the status of the baked lasagna while Robin set the table. Finally, a gentle rap on the door marked the arrival of Sandine Rocheneau.

Sandine's appearance made them all gasp. Robin could barely control himself enough to mumble unnecessary introductions. Bruce shook Sandine's hand; Ellie stroked her cheek with her own hand. Robin stood, mouth open, in solid wonder.

Sandine looked like the first day of spring, fresh, clean and full of hope. Her floral skirt with camellia fades brushed smartly when she walked. To be provocative, flesh-tone colored hose were cased in ankle booties with three-inch heels. Only a girl with a proud torso form could wear the V-neck cap sleeve blouse held at the center with a single button. A tight fitting tee-style shirt was caught loosely at the neck and held her breasts with a fastened mini-belt.

Bruce was the first to regain his composure. He raised the champagne bottle and waxed grandiloquent. "To all ye present, this is a solemn moment. We celebrate the coming out, or over, or up, of our beloved Robin Joyner who has this very day received clearance for acceptance at the Middlesex Clinic."

There was a polite round of applause. Sandine grinned happily. Bruce popped the cork and poured four slender champagne glasses. Everyone touched rims, smiled and held the bubbly on high to toast Robin's good fortune.

"Thank you, gentle sir, honored guests," Robin said, keeping up the farce. "I would like to remind you all that this night originated with the sad demise of beautiful Crystal Czern whom we hope to see renewed in my humble form."

"Hear, hear," Bruce said and looked quickly at Sandine for a reaction.

Sandine sensed she was being asked to speak. She set her glass on the coffee table and folded her hands, fingers grasping. "Thank you, one and all. Crystal's memory, all the glory of her being, lives in me and all of you. Thank you for a dignified and sensitive moment." She was silent as an empty room. After a moment, she locked eyes with Ellie, walked to her and took her hand.

"You are so beautiful," Ellie whispered, unable to raise her usual firm voice.

"We need to talk. Robin has told me about you; about what happened. If you've no objection, I want to know what Robin is looking forward to, how the scenario might play out. You seem close. I want to know the details from someone experienced. Will you help?"

The visible sincerity, the caring and affection, touched Ellie deeply. "Of course, let's find a place to hide. Ellie pulled Sandine to her feet. They went to the living area and opened the drapes. The swimming pool and gardens were in stark contrast to the early evening due to the large flood lights. "It's pretty here," Ellie said and relaxed next to Sandine. "I guess it is no secret that you gave us much pleasure just by being here tonight."

Sandine smiled. "Thank you; it's nice to be appreciated. What you perceive is comforting but also a threat. Crystal's killer, Darcy Davis, calls me sometimes twice a day insisting I allow him to visit. 'To chat' is the way he terms it. Needless to say, I'm terrified I will be next. I believe Crystal was forced by Darcy before he killed her. Once his jealousy, his twisted vengeance, was satisfied, in his mind there was no further reason for Crystal to live. Thus, a motive as old as the human genome, I suppose."

Ellie was thoughtful. "What have the police concluded in their investigation?"

"They won't answer my calls. The detective assigned to the case has a sample of Darcy's DNA in his chewing gum, which I gave them. Robin collected it. All I did was suggest they match this Darcy Davis DNA with forensic records of other girls murdered on campus. Maybe the police are doing this, maybe not."

"Whatever reason could he give to hesitate when he has grand jury quality evidence in his hand?"

Sandine let out a long breath, relieved at finally telling someone about her concerns. "The cop is young and sexually ambitious; it's clear, as any girl can tell. When I went into the police station with the DNA evidence, he motioned me into his office area and made light of what I was bringing him."

"I can understand that. By stretching out the investigation, he can string you along in hopes of getting next to you. What the dork is missing is that soon, if not already, the perp is out there planning his next abduction and rape."

"Agreed. There is another factor that involves Crystal that is meaningful. I said from the beginning I could not understand why Crystal would ever consent to meet with this guy for sex. The patent answer is that Darcy told Crystal he would force her girlfriend, me, if she did not cooperate. Thus, a compound motive. What do you think?"

Ellie shook her head in wonder. "Makes absolute sense to me. Nothing wrong with your reasoning. Could you perhaps mention all this to Robin? He would be agreeable to keep you here for safe-keeping. I'm sure of that."

"So am I but I can't do that because all my computer equipment is under tight security, all of it. My job, while allowing me the comfort of being home, has made me a prisoner."

Ellie put one arm around the hapless girl and tightened her hold. "Tell you what, if you agree, I have a lawyer friend who can help. She got me through the judicial system when I needed it really bad. I've had a checkered past. That surprises you, right?" She was pleased to hear Sandine chuckle. "Most recently, when Robin needed help she came through like a freight train in the tunnel. When I tell her what the police attitudes are, she'll come out fighting mad. I hope you get to meet her; she's a charmer."

"Sound wonderful. Uh, is she, uh?"

"Not out yet. Probably a good decision on her part but she isn't a lez-diesel on the weekend either. You can talk to her. Shall we do it?"

"Oh, Ellie, I'm so grateful you are Robin's friend. Maybe we can arrange a meeting on Monday, this being Friday late."

Ellie kissed Sandine on the cheek, jumped up and walked quickly to the foyer to find her purse. "Be right back; I'm going to get my cell phone."

Sandine shook her head, wondering at the energetic girl. Ellie's easy demeanor impressed her as did the pretty face and curvaceous figure.

When she returned, she sat down and hugged Sandine.

"This is so great of you. I have legal insurance so I can pay my way. I just didn't know where to start to protect myself."

"I left a message on her answering machine. She will call; she always has. I've never been successful to interest her in a 'girl-thing' but when she sees you, well, I'll bet she gets wet."

"Oh, you are awful. I've been on the Ferris wheel since I was about ten, I think. The scenery is terrific but you keep going round-and-round without getting anywhere."

Ellie laughed. "When I was a guy, before Bruce rescued me from myself, I would have killed for a smile from a girl like you. Crystal was a very lucky girl to have you. If your analysis of the killer's motive is correct, the bond you two had is enviable."

"You and Bruce, ah, have you been together long?"

Ellie spelled out her usual yarn about Bruce and the 'stray cat syndrome.' She explained the open relationship they enjoyed without implicating Robin in the scene. Finally, the cell phone ringtones burst Gershwin upon them. Ellie outlined Sandine's story and skillfully filled in all the contact details needed. She put the phone down.

"It's done. Honest, Sandine, I was afraid you would be nervous in the company of a transgendered lesbian. Now, I find myself in love with you. That's a new event in my life; it usually takes a long time. How can you have survived this long being so outright sexy?"

Sandine laughed. She did not answer. They heard some music coming from the sound system behind them. Sandine laid her head on Ellie's shoulder. "Are you aware you are starving your newfound sex object?"

"O-M-G! I forgot the lasagna. Let's go!"

After a dinner drawn out by jokes and laughter, with pleasant gibes all around, Robin and Bruce retired to the kitchen to clean up. They kidded Ellie about putting the meal on the table so the guys would have to clean up. It was, they said, a conspiracy.

Ellie punched the sound system and a slow dance number came on. She winked at Bruce and pulled Sandine onto the small parquet area they could use for dancing.

It was a dream holding Sandine close, feeling her firm breasts moving with her body without benefit of a brassiere. Her dance steps, as she followed Ellie's lead, were precise, on the tempo and smooth.

"How very nice. I needed this outing. Didn't know it until now."

Ellie moved one leg between Sandine's knees and stopped the dance step on the exact moment one musician segued to the next. "You feel marvelous," she whispered as if saying something the others might find offensive. "I know you are anxious about Robin-slash-Crystal; we all are. It's going to take some time to make arrangements, get ap-

pointments, travel plans, all of that. Would you consider seeing me occasionally while you wait for the final results?"

"Ellie, I'm flattered, really. You speak with such confidence about your lawyer friend. I'm encouraged that the danger to my person is past."

"I have something to suggest that might help. Since you have to be at your home to do the job, pay the rent, all that, does it mean you can't use your home as your place of business? That would mean going there during working hours but staying here where security is in place. Robin would be delighted, of course, to have you here until he leaves for the Caribbean. After that, you can use his car to get about. Should I approach him with the idea?"

"Ell, that's a marvelous solution to the immediate problem. If that murderer does show up, he'll find a hot welcome. When Robin, uh, Crystal, returns from the trip, the climate should be much improved. Do you think that?"

The music stopped, pausing for the disc changer. Ellie held Sandine close. "You didn't answer my comment. Would you see me if I can drop in from time to time? I'm thinking of bringing my artist supplies and doing some serious still-life portraits or scenes. What do you say?"

"This is all so sudden. It would be swell to have the company. Would this cause trouble between you and Bruce?"

Ellie grinned. "I would like to answer that question right now. Ready? Come with me."

Ellie led Sandine through the double rooms with the photo-art to the small guest bedroom near the front entrance. She touched her lips with her finger. "Hush," she whispered and quietly turned the knob. A gentle push and the door was open wide enough for the two girls to see inside.

They needn't have been so cautious. Bruce and Robin were on the bed, embraced, hands exploring, happily approaching serious sex.

