

Lovely Little Señorita



Dulci Daily



An "Adult TV" Novel



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For information address
Reluctant Press
P.O. Box 5829
Sherman Oaks, CA 91413
USA

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Lovely Little Señorita

by Dulci Daily

Chapter 1

When Mamá first started dressing me in girls' clothes at the age of six, she told me she had no clothes for me to grow into except for hand-me-downs from my older sisters Anita and Clarita, because we were poor. I believed her, back then. We were poor indeed after Papá died.

Papá had been almost 20 years older than Mamá, and had married her when she was only 15, a new *quinceañera*. He had been a lawyer, *un abogado*, in Santa Fe, the capital of New Mexico Territory. We had then lived in a nice house in Santa Fe—but Mamá could do nothing for Papá's clients after he died, they would not pay her for nothing, and the house was mortgaged.

That was why Mamá had to move in with Señor Muertazos, to live in his big hacienda on his ranch

several miles from Santa Fe. Señor Muertazos himself was rich, but we were still poor, or so I thought.

It was easy for me to get used to looking like a girl, and to being called by my girl's name: María, almost the same as Mario, my boy's name.

I was very fond of Anita and Clarita, though they were very different from each other. I wanted to be like them, though it would have been hard to be like both at once. I did *not* want to be like the only man in our new little so-called family, Señor Muertazos, with his loud voice, his ugly big black mustache, and his foul-smelling cigars.

When I was eight years old and my hair had grown long like Anita's and Clarita's hair, Anita told me I was as pretty as any little girl she knew. I was thrilled. I wondered if I would be as beautiful as Anita when I was her age. She was fourteen, six years older than I. Her dark eyes sparkled when she spoke, and her breasts, though not nearly as big as Mamá's breasts, were round and lovely. I could see Anita's nipples sticking out under her blouse when she told me I was pretty. I wondered if my nipples would stick out like hers when I was her age. I hoped they would. Though I was only eight, my tiny member was already growing hard beneath my skirt at the thought of being like Anita.

I loved Clarita too, and we were very close, but she was nothing like Anita. From an early age Clarita, two years older than I, had loved God and gone to Mass at least every Sunday and holy day, walking the long road to Santa Fe and back on foot when she could not get a ride. It was she, not Mamá and certainly not Anita, who taught me my prayers and sweetly encouraged me to be a good girl. When I was eight and Clarita was ten, not long after Anita told me I was pretty, Clarita asked me to pray that Mamá

would have the courage to leave Señor Muertazos, for they were living in sin.

“How do they sin?” I innocently asked Clarita.

“It’s not decent to say,” Clarita gently rebuked me. “But please pray. Señor Muertazos is a very bad man, and Mamá will go to hell if she does not leave him.”

“Why will she go to hell?” I asked, wide-eyed.

“You can either love God or love sin, but not both,” Clarita explained. “If you love sin, it shuts out love of God. If you try to love sin *and* God, one or the other of them will get shut out. When you love sin, you’re making a hell for yourself, because you’re shutting God out of your life. At last, when you’ve shut him all the way out, there’ll be nothing left but the hell you’ve made for yourself.”

I was duly horrified, though I wasn’t sure I understood very well. “I’ll pray,” I assured her. “There must be some way we can live without Señor Muertazos.”

“I know that, and you know that,” Clarita said, “but Mamá has to know that too.”

Life went on for years, and Mamá did not leave Señor Muertazos. She often seemed sad, as if she really were making a hell for herself as Clarita had said—but I knew of nothing I could do to help her, except to pray. Mamá was still a beautiful woman, but her beauty was starting to fade. I wondered if Señor Muertazos would get tired of her and tell her to leave. If he did, I thought hopefully, then we would be free from him!

Anita was more beautiful than ever by the time she was 18, when Clarita was 14 and I was 12. Her breasts were still small, but she was tall and lithe, and her eyes seemed to smolder with something I did not yet understand. I wondered if it was desire for sin.

I was still praying and trying hard to be a good girl like Clarita, but I was growing ever more fascinated by sin as well. I was still very short, and so was my little member, but it was growing stouter, especially the bulb on the end; it was now often hard beneath my skirt, and hair was starting to grow above it. My chubby little breasts seemed to be starting to grow like a real girl's breasts, and my nipples were pointy and tender, sticking out just as Anita's nipples had done when she was 14. I often imagined what it might be like to sin with a boy, a good boy—but never with Señor Muertazos!

I was totally shocked, then, when Anita took me aside one day and told me she had lain down with Señor Muertazos in his bed, and he had entered her. "Oh, Anita, no!" I cried, though my short member rose rapidly to full hardness beneath my skirt at the thought. "But— isn't it a sin? Won't you go to hell?"

"I will not," she assured me. "Señor Muertazos knows all about such things. He studied for the priesthood, but he quit when he found out that all they were teaching him was lies. He knows there is no hell—but there is a heaven, and a man and a woman enter it when they lie down together."

I did not understand how that could be true, even if the woman were as excited as I was now, hearing about such things. "You really entered heaven when you lay down with him?" I asked.

“Yes, I did,” she said. “It was by far the greatest bliss there can ever be.”

“And you will enter it again?”

“Yes. Tonight.”

“But—does Mamá know?”

“She does. Señor Muertazos told her this would happen, and she would have to accept it.”

“Oh, Anita!” I gazed upon her with awe. I felt ashamed of what I was thinking, but I had to ask: “Anita, is there a place where I could hide and—and watch you entering heaven with Señor Muertazos?”

Anita laughed. “I will ask him,” she said. “Perhaps you will not need to hide.”

“So, little *señorita*,” said Señor Muertazos that evening, “Anita tells me you are ready—ready to see how a man enters a woman.”

“I—I think I am,” I said, hardly able to believe that this was happening. “Please let me see.”

“You are fully ready, I can see!” he exclaimed. “You are *muy caliente*—your feelings are very hot?”

“Yes, they are,” I truthfully told him. My short, stout member was throbbing beneath my skirt, almost as if it were my heart.

“Perhaps you too will be ready soon, to be entered by a man?” he asked.

“Oh!” I said. “Well—I do not know. I am still very young.” I was ashamed, and afraid. I did not want Señor Muertazos to enter me, even if it was possible—and what if he found out I was secretly a boy, with a boy’s member under my skirt?

“We will see,” he said. “You will be even hotter when you have seen this.”

Without delay, Anita and Señor Muertazos were kissing on the mouth and embracing, with their hands on each other’s hips. Almost at once Señor Muertazos pulled Anita’s long skirt down, showing much of her bare legs below her short smock. She returned the favor, stripping him nude below the waist. I could see his big erect member, much larger than my own, which now seemed very tiny, though it was very hard.

Señor Muertazos stripped himself and pulled Anita’s smock and her blouse off at once, leaving her fully nude. My eyes were fixed on her small breasts with big, dark nipples, but I had not long to look at them. Señor Muertazos was pushing her down on the bed and kissing her breasts, while she clutched him hard.

Soon he slipped his hand between her legs, and she was moaning. Then he lay on top of her, she raised her legs, and he pressed his big member into the opening between her legs. As I watched, with my eyes and mouth wide open in amazement, I was so excited that I could not keep from pressing the bulb on the end of my short member through my skirt with both hands. Before long he was thrusting into her incredibly fast and hard, while she gripped him, bucked her hips wildly, and cried out in extreme delight.



Surely Anita had not really gone to heaven, I thought—but she had done something that I, too, must do without delay. “Thank you!” I called out. “Many, many thanks for letting me watch!” I was already on my way to my own little bedroom as I spoke.

I pulled my skirt down over my plump hips, as Señor Muertazos had pulled Anita’s skirt over her slender ones. I pressed my member down into hiding between my legs, to make me look like Anita in front, though it was so short I could hardly keep it from popping out. I stripped off my smock and my blouse, and rubbed and squeezed my chubby little bare breasts to make them look and feel bigger and more girlish. I lay down on my bed, raised my legs like Anita, and pressed both arms down between my legs, pretending my arms were a man’s body. Then I bucked my hips like Anita and rubbed my pressed-down little member, going wild with excitement as she had done, ascending to the utmost pinnacle—until I was gasping for breath, and something new, strange, and hitherto unknown was gushing out of my member in quick, uncontrollable, intensely desirable spurts. I later learned that the sticky, smelly fluid that spurted was called my seed.

“Oh, my God!” I murmured. I had not gone to heaven, and I was pretty sure I had sinned—but, if *this* was sin, I had no idea how I could keep from sinning. I even started to fear that, beyond belief, I would sin with Señor Muertazos as Anita had done, if he wanted me as he wanted her.

Chapter 2

After Anita, it was not I whom Señor Muertazos wanted next. It was Clarita, whom he called the “little saint.” Clarita now, at 14, was at least as lovely as Anita, and her breasts were at least as big as Anita’s.

I knew Clarita would never agree to lie down with Señor Muertazos as Anita had done—but Señor Muertazos himself did not know that, and he even tried to enlist my help in getting Clarita to lie down with him.

“You are becoming very lovely, little *señorita muy caliente*,” he said to me one evening. “The time will come when you will need to lie down with me—but first I will need to lie down with the little saint. You will help me to persuade her that she needs to lie down with me.”

“Oh, I cannot!” I said. “She will never agree! She is not *muy caliente*, you know, as Anita is—and I am, too.” I was blushing. The memory of Anita lying down with Señor Muertazos had penetrated deep into my soul. Even the thought of lying down with him myself was no longer so repellent to me as it had been not so long ago. My short member was growing hard under my skirt in his presence, though I dared not let him know.

“Please, Señor Muertazos,” I begged him, “do not ask me to do this for you. Clarita is too pure, too holy. It can do no good. Please leave her alone.”

His eyes were penetrating deep into me. I could see that his big member was hard beneath his trousers, as my little one was beneath my skirt. “You yourself are not too pure and holy to lie down with me?” he asked with a lewd smile.

“I admit I am not,” I said, feeling the heat of my blush at the knowledge that he was desiring me though I was only 12. Did I dare to say what I was thinking? I had to dare, I decided. If I could help Clarita by doing such a thing, I would—I must.

“I will lie down with you, Señor Muertazos,” I said, “if only you will leave Clarita alone. I am *muy caliente*, as you say. Though I am young, I have such desires, and they are very strong. But Clarita desires only God, and goodness. She will never sin with you.”

“You will lie down with me indeed, lovely little *señorita*,” said Señor Muertazos, “when the right time comes. But first the little saint must quickly grow up into a most excitable sinner. You will tell her that I desire her, and that she must come to me.”

“No, I cannot—I must not—I will not,” I said, though my heart was pounding in fear at the thought of defying him.

“Little *señorita*,” he said, still smiling, “you have spirit, and I admire you for it. But you must know that I have total power on this ranch and in this hacienda. Your mother knows, Anita knows—and soon the little saint must know too. You have seen men flogged until they screamed and bled for defying me. It will not happen to you, because you are too good, too sweet—and too ready to do this simple thing, to convey my message to the little saint. Is it not so?”

Despite the smoothness of his words, I knew he was threatening me with a flogging if I did not comply—and I knew I lacked the courage to face a flogging. I I was beaten. I would convey his message to Clarita—but I knew she had the courage I lacked, and she would never give in to him.

“Yes,” I said. “It is so. I will tell her.”

“Señor Muertazos has given me a message for you,” I soon told Clarita with shame. “I was—I was

afraid of him, so I told him I would give you the message.” My shame was so fierce it was terribly painful. I knew that Clarita was not afraid of Señor Muertazos. She already knew I was afraid of him. More than once she had gently but urgently implored me to trust God and not be afraid, but I had failed.

“I will spare you the embarrassment of giving me the message,” Clarita said. “I already know what it is. He wishes to sin with me. I have seen it in his eyes—and in his trousers, too.” She blushed to reveal that she had looked at his bulging trousers. “That is the message, isn’t that true?”

“Yes, it is,” I admitted.

“Dear Lord, have mercy on me, and give me strength!” Clarita prayed right in front of me. She was silent for a time—silently begging God, I could see, to help her face the wrath of Señor Muertazos and not back down.

“All right, then,” she said at last. “Come with me. I will tell him to his face that I will never sin with him.”

Dread of disaster filled my soul as I walked with her to find Señor Muertazos. We found him in the parlor of the hacienda, smoking a cigar as usual. The parlor had been built in the English style to the specifications of Señor Muertazos himself—but his conduct, as I later learned, was not at all in the English style, for English gentlemen did not smoke cigars in the presence of women.

Both Mamá and Anita were sitting in the parlor with him. All were silent as Clarita and I entered. Aside from Clarita and myself, almost the only movement in the room was that of the cigar smoke, slowly ascending toward the ceiling from the mouth of Señor Muertazos.

“María has told me that you wish to speak to me,” Clarita said without delay.

Señor Muertazos smiled and blew a puff of cigar smoke. “It is true, little saint,” he said. “It is time. I have a very important message for you. Can you guess what it is?”

“I know what it is. You wish to sin with me. I will not.”

He smiled more broadly and looked at his cigar, then back at Clarita. “You have spirit, little saint,” he said. “It is good—but it is time for you to begin to know that little saints must grow up to be big sinners.”

“I will not,” Clarita repeated.

He snuffed out his cigar and arose. “I will be patient, little saint, very patient,” he said. “I was very patient with your hot sister Anita; I will be very patient with your amazingly hot little sister María; and I will be very patient with you. Years may elapse before you finally decide you are ready to lie down with me. But it is time for you to take the first step. Your sister Anita was not ready to lie down with me until she was 18—but she was your age, 14, when I first kissed her. It is time, little saint. I will kiss you.”

He approached her. Her eyes blazed with outrage. He gripped her hips. She slapped him hard in the face. He did not let go her hips. She slapped him again, to no avail. Then she brought her knee up sharply to his groin, giving him pain in his erect member.

“Ay! Auooo!” he shouted in pain and outrage, but he did let go her hips. “Little saint, that is going too far! It is wrong!”

“No, it is right!” she retorted. “I will never sin with you!”

“It is only your youth, your childishness, your ignorance of the truth that is speaking,” he rebuked her. “When I was your age, I imagined I would never sin with a woman. Later on, I even studied to be a priest—did you know that? Yes, I begged God to keep me from sinning, I struggled with all my might to be pure and holy—but then I learned the truth. Here is the truth, little saint: sin is like a strong horse, far stronger than yourself. If you ride it with skill, it can take you far and fast with great delight. If you try to resist it, it will drag you and throw you and trample you, and you will be destroyed. I do not want to see you destroyed, little saint—but you will sin, like it or not, and the time to start is now.”

“I will not,” Clarita said yet again, “and you will go to hell, if you love sin to the end instead of God!”

Señor Muertazos gave her a big, almost blissful-looking smile. “Yes, I will go to hell, little saint,” he said. “I know that. It is the true freedom, to know that you will go to hell. Always they used to try to stop me from sinning by telling me to fear hell. I broke free. I no longer fear hell. I am free to do whatever I wish, without restraint.”

“And if you wish to kill me, because I will never sin with you?” Clarita defied him. I could see the terror in her eyes, but I could see something far greater than any terror too.

