



*Reluctant Press*

# Marion & Leslie

Robin Lee Shelby



*ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHAS*

**A 'HER TV' NOVEL**

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# Marion & Leslie

by Robin Lee Shelby

## Forward:

According to a 1950's television series, there are 8 million stories in the Naked City; that city being, of course, New York. Closer to where I was born and raised is another large city and I can personally attest that it also has a few million stories to be told. That city has been called many things over the span of years but the one that suits it best is the Crescent City, for in the arc of the Mississippi River is the beginning of many a tale. This story is just one of them.

## Chapter One

The twin engine Widgeon slowly descended from a partly cloudy sky and lightly touched down on the macadam strip at Lakefront Airport. Leslie was glad the long trip was almost over. She was looking forward to stretching her legs after sitting for so long in the cockpit. She also was quite anxious to return home and begin her new career, even if it meant working for her father's company. Still, she had a bit of apprehension; for she'd been carrying a secret for a few years now and it had recently begun to prey on her mind in an almost endless daydream. It was her hope that this change would help her to cope with that secret by giving her new tasks to occupy her time and attention.

The pilot smiled at her as he slowly maneuvered the plane down the taxiway to the private hanger of Chancery Unlimited Corporation. He glanced over at the petite young lady sitting in the copilot's seat. Her dark blonde hair fell almost to her shoulders and framed a lovely soft face that was strangely devoid of any but the basic makeup. Her hazel eyes were bright and almost penetrating and her full lips encircled a very dainty mouth devoid of lipstick.

“We’re almost there, Miss Chancery,” he informed her. “Your father has sent a car to pick you up and some assistance to get you settled in.”

She returned the smile to the pilot, Jim Thompson, a long time employee of Chancery Unlimited and a life long friend. She couldn’t begin to count the numerous trips she’d made with her mother in this very plane. “Thank you, Mr. Jim. It’s good to be home.”

“Got tired of the boys at Vassar?”

She looked quickly at Jim and before she could retort, she saw the grin on his face. She knew the reply he expected and she obliged him.

“If Daddy knew they were going to go coed, he would never have had me go there,” she replied and returned the grin. “But it was fun while it lasted.”

“Well, you’ll be meeting a lot more guys from now on. Just be careful. You know how some of the folks in this city are.”

At that she nodded, knowing that’s what he expected her to do.

The plane had come to a stop. Jim quickly shut the motor off and unbuckled his harness. He turned to Leslie and said, “Welcome home, Miss Leslie.”

She smiled at him and gave her thanks. Quickly, they exited the plane and he got her luggage out of the baggage compartment. Near the hanger’s office had been standing a young man of average height with long auburn hair held back into a low ponytail. An obviously custom-made suit hung on his smallish frame. When he saw that the plane had safely come to a stop, he quickly approached them and introduced himself.

“Miss Chancery, I’m Marion Le Blanc. I’m here to help you for the next few days in any way I can to get you settled in. I’ll take your bags to the car and you can freshen up in the office facilities. If you like, I have some refreshments in the car.”

She was shocked by the sudden onslaught. Not only that, but she found her breath had been taken away by the sight of this young man. He was not muscular but lean like a panther, with sleek bodylines hiding under his apparently custom-fitted suit. His hands were long and tapered like those of a pianist she’d once seen perform. His face was that of a much younger person with delicate eyebrows and no sign of blemish or hair shadow. In fact, his complexion and skin looked more like a woman’s, not coarse but smooth and silky. His voice was also soft and light, not deep. For a moment, she’d had an impression that this was a woman disguised as a man and feelings welled up inside her. She fought to regain control.

“Uh, thank you, Mr. Le Blanc,” she finally managed to blurt out.

He shook his head slightly and smiled. “Please, call me Marion, okay?”

“Yes, certainly,” she replied.

As he drove them along, she watched the passing buildings and trees but found that her eyes kept returning to him. It was much later as they were driving down St. Charles Avenue when she noticed that he sat upright with his legs posi-

tioned more like a woman's. The delicate way he held the steering wheel reinforced the first impression she'd made. After a while, she turned to him and asked, "What is your regular job at Chancery's?"

"I work in the data processing department," he replied simply.

She was now curious, "How did you get stuck with this job of helping me?"

He glanced over at her for a moment, then said, "I didn't get stuck with it. Your father asked my boss if I would do it as a personal favor. And I'm now glad I said yes. You're very beautiful, you know; even if you're stuck in that business suit get-up of yours. You could use a touch of makeup to bring out the highlights in those gorgeous hazel eyes and a little lip-gloss wouldn't hurt either. And while I'm on the subject, you could have your hair done just a bit longer to frame and flatter your face."

She looked at herself. What he'd said was true and she wondered at his acute observations. How could he know about women's fashions and makeup? She knew she was dressed pretty conservatively in a brown double-breasted pantsuit. But, of course, that was how she liked it. It was what her father expected of her; if she wanted to one day take over the reigns of Chancery Unlimited. To compete in the business world of men, one almost had to dress like a man. There had been a lot of times, when she was younger, that she'd dressed more formally in long flowing ball gowns and such but she'd never really had enjoyed them all that much. Somehow, they never seemed right, even though she knew her late mother had taken so much pleasure in it, often to the point of insistence; an insistence that she still rebelled against.

The thought of her mother brought a touch of sadness to her just then. Marion noticed it.

"Is something wrong?" he asked, full of obvious concern.

She shook her head, "Just thinking about my Mom. She passed away five years ago before I finished high school. I guess I've tried to dress for a man's world since. Dresses make me kind of uncomfortable now. And I very seldom use makeup any more."

"Oh," he said raising his eyebrows just a little as he again glanced at her before returning his gaze to the traffic ahead. "I'm sorry. Didn't mean to pry or anything."

"How well do you know my father?" she asked abruptly.

Cautiously, he replied, "In what way?"

She smiled briefly at his discomfort. "You can be honest. I think I know what you're going to say."

He shrugged, "Well, I don't know him socially, but as a business man, he's a hard-nosed S.O.B. Is that what you wanted to hear?"

She visibly smiled then. "Yes."

He shrugged again. "Even so, I like working for the company. And you...how does it feel to be home?"

The change in tone surprised her a little. “I’m not so sure you could call this home,” she replied. “I’ve spent most of my life away at school. Home is just some place I visited between schools during the summers and on a few holidays.”

The rest of the ride was in silence. Looking out the window, she saw the tree-lined boulevard where ran the only remaining streetcar line in the city. Soon they turned onto Canal Street for a few blocks, then made a right turn onto Royal Street. A few blocks later, Marion had pulled the car to a stop at the hotel where her father had his penthouse apartments. The old mansion that had once been home had been sold soon after her mother’s death. He turned to her and said, “Well, for what it’s worth, welcome home. Your father said I was to help you get settled in. So, just wait right there.”

Quickly, he got out of the car and walked around to her side. Like an old southern gentleman, he opened her door and held out his hand for her to exit. Smiling, she accepted his hand, which was extraordinarily smooth for a man, and just for a moment a tingling came to her fingers. It rapidly accelerated to the rest of her body. The touch of this young’s man hand had done what no other had person had ever done to her, except Lisa. It literally took her breath away for a moment.

Slowly, she allowed him to show her to the private elevator and to the top floor where he ushered her to a new annex he said was to be her private apartment, complete with its own separate kitchenette and bath. She also noted it had a small clothes washer and dryer combination concealed in what first appeared to be a closet next to the bath.

When he’d finished showing her around, he made ready to leave, saying, “I’ll have the staff bring in your luggage. If you need anything, just call the office and ask for me.”

With that, he took her offered hand and, like an old-time gallant, kissed it. The touch again repeated that tingle in her and she became a little flustered as the door closed behind him. She had to shake her head to clear it. How could this be happening to her? She was not attracted to guys. Yet that one touch had almost given her an orgasm. She reflected on her first impression that he was a girl disguised as a guy. Could she have been right? This was going to take some further study.

That night, after she’d unpacked, she heard a knock on her door. Opening it, she saw her father standing there with a box of roses in his hand, a broad smile on his face.

“Well, how’s my little girl? Getting settled in?”

She wanted ever so much to run to him and give him a hug but she simply accepted the roses and smiled. “Yes, I’ve just finished unpacking and was getting ready to take a shower.”

“You look fine,” he stated. “Sorry I couldn’t make it to the graduation ceremony. But I’ve got some good news. I’m taking you out to dinner to celebrate your being the first B.A. in the family. So grab your coat and let’s go.”

Dinner was at Antoine's in the Quarter. She'd enjoyed being alone with her father and he seemed to be truly interested in her future plans.

"Take a week off, Honey. Look around the city. If you want, I can have someone show you around. There've been a lot of changes in town. Why, they've even begun construction of a new football stadium for the Saints. I'm sure Edna can spare someone from her department for a few days."

She wanted to protest, "But, Dad, I really want to get started right away."

"Nonsense, you deserve some time to yourself before you put your nose to the grindstone. When you're ready, just come in and check with Maureen."

She knew further argument was useless so she agreed but declined the offer of a guide. It only took one day of sightseeing before she grew bored, so she reported to the office the following day, quite anxious to take up her new duties in the family business.

She was quickly ushered into her father's office. Once there, she said hello to her dad's secretary, Maureen Bourg, whom she'd known for most of her life.

"Your father will be here in a few minutes, Leslie," Maureen greeted the young woman. "How was your flight?"

"Fine, Ms Bourg," Leslie responded. "I know Dad told me to take a week off, but I really would like to get to work."

Ms Bourg smiled, "Well, we'll just have to get you settled in then, won't we?" With that, she made a few intra-company phone calls to various departments, including Personnel.

All too soon, Leslie had been assigned an office and was busy signing a sheaf full of papers sent there by the Personnel Department. Her office had a window that looked out towards the River. She saw a Tidewater supply vessel slowly making its way downstream when she first looked at the view.

The cityscape that stretched out before her wasn't all familiar but she did recognize several buildings and the bridge across the river. The city was strange to her. Even though it was her home, she'd not really grown up there. As she'd told Marion, she'd spent most of her life away at boarding schools.

Around 11 o'clock, she heard a knock on the door frame. Looking up, she saw Marion. The sight of him again brought the feeling that he looked like a girl disguised as a man. She had to find out the truth, especially since he had aroused her so.

"Free for lunch?" he asked.

She smiled, "But it's only 11."

"I take the early shift to beat the crowds. Come on, I know a little place that serves a mean sub."

Surprisingly, he didn't offer her his hand. In fact he had almost doubled the personal space between them he'd exhibited that first day. Once they exited the

employee's elevator and walked out of the building, he led the way to a little al fresco bistro a few blocks down.

Marion helped Leslie to her seat before he sat in his own chair, a heavy but fragile looking piece of wrought iron that scraped against the concrete of the sidewalk as he moved it. The waiter who served them appeared to know him personally. "Ah, Monsieur Le Blanc, I see we have a most charming guest today. And what will we be having?"

Marion looked over at Leslie and asked, "Do you trust me?"

She nodded.

"Jacque, two of your best seafood subs, ci vous plait. White wine for me, and..." he looked over at Leslie in inquiry.

"Tea for me, please," she responded.

"Very well," Jacque replied, then left to bring the order to the chef.

Marion smiled at her then and said, "You're going to have to learn how to sling the lingo around here. The tourists expect us to parlez vous le Cajun, you know."

She grinned at that. "Oui, I've heard that."

Over lunch she watched him carefully. He had delicate eyebrows that showed a girlish arch. His fingers were long and tapered with surprisingly long fingernails for a man. They were not excessively long but they extended over a half-inch and were very well manicured. His face was smooth-shaven and showed absolutely no sign of stubble or shadow. His mouth had an upswept curve that would have been more at home on a mature woman.

His manners were almost impeccable even though they were eating submarine sandwiches, which were surprisingly delicious. She could distinctly taste the various flavors, from fried catfish to Gulf shrimp with a hint of boiled crawfish that had been prepared in Zatarans seasonings. It'd been a long time since she'd tasted it; since before her mother had passed away.

After the meal when Marion rose, she noted that he had a very narrow waist. The obviously custom-fitted suit concealed the rest of his body but it was apparent that his upper body was either very muscular or was hiding a pair of female breasts. The notion that he was a woman disguised as a man just wouldn't leave her mind.

As they walked back to the office building, she noted that he walked with shorter strides than men normally use. And the way he lifted his feet gave her the impression that he was more used to walking in higher heels than the dress boots he was wearing. The tendency to walk toe and heel instead of heel and toe was also evident in his stride. He also displayed a tendency to sway his hips just the slightest bit, even though there was an obvious attempt on his part not to.

She made a promise to herself that she would find out, one way or another, the truth about Marion Le Blanc. Was he a girl disguised as a man—or something else?

## Chapter Two:

Marion Richard Le Blanc was shaken to his very core of his being. After he'd taken Leslie's hand that first day, he was confused beyond explanation. He could still feel the tingling in his fingers. He sensed rather than knew that she was someone who excited him. How could he even hope that she would reciprocate those feelings? If he explored anything further with her, the truth would come out and he wondered if she could handle it. With some effort, he put her out of his mind and decided that he would take her out to lunch the following day to see if it would lead to anything.

It had come home to him again the night after he'd taken her out to lunch when he'd returned to his apartment in Metairie. After dropping his keys and wallet on the nightstand, he looked at himself in the mirror. He peered at his reflection intently as he slowly removed the band holding his ponytail and took up a brush to pass it through the sensuously full auburn strands. They now framed his face and rested on his shoulders. The image he saw was that of an obviously pretty young woman without makeup.

Deliberately, he took off his jacket and hung it on the nearby valet. Slowly, almost sensuously, he then removed his tie and shirt, revealing a white longline satin minimizer bra. Reaching behind him, he unhooked it and let it drop to reveal two feminine breasts complete with full nipples and areola. He knew that they would be tender to the touch but he reached up and cupped them both to air them out after their confinement. For a long time he just stood there and thought about the past.

It had happened the year he was in the sixth grade. An accident had put him in the hospital for more than eighteen months. When he was released, he was no longer a whole boy but not quite a girl either. His hormones had gone completely haywire, causing his breasts to grow, his waist to narrow, his hips to broaden, and his body to acquire just about every attribute that really belonged on a young girl his age. His skin was silky smooth and his face had never sprouted any hair. His voice, so they told him, would not change very much. The doctors had called it a chemical imbalance at the time. At least that's what they'd told his parents.

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He lay there like a broken doll, his legs trapped under the heavy tires of the large Case tractor. At first, there was no pain, just a fuzzy feeling in his brain. Off in the distance he could hear people shouting at one another about moving the contraption off his legs. Later there were the sounds of two different sirens, a minute or so apart and someone trying to ask him a question. He tried to answer but somehow his tongue wouldn't respond. After what seemed like a hundred years, he felt his body being strapped against something and then being lifted. His eyes wouldn't quite focus to see where he was being taken and by whom. Soon, he began to feel a sharp pain. Slowly at first, then it became almost unbearable as he

tried to move but found he couldn't. Before long, blessed sleep came and there was only darkness, then nothing.

The bright light flashed in his face and he quickly moved his head to the side. He was strangely numb all over and still groggy. His right arm refused to move. He could feel a strange object taped to the right side of his face and something in his right nostril. He found he could move his left hand and tried to swat away the light that was bothering him. His eyes opened when he heard a familiar voice.

"You've decided to rejoin us, young fellow?"

His eyes now open, he saw Dr. Vice standing over him. He tried to sit up but found he couldn't. Then he saw both his legs fully encased in plaster casts and hanging from an iron contraption suspended over the hospital bed he was in. He wanted to scream as he closed his eyes, hoping it was all a bad dream. Then he remembered.

"Doctor, I fell..."

"Yes, we know," Doctor Vice said soothingly. "You were pretty banged up. Get some rest now. We'll talk in the morning."

Marion began to notice other things. He saw a tube coming out of his right nostril. It was taped to his forehead and led toward something on the side of the bed. He couldn't quite make out what it was but he noted a soft humming sound from the area where the tube led. His right arm had been taped to a board and there were three plastic tubes connected to a needle in the vein. All tubes led to IV bottles hanging from an IV rack. His chest began to feel itchy, as though there was something growing there. There were other things that his brain simply couldn't categorize but it all made his body feel different, changed.