Ellie tugged the door and let it close. Still moving noiselessly, they went back to the living area with the double picture window. Ellie turned to face Sandine. She touched Sandine's hair and ran her fingers along Sandine's neck and shoulders. "Let me," she said, her voice ragged. Not waiting for a response, she touched Sandine's lips with her own in a warm kiss packed with lust, passion and longing.

Sandine sank into her; their bodies melded. "I'll bet you do this to all the girls," she said teasing and trying to break away. "Please, Ellie; you are wonderful and I know what might await us but I need some space. I haven't had but one girl in my life. Crystal couldn't keep her hands off a willing coed starving for affection. I did enjoy a romp with Robin but that was because of the frame of mind I was in at the time. I'm not really into men. I tried to bring myself to do what Bruce is doing for Robin right now. The idea of using my mouth as a sperm receptacle turns me off."

Ellie embraced her and kissed her again, very gently. "Let's just sit and enjoy each other, OK? We are not fifteen again, though you make me feel like I am."

"What was it like, that back-alley business you had?"

Ellie giggled. "It paid my rent in a dingy room at the end of the alley. I sometimes made enough to buy a restaurant meal but usually just take-out Chinese or something."

"How awful for you."

"I might think that now, looking back, but at the time it was me against the world. I thought I was on a crusade for survival of some kind. How about you? Tell me about your first girl-girl adventure."

Sandine relaxed. She sighed, then carefully went into detail of how Crystal had seduced her and made her think it was all her idea. "I knew even way back then that I had a desirable figure. Several girls hit on me but Crystal was THE one. Since then I've enjoyed the sight of attractive women; I look but try not to let them know I'm interested. Shy is the word."

"And you can see Crystal coming back and not needing another girl in bed with you? That the way it is?"

"It is Robin's decision to go the route to gender reassignment. The mystery of Crystal urging him to being a girl seems to be motive. He has, no doubt, wondered why Crystal, in this ethereal transference, did not select a girl to receive her urges. It had to be Robin. Maybe it was because he was there. Maybe it was because Crystal somehow sensed a better future. I could not have gone to Darcy Davis like Crystal did if the situation was reversed. Darcy Davis is a transgender candidate like Robin. The difference is that Darcy uses the girls who don't know he has male equipment until their legs are spread and he spears them. Oh, I'm talking too much."

"It shows you are comfortable with me. I like that. Are you aware that in all likelihood Darcy Davis will want you to give him what you least feel qualified to give? That is, he will desire your pretty mouth. Whether or not he had Crystal perform fellatio on him before he tore off those panties is anybody's guess. Maybe he will tell the story one of these years and we'll know."

"You sure know how to upset a girl and put her at ease at the same time."

"Tricky, aye?"

That was when they heard the noises coming from the kitchen. Sandine smiled. "Sounds like the second bottle of wine getting tapped."

"Those two jocks can get rid of more alcohol per hour than a fraternity bash. Come on, let's go check on them."

All of a sudden, Sandine was into a playtime spy game. They brought stealth to their walk and came upon the two guys handing the bottle back and forth. They were not surprised when the two girls approached.

"Hey," Bruce said loudly. "Robin and I have staked out the guest bedroom. You two can have the master bedroom. There is a quarter-bottle of that blush wine in the cooler if you get thirsty."

Robin came up behind Bruce and took his wine glass for a refill. "Just in case you two start feeling sober, the top cabinet has the liquor selection."

They laughed and watched the two guys hauling their glasses and wine bottle back to the guest bedroom.

"It seems we are in fast company," Ellie said getting out the chilled wine. "You ready for some more?"

"Why not? Thanks so much for listening to me and answering my questions. I really feel better having you for my friend."

"Bring your overnight duds, pretty chick. We can check the DVD collection in the bedroom."

Sandine dutifully followed and self-consciously undressed to put on her night gown. Returning from the bath, she found Ellie propped up against the bed board, reading a novel that was on the night table. "I'll get the light," she said. When she clicked off the lights, all they had was moonbeams from the skylight above them. "How neat," she said.

"Snuggle up," Ellie said. She put one arm around Sandine and leaned forward for another kiss. Sandine froze. "Uh, sorry, girl."

Tears welled in Sandine's eyes. She was immediately thankful Ellie couldn't see them tumbling down her cheeks. "No, *I'm* the one who is sorry. I hope you don't mind."

"It would help if I understood where you are coming from," Ellie said idly, turning to face Sandine. She put one hand on Sandine's hip. The girl with the available, beautiful body shied away. "Hey! Whoa! Excuse me for being so dense. Now I do understand. Ten lashes for you not telling me you and Crystal had a grand love duo going, right? That's what you said. What you did *not* say is that you never went down on Crystal. She was always the one. Well, I'll be damned. Some people in this world are really dumb and tonight, I'm the one."

Sandine started wailing. "I just want Crystal back; I need what she gives me so much. I'm terrified you are going to ask me to do it to you. I cannot do that for you any more than I can for Robin. I'm flattered you like me and I definitely like the woman's touch but I cannot imagine doing it."

Ellie chuckled. "Calm down; the most unexpected of events happened. We have four people in this place tonight. Two of them are virgins; well, Robin *was* until a short time ago. You both expect us to give without receiving."

"I'm sorry, Ellie, truly. Let's go to sleep. Shall I dream about Crystal, the lawyer you like and you? Will each of you like to do cunnilingus with no strings attached?"

"Yes, darling girl, dream on. Seriously, I hope you are able to resolve all these hang-ups without breaking too many hearts. When were you going to tell Robin/Crystal?"

"I don't know; I just don't know."

Ellie closed her eyes and was soon sleeping peacefully. She could have told Sandine she was addicted to clean white, linen sheets but that wouldn't have meant much.

CHAPTER X - Cohabitation

Bruce and Ellie approached Robin in an effort to shield Sandine from the mad TG rapist, Darcy Davis. At first he was thrilled at having Sandine in and settled, then house-sitting while he was away. After some thought, with Crystal as his guide, he backed down with the excuse that the beautiful home would be in danger.

Ellie stepped forward and asked if it would be acceptable if she moved in with Sandine in the flat. Though Robin reasoned two girls was twice the risk, he could not find the heart to dissuade them.

Also, Robin thought, leaving Bruce without his helpmate would likely cause trouble.

Finally, Bruce stopped in one day to chat.

"There has been some encouraging action on the part of the police," Bruce said after he uncorked a split of Mouton Cadet, white. "It seems the investigator knuckled under pressure from Sandine's lawyer. The gum did identify the killer as having chewed that sample but he had only your word that it was Darcy Davis. When further DNA testing showed the same DNA in some of the murdered girls on campus, the police department moved quickly."

"I caught that on the news," Robin answered. "They went to pick him up for further testing and more questions. Our guy-girl Darcy has disappeared. Not difficult to understand. Of course, in doing that, she as much as admitted her guilt."

Soon there were photos in public places and news accounts of the splendid job the police were doing in protecting co-eds from harm.

As for Robin's plan to pursue the gender re-assignment at Middlesex Clinic, Bruce was supportive. "I've seen the miraculous change in Ellie's life because of what those people do. I can only hope for the same for you," Bruce said.

"It's settled then," Robin said. "I am waiting for confirmation from the clinic to tell me when to arrive, what to bring, that sort of info. I understand the Windward and Leeward islands are beautiful this time of year. I'm thinking, if the clinic imposes a long wait, maybe I'll take a cruise. I'm looking into it."

"Sounds great. Let me know if I can help."

"There is something else on my mind for you to think over. What are your vacation benefits at the hospital? Could you accompany me to the clinic, get me situated, like that?"

Bruce confessed to a collection of goose bumps, both arms and on his scalp. "I'm all giddy at that suggestion. First off, though I do have time coming, I can't afford to go traipsing around the Caribbean; that is out of my league. I'm still paying for Ellie's trip there. I'm flattered, no, super impressed, with this. Are you faltering in your decision? What is Crystal telling you?"

Robin grinned. "Hey guy, I'd like some company going to a strange quarter of the world. I'm more secure than ever in my decision to continue. As for the expense, I'll pick it all up so you won't be caught short. Remember, Ellie will be with Sandine at my flat so you now have an option to do something you would like to do for a change."

“Are you serious about the cruise? It’s something I’ve only dreamed of doing.”

“Let’s snoop around and see what’s available. You think it over. Get Ellie’s point of view, as well.”

Sandine, still wary that Darcy had not yet been caught, gathered a few items at a time to carry to Robin’s flat. She didn’t want to call attention in case Darcy, in his/her insanity, was watching. In addition to the tension in her life involving Darcy Davis, Sandine had her relationship with Ellie to consider. She was beginning to regret her life choices but realized she could do very little to alter them.

Seeing Ellie every day only increased her anxiety. She did have enough discipline to hide it from her charming friend. Ellie had neither done nor said anything about her desires since that night at the party. Sandine concluded she had to admire that.

Arriving at her usual time in the evening, Sandine did not find Ellie in the flat anywhere. She shrugged her shoulders, poured some herbal tea and sat in the viewing area by the picture windows. The drapes parted to reveal the usual panorama. She reflected that she was indeed fortunate to lead a civilized life, however inhibited.