“That will never happen,” he assured her, “because you *will* sin with me. Here, I will show you.” He approached her, gripped her hips again, and forced his mouth upon hers.

Almost at once he screamed in pain and backed off. Blood was coming out of his mouth. “You are no saint!” he shouted. “You are a vicious biter!” He could not say the words clearly, for she had bitten his tongue hard enough to make it bleed.

“I will cut off your member, too,” she threatened him, “if I must, to defend myself against your sin.”

“Shitty little cunt! That will never happen! You will die tonight!” he shouted. Still bleeding from the mouth, he grabbed her legs and jerked her feet out from under her, making her fall backward. She would have hit her head on the floor if I had not broken her fall. I could not keep him from dragging her away by her feet.

Twilight was beginning to fall as I left the house and followed him. He was still dragging Clarita behind him, like an ox pulling a plow. I could see his destination: the stables. Horror gripped me and almost blinded me as I remembered his words: “it will drag you and throw you and trample you, and you will be destroyed.”

He grabbed a rope, tied Clarita’s feet together, and tied the rope to a strong black stallion. Clarita’s eyes were closed, her hands pressed tightly together in prayer. She did not scream, but I did.

“Señor Muertazos, do not do this!” I begged him. “You will kill her!”

“Yes, I will kill her,” he agreed. “I already said that.”

He was going to mount the horse. I grabbed him as if to keep him from doing it—knowing I could never succeed, but desperate to try rather than stand there and do nothing. “You have no power, little *señorita*,” he admonished me. “You will let me go.”

“I will not!” I said, gripping him with all my might.

He laughed. “Then you will lie down with me, right here in the stable?”

I choked. It would be dreadful, but I would do it, if it would save Clarita. “Yes, I will lie down with you,” I said, “if only you will not harm Clarita!”

“You will lie down with me indeed,” he said, “but not here, and not now. That shitty little cunt who bit me, and would cut off my precious member if she could, must die. Would you like to ride with me?”

“No!” I cried. I was shocked into loosening my grip on him. Quickly he escaped from me, mounted the horse, and rode off, dragging Clarita behind him. In the twilight I could see that he was heading toward the rockiest ground around.

I could do nothing. I walked out of the stable. Mamá was standing there, crying. Anita was not there. She must have stayed in the hacienda, I thought, preferring not to see what evil Señor Muertazos would do.

Mamá had been distant from me, almost like a statue rather than a living mother, ever since she moved in with Señor Muertazos. She was still almost like a statue, but now like one of those statues in far-off places that, Clarita had told me, were said to shed miraculous tears over the sins of men and women. I went to her and embraced her. “Mamá, please, you must leave Señor Muertazos!” I begged her. “Clarita has prayed for years that you would leave him! Now you have—we have—let her be killed, rather than leave him! We must not stay with him any longer!”

Mamá said nothing. I hugged her as tightly as I could, pressing my head between her big breasts, for she was much taller than I, as tall as Anita. I could feel her grip around me tightening. I looked up at her face. Her tears were falling upon me, bitter with salt and yet sweeter than rain in the desert. She started to shake as if in an earthquake, her mouth opened, and she let out a terrible wail of most dreadful sorrow, as if she had been among those who stood and cried “Crucify him!” when men murdered the King of the Universe come down to earth.

Señor Muertazos rode fast and hard when he returned at last, dragging Clarita behind him. Her clothes were ripped to shreds and she was covered with blood, blood blinding and choking her—but life was still in her.

“Clarita, my baby! It is my fault! Forgive me!” Mamá pleaded, kneeling before Clarita. Clarita could no longer see, but she could hear and, barely, speak. “Mamá, you must leave Señor Muertazos and return to the sacraments!” she murmured. “I have prayed for you for years! Please, do this for me—and for God!” She gasped for breath, suffocating in her own blood. In a louder voice, with her last breath, she cried out: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

She shook. She could not breathe. She died. Señor Muertazos had dismounted; he stood aloof with his arms folded, until I turned and told him, “She is dead. You—you have killed her.” I was crying like Mamá.

“Well, then, we must give her a proper burial!” Señor Muertazos cried. He led the horse, still dragging Clarita’s body, to a big pile of horse manure.

Then he cut the rope, grabbed a pitchfork, and vigorously dumped the manure on Clarita's body until she was completely buried in it. He led the horse back to its stall, left it there, and returned to the hacienda without another word.

I felt sure he was going to sin with Anita, leaving Mamá alone. It was good, I thought. Perhaps Mamá would agree to leave with me, at last—early tomorrow morning, while Señor Muertazos and Anita were still sleeping the deep, dark sleep of sin.

Chapter 3

Mamá did leave with me in the morning. We took nothing but the few belongings we could carry on a single horse, the same strong horse Señor Muertazos had used to kill Clarita. We were poor and homeless—but we were free at last, we hoped, from the grip of Señor Muertazos.

We tied the horse near the cathedral in Santa Fe and entered. A few people were already lined up for confession. Mamá knelt and prayed for many minutes. I imagined her confessing that she had lived in sin with a man for years, and he had been able to kill her daughter because she had been afraid to leave him, even when she knew that he was sinning with her oldest daughter. After some minutes of this day-dreaming, I finally forced myself to think the truth: I was not going to confess Mamá's sins, but I needed to confess my own.

Mamá got in line. I got in line behind her. An aging priest entered the confessional without looking at the line of penitents, and the first penitent entered. I prayed to God to help me be pure and holy as Clarita had been, for I was the only one who could and would

take her place as the good, innocent daughter in the family.

In due time Mamá went in. I tried not to think of what she was saying, but only of what I would soon have to say. In a time far shorter than her years of sin with Señor Muertazos, Mamá came out of the confessional with a look of blessing on her face.

I went in and knelt. “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned,” I said in Spanish. “It has been—well, years since my last confession, and I cannot remember all my sins, but these I do remember. On one occasion I sinned with myself, pretending I was sinning with a man. This was after I had watched a very bad man sinning with my older sister. I had asked to watch, because I was so fascinated by sin. I also told the same man I would sin with him, although he did not because he thought I was still too young. And I—I failed to tell my mother that she should leave this man, as my other sister had told her. Then he killed the other sister, and I am afraid it was partly my fault. I also wish to include in this confession all the sins of my whole life, especially any sins against purity, and any sins of omission.” I was glad I remembered how to do at least this much, from my few confessions when I was younger.

“Well, my child, thank God for this good confession,” said the priest. “Please do not wait more years before going to confession again. How old are you, my child?”

“I am 12.”

“Well, pray to God for strength to withstand more temptations against purity, for they are sure to come. For your penance, say 10 Our Fathers and 10 Hail Marys, and now make a good act of contrition.”

“O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee,” I said from memory, “and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell—uh—”

I stopped. It had been too long. I could not remember the rest of the Act of Contrition.

“But most of all,” the priest prompted me.

“But most of all—oh, yes!—because they offend Thee, my God—who art all good and worthy of all my love. I firmly—uh—”

“I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace,” said the priest.

“I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace,” I repeated, “uh—to sin no more? And to avoid the near occasions of sin?”

“Very good, my child,” said the priest, disregarding the uncertainty in my voice. He gave me absolution, but he did not say at once “Go in peace.” Instead he said, “And now, my child, do you know why this man of whom you speak killed your sister?”

“Yes. It was because she would not sin with him.”

“Have you told *el alguacil mayor*, the sheriff, about this?”

“No. Not yet.”

“You should tell him. A man like that must be stopped. Do you speak English?”

“Yes. My father spoke both English and Spanish well; he taught my mother English, and she taught it to us. The—the man who killed my sister also speaks

much English as well as Spanish, and I have learned some English from hearing him.”

“Very well. You will tell the sheriff, won’t you?”

“Yes, Father, I will.”

“Very good. Go in peace.”

I went out, knelt next to Mamá, and said my penance. Then I told her we should go to see the sheriff, but she said we would stay for morning Mass first. “It is what Clarita would want,” she said. “She—she gave her life for me. The least I can do for her is to pray for her at Mass.”

I knew she was right, although I was eager to tell the sheriff and have Señor Muertazos arrested for killing Clarita. Perhaps he would even be hanged, I thought with mingled revulsion and delight.

Mamá received Holy Communion at Mass, but I did not, for it was not then the custom to receive First Communion until you were at least 13 or 14 years old. Then, after Mamá made her thanksgiving, we set off for the sheriff’s office.

A lean young man, looking almost too young to be a deputy sheriff but wearing a badge, was leaning back in a chair near the entrance of the sheriff’s office. He sat bolt upright when Mamá and I entered, and his blue eyes gazed upon us with amazement and delight. “Oh! Good day, ladies!” he said in Spanish. “I am Deputy Pete Juttings. I speak Spanish, a little. Welcome! How may I help you?” Was it only my imagination, I wondered, that made him seem to be looking at me even more than at Mamá—and to be delighted with what he saw, though I was so young? I did not know—but my heart was beating hard at the thought, and I was glad my member was too short to

make my skirt stick out in front, for it was rising fast in response to his admiration.

Oh, yes! I am attractive to him! I thought, seeing his eyes fixed upon me. Soon my member was very hard, my heart was shaking me, and I could feel myself blushing deeply all over. I was ashamed of having such feelings for a man I had never met before, but I could not deny them.

“A man has killed my daughter Clarita,” said Mamá in English, pouring ice water on my hot feelings. “I was living in sin with the man. My—my daughter María, here, and I have escaped from him only this morning.”

“Oh, ma’am, that’s damnable!” Deputy Juttings exclaimed in English. “How did he kill her?”

“He dragged her behind a horse.”

“Who is he? Where does he live?”

“He is Señor Marcial Muertazos. He lives on his big ranch, miles from here.”

“Does he have guns? Bodyguards?”

“He does have guns, and he is the *padrón*. If he commands his ranch hands to kill for him, they will.”

“Well, we can’t let him get away with that. Let me talk to the chief deputy.” He entered an office and closed the door. Soon an older man, stout and gray-haired but still handsome, emerged from the office with Deputy Juttings.

“Good morning, ladies,” said the older man, holding his ten-gallon hat in his hand. “I’m Chief Deputy Frank Ripson. Deputy Juttings has told me about the murder. I’m terribly sorry for you both.” His eyes, un-

like those of Deputy Juttings, were fixed on Mamá. He seemed to find her as attractive as Deputy Juttings seemed to find *me*.

“We’ll need you to swear out a complaint, ma’am,” the chief deputy said to Mamá. “Then Deputy Juttings will round up a posse and go out to arrest this Señor Muertazos.”

“Oh, can I come too?” I blurted out. An opportunity to help arrest Señor Muertazos, if I could get it, would be too good to pass up.

“Take it easy, *señorita*,” said Deputy Juttings with a smile, mixing English and Spanish. “This is no job for a lady.”

I couldn’t admit to him that I was really no lady; I was afraid he’d stop being attracted to me if I did. Still, I had to say, “But why not? I—I’m not afraid of Señor Muertazos!”

He laughed. “You’re a brave little lady,” he said with great admiration in his eyes. “But you can’t go. It’s a man’s job to face danger to protect women and children. I can see you’re not a child any more—but you’re a woman, and you need to stay safe.” Were his blue eyes really adding, without a word, “*stay safe for me*”? I really thought they were, and my heart leaped high at the thought.

“But I need to show you where—where he put Clarita’s body!” I protested. “It was under a pile of horse manure.”

Deputy Juttings frowned. “You can’t go,” he said again. “Just tell me how to get to his ranch, and draw me a diagram of where he put the body.”

“Oh, all right,” I said, pouting. “But make sure to tell me everything about arresting him, after you’ve done it!”

“I’ll be glad to, *señorita*,” he said. “Just say when.”

“Well, I think we could treat these ladies to dinner this evening,” said Chief Deputy Ripson. “Then we can tell them about the arrest, and get to know each other.”

“Great plan!” said Deputy Juttings. “I’ll go round up the posse right now!”

“This saloon may not be the most elegant place in the West,” said Chief Deputy Ripson as he escorted us into Murchison’s Saloon that evening, “but the food is good, and it’s not as noisy or rowdy as some.” I looked around. Mamá and I were almost the only ladies there, except for the saloon girls—supposing them to be ladies. At least they were *women*, as could be plainly seen from their breasts above their low necklines. It made my member hard to see their breasts. I was embarrassed, but I could hardly keep my eyes off them.

Only one of the saloon girls did not reveal her breasts. Hers were very small, completely covered by a high-necked red dress with a tight bodice. I was not even sure she was a woman; she was tall, thin, and plain, with a long, horsy face that looked as if it could be a man’s face. In fact, it looked more like a man’s than a woman’s face, except perhaps for her big blue eyes, which looked soft and sweet—but so, I believed, did my own girlish-looking brown eyes, and I knew that I myself was a female impersonator. Her figure, too, looked like that of a man, not a woman, straight

and lean, with fairly broad shoulders and narrow hips. Her little breasts, I thought, might easily be false, an illusion created by a stuffed corset. I wondered if she had a secret like mine beneath her skirt; I felt sure she did. It made my member even harder to think about it.

“Decent ladies are still mighty scarce here, and almost everywhere in the West,” said the chief deputy, almost as if he could read my mind. “Many are not so decent, and I’m ashamed to say there are even some female impersonators, openly seeking to deceive men with their wiles.” He looked toward the thin girl with the mannish-looking face and discreetly but unmistakably gestured toward her, confirming my suspicions. Surely he must know that the thin girl was really no girl, but a female impersonator. I hoped he would not find out that I, too, young as I was, was already a female impersonator. I certainly hoped Deputy Juttings would not find out either—but could I keep him from finding out forever, if we were to fall in love?

“We’re honored,” the chief deputy went on, “that you real, decent ladies are willing to dine with us.”

“That’s right!” said Deputy Juttings, gazing at me and making me blush.

“We are very grateful,” said Mamá with her eyes lowered, “but—well, you must not think me a decent lady. I was living in sin with Señor Muertazos.”

“Oh, ma’am, that’s all over with now. That Señor Muertazos won’t bother you any more. And you know, as the Good Book says, *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God. I’ve sinned too, and so did my first wife, before she took the consumption and died. She was actually a saloon girl here, at this very saloon. I knew she’d sinned with men, sure

enough—but she was so glad to get out of that life, and become a decent, faithful wife!” It was pretty plain to me, and I guessed to Mamá as well, that Chief Deputy Ripson was yearning desperately for another decent, faithful wife, and hoping Mamá might turn out to be the one.

“You did not despise her for her sin?” Mamá asked, raising her eyes as if in dawning hope.

“We did not despise each other for our sins,” he answered. “We just went and sinned no more, as the Good Book says. At least, we didn’t do any of *those* kind of sins any more—not that we became perfect!”

“But why won’t Señor Muertazos bother us any more?” I asked, unwilling to wait any longer to find out. “Did you arrest him?” I turned to Deputy Juttings.

“We sure did!” He grinned. “With a little help from his slaves—I mean, his ranch hands!” He looked straight at me, seeming to delight in my attention.