"Doctor, how long have I been out?"

The doctor hesitated before answering, "You've been unconscious for a little over three months."

For a while, he just lay there, soaking in that information. Then he said, "Doctor, I feel strange. My body doesn't feel right. Does it have to do with the accident?"

"We'll talk in the morning, Marion," the doctor replied. "You go back to sleep now and get some rest."

But sleep didn't come immediately. As he became more aware of his surroundings, he noticed other wires and tubes attached to his body that ran to various monitoring devices beside the bed. In his penis he could feel a tube, which led off to the side of the bed. He noted that the room was filled with monitoring devices. Once, a pretty young nurse checked the readouts on some of them, but she didn't seem to notice that he was awake. Later, she came and stuck a hypodermic into the IV bottle and injected something. After she'd left, he found his eyes were getting heavier and he finally went to sleep. But it was a troubled sleep in which he had a series of nightmares about being a girl.

It was an office cluttered with shelves of books and magazines. A slightly beat-up couch was against the outer wall. A large mahogany desk took up most the remaining room behind which the doctor sat in an overstuffed chair. The two people sitting on the other side of the desk in beat-up office chairs were tense as they listened to the doctor speak.

Matt Le Blanc was a man who'd seen his share of grief, as a young man growing up during the Depression, then serving a time at a CCC camp. After that he volunteered, as had so many others, for the Army during the War. The sights and sounds he'd heard in North Africa, Sicily, Normandy and Bastogne he never really conveyed to anyone but there were as much a part of his life as the typhoid fever that erupted every so often in his body. His careworn eyes and weather-beaten face were testaments to his experience.

Rebecca Le Blanc was a handsome woman who had seen her own share of adversity. She was a short woman whose auburn hair hung almost to her shoulders. Her face bore just the barest of makeup and, as an accessory, she wore a simple pearl necklace. She'd served in the Red Cross during the War, folding bandages. After the war, she met her husband-to-be at a bar in the nearby town of Thibodaux. They had settled down in the little town where Matt had grown up, or rather in the rural area that surrounded it. There little Marion was born and grew up. There was a bayou to fish in and a forest to hunt in, a true "sportsman's paradise" as the state license plates proclaimed.

The speaker was the family physician, Dr. Vice, who was well into his fifties. He was of average height and a little stout. His hair had already turned quite white with just a touch of the former brown it had been. His face showed the signs of many medical battles with crow's feet at the eyes and wrinkles on his brow. He was now trying to inform Marion's parents of his condition.

"The facts are these, Mr. & Mrs. Le Blanc. Sometime during Marion's treatment, his body started to create the wrong mixture of chemicals. This chemical imbalance caused the body to receive the wrong signals and instead of telling it to grow like a boy, it sent signals telling it to grow like a girl. That's the simplest way I can explain it to you in layman's terms. That's why he is developing the breasts you asked about. And I must warn you that he will develop other feminine body traits as time passes."

"This is my son we're speaking of, Doctor," Marion's mom said angrily. "I want to know what can be done to correct this. What are you doing to correct this?"

The doctor hesitated a moment before replying. "There is very little we can do until his body stops growing. When he reaches eighteen or nineteen, there are some surgical procedures we can undertake to remove the breasts and take some fat off his hips. We can also start him on a course of hormone therapy. But I counsel against this. Hormones in the dosages required could cause other damages, particularly to his heart."

Marion's father then spoke, "Does he know what you're telling us, Doctor?"

"No, not yet, I wanted to explain all this to you before I went any further. He can continue to live as a boy but the breasts will show and his voice simply won't deepen. His hips will be broader, his waist narrower and he'll develop no facial hair to speak of. Or, he can learn to live as a girl with these features. In either event, there will be difficulties in others adjusting to this change, due to the prejudices they've been taught by a xenophobic society. How he will take this is still unknown. A psychiatrist will see him, of course, to get an evaluation."

Marion's father stood up restlessly. He went to a window that looked out onto a private garden and stared. Without turning, he asked, "Will he be able to father children, Doctor?"

"We can keep monitoring his sperm count, but as of now I see no problem with that."

Marion's mother again spoke, "What about his legs, Doctor?"

"We'll continue to reevaluate but we should be able to remove the casts in about 6 weeks or so. After that, he'll be fitted with leg-braces and will undergo intensive therapy. Once he can manage on his own, he'll still have to use crutches for a while and a wheelchair when he becomes too tired. After that, he should be able to carry himself well enough without either," he replied, more sure of that diagnosis than the one before it.

"Doctor," Marion's mom continued, "what do you recommend we do?"

"I can only give you options, Mrs. Le Blanc. The decision you make must be yours and Marion's."

"Mon Dieu, Jason," Marion's father shouted, "Il est un vraitment anormal. Comment est-ce que nous le rendons normal?"

The doctor sighed, realizing his friend's frustration. "Matt, I've been a medical man for forty years now. I've seen all manner of conditions that can be inflicted on a person. I've seen polio decimate all too many young men and women. I've seen other diseases waste a person's body away until there's nothing left. There've been accidents where we've had to remove an arm or leg, or worse. I wish I could tell you that this condition of Marion's will go away. I can't. No matter what we do now, he will continue to grow as a young girl. That is inevitable. Yes, it's a rare occurrence but it does happen. Once, a long time ago, I saw a case similar to this one. What he needs now is your love and understanding more than anything else."

"But the neighbor's..."

"Hang the neighbors. If they weren't so hidebound by the mores of their superstitious religions, they would understand. This is a medical problem and has nothing to do with their clay-footed God. Is that all you're worrying about? Think about your son's health and his feelings and quit worrying about those hypocritical so and so's."

“Oui,” Matt said angrily, “They’ll see a big strong healthy boy who’s been turned into a damn wimp of a girl and will want to condemn us all as tools of the Devil. And I *am* thinking about my son, who’s now a damn circus freak. Thanks, Jason, thanks for nothing.” With those words, he stormed out of the office.

Rebecca Le Blanc stared soulfully after her distraught husband before looking again at the doctor with pleading eyes.

“I think you’re unduly being harsh about our neighbors, Doctor. Some would understand. At least I’d like to think so. You know how Matt is, he doesn’t much care for the Church and I can see that you don’t either. He also blames himself for the accident that put Marion in the hospital in the first place. All I’m asking is that you do whatever you can. I want my son back but if I can’t have that then, please, let my daughter be healthy.”

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A sense of helplessness descended on him as he lay there day after day in the antiseptically sterile hospital room. Even the daily programs on TV became boring after a spell and he’d stopped watching altogether. His discomfort was compounded by changes he knew were occurring in his body. His chest constantly bothered him and lately he’d begun to experience times when he simply wanted to cry for no apparent reason. His entire emotional makeup had somehow been turned into an unordered series of peaks and valleys he was unaccustomed to.

His Mother spent a lot of time at the hospital with him and he could not convince her that it was unnecessary. The worry in her face was very evident to him and he was concerned for her health. He found out the reason for it one morning when the doctor made more than his usual rounds.

After looking at Marion’s chart, the doctor lifted up his wrist and started to check his pulse. After he checked the feeling in Marion’s toes, he sat in a chair beside the bed and said, “Well, young fellow, your legs are mending but I’m afraid you’ll be with us for a while longer.”

“Why is that, Doctor?” he asked.

Glancing at Mrs. Le Blanc, the doctor answered, “There’s been a complication in your case, Marion. I’m here this morning to try to explain why you’ve been feeling, well, sort of strange, these last few weeks. Your father was supposed to be here for this, but it seems he can’t get away from his job. So, I’m going to go ahead without him because I can’t put this off any longer. There are some decisions you have to make very soon. Now I’m going to try to make this a very simple explanation for you, so if I use a term you’re not familiar with just let me know, okay?”

Marion said simply, “Okay, Doctor.”

The doctor exhaled and said, “Fine. Well, your body was pretty banged-up. But, I suppose you already know that. We spent a long time in the operating room trying out best to wire the bones in your legs back together so they’d knit prop-

erly. Even so, it will be quite some time before you regain full use of them. We also had to give you quite a bit of pain medication and other powerful drugs in your IV's and through shots and pills after you regained consciousness.

“Well, to make a long story short, your body developed a sort of chemical imbalance during all this and it caused your body to start changing. The itching in your chest area was part of that change. The reason for that itching...well, to put it bluntly, Marion, your body is not developing into that of a young boy anymore but rather that of a young girl. That itch you feel is your breasts growing. Not only that, but your hips are starting to get wider and your waist may even shrink from its present size. There are other factors as well. Because of your age, you won't develop any appreciable body hair, especially on your face. Your voice will stay pretty much the way it is now and your height will probably top off at five foot six or so. So, to all outward appearances, you will look and sound exactly like a young teenage girl.”

The shock of what the doctor had just told him left him without anything to say. He couldn't believe what he was hearing. It had to be a nightmare that he would soon wake up from. Things like that didn't happen in real life, only in fiction or on TV, like *The Twilight Zone*. Yet the reality of the hospital bed and the plaster casts on his legs and the itching in his chest told him that this was reality. He looked at the doctor imploringly. “Doctor, is there anything you can do to change or stop this?”

The doctor shook his head sadly. “No, I'm afraid we have to wait until you finish growing. Say about the time you turn eighteen or nineteen. At that time there may be other options for you to consider but for now you need to adjust to these changes. I have you scheduled to see a psychiatrist this afternoon. It's my hope that he'll help you to accept yourself and answer any questions you may have. We're all here to support you, and we'll do whatever it takes to help you adjust to your new circumstances.”

Randy looked out the window. The news he'd been given wasn't what he'd expected. How could this be? How could his life have been turned upside down so quickly? All his plans, all his hopes had been shattered like a drinking glass falling off the kitchen table onto a hard floor. His tears started to flow and he did nothing to stop them. He wanted to run away and hide but knew he couldn't. The bed now felt like a prison from which he couldn't escape. He looked at his mother. There was pain in her eyes and he knew, without question, they were for him.

Mrs. Le Blanc rose from her chair suddenly and went to sit on the bed beside her son. She reached out and grabbed his hand and held it tightly. Marion then hugged her as much as he could; confined as he was. He rested his head on her shoulder and let the flood of his grief flow, while she held and comforted him. The doctor decided that it was a good time for him to leave.

“Oh, Mom, how could this have happened?” he cried.

“I don't know, Honey,” she said running her hand through his now long hair. Hair that she now realized was much fuller and softer than it normally was. “I'm here for you, my baby. Together we'll work through this. That's a promise.”

“I don’t want to be a girl, Mom. How can I make it stop?” His cry tore at her heart.

She said soothingly as she held his now trembling body, “Honey, don’t do this to yourself. You can’t change what’s happened and it’s not your fault. I’ve already asked everything there is to ask. We’re all going to have to accept this. Whatever you want, my baby, that’s what we’ll try to do but we just can’t change your body back to what it was. I wish to God we could!”

“Hold me, Mom. Just hold me,” he said as he cried. In his mind he wondered why he couldn’t hold his emotions in like he had in the past.

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The orderly wheeled his chair into the office of the staff psychiatrist that afternoon. His mother had not accompanied him because it was explained that the therapist wanted to speak to him alone. He sat sullenly there while the doctor read through the chart. From the nameplate on the desk he saw that the doctor’s name was Alvin Sims.

“You have a girlfriend, Marion?” he asked suddenly without preamble or introduction.

“Not really,” he muttered, more to himself.

The therapist pressed on, “But there is somebody, isn’t there?”

“Sort of,” he replied in a dull monotone, thinking of his infatuation for Karen Dupont.

“And you think that if she saw you now, she’d laugh at you, or do something worse.”

Marion looked at the doctor sitting in a chair beside him. He could see a look of genuine concern in his face. He responded, “Something like that; but not just the girls, the boys too. They would think I’m a freak.”

“Do *you* think you’re a freak?”

Marion didn’t want to be there and the questions were forcing him to think about things he didn’t want to think about. But the doctor was patiently insistent.

“Yes, Doctor. I’m a freak. I’m a boy that’s going to be trapped inside a girl’s body. Even my penis seems to be shrinking. I don’t want to be a girl!” The last was almost a painful cry of pain and agony.

The doctor continued after a moment, “But you know you can’t be a boy now, at least not on the outside. I know this is hard for you to understand and accept but the only other alternative is for you to live as neither. I think the Bible refers to that condition as a eunuch. You might not find that any better.”

Marion didn’t have an answer or reply to the Doctor’s statement so he sat and waited.

Realizing he wasn't going to get a response, the doctor forged ahead. "Okay, Marion. I'm going to give you and your parents some literature I want you to read. They're about other people who've experienced events similar to what you're now going through. I'd like to see you again tomorrow after you've had a chance to read them. I think you'll find that you're not alone.

"Now, do you have any questions for me?" the doctor invited.

Marion asked simply, "Why did this happen to me, Doctor?"

For a moment the Doctor appeared to be lost in thought, and then replied, "Are you a religious person, Marion?"

He shrugged, "You know..."

The doctor gave a wry smile, "Can live with or without it, right?"

"Going to Church makes my Mom happy. You know," he said shrugging his shoulders.

"Well," he continued, "I'm sure you've had the usual catechism courses and such."

"Yes."

"Then to try to answer your question, I don't know why, myself, but sometimes I feel that God doesn't consult us about the plans He has for us. What happened to you may be part of His grand plan for an event he didn't consult with us about. Some people call it 'fate', and I believe the Founding Fathers called it *divine providence*. Whatever you call it, it's part of our lives and quite often results in some very strange occurrences."

All his life Marion had heard that same old line and he simply wasn't going to accept that as an explanation. He said so to the doctor.

"Well, Marion, all I can say, then, is that you may be fortunate enough one day to find out the reasons behind it. I hope so, for your sake. Until tomorrow, then?"

Marion was still sullen but he managed to say, "Okay, Doctor Sims. Tomorrow..."

As Marion was wheeled back to his room by an orderly, the doctor made a notation on the chart and slowly shook his head in a negative manner. But there remained a stubborn look on his face that said he wasn't going to give up.

The sessions continued daily for a week. Marion had sunken even lower into despair and he barely responded to the Doctor's questions. Then one day he was wheeled in and there was an older girl sitting in the office. She was wearing a ruffled white blouse with three-quarter-length sleeves and a denim skirt that came just below her knees with a pair of mid-calf high-heeled dress boots. Her dark brunette hair had been put up into a bun behind her head and her face had been expertly made-up with just a touch of eyeliner to highlight her blue eyes. She smiled at him as he was wheeled in.

The doctor looked up as he came in and smiled as well. "Well, here we are again. Marion, I'd like you to meet Margo Bourque. She's going to be sitting in

with us today. Margo, this is Marion Le Blanc, the young man I spoke to you about.”

She smiled and extended her hand to him with her wrist held in the fashion women use to greet others. “Pleased to meet you, Marion.” Her voice was very pleasant; almost like a small bell whose tone was not too loud or harsh.

He took her hand hesitantly and said, “Yeah, me too.” He noticed that her hand was very soft, smooth and silky, almost like that of a baby. He wondered why she was there.

“Marion,” the doctor began. “For about a week now I’ve been trying to get you to release your feelings with the hopes of getting you to accept your body as it is. You’ve been very resistant and that’s why I asked Margo here today to speak to you. You both have a lot in common and I’d like for you to spend a little time together.”

Marion was sullen, “I don’t think she’d want to be seen with a freak like me, doc.”

The doctor stuck his face in Marion’s and exclaimed, “Look here, Marion. I’ve just about had enough of that. As it just so happens, neither Margo nor I think you’re a freak. You need to get that nonsense out of your head right now. Yes, you’re different. But we’re all different one way or another. You’re going to sit there and listen to Margo.”

Marion felt as though he’d been slapped in the face. His emotions welled up then, as much as he didn’t want them to, and he started to cry. Margo came over to him and dried his eyes with a tissue she’d taken out of her purse. He looked at her closely and her blue eyes revealed a deep concern. There was something else in them as well, something he couldn’t quite figure out.

Her musical voice again spoke, “Are you okay now?”

He nodded his assent.

She stood and turned to the doctor, “I think I’ll take Marion on a little walk, Doctor.”

He nodded as he said, “I think that would be an excellent prescription, Margo.”

She went behind the chair and wheeled him out of the office to the solarium where she took one of the chairs there and faced him. For a long while, she just sat there and let him sulk.