Next, a motion near the pool shed caught her eye. Ellie had set up her easel and was busy creating a large detailed landscape. The sight of the attractive girl so absorbed in displaying her talent gave her immense comfort.

‘To think this beautiful, talented creature is interested in me sexually,’ she thought. ‘I probably should ask her forgiveness if nothing else.’ She continued to watch while sipping her tea.

Another, shorter, girl approached Ellie. Sandine was surprised. She knew the area was enclosed and secure. They were talking, friendly it seemed, so Sandine assumed Ellie had invited the girl. That would not have been unusual.

She started to go to refill of her tea cup when she heard a scream. She looked on in horror as Ellie, facing the intruder, was backing up in a vain effort to escape. In a quick moment, Sandine was on the small porch at the top of the steps calling out.

“Run, Ellie, the police are on the way.”

At this, this girl who had appeared so menacing, turned and ran back the way she had come.

Sandine had Ellie in her arms in a matter of seconds. “I thought you had another conquest interested in your art. I didn’t pay attention until I saw your reaction. Who do you think that girl is and why was she here?”

Ellie’s face was chalk white. She stuttered. “I’ve been in many a fix in my life but that one shook me. I didn’t see it at first; that girl is Darcy Davis. I really think she thought I was you. About the time she saw her error, you started hollering and she split. Wow! Guess we should call the cops.”

Sandine sat heavily on the concrete bench. "All precaution for naught," she said, her voice slightly shaky. "Now Darcy knows where I am and that you are here as well. This is totally ungood."

They called the telephone number the police had given her. A patrol car soon arrived. One officer took a statement while the other checked the grounds. "The gate at the end of the walk from the street was unlocked. Is there a reason for that? Was the gardener here today, perhaps?"

Neither girl knew but they promised to check the gate every day. When Robin arrived and learned what happened, he promptly went out for a chain and padlock. He put one on his packet of keys, the other on a paddle inside the pool house door.

Shortly, Bruce arrived and the four of them sat at the kitchen table. It was sad news but in discussing the incident, they realized the horny intruder would have seen how quickly the police responded to a call. There were four luxury flats in the complex; any tenant could have broken the security rules.

Later, Bruce and Robin left. Bruce had to get ready for work the next day. Robin had internet activity to follow up on.

Sandine and Ellie crawled into bed. "That dork is out there," Sandine said, short of breath. "She knows we are here and can see all kinds of activity with nobody paying a bit of attention."

Ellie put her arm around the distraught girl, hugged her, touched her hair and brushed her cheek with her lips. "Try to get some rest, love; not likely we'll be disturbed now. What pisses me off is I was really getting into that painting."

"You know what I was thinking when I saw all that ac-



tion from the window? I was telling myself I should apologize to you for being an inhibited, uncaring, unfeeling, half-lesbian witch. Calling myself names seemed to help. And all I was drinking was tea."

Ellie chuckled. "Don't be too rough. One of these days you might feel like you will explode unless some lucky girl gets her head between your legs. There are no sensual guarantees. Get some rest."

CHAPTER XI - Paladin

Next day, on a whim, Ellie caught the downtown bus. She transferred to the express that went across the river and over the railroad tracks to the area known locally as "Loser Lane." She wore loose-fitting jeans, a paint-smearred tee and threadbare jacket. Her lustrous hair was tucked into a worn bill cap. She soon realized, in looking at her old haunts including the infamous alley she remembered so well, she was cruising. 'Loser Lane' was in her blood even with her physical makeup changed. A young, ripe, hippie type would have pleased her but she saw nothing.

She watched a taxi cruise to a stop near the alley. A well-dressed middle-aged gent paid the driver and, looking furtively in both directions up and down the street, went into the alley. Ellie followed him.

She knew the way very well; nothing had changed much. In her delay to walk through, she missed the older gentleman. Not for long. There was a recess in the brickwork near number seventeen she remembered as a hiding place. This time, as she paused there, the man came out and grabbed her arm.

"Why are you following me?"

"I'm not, Governor," she answered, faking her best Limey accent. "And why are you worried?"

The man let go of her arm and moved one hand inside her jacket to feel her breasts. "I was going to ask if you were a guy or a gal. This tells it." She remained still, stoic.

"So, where you headed?" she asked. "Nice night for a stroll, innit?"

"You are a sassy one. I'm expected at the large room, top of the stairs," the man said. He removed his hand from inside her jacket.

"That would be twenty-three, am I right? Numbers are screwy on the second level."

"You know your way around, little tart. Would you like to come along? I can introduce you. What's your name?"

"Elliott, Governor," she answered. "Don't be alookin' like that; it's me real name."

"Come along, then. You're about as English as I am Japanese but I admire your spunk."

They climbed the stairs and let themselves in. The room was empty. It had the same worn doorstep, the same ratty drapes and dirty mattress on the floor. "Looks like you've been stood up," she said, dropping her faux accent.

The man settled on a shaky straight back chair near the outside wall. He motioned for Ellie to kneel between his legs. "I've a fifty for you, little tart. But, be quick about it."

"Fifty won't cover my dry cleaning bill," she answered, sarcastic.

He laughed and raised one eyebrow when the girl he originally expected came into the room. "Sorry to be late. Who is this?" she asked pointing at Ellie.

"She says her name is Elliott which is a guy's name. But, if you'll check her fine set of tits, she's not a guy but a girl, sassy tart she is."

She looked about thirty years old in the shadows though Ellie knew from experience she was nearer twenty and had likely started working this alley about age fourteen. It was a startling moment. "Well, I see you don't need me," she said, heading for the door. "He offered me a fifty, don't let him jerk your fee." She left and clambered on down the rickety stairs.

Along the alley, toward the street, she stopped to hide at number seventeen. After a few minutes, she heard some girls giggling and poked her head out to see. There were two college girls, complete with athletic shoes and tennis skirts, coming down 'Loser Lane' holding hands.

They were obviously on a forbidden adventure of their own making. Ellie stepped out and surprised them. They stopped. "Oh," one of them said. "Who are you?"

"The Mayor of Loser Lane. You should recognize me. Maybe you haven't been here before. If that's it, I can direct you to some action. What is your wish?"

They both backed up, still holding hands. "Nothing, Mister Mayor," one of them answered. "We were just having a little fun."

"Don't get freaky. Stand over there in the light. Let me see your nice figures."

They stood across the alley and squinted to get a better look at Ellie. She remained in the shadows. "We want to go now," one said. "If that's OK, that is."

Ellie crossed and stood in front of them. She handed them a photo page of a girl in several poses and alternate clothing. "Have you seen her? Were you to meet here?"

"Uh oh, we've been had," came one reply. "She said she would give us a good time. We didn't believe her but came anyway in case."

"What time is the meeting?"

Another figure came to stand next to Ellie. "About now," Darcy Davis said. She took the photo page and held it for the light. "Very nice. Why are you looking for this girl? She a friend or something?"

Ellie breathed a sigh of relief. The dull-witted murderer of innocent college girls did not recognize her. In her outlandish outfit, it would have been a miracle otherwise.

"These girls must have told about their plans. I learned from a friend of whoever they told. That's where I got the photo sheet."

Darcy raised one eyebrow. "Barely plausible, not nearly credible but why not have some fun? Come along with me, uninvited guest."

'Crap, what am I into now?' Ellie thought, nervous. 'Best to play along. We can easily be busted; it's happened to me often enough here.'

With Darcy leading the way, the four girls climbed the stairs. Ellie was at the end of the line. As they passed number twenty-three, the well-dressed gentleman came out tugging his trousers and fastening his belt. When he saw Ellie, he zipped his fly and smiled.

"There you are, Soho tart," he said. He looked appreciatively at the four girls moving toward the open door of number nineteen. "Looks like you're going to be busy."

As they passed, Ellie whispered to the man, "Call the cops; these chicks are way under age." She wasn't certain he heard and, if he did, she knew he probably would not involve himself. Yet, she considered, it was worth a shot.

Room nineteen was smaller than twenty-three but Darcy herded them in. The two college girls were in conspiracy mode, giggling and jostling each other. Darcy seemed amused. Quickly, Darcy embraced the first girl, the more buxom of the two, and tugged her to some worn exercise pads in one corner. If the young girls, barely eighteen Ellie figured, didn't panic, they might survive. The 'slumming' was a secretive activity soon to entertain their sorority sisters. She shook her head in wonder at the foolhardy adventurers. But, she thought further, why not get into doing what she came to do?

As the second girl stood in the center of the dismal room, Ellie came up behind her, put both arms around her and captured her breasts. She kneaded the youthful flesh and thumbed the nipples. She raised the girl's tee and unhooked the brassiere. Next she moved against her, still from behind, until the girl's hips melded into hers. Breasts squashed into her back.

Glancing across the room, Ellie could see Darcy kissing and fondling the other girl who was busily cooperating. Her naked legs glistened.

Ellie began to nibble at her object du jour. She whispered, touched her ear and neck. The scent of Ivory soap caught her; that was amusing but she didn't know why.