“When we got to the ranch,” he said, “we met up with two big *hombres* blocking our way. I explained, in Spanish, that we were there to arrest Señor Muertazos for murder, and there mustn’t be any interference. The biggest one said, ‘Murder! He will hang?’ ‘Maybe so,’ I said. ‘Then what will happen to the ranch?’ he said. ‘I don’t know,’ I said. ‘That depends on who inherits it.’ ‘No one will inherit it,’ he said. ‘Señor Muertazos has no wife, no children. He has only slaves—like us, his ranch hands.’”

He had my rapt attention, and I could see that he did delight in it as he went on. “‘Hey, wait a minute!’ I said. ‘Slavery’s been illegal for decades now!’ He said, ‘Señor Muertazos does not know, or does not care. We are slaves.’ I said, ‘Well, how would you like to be

free men instead? Come on and help us arrest him!’ He said, ‘But what will happen to the ranch?’ I said, ‘If nobody inherits it, it will revert to the territory, and the sheriff will put it up for sale. But I’m sure the new owner, whoever he is, will want good ranch hands to help him—and we’ll keep an eye out to make sure there’s no more slavery.’ He said, ‘Then we will help arrest him!’ The other *hombre*, the silent one, nodded ‘yes.’”

I laughed. “Very good!” I said. “Señor Muertazos deserved it!”

“He sure did,” said Deputy Juttings. “We found the body under the horse manure, like in your diagram. I was thinking he might have moved it or even burned it, but he didn’t. Those ranch hands were pretty damn—I mean, pretty mad when they saw what he did to her. I had a couple of men from the posse stand guard to make sure nothing happened to the body. It’ll need to be examined to verify the cause of death, but after that she can be given a proper burial.”

“Thank you,” said Mamá. “It is important.”

“It’s the least we can do,” he said. “So anyway, then we went into the hacienda, and the big *hombre* said, ‘Señor Muertazos, some men are here to see you.’ He must have had some idea who the men were and why we wanted to see him, because he came out of his parlor with six-guns in both hands. ‘Drop the guns right now or we’ll shoot!’ I said. ‘You’re way outnumbered, you’ll be killed if you try to fight.’ He was looking around and seeing that I was right, because I’d gathered up quite a posse, plus the two ranch hands. So he dropped the guns, but he said, ‘My men will hunt you down and kill you, and I will escape.’ I told him, ‘Not if your men are anything like these two,’ and I pointed to the two ranch hands. ‘They’ll be glad to bid you good riddance!’”

I laughed again. "So you arrested him, and he is in jail?"

"He sure is. He'll get a speedy trial, too. Sheriff Cunningham isn't too fond of hangings, but I'm thinking he'll have to go through with one pretty soon."

I wasn't sure I was too fond of hangings either—but then I thought of Señor Muertazos dragging good, innocent Clarita behind the horse until she was about to die, all because she would not sin with him. He deserved it, I thought, and he deserved worse than that. No doubt the sheriff couldn't drag him behind a horse until he died—but hanging was too good for him.

"I hope so," I said. "Señor Muertazos must die for what he did."

Our dinner was served by the thin, mannish-looking saloon girl. She seemed sweet enough, at least for a man in women's clothes—but her voice didn't sound much more feminine than her face looked, and her brisk, straight movements seemed mannish too. I almost imagined I could see through the stuffing in her corset and see that she had no breasts; I was sure she was a female impersonator. Deputy Juttings and Chief Deputy Ripson must know she was one too, I thought. I wondered what they thought—especially, what Deputy Juttings thought—of female impersonators, and how they would react if they found out I was one. I blushed at the thought, and my little member was hard yet again beneath my skirt.

After dinner, the men escorted us to a nearby boardinghouse and made arrangements with the proprietor, a plump, red-faced elderly lady, for us to stay there. Chief Deputy Ripson said he hoped he would see us again very soon, and Mamá promised that he would. Deputy Juttings went even further: he asked if I would like to go for a walk around the block with him.

“May I, Mamá?” I asked, fearing she would say no because I was too young and because she knew my secret—but she said yes! “Just around the block,” she said. “Chief Deputy Ripson and I will stay here on the porch and talk, to make sure you get back soon.”

“Thank you, Mamá—I will!” I promised.

“Well, María,” Deputy Juttings said softly when we had walked just out of earshot. “Thank you! It’s not often I get a chance to take a walk with a—a real, decent lady. Would you mind calling me Pete?”

“I am glad to give you the chance to walk with me—Pete,” I said. “You—you are lonely?”

“I’ve been *mighty* lonely,” he said. “As the Good Book says, it’s not good for a man to be alone. You know what I mean?”

“Yes, I do,” I said. “I have been lonely too.” I sighed. “But—well, I am still very young.”

“You are,” he said, “but you won’t always be. María, I’m thinking you’re a treasure well worth waiting for. You won’t think I’m too forward for saying that, will you?”

“Oh, no!” I assured him, and I meant it. I could hardly believe my ears: it was true! He wanted to love me! He wanted to wait years for me to be ready to

marry him! Could it be? And, if it could, what would happen when he found out about my secret—the secret that, even now, was hard and throbbing beneath my skirt?

“You will need to be very patient,” I told him. “My sister Clarita was very good and decent, and I want to be like her. I will not sin with a man.”

“I wouldn’t have it any other way,” Pete assured me. “You’re too good for that. I—I admit I haven’t always been a patient man, but I’ll be as patient as it takes.”

“Thank you, Pete,” I said, taking his arm to walk with him as a lady with a gentleman. “So will I!”

Pete lived up to his word—but soon Mamá almost destroyed everything. One evening she talked with me in private. “María,” she said, “I think it is time for you to return to being Mario, a boy. I have never told you this—but the reason why I started dressing you in girls’ clothes, soon after I went to Señor Muertazos, was that he insisted. He wanted me to raise you as a girl for sin.”

I was afraid. I did not want Pete to find out that I was a boy; I was afraid he would not love me if he knew my secret. He would love me for years to come if he did not know—and perhaps, incredibly, he might still love me when he knew, if only I could keep him from finding out for long enough, and his love for me could grow deep enough! But what could I do?

“Mamá, Señor Muertazos is a very bad man,” I said, “but I will not sin with him, and I did not know that he wanted you to dress me as a girl. Now I am

María, and I love being María. I do not even know how to be Mario any more. Please do not try to make me stop being María.”

Mamá looked at me with concern, but not with understanding. “Is it for Deputy Juttings that you wish to be María?” she asked. “I do not think that is wise.”

“He treats me as a lady, and—he admires me as a lady,” I said. “I do not want to disappoint him—unless I must. I told him I wanted to be good and decent like Clarita, and I would not sin with a man. He understood. Please do not make me disappoint him, Mamá!”

“You will have to disappoint him sooner or later,” said Mamá.

“Well, at least let it be later, not sooner!” I begged.

Mamá frowned. “And what about school?” she asked. “Now that we are in Santa Fe, you will have to go to school regularly. Surely you do not think you can deceive everyone at school into thinking you are a girl!”

It will be no deception, I thought, for I am a girl—a girl with a secret that no one will see! I could not say this to Mamá, I knew. Instead I said only, “It will be time for me to think about dressing as a boy if anyone finds out that I am not a girl. But no one will find out. I will train my voice to stay high like a girl’s voice, and no one will be permitted to see or feel what is under my skirt.”

Mamá sighed. “I do not think it is a good idea,” she said, “but I see that you are too stubborn to change your mind, and I cannot force you. Well, then, let it be done as you wish—but do not say I failed to warn you.”

“I will not say so, Mamá,” I assured her, turning my face away to hide my big smile.

Chapter 4

Pete kept on being a perfect gentleman for me. We were in love, but he did no more than hold my hand and kiss me on the cheek. I could not help pretending, on occasion, that I was lying down with him, getting so excited that my member again underwent the uncontrollable spurts of seed—but this was only in secret, I did not let him know, and I always went to confession afterward.

Mamá and Chief Deputy Ripson were far from too young for full love, and soon I could see that they too were in love. Even before the date set for the trial of Señor Muertazos, the chief deputy—“Frank” to Mamá—had asked her to marry him, and she had accepted. Mamá had convinced him that Catholics, too, believed in the Good Book; he was most eager to be convinced, and they were to have a Catholic wedding some months from now.

When the day of the trial arrived, the courtroom was almost completely filled. I had seen news reports on the case of Señor Muertazos in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, and I knew that many people were outraged at the crime he was charged with committing. Some were excluded from the jury for saying they already believed he was guilty, but at last a jury was selected, the known witnesses were ordered to wait outside the courtroom, and the trial began.

“Gentlemen of the jury, you will hear things today that will shock you to the core,” the prosecutor said. “A wealthy and powerful landowner, Marcial Muertazos, was not satisfied with living in sin with the beautiful widow of a respected local attorney. He

demanded to discharge his insatiable lusts upon the widow's daughters as well. One daughter, a pure and devout maiden of 14 known as Clarita, resisted his advances. Outraged, Muertazos murdered Clarita by dragging her behind a horse until she could not survive. Then, to complete the outrage, he buried Clarita's body beneath a pile of horse manure. He showed his consciousness of guilt by pulling six-guns on a deputy sheriff and his posse who had come to arrest him for the murder. He is guilty, gentlemen of the jury, guilty of murder beyond a reasonable doubt; and I am confident that you will find him guilty after hearing all the evidence."

The facts stated by the prosecutor, about what I had seen with my own eyes, were shocking indeed—but even more shocking was what was said by the advocate for Señor Muertazos. The *New Mexican* had said he was a San Francisco attorney, Billman W. Bulger, specially admitted to practice in New Mexico Territory for this case. The newspaper article had discreetly suggested that he would stop at nothing to win a case. I soon saw that this was true.

"Yes, gentlemen of the jury, you will be shocked to the core today," said the handsome, strong-looking Mr. Bulger, "but *not* by anything done by the innocent defendant, Mr. Marcial Muertazos! No, you will be shocked by the brazen, horrific nature of the conspiracy to incriminate and destroy Mr. Muertazos—by none other than the dissatisfied, dishonest, adulterous common-law wife of Mr. Muertazos and the chief deputy sheriff of this county! The common-law wife, deeply involved in an illicit love affair with the chief deputy, hatched a plot to destroy Mr. Muertazos along with her own daughter Clarita, whom she hated for opposing her sins! Gentlemen of the jury, you have read in the Good Book about the crime of Herodias, the illegal wife of King Herod, who had the holy John the Baptist put to

death for daring to rebuke Herod's sin with her. Here you will see a modern-day version of the same ancient tale of woe, misery, sin, and murder, with the common-law wife of Mr. Muertazos as Herodias, the chief deputy sheriff of this county as King Herod, and not one but *two* holy John the Baptists killed or in danger of death: the innocent maiden Clarita, ashamed and disgusted at her mother's flagrant sins, and the equally innocent Mr. Muertazos, hated for standing in the way of his common-law wife's burning adulterous desire for the chief deputy! Gentlemen of the jury, Clarita is dead because of this conspiracy; do not, I beg you, let the conspiracy succeed in killing *another* innocent person, Marcial Muertazos!"

The prosecutor called Mamá to testify. She walked with dignity into the courtroom, her eyes cast down. I was glad she had not been able to hear Mr. Bulger's terrible lies about her. She swore to tell the truth, stated that her name was Lucía de Alcazán y Buenazos, and did tell the truth: Señor Muertazos had openly demanded to sin with Clarita, she had resisted him with all her might, he had dragged her with the horse, she had died, and he had buried her body under horse manure. Mamá and her daughter María had escaped the next morning and reported the murder to Deputy Juttings and Chief Deputy Ripson, neither of whom she had ever met before.

Mr. Bulger rose to cross-examine her. "So, Mrs. Muertazos," he said, "you wish the jury to believe you had never met Chief Deputy Ripson until *after* Clarita was killed, do you?"

"I am not Mrs. Muertazos," said Mamá.

"You were the common-law wife of the defendant, *Mr. Muertazos*," said Mr. Bulger, as if she could not contradict him.

“I was living in sin with him,” Mamá said. “I was never his wife. He did not believe in marriage.”

“Your Honor, I’ll object and move to strike that last comment as irrelevant and prejudicial to my client,” said Mr. Bulger.

“Your Honor, the defense has opened the door by arguing that the witness was the common-law wife of the defendant,” said the prosecutor. “To rebut this, it’s relevant to show that neither the witness nor the defendant regarded their relationship as one of common-law marriage.”

The judge, a stout, white-haired gentleman with drooping jowls and a stern expression on his face, hesitated for a moment and then said, “I’ll overrule the objection.”

“Very well, Mrs. Muertazos,” said Mr. Bulger, disregarding what she had said. “You wish the jury to believe that Chief Deputy Frank Ripson was a perfect stranger to you until after Clarita was killed?”

“Yes. It is true.”

“And yet now you are engaged to marry him, are you not?”

“Yes, I am. We became acquainted quickly after we met, and—before too long we were in love.”

“Oh, Frank, this is so *sudden!*” Mr. Bulger said with a sarcastic sneer. “Is that how it was?”

“I did not use those words,” said Mamá.

“Clarita didn’t approve of your so-called sin with Mr. Muertazos, did she?” asked Mr. Bulger, quickly changing the subject.

“No, she did not. She had begged me to leave him, but I would not listen. Just before she died, after Mr. Muertazos dragged her with the horse, she begged me again to leave him, and said she had prayed for years that I would leave him. At last I listened. The next morning I did leave him, taking María with me.”

“You didn’t take your oldest daughter, Anita, with you too, did you?”

“No. I was sure Anita would not wish to go. She was—”

Mr. Bulger cut her off before she could say “singing with Mr. Muertazos.” He challenged her: “You knew what Anita would say about who killed Clarita, didn’t you? You knew it wasn’t the same as what you wanted everyone to believe, didn’t you? You knew Anita would say it was Chief Deputy Ripson who dragged Clarita with the horse, not Mr. Muertazos—didn’t you?”

“I did not know what Anita would say,” Mamá said simply. “But I did know she would not wish to—to escape from Mr. Muertazos.”

“And you wish the jury to believe that Mr. Muertazos was *openly* demanding to sin with Clarita, right in front of you and Anita too? There was no secrecy?”

“No, there was not. Anita and I were there, and so was my youngest daughter, María, who is 12 years old.”

“So Mr. Muertazos was so devoid of any sense of shame that he dared to demand sin openly in the presence of a 12-year-old child? Is *that* what you imagine the jury is willing to believe on your say-so? Are you sure about that, Mrs. Muertazos?”

“Yes, I am sure. And I am still not Mrs. Muertazos.”

“Well, we’ll just see about that. No further questions.”

I felt sick to my stomach. I was glad that I would not be called to testify because I was only 12, and I had seen no more than Mamá had seen of the crime of Señor Muertazos. I watched in silence as Pete testified about the report of the murder, the discovery of Clarita’s body beneath the horse manure, and the arrest of Señor Muertazos. Mr. Bulger led him to admit that he did not personally know who had killed Clarita, and that was all for Pete. Since his testimony was done, Pete was permitted to stay in the courtroom and watch the rest of the trial. He took a seat next to me, which I had saved for him.