“Tetu! So, you’re going to wallow in self pity,” she stated flatly. “Well, I tried that, bucko, and believe me, it leads nowhere. In fact, my little girlish friend, it sucks.”

“You tried...” he asked, both puzzled by what she said and amazed by how she said it.

“Yes. You see, Marion, I was born a boy and was forced by circumstances to become a girl. Something I didn’t want, either.”

Marion could not conceal the shock of revelation in his face as he looked at the beautiful creature before him. To learn that she had been born a boy did not want to register.

“But you can’t be!” he started to say before a cold reality seized him.

“You would never’ve known had I not told you. The doctor was right, Marion. We’ve got a lot in common. On the outside, I’m a girl. For a long time, I still considered myself a boy. In time I came to appreciate the feminine side of myself and, well, I’m more girl now than boy. So you see, you’re not alone. There are others like you and me in this world. Yes, we’re different, but we’re still human beings with feelings, wants, desires and dreams.”

Marion’s curiosity took over. He had to learn more but there was still a part of him that resisted. A part that still didn’t want to give up the distant hope of changing his body back to the way it had been. What was it the doctor had said? Something about learning to accept his body the way it was. He could feel the beginnings of a flood of emotion but he fought to keep it at bay.

“What was your name before?” he asked Margo.

“Mark,” she said smiling. “But that was a long time ago. I’m nineteen now. When this happened to me, I was twelve. I was in denial for a long time before I saw there was really only one alternative.”

Marion rebutted, “The Doctor said there were two alternatives.”

“Yes,” she said nodding her pretty head. “The other is to remain in neutral, neither boy nor girl. But that’s a dead end. All your hopes, wants and desires have no outlet and you will probably end up all alone. We’re here to help you, Marion, but you have to *want* that help.”

“But I want a family someday. How can I even hope to find some girl who’ll accept me as a husband if I look like a girl? What girl would even look at me unless she was a lesbian?”

“When you find the right girl, you’ll be surprised what love can overcome. Be thankful you still have a functioning penis. I’m not so lucky. You see, mine was so mangled, they had to cut everything completely off. There were times when I missed, it but I’ve learned to accept this body. The surgeons were even able to give me a realistic-looking and, up to a point, functioning vagina. The only difference is that I can’t conceive a child.”

“So you’re all girl,” he said in amazement. “Do you go out with guys and...such,” he said with a little embarrassment.

She smiled at his discomfort. “If you mean do I have sex, the answer is yes. Like I said, I’ve learned to be a complete girl. All you have to learn is how to be a girl on the outside. No one expects you to change on the inside. I know you can do it. You just have to try.”

He reached out and kissed her on the cheek and said, “I keep hoping this is all a nightmare and I’ll wake up, but seeing you and how beautiful you are...it can’t be a dream, can it?”

She shook her head slowly, “No, it’s not a dream, Marion. It’s real. You can make it a living nightmare if you can try to get comfortable with it and turn it into a living dream come true. Now, I think it’s time we get you back to your room.”

As an orderly wheeled him to his room, Marion looked back at Margo. She gave him one last wave and a smile. He sat back in his wheelchair with much on his mind. He had a lot of thinking to do.

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Physical therapy progressed slowly as Marion had to relearn how to walk. Building strength back into his legs was further complicated by the changes in his hips and buttocks and waist, as well as the budding growths on his chest that had shifted his center of gravity. They seemed to grow even bigger with each passing day and their sensitivity caused a constant chafing against the cotton shirts he wore. In time he was given a training bra to support the two girlish mounds and to keep the sensitive nipples from rubbing against his hospital gown.

Slowly and painfully, he continued to progress until the day came when the last of his casts came off. He was still too weak to stand without support and he was fitted with a pair of leg braces that would help to distribute the load. Even so, he spent most of his time in a wheelchair. Then, after many months the doctors said he could go home. By then, his breasts had become a full size A. Despite his outward appearance, he still hadn’t decided on the course he was going to take.

His sessions with Dr. Sims had progressed to the point where he had accepted the changes but there still remained doubts in his mind. At their last session, he asked the doctor, “What if my friends don’t accept me as a girl?”

He replied simply, “Then that’s their loss. If they are truly your friends, they will accept you no matter how you look.”

Doubts still clung in his mind. He wanted to believe that it wouldn’t matter to his classmates but he also knew that there would be those who would never understand; those who feared anything different in their little world to the point of open antagonism. If he chose to become a girl, it couldn’t be where he was known. It would have to be someplace new, a place where no one knew him.

A few days before he was to leave the hospital he received a surprise visitor, Miss Margaret Stack, his second grade teacher.

Marion recognized her as she entered his room. He swallowed hard and became apprehensive about what she would say when she saw what he’d become. She was wearing her usual mid-calf length three-piece suit and horn-rimmed glasses but her hair was not in its usual bun. Instead, it flowed around her face and shoulders in a most pleasing arrangement. When she saw Marion, her eyebrows lifted just a fraction but her face remained unchanged otherwise. Marion knew she’d seen the changes and wondered why she didn’t appear to be surprised or shocked.

“Well, Marion,” she stated without a trace of untoward emotion in her voice, “You seem to be doing better. You look quite healthy in fact, aside from those leg irons you seem to be toting. I suppose you’ll be ready to leave here soon.”

Marion nodded his head slowly, “Yes, Ma’am.”

She sat down in a chair and said, “I don’t know if you’d heard or not but I’ve been appointed the new Principal and I was going to ask if you’ll be ready to return to school soon, but I see there are some...complications that have arisen that may prevent that possibility.”

“I don’t think I could go back, Miss Stack; not like this,” Marion said indicating his new torso and the breasts that sprouted from it. “They wouldn’t understand and some would even be afraid and angry maybe.”

She nodded, “Perhaps you’re right. Marion, I won’t lie to you. Your condition is not unknown to me but I’m afraid you’ll find that your friends and classmates and their parents won’t accept the...new you. Oh, some will, but not all. I know Randy Lane would be the first to embrace you, however, for what that’s worth. But all too many of the others, as you say, wouldn’t understand.”

“Randy,” he asked puzzled. “But he’s always kept to himself or hung out with Robin or Alvin and Frank, usually Robin. Why would he embrace me now?”

She thought about something for a moment and then said, “Perhaps he may not appreciate my telling his secrets, but Randy is also different. You see he keeps hidden the fact that his right leg below the knee was amputated when he was quite young. That’s why he keeps to himself a lot and doesn’t participate in physical sports of any kind. But Randy also hides the fact that he has a genius IQ. He conceals it because he doesn’t want to be made into something special and be forced to leave his friends—and he does have a few—to go to some special school far away. He tries too hard sometimes and thus he has few friends. I think you could be one of those friends.”

Marion nodded, “The rest, they’re afraid of anything different, aren’t they? Afraid because their parents told them to fear anything different, to the point of hatred. That’s why Randy conceals his loss. That’s what your religion has done to them, hasn’t it?”

A slight frown crossed her face but she remained calm and replied, “Marion, you know better! Still, there is some truth in what you say. You’re confusing what people say about religion with what belief in God is all about. You have to understand that *Religion* and *Faith* are not quite the same thing. But then, you’re still quite young to understand any of that.”

“Miss Stack, I know you believe in Faith and God and such but I can’t stomach the hypocrisy and I strongly suspect you can’t either,” Marion spewed out. “If the people would ever learn what happened to me, they’d think it was an act of the Devil and that I’d sinned against God and that my parents had sinned against God.”

Miss Stack chewed at her lips for a moment, deep in thought. She took a deep breath and then replied, “Yes, Marion, you’re right. I won’t try to deny it or give

you any counter arguments. But for what it's worth, your secret is safe with me. As a teacher, I know that what's happened to you has a valid medical reason and is not the work of some evil being. Such thinking belongs in an earlier century. There are some in the church hierarchy who continue to cling to that idea and some communities never escape from that outdated thinking. However, I do believe that God did have a hand in this and His purpose for doing so may not be readily evident to us. I will hold you in my prayers and support you in whatever you decide to do. If you decide to return to our school, I will do what I can to make it easier for you. But, we both know what you're up against and that it won't be easy."

So saying, she went to the bed where he sat and hugged him. Surprised at first, he soon hugged her back and said through the tears that were now flowing, "Thank you for coming."

Miss Stack replied, "You've got to have faith, Marion. I know you'll work this out. If it means you have to become a young woman instead of a young man, then I know you'll do your best. You're one of my students and my students always do their best."

She stepped back after one last pat on his back and then she gently dabbed at his eyes with a tissue. She smiled and said, "Ce sont les larmes d'une jeune fille, Marion. C'est ce que vous êtes maintenant, comme lui ou pas. Je peux le voir dans vos yeux, Mon Cheri. Et maintenant, ce qui est votre nouveau nom pour être? "

He shook his head at her question.

"I think that it shall be *Mary Ann*," she stated matter-of-factly.

He smiled and said, "Mary Ann...Marion. Mary Ann. Yes, that's who I'll be."

"Well," Miss Stack then said, "I have to be going, Mary Ann. Keep your faith, my dear. You will work through this. I know it in my heart."

Before she could leave Marion spoke out, "Miss Stack, I'm sorry."

"Sorry about what, Mary Ann?"

"I had you labeled as one of the...hypocrites. You were always so religious and, well, you seemed to support the priests and what they kept saying about...things."

She smiled and said, "You assumed I wouldn't be able to tolerate differences in others. We come from a small town, Mary Ann, and there are those who have been wedded to their prejudices all their lives. It's almost as though it's been passed down from generation to generation. They've not seen any significant part of this world or know what differences really mean, nor are they aware of the many different cultures in this world. I have. I'm not afraid of what's different as most of them are. When I was young, I traveled the world and saw things. Have you ever wondered why I never married?"

"No, ma'am," he answered puzzled.

"Perhaps you're naïve as well, but at your age you've not seen much of this world. So many others have questioned my choices. The secret is, my dear, that

I'm also different. Different in a way that many suspect but can never prove because I've never given them the ammunition they needed. You are one of the few who will now know that I am not attracted to men. The fact is that I'm what is commonly called a lesbian and I've fought my entire life against it because the Bible says it's wrong. I suppose I shouldn't have fought against it but I've clung to my faith to try to understand why God would want me to be this way. It's been my own cross to bear and my own personal torment. I'm telling you this in confidence so you can cling to that faith. It is one of the only things that will see you through this trial. This is the cross that God gave *you* to bear and he knows you're capable of carrying it. I love you, my dear, as I love all my students, for I've never had any children of my own. My students are my children. If you must cling to something, you can cling to that fact."

And with that, she left Marion/Mary Ann deep in thought about the coming days of his/her life.

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The sun was warm that spring Saturday morning as he sat in his wheelchair on the redwood deck in his backyard. He could see the swelling of the two mounds that poked out the fabric of his shirt. His hips had indeed broadened out. His mother had gotten him a regular bra to wear and it helped to ease the discomfort he felt without it. He still wore his regular clothes, however, even though they were a bit tight in spots. But he knew that the time would come when he would have to start wearing the sissy stuff that girls wore, like nylon panties and makeup and such as well as skirts and blouses that buttoned on the wrong side. He kept his hair long now; it was a constant reminder that he would soon have to make a decision, but he had to be sure that the decision he made was the right one.

From the kitchen, his mother was keeping a careful eye on him to be sure he didn't get too much sun or hurt himself. He looked so small and fragile out there to her. She wanted to just hold him in her arms and tell him everything would just go away and it would be all right, but she knew it never would, not ever again.

Soon, there came a knock on the door. Startled she went to see who it was. Standing there were two of Marion's classmates and neighbors, Randy Lane and Robin Lester. She almost panicked. Randy spoke first.

"Mrs. Le Blanc, can we come in and see Marion?"

She weakly smiled, "I don't know, Randy. He's resting right now."

Robin spoke up, "We promise we won't be long, Mrs. Le Blanc."

"We'd just like to see how he's doing and to let him know we're thinking about him," Randy added.

Randy was a quiet and gentle young blonde headed boy who normally kept to himself. He often spent his free time fishing or hunting and he had spent a few

times with Marion. Robin was Randy's next-door neighbor and the two were often seen during the summer months together in the open fields behind their homes. She was an open young girl with green eyes and long brown hair who had a ready smile for everyone and often went out of her way to help others.

With a sigh she finally said, "Let me check, Randy."

She approached Marion hoping that he would be asleep but he was wide-awake and noticed her approach.

"Marion, Randy and Robin are here. Do you want to see them?"

Marion wheeled his chair around with a smile on his face. "Yes, I want to see them, Mom. It's okay! I'm tired of just sitting here by myself." He knew this would be a test. Would Miss Stack be right and would they accept him as a girl? He had to find out.

"Are you sure, dear?" she said fearfully. "They're bound to see you..."

"It doesn't matter," he interrupted, "I want to see them."

So it was that two of his classmates and hoped-for friends discovered the truth. Marion felt he could trust both of them with his secret based on what Miss Stack had told him.

Randy was the first to pause when he saw Marion. There was definitely something different and he could well see what it was. Robin let out a little gasp when she spotted it a few seconds later.

"Marion! Mon Dieu! What happened?" Robin asked in a rush as she went to his side to hug him.

There followed a long explanation to them that Marion related as he was wheeled into his own room, his mother saying it was time for him to come in.

Randy was the first to react, "Gee, that's tough, Marion. What're you going to do now?"

The concern that was in Randy's face was genuine and Marion saw no trace of fear or hatred, or pity. Robin's hand in his own sent a wave of comfort through him and his doubts melted into resolve. His decision was finally made. Marion looked at Randy pleadingly, "I don't know, Randy. But I want...no, I *need* your help."

"We'll help you anyway we can, Hon," Robin replied, her voice filled with sympathy and understanding as she continued to hold his hand.

"I spent a lot of time on my back in the hospital in traction and after. That gave me a lot of time to think. I want you to find a place I can go to learn to become a girl...a woman."

For a long moment there was silence, as Randy and Robin found themselves speechless.

"Whoa, podner," Randy countered at last, "What makes you think I can do that?" In his mind, Randy knew that he probably could but he wanted to give his new friend a chance to be sure, not knowing of the inner turmoil Marion had al-

ready gone through to face acceptance of his new body, *her* new body, it now seemed.

“Because I know you’re a lot smarter than you let on. You can do this for me. I know it. You can ask Miss Stack for help if you need to. Please say yes.”

The pleading in his young friend’s eyes made it impossible to say no. But before he could answer, Robin interrupted, “Hey, I can do that for you, kiddo. If that is what you really want.”

He turned to her, “It is, but it has to be away from here. You know what the people around here are like. They would never understand because the Vauchons wouldn’t understand. They would behave like God is punishing my parents and me for having done something wrong and would treat me like someone who’s been possessed by a demon. You know that, Robin, and I don’t want to bring any more pain to my parents then they already have.”

Again he turned to Randy, “Please, Randy. There’s got to be a private school or something I can go to for people like me.”

“Do your parents know about this and does Miss Stack know about...?”

“Miss Stack came to see me in the hospital and no, my parents don’t know—not yet,” Marion said, hanging his head down. “I want to tell them about it when I know there is such a place.”

Slowly shaking his head, Randy agreed to do as his friend asked.

They stayed a long time visiting and Robin promised to return the next weekend with a surprise.

True to her word, Robin showed up early the next Saturday morning carrying an overnight case. She briefly explained to Marion’s mother what she had planned and was reluctantly given the go ahead. Marion was delighted to see her.

“Robin,” he said excitedly. “What’ve you got there?”

She smiled, “The new you, kiddo. First, we’re going to wash your hair with some shampoo I brought along. Okay?”

After his hair and been washed and trimmed, Robin worked at separating and curling it. She then set to work on Marion’s face. First, she took a pair of tweezers and carefully plucked at his eyebrows, shaping them into a delicate arch over the eyes. Then, pulling out one item after another, she proceeded to apply makeup to his face, brushing and smoothing as she went. Last, she took a small brush and applied a layer of paint to his lips, slowly shaping and retouching until she was satisfied.

When she’d finished with his face, she took the curlers out and began to brush his hair. She wasn’t an expert in hair care, but she softly brushed it until it curled outward at his shoulders. Then she sprayed it lightly with a can of hair spray.