"I'll lay with you," the girl said, smiling as if accepting an after-dinner mint. She went down on her knees, then sat on the floor.

There was no mattress and no pad; Ellie didn't care. She felt the girl's warm, accepting lips with her own. She shoved until the girl lay on the floor, arms open and welcoming. Ellie unbuttoned the girl's blouse and kissed her again. In a moment she had one hand under the tennis skirt as she explored the smooth thighs. When the girl moaned, Ellie responded with another kiss and caught one breast with her lips. There could be no doubt as to her skill and experience as the pretty coed parted her knees, still with her arms around Ellie, urging her on.

Ellie was getting aroused though the entire scenario was bizarre. She could see the other two across the room. They were embracing and undressing.

In a quiet moment, she felt a pang of guilt while thinking of Sandine who had worked so hard keeping her at arm's length. She next moved on the panting girl beneath her with

positive strokes and kisses, forcing Sandine out of her mind. This caper was less complex, she thought, and slid one hand under the coed's panties.

Another kiss and she fingered the wet vaginal folds the girl offered her. Her fun was tempered with the knowledge that the girl across the room would soon erupt in some way when she felt Darcy's cock probing sensitive places.

"You want me to go down on you, don't you?" She said it but not as a question.

The girl took the initiative and started another kiss. "Oh, yes; please. Do it. You have me so totally worked up."

Further talk was unnecessary. She slid down between the elegant legs, parted the panties by stretching the elastic aside and began a torrid cunnilingus much to the young girl's delight.

Then it happened. "Hey!" the girl beneath Darcy screamed. "Put that thing away. What is this?"

Ellie sat up. She laughed at the situation. One girl was rolling her hips beneath her. The other girl, across the room, legs spread apart, was feeling Darcy enter her with a thick, firm penis she totally did not expect. The girl accepted the large cock and began thrusting with her legs and hips.

"What's the scene?" The girl beneath Ellie grabbed for her head to urge her to continue.

"Your friend has been betrayed, in a way," Ellie said softly. "The girl she admired as a girl is a guy and has all the equipment. Take a look."

She sat up, bewildered. She clenched her fist and bit her knuckle.

Ellie loved it. She quickly arranged her clothing and headed for the door. If the coward in room twenty-three hadn't called the vice squad, she would have to do it. Once outside, cell phone in hand, she punched the numbers. It was unnecessary. Two uniformed patrolmen were strolling down the alley. They were talking and sipping from plastic coffee cups.

Ellie ran to them, panting, to tell them the two college coeds were probably underage and being molested by a campus rapist. That was when she identified Darcy Davis. One cop headed up the stairs, the other called for backup. A 'most-wanted' fugitive was considered armed as a matter of routine.

Ellie was soon out of the alley and lounging at the bus stop. Two more police cars arrived and the three were hustled away to headquarters. The two adventurous girls, crestfallen, had their stories to tell. The minor victory would make life easier all around.

'Not a bad day's work for a transsexual,' she sighed happily.

Darcy Davis was in custody.

CHAPTER XII – Travel Plans

“Well, look at this,” Robin said as Bruce came into the room. “The news is all over the media. Seems the police are getting accolades from the Mayor for apprehending Darcy Davis in a well-organized sting operation on Loser Lane, wherever that is.

Bruce pressed Robin’s shoulder, a greeting of sorts, and looked at the newspaper.

“The girls will be pleased with that development. Maybe the tension is finally over. Wonder what really happened?”

“Here’s something more. Darcy has been arraigned and is temporarily in the custody of Doctor Dieter Castine. Who else, right?” Robin asked.

“Yes, now he is a hero for being the shrink that kept you in custody beyond the legal limit. What goes around, et cetera.” Bruce reached for the phone. “Sandine and Ellie will be thrilled with this.”

Sandine stood up and embraced Ellie. “It’s over. Did you catch the news?” Sandine asked.

“Yes. How does that change your life? Your answer to that will tell how it changes mine.”

“I don’t know. We need to talk. This is so exciting. It shows your efforts to alert the authorities in my behalf, and your lawyer friend, were effective. Anyhow, they’ve hauled Darcy off to the funny farm. I see where they’ve awarded special medals for the officers who showed outstanding initiative in catching such a dangerous fugitive. It isn’t clear what Darcy was doing at the time. Anyhow, the cops were able to subdue him after a struggle.”

Ellie smiled inwardly. “How nice to have our city’s finest combing the area for a serial rapist. I hope they didn’t spill their coffee. Makes one feel safe and secure. What’s for dinner?”

“What coffee? You make the strangest remarks sometimes.”

“Oh, nothing of note. Just joking. Shall we go to the Barbary Coast Café to celebrate?”

Sandine was enthusiastic. “Right! We can do things again. I hope we can stay together at least until Robin/Crystal comes back from the clinic. Even then, I’m not sure what to expect.”

Ellie elected to wear her ‘butch’ attire: button-down collar, tie, leather jacket and worn jeans stuffed in her ankle boots.

Sandine pulled on her white pantihose, mini and closed-toe flats. She cinched the belt to her three-quarter-length jacket. It was form-fitting for her torso which emphasized her breasts.

"That looks nice on you," Ellie said. "Not that I pay any attention to your voluptuous figure or anything like that."

Sandine looked momentarily disturbed. She called on her reserve of discipline not sure if she could hold it. "I said I'm sorry and I'm trying to cope. Maybe with this Darcy episode over, I can be better for you."

Ellie checked for her keys and they left for an early dinner. "Not to concern yourself. I can probably find some action somewhere. I'll pick out a dark alley."

"You are so silly," Sandine said. She squeezed Ellie's arm.

At the restaurant, they split the usually large-portion pot stew and worked diligently on a bottle of red table wine. They were in high spirits, joking and laughing.

The café owner approached. "Pardon, Miss," he said. "Correct me if I'm wrong. Are you Ellie Ellison, the artist?"

Ellie nodded 'yes.'

"I've admired some of your caricatures. I went to that showing you had a few months back," he said.

"Thank you but I'm no celebrity."

"What showing? You didn't tell me about that." Sandine was dismayed.

The owner smiled, friendly. "I've been thinking about that wall the patrons see when they first come in." He motioned at the blank divider wall that flanked the dining area. "I'd like a mural, original, with a 'Pirates of the Caribbean' theme. Would you be interested in doing it? I'll pay the going rate."

Ellie smiled. "Well, I do have some experience with some pirates in the Caribbean but I don't think that applies." She smiled and looked critically at the wall. "Let me give this some thought and make some rough sketches. I have an image projector to use once you agree on the mural. Why would you want a caricature sketch artist to do this?"

"I hope you are not offended; I couldn't ignore the way you are dressed. Being with this beautiful companion helps. I'd like the pirate ship to have an all-women crew, scabbards, scarves, shorts, bold legs, that sort of thing. More and more of my patrons are adopting a lifestyle such as you have. I sense a change in the demographics. This kind of statement, a mural supporting independent feminists, will benefit from word-of-mouth advertising."

"Ah, just don't scrimp on the pot roast. Can I sketch tomorrow, mid-afternoon, when you aren't so busy? I have to envision what I'm going to do. It helps."

"I'll watch for you. This is wonderful. Thank you." He left.

Ellie turned to Sandine and grinned. She affected a small shrug of her shoulders and threw her eyes aside in the direction of the owner. "How about that? I'll be able to give my commission check to Bruce to help with the bills. He is still paying for my operation."

On the way back to Robin's flat, Sandine was effusive. "Does this mean I'm a 'femme' and you are the 'butch'?"

Ellie grinned. "That's close to the truth, isn't it? It's rare we hear of the two switching roles but I suppose in the throws of passion, anything can happen."

Sandine was quiet. Ellie glanced at her. 'This girl was on the verge on saying something important; wonder if I screwed it up? Nothing new for me.' She went over the situation in her mind. Casually she thought of the two girls caught up in the Room Nineteen sting operation. It was hilarious comparing the news coverage to the actual story. There was no mention of any girls involved with Darcy in that room though Ellie was an eyewitness to the girls getting into the police car.

Sandine finally spoke up; her voice was strained. "If I'm so untouchable in the way you think of me, I can't help it. I've apologized. Now I'm wondering if you might be happy if we don't see each other so often.. I've become too fond of you and your strange ways to suggest separation. I'm a coward, through and through."

"We both dance on egg shells when we're together. You are fully aware that I'm in love with you. No, it's not a disease, it's the way I feel. I would rather have one smile from you than all the murals on Main Street. If you are too distressed by the situation, then I'm forced to agree to what you want to do. I do not want to change."

Sandine pouted. "I'm glad you love me and that you know, in my own way, I return that love. I've thought about it a lot. If I'm to degrade myself into enjoying sex with you, how will it end? Is there more to be done by each of us? Did all this happen because you were once a guy and haven't fully, emotionally, come to grips with the change?"

"Like I said a minute ago, stop! You just brought up the magic word that will help the eggshell dance. Having sex is not wrong. It's beautiful; more so when partners truly care about each other. It's certainly not degrading." She stood up to go to the kitchen. "You better not take up poker for a hobby; you just tipped your hand."