A doctor who had examined Clarita’s dead body testified next. I did not want to listen too closely. He testified that the cause of death was loss of blood and injuries to internal organs, which could have been caused by dragging behind a horse with a rope, in view of the rope burns on Clarita’s ankles. I was relieved when Mr. Bulger asked him no questions.

Last came Chief Deputy Ripson. He was as dignified as Mamá, testifying that he had received the report of the crime, obtained a sworn complaint from the victim’s mother, and ordered Deputy Juttings to form a posse for the arrest of Mr. Muertazos. He, too, testified that he had never before met the victim’s mother, Lucía de Alcazán y Buenazos.

“So, Chief Deputy Ripson,” Mr. Bulger said at once on cross-examination, “you wish the jury to believe you have had a *whirlwind romance* with the victim’s mother, starting only *after* the death of the victim?”

“Yes, you could call it that,” said the chief deputy.

“You wish the jury to believe you never set foot on the property of Mr. Muertazos?”

“Yes, that is true.”

“You wish the jury to believe you had nothing to do with the victim’s death?”

“Yes, I had nothing to do with it.”

“You wish the jury to believe you did not personally drag the victim to her death behind a horse, at the instigation of the victim’s mother, who hated the victim and wanted desperately to elope with you from her common-law husband, Mr. Muertazos?”

“Yes, I do wish the jury to believe it, for none of what you are saying is true.”

“Well, we’ll just see about that. It’s your story, and you’re stuck with it.”

My shock was quite deep enough already, but there was worse to come. Mr. Bulger called Anita to testify. I was sure she would lie, and she did.

“I am Anita Buenazos y Gutiérrez,” she said. “I have served as mistress of the Rancho Muertazos since the departure of Mr. Muertazos and my mother, who was his common-law wife.”

“Were you aware of your mother’s feelings toward your sister, her daughter Clarita?”

“Yes. She hated Clarita, because Clarita was always nagging her to give up her so-called sin with Mr. Muertazos.”

“Were you aware of a relationship between your mother and Chief Deputy Frank Ripson, *before* your sister’s death?”

“Yes. My mother admitted to me that she was in love with Chief Deputy Ripson and wanted to leave Mr. Muertazos.”

“Did your mother enlist your assistance in a plan for killing Clarita, incriminating Mr. Muertazos, and eloping with Chief Deputy Ripson?”

“Yes, she did. She knew that I too hated Clarita because she was a—a holier-than-thou prude, a kind of person I cannot stand. She asked me to carry a secret message to Chief Deputy Ripson.”

“Did you read the message?”

“No, but I guessed what it was about. Soon afterward, my mother asked me to stay in the parlor with Mr. Muertazos and María, while she went out toward the stables for a private talk with Clarita.”

“Did Clarita go with her willingly?”

“Oh, yes. That was how she was: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. She never suspected.”

“Had there been any confrontation between Mr. Muertazos and Clarita?”

“No—no, I do not think so.”

“Did Mr. Muertazos demand that Clarita sin with him?”

“No, certainly not.”

“Did you see Clarita being tied up and dragged away?”

“No, I was inside the hacienda with Mr. Muertazos, making sure he would not see. But I did go outside

after that, and I saw her being dragged back to the stable.”

“Did you see who was riding the horse that was dragging her?”

“Yes. It was Chief Deputy Ripson.”

“Did you see who buried her body under a pile of horse manure?”

“Yes. Chief Deputy Ripson did that.”

“Thank you. No further questions.”

I was horrified and outraged. I did not love Anita, I had never loved her since I had seen her eagerness to sin with Señor Muertazos, but now I hated her for her terrible lies. I was torn between a desire to hear the prosecutor’s cross-examination of Anita and a desire to tell Pete what I knew about Anita’s loathsome motive for lying. The desire to tell Pete soon won out.

“Pete,” I whispered, “I know why Anita is lying. It is because she was sinning with Señor Muertazos, and she wants to take Mamá’s place with him!”

Pete’s eyes bulged. “You *know* that?” he whispered. “How do you know?”

“Well—they let me see them sinning with each other.”

“Ugh! You *watched* them?”

“Yes. I’m sorry, Pete. I know it was wrong, it was a sin, and I confessed it—but I was just too fascinated by, um, by sin.”

“You know a lady really shouldn’t be fascinated by sin?”

“Yes, Pete, I know! I wish I hadn’t—but I did, and so I know why Anita’s lying!”

Pete sighed. “Well, actually, I guess a gentleman shouldn’t be fascinated by sin either,” he said, “and I can’t say I’ve always been perfect along those lines. But I think I’ve got to tell the prosecutor about this. You might have to testify about it.”

“Oh! But—I thought I wasn’t going to testify!”

“You weren’t—but maybe now you are.”

Pete got up and inconspicuously moved to join a bailiff at the side of the courtroom. When the prosecutor’s cross-examination was done, Pete walked over to him and spoke softly. Soon they were deep in earnest conversation.

“Is the prosecution ready to proceed?” the judge asked, seeming a bit impatient.

“Yes, Your Honor,” the prosecutor said. “I’ve just been told of a possible rebuttal witness. I’ve now heard enough to make my decision about calling that witness.”

He didn’t say what the decision was. I was left in suspense while Mr. Bulger called Señor Muertazos and predictably got him to say that Mamá was his common-law wife, he knew she hated Clarita, and he knew nothing of the murder until the posse showed up at his door. The six-guns, he explained, were for the purpose of defending himself against what appeared at first glance to be an armed mob with no lawful purpose for invading his ranch. As soon as he recognized that the mob was really a posse led by a deputy sheriff, and that he was to be arrested for a reason totally unknown to him, he submitted at once to lawful authority and dropped the guns.

After a brief cross-examination in which the prosecutor seemed to be getting nowhere, Mr. Bulger said “the defense rests.” The prosecutor then said that, as a rebuttal witness, he would call María Buenazos y Gutiérrez.

My heart was pounding as I got up and shakily walked to the witness stand. When I said I was 12 years old, Mr. Bulger objected that, as a child, I was incompetent to testify.

“Your Honor, a 12-year-old child is beyond the age of presumed incompetence,” said the prosecutor, “and furthermore, I can verify that this child understands the obligation of an oath and the difference between truth and falsehood.” He then asked me if I knew I had promised to tell the truth, and asked a few questions like what would happen if I lied under oath (I would get in big trouble, I said). The judge was satisfied and allowed me to testify.

“Now, María,” said the prosecutor, “were you in the parlor with Clarita on the evening just before Clarita was killed?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Were your mother, and Anita, and Mr. Muertazos also there in the parlor?”

“Yes.”

“Did Mr. Muertazos demand that Clarita sin with him?”

“Yes, he did. He called her ‘little saint’ and said that little saints must grow up to be big sinners.”

“Did she refuse him?”

“Yes, she did, and she fought with him when he tried to kiss her. She told him he would go to hell, and he said yes, it was true freedom to know he would go to hell, because he could do whatever he wished. When she kept resisting and fighting him, he became very angry and dragged her out to the stables. I followed, but I could not stop him.”

“Did you see what he did in the stables?”

“Yes. He tied Clarita’s feet to a black horse. I begged him not to do this because he would kill Clarita, and he agreed that he would kill her. He rode away, dragging Clarita behind the horse.”

“Did you see him come back?”

“Yes. He was still dragging Clarita. She was bloody all over. My mother was watching with me. Clarita told my mother she had prayed for her for years, and she must leave Mr. Muertazos and return to the sacraments. Then Clarita said, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’—and she died.” I had kept from crying on the witness stand so far, but now I could feel tears forcing their way out of my eyes.

The prosecutor paused to let my words sink in. “Did your mother leave the parlor while you were still there?” he then asked.

“No. Mr. Muertazos left first, dragging Clarita behind him. I went out after them. My mother did not come out until after that. Only Anita stayed in the hacienda.”

“Did you see Chief Deputy Ripson at any time that evening?”

“No. I never met him or—or Deputy Juttings until the next day.”

“And did you see someone covering Clarita’s body with horse manure?”

“Yes. Mr. Muertazos did that. He said it was a proper burial for her.”

“All right, María. Now I need to ask you about something that may be embarrassing, but you know you must tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

“All right. Are you aware of any special relationship between your sister Anita and Mr. Muertazos?”

“Yes. He has sinned with her. I have seen it.”

Loud noise broke out in the courtroom. “Objection, Your Honor!” Mr. Bulger shouted. “I’ll object and move to strike that answer on the ground that it’s extremely prejudicial to my client!”

“Your Honor, it’s highly relevant to the bias of this witness’s sister, and the sister’s motive to testify falsely!” the prosecutor retorted.

The judge frowned. “I’ll overrule the objection,” he said. “But the jury is hereby instructed to consider this evidence *only* in regard to possible bias or motive to testify falsely on the part of witness Anita Buenazos y Gutierrez. This evidence is not to be considered in relation to the character, or the guilt or innocence, of the defendant, Marcial Muertazos.”

“Thank you, Your Honor,” said the prosecutor. “Now, María, how did it come about that you saw your sister Anita sinning with Mr. Muertazos?”

I took a deep breath. “Well,” I said, “one day Anita told me she had lain down with Mr. Muertazos, he

had entered her, and she had gone to heaven. She said it would happen again that evening. I was shocked and ashamed, but I was too fascinated, and I asked her if I could hide and watch. That evening Mr. Muertazos told me I could watch without hiding. Then they were kissing, and he took her clothes off and kissed her breasts and put his hand between her legs. Then he lay down with her on his bed, and he put his member into her between her legs, and they started moving very fast together and made noises.” I heard noises in the courtroom when I said that. I was embarrassed, and afraid Pete might think I was a bad girl for being fascinated with sin—but I knew I must tell the whole truth.

“Thank you, María,” said the prosecutor. “I know this has been very hard for you. You are a good, brave girl. I have no further questions for this witness.”

“Now, María, you love your mother very much, don’t you?” Mr. Bulger asked at once.

“Yes, I do,” I said.

“You don’t want anything bad to happen to your mother, do you?”

“No.”

“But you don’t love Mr. Muertazos very much, do you?”

“No. He is a very bad man.”

“So it’s all right with you if something bad happens to Mr. Muertazos, isn’t it?”

“For what he has done, yes, it is.”

“If you had to lie about what Mr. Muertazos had done, to help your mother, you would do it, wouldn’t you?”

“No.”

“Come now, María. What if your mother, whom you love very much, would be hanged unless you lied about Mr. Muertazos, whom you do not love? You would do it, wouldn’t you?”

“No. If my mother had done anything to have Clarita killed, she would deserve to be hanged. If Mr. Muertazos had *not* done anything to have Clarita killed, he would *not* deserve to be hanged.”

“María, this has gone far enough. You know the truth. Now tell the truth. You know it was really your mother whom you saw sinning, not Anita—and your mother was sinning with Deputy Chief Ripson. You know it was really your mother and Deputy Chief Ripson who had Clarita killed. Now tell the truth.”

“That is not the truth. I have told the truth.”

“Your Honor,” said the prosecutor, “I’ll object to any further questioning along these lines as badgering the witness.”

“I’ll sustain the objection,” the judge said at once. “Mr. Bulger, this young witness has made it amply clear that her testimony will not support your theory of the case, and there is no more to be said about that. Have you any further cross-examination along any *other* lines?”

“I’ll move for a mistrial,” Mr. Bulger said instead of answering the question. “Denial of the right to full and fair cross-examination is fundamental error, irreparably prejudicial to my client.”

“Motion denied,” said the judge. “If you have nothing further, the court’s final instructions will be given to the jury, and closing arguments will be heard.”

“A miscarriage of justice in this case will bring lasting infamy to this court throughout the nation,” Mr. Bulger persisted.

“That remains to be seen,” said the judge, “but your prediction will not change my decision. I will now give the court’s final instructions to the jury.” Without allowing Mr. Bulger to say any more, he proceeded to do so.

There seemed to be little new in the closing arguments, and I might not have noticed if there had been. It had been hard on me to testify, and I felt sick about the lies I had heard. I was going back to the boarding house after the jury left the courtroom, I decided. I could find out about the verdict tomorrow; it would do no good to try to stay up until the jury returned, perhaps after many hours.

The arguments were finished in due time. The bailiff escorted the jury out. Tomorrow I would learn the fate of Señor Muertazos—and of the truth.

Pete and Chief Deputy Ripson—Frank, as Mamá called him—walked us home from the courthouse. I was blushing at their praise of me for being brave and standing up to Mr. Bulger’s bullying. Before we arrived at the boarding house, Pete and I were lagging behind, walking with our arms around each other, which we had never done before. It was twilight, but not too dark for me to see that Pete’s trousers were bulging in front, and that his member inside them was much longer than mine.

I had been hoping Pete would not think I was a bad girl for wishing to watch Anita and Señor Muertazos sinning, and now he made it perfectly clear that he did not. “María, you’re the greatest,” he told me, “and—and I love you.”

We stopped walking for a moment—only long enough to kiss briefly, but thrillingly, on the lips. We turned our necks to kiss, standing side by side; he kept his member from touching me, and I was glad, for my own little member was sticking straight out in delight, and he might have discerned it if the front of his trousers had touched my skirt. I did not pull away from his kiss; surely he could see that I wished to kiss him as much as he wished to kiss me. Then we walked on in blissful silence, and too soon said good night.

I was so excited, I could not help pretending I was lying down with Pete. I had to be very quiet, for my bed was on the other side of the same room as Mamá’s bed—but the room was very dark, and she could not see what I was doing under the covers.

I was lying on my back and pulling up my thin, short nightgown to bare my plump hips and my short member, pretending I was disclosing them to Pete for the first time. “Oh, Pete,” I silently pretended I was saying, “please don’t think I’m a bad girl for doing this—or a bad *boy* either! I admit I’m a female impersonator—but I love you so much, and I *need* you!”

“Oh, María, you’re the greatest, and I love you!” I imagined Pete was repeating. “I love you just the way you are!” To prove it, he squeezed my member in his hand; then he lay down on top of me, between my up-raised legs, and rubbed his long member against my short one. My hips were rising and falling on the bed, and I was afraid Mamá would hear, but I could not stop now. I made fervent imaginary love with Pete,

and imagined I could feel his member ejecting mighty spurts of his seed upon me, while my own member was really spurting my seed, gloriously and without restraint, upon the lower reaches of my chubby belly.

“María, he’s guilty!” Pete proclaimed early the next morning, stopping by the boardinghouse.

“I already know he’s guilty,” I said. “But the jury found him guilty?”

“You bet. It took them a few hours, but I stayed up for it, and I’m glad I did.”

“Will he be hanged?”

“Well, I’m sure he’ll appeal. I just hope he doesn’t get anywhere. He needs to swing for what he did.”