Before she let him look, she removed several more items from her case: a green satin blouse, a knee-length black polyester skirt and a green silk panty. She explained that the panty would be a snug fit to help tuck his penis and testicles out

of sight. She left the room for a moment while he put them on. Then she gently helped him to put on the rest of the ensemble and after a few final touches she allowed him to look in a mirror.

Marion was excited. He knew he was looking at himself in the mirror but the reflection was that of a little girl about his age. She was not startlingly pretty but she had a certain charm about her; there was gentleness in her face and eyes that projected a sense of pain and helplessness. His breasts gave a pleasing silhouette to the shiny blouse. Slowly he reached up to touch his face and when he saw the girl in the mirror repeat the action, strange new emotions took over and he started to cry.

Robin then hugged him, “Hey, kiddo, don’t you ruin my makeup job. Here.” With that she handed him some Kleenex tissue.

Slowly and gently, he dabbed at his eyes.

“This means I’m a really a girl now, doesn’t it? I can’t ever be a boy again with a body like this, can I?” He turned to look at her.

Robin smiled and hugged him again, “Yes, if that’s what you want. This is an idea of what you’ll look like; I’m not really that good at makeup. We’ll do better next time. So! Now you’re my little sister and I love you. Now, do you want to show your Mom?”

He nodded.

When his mother first saw the change that Robin had effected, she started to cry. She knew that Marion had made his decision and that she no longer had a son but a daughter.



“Mom,” he said. “Don’t cry. This is to be the new me. You know it has to be this way.”

“Yes, my dear,” she said as she hugged him. “I know it does.”

During the ensuing months, Robin made a habit of going to visit every Saturday, sometimes bringing Randy along. Their friendship and time together made them grow close. Robin taught him how to care for his hair and how to apply the different layers of makeup and lipstick, always keeping it at a basic minimum. In time he became proficient at applying it himself.

It was one Saturday when Randy pulled Marion aside to speak to him about his condition.

“Marion,” he began slowly. “I found a place for you to go, as you asked. It’s in Ohio and is a pretty exclusive school. I want you to understand that it’s a place where boys go who, for one reason or another, desire to be girls. Some change their sex completely and others are in the same situation you’re in.”

“I understand,” Marion said quietly.

“I’ll get Dr. Vice to make the arrangements if you want, but I’d wish you reconsider and stay here. We can explain it. I think they’ll understand. They can’t all live in the 15<sup>th</sup> century like Reverend MacCready and the Vauchons.”

Marion looked at his friend and knew he meant well but he surprised Randy when he said, “Just like they would understand if you would ever tell them you’re an amputee or have a genius IQ. That you’re not a complete boy, either; maybe not in the same way as me, but not whole in their little minds and therefore maybe some kind of a freak.”

Shocked, Randy asked, “How did you know that?”

Marion replied, “Why’d you think I allowed you to learn *my* little secret? The majority of the people in this town are hypocrites because their minds have been made that way by their religion and the superior attitudes of the Vauchons who run this town. You know that, as well as I do. No, my new best friend, it’s better that I go away where no one knows what I was or who I am. You’ve been able to hide your secrets. I’m afraid there’s no way to hide mine.”

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The farewell party for Marion was very small. Besides his parents, Randy and Robin were there, as was his Aunt Betty, his mother’s sister. Marion’s father stayed in the background, still not resigned to his son’s fate. There were tears and hugs all around, especially with the young people since they knew it would be a very long time, if ever, before they would see their friend and classmate again.

Before he left with his mother and Aunt to the Greyhound Bus station in nearby Thibodaux, he took Robin and Randy aside.

“Promise me you’ll write. I’m going to miss you. You’ll have given me so much love and support these past few months; I just want to thank you.”

“Hey, kiddo,” Randy said, “we want to thank you. We know it’s been tough and I know there’s no way I can truly understand what you’re going through. Still, we wanted you to know we’re there to support you in whatever you decide to do. You come back here now and let us see how you turned out, okay?”

“I’ll do that,” he said holding onto Robin’s hand.

Robin looked at her friend who now had the appearance of a very prim and proper young lady. She’d spent many weekends and days off helping him to learn how to care for his now long hair, apply makeup and dress like a young lady. His braces had been removed and he got around on his crutches but fatigue kept him in his wheelchair more than he liked.

The blouse and skirt he now wore were a gift from both her and Randy. The shoes were still orthopedic but in a girl’s style to complete the illusion.

Robin then hugged him and said, “I know you’re still a boy, Marion, but I do so want to see you again. We can be girlfriends and sisters, when you get back, okay.”

He smiled at the thought; “Sure, we can have a sleep over one night.”

Startled, Robin said, “Uh, sure, why not?”

He smiled, “I want to thank you both for all you’ve done. I won’t forget either of you.”

Randy had to look away to hide the tearing in his eyes. Robin saw his little movement and drew attention away from him while he composed himself. “Hey, what are you going to call yourself now?”

“Mary Ann,” he replied quickly, using the name Miss Stack had chosen for him. “It sounds near enough and I’ve sort of gotten used to it.” Then he pulled closer to Robin to whisper in her ear, “You love him, don’t you?”

Flustered, Robin whispered back, “Yes, but don’t tell him, please. He has to find out for himself.”

Mary Ann simply nodded with a knowing wink but she knew that it would be a long time before Randy did so.

His composure regained, Randy went over to his friend and knelt by the chair. “You take care of yourself, Mary Ann. Send us a postcard with your new address and we’ll keep you posted on the goings-on around here.”

A tear was now coming to Mary Ann’s eyes. “Thank you, Randy. I love you...” With that, he threw his arms around Randy’s neck. Randy hugged him in return. Robin soon joined the duo in a long group hug.

All too soon the trio disappeared down the road to bring Mary Ann to his/her destiny. Randy and Robin were left holding hands. But before they could leave, Mary Ann’s father called out to him.

“Randy, could I speak to you, alone?”

Randy glanced at Robin, who nodded her consent.

“Sure,” he replied.

As they walked in the large back yard, Randy listened to his friend’s father.

“Randy, I remember a time, not so long ago, when your father brought you home that day from the hospital. I thought then that what you’d gone through was possibly the worst thing that could ever happen to a young boy. I know I’ve never spoken to you about it and I also know you’ve had to overcome some, er, difficulties. You’ve had to put up with fools like me in this little town and I want to personally apologize for that.”

Randy glanced at the older man and saw that he looked tired beyond his years. “There’s no need for apologies, Mr. Matt.”

He shook his head, “No, I have to say this. I never got to know you, Randy. These past few months have taught me a lesson. I know you now. I now know that a physical deformity shouldn’t define what, or who, a person is. These past few months have helped to open my eyes in that respect. I knew that you would keep Marion’s condition to yourself.

“I, uh, also want to thank you for being his friend. I guess I never knew what true friendship was until now. Now...this is not easy... Aside from the fact that I keep asking myself why God would allow something like this to happen, Randy, can you explain to me why he’s doing what he’s doing? Why is it so important for him to pretend to be a girl?”

“I don’t really know, Mr. Matt. There’s no way I could put myself in his place. God knows I’ve tried these past few months. I guess he’s made this decision because to him it’s the logical solution. It would be far easier for him to go through life outwardly as a girl than to try disguising himself as a boy. And I don’t think it’s a pretend situation for him any more.”

“Why did he change? Was it because of me?”

Randy stopped and looked up at the older man, “He hasn’t changed, Mr. Matt. Not down deep where it matters. Only the outer shell has changed. That is something I can attest to. My outer shell changed a little but I didn’t change inside. I’m still the same me I’ve always been. So is Mary Ann. Down deep in your heart you know what I’m saying is true. I may not say it so well, but its how I feel. All you can do is love and support him and respect his choices.”

The older man stood there for a long time before he replied. Randy noticed a bright sparkle in his eyes. To cover, Randy cleared his throat unnecessarily. When he looked back, Matt Le Blanc had regained his composure.

“Would you like to go fishing sometime, Randy?”

“Sure,” Randy said hiding a smile. “Anytime you’re free on a weekend.”

Randy then took the outstretched hand and shook it.

“Thank you, Randy. Thank you, for all you’ve done.”

Randy just nodded his head.

On their way home, Robin broke down in tears. “Oh, Randy, why did this have to happen?”

He hugged her to his side. “I don’t know, Bobbie. I guess its nature’s way. Call it fate if you want or some cosmic joke—maybe it’s a ‘larger plan’. You know what I think about things like that. But, I’ve got a feeling that this is not the solution Mary Ann really wants. She’ll try to go through with it but by the time she reaches eighteen, she may make another decision.”

“But,” she replied, concerned, “The doctor said that to change back could damage his...her heart.”

Randy sighed. “Who knows what medical science may discover in the next six or seven years? Look how far it’s come since the turn of this century. I’m not worried about Mary Ann; she’ll be okay. It’s her father that has taken this all too hard. I think I’ll ask Pop to keep an eye on him for the future. Anyway, Mrs. Le Blanc asked me to keep an eye on him. He wants to take me fishing so I’ll try to keep talking to him. Maybe it’ll do some good, maybe not.”

“You don’t think he’ll do anything drastic do you?”

Randy shrugged, “I don’t know, Bobbie. I just don’t know.”

They continued to walk in silence for a while when Randy asked, “What did Mary Ann whisper in your ear?”

Robin thought quickly and said, “Oh that was just some girl stuff. You wouldn’t understand.”

“Yeah,” he said as he eyed her suspiciously but he said no more about it.



Mary Ann reached out to her mother’s hand, as they got closer to the school. She wanted so very much for her to understand why she was doing this.

“Mom, I love you,” she said suddenly. “I’ll never stop loving you but this is how it has to be. I really can’t wear boy’s clothes any more; they simply don’t fit right. You know that. It’s still Marion inside but the world will only accept me as Mary Ann and I have to live that part as best as I can full-time.”

Her mom smiled wanly, knowing that she would soon have to let go of her only child, who she could not stop thinking of as the little boy she’d held in her arms so many times. But now all she saw was a pretty little girl sitting next to her in the car taking them to the school that was going to train her to be a woman.

As the driver pulled into the gate of Shadow Acres, they saw a sprawling complex of buildings and sporting fields. The driver pointed out the tennis courts, the baseball field and the archery range. He also informed them that there was a swimming pool and indoor basketball courts. The facility was self-sustaining in that it had its own infirmary, cafeteria, library, a small general store as well as riding stables and pleasant dormitories. In all, there were over 400 acres of land

where students could jog or walk through nature trails, ride horses in the pasture or pursue any physical activity they cared for.

Mary Ann was impatient for them to arrive at the administration building where they were to meet Dr. Osgood. Soon enough the car came to a halt; the driver quickly came around to get Mary Ann's wheelchair and helped her into it. He also held out his hand to assist Mary Ann's mother out of the car.

"I'll bring her bags around to her dorm room, Mrs. Le Blanc, while you and the little missy here get oriented with Dr. Osgood," he said as then showed them the direction they should take.

In short order they were seated in Dr. Osgood's office.

"How was your trip, Mrs. Le Blanc?" he inquired.

"It was pleasant, Dr. Osgood, for a bus trip."

"And this must be the lovely young Mary Ann. My, but you seem to have gotten quite a lead on the situation. Did you do that makeup by yourself?"

Mary Ann nodded saying, "My friend Robin showed me how. She also picked out my clothes and helped me in many ways."

Appraising her appearance he agreed. "I've no doubt about it. I take it then you've no second thoughts about this. No doubts in your mind about going through with the program?"

She was firm, "No, sir. This is the best thing for me to do. I look in the mirror and I see a little girl; and that little girl is me. I know Mom and my Dad are not too thrilled with it but it's my choice."

Dr. Osgood then looked to her mother. "Mrs. Le Blanc, I was under the impression that you'd agreed to this."

Mrs. Le Blanc sighed, "We agreed to it, Doctor, but in our hearts we still have reservations. Isn't there any possibility of changing him back into a boy?"

The doctor waited a long time before answering. "Not without some medical risk. I've gone over her medical file thoroughly and the best thing we can do is let nature take its course. There will be daily doses of hormones and such but to all outward appearances, Mary Ann will be all girl. It takes a great deal of courage on her part to agree to learn to be a female full-time. But I think her mental attitude is such that she'll have no problems here. Rest assured, she will receive the best in care and training. Her fellow students are all here under similar circumstances. They will support each other emotionally and, when they graduate, they'll be able to lead full and productive lives free of any mental trauma."

"I didn't ask for a commercial, Doctor," she said noting his use of feminine pronouns. "But, I guess you're right. She never could've gone back to her old school. There would've been too many who refused to understand. I'm entrusting my daughter to you, sir. I only hope she'll be happy here."

“I think she will be,” the doctor said smiling. “When you’re ready, Craig will drive you back to the bus station. If you wish, I can obtain a room for you at one of the hotels in town. You really need to get a good night’s sleep before you leave.”

“Thank you, Doctor, but I really have to be getting back. My husband couldn’t bring himself to come with us and I must get back before too much longer. He’s been emotionally hurt over this, very deeply, and I’ve got to be there for him.”

“Of course,” he replied. “Well, I’ll leave you two alone to say your good-byes and have Craig standing by. Good-bye, Mrs. Le Blanc. Perhaps we’ll see you on visiting day.”

She held out her hand to the doctor, “Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate everything you’re doing for us, and Mary Ann.”

As the doctor left, she knelt beside the wheelchair and held her daughter’s hand. The thought had suddenly come to her that she now thought of her child as her daughter instead of her son. She smiled and said, “I’m going to miss you, baby. You behave yourself now and do what they tell you to do. I’ll try to get your father to come with me next time. It’ll take time and a lot of understanding. I asked Randy to keep an eye on him while we came up here and I know he’s going to do that for you. You were right; Randy is a very smart young man.”

Mary Ann reached out to hug her mother, “I love you, Mom. I’ll write you every day.”

She shook her head, “Don’t make promises you won’t keep, my baby. Soon you’ll have new friends and lots of things to do and you won’t have time. Just write when you can, okay?”

The emotional wellspring of being a young girl with feminine hormones in her body caused Mary Ann to break out into tears as she hugged her mother closely. Mrs. Le Blanc got out a handkerchief and dabbed at the tears in her daughter’s eyes. When she finished, she stood up and said, “I’ve got to go now, baby. I’ll be seeing you. Now you be a good girl.” With that, she quickly left the office and made her way to the entrance where the school car awaited. Before she reached it, Dr. Osgood stopped her.

“Mrs. Le Blanc, I want to reassure you that Mary Ann will receive the very best here. I don’t want you to leave with any other impression.”

On the verge of tears herself, she replied, “I know you will, Doctor. It’s just so hard for me to let her go. I knew this day would come; it’s just that I didn’t expect it to be so soon. She’s still a child. And I’m still her mother.”

The Doctor replied soothingly, “And no one wants to change that. I tell you what. Come when you can on any weekend. I’ll see that you have a few hours together. From the progress I’ve already seen, she’ll easily fall into our program and I’m sure she’ll learn very quickly.”

“Doctor, about the money...”

Dr. Osgood quickly interrupted, “Didn’t Mr. Lane speak to you?”

“Randy? What’s he got to do with this?” she asked puzzled.

“In his original letter of inquiry he asked me about funding and indicated that he knew of an agency that would possibly pay for Mary Ann’s stay here if I could provide him with an itemized schedule. I received word a week ago that all expenses would be paid but that I was not to inquire about the source. So, you have no worries about the expense. Mr. Lane, as I understand it, is quite a remarkable young fellow.”

She nodded, “I think I’m beginning to see that, Doctor.”

“Then you let us worry about such things,” he said as he helped her into the car.

She smiled, “Thank you, Doctor. About your offer, I think it best that she not be allowed any special privileges. We’ll come on visiting days when we can.”

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Dr. Osgood brought Mary Ann to her room in the dormitory and introduced her to her new roommate, Traci Leonards, a young brunette with hazel eyes. Traci was also a recent arrival who’d been sent there by her parents when it was discovered in a physical examination that “his” genitalia was in reality that of a young girl, not of a young boy as had been thought since birth. She seemed to be happy about it as the two exchanged their life stories that first night.