Sandine stood on the wooden floor and found herself counting the number of leaves on a windowsill plant. She had no reply.

"Well, this looks right," Bruce said coming into the den. You are confirmed to arrive at the clinic in about four weeks. That gives you time to get your act together."

Robin was pensive. "Four weeks. Well, I guess we'll just sweat it out."

"Maybe not. A brochure arrived in today's mail. There is a sixty-eight foot sailing schooner named 'The Shanghai Joe' that wanders around from island to port to island. It carries cargo, passengers, anything apparently. We can book passage on that because their itinerary falls roughly a day or so before the clinic appointment. What do you say?"

Robin reviewed the brochure. "Looks great; let's go. Are you OK with this?"

"Yes, I even got Castine to give me an extended leave if we want to hoop and holler or something. I've worked up the cost. It's within our budget. I haven't said anything to the girls about it yet. They know we're leaving but none of the details."

Robin put his arm around his partner. "It's all coming together like it is meant to be," he said with conviction. "Any beer left?"

Next day, the travel plans were fixed. They were booked on a flight to San Juan, then on a smaller aircraft, a DC3, to Antigua where they were to wait for their boat connection.

All four met at the Barbary Coast Café where Ellie wanted to go to make more sketches.

Robin noticed Sandine's nervousness immediately. While Bruce was looking over Ellie's shoulder to see the mural plan unfold on her easel, Robin touched Sandine's hand.

"Want to talk about it?"

"Not sure talking will do much good. I'm scared," Sandine answered.

"Hey, your nemesis is behind bars; relax."

"It's not that. Ellie is at the breaking point. Our relationship is in jeopardy. I don't want this kind of trouble but I can't help it."

"Explain, please. Even if you think talking won't help, it might clear some of the cobwebs. You should be over Crystal's murder by now. It is likely Crystal will have an influence on you when I return from the clinic. Are you telling me you and Ellie do not have sex? Does that bother you? Don't forget I know what Crystal did for you, how much you relied on her touch."

"Yes, I know and thanks. You are the only guy ever to know my body with such intimacy. Crystal was the only girl. When she died, it left a hole in my gut. With the way she died and that I now understand why, well, the hole got bigger."

"You can't fill the hole or cover it up. You have to learn to live with it. Bruce has taught me that."

"It's worse than I originally thought. I have an emotional hangover. Crystal went to that meeting with Darcy to protect me. Darcy threatened to harm me if Crystal refused her advances. She went there, to that hilltop where you found her, knowing the risks. Of course, she did not know the extent of Darcy's involvement. Even if she did, I doubt it would have changed her mind. She is that kind of person; tenacious."

Robin was thoughtful. "Darling, I know, I know. Crystal has, in her way, confirmed what you just said. She loves you beyond breath, beyond reason, beyond love's very power. You have to rely on that. You are beautiful, your body is gorgeous and responsive. Can you fault Ellie for being so frustrated? Aren't you coping the same way now that Crystal is in limbo? Do you want the final word on this from Crystal? I've had it for several weeks."

Sandine blinked, eyes wide but not understanding. "Whatever do you mean? If you have something I should know, why haven't you said what it is?"

"Because of that awful Darcy influence on all our lives, that's why. Now, with that gone or on hold, I can be honest with you about your concerns."

Sandine sighed. "OK, let me have it. Both barrels. What does Crystal say about Ellie?"

“Most of this is common sense. You know the situation is in transition. You know you will have some decisions to make when I become Crystal in the flesh after my operation. What you don’t know is that Crystal is urging you to give Ellie what you never gave her. To prove this, tonight when you are alone, think this over. What would you do to make Crystal happy if she crawled between the sheets with you?”

Sandine winked back tears misting her eyes. “Anything. You know that.”

“Then that is what you must do with Ellie. There is a point to all this; if you do not have sex with a girl who loves you, you will not likely find completion with Crystal, or any other girl for that matter. Get with it, love. Fear is a great motivator.”

She dabbed at her tears when Bruce returned to the table.

“Hey, has this jerk been distressing you?” Bruce asked Sandine.

“It’s a good thing Robin knows so much about me. He is able to tell me things completely foreign to my way of thinking.”

“Which makes no sense, whatever. Come look at what Ellie is putting on her sketch paper.”

Sandine approached with a soft step. She was wary of her own feelings after such an emotional shock from Robin. But, feeling the need for composure take hold, she peeked over Ellie’s shoulder. She gasped at the clear, clean, lines designed to become a talked-about mural for a long time to come. She looked at Ellie’s hands, the firm expressive fingers and her sure touch with creative strokes. Ellie’s concentration, the raising of her pencil to get perspective, was suddenly sexy to Sandine. She looked at Robin and Bruce, afraid they could read her mind. It was at that point she knew she had to act to benefit, not only Robin, Crystal and Ellie but also her ambivalent self. If, at that moment, Ellie had kissed her and hauled her off to the bedroom, she would have welcomed it.

“Oh, my gosh,” she said and looked plaintively at Robin. “You are so right and I’m so wrong.”

“You have a right as a woman to choose your path in life. Do it if you believe my promise. Do it and you will not only save yourself but the rest of us as well.” Robin embraced her, kissed her lightly on the lips and went with Bruce out of the restaurant.

Ellie, oblivious of the importance of what just happened, continued to sketch, happy with the mural as it took form.

CHAPTER XIII - Caught in the Act

Sandine was in bed and asleep when Ellie came in from the study. She had been researching a text in sexual transformation. Sandine’s comment about coming to terms with the sex change disturbed her.

Soon they were both asleep.

The yard lights, hooked to proximity switches came on which meant something moved to trip the sensor. Ellie was instantly awake, still on danger alert from the many fearful

nights when Darcy Davis was loose. She looked at Sandine and was satisfied the lovely girl was sleeping soundly.

Pulling aside the picture window drapes, she could see out into the yard and beyond. She noticed the wind had disturbed the trees and shrubs, which would explain why the lights came on. She waited until the lights again were off. The view disappeared in the darkness.

She went back to the study to put the book away. There didn't seem to be anything written that could help her understand what happened. It remained a conundrum. She knew the transsexual operation, as well as Bruce's support, led her to a more wholesome life. She scanned the book shelf and turned to go back to bed. Wandering around at two in the morning was not to her liking.

She flicked off the desk lamp and headed for the doorway. She stopped firmly in her steps and gasped.

Sandine was in the doorway. She couldn't read her facial expressions because of the light behind her. She stepped toward her.

Sandine, still as a statue in the doorway, facing the darkness, wore a wispy peignoir that hugged her curves. Her silhouette, emphasized by the light behind her, was breathtaking. Her disheveled hair splashed in unruly tresses on her shoulders. She was a vision of incredible beauty.

"Darling, what is it?" Ellie asked. She was near panic and didn't know why.

Sandine's soft voice was firm but low. "You didn't check the answering machine when you went into the study. There is a confusing message that I've concluded was an error. Now I'm thinking about it and I need some answers. The police investigator left a thank-you comment. He assumed that not only did I bring the DNA evidence for him but also precipitated the dramatic capture of Darcy Davis. It sounds to me like nonsense. I've thought about it."

Ellie gave a sigh of relief. "Oh, he's mixed up. Pay no attention."

"That was my first response. Next I remembered this afternoon when the café owner said he had enjoyed your art show. You did not tell me about that. Was it a piece of trivia you thought wouldn't interest me? Well, it does. I'm interested in everything you do"

Ellie approached Sandine who was still standing erect, proud, in the doorway. "Please, don't upset yourself; it was nothing."

"All the little messages, like minor irritants, went together. I'll tell you what I think. You were there in that alley, someplace I never heard of. You led the police to pick up Darcy. Now the truth comes out, two college girls mentioned on the answering machine. You are officially informed that the two girls who identified you from the mug shots are doing all right and will not likely try such a foolhardy adventure any time soon.

You know how all this adds up?"

"Calm down; there is no harm."

"Do you think I'd never find out? Do you know what has happened here? Crystal went to her death to protect me. She went willingly because she placed a high value on the love

in her heart. Not much time passes and look at this. You followed some lead to that back alley and risked your life to apprehend Darcy Davis because you wanted to protect me. Darcy is a cool, calculating, killer. You could well have been another victim. Do you realize I could very well have lost you as well as Crystal and both of you for the same reason?"

"I don't dispute your conclusions. I just was lucky, that's all," Ellie stammered.

"If you think this is the end, listen up. Two people in love with me walked into the jaws of hell and one survived. As of right this moment, I can see clearly what the essentials are. I am yours to do with as you wish. There is no future without you. I'm not the first woman in history who has gone down in defeat because of a loving heart. The difference is that I now know it."

"Is there a price to this freedom? Come along with me, love. I've no wish for a slave to love; I want you just as you are."

Ellie put both arms around Sandine and brought her close. Sandine's warm body, firm perhaps with anger, melded with her own. The kiss was a study in sensual daring. Ellie held her close and, when they both faltered, led the spectacular beauty to the bedroom.