Mr. Bulger did appeal for Señor Muertazos, and the appeal took months. By the time it was over, Mamá had married Frank, and we had moved into his house—a big improvement over the boardinghouse, especially since I had a room of my own. I tried not to pretend too often that Pete was in my new bed with me, but it wasn’t easy, and I didn’t always succeed. In reality, though, Pete was still a perfect gentleman, never trying to do anything indecent with me, though he did kiss me on the mouth every now and then, with my eager consent. I went to school, too, and nobody seemed to have any idea that I wasn’t a girl as I seemed to be. Some girls were jealous of me because a handsome deputy sheriff was in love with me, but I tried to be sweet and kind to everyone.

At last the appeal was over; Señor Muertazos lost, and the death warrant was signed. This made things hard for Pete, Frank, the other deputies, and Sheriff

Cunningham himself, for they had to guard him carefully until the execution date. They were worried that a lynch mob might try to take the execution into their own hands, since a lot of people had been outraged by the behavior of Señor Muertazos as they heard about it at the trial or read about it in the *New Mexican*.

As it turned out, though, no lynch mob appeared, and the execution took place as scheduled. I was queasy about watching, but I figured I could always turn away when the actual hanging took place, and I wanted to see whether Señor Muertazos would repent at the last minute. It was possible, I thought, since a very bad criminal had repented at the last minute when he was being crucified next to Our Lord—but the other criminal on the cross had not repented, and Señor Muertazos seemed a lot more like that one to me, or worse.

I saw him being led to the scaffold. He was offered the assistance of a Catholic priest, since he was raised Catholic and was a “Mexican” (he was called that, although he, like Mamá and me, had lived in New Mexico Territory all his life). Señor Muertazos spat in the face of the priest.

This was very bad, but still I knew I must not hate Señor Muertazos. Clarita would not want me to hate him; she would want me to pray for him to repent. It was hard, but I did it: “Dear Lord, let even Señor Muertazos repent and be forgiven all his sins—including spitting on the priest!”

I could not think my prayer had no effect at all—but it did seem to have no effect on Señor Muertazos. He walked tall and proud to the scaffold. When he was asked if he had any last words, he said this: “I am not afraid, though I know I go to hell. I am not afraid to face the tyrant of the universe who tries

to enslave and control men by the threat of hell. I will face the tyrant and tell him to his face that I am in the right and he is in the wrong. And if he tries to steal from me even the words ‘right’ and ‘wrong,’ I will still proclaim to him, throughout eternity, ‘*me, not you!*’”

“He’s not in such a great position to be complaining about *tyrants*,” Pete muttered to me.

Señor Muertazos mounted the scaffold, and Sheriff Cunningham placed the noose around his neck. I turned away. I did not want to see a man being killed, not even Señor Muertazos. I certainly did not want to see his eyes as he entered hell—and found, perhaps, that it was far more terrible and more unendurable than he had imagined.

I heard the sound of the trap door being opened, and the terrible sound of the neck of Señor Muertazos breaking when he fell. “May God have mercy on his soul,” I said softly. Pete put his arm around me, I put mine around him, and we walked away in silence to begin the rest of our lives, no longer in the shadow of Señor Muertazos.

Chapter 5

I was 18 years of age in the year of Our Lord 1900; I wondered where the years had flown. Pete had asked me to marry him when I was 15, the age of the *quinceañera*—but I had said we should wait until I finished high school, and he understood. Now it had happened, just yesterday, and I was pretty sure I knew what would happen today.

Mamá and I were now living again in the hacienda, on the ranch that had belonged to Señor Muertazos. After Señor Muertazos was hanged, the sheriff had arranged for the ranch to be sold by an independent

auctioneer, and Frank had put in the highest bid. He needed a mortgage to obtain the money, but he was confident of being able to pay it off, for the ranch had been a source of wealth for Señor Muertazos, and would still be so now for Frank and his family, even though Frank paid the ranch hands much better than Señor Muertazos had done.

Anita no longer lived on the ranch; she had long ago gone to San Francisco with Mr. Bulger, the lawyer who had unsuccessfully defended Señor Muertazos with the help of Anita's lies. He had deceived her into imagining she would become his wealthy wife if she passed the test of concubinage with him, but then he had abandoned her to play the harlot. Every now and then she wrote a letter blaming Mamá for turning her into a harlot by introducing her to Señor Muertazos, but that was all. She could hardly blame Mamá for leading her to tell dreadful lies under oath about Mamá and Frank, or for getting her to run off with Mr. Bulger.

I knew that Clarita would wish me to pray for Anita, but I found it very hard, and I did not do it often, because I hated her. I knew I should try not to hate her, but the closest I felt I could come to not hating her was not thinking about her.

Pete did not live on the ranch, but still he was almost like a member of the family. Mamá and Frank now had two small children, a three-year-old boy named Juan and a one-year-old girl named Isabel, and Pete loved to play with them. This morning, though, Frank had announced that Mamá and the children were to go on a buggy ride to Santa Fe. Pete had ridden out early and eaten breakfast with us at the ranch; now he and I would be left alone in the hacienda. Pete must have arranged this with Frank and Mamá, I thought, so that Pete would have some privacy to propose marriage to me.

When we were alone, Pete and I sat in the parlor. He looked at me with great admiration. I was now quite plump and had breasts like a real girl; they were still very small for a full-grown girl's breasts, but no boy or man I had ever seen had anything like them, and my white blouse was cut low enough for Pete to peek between my breasts. He could not see my member beneath my long red skirt, of course, but it was there, fully erect in anticipation. I had measured it in secret when it was hard; it was three and a half inches long, still quite short for a man's member, but very stout, with a large bulb like a plum on the end. Now Pete must find out that I had it, and I would see whether he still loved me when he knew. Desperately I hoped he would.

"María," Pete said, "I've got to admit I asked Frank to clear out with the family, so I could have some privacy to—uh—to talk with you about something very important. You asked me to wait until you finished high school for this, and I did. Now that's happened, and I just can't wait any longer."

Pete got down on one knee before me. "You know I love you, María," he said. "I've loved you more than I can say, ever since you were 12. You can make me the happiest man in the universe, if you only say the word. María, will you marry me?"

"Oh, Pete!" I cried. "I'd love to marry you! I'd be unbelievably happy with you! There's just—uh—one little thing you need to know about first."

"What is it?" Pete asked. "Tell me anything!"

"Well—give me your hand."

Pete gave me his hand. I pulled it toward myself; I put it on my skirt; I pressed it against my erect member through the skirt, making him squeeze my mem-



ber with his hand, leaving no doubt that there was indeed a stout, hard male member underneath, despite all my femininity.

Pete's eyes bulged, his mouth opened wide, and he gasped. "Oh, María!" he cried. "I can't believe this! You were such a—a totally lovely, feminine little *señorita*! Can you really be a—a *female impersonator*?"

"Yes, Pete," I admitted. "I didn't want you to know until you had to—but now you have to. It was so wonderful to love you and be loved by you—and I was afraid you wouldn't, if you knew what I really was."

"Oh, María, I do love you! I'll never stop loving you!" Pete protested. "It's just that—well, if you're a female impersonator, then we don't really need to get *married* to show our love to the full! I mean—we could do it today, right now! Couldn't we? I mean—are you ready?"

"I'm ready," I said, though I was trembling. "Is it really all right with you that I'm a female impersonator? I mean, I know some men don't approve of them." I was thinking of Frank, who had been ashamed to acknowledge that female impersonators, like the thin horse-faced saloon girl he had pointed out, were free to deceive men with their wiles.

"I'm not one of them," Pete said at once. "I've got to admit I've—well, I've been pretty intimate with some females, and some female impersonators too. I did try to keep myself pure for you, but it was really hard to do that for years at a time. I did succumb to my desires every now and then. You can forgive me for that, can't you—I hope?"

"Oh, yes! Pete, of course I can!" I assured him.

“Well, then—if you’re ready, and I’m ready,” Pete said, “then—”

He kissed me on the mouth. For the first time, his tongue entered in, and my own tongue responded in kind. Almost at once his hand was on my breast, and I was pressing it firmly with my own.

“Can we go to your bedroom?” he begged.

“Yes. Please. Now,” I said.

We walked with our arms around each other, quickly, to my bedroom. Never before had his hand dropped to my big, womanly rump, but now it did. My hips swayed in eager anticipation as we entered the bedroom.

He embraced me fully and kissed me deeply. I could feel his long, hard member through his trousers, and I made sure he could feel my short one through my skirt. He caressed my rump tenderly, and gently pulled my skirt and drawers down. Then he pulled my blouse and my smock up off me at once, leaving me nude.

He stripped, laid me down on the bed, and licked both my nipples until they were hot and hard as could be, while he stroked my short, stout member to high heat as well. I stroked his long member too, until we united.

He lay upon me with his member right next to mine upon my belly; my plump legs were raised to receive him. Tenderly, but with increasing fervor, he rubbed my member with his own, bringing us both to the high point of desire; then he culminated me, shooting great spurts of his seed upon my belly, while my own spurts of seed joined with his, and we

both cried out together, “Yes! Yes! I love you! *I love you!!*”

“Oh, María!” he murmured when the thrusts and spurts had ended at last. “You’re the greatest!” He snuggled close to me and added, “You were really ready for this when you were only 12, weren’t you?”

“No,” I said. “Well—I guess maybe I would have thought I was, but really I wasn’t. This was the right time.”

“I guess you’re right,” he said. “But I’m sure glad I didn’t know you were a female impersonator back then—because I sure wouldn’t have wanted to wait all those years to make love with you if I’d known!”

“I’m afraid I wouldn’t have wanted to wait either, if I’d known *that*,” I admitted. “Señor Muertazos told me I was *muy caliente*, very hot, when I was 12. It was true. I was already pretending I was doing this with you, not long after I met you.”

“Did Muertazos know your secret?” Pete asked.

“Yes,” I said. “Mamá told me she started to dress me in girls’ clothes when I was six years old because he demanded it, because he wanted me to be a girl for sin when I got old enough.”

“Did you ever?” Pete asked. “You know, sin with him?”

“No. He said he would want me, but he wanted Clarita first.”

“Good thing he didn’t get to you.” Pete said. “You’re mine—all mine.” Again we kissed on the mouth, deeply and long.

No doubt Pete really meant it at the time, when he said he loved me and I was all his—but men’s feelings can change after they have satisfied their desires, I knew, and that was true of Pete. Before we had made love more than 10 times or so, he was suggesting that I should become a saloon girl. I would make a very good one, he said, for I was indeed *muy caliente*.

“But I thought I was all yours!” I protested.

“Well, you are,” he said. “But I was all *yours* in a way since you were 12, and yet I did have some intimacies with females and impersonators along the way. You’d still be all mine, even if you did some little things with men along the way.”

I was doubtful, to say the least, but Pete seemed to have his mind made up. “I could give it a try, I suppose,” I said. “Will you introduce me to the saloon-keeper?”

“You bet!” said Pete.

He did introduce me to the owner of Murchison’s Saloon—the same saloon at which he and Frank had dined with Mamá and me the first day we met, the day Señor Muertazos was arrested. The owner, Mr. Murchison, looked me over, and seemed to like what he saw very much. “You *look* like you’ll do just fine,” he said. “Er—real female, or impersonator?”

“I see you can’t tell from looking at me,” I said with a smile.

“No, I sure can’t,” he said. “Your face is as pretty and female-lookin’ as they come, and your voice sounds fine and female too. Your titties are so little you *could* be an impersonator, all right, but they’re

mighty fine too. You'll need a corset to make 'em look a bit shapelier, but that won't be hard to do. Below the waist, you could be either a plump female or a plump impersonator, no tellin' which. So which are you?"

"I'm an impersonator," I admitted.

"Well, that's just fine and dandy with me! Some of our customers actually prefer the impersonators over the real females, and Pete here has told me you're what the Mexicans call *muy caliente*—meanin' damn hot!"

"I've been *muy caliente* since I was 12 years old," I told him.

"That's what I like to hear! How old are you now?"

"I'm 18."

"Fine age for a female impersonator. We'll get you started here at once. Thank you kindly, Pete, for introducin' us."

"My pleasure," said Pete.

Mr. Murchison introduced me to Belinda, the tall girl with a long, horsy face and thin figure who had waited on us when we first came to the saloon—the one whom Frank had pointed out, with shame, as a female impersonator deceiving men with her wiles. She now managed the saloon for him, Mr. Murchison said. Belinda looked, sounded, and acted at least as much like a man in women's clothes—a not very convincing female impersonator—as she had looked before. "Belinda," said Mr. Murchison, "this here's María. She's our newest girl here. She'll need your help with clothes and things."

“Gladly!” said Belinda with a smile, in her voice almost too deep to be a woman’s voice. I was glad she was friendly. I hoped she would still be friendly when she found out I was an impersonator too. She *might* be friendly to me, I thought, as a fellow sharer of the secret under the skirt—but she might also be unfriendly, regarding me as a competitor.

“You’re very pretty, María,” said Belinda, “and very sweet-looking.” Her blue eyes were bright, perhaps with delight at seeing me. I thought again that her eyes (unlike the rest of her) looked like those of a lovely woman, though surely not more than my own eyes did.

“Oh, thank you!” I said. I could not say the same for her, but I said what I could: “You’re very kind.”

“It didn’t take any kindness to say *that*, only honesty!” Belinda said. “But I do always try to be kind, and thank you for thinking I’m succeeding. There’s more than enough unkindness in the world already, without me adding any more.” She smiled again, but a small shadow seemed to pass across her face. “I’m sure you know what a saloon girl is expected to do with men,” she said. “Have you—er—been with men before?”

“Well—only with one, Pete Juttings, the deputy sheriff.”

“Oh, Pete’s a very fine gentleman!” said Belinda. “I’ve provided intimate services to him more than once. He’s very gentle, isn’t he?”

“Yes, he is.” It was true, but Pete was beginning to lose his hold on my heart. I guessed I could not have expected him to refrain from all contact with females or female impersonators for years, while I was too young to make love with him—but I was beginning to

think that perhaps it was a good thing I couldn't marry him after all. If he could find satisfaction with Belinda *before* we were married—and how could I know how deep the satisfaction might have been?—then why might he not again have sought satisfaction with her *after* we were married?

“Did Pete give you great—great satisfaction?” I asked.

“Oh, certainly!” Belinda sighed. “I'm sure he gave *you* great satisfaction, too!”

“Yes, he did,” I said, “although I cannot compare it, for he is the only one so far.”

“You'll still rate Pete pretty high, I think,” Belinda said, “when you've been with as many men as I have.”

“How many is that?”

“Oh, dear, I couldn't count them!” Belinda laughed. “I've been at this saloon for going on eight years now, and my first was before that. He was a—a student at the high school, where I was a young teacher—a *very* young and, I'm afraid, a very immature teacher, in my first and only year of teaching. I thought I could trust him, but he revealed our secret, and I was discharged. I was lonely, and—er—afraid I wasn't very attractive, and I was desperate for love. I let him—have his way with me, and I was overwhelmed with passion for him. Within three months he was laughing about it with other boys, and the authorities heard about it. I was fully exposed, to my—my dreadful shame and horror.”