As the days progressed into weeks and the weeks into months, Mary Ann learned what it was to be, not only a woman, but also a refined lady. There were lessons on dress and deportment, subtle makeup application as well as hair care and personal hygiene. She learned how to walk and talk properly, how to sit with a dress and the proper way to position her feet and legs. Special therapy sessions were also on her schedule to rebuild the strength in her legs that were now growing quite shapely. In time she started to wear high-heeled shoes until they became as comfortable as any other shoe she’d worn. She noted that when she wore them, her hips tended to sway with the small steps she was forced to take.

Her weekly routine included sessions with a guidance counselor, in actuality a psychiatrist, who kept very close tabs on the mental well-being of the students. There were no classrooms, except for team sports, lab work and such. Each student was expected to learn on their own, with the help of a qualified staff of tutors versed in a wide variety of subjects. Some progressed faster than others and there was none of the competition so prevalent in other schools. It was Dr. Osgood’s belief that what a child learned by experience was more important than the grades on a report card derived from constant tests and there was a subtle testing procedure to insure that.

Before a year was up, Mary Ann was comfortable with the pretty young girl she’d become. She’d also become quite the hostess, excelling at the task of serving tea and entertaining guests who came on visiting days. By then she’d been freed from the confines of her wheelchair and only had a hardly noticeable limp that would gradually disappear altogether.

The thing that surprised her most, however, was how the silk and satin undergarments made her feel. They felt so warm and comfortable and pleasurable as they clung to her now hairless body. She at first had trouble concealing the resulting bulge in her groin from the erotic smoothness of the material but in time she learned to control those urges. With the continuing dosages of hormones, she didn't get aroused as much and it took a sustained effort to get an erection.

She'd also taken to wearing only skirts or dresses. The nylon hose she wore with them made her feel secure; as they fit her body so much better than a boy's clothes would. The feel of silk, satin and lace against her smooth and hairless body made her feel that she was a girl. She found the constant flow of air under her dresses and skirts also acted as a constant affirmation of her femininity. In time, she found it hard to remember her life as Marion. Her mannerisms and feminine behavior became second nature and any vestiges of male behavior were long since shed along with the boy's clothes she'd discarded and could no longer wear properly anyway.

As much as she tried, Mary Ann's mother could never get her husband to visit. This disappointed Mary Ann but there was little she could do about it. She constantly wrote letters to him that she gave to her mother. He never replied.

One day, her mother finally told her the bad news in a breathless rush, as though what she was saying gave her a bad tasting mouth.

"Honey, your father loves you. But he's been emotionally hurt and he refuses to see you or acknowledge what you are. To him, you are still his son and he won't see it any other way. He tried. Randy has spoken to him many times about it. But I know that his dream has been shattered and he doesn't know how to create a new one. He also puts up a brave front around his buddies at work, saying you're still in recuperation and that you're away at a special school. I know he has to endure the stories of the others about their own boy's exploits and such, and it pains him that he can't talk about you. You know how fathers are.

"He refuses to get counseling, says he won't 'waste his time with no head-shrinker or priest'. I'm afraid he's begun to drink more heavily and I can't do anything to stop him. He's wasting away before my eyes, my baby. Don't hate him because I don't think he'll ever agree to see you like you are. When you come home, he may not even acknowledge you. You have to prepare yourself for that. I wish it were different. I just wish none of this had ever happened."

Mary Ann's heartache over this news was so overwhelming that she cried herself to sleep that night. In the morning she found that her roommate, Traci, had slipped into her bed during the night so that she could hold onto her, like a teddy bear, for comfort. When Christmas came that first year she returned home and found that her father did his best to avoid her. As a result, she cut her visit short and decided that she would not return unless he invited her. She spent all other vacations and holidays with her Aunt Betty after that and her mother spent what time she could with her there.

At the end of three years, Mary Ann was ready for her next step. The school's program called for her to live in the nearby city for a year. During that time she

would have to live as a girl and mix with the residents, patronizing the local stores and shops as a young woman. As part of the program, she would be given a job with one of the local businesses as a part-time secretary. She'd found that she liked the typing, shorthand and accounting courses at the school and she was a quick study, progressing to a very proficient level. Her employer was very much impressed with her work and even offered her a full-time job when she graduated.

But Mary Ann had other plans. She wanted to return home. It had been only the year before when she had returned for the funeral of her paternal grandmother and was forced to remain anonymous by her father. He had little to say to her and she could tell that he had still not reconciled with her condition. Still, she missed her hometown terribly and knew she would at least visit with Randy and Robin before she made any other plans.

But after she graduated and made that visit, she gravitated to New Orleans, which had a subculture of transvestites and female impersonators at the night-spots along Bourbon Street. However, she had no interest in being an entertainer or becoming part of that culture. She started looking for a job that would make use of her talents. With money from a trust fund established by her parents, she enrolled at Tulane University as a business administration major. With the records from the training center, she was given advanced standing in some of her business courses.

There was a problem almost from the very first. When she revealed her true nature or had to take a physical, many companies wouldn't hire her. Prejudice against "his kind" was high and she often found herself taunted by those who considered themselves "normal". It was scarcely little better in college, where she'd been medically excused from the physical education requirements. The administration was not immune to the fear attached to her condition when they refused to let her room in the dormitories. She had to find an apartment off campus to live in. Money had been very tight for a while until she finally managed to get a job with Chancery.

While at college she mostly kept to herself, sometimes attending the football games on Saturday night. She made few friends and rarely took part in extracurricular activities. One boy had asked her out one time but she politely declined, claiming a prior commitment. However, she found that there were times when she wished she'd had made a few more friends on campus. The weekends were often quite lonely for her as she usually found herself stretched on the bed with nothing but a bolster between her thighs for comfort.

From the moment she walked into her office dressed like the girl she'd become, Edna Theriot had shown an almost motherly interest in her. A mature woman of medium height who possessed one of those two-tone hair colors that had turned a beautiful black and white and whose eyes bespoke of tragedy in her life, she listened to Mary Ann's tale and noticed the pain that was very evident in her eyes. Her heart had gone out to the young woman, for that is how she thought of Mary Ann, even though she now knew he was a young man. When Mary Ann had demonstrated her proficiency in typing, Edna immediately gave her a job in the data

processing department as a keypunch operator with a starting salary well above the norm.

By the time Mary Ann graduated from Tulane with a BA in Business Administration, she'd worked her way up to administrator of the data processing department. She was on her way up in the company and Edna kept a very careful eye on what she now considered her protégé and the eventual successor to her job as company comptroller.

But in an about-face, after having attended several progress meetings, Mary Ann had suddenly decided to try to live like a young man and had resumed his legal name of Marion. Edna wanted to question him about it but she held back, knowing that if he wanted to tell her about it, he would. She knew how the field supervisors, who were all men, sometimes behaved around a good-looking woman and that often carried over into the weekly progress meetings. Mary Ann had shown a little discomfort at this in the beginning and Edna assumed it was her reason for changing. But she began to miss Mary Ann who had been so vibrant and alive and brought new meaning into her life.

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Staring in the mirror, Marion let out a heavy sigh as his thoughts returned to the present. How could he even hope to interest a woman in him when his body was in many ways better than theirs? He'd resigned himself to a lonely life. Then Leslie had sparked in him a renewed hope. However, she was the boss's daughter. That thought gave him pause.

Slowly, he went to one of the two closets in his apartment, the one that held his feminine wardrobe. Slowly, he began the transformation from a youthful-looking young man to a very beautiful young lady. He slipped into a ruby red peignoir, chemise and panty set. His legs were soon encased in red silk stockings attached to a red garter belt. He carefully made up his face with the Max Factor makeup on his vanity. He then tied his hair up with a red bow. The illusion was complete. The only congruity was the small bulge in his panties that to the close observer would reveal the truth about his real sex.

The breasts were real, though. On the now rare occasions he went out dressed as a woman, he would wear a gaff to take care of that little bulge but for the most part he only dressed like this in the privacy of his own apartment.

For this night he wanted to be particularly feminine because of that encounter with Leslie. He was experiencing a passion he'd very seldom had in his life. After he'd retired for the night, he experienced his first nocturnal emission.

But before he did that, his thoughts reminded him of one who had been very close to him in the past. A phone call to directory assistance got him a phone number, which he quickly called. Once he obtained another number, he quickly dialed again.

The voice on the other end was one out of his past.

“Hello.”

Suppressing a grin and changing his voice slightly, Marion replied, “How’s my favorite sister?”

After a brief pause, the voice replied, “Who’s this? Mary Ann!! Is that you, doll? God, how long has it been?”

“Too long, Sis. How’ve you been?”

“Oh, can’t complain,” she replied. “And yourself? My goodness you’ve surprised me. Right out of the blue. Where are you? What are you doing?”

Marion proceeded to fill his friend in on his life for the six years since last they met. Robin reciprocated in kind, filling him in on the lives of her family and what she’d last heard of Randy.

“So, what does my little sister really want?” Robin finally asked when they were through catching up.

“I’ve, uh, met someone, Sis. She excites me like you wouldn’t believe. I just don’t know if she’ll... Well, you know.”

“Tell her the truth. If she feels the same way, your appearance won’t matter. She must be someone special for you to feel this way.”

“I just met her a few days ago,” he confessed. “She’s the boss’s daughter and I took her to lunch today. I think there was a mutual attraction, but how can I be sure?”

“Ask her out, you fool. But don’t deceive her. If there’s anything there, you’ll both know it. Trust me.”

Okay, Sis. Thanks for listening.”

“Don’t wait so long to call again. Give me your phone number. I’ll call you.”

Smiling, he did so. Each said their good-byes with a promise to contact each other soon.

The next morning, after taking a long cold shower, he dressed in one of the six specially-made custom suits that would conceal his female breasts, narrow waist and broad hips. He was impatient to see Leslie again.

During that long morning, after he’d finished up his workload, he reflected on a puzzling aspect about Leslie. The two times he’d seen her she’d been wearing business pantsuits. He wondered if she’d ever worn a dress. He also recalled that she had very little makeup on. There was no sign of lipstick, mascara or even nail polish. He recalled that her fingernails were clean and well-manicured but rather short for a young woman. Her hair had been done up in a bun, efficient and out of the way.

There was something else about her that he’d gotten a brief impression of but couldn’t quite place in his mind. He knew it would take some time for him to figure it out.

## Chapter Three

Leslie had finished taking her shower and was sitting idly in front of her vanity mirror. She was slowly brushing her hair allowing it to air dry instead of using a hair dryer. Her thoughts were really not focused on what she was doing, however. Instead they were focused on Marion. He was a mystery to her and her attraction to him made that puzzle all the more compelling to solve.

But there was also, in the back of her mind, the feeling that she was not really comfortable with herself. In her heart, she knew that being a woman was not her first priority. There'd been times when she could no longer fight her desires and she succumbed to her secret passion. Only Lisa knew and she had helped her through that one rough time her junior year. But Lisa was gone. She'd graduated the year before Leslie, leaving her drifting in a sea of uncertainty and confusion.

She considered her feelings to be a demon that possessed her and fought it constantly. She knew that some girls had done it and there was really no social stigma, but she still felt it to be wrong. Her mind constantly fought with her emotions and she knew that she would continue to give in on occasion, like tonight.

Slamming the brush down on the vanity, she stamped off to her closet and removed a small suitcase. She immediately put it on the bed and snapped the latches. Before she opened it, she removed what she'd been wearing and stood naked. Slowly, she opened the little case and proceeded to remove the clothes that lay in it.

First there was a Hanes boy's brief that she quickly pulled on. The feel of it caused a tingle in her loins. She knew that if she continued, she would rapidly grow wetter and wetter, but she was committed. Rapidly, she completed the ensemble: a sleeveless undershirt, a white cotton shirt and tie. This was followed by a pair of Sears brown worsted pants and sports jacket. She then tied her hair into the low ponytail that men wore.

When she'd finished, she could feel her juices flowing and it made her shiver with excitement. She knew from experience that she would soon come and she wanted to savor it. She sat on the edge of the bed and put on a pair of men's black cotton socks and brown loafers. Sitting there for a moment with her eyes closed, she let her body take over. Soon she was lying on the bed writhing with her first orgasm, which lasted for more than a minute. She knew that the briefs had been soaked with her juices but she lay there, unmoving, in the heat of her own spent body passion.

As her heavy breathing slowed down, she envisioned Marion in her mind and her body seemed to renew itself with flame. Once again, her juices started flowing and she had to reach down to her uvula to keep herself in control. But the touch of her hand sent shivers through her spine and she again came in another burst of orgasmic passion. For a long time, she just laid there, her eyes closed and her breathing slowly returned to normal. As she lay there, her thoughts went back in time.

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“Leslie, I want you to go to your room and put on that nice green formal I got for you the other day,” her mom ordered her.

Leslie put down the book she was reading and looked at her mother with an evident dislike for the order. She was comfortable in the Levi jeans and T-shirt she was wearing. She knew that such an order coming from her mom meant one thing—some of Mom’s snooty socialite friends were coming for a high tea and she was to be the centerpiece of attention.

She protested, “Mom, I don’t like those old ladies that come over here. They make me uncomfortable.”

Her mother was determined. “Just the same you’re going to get dressed like a proper young lady and you’re going to behave yourself this time, young miss. How do you expect to get anywhere if you don’t start acting like a debutante?”

Leslie shot back, “I don’t. You know I don’t like those damn fancy dress balls and cotillions or those beauty pageants you put me in.”

“Leslie Chancery!!” her mother exclaimed, “You know I don’t approve of you using such language. Now march to your room and do what I tell you. And fix your face.”

Giving in to the inevitable, Leslie shrugged her shoulders and shuffled off unwillingly to her room. She knew she would go through with it and hate every second but she had let her mother know her feelings about it, not that it had ever done her any good. She was fifteen years old and had spent more time dressed up as a fashion model than any of her classmates. Her mother had been entering her in one fashion show after another since the time she’d turned six.

She detested being on parade all the time. There was very little time to herself and that meant she had no real friends she could play with. Playing was something she’d never been allowed to do. Her toys were the dozens of pageant outfits her mother kept buying and forcing her to wear. She was always made up like some porcelain doll with eyeliner and lipstick that very few girls her age were even permitted to wear. As little good as it did, she protested in the only way she could, by voicing her distaste for what her mother made her do.

Another thing that kept bothering her about those pageants was the way she was treated, not like a person but a robot they expected to perform in a certain manner, all smiles and oozing sex so that the male judges would give her more votes. But that kind of behavior led to other things. Things that few people notice among the melee of backstage mothers, busy stagehands and girls her age caught up in the chaotic frenzy of pageant life. Much of it was the behavior of others that she found rather distasteful but which her mother shrugged off as necessary to winning.

Perhaps that’s what bothered her so much. Her mother had only one aim in mind and the wants and needs of her daughter were not even considered. So Leslie grew to detest the things her mother did for her and made her do.

So she dressed in her petticoated finery and attended the afternoon tea with all of her mother's friends. As she suspected, they made her prance around like a puppet on a string for them to see. Then came the poking and prodding by some of the self-appointed experts to adjust some aspect of her dress. When they finished, she had to sit politely and wait for the social event to pass. However, a younger lady had stayed behind after all the others had left.

"Leslie," her mom called her over, "This is Ms Valerie Crandall. She's a former debutante and owns a beauty salon in the city. She's graciously volunteered to help you with your makeup. It seems we've been using colors that don't quite match with your eyes and skin. So, tomorrow we're going to go over there so you can get a makeover. How's that?"

Leslie sighed, "Okay, Mom, if you say so." She then turned to the young lady and said, "Thank you, Ms Crandall."

Valerie smiled and said, "You're quite welcome, Leslie. We'll see you tomorrow then."

Leslie curtsied and said, "Yes, ma'am."

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The smell that permeated the shop made her want to rub her nose hard to keep from sneezing as she made her way to the chair. A simple makeup job had turned into a full beauty regimen with a hairstyling thrown in for good measure. Leslie's Mom had decided to give her a full makeover. Already she was planning her next afternoon's luncheon to show her daughter off to the city's society matrons.

Leslie grudgingly endured the treatment. After the makeup had been completed, her fingernails had been manicured and polished. Her eyebrows had been enhanced and mascara had been applied to her eyelashes. As Leslie looked at herself in the mirror, she couldn't help but feel that she was being deliberately made to look older than she was. Her lips had been made fuller with the application of lipstick and her cheeks were highlighted with rouge.