CHAPTER XIV – The Shanghai Joe

Robin and Bruce had to wait overnight in Puerto Rico for the flight to Antigua. They found a hotel room in the old city, San Juan, and trudged about, getting the feel of a city preserved from antiquity. Morro Castle made Robin shudder as he imagined the cold cell-like rooms.

"The brochure says the schooner does not come to Puerto Rico. Might be political, who knows?" Bruce observed.

"As long as the DC3 is air worthy, we're in good shape," Robin replied.

"If you show up at the airport looking as great as you do right now, you'll likely corrupt the entire expedition."

Robin just shook his head. He wore a chemise caught at the waist with a wide belt buckle. It extended to just above the knees but, when they sat down, a generous portion of thigh entertained passersby.

After spoiling themselves with more food than they needed, they picked up a bottle of Scotch and retreated to their hotel room.

As they both fussed with their luggage, getting ready for their early departure in the morning, Bruce turned to face Robin.

"Why such a quizzical look?" Robin asked.

"I'm not sure how much privacy we will have on board the sailing schooner. The reservations call for a private stateroom but I really don't know what that means."

"So? It should be great getting out on the water, good food and drink. Why this mystery?"

"You have enjoyed our sex together, often enough. I'm of the observation that you've perhaps wanted to enjoy me in the same way. It hasn't happened yet and, not sure, but this might be our last chance at privacy. What do you say?"

"Of course the answer is 'yes.' When I'm a girl, there will be no opportunity; it's something my new self will need to experience."

Bruce grinned happily. "I didn't want to pressure you into doing something against your nature. It's a personal decision most men avoid."

"I want to try," Robin said. "You know, my head is swimming with all the sex I've enjoyed since Crystal's demise. It's a wonder."

"Do you still feel Crystal is your true soul mate? Is that transfer to your body real?"

"I think you and Ellie, Sandine as well, are sick of hearing my enthusiasm for the way Crystal is entering my life. Attitudes have changed. I'm simply not the same person I was when my company fired me for suspicion of murder. It's not a problem; I had the job for the outlet more than the money. Now, here I am in a sensitive relationship, having my mind and body dictated to by some specter, and sailing off into the sunset for a change of sex. Incredible!"

Robin came out of the shower wrapped in the hotel towel tucked in at the waist. He approached Bruce from behind and ran one hand in a downward caress from the muscular shoulders, across the tight abs, to rest on the top snap of his boxers.

Bruce remained silent and still. Robin feeling his erection through the soft linen of his shorts was a thrill he'd thought impossible. He allowed Robin to remove his briefs and led him to the bed.

Robin clicked off the lights but there was ample illumination coming from the street. He put a generous glob of gelatin on his finger and gently worked it into Bruce's anus.

"It's time, beautiful man," Bruce whispered, his voice lusty.

Robin pressed and slowly brought his hard tool into the tight entry. As he rocked and felt for the feelings he knew were there, he finished by filling Bruce with rocket shots of sperm.

They both fell into a restful sleep.

Next day, they boarded the aircraft, took the seat the steward assigned and were promptly airborne on their new exploit

Arriving in Antigua, pronounced an-TEE-ga, they found a wharf side restaurant with tables scattered on the sidewalk on the narrow street. As afternoon approached, Bruce stood up and looked into the misty harbor.

"Robin, there she is. Looks terrific."

They watched awestruck as the large boat cruised easily to dockside. Sailors called, lines were thrown and secured. A passenger ramp was set in place. A crew of stevedores lugged boxes and cargo onto the open forward deck.

A tall man with a captain's cap supervised the unloading and loading. He made entries on his clip board, checked off cargo destination, weight distribution. That completed, he signed the labor tickets.

Robin and Bruce joined a half-dozen other passengers who crowded around the gangplank. Bruce noticed he was in the company of only one man. All others, including Robin, were women of various dress. Bruce immediately locked stares with the skipper of the sleek schooner.

"I'm Captain Leventis," the captain said. He was instantly the focus of every passenger. He was taller than six feet, Bruce estimated, with black wavy hair. He was fiftyish, with dark skin and a slight hook nose that labeled him as Greek. He waved to have them bring their luggage on board. At the top of the gangplank, he checked in each passenger and assigned the staterooms.

Bruce scanned all those present and decided that Robin was the best prospect to keep him company on the lonely cruise. A middle-aged matronly lady had two teenage girls in tow. The girls were in modest mode but any pimp could see the possibilities there. 'Ah, the games people play,' Bruce said to himself.

Their stateroom had two large portholes which gave the room a light, airy feeling. The door opened onto the middle deck, port side. The dining salon, the most forward room, was easy to reach. Bruce considered that might be important if they encountered rough seas.

With the mooring lines away, The Shanghai Joe slipped away from the dock; she turned her bowsprit to the east as the sailors raised full sails. The schooner tilted slightly to one side depending on the angle of the wind. The entire operation was spectacular.

For the weathered skipper, it was business as usual. Bruce



and Robin were enthralled with all the drama that carried hundreds of years of tradition. They envisioned old sailing rigs, brigantines, and the center passage.

With the sun down and the dinner complete, Bruce wandered out onto deck. He headed for the fantail and was delighted to discover a bar complete with barmaid. Cocktail tables were bolted to the deck. The barmaid explained the honor system; charges were posted to the stateroom account. He began to relax. 'This is the life,' he thought absently as he watched the white wake churned by the powerful engines.

The days at sea, even with the commercial flavor of passengers and bustling cargo handling, were lazy for Bruce and Robin. They ate and drank more than they needed. Wandering from island to island, port to port, was exciting, a personal escapade.

Second day out from Antigua, Bruce drank his supper at the bar on the fantail. The gentle roll of the boat lulled him to sleep in one of the deck chairs.

Robin went back to their cabin, showered and dressed in his sailing sportswear. He tugged the cap until his hair was covered. The hormone therapy had progressed to the point that he no longer had a beard, just light fuzz like a menopausal woman. He shaved and powdered; next he added a light touch of lip and eye shades. Proud of his well-shaped legs, he pulled on calf-length socks and put on deck shoes. Short Bermudas completed the picture of a chic, worldly woman, on a sultry night in the Windward Islands.

He went aft to check on Bruce who was sleeping peacefully on the deck chair hugging a half-pint of brandy like a child with a Teddy bear.

The moon was shining brightest on the starboard side so he went along the companionway there. The port side was shielded by the wide sails. He stopped outside one of the staterooms when he heard two people arguing. 'Ah, intrigue,' he thought upon identifying the voices; the captain and the matronly woman who came on board with the two girls. Feeling impulsive, he rested against the bulkhead next to the open porthole and eavesdropped. Apparently, the woman was no relation to the girls who were en route to the Frangipani Hotel for seasonal employment. She was distressed because the captain pinched the butt of one of the girls and fondled the breasts of the other. Her voice became louder, threatening. The captain was doing his best to calm the lady.

Finally, the woman came out and slammed the door behind her in a fit of anger. The captain followed her out, apparently leaving the two young girls in the stateroom. He stopped when he saw Robin and smiled.

"Pesky business, this," the captain said. "All I need is a governess playing body guard." He shook his head.

Robin laughed. "Captain, you certainly know you can't win them all."

He sighed. "I know you're right but this is a lonely life being responsible and in authority. It's rare when anyone takes any time to talk to me."

"Captain, stop; you're breaking my heart. How many notches per voyage do you put on your jock strap?"

Levinson grinned. He turned to go then hesitated. "Uh, Robin Joyner isn't it? Yes; well, may I depend on you to keep this minor fracas quiet? No sense in sounding the alarm, *n'est pas?*"

Robin laughed and touched Captain Levinson's shoulder. "Depend on me," he said.

"Thank you, I shall. I recall from the passenger manifest that you and your, uh, partner are departing at Martinique. I often see pretty young women travel from Antigua for an appointment at the clinic there. Might that be the case with you?"

Robin chuckled. "No harm in admitting it, I guess. I am going there to take advantage of their surgical procedure. It has been a long time coming."

The captain nodded and spread a knowing smile. "'I see you are a citizen of the world. Perhaps you will help me demolish a jug of B&B I've saved for just this occasion."

"Certainly, sir; kind of you. But, this is hardly an occasion for celebration. Vengeance is involved."

He winked. "Then the event requires recognition, I think. It's likely you are in pursuit of a bitter pill."

Robin followed him up the gangway ladder to his command post directly behind the wheelhouse. Once inside, Robin admired the well-appointed room; wet bar, liquor cabinet with mirror doors, sofa and large easy chair. Draperies covered a door to another room which he assumed was sleeping quarters. "Very nice, Captain; thank you," he said accepting the cool glass of ice with a shot of liquor.

"Benedictine and brandy," the captain said proudly. "Makes a man's drink acceptable to a lovely, uh creature, such as you."

Robin was amused when the captain sat next to him and settled a gnarled hand on one knee. "Tell me, sir; we are both experienced. What really upset that nice lady?"

"You are quick. Both girls are very pretty, you agree no doubt. I was particularly nice to the one with the large breasts. The trouble began when I excluded the other one from my caresses. I should have seen that coming. You can understand, friend, my motive is based in the desire to coax some lively prospect into my bed. That is, I like both genders."