“Oh, I'm terribly sorry for you!” I said. Could her shame and horror have been so dreadful, I wondered, if she had not been exposed as a female impersonator? Surely not, I thought. I myself would have been

ashamed and horrified if anyone in school had found out I was not really a girl—and it might have happened to me too, if I had not been in love with Pete all the time, if I had instead succumbed to my hot desires with some boy who might have betrayed me.

I could easily imagine how Belinda had felt. I felt sorry for her, but more than that, I was already beginning to like her very much. I would be her friend—her very dear friend, I knew—if she would have me for a friend.

“It was a very terrible experience,” Belinda said, “and it made me value kindness more than—almost anything in the world, having been treated with the most extreme opposite of kindness by the boy who betrayed me.” She sighed, and my heart was touched with longing to be kind to her, unlike the evil boy.

“Well, we need to get some things done,” Belinda said, suddenly changing her tone of voice. “You’ll need to strip, so I can see what you’ve got and what you need.” She said it in a brisk, businesslike manner, as if she did such a thing every day—giving me an even stronger impression that she was really a man in women’s clothes.

“Well, all right,” I said. I pulled off my blouse and pulled up my smock, leaving my skirt for last.

“Very fine,” Belinda said on seeing my bare breasts. “Some men are very fond of small breasts. And now remove your skirt, please.”

I complied. I was embarrassed, and my member was all too ready to become hard whenever I was embarrassed. Belinda saw my member. She did not seem surprised, as Pete had been, but her bright eyes did seem to show more than a little fascination.

“That’s very lovely,” she said. “Many men can appreciate a feminine-looking female impersonator—or even one who is *not* so feminine-looking.” She smiled. I felt sure she was speaking of herself.

“I’m sure you will be one of the best,” Belinda went on. “Now I’ll let you put on some drawers, and I’ll measure you for a corset and gown.”

She handed me a pair of white women’s drawers, which fit me fairly well, and drew forth a measuring tape. After measuring me up, down, and all around, she said, “very well, I’ll order you a corset, petticoat, and gown. The men will be very, very pleased to see you.”

It was true, as I soon found out. When my corset, petticoat, and gown arrived, I put them on, with Belinda’s help in lacing up the corset and doing up the back hooks on the gown. Rather than put up my long dark hair in a dignified fashion, I daringly let it hang loose as Belinda let her lighter brown hair hang loose; even now in 1900, when newfangled fashions were popping up everywhere like spring flowers, I knew that men would see this as signifying the looseness of my morals and my readiness to provide intimate services to them. Then I gazed upon my newfound loveliness in the looking-glass, to Belinda’s entire approval.

The corset was cleverly designed to make my breasts look larger than they really were (though still fairly small), and was cut very low to let men peek far down between my breasts. The gown, bright red, was cut almost as low as the corset, showing off my breasts to best advantage. The style of the gown, with short puffed sleeves below my bare shoulders and a

daringly low neckline, was one that had been in and out of fashion for many decades, but was still as lovely and enticing as it had ever been. I wondered if men would get erections when they saw my breasts, as I had gotten one at the age of 12 when I first visited the saloon and saw the saloon girls' breasts.

I did not need to wait long to find out. Even before Belinda finished showing me how to operate the cash register and to serve food and drinks, men's eyes were on me, drinking in my loveliness. My member responded eagerly beneath my skirt and petticoat. Soon, I imagined, some man would know my secret; I hoped he would be pleased.

I felt a twinge of regret that I would soon be playing the harlot, as Anita was doing in San Francisco—as both Mamá and Anita had done for Señor Muertazos. Clarita would never approve, if she were still alive—and I had to think that, in heaven, she *was* still alive. But my regret soon passed when a handsome man, sitting next to a less handsome man with a grizzly beard, began to make it clear that he desired me. Perhaps, I thought, this man—or *some* man—might even marry me if he knew my secret. Pete would not, but Frank's first wife had been a saloon girl, and I knew I could pass for a girl. I could not give up hope. Perhaps this man, gazing at me with fully evident longing, might even be the one.

"Say there, *señorita*," said the man. "I like your looks. Would you like to take my order?"

"Certainly, sir," I said with a smile. "What is your order?"

"Well, I reckon I'd like to order *you*," he said. "Know what I mean?"

“What in tarnation!” the grizzly-bearded man spoke up in an angry voice. “What in the blazes o’ the bottomless pit o’hell! A *female*?! Roy, you promised no female would ever come between you and me! You *promised*! No female!”

“Shut up, Gabby,” said the handsome man, Roy. “That was then. This is now. You may despise females, but I don’t—especially this one.”

“Gosh darn it, Roy, that’s *wrong*!” Gabby protested. “That’s *dead* wrong!”

“Well, I can’t agree with that,” Roy said smoothly. “I can’t pass up this chance.”

“Sir, you’ll have to place your order at the cash register,” I informed him, as Belinda had instructed me. He rose at once to do so, and I followed him, trembling in anticipation of my first intimate encounter with a man other than Pete. Gabby called out more angry imprecations, but was impotent to stop Roy from fulfilling his desire with me.

Belinda took his order, gave me a quick, brisk smile, and turned away. I took his arm to walk in dignity up the stairs to the room in which we would unite.

“What’s your name, *señorita*?” Roy asked, sitting in a chair to remove his boots, then standing to unbuckle his belt.

“I am María,” I said. “You, I know, are Roy, and your—er—your friend is Gabby.”

“Yes, Gabby’s a good friend, most of the time,” Roy said. “He’s my bosom companion on the trail. A man could get mighty lonely out West if he didn’t have a bosom companion. But Gabby can’t stand females,



and he wishes I couldn't either. He seems to wish he could have me all to himself—but that can't always happen. When I see a lovely little lady like *you*—well, it just takes me by storm, and I've got to do something about it. You know what I mean?"

"Yes," I said. "I, too, have been taken by storm." I didn't think I needed to mention that it started to happen when I was only 12.

"Well, then, you know how I feel," Roy said, approaching me and putting his strong hands on my womanly hips. "I feel just like *this*." He looked deep into my eyes; then he kissed me on the mouth, and we did not withhold our tongues from each other. As he caressed my hips through my skirt and petticoat, I could feel his long, hard member pressing against me through his trousers. I tried to keep my hips pulled back, making my rump seem even larger than it really was, so that he would not prematurely discern my hard little member.

"Oh, Maria, you're heavenly," Roy said, undoing the hooks in back of my bodice. Soon my gown had dropped to the floor, and he was embracing me in my corset and petticoat. He undid my corset, removed it, and laid me on the bed wearing nothing but my petticoat and drawers; then he kissed and licked my nipples, making me gasp in fast-growing excitement.

"We've got to get going," Roy said, standing and stripping fast. "I can't hold back much longer." I stood up too; he pulled my petticoat and drawers down in a single motion, and stood amazed at what he saw—my short, stout member, fully erect, signaling him that I wished to unite with him.

"María!" he cried. "Can this be true? A female impersonator? Why, you're the finest female impersonator I've ever seen! I never could have imagined! And

yet”—he reached out to caress my member—“and yet it’s true!”

“Yes, it’s true,” I said, restating the obvious.

“Turn around,” he commanded. I complied. He stroked my member with one hand, my breasts in turn with the other, while slipping his own long, lean member between my soft, plump thighs. I reached down to caress it, for it was long enough to stick out beneath my own member. Roy was beginning to thrust.

“Bend over on the bed,” he told me. I lay face down on the bed, with my feet on the floor and my plump rump sticking up. He was gripping my breasts with both hands and thrusting between my thighs from behind, while I gripped and rubbed his member with my hand beneath my belly.

“Oh, María, get up on the bed! Let me ride you!” Roy urgently demanded. “Wild horses—mating horses—bucking broncos!”

I did as he desired, kneeling on the bed with my arms straight out, my neck bent back, and my rump held high, mating with him like a mare with a stallion, gripping and rubbing his member with all my might, while he did the same with both my breasts. Then, when I could feel his mighty spurts emerging from his member into my hand, he reached down to rub my member, making me buck and spurt like a stallion too, even while I frantically played the mare in heat for him.

“María, you’re the greatest,” Roy said when his thrusts and spurts had ended at last. “I almost wish I could stay here and mate with you again and again. Gabby and I are on our way to California to seek our fortune—but I’ll always remember you, María.”

“I’ll always remember you, too, Roy,” I assured him. No doubt it was true, for I could not easily forget this wild mating ride with Roy—and yet I was sad. Would my life from now on be always like this, a series of matings with men I would never see again, and never a hope of marriage? I did not want it to be so—and yet I had no idea how it could *not* be so.

Chapter 6

Pete did make love with me again, not long after my ride with Roy. I showed Pete how to ride me from behind as Roy had done, and he loved it. Then he said, “*Hasta la vista, María,*” and left me again. Pete, like Roy, was now only one of the series of men who would meet me, take me, and vanish from my life.

Belinda, though I was sure she was really a man as well beneath her women’s clothes, was not like them. She was a faithful friend, confiding in me, helping me, always being available to me. If Belinda had been a manly man like Pete, and had wanted to marry me while knowing my secret, I would have been eager to marry her, or rather *him*—but she was not, and I still had no hope of marriage.

I did not long remain the newest of the saloon girls. A pretty, slender red-haired girl named Sally soon joined us. Like Belinda, she had small breasts that she did not reveal. I was sure Belinda was a female impersonator—she was so mannish-looking and businesslike—but Sally didn’t look or act mannish at all. I wondered if she was an impersonator too, or a real girl.

I soon found out. Sally was a sweetheart, and as friendly to me as could be—as friendly even as Belinda, who had very quickly become my dear friend. Sally’s feminine-looking, freckled face broke

out in a big smile whenever she saw me, and we soon became good friends. Of course, before too long, I had to disclose to her that I was an impersonator—and she let me know she was one too.

“You’re so fortunate that your mother let you be openly girlish,” Sally said. “I had to keep my girlishness a secret when I lived with my parents. They would have hated it if they’d known. I was afraid to have a boyfriend when I lived at home, but I sure *pretended* I had one—in bed, I mean. Did you do that too?”

“Yes, I did,” I said.

Sally got close to me. “Did you ever pretend you had a *girlfriend*?” she asked.

“Oh! Well—no, I never did,” I said.

“Would you like a girlfriend? I mean—well, I really like you, and if you did ever want to kiss me or anything, I certainly wouldn’t complain.”

I laughed. “I never thought of having a girlfriend before,” I said. “But—well, I really like *you*, too, and, uh—if you did want to be my girlfriend, I certainly wouldn’t complain either. In fact—I think I might love it.”

“Let’s find out,” said Sally. She raised her lips to mine, and we were kissing. The kiss went on and on, long and deep. I had never before imagined it might be so exciting to kiss a girl—although Sally wasn’t really a girl.

“Let’s go to bed. Please,” Sally pleaded. “I love you, María, and I need you.”

I could not complain, to say the least. Hand in hand, we ascended the stairs, entered a private

room, and removed each other's gowns, corsets, and drawers, leaving on only our petticoats. "It's more decent this way," she said.

She pulled some things out of her handbag. "This is a skin condom," she said, slipping a thin tubular thing, closed at one end, onto my erect member beneath my petticoat and smearing some jelly-like mess onto it. "I like these better than the newfangled rubber ones. Now come into me, please, my dearest."

She lay on her back on the bed and raised her slender legs, displaying her hard member, almost as short as my own and much thinner. I stared. She wanted me to enter her dung-hole. I had heard of such actions, of course, but never done them or wanted to. Still, I did want to please Sally, and I would do this to please her.

"Go gently," she said. "I'm very tight." It was true. I could hardly press my stout member into her, but I kept patiently trying. At last my bulb, within the skin condom, was in her. It was terrifically thrilling, so much that I could hardly keep from spurting, but Sally was clutching me and begging me to come farther in, so I desperately tried to hold off.

At long last I was in her as far as I could go. "Oh, yes, yes!" she murmured. "Now plunge me, my dearest, plunge me!"

I made little plunging motions within her tight, hot entryway. I was too thrilled to hold off any longer. "I can't hold off!" I said, plunging harder. My hips were pumping and I was spurting seed into the skin condom. "Oh, yes, yes, now!" Sally cried, pumping her own hips so hard that she lifted me up and down. I could feel her spurting her own seed onto my belly as I plunged her, filling the skin condom with my seed.

“Oh, María, that was beautiful!” Sally murmured. I wasn’t sure I could agree that it was *beautiful*, but it was unbelievably exciting. If Sally wanted me to do this with her again, I thought, I would—as long as I could have enough seed left to play the harlot with men, real men, as well.

In intervals between matings with men, I mated with Sally several more times, lying with her as with a woman, except that her dung-hole served as her womanly entryway. Not long after that, though, I began to wish my life would change greatly, when Clarita entered my dreams as she had not done before. I knew I was playing the harlot like Anita, and sometimes I was ashamed, but it was so exciting and so satisfying to me—and to the men, and to Sally—that I could not think of giving it up. I could only *dream* of giving it up—with Clarita’s help.

One night, not long after I had fervently kissed a man’s member and he had spurted seed into my mouth, while I was kneeling before him and spurting between my thighs, I dreamed. It did not seem to be a dream, but real life. I was shocked, but unbearably excited, for I was watching Señor Muertazos plunging Mamá from behind, gripping her big breasts and riding her as Roy had ridden me, but with his big member deep in her womanly opening. Then he was ejecting his seed into her, casting her off, and moving on to do the same with Anita, frantically playing the bucking bronco with him. I knew that I was next, and that the insatiable Señor Muertazos would seek to ride me as Roy had done, as he himself had ridden Mamá and Anita. I was crazed with desire to mate with him.

He ejected more seed into Anita, cast her off too, and moved on to me. I was afraid, but thrilled—until he started to press his big member into my dung-hole, and it hurt.

“Señor Muertazos! No! Do not do this!” I cried. “I do not wish it! It is vile! It is wrong!”

“Little *señorita muy caliente*, you know nothing of what is vile and wrong,” he said. “This is life’s finest deed. It must and will be done. You will go to heaven.”

“No!” I screamed. “Do not do this!”

Señor Muertazos paid no attention, and kept trying to push his member into me until it was almost unbearable—but suddenly the earth shook, he was struck down as if dead, and Clarita stood before me.

Clarita was glorious, clothed all in white linen and many-colored flowers, with a heart-warming, breath-taking smile. I knew she had come from heaven to meet me. “María, I love you,” she said to me. “I tried to come to Señor Muertazos before he died, but he would not look or listen. I hope *you* will look and listen. María, do not go on playing the harlot. There is a much better life for you.”

I knew there was a much better life for me, a life like Clarita’s, if only I dared to live it—but did I dare? Would my *gran calor*, my great heat, simply become unendurable if I tried to flee from it and live like a saint, like Clarita?

“Clarita, I’m not ready for heaven,” I protested, not thinking very clearly in my dream. “I can’t go there with you—not yet!”

“You can live a better life,” she said. Then she vanished from my sight—but after I could no longer see her I distinctly heard her saying, “Go to Belinda!”