So, instead of a fifteen-year-old, she looked closer to twenty-one. Even her bosom had been fitted with enhancers to give her a fuller look. Her mother smiled at the results even though Leslie hated the foreign objects that were now taped to her chest. She wanted to rip them off but the girl who applied them said the tape would hold for a week. A groan almost escaped her lips when she'd heard that bit of news.

Valerie and her Mother had watched the entire transformation and were holding a rather prolonged conversation. Leslie was to find out what part of that conversation was all about. When they'd finished with her and were about to leave, Leslie's mother said to her, "Leslie, I think it's time you learned how to handle your body better than you have. We're going to enroll you, for a little while, in a ballet class Ms Crandall sponsors."

Leslie's eyes flashed red when she heard that but she knew better than to protest in public. She also knew her mother had deliberately broken the news to her in public so she wouldn't argue about it.

For three months, instead of enjoying her summer vacation, she was forced to go twice a week to dancing lessons. After a while, she had to admit to herself that she did get some benefit from the classes but she still resisted going to them. One day, Ms Crandall spoke to her about it.

"So, Leslie," she began in a friendly fashion. "How are you getting along with your dance class?"

Leslie, as usual, shrugged and said, "So, so."

"What's wrong, Leslie?" Valerie asked, noting her dejected attitude.

Leslie seized the opportunity. "Can I be honest with you, Ms Crandall?"

"Yes."

"I don't like being a debutante. I hate beauty pageants and I detest learning how to dance. Sometimes I wish I'd been born a boy so I wouldn't have to go through all this. Maybe my father would pay more attention to me." Her outburst had come out in a rush of pent-up anger.

For a long moment, Ms Crandall said nothing, then she put her arm around Leslie and asked, "Have you told your mother any of this?"

"No," Leslie said shaking her head. "She wouldn't listen, or understand."

Soothingly, Ms Crandall said, "You are her only daughter, Hon, and she wants to give you the same things she experienced. Have you ever had any fun with any of this?"

"No," she replied again, "Mom never let me have the fun or friends or parties I wanted."

"No friends from school?"

"I go to a private girl's school in Peekskill, New York. Any friends I made there are not from around here," she answered.

Ms Crandall seemed to think for a second then she said, "So I take it you've never had a slumber party or spent time with other girls your age."

"Mom wouldn't allow it," Leslie said emphatically but with a timbre in her voice that said she would dearly have loved to experience just such a party. "Even the dorm rooms I live in are for one person. I've never had a roommate or any really close girl friends."

A smile crossed Valerie's face as she said, "Then let me talk to your mother. I'm sure we can arrange something for you."

Leslie wanly smiled at the older lady, wishing in her heart that she could arrange it.

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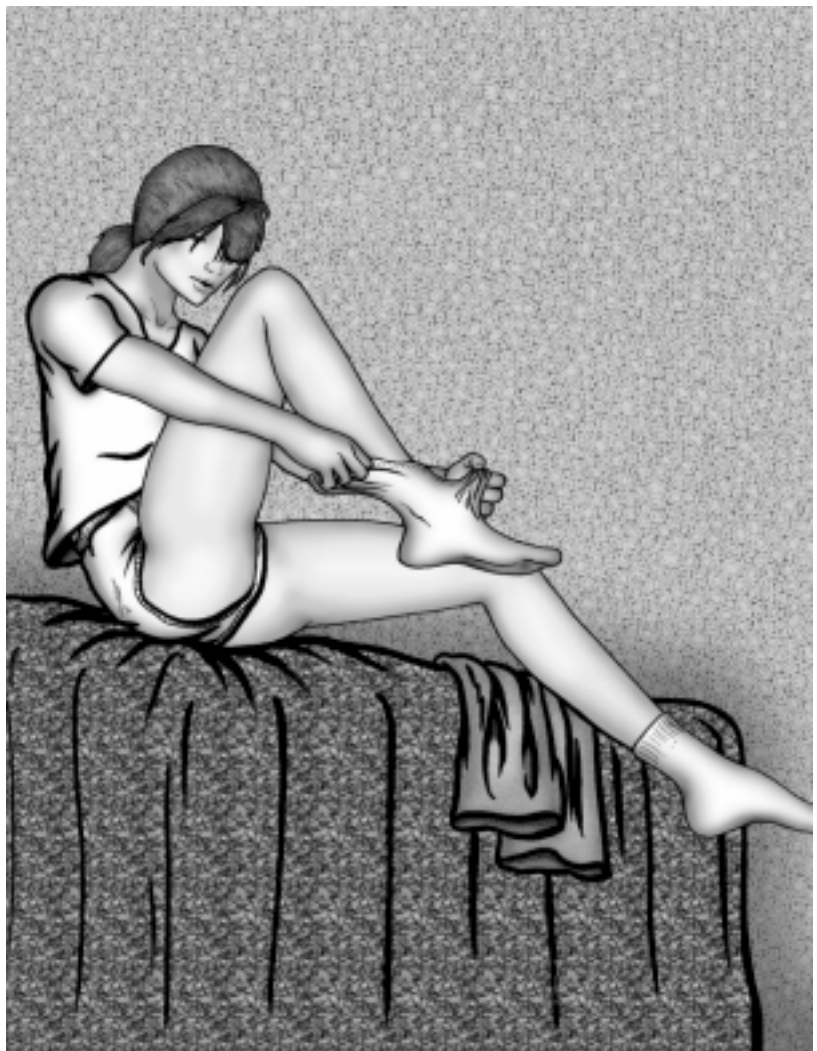
The party was held at the Gretna residence of Ms Crandall. There were ten other girls there, all students of the ballet school. Valerie had arranged the party as a get-together for certain select students. Leslie only recognized Penny Duralde, daughter of her Mother's closest socialite friend. They'd had a passing acquaintance over the years and thus gravitated towards one another as the party began.

Penny had long honey blonde hair and was slightly taller than most of the other girls and quite buxom. She had been in many of the same pageants as Leslie and it was apparent her own mother was also grooming her for New Orleans society. But, unlike Leslie, she attended local schools and had a large host of friends in her own social strata.

For the first time in her life, Leslie was able to join in on the chattering of teenage girls at an all-night fun party. Each girl had dressed in flannel pajamas, which singled out Leslie because all she ever wore were silk or satin pajamas that her mother purchased exclusively.

Penny made a suggestion that they all strip down to their panties and bras. The girls agreed and soon they'd discarded their pajamas. Leslie discovered that she was a bit shy around the others but Penny took her hand and led her to join the others who'd formed a circle on the floor to tell stories.

As the night wore on, Leslie became more comfortable, although she felt that Penny had been very possessive of her. Her hand was on her body the entire night. First it encircled her back and later it was on her leg, followed by a light grip on her arm. And when it came time for them to get some sleep, Penny made it her priority to lay in the bed next to her. Leslie could feel the warmth of Penny's body; it gave off a heat she was unaccustomed to.



During her slumber, she could feel the older girl's arm encircle her upper body and lightly cup her left breast. The sensation she felt at her touch was almost erotic and she felt her body shiver at the contact. A soft purring sound could be heard as she contentedly slipped into an even deeper sleep. The comfort she felt made her wish that the night would never end.

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She had just turned sixteen and was attending the birthday party that her mother had deemed appropriate for the occasion. Leslie thought it was a bit too much and had simply wanted a small family party instead of dozens of society mothers and their daughters and sons. She knew very few of the other girls and boys and was not very comfortable with them. The girls all had the same pretensions as their maternal parents and were often quite expert in the backstabbing and cattiness that went with being part of the "social elite".

One girl, a year or so older than Leslie, had designs of her own. As the party was in full swing and the mothers were all engaged in the conversation of grown-ups, she had spotted Leslie trying to fade into the background. She quickly approached her.

"Leslie," she began, "such a charming party. I do hope that this means you're ready to join our sorority, my dear."

Leslie looked with mixed emotions at Penelope Duralde, daughter of Dr. Benjamin and Francesca Duralde. She was the current leader of the Omega Mu sorority. Her position in the social order was at the apex and she never let anyone forget it. Any girl who hoped to be part of the social scene had to first get the approval of Penelope and her clique. No one was asked to join the sorority without Penelope's permission. Leslie detested the way others clung to her social petticoats for any favors she might toss their way. Personally, though, she kind of liked the older girl. She recalled fondly the night of the slumber party when she'd spent some time with her.

She smiled at the older girl and said, "Hello, Penny. Long time no see."

Penelope simply smiled in her usual manner but her eyes had narrowed just a touch. "Come, now, Leslie, I've told you my name is Penelope. We must observe proper decorum, you know. After all, we are the elite of the elite here and we must not forget that."

"Yes, Penelope," Leslie smirked.

"Leslie," Penelope said with a mocking maternal patience, "you must stop this childish behavior. After all, your mother was once part of our little group. We've agreed to take you on as a legacy but you must act accordingly. After all, we can't just let any old ruffian in, you know."

Leslie replied in kind as she said, "Perhaps the group may find me a bit rough around the edges and may not wish me to be in it. Or perhaps I could avail myself

of your expertise in the matter to possibly learn more...proper methods of behavior.”

“Perhaps,” Penelope replied cautiously. “Perhaps we could retire to your room for some preliminary instruction.”

Leslie suddenly became cautious as she replied, “Perhaps.”

Once there, Penelope daintily sat on the bed and invited Leslie to sit beside her. “Come, Leslie, I won’t bite.”

With just a little apprehension, Leslie sat beside Penelope. Then the older girl reached over for Leslie’s hand and gently held it in her own, slowly caressing it as she did.

“You know, you are quite the beauty, Leslie. Not gorgeous, mind you, but very pretty. I just don’t understand why you don’t want to be a part of our group. Your mother has worked so very hard for you, you know.”

The tone of Penelope’s voice bothered her. She was not being snide or petty in her remarks. It was as though she had an honest interest in Leslie’s welfare. Still, Leslie was suspicious.

“I don’t like all these fancy trappings, Penelope. I never did like them, they just aren’t me. I think I told you that when we had that little slumber party at Ms Crandall’s.”

Penelope raised her eyebrows a bit and said, “Just what *is* the real you, Leslie?”

Leslie pursed her lips and shrugged. “I don’t know. I never had any real friends or playmates growing up. All I’ve ever known is the different things my mother keeps dragging me to. I never had a chance to find out exactly what it is I do want. I only know what it is I *don’t* want. I’m sorry, Penelope, I just can’t join your ‘little group,’ as you call it. I just wouldn’t fit in.”

“Perhaps,” Penelope stated. “But my mother made me promise to try. She feels she owes it to your mother.”

Penelope released Leslie’s hand and stood up then. She took a few steps away from the bed, then turned. “Leslie, I like you. I wouldn’t admit that to the others, but I think you are a girl who has a mind of her own. You know the real reason you wouldn’t fit in?”

Leslie just shook her head.

“You’re too much of a tomboy and you’re too strong-willed to be one of us. Yes, I know you give in to your mother, but you still keep up the protests and you let us all know about it in your manner. You stand defiant, even in the most elegant gown your mother can find. I know you don’t mean to, but any grace or charm you may have takes second place to that martial look you always project; like you’re ready to take on the whole bunch of us in a battle royale.”

Leslie looked up at Penelope and saw that she was serious. “I can’t help it. Penelope, can I tell you something in private?”

“You better not,” she said quietly, “I might be tempted to use it against you.”

“I think I’ll take my chances, Penny,” she replied quickly.

Penelope just smiled.

“Penny, there are times when I wish I’d been born a boy instead of a girl. Perhaps then my father might’ve paid more attention to me and I wouldn’t have had to put up with all these blasted beauty pageants, teas, cotillions and balls. I hate them. I hate dressing up and I hate all this fuss over nothing.”

Penelope resumed her seat by Leslie and put her arm around her shoulders. “Leslie, I almost wish I had the power to give you your wish because there’ve been times when I felt the same way. I put on a bold front with others but you continue to openly defy. I’d like to show you something...”

With that she reached out to Leslie’s face with both hands and held it motionless while she slowly moved to touch Leslie lips with her own. Slowly and lingeringly, she kissed the young girl, who, surprisingly, gave in to the unusual ministrations. Leslie’s arms quickly encircled Penelope’s neck and she pulled her forcefully into her mouth and began to explore the older girl’s mouth with her tongue, only to be met by Penelope’s prying tongue. Hungrily, they explored each other as they grasped each other in the throes of a rapidly building passion Leslie had never known before.

The girls continued to embrace each other even when they broke off their passionate kiss. Penelope had moved her head to Leslie’s breasts and was furiously licking the exposed portions, sending shivers through Leslie.

“Penny, why are you doing this?” Leslie finally asked when she could catch her breath.

“I wanted to do this to you for so long, my dear, ever since that slumber party you mentioned. I spent the night next to you because I was drawn to you. Don’t you know that I’m a lesbian?” she asked simply. “I’ve wanted your body for a long time. Every time I saw you at one of the formal balls, I’d get positively wet. Didn’t you know?”

“No, Penny,” Leslie replied. “I didn’t know. But we can’t continue like this. The party...”

Penelope released Leslie and composed herself. “I want you, Leslie. I need you and I *will* have you. Join our club and I can arrange with your mom to have sleepovers and we can have a little fun together.”

Leslie was uncertain as she said, “But it’s wrong, Penny. We shouldn’t be doing this.”

“Don’t tell me you didn’t enjoy it, honey. I can tell. You just leave it to me.”

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The night had been a long one; neither of them had really slept. Both girls stripped before getting into bed and Penny spent a long time snuggling against Leslie's exposed breasts, teasing them until the nipples hardened from anticipated pleasure.

"Oh, Penny," that feels so good!" Leslie said as she felt the older girl's tongue teasing her nipples.

Penny responded by lightly nipping them with her teeth.

"Oh, yes!" Leslie moaned. "Keep doing that, Penny."

Penny looked up at Leslie's face from her position at her left breast. She then slowly moved over the soft supple body under her and settled herself so that she could caress the passion-spread lips with her own. Quickly, the two tasted each other's mouths as their tongues probed with urgency. As they did so, their hands rapidly explored each other's bodies. Penny ground her hot pussy into Leslie's own increasingly wet cunt, until she felt Leslie's legs encircle her waist to pull her even closer.

Throughout the night, the two girls spent hour upon hour of lustful contact until they were spent from their carnal exploration and experimentation.

The morning found them still clinging to one another, under a soft satin sheet. Leslie moaned with pleasure as she slowly awoke with Penny's arms still around her.

"Good morning, Penny," Leslie said smiling. "I had a very good time last night."

Penny slowly opened her eyes and leaned over to kiss Leslie on the forehead. "As did I, my sweet. God, but your cunt is deliciously sweet. I knew it would be. I could eat you forever, Leslie."

"Penny," Leslie then said with some concern, "as much as I enjoyed being with you last night, I don't think we can continue doing this. I'll be going back to school soon."

In response, Penny pulled Leslie closer to her and said, "Then we'll spend what time we have left. I want you, Leslie, even more so after what we had last night."

Leslie knew she had to put a halt to this, for as much as she'd enjoyed her rendezvous with Penny, she knew nothing could come of it in the future.

"Penny," she began, "I do love you and what we had last night, I'll remember always. I truly don't want to hurt you after that kind of experience, but the truth is I don't think this will work out between us. You know yourself that Mom wants me to be a damn debutante and a Carnival Maid someday. Your parents want the same thing, don't they?"

"Yes," Penny acknowledged slowly.

"Then we can't continue like this. Someone is bound to find out. Where would that put all those plans?"

Slowly, Penny nodded and said, "You're right, my love. I'll wait for now but one day I will expect a repeat engagement."

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"But, Mom, I don't *want* to be in the parade!"

The teenager dressed in the ante-bellum dress, complete with at least four petticoats that constantly rubbed against her legs, was standing in her mother's conservatory and obviously angry about something.

"But, Darling," he mother soothed, "you were chosen to be one of the maids. That's quite an honor."

Leslie was still furious. "I won't do it. *You* might consider it an honor but I'm not interested in this folderol and you know it. I never wanted to be a debutante."

Exasperated by her daughter's stubbornness, Thelma Broussard Chancery, ex-debutante and paid-up member of New Orleans society, grew just as stubborn.

"Leslie Chancery, you will do what I tell you. I didn't sweat and strain for three years to see you throw this opportunity away. You're my daughter and that means you will become part of New Orleans society."