"And you hope to have that young girl on her hands and knees. The poor girl doesn't stand a chance."

The captain laughed. "You are so correct. You can see I've sabotaged my own exploit here."

"Not entirely. I am particularly curious about your philosophy. Here you are in a position of authority, knocking around these beautiful Windward Islands seducing all manner of passengers. There are laws, you know. Even if they don't apply, there is protocol."

The captain thought for a long moment. His brow wrinkled and there was a light in his eyes not often detected. He raised his eyes to the ceiling and then out the window to the choppy water. "Males and females freely commit fornication, adultery, all sorts of crimes of passion. Some are accepted, some are outmoded; all are attractive. The influence of a creeping threat to men like you and me we quickly call feminism or, worse, matriarchy."

"It seems we think alike, Captain," Robin said. He sipped his brandy as if the scent and flavor might somehow reveal a secret.

"So, as the philosopher told us a long time ago, 'What is written is done and cannot be undone.' Something like that."

“Correct. We cannot erase a word of it.”

“So, would you have me go down in defeat? Life is too short and pleasures too few. Our time on this planet is but a breath in time. The end does indeed justify the means.”

Robin laughed and crossed his legs. The sheer hosiery swished and snapped. He liked the sound. “Captain, you are a delight. Of course I agree, the passage of time is witness to changes in our behavior.”

The captain laughed and slapped his knee. “Let me tell you, there was this guy named Socrates. He had specific ideas about fellatio and pederasty. These were hotly debated and, as it turned out, the short-sighted, uh myopic actually, laws were found to have been breached. Socrates was summarily dismissed from the living. Of course, I knew him well.” He stopped and chuckled.

Robin picked up the gibe. “Me too. He asked me to stop in for a drink but I declined. I told him I was not into hemlock.”

The captain roared with laughter.

“Might there be a lesson to be learned? Shall I befriend the conscientious matron? Let’s strand her ashore when the launch leaves Dominica port tomorrow. Then we can both entertain the pretty high school girls.”

“I hear the voice of genius. Sir, that speaks of deep experience on your part. Tell me; are you really serious about being a girl? I admire your very feminine appearance. Maybe this is a mental exercise.”

“Something like that. It’s far too complex to elaborate. The story would put you to sleep faster than this excellent brandy.”

The captain slid one hand beneath Robin’s Bermuda shorts and fondled the smooth thigh. “I think, Robin Joyner, that you should be rewarded for your willingness to carry out this dastardly plot. You see, piracy is not dead. Pretty damsels are, as always, at risk.”

“Do not include me in your target gallery. You are an evil man but I forgive you if we can be compatriots.” Robin finished his drink, saluted with one finger to his temple, and left the captain smiling on the sofa.

“Anything happening?” Bruce asked as Robin came in. “Guess I dozed off.”

“I expect you to regale me with lust satisfied by the neat barmaid.”

“No such luck but I gave her a try.”

“The nice Captain Levinson invited me to his quarters for a drink. He really is a decent sort despite appearances to the contrary. I left when he started feeling me up. He is currently on a crusade to get one of those high school girls into his bedroom. I offered to help him if he would let me have the one he doesn’t want.”

Bruce laughed. “How, please tell, do you hope to do that with a Victorian nanny in constant attendance?”

“The captain mentioned the very staid lady likes her Schnapps. It should be easy enough to lure her away by letting her addiction take over.”

Bruce leaned back on the bunk. He put his hands behind his head and smirked. "For me, I'll finish the bottle of Scotch and sack in. That OK?" He hesitated and looked seriously at Robin. "This voyage will soon be over. When they start performing modern miracles on your neat body, Crystal will have us both."

"So, what are you saying? I'm the one getting the sex change, not you. Either way, you win the door prize. Or are you suggesting we have one last romp in the sack? You get more horny every day. I'm not objecting but, right now, I'm going to do a little cruising. You finish your whiskey. Beware, if that Captain Leventis catches you; it will be sore tail duty for a day or so."

Bruce laughed. "Go for it; I'll lock the door."

Robin shook his head and left his alcoholic friend to his own tremors. His mood was buoyant.

On the way to the fantail bar, he spotted one of the girls he and the captain had discussed. "Hi, where is your friend?"

The girl smiled. "She was invited to dine with the captain so I tried to be gracious and disappear. Our nanny, as we call her, is in her bunk with a good book. Not much chance of catching a taxi to the nearest bar, is there?" She laughed.

Robin took her arm and led her aft. "May I have your company for an after-dinner drink?"

The girl all but climbed all over him. "You betcha! That barmaid won't serve me so you'll have to do honors. Make mine a rum Mai Tai."

Robin returned to find her on a deck chair under the transom of a lifeboat. He pulled up another chair to sit beside her.

"Thanks; I was wishing and here you are."

"I understand you are going to the hotel for the season. Did they tell you what to expect in the work duties?"

She winked and didn't answer. "You were the talk of the gossip corner in the salon today. You are going to the Middlesex Clinic? You don't look obese, far from it, and you have a neat girlish figure. What else is there to attract you?"

Robin tried to identify what it was that made the young girl so desirable. Part of it, he knew, was her bubbly personality. The playful twinkle in her eyes gave her a 'never-care' look. The slender figure, clear skin and interesting breast line helped.

"Right now, *you* attract me. Do you *really* want to hear all about the transsexual colony known as the Middlesex Clinic?"

"You are going to change sex? Be a guy?"

He touched her arm. "Have you had sex with a girl?"

"Wow! No, well, not recently and never heavy. I had a girl friend; we were fourteen. We talked about it and when I suggested we do something more than talk, she freaked. That's as far as I've gone. The result you can already guess; no more girl friend."

Robin laughed. "As you can see, if I'm to soon be a different sex, should we have another drink and talk some more?"

'You are plying me with hard liquor so I'll have sex with you. I love it!"

He smiled. "You are amazing. I'll be right back."

"Make mine a double," she called out.

When he returned, he served her with a grandiloquent bow. He pulled his chair closer and put one arm around her shoulders. "Would you rather have a guy than a girl?"

She laid her head on his shoulder. "Unfair question; we aren't being asked to decide anything, right?"

He turned her chin up and gently kissed her on her soft lips. "Before we get too far," he said slowly after the tender kiss, "I have to admit I've been toying with you. Give me your hand."

She moved one hand up so he could grasp it. He moved it between his legs where the sheer dress offered no resistance. He pushed her hand onto his erection.

"Oh," she whispered slightly alarmed.

"Did you think I was packing'?" Robin asked.

She erupted. "No; not possible. I'm not getting laid by a she-male."

He kept cool. "With that body, you can't be a virgin."

She was silent a long time. She sipped her drink. She looked at him. She looked at the sudsy-stream of water as the boat made headway. She looked at him again. "Are you going to go down on me first?"

"Come along with me," Robin said softly. His voice was insinuating 'yes' but she wasn't sure. He led her into the after companionway. The captain had given him a key to a vacant storeroom. He switched on the light.

The sudden light hurt her eyes and she covered her face with her hands. She welcomed his embrace and went up on her toes to accept his kiss. He moved his fingers onto the top buttons of her blouse.

First he took her mouth, nibbled at her lower lip and licked a sensuous line along her neck to her ear.

She began to respond, her breathing came in short gasps as she pushed her hips against him.

He broke away and quickly tugged a mattress that was leaning against the bulkhead. It fell flat on the floor with a whooshing sound. Next he surprised her by picking her up off her feet. He swung her around, kissed her and gently knelt on the mattress to release her. She scrambled to the center.

She felt his hand move beneath her skirt and onto her thighs, then higher. She pushed again and, in abandon, let her legs part to accept his hand on her vagina. She next caught his hand in her own to block him. "Give a girl a chance," she said as if out of breath. "This is a new experience for me."

"You want sex with a girl; you said as much. Unbutton the top of my dress. Yes, like that; open it up, it's a strapless bra, pull it down. Um, nice; fasten those pretty lips on my breasts. Oh, nice touch."

She moved to the other breast. Her tongue was licking more forcefully than before.

"Oh, Robin; I've wanted to do this. I've wondered how it would feel."

He smiled, kissed her hair and the side of her face. "That feels great, my nipples are firm as fingers. Put your hand under my dress; you liked my legs before, no change there. It's what it will be like when you feel your pretty girlfriend."

She nodded and finally wrapped her nimble fingers around his erection. She molded and formed with her hand, pulled and released, tickled and touched. "This is fun," she said and leaned closer for a better view. She didn't object when he urged her by pressing on the back of her neck.

He could feel the warmth of her breath on his naked genitals. As if she was born for fellatio, she tucked the pulsing corona between her lips and passed her tongue over it.

It was not to last. He removed her head, pulled her skirt up and buried his mouth on her crotch. She quickly reacted by throwing her hands down to capture his bobbing head, moaned and dug her heels into the mattress. His tongue tip fondled the swollen vaginal lips, pushed to enter, went higher to tickle her clit and slid two fingers into her pussy. The sensitive and caring cunnilingus stirred her to the depths. She had an immediate climax.