I awoke, with the vision not yet fully vanished, and with Clarita’s words still echoing in my soul. Had Clarita really appeared to me in my dream—the real Clarita, who was in heaven? I found it very hard to believe—and yet it was even harder *not* to believe. I had seen her and heard her, just as if she were really in my presence. But why, in heaven’s name, had Clarita told me to go to Belinda? Belinda was a female impersonator playing the harlot, just as I was! How could she ever help me *stop* playing the harlot?

All this was terribly strange, but I could not dismiss it from my mind—and I began to have some idea how it might really help me to go to Belinda. True, Belinda played the harlot, and so did I—but we did not play the harlot *with each other*, as Sally and I had done. We were simply friends, dear friends already, and we might become much better and dearer friends. Our friendship might serve us for refreshment and peace, enabling us to become at least a little bit like Clarita for each other, though not for men. Belinda was not a Catholic, much less a saint, but she was a good-hearted friend; she was like Clarita at least in that way.

It was good. My mind was settled. I would go to Belinda—and I would even tell her about the strange and lovely dream that had brought me to her.

“Belinda, would you like to talk for a few minutes—just you and me?” I asked her next morning.

Belinda smiled. “Of course,” she said. “I’m always glad to talk with you, María.” Her bright blue eyes shone with delight, making it fully clear that she spoke the truth. “Here, shall we go to my room, where no one will interrupt us?”

I agreed, and we went to her room. “Is everything all right, María?” she asked me almost at once.

“Well—yes, I hope so,” I said. “I must tell you about a very strange and beautiful dream I had last night.”

“I’d love to hear about it,” Belinda said. “My own dreams are often strange, but not often beautiful. Tell me about your dream.”

“Well, it did not start out beautiful. I dreamed I saw the man whose hacienda my family used to live in, Señor Muertazos, mating with my mother. She wasn’t married to him, and I never really saw her doing that with him, but I knew she did it. Then he cast her off and quickly started mating with my older sister, Anita. I really did see Anita doing that with Señor Muertazos when I was 12.”

“Oh, my!” Belinda exclaimed. “That must have been—er—quite memorable!”

“Yes, it was. Anita said she had done it with Señor Muertazos, and I wanted to see. It was terribly exciting to me. I—I pretended I was mating with a man right after that.”

“I can understand that easily—all too easily,” Belinda said, drawing closer to me and speaking softly. “I, too, already had—er—very strong erotic feelings when I was 12, and I too pretended I was making love with a man.”

I was embarrassed, but excited, at this revelation that Belinda was very much like me in this way. My member was hard beneath my skirt; I wondered if hers was hard too, beneath *her* skirt. I knew my own was going to get even harder, but I had to go on.

“In my dream,” I said, “when I saw Anita and Señor Muertazos mating, I knew I would be next. I never really mated with him, but in my dream I did. But he was trying to enter my dung-hole, and it hurt.”

“I have never permitted a man to do that,” Belinda said. “I have stroked and kissed many men’s members, and loved it—but never that.”

“I never will either,” I said. “But in my dream, he was entering me, and it hurt very much—but then my sister Clarita appeared. The earth shook, and Señor Muertazos seemed to be dead.”

“Did she kill him?” Belinda asked. “I mean, in the dream?”

“No. But in real life, *he* killed *her*, and he was hanged for it. I am sure Clarita is in heaven, but I am afraid Señor Muertazos is in hell. He said he was going to go to hell, and I believe it.”

“Oh, dear!” said Belinda. “He wasn’t the one who killed a girl by dragging her behind a horse, several years ago—was he?”

“Yes, he was. The girl was Clarita.”

“Oh, no! I’m terribly sorry! That’s monstrous! I still remember reading about it in the *New Mexican*. I’m not much in favor of hanging, but if anyone has ever really needed to be hanged, it was that man.”

“I think that’s right. But he couldn’t stop Clarita from going to heaven, and I dreamed I saw her com-

ing back from heaven to see me. She was glorious, even more beautiful than she was on earth.”

“I imagine she would be—if there really is a heaven.”

“Oh, there *is!* Well—I’m pretty sure there is, and Clarita is there. She’s *got* to be there. It just wouldn’t be right if she were not there.”

Belinda laughed, not unkindly. “Maybe that’s right,” she said. “Well, did Clarita say anything to you?”

“Yes. She said she tried to go to Señor Muertazos before he died, but he would not look or listen. And she said I should—I should stop playing the harlot, because there was a much better life for me.”

Belinda sighed. She seemed to be looking at me closely, trying to see deep into my eyes. “Do you think she was right?” Belinda asked.

I looked at Belinda in silence for a moment. The thought that she cared very deeply about me, more deeply than I could have imagined, seemed to be flying from her eyes into mine. “I don’t know,” I said honestly. “I hope so—but I don’t know what the better life might be.”

“I have dreams of a better life too, sometimes,” said Belinda. “Did Clarita tell you what your better life might be like?”

“No, except for not playing the harlot—but just when she was vanishing to go back to heaven, she told me to go to *you!* I heard her clearly saying, ‘Go to Belinda!’”

Belinda laughed again. Her eyes and mouth were wide open in obvious delight. “Did she really!” she ex-

claimed. “Well! That was very sweet of her!” She moved even closer to me. “I suppose that could mean one of two things. Either Clarita really did come to you from heaven and say that, because she—she knew something about me that you didn’t yet know—or else it was your own heart speaking to you through the image of Clarita, and your own heart wanted you to come to me. Whichever it was, I’m very glad. You know—you *must* know I’m very fond of you, María.”

I could not speak; I could only smile, even while tears were beginning to come from my eyes. “I’m very fond of *you*, too,” I said. “I hope we can always be very dear friends.”

“Oh, yes!” Belinda said. “Or—well—please forgive me if I’m saying something I shouldn’t, but—maybe someday more than just friends.”

I stared at her with my mouth open wide. “You mean—*in love*?” I asked, almost gasped.

“Is it as shocking as all that?” Belinda softly asked me.

“Oh, no!” I said. “But—”

I did not know what more to say. Surely I could love a female impersonator, for I could love a *man*, and a female impersonator was really a man in women’s clothes. Surely I could *make love* with a female impersonator, for I had made love with Sally, though she was a much lovelier and more convincing female impersonator than Belinda. But would Clarita really want me to love a female impersonator? Was it only my own heart, after all, that had led me to Belinda, and was the vision of Clarita just unreal?

Perhaps it was, I sadly thought. I was a sinner, after all, and no saint like Clarita. And would it really be sin for me to make love with Belinda, to receive spurts of seed from her long, thin member (as I imagined it) and to give her my own spurts of seed, though we could never marry?

“Maybe that could happen,” I said. “I think I could be in love with you. Maybe I am already starting to be in love with you.” As I saw her smile, I thought I really was. Hoping I was not about to say something dreadfully wrong, I went on: “If we are patient, the right time to make love might come. And I know—I know you would never try to put your member in my dung-hole, or anything like that.”

“Oh! No, I certainly wouldn’t!” Belinda assured me, her eyes wide and bright. She smiled, as if to assure me also that I had not insulted her, but still she asked me, “You don’t think I’m a very convincing female impersonator, do you? I mean, honestly?”

I bit my lip. I feared I had indeed insulted her. Still, I could not lie to Belinda. “Well, if you really want me to be honest,” I said, “no, I don’t. I could tell you were a female impersonator even when I was 12, the first time I ever came to this saloon, with my mother and Pete, and Frank—I mean, Chief Deputy Ripson, who is now my mother’s husband. And Chief Deputy Ripson pointed you out as a female impersonator, and I was sure he must know what he was talking about.”

“You were very perceptive, and so was he,” said Belinda. Up to now, when discussing herself as a female impersonator, Belinda had kept a perfectly straight face—but she could not quite succeed as she went on. “Yes, María, you were very perceptive—but you were not quite *thoughtful* enough. You failed to realize that there were two very different possibilities.

I might be very unconvincing as a female impersonator—or else I might be very *convincing* as a female impersonator *impersonator*.”

“*What?!*” I cried. Surely this could not be true—or could it? Could Belinda, with her mannish face, mannish figure, mannish ways, really be a woman? Could I be in love with a woman, after being in love with a man for years? Could I mate with a woman, as I had mated with Sally who played the woman? Could Clarita really have been leading me to Belinda after all, for Clarita had known the truth about Belinda as I had not?

These questions were too much for me. I could not think of them now. I could think only of one question: *Why?*

“You have impersonated a female impersonator?” I asked. “But why?”

“It began when I was young, about 12 years old,” Belinda said. “I was told that I looked and acted like a boy, and that this was not good. It hurt me deeply, but I could not deny it—especially when I became older, yet my hips were still slender like those of a boy, and my breasts still did not grow big. My face and figure were like those of a boy—and in another way I was like a boy as well, a way that was deeply shameful and embarrassing to me, but unavoidable. Boys became strongly erotic at a young age; girls, it was said, did not. In this way, too, I was like a boy, not a girl.”

“I was not like a girl in that way either,” I said, “but, in almost every other way, I was.” Belinda knew in what other way I was not like a girl, for she had seen my erect member.

“I had deep desires to be loved as the woman I really was,” Belinda went on. “They led me to make love in secret with my student, as I have said. I gave myself fully to him—and he laughed at me and betrayed me. My shame was so great I thought I would die. I did not die—but I did decide I would never again give myself fully to a man, unless a man ever married me, promising to be faithful to me for life.”

“That is good,” I said, and I meant it.

“It is,” Belinda said, “but it is not what men wish of a saloon girl. They often demand to enter a woman’s nether regions, her sacred precincts, if she is a real woman. But if she is a female impersonator, most men do not wish to see her male member, for it destroys the illusion of femininity. A female impersonator may keep her skirt on, and satisfy men by stroking and kissing their members. It was obvious to me, then, that I must become a female impersonator *impersonator*. It was the only way of being a saloon girl, which I must do for my livelihood, while keeping my skirt on.”

“You have done it very well,” I said. “It was quite obvious to me that you were really a man in women’s clothes—and quite obvious to Frank, Chief Deputy Ripson, as well.” I laughed. “He was ashamed to say that you were openly seeking to deceive men with your wiles!”

Belinda laughed too. “Yes, I hoped it *was* obvious, though it was not *true*,” she said. “And, if Clarita really did tell you to go to me, it was because she knew the truth about me. Don’t you think so?”

“It must have been,” I said. Yes, it was true, I thought: Clarita really had come to me from heaven, and told me to go to Belinda, because—could it really

be true?—Belinda was really a woman, yearning in secret for me to love her and marry her!

“She knew you were really a woman,” I said, “and of course she knew that I was *not* really a woman, in spite of how we look! And she knew—did she know that you were coming to care for me and love me, very deeply, while I never suspected?”

“I am sure she did,” said Belinda. “It surprises me very much that she did. Ever since I was 12, I never imagined I could be a Christian of any kind, much less a Catholic, because I was—I was far too erotic. And yet now I find myself believing that a saint in heaven has sent you to me, because she knew the secrets of my heart!”

“It is true,” I said. “It *must* be true. And because she knew the secrets of *my* heart, too.”

Belinda and I gazed into each other’s eyes. “Perhaps Clarita knew that you and I were made for each other,” Belinda ventured to say. “Do you think that could be true?”

I knew the answer, and my heart resounded within me as I spoke: “Yes, Belinda, I do. I think it could very well be true.” I felt an astounding flood of love welling up in my heart, and I could not hold back my words: “It *is* true! Belinda, I love you! Will you marry me?”

“*María! My love! If only you knew how I’ve yearned for this!*” Belinda cried. “Oh, yes, María, I *will* marry you—as soon as I can believe this is really happening!”

Our arms were around each other almost at once, and we were kissing on the lips, gently, tenderly, longingly. I thought of Clarita watching us from

heaven, and my heart began to open again, at last, to the radiance of heaven's light and warmth and bliss.

Chapter 7

Belinda really did not again play the harlot, nor did I. She promptly informed Mr. Murchison that she could still manage the saloon for him, but she could no longer serve as a saloon girl, because she was to be married. He actually approved of her decision, and told her so in my presence. "I reckon it's only fair," he said. "When I was doin' all the managin' myself, I sure didn't double as no saloon gal!" We both laughed heartily at that, and thanked him very much.

I could not manage the saloon, but I was sure I could return to the hacienda and live there, at least until Belinda and I were married. Mamá and Frank would be more than happy to welcome me home, and so would the children. Before going home to the hacienda, though, I thought I owed it to Sally to explain why I was leaving the saloon—and to Pete as well.

"Oh, María, I'm so happy for you, and for Belinda too," Sally said when I told her that evening. She made a funny face, half smile, half grimace. "I'm just not quite so happy for *myself*. I know this will be the end for you and me, and it's got to be that way—but I admit I wish it didn't have to."

"You'll find somebody too, Sally," I assured her. "Somebody at least as good for you as I could ever have been—or better. You're so pretty and sweet, and feminine—and so exciting, too! Some good man will be more than happy to find you, and love you."

"I sure hope so," Sally said. "Well, let me know who he is, if you happen to find out."

“I will!” I promised.

Pete was not at the saloon that evening, so I sought him out at the sheriff’s office next morning. He was leaning back in a chair, as he had been when I was 12 and first met him. “Hello, Pete,” I said softly.

“María!” he cried, again sitting bolt upright as he had done the first time. More softly, as if in hope that no one (such as Frank) would overhear him, he said, “I was just thinking about you!”

“I was just thinking about *you*, too,” I said truthfully. “That’s why I came to see you. I’ve got something—er—very important to tell you.”

“Gosh! I’ve got something very important to tell *you*, too!” Pete said. “How about I tell it to you, and then we can see if it’s—uh—anything like what *you’ve* got to tell *me*.”

“Well, all right,” I said, sitting down in a chair near Pete. I did wonder what Pete had to tell me. I felt a sudden thrill, and yet I wondered if it should be a sinking feeling instead.

“I’ve been doing a lot of thinking,” Pete said, in an even soft voice. “You remember how I proposed marriage to you, but—uh—then when I found out something about you, I went off in a different direction.”

“Yes, of course I do,” I said.

“Well, I’ve been thinking. I decided that wasn’t such a good idea after all. There’s nobody like you, María. I need you. I need you with me for life. I remember you said you’d love to marry me, and you’d be unbelievably happy with me. Well, I’m thinking we could get married, and nobody would need to know your secret except you and me.”

I could not force myself not to feel a thrill, for I had been in love with Pete for years since I was 12, and not so long ago I would have leaped at the chance to accept his proposal if he had been willing to marry me when he knew my secret. Still, I now felt both the thrill and the sinking feeling at once—and the sinking feeling was fast pulling up to win the race.

“Oh, Pete!” I said. “I—I’m honored, and I admit I’m thrilled that you’d be willing to do that for me after all—but I’m afraid it’s too late. You see—the very important thing I have to tell *you* is that I’m going to get married—and not to you.”

“*What?!* Dang nab it! You mean I’m too late?” Pete cried out, forgetting to speak softly in his consternation.

“I’m afraid so,” I said.

“Hey there, what’s all the commotion?” Frank asked, emerging from his office. “Oh, hello, María, nice to see you here. You don’t have another murder to report, I hope?”