"But that's not *my* dream, Mom. That's *your* dream." The young girl was still adamant.

Mrs. Chancery sat back in her chair and surveyed her graceless daughter standing there in the frock that fit the theme of that year's Comus parade. For years she'd desperately tried to make a refined lady out of her only daughter but there was too much of her father in her. She possessed a rough and unrefined nature that was more interested in practical pursuits than the arts.

Suddenly tired of the battle with her offspring, Thelma pulled out her ace. She exhaled noisily and said, "This is so exhausting, honey. I'm not feeling very well. We'll talk about it when I feel better. Go change now and ask Marie to bring me my medicine."

Marie was Mother's personal maid; Leslie dutifully passed on the message as she made her way to her room to shed the disgusting garment from her body. As she changed, she knew she would go through with it, not because she wanted to, but because it would keep peace in the family and not put a strain on her sickly mother.

Even though she was indeed very sickly, Thelma still had all the poise and grace of the debutante she'd once been. When it came to promoting her daughter with teas and cotillions and afternoon brunches, she spared no expense. Leslie usually gave in but got even by being as clumsy and unrefined as she could get away with. She looked more like a tomboy dressed in fancy ball gowns than a prim and proper young lady of New Orleans society.

So, she got on the float and went to the ball that night at her mother's insistence. The party was a grand and gala affair at the Municipal Auditorium. At mid-

night, the Kings of Rex and Comus met to end that years Mardi Gras celebration. When Leslie arrived at home, she almost ripped off the dress and threw it carelessly on the floor, took a long shower and went to bed.

The next morning, Thelma Chancery was found by Marie to have passed to the Great Beyond in her sleep. The funeral was held at St. Louis Cathedral a couple of days later and the cream of New Orleans society was there. Leslie endured it with her father, who was as uncomfortable with New Orleans society as she was. The condolences were many and sincere but Leslie felt herself empty from the lost opportunity of not having a normal childhood with a loving mother. She felt a loss far deeper than she expected she would have.

So it was after her mother's death and she was back at her school in New York that she completely stopped wearing dresses and started to wear slacks or pantsuits. As far as her breasts were concerned, she'd never grown large in that area, topping off at an A size cup. She even trimmed her hair from waist-length to neck-length, normally wearing that in a simple pageboy cut over her ears, which she considered unshapely. She even dispensed with all but the barest of makeup.

Her father, seeing these changes in her, decided that she would go to Vassar, an all girl school. He figured she would pick up some of the habits of the other girls there. But the school went coed in 1969 and he gave up about her learning how to act like a proper young lady.

In college, she was assigned a two-person dormitory room with a girl one year ahead of her. Lisa Brown was a tall, gorgeous brunette. Her complexion was without blemish and her legs were tall and shapely, almost like a dancer's. She had a very narrow waist and her size C breasts poked out like daggers against the tight blouses she preferred. When Leslie first saw her, her breath had been taken away and she didn't know why. She was soon to find out.

Even though she tried to maintain her tomboy image, there were many times when the female hormones within her had their way and she would break down and cry for apparently no reason whatever. And she was definitely not immune to Eve's monthly rhythm. She could be positively bitchy at such times.

Around midterm that first year, she'd been lying face down in her bunk bed after a crying spell. Lisa walked in and saw her lying there with a tearstained face and red eyes. After she dumped her books on her desk, she sat on the bed next to Leslie and put out her hand to take her arm. Gently, she pulled the smaller girl to her bosom and comforted her.

"You want to tell Auntie Lisa about it, Hon? This time of the month can be such a bitch, can't it? But I'm here for you now. Just cry all you want to. No one is going to blame you."

And she did, releasing a stream of tears that she knew went back to the death and funeral of her mother. When she finished, she felt spent and was ready to go to sleep. But Lisa wouldn't let her do that without taking a shower first.

It was a much-refreshed pair of girls who returned to the dorm room. Leslie hugged her roommate to express her appreciation. Lisa, surprisingly, hugged her

in return, then helped Leslie into bed without bothering to dress in pajamas or nightgown. Her panties were all that she wore, with the obligatory pads necessary for “that time of the month”.

Dreamily, she snuggled under the covers and saw that Lisa was also removing her robe and moved into the bed next to her. The warmth of Lisa’s body next to her own seemed so right and they snuggled next to one another in the bed until sleep overcame them both.

In the morning, upon awakening, she was still entwined in the warm body of Lisa and it made her feel safe and comfortable. She wanted to stay like that forever. When Lisa awoke, she looked at Leslie and smiled, “Feel better this morning?”

“Yes,” Leslie replied, then gave the older girl a hug. “Thank you for last night. I’ve been so damn lonely here.”

“Well,” Lisa said as she threw back the covers and pulled Leslie out of bed with her, “a new day awaits and we’d better get to class. See me in the Union at noon, okay?”

Nodding her assent, Leslie then prepared for the morning classes. When she arrived at the Student Union at noon, she saw that her roommate was seated with three boys. The shock of having boys at a formerly all girl school had surprised her initially but she’d grown used to it. Lisa spotted her and waved for her to come over.

“Leslie, I want you to meet three of the horniest guys on campus, Frank Cramer, Jacque Martin and Bill Trammel,” she said indicated each in turn. “Guys, meet Leslie Chancery of the New Orleans Chancery’s. She’s looking for a friend. Any takers?”

Leslie was shocked by Lisa’s shamelessness, but when she caught the twinkle in the other girl’s eyes, she realized at once that she’d been pulling her leg as a way of breaking the ice. Catching on, she smiled in return and said, “Pleased to meet you fellows.”

Each one exchanged pleasantries with her and after the usual round of questions and answers, Lisa pulled her to one side, “Hey, your radar isn’t turned on, gal. What’s wrong?”

Leslie replied, “I appreciate what you’re trying to do, Lisa, and those guys are okay. Well, it’s just that I’m not really interested in guys.”

A look of surprise came to Lisa’s face as her eyes widened just the slightest. She reached over and patted Leslie’s hand and said, “I think I see. We’ll talk tonight, okay.”

Leslie wanly smiled, “Sure.”

That evening, after they’d finished their homework assignments and had studied the next day’s assignment, Lisa turned to Leslie and asked, “Okay, honey, let’s have it.”

Leslie sighed and said in a rush, “Well, when I said I was lonely, I meant that I was missing the friendship of girls my own age. Most of the girls here are refined young ladies. I never did go in for that sort of thing. I guess I’m more of a tomboy and it’s hard for me to fit in. And guys like the jocks you introduced me to today just don’t interest me.”

Lisa’s eyebrows went up and her eyes widened as she asked, “Are you saying you’re more interested in girls, like a lesbian?”

The word spoken out loud shocked her but she had to admit that it was the truth, much as she might try to deny it. She simply nodded her head.

Lisa got up from her chair and helped Leslie to her feet. She then led the way to the bed. Together they sat as Lisa continued to hold her.

“You’re young yet and, from what I’ve seen, you’ve led a pretty secluded life. Let me guess, you been at girls boarding schools most of your life, right?”

Leslie simply nodded in the affirmative.

“I thought so. You’ve got to let yourself learn how to explore other options. Did you, uh, have a lover at any of those schools or at home?”

Leslie swallowed the saliva that had accumulated in her mouth, “Yes, a few,” she admitted. “It was only petting and snuggling mostly. There was a girl I knew in New Orleans. We did a little exploring once.”

“Honey,” Lisa chuckled softly, “that’s not being a lesbian. Girls do that sort of thing. It’s perfectly natural. Didn’t your mother ever explain that to you?”

Leslie started to cry and Lisa held her closely until she’d cried herself out. “My mom was more interested in making me a society debutante and I resisted. She never explained much to me about the ways of life. When I was at home, I was never allowed to have anybody over, not that I had any friends. There was one time I was allowed to sleep over with that other girl I spoke of.”

“You poor doll,” Lisa said in sympathy. “Well, you’re in Lisa’s hands now and we’re going to rectify some of the oversights in your education, okay?”

Leslie nodded and smiled in appreciation.

During the weeks that followed, Lisa introduced her to other girls in the dormitory and around campus. In time, there were six or seven girls who became close and they spent a lot of time after class studying, playing and just hanging out in the Student Union. Then one Friday, they surprised her by coming to her dorm room and holding a pajama party. She’d never been happier in her life.

It was during the second semester of her freshman year that she received another surprise from Lisa. It was a Friday night and she’d just returned from taking a shower, only to find that Lisa was waiting for her in a short red baby doll sans panties. A look of inquiry crossed her face as Lisa approached her. “Just relax, honey. We’re going to find out something tonight, okay?”

Leslie simply nodded as she let her roommate guide her to the bed. Lisa slowly and sensuously removed her robe and lowered her on the bed that had already

been turned down. She then proceeded to kiss Leslie's breasts, flicking her tongue against the increasingly hardening nipples. Slowly, she worked her way over just about every inch of the young girl's body until she reached the soaking pussy lips.

Leslie just lay there, basking in a new set of emotions and feelings. She was being made love to by her roommate, another girl. The memories of her one interlude with Penny paled by comparison. She was excited beyond description and when Lisa thrust her tongue against her clit, she jumped involuntarily with a shock of passion and lust she never knew she was capable of. Then that same tongue was probing into her vagina itself. She wanted to hold off and savor the experience but the excitement was too much. She arched her back and came like she'd never come before, over and over for almost five minutes.

When she stopped shaking, she discovered that Lisa was naked, holding on to her and had ground her pussy against hers. That caused her to come again. She thought that her juices would not stop flowing. But she slowly regained her composure and found that she was holding onto Lisa and had snuggled against the older girl's breasts. She knew then what she wanted to do.

Slowly and gently, she released her hold and sat up. Lisa started to rise with her but was gently pushed back. Then Leslie began to do to Lisa what Lisa had done for her. When she came to Lisa's pussy, she hungrily stuck her tongue in and licked at the walls of pink flesh and was soon drinking the cum juice that was flowing freely. She greedily swallowed each droplet as the older girl continued to come and come and was disappointed when there was no more to be had.

After she'd finished, Lisa reached out and pulled Leslie to her. Their lips soon met, their tongues exploring hungrily. Leslie found the taste of her roommate's mouth to be unlike anything she'd ever experienced before. She also was thrilled at the contact their breasts and pussies made with one another. She didn't want this night to end. Eventually, the two girls' spent bodies collapsed, still clinging to one another.

The alarm clock startled them early the next morning and Leslie found herself still clutching Lisa. When she looked at the older girl, she saw her smiling. "You could pass for a lesbian, lover. I'm inclined to believe that now. You were marvelous last night. I've never had so many climaxes before."

Leslie was reluctant to ask, but after the performance of the night before she simply had to. "Lisa, are you a lesbian?"

Lisa smiled and hugged Leslie to her, "No, precious, I'm what is known as bisexual. I enjoy having sex with either men or girls. But after last night, I'm not so sure anymore. God, but I never had an orgasm like that with a guy. You've got talent, girl, and you're all mine."

Thus began a three-year affair between the two. Even though they had other friends who still came over for pajama parties, the two reserved Friday nights for their special lovemaking. When Lisa graduated, Leslie was almost devastated. She eventually overcame her loss and experimented with other girls, but none ever had the intensity of lovemaking she shared with Lisa.

One day while she was shopping for clothes, her eyes kept returning to a mannequin clothed in a brown worsted pair of pants with matching blazer. A flush came over her as she envisioned herself in that suit. The urge to wear it became overpowering. Finding a sales clerk, she managed to make the purchase, along with a boy's dress shirt, cotton briefs and sleeveless undershirt.

That evening alone in her room, she stripped naked and slowly dressed in the ensemble she'd purchased. The sensation of crossdressing made her feel excited and she could feel her cunt juices flowing freely. Her arousal escalated with each passing moment and she found her hand had insinuated itself into the pants and briefs to tweak her clitoris. As she rubbed it with her fingers, she began to shake and shudder until she finally climaxed in every flowing waves of sexual satisfaction. Later she found she'd collapsed on her bed and her body was thoroughly soaked with the sweat of her passion.

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Her eyes opened and she was looking at the ceiling. Her hand slowly brushed against her upper torso and she encountered the suit she was still wearing. She jerked to a sitting position and saw the wet spot that encircled her groin. God, she hadn't realized how much she had come. Quickly, she undressed and used the apartment's washer and dryer to clean the soiled clothes. In time, they were back in the suitcase and were safely ensconced in her closet.

A warm shower made her feel almost human after her wanton abandon in the bedroom. A sense of guilt and shame hung heavily over her but she knew that would not stop her the next time she felt the urge. Those urges were coming all too frequently of late.

## Chapter Four

With the nightlife that thrives in the French Quarter, the casual observer would assume that the city of New Orleans never sleeps. Yet as the sun slowly makes its way over the canyons of buildings and streets, it finds that the city is indeed in slumber, if only for a short while. There is peace in the relative quiet at that time of day and even birds can be occasionally heard. The air seems to be a bit crisper and cleaner. Soon, other sounds intrude into this calm, as streets are swept and cleaned by the giant behemoths of the sanitation department. Their swirling brushes against the concrete curbs can be heard for blocks around, whisking away the debris of the day and night before.

Next comes the sounds of street traffic as vehicles begin to increase in frequency along the byways of the city. At times they are coupled with the sounds of jackhammers and other machinery in their constant battle to maintain the infrastructure of the city. Streets are constantly dug up for sewerage work and other utility maintenance. The resulting barricades and warning signs are as much a

part of the city as Bourbon Street bars and the cobblestone streets in the French Quarter.

As the sun inches its way ever higher in the sky, the sounds of busses and trucks commingle with the automobiles carrying people to their places of work. Parking garages and lots open their gates to welcome the daily influx of vehicles in public and private areas alike. Daily delivery vehicles deliver their loads of fresh produce, milk, fish, bakery goods, daily newspapers and laundry to their destinations.

Slowly, the city stretches and comes to life after its brief slumber. The people who live and work there accept the resulting sounds as a matter of course and they hardly notice it. Even the occasional police or fire siren garners little notice. It is all part of the fabric the people have grown accustomed to. A garment they only notice when something out of the ordinary happens.

Morning found Marion in his bedroom, getting suited for the day. There was a lot on his mind and most of it revolved around Leslie. He knew that he would have to tell her the truth about himself, but for the first time in a long while he felt unsure of himself around a woman. It would've been easier had he not decided to dress like a man. The clothes he wore made him feel unsure to begin with. There were too many years when he'd lived like a woman and found comfort and security in that lifestyle. He had been given an unwelcome choice and this continued to bother him.

At work he went through the morning routine by rote, not really being able to concentrate on specifics. As the morning progressed, he found that he was placing more than the usual amount of work in his "incomplete" box. Suddenly, angry with himself, he pulled most of it out and forced himself to complete what he could, setting aside what he couldn't. Slowly, the hands on the clock inched forward until, after what seemed like an unbearably long day, they reached 11 o'clock.

He made his way out of his office and to the elevator. As the doors opened, he saw Leslie standing there. Her appearance startled him. She was wearing her usual pantsuit but her face had the traces of an inexpert but passable makeup job. She'd tried to highlight her eyes but had used evening makeup that was far too bold for daylight wear. After a moment's pause, he entered the elevator and stood next to her. "Bonjour, mademoiselle Leslie, comment ca va?"

"Ca' va bien," she said tentatively. Then she looked up at him and said, "That's right, isn't it?"

He smiled and said, "Mais oui, mon cher petite."

She grinned, "I'm afraid I used up all my French today. Maybe you could give me lessons."

The elevator suddenly opened and Marion saw they were in the lobby. He led the way out as he said; "I'm fair to middling myself in the language. And it's 'C-ajun'. French is what they speak in France."

"What's the difference?"

He looked at her in amazement. As a resident of Louisiana, how could she ask such a question? Then he remembered that she'd spent most of her life away at schools. The heritage and knowledge of Louisiana history he and others knew must be foreign to her.

"Our version of French hasn't grown since the Acadians came here from Nova Scotia after the Great Expulsion. It's more Franglish, a combination of the old French words and the new English words. It even contains fragments of Spanish, German and a touch of Italian."

"My, listen to you!" she said, smiling as she observed again his tendency to walk toe and heel instead of heel and toe. "You're the handy dandy walking encyclopedia of New Orleans culture and history."