She was still struggling to catch her breath as he moved his hips between her legs and probed lightly. She caught his penis and guided it into her. She met his rhythm with her own and squealed with delight when she felt the warm spurts entering her, splashing her cervix.

Too quickly, the love tryst was over.

He watched her dress. "Are you going to tell your girlfriend about your adventure?"

"Maybe I will, someday. You've lit a flame in me. It started when you said her legs would be fun to caress. That made me pay attention. I think I would like to have sex with her; we've discussed it but nothing ever came of it. I'm hoping she will like me enough to let me go down on her."

Robin stood up, caught the young girl by the wrists and pulled her up. "I'm good for another drink if you can walk. Hey, just kidding."

They went back to find the chairs just as they left them. A few more drinks and she asked to return to her cabin.

On arrival there, she opened the door. They went in to find it empty.

"Oh, right. She is with the captain. How could I forget?"

Robin glanced at his watch. "I hope she's OK; look at the time."

"She has sexual experience; not to worry. She can handle herself."

"Fine. Well, I'll leave you for now. I better check on my partner. Your partner has sex; mine has a bottle of whiskey." They both laughed at the irony.

"Well, we had each other," she answered and went up on her toes again to kiss him. "You are the most charming girl I've ever met, cock and all."

He grinned.

She closed the door behind him.

Robin took a deep breath of the humid Caribbean air and stretched his arms above his head. He had to admit to himself he was not ready for another sexual encounter with Bruce, as nice as the man had been for him. 'Maybe I'm losing interest in men altogether. Oh, well.' He amused himself with tricks of the mind. 'Crystal, we are going to be a team for a long time,' he thought.

He heard the slap of her flip-flops on the deck. Next, the girl came dashing toward him, headlong out of the captain's cabin. She had left the door ajar. She stopped solid in her steps. "Oh, it's you. Captain Leventis told me about you."

Robin smirked and reached for her. She cowered away. He stopped smiling when he saw the tears cascading over her cheeks. Sobs wracked her body. He quickly offered her his handkerchief.

She slowly, warily, nodded to him and continued toward her stateroom and safety. She stopped at the door and handed him his handkerchief. "Thanks," she mumbled. She looked up at him. "I saw you before in the salon. You're a pretty girl; are you interested in my roommate?"

Robin stepped forward and rapped lightly on the door. When it opened, the aggrieved girl fell into the other's arms. He stepped inside and closed the door behind him.

"He put something in my drink," she said between sobs. "The next thing I knew he had me on the bed in just my panties."

The two girls embraced. "Easy now; it's over. Come on, I'll get the shower ready."

She stomped her foot. "No! I want to tell you. The man's a monster. Within minutes, he had me on my knees pushing that huge penis against my lips. What was I to do but let him in?"

"OK, no harm done, really. Hot shower and some sleep will make you right. He come in your mouth?"

"No, in my rectum and it took him a long time; lots of grunting and groaning. He told me I was tight as a vice."

She embraced her again and began undressing her. "Calm down, darling. Ah, sorry, my faulty manners are showing. This is Robin Joyner; he likes sex, too."

The girl looked at Robin, owlish. "This is not a 'he,' obviously."

She grinned and unhooked the girl's brassiere. "He is a transsexual. The breasts are real."

"Ow, this is too much. Totally. A horny captain and now a chick with a dick. What have you been doing, the pair of you?"

Robin mumbled an apology and turned to go.

"Please, don't go; that captain may soon be at our door and what will I do?"

OK, I'll wait." He sat on the armchair and thumbed through a magazine. He looked up when the naked girl was getting into the shower stall. 'Gorgeous figure,' he thought absently. 'Our affable captain has good taste.' He heard the shower running.

"Thank you for staying. Do you mind terribly? I don't think I could handle her if that Greek comes calling in the middle of the night."

"I can speak from experience. He is no longer interested in her; he wants you."

She smirked. "For a girl-to-be, you haven't lost your male viewpoint."

"Nature of the beast, hope I keep it with me for reference," he said laughing. "Are you going to give aid and comfort to the afflicted? You really don't need me to stay, unless you are an exhibitionist at heart."

"You're saying I shouldn't be frightened?"

Robin shifted in the chair. As the girl sat on the edge of the bed and crossed her legs, his interest perked up. "Look, I'll stay if you wish. If he doesn't come rapping on the door with the changing of the watch, you're OK until tomorrow."

"Changing of the watch? What's that?"

"Four in the morning; every so often, someone has to be awake and alert. The captain is very vigilant. These can be dangerous waters."

"Ah, yes; I recall. Edward Teach is searching these waters for booty and bootleg, all the while stroking his black beard."

Robin smiled. "You did indeed learn your history lessons. We are in a more southern latitude, keep in mind."

"Perhaps, but ghosts don't usually take geography lessons."

With that, the other girl called from the shower and stepped into a warm towel offered by her roommate. Next she put on the Terrycloth robe furnished to them by the impressed stateroom steward.

Robin responded to his long, eventful, day by dozing while the two girls chattered and giggled getting ready for bed. The ship's clock over the door showed two in the morning. He thought briefly of Bruce but reasoned the whiskey bottle must have done him justice by then.

He next turned his impulsive thinking to the dashing Captain Levinson. 'Surely, if he keeps up this sexual revolution on every eligible passenger, eventually someone is going to complain. We will no doubt soon see the fruits of the captain's labor. One girl is going to sink into the arms of the other finding the solace she thought she might get with the captain. 'But then,' he further considered, 'the seed had to be planted before it would sprout. Interesting.'

He dozed further until he heard a noise foreign to the regular creaking of the rigging and the rush of water forming the wake. He opened his eyes to see that the abused girl was crying again. She let her head lob on her partner's shoulder like she had a broken neck. There were kissing noises. As his eyes adjusted to the shadows, Robin could see the savior girl's hand slide inside the other's girl's bodice. She caressed the sensitive breast with a tender fondling. Her reward was a low moan of acceptance.

Robin stepped out onto the deck to watch the sunrise ply colors on the extended carpet of sea. Mini-white caps formed and disappeared like ice crystals on a winter morning. Gulls swooped and griped. A trio of pelicans was gliding near the surface looking for some breakfast.

He decided to pull the stateroom door closed and return to his own room. As he reached the open door, he sensed the presence that had moved to stand behind him. It was Captain Levinson.

Robin quickly pulled the door shut until the lock clicked. "Don't you ever sleep, Captain?" he asked, smiling.

"Always make my rounds at this time. The morning air is invigorating. All seems in running order. You've spent the night with the two pretty girls?"

"Well, with the one. I had her all to myself until the one you raped showed up. They were so upset they asked me to stay. If you are here to lay claim to the other girl, remember our deal. She is mine."

"What happened to the traveling nanny?"

"Passed out with peppermint Schnapps probably."

The captain was thoughtful. "Do not accuse me of rape. I might have a forceful nature but I don't beat up young girls; unnecessary at best. The charming morsel was doubtful but, um, cooperative."

"Well," Robin began, "you did not get good grades for your sex lesson. Your victim took refuge in the arms of her roommate. They slept all through the night, afraid you would tear down the door like the Big Bad Wolf."

He laughed. "So be it. I did not turn anyone's head; you can believe that."

"Then I have your word of honor that you will allow your passengers safe passage to Bequia?"

"Agreed; the Frangipani Hotel. Do you know it?"

"Only by reputation. I understand they are hospitable and managed by a handsome English woman; blonde I've heard."

The captain turned to go forward to continue his dawn patrol. "May the sun shine on your face, faithful rogue," he said.

"And the wind at your back," Robin answered.

CHAPTER XV - the Middlesex Clinic

It was over too soon as they approached the harbor at Fort de France, Martinique.

'Is this a dream?' Robin said to himself. 'It is catching me up in déjà vu.' The busy port, the very French ambiance, seemed familiar. A pretty girl drove up and parked a white station wagon near the passenger ramp. The lettering on the side increased Robin's anxiety; Middlesex Clinic, it said.

"You look distressed," Bruce said. "Wow, look at the blonde."

"Not distressed but, well, informed. Ellie made mention of a seductive TG chick named 'DeDe Devine'. I have to admit I didn't believe her at the time. "This might go very well for Crystal Czern as the time approaches."

"You still cling to that notion of transformation, don't you?"

"Yes, now more than ever. It isn't just Crystal; it is the real me."

They stopped next to the station wagon. "Hello, I'm DeDe Devine," the blonde said smiling.

"Yes, we know," the two guys said in unison.

EPILOGUE

Months after Bruce had left to return home, a lone woman approached the receptionist at the first class lounge in Barbados.

"Hello," the pretty girl said with a wide smile.

The woman's appearance warranted the smile. She was medium height, walked with a purposeful and confident stride; brownish red hair to the center of her back caught in a short pony tail. She had flashing eyes showing a lively nature and a touch of mystery. There was a quiet reserve to her demeanor, intellectual, strong, yet a personal ambiance spelled a willingness to become involved if the scenario qualified. Simple diamond earrings; blouse open at the neck. She handed the receptionist her passport.

"I have a reservation in the name of Crystal Czern," she said softly.

The End