“Oh, no,” I assured him. “Only a marriage—a future marriage, I mean.”

“Well, that’s grand! Are my congratulations in order, Pete? I could see plain enough that you were stuck on María for years. Is it time for the big announcement at last?”

“Nope,” Pete said glumly. “I’m too late. María’s got someone else. I’m not too pleased, but I’ve got to swallow it.”

“Oh!” said Frank. “Well, that’s some misfortune for you, but it’s her choice. Well, María, who’s the lucky gentleman?”

I took a deep breath. This was not going to be at all easy to explain, especially not to Frank.

“I’m going to marry Belinda, the manager of Murchison’s Saloon,” I said.

Frank’s eyes and mouth opened wide for a moment, until he thought he understood. “Oh, I get it!” he said. “Belinda may be a female impersonator, all right—but that don’t mean she ain’t a man, or *he* ain’t a man underneath them women’s clothes! And I guess them women’s clothes don’t keep a man from havin’ an eye for a fine woman like *you*, María!” Frank usually spoke better English than that, but he must have had old Western language habits that were coming to the surface in this new and unexpected situation.

“Well—er—it’s true that the women’s clothes wouldn’t mean Belinda wasn’t a man underneath—if she *was* one,” I said. “It’s just like m—*my* women’s clothes don’t mean that either, about *me*.”

“*What?!*” Frank almost shouted. “About *you*? But, María, you can’t tell me *you’re* a female impersonator! Anyone can see *that’s* not true!”

“*Almost* anyone,” said Pete, still glum. “Unless they happen to know.”

Frank was speechless. Pete said nothing more too. At last it was I who had to break the silence.

“I’m sorry, Frank, but it *is* true,” I said. “I know you think it’s shameful, and it’s deceiving men with my wiles—but I’ve been a female impersonator ever since I was six years old, when Mamá started dressing me in girls’ clothes because Señor Muertazos demanded it. I liked it, I became María instead of Mario, and I never wanted to stop being María—even when Mamá

said I should, after Señor Muertazos was arrested. Pete never knew, all the time he was in love with me since I was 12, until I—I had to let him know when he proposed marriage to me.”

“Well, this is mighty damn hard for me to understand, and that’s the truth!” Frank exclaimed. He usually didn’t say “damn” either, but this was far from his usual daily routine.

“So you’re telling me,” he said, “that Belinda, who everybody knew was a female impersonator, *isn’t* one—and *you*, Maria, who everybody knew *wasn’t* a female impersonator, *are* one! And, Pete, when you found out María was a female impersonator, you didn’t want to marry her at first—but now you *do* want to marry her, even though you know what she is, only it’s too late!”

“That’s about the size of it,” Pete said. “María’s the finest lady I ever met. I’m not ashamed to say I love her, knowing all about what she is—and *I’ll* never talk about deceiving anyone with any wiles, where she’s concerned.”

Frank took a deep breath and almost snorted when he let it out. “Well, that’s your concern, and none of my own, I guess,” he said. “But don’t ask *me* to hold with any newfangled nonsense about a man marrying a female impersonator!”

“Don’t worry, I won’t,” Pete said. “It’s too late for that now, anyway.”

Frank re-entered his office, leaving Pete and me alone again. I was getting an idea, perhaps a far-fetched one, but one that might make two people I cared about very happy, if only it could work. “You’re right, Pete, it *is* too late for *you and me*,” I said. “I’m going to marry Belinda, not you, and that’s that. But

I wonder—well, if you really are willing to marry a female impersonator after all—I happen to know a very lovely and delightful one who might make you very happy.”

“There’s no way she could be anywhere near as fine as you,” Pete said flatly.

“I’m not so sure about that,” I said. “At least let me introduce you to her, and you can see what you think.”

“I know what I’ll think,” Pete said. “I’ll think she’s nothing like you.”

“Maybe so,” I said, “but maybe not. I tell you what, I’ll tell *her* about *you*, and see if she wants to meet you. If she does, then maybe you could at least be kind enough to meet her.”

Pete sighed. “So now I’m *unkind* if I just can’t believe she’s anything like you?” he demanded to know.

“No,” I said, “but you might be unkind if you refused even to meet her when she was—uh—eager to meet *you*.”

Pete snorted, but seemed to be trying to suppress a smile. “Maybe I was wrong about you not deceiving men with your wiles,” he said. “You’ve sure got wiles, all right.”

“Maybe I do,” I admitted, “but I’m not trying to deceive you with them. You won’t really refuse to meet this lovely lady, Sally, if she wants to meet you—will you?”

Pete sighed again, more deeply. “If it was just for *her*, I might,” he said. “But it’s for *you*, too, Maria. All right, I’ll do it for you. When do I meet her?”

“Tonight, at Murchison’s, if she does want to meet you. I’ll ask her. Come to the saloon this evening and I’ll let you know—or *we’ll* let you know, if she does want to meet you.”

“All right, then, it’s a deal.”

“Sally!” I said at the saloon that evening. “You asked me to let you know if I found a good man for you. I think I’ve found him already!”

“Oh, really? That was fast!” Sally said. “Who is he, and how can I meet him?”

“He’s a deputy sheriff, Pete Juttings, a very fine gentleman—and I happen to know he wouldn’t object to marrying a lady because of, er, a certain secret under her skirt.”

“He sounds very interesting! How did *you* meet him?”

“Well, my mother and I had to report a crime when I was 12. After the criminal was arrested, Pete and the chief deputy, Frank Ripson, took my mother and me to dinner here. Frank fell in love with my mother, who was a widow, and—er—Pete fell in love with me.”

Sally wrinkled her nose. “So this fine gentleman is a *hand-me-down* from you to me?” she asked.

“Well, I guess you could say that,” I admitted. “But I think he’s quite a *high-quality* hand-me-down.” I smiled. “My clothes for years were hand-me-downs from my older sisters, but they were very pretty.”

“But is he still in love with you?”

I would not lie to Sally: “Well, I think he was this morning, anyway, when I told him I was going to marry Belinda—but he’ll get over it. He got over wanting to marry me very soon after he found out I was a female impersonator. Then later he changed his mind and did want to marry me—but he’ll change his mind again soon enough, with your help.”

Sally pouted. “Then he’ll change his mind yet again, and cheat.”

“Not with *me*,” I said, “and I’m not so sure he’ll cheat with anyone. Of course there’s no guarantee—but still, being married to a good man would be better than *not* being married to an endless series of men, wouldn’t it?”

“Well, maybe.” I could see that she really meant “certainly.”

Sally smiled. Her mind was made up. “All right, bring him on,” she said. “Just let me put my hair up. I should look dignified to meet a fine gentleman.”

She strode up the stairs, while I waited near the entrance. My own hair was already up and my breasts were not on display, but still I had to insist to an interested man that I was not on the job.

Sally returned with her hair up, and Pete soon arrived. Sally’s eyes sparkled when she saw him, and she turned on all her charm, for Pete was a handsome man indeed. Before long she was praising him for his bravery as a deputy sheriff, and he was drinking it in. I could see that he found Sally very attractive. Yes, I thought, Pete would forget about being in love with me soon enough.

When their lively conversation was well on its way toward intimacy, I excused myself to go and see

Belinda in the saloon office. “María!” she said with a big smile. “What are *you* doing here?”

“Introducing Sally to a fine gentleman, who has decided that it’s quite all right for him to marry a female impersonator,” I said with an equally big smile.

“Oh, good!” Belinda said. “Sally’s such a sweet-heart. She really deserves a fine gentleman.”

“So do you,” I said, drawing very near her, “even if the fine gentleman happens to be a female impersonator.” Almost at once we were kissing, while the office papers waited in silence for a more important matter to transpire.

Chapter 8

Pete and Sally were married even earlier than Belinda and I, for our wedding was to be a Catholic one and could not take place on short notice. Belinda had never before even considered becoming a Catholic, but she explained that the big obstacle for her was her deep erotic needs. Now that she would soon be able to fulfill those needs in a way acceptable to Catholics, she was able to see much beauty and truth in the Catholic faith—especially in the doctrine of the Communion of Saints, for she was quite convinced that Clarita had truly spoken to me from heaven in my dream. Never having been a believing Protestant any more than a Catholic, she had no firm Protestant misconceptions to overcome, and soon it was arranged that she would be baptized before we were married.

Our clothing for the wedding did present some difficulty. We knew it would not be acceptable for it to appear that two women were marrying each other. One of us would have to be dressed as a man—but

which? I was a man in reality beneath my women's clothes, but I had never appeared as a man in my life, and I had almost no memory of appearing as a boy before I was six years old. Belinda was really a woman, but had appeared to many people (including me) to be obviously a man in women's clothes. To my relief, Belinda volunteered to wear the men's clothes. She would not cut off her long brown hair, but she would discreetly hide it beneath a top hat. The priest who was to perform the ceremony agreed, if a bit reluctantly, that this would be acceptable, since I had been publicly known as a female for many years and I had no experience appearing as a male. I would have to use my real name, Mario, for the vows, but this (he said) would be only an "inconspicuous incongruity" with my appearance.

The wedding preparations were not too burdensome, with a lot of help from Mamá and Frank, Pete and Sally, and several ladies of the cathedral. One thing that happened before the wedding, though, was very painful to me.

Belinda and I had politely sent a wedding invitation to Anita in San Francisco, not imagining that she would come, but also never imagining that we would receive a message like the one she sent to us in return. "Fuck you," Anita said. "You gloat over me because you are getting married and I am a hell-bound harlot. You hypocrites are worse than the holier-than-thou prude Clarita. At least Clarita did not *screw* and pretend to be holy. Well, I *do* screw and do *not* pretend to be holy! I am hell-bound and proud, and I say it out loud! I will not see you hypocrites at your wedding, but I will see you in hell!"

I was angry at first, but soon tears of sorrow began to flood out my anger. I needed to pray for Anita, I knew—but I could not, because I still hated her for her lies about Mamá and Frank, and she was no

better now than she had been then; she was as bad as Señor Muertazos himself. I could only think of Clarita—in heaven now and forever, though I could not see her—and beg Clarita to do what I could not do myself, to pray for Anita.

Anita's letter did do one thing for me: it shocked me into thinking of my own sins, and remembering that I needed to go to confession. In the excitement of anticipating my wedding, I had forgotten about that.

It had been too long. I had sinned with Pete, Roy, and numerous other manly men, as well as Sally. It was hard enough to be sorry for those exciting sins, but at least I could do it, now that I was to be married to Belinda.

What I could not do—what was completely impossible, I feared—was to stop hating Anita. I begged God to help me stop hating her, but all I could think of was that there was only one thing I would hate more than I hated Anita. That was to be stuck in hell forever with Anita and Señor Muertazos.

It would have to do, I decided. To go to heaven with Clarita, or to hell with Señor Muertazos, one day to be joined by Anita—it was not a hard choice. I really did dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, and I would say so in confession.

My sins were forgiven, I begged God for help in not committing a lot more of them, and my wedding day arrived. I was not a virgin, to say the least, and I did not wear white exactly, but I did wear a lovely, high-necked, off-white wedding gown. Belinda wore men's morning dress, and Frank walked up the aisle with me. He still did not approve of female imperson-

ators in general, but Mamá had persuaded him to make an exception for me.

I remember, even now, that Belinda and I exchanged our vows of everlasting faithfulness; I remember that we both received Holy Communion, for Belinda had recently been baptized and I was not in a state of mortal sin for a change; I remember that we had a fiesta at the hacienda; but other than that I remember little of my wedding day, until the time when Belinda and I went up to my bedroom and closed the door. What happened after that I still remember as if it were yesterday—for I was, and am, still *muy caliente*.

“María, please turn around and close your eyes,” Belinda said as soon as we arrived in the nuptial chamber. I complied. I could hear soft sounds, as of Belinda stripping off her men’s clothes at top speed. I took a deep breath. I hoped I could satisfy her, with her admittedly deep erotic needs, after having played the girl and the woman for so long.

“Now let me help you remove your clothing,” Belinda said. I could feel her hands shaking as she unhooked my gown and unlaced my corset from behind. When I was still standing, wearing only my petticoat, drawers, and wedding slippers, she reached around and caressed my breasts; I pressed her hands tightly with my own. Her breathing was deep, and I could feel her bare breasts pressing against my back. They were very small, but her nipples were bigger than mine and very hard.

“Oh, María, I love you; I’m all yours!” Belinda murmured. Still caressing my breasts from behind, she kissed my neck; then she turned me around and kissed me full on the mouth. My hand rose quickly to her tiny breast, making her gasp with delight.

“Put your hand between my legs—please!” she begged. I complied at once. I had never felt a woman’s entryway before. It was hot and wet. Her female member above her entryway, though much smaller than my own member, was protruding and begging me to stroke it. I did, making Belinda shiver all over—not from cold, but from the heat of desire.

“Yes, yes, yes! Oh, María, keep stroking me!” Belinda pleaded, clutching my hand tightly with her legs. My excitement was already extreme. I hoped she would permit me to enter her soon, for I would spurt seed without entering her if she did not.

“Belinda, please let me enter you!” I begged when I thought I could stand it no longer. “Please! Now! I need you!”

“Yes! Oh, María, I need *you!* Unite with me!” Belinda murmured, lying on the bed and raising her knees to admit me. Trying with all my might to keep from spurting my seed too soon, I lay on top of her, and she guided my short member into her deep womanly cave.

Her steaming entryway was lithe and tight, but there was no difficulty in entering her, as there had been with Sally. The only difficulty was in forcing myself not to spurt seed at once, while Belinda raised her strong, narrow hips off the bed and brought them down, again and again, faster and faster.

“Belinda! Please! Now? I can’t hold off!” I cried.

“Yes, yes, now! Oh, María, my love! I’m all yours forever!” Belinda responded, clutching me with all her might and bucking like a wilder bronco than I had ever known before.



I could speak no more. As my seed emerged into my beloved newlywed wife, rushing forth with might far beyond my own, I could only moan, “Oh! Oh! *Ohhhh!*”

Our deep, quick breathing took long to become more regular. We lay together, still united, even when my member had dwindled to its smallest. Exhausted, I soon fell into sleep.

I dreamed—was it only a dream? Clarita came to me again from heaven, as glorious as before. This time she said nothing, but only smiled upon me. I returned her smile, much more feebly, but yearning to do more. “Thank you, Clarita—for all this and more!” my heart cried out, as mightily and unstoppably as if I were spurting seed.

Clarita smiled more brilliantly, and now she seemed to be joined by many others, saints and angels, descending to gaze upon Belinda and me with blessing in their eyes. Beyond them all, and yet through them and in them, the light of the Greatest and Highest shone upon me from the supreme throne of heaven. I glimpsed it, but I did not dare to look up to the throne, and I awoke.

It was dark. I was no longer united to Belinda in the flesh, but in spirit I was. The light of heaven had vanished from my eyes; I could only remember it and cherish it in my heart. At least I could do that; I prayed that I would do it always. Once more, not now unstoppably, but with my full will and desire, I whispered: “Thank you, Clarita—for all this and more!”

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