Her sense of humor brightened him up. "If you like that, I can give you an hour's discourse on the history and evolution of Mardi Gras in New Orleans and outlying regions of Louisiana."

"I'd like that," she said with sincerity.

At lunch, Marion was strangely silent. Leslie could see that he wanted to say something but couldn't find the nerve to do so or the words to convey it. She took the lead.

Taking a sip of tea, she said, "My aunt usually says, 'Quit chewing on it and spit it out'."

He glanced up sharply at her and saw that she was not joking.

"I guess I'm an open book, then," he commented. "Leslie, you're a young and attractive young woman. I'm sure the young swains around here will soon be flocking to your door. I'll admit that I find you attractive myself. Yet, there's a lot about me you really need to know and I'm not quite sure how to begin."

She smiled, saying, "You're not an axe murderer or anything?" The grin on her face told him she was jabbing at him to lighten the tenseness that he was displaying.

He shook his head slowly and responded. "No, nothing like that. I... Well, I need to tell you something about myself and this isn't the time or the place. I'd like to take you out to dinner some evening and perhaps a show. After that, perhaps we could find a place to talk and get to know each other a little better."

She reached out for his hand and gripped it, again wondering at the silky smooth softness of his skin and the fact that it was void of any hair. The fingernails were perfectly manicured and could be said to be a little long for a man. Still, she continued to hold his hand and felt a return pressure on her own. The electricity she'd felt before was still there and it was all she could do to remain collected. "I'd like that," she replied.

"How about Friday night?" he asked.

"Perfect," she responded.

After lunch, Jeff Church, one of the company's photographers, poked his head in her office. "Leslie, you want to take a field trip?"

"A field trip?" she asked.

"Just across the river. I need to do a shoot on the Westwego project. Mr. Addison thought you might like to get out of the office for a while."

She didn't really want to leave the office but knew that eventually she'd have to, so she reluctantly agreed. Throughout the trip, Jeff tried to engage her in conversation but she didn't feel like talking. Her interest in him was zero and she didn't want to encourage him. He was about six feet tall and stockily built. His hair was blonde but cut almost to the scalp in a crew cut. A pair of faded blue jeans and a shirt that'd seen better days was his total outfit, if you didn't count the photographer's vest he sported.

Leslie had encountered his type before. They were more interested in talking about themselves or the task at hand, than anything else. On the job site he kept up a running dialog of what the project would do for the area and how Chancery had been lucky in snaring the contract. He also regaled her with his past triumphs in photography and invited her to see his collection. She, of course, politely declined.

That night, when she returned to her apartment, she found a message taped to her door. Her father wanted to see her. So, she walked a few doors down and knocked.

Her father's personal secretary opened the door and immediately ushered her into the expansive suite. She found her father in his study, going over what appeared to be a long contract. When he looked up and saw her, he put the papers down on the low coffee table in front of him and said, "Come in, Leslie. How'd your day go? I understand you took a little trip today."

She sat in an almost too soft sofa chair as she replied, "Okay. We just went out to shoot some pictures of the Westwego housing project."

"You and Jeff get along all right?"

She looked at him closely as he asked the question. There was a look of anticipation in his face that she immediately recognized. The trip had been a fix-up by her dad.

She shrugged noncommittally, "He's okay. Not my type though."

"You've been learning anything?" he continued, nonplused.

She shrugged. "There's not much new to learn in public relations."

Pursing his lips, he shook his head in agreement. "Yep, I know what you mean. Listen, honey, I still think you should've taken more time off before you began work. If you don't like the city, how about taking a trip to Europe?"

Leslie saw immediately that her father was trying to avoid saying something. He was also trying to get her away from – what? She was not going to give in too easily to his requests – or demands.

“But, Daddy, I want to work. Besides, I’ve already been to Europe, right after I finished high school. Don’t you remember?”

He was beginning to show signs of exasperation as he stood up and walked over to a faux fireplace mantle. “Honey, I think you need to get away...”

“Why, Daddy?” she interrupted. “Are you trying to get rid of me?”

“No, of course not,” he retorted quickly. “I just feel that you need some rest after finishing school.”

“Daddy,” she said quietly, “you’re trying to tell me something and I want to know what it is.”

He looked directly at her and saw the determined look in her face. For a moment, it reminded him of his late wife. She, too, refused to back down to his demands on occasion.

“Leslie, it’s come to my attention that you’ve been seeing a young *gentleman* from work.” Leslie noted the unusual emphasis he’d used on the word ‘gentleman’.

“He’s been helping me get settled in,” she stated. “What’s wrong with that?”

His answer was quick and to the point. “I just rather you’d not associate with him. I’ve got my reasons.”

Puzzled she asked, “Can you tell me why?”

“No,” he said, turning away from her again. “I’d rather not say.”

She sat there for a moment, torn between what her father wanted and her own desire. Her father’s apparent dislike for the young man made her all the more determined to solve the puzzle of Marion Le Blanc.

“I can’t do what you ask, Daddy,” she finally said flatly. “I came here to work. Even if you stick me in the mailroom, I’m going to stay here and do just that. Besides, I can always go to work in Aunt Edna’s department.”

“Damn the two of you, anyway,” he burst out suddenly. Then realizing what he’d said, he quickly faced his daughter and saw the hurt that was in her face. The color appeared to have drained completely away and left her complexion quite pale.

He quickly responded with obvious pain in his voice, “Leslie...I’m sorry, honey. I didn’t mean that. It’s just that I don’t want to see you get hurt. Can’t you see that?”

Her breath had been knocked out of her when she heard her father swear in such a forceful manner. She swallowed hard and gasped for air. “Daddy, I love you and I want to believe you, but I don’t see how Marion could hurt so much as a fly. He’s one of the sweetest young men I’ve ever met. There’s something about him that attracts me. You can’t really be serious about my not seeing him. Besides, you can’t stop me. I’m been of age for a few years now and I’m quite capable of making up my own mind.”

He angrily sat down again and said, "You're right, I can't stop you. But I could fire him, or ship him out of state."

"That wouldn't stop me from seeing him, Daddy. And I don't think you would do something so heartless. Why don't you want me to see him? Is he a criminal or something? And if he is, why did you hire him?"

His response was abrupt, "I didn't hire him. That was your Aunt's doing."

"Then he couldn't have done anything wrong, now could he?" she stated emphatically.

Almost to the point of frustration, he replied, "It's not what he did, it's what he is."

"And..." she inquired.

"I can't tell you," he said dejectedly. "If you must know, ask him and see if he'll tell you. Go ahead. Find out the hard way."

"Daddy, you're not making sense," she replied. "As it just so happens, he asked me out Friday night and I accepted. And he said he had something to tell me about himself. I'm keeping that date, Daddy and whatever it is he wants to tell me, I don't think it'll make any difference about how I feel."

He exhaled noisily. "Okay, Leslie. I should've known better than to try to win an argument with you. Just try not to get hurt when you find out the truth. That's all I ask."

She stood up and went to him, leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. "Daddy, I love you, but it's my life. I'm no longer a little child. Some mistakes I'll have to make myself. But I don't think this'll be a mistake. I want you to understand that I'm not a baby anymore."

He took her hand and said, "I know, honey. But to me you'll always be my little baby. I know I haven't been there for you all the time but I do love you."

She then hugged him and said, "I know."

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As she prepared for bed that night, she kept thinking about the blatant interference of her father and his refusal to tell her why. She knew that he could never understand how she felt and it would've been useless to explain. One other thing that kept bothering her was his attitude toward Marion. He'd said it wasn't what he'd done; it's what he was. Could her suspicions be true? Was "he" really a "she" and was that the reason her father didn't want her to associate with him/her?

Before she'd met Marion, she never thought that a man could interest her as he did. His very touch sent a charge of electricity through her. Could it be possible that it was the concealed woman that thrilled her so? She was more determined than ever to find out the truth about Marion.

Her sleep that night was very restless. She kept dreaming about Marion and envisioning him as a voluptuous redhead who made long and passionate love to her. Her body shivered and broke out into a sweat as she unconsciously fingered her clit until she came again and again during the night.

## Chapter Five

The background noise of the city seemed to be louder than normal that night as Marion prepared for bed as Mary Ann. He went through the motions almost absently, his mind on Leslie. Laying down, he went through a relaxation exercise to help him get to sleep but sleep would not come, despite his efforts.

After what seemed like hours to him but was only forty-five minutes, he tossed back the covers angrily and got up. Absently, he put on the sheer matching robe of the gown he was wearing and went into the darkened living room. There he turned on a small table lamp, sat on the couch and looked toward the nearby window. The city was still alive with noise and light. There were some who said it never really slept. There were many darkened buildings but also those whose lights blazed in the night. The steady cacophony of the traffic in the background was almost as noisy as it was in the daytime. In the distance, the sounds of sirens could be heard and an occasional passenger jet could be heard approaching the Greater New Orleans Airport.

He didn't really know how long he sat there but the turning of a key in his apartment door eventually captured his attention. He didn't move from his position because he knew there was only one person who had a key.

"Well," he heard her say as she entered, "this is a first! You've been waiting up for me, doll? And look at you. God, but you're deliciously pretty tonight all in red like that."

"No, Dixie," he replied without looking, "I've been thinking."

She sat beside him and began to massage his neck. She could feel the tenseness that was there. "Thinking about what, honey?"

He stretched his neck to let her work. Her neck massages had always been first-rate. While she continued, he replied, "I think I'm in love, Dixie. I can't get her out of my mind."

"Sounds serious," she said as she continued to knead his neck and back. She could feel the tightness in his muscles and knew there was something bothering him. "I don't suppose we'll be having our usual tête-à-tête tonight then."

He turned to face her. Holding her hands in his, he said, "We've known each other for a while now, Dixie, ever since we had that chance meeting in that Bourbon Street bar. You've been a dear friend and I know what a good lover you are. Even though I desperately need you, I don't think I'd be good for you tonight."

“No apologies, lover girl,” she said patting his hand. “You deserve to find love. I’ve known that for a long time, like I knew you didn’t really belong in that bar. Does she know about...?”

“No,” he interrupted her. “I’ve been trying to find a way to tell her. I don’t want to lose her, but I also don’t know how she’ll react to these,” he finished, indicating his size B+ breasts.

“Such precious little knockers they are too, pet,” she grinned. “I could just nuzzle them right up.”

He smiled, “And so you have on occasion.”

“But not tonight,” she stated. “Tonight you need a big sister or aunt. You talk; I listen. Okay?”

Saying that, she removed her shoes, curled her legs under her and settled comfortably on the couch.

Marion looked at his companion. She was a tall redhead, with killer legs and a buxom figure. Tonight she’d worn a lovely pair of ankle-length black palazzo pants with a short double-breasted jacket. A black band held her hair back out of her face. Her makeup, as always, was impeccable. No harsh coloring or bright lipstick sullied that lovely face. She was a class act and he knew it. His knowing she was once male didn’t enter into the picture any more.

In the three years they’d been meeting, they’d grown close together and shared things no one else did, and became real lovers. Dixie had been transformed into a complete girl just as had his long-ago acquaintance, Margo. In fact, their first sexual encounter was the first for both of them.

“To start off with,” Marion began, “she’s the boss’s daughter. I just met her a few days ago and my life hasn’t been the same since.”

And so he filled her in on his thoughts and actions of the last few days. Patiently, she sat and listened as he began his story. Before he was halfway through, she got off the couch, grabbed his hand and pulled him into the bedroom. Quickly, she removed her clothes, hung them up and put on a blue satin nightgown. Then she got into bed and indicated that he should follow. He shrugged as he removed his sheer robe and cuddled up to her.

“This, doll,” she said as he snuggled next to her, “is what is known as pillow talk. Keep talking and your naughty aunt will listen while we get cozy, okay?”

“But I don’t...” he started to say.

“Shhh,” she said as she put a finger to his lips. “No sex, my pretty, you’re my teddy bear tonight and I’m yours. You need someone to hold you and listen and you can hold me right back.”

So they continued to cuddle as Marion completed his story. At one point, he fell asleep in her arms and basked in the glow of her body. The next morning he awoke with a start to see her gone, but that didn’t surprise him. What did startle him was finding her key to the apartment on the entrance étagère and a note.

*Baby doll:*

*You deserve a lot more happiness than I could ever bring you. Go for the brass ring, my darling. If she loves you in return, it won't matter what you look like on the outside. You know you've got to try. If you need me later, you know where you can find me. I don't expect to hear from you, though I will keep tabs on you.*

*One thing I need to point out to you, Love. You should never have given up being a woman full time. You know that. It's why you stay so tense so often. I know what you are underneath and accepted that in you, just as you accepted me. But, you've tried to deny the feminine side of yourself. Embrace it, my darling. Hug it close to you again and let yourself feel. It's so much easier to be the woman you are than to try to be the man you wish you could be.*

*To me, you are both. You're the kindest, sweetest, most gentlemanly man I've ever known.*

*Don't change that. I thank God for his allowing me to even meet you.*

*But, you know, you have to return to that woman you once were.*

*You know in your heart that this is true and I'm saying it to you now because in my own little way, I love you, my precious Mary Ann.*

*You've been what I've needed on more than one occasion and I'm going to miss you terribly.*

*You were my first lover, as I know I was yours. We will always have that. But we both know that I have to move on, and you do to.*

*I'll be rooting for you, Marion Richard Le Blanc, but I'll always remember you as Mary Ann, my precious lesbian lover.*

*Au revoir, Mon petite rouge,*

*(s) Dixie.*

Marion looked up from the letter and said, "Good-bye, Jennifer Anne Hebert, mon grande rouge." Then, after a moment of decision, he returned to his bedroom, removing his shoes, jacket, tie, shirt and pants as he went. When he got into the room, he was down to his bra and panties. Grabbing the phone off the nightstand, he called Edna and explained that he would be late getting into work that morning. Then he proceeded to change into another set of clothes, from the closet that held his feminine wardrobe.

He first removed his bra and threw it on the bed. Taking out a satin and lace body shaper from his wardrobe, he commenced to lace it on, getting it as tight as he could, effectively shrinking his waist two inches and thrusting his breasts up and further out. Next, he put on a frilly black garter belt and passed the straps through his black panties. A pair of black sheer stockings was soon encasing his smooth legs. The coolness of them almost aroused him but he had other things on his mind.

A white satin blouse with a ruffled collar and French cuffs was soon quickly buttoned; he had to remember that the buttons were on the left side. To this ensemble he added a plaid skirt that came to just below his knees. A pair of mid-calf brown vinyl boots with 3" heels completed the basic outfit.

Sitting at his vanity, he proceeded to pluck at hairs in his eyebrows until they were once more the familiar arches of his feminine persona. Then he applied eye-liner to make them a bit fuller. Mascara was soon applied to his eyelashes until they were also full. A modest bit of coloring to his eyes completed that portion of his task. Then, he started to apply a base to his cheeks and brow, slowly smoothing it out with a series of brushes. A spot of color fleshed out the face highlighting his cheekbones and softening his face. A quick application of red lipstick brought out the fullness of his lips.

When he came to his hair, he made a resolution to have it redone at his next salon appointment that very Saturday. So, he grabbed a scarf and passed it underneath his hair and tied it just beyond the crown of his head. The final result called attention away from the condition of his hair. He then brushed his hair until the ends were free of any tangles.

Looking at himself in the mirror, he realized something was missing. He opened a jewelry case and selected a pair of earrings to clip on his ears. Around his neck he put on a simple black satin band. The illusion was almost complete. As he got ready to leave, he put on the plaid jacket that went with the skirt, as well as a pair of black palm gloves. He then checked the purse that went with this ensemble and placed his wallet, keys, lipstick, compact and other personal items into it. It already had a small makeup kit and other feminine items.

Letting out a breath, he marched to the door and became once more the woman she enjoyed being as soon as she stepped over the threshold. She then went to the elevator that would bring her to the lobby. Arriving there, she asked the doorman to call a cab for her. She would normally have taken her own little Corvair but she'd have to change her driver's license picture again before she would risk that.

As she stood and waited, she could feel the smooth and cool comfort of the stockings on her legs and the gentle updraft that swirled under her skirt. The sensation gave her a gentle shudder and reminded her of how comfortable it was to wear dresses and skirts. It renewed her confidence and made her once more sure of who she was, a feeling that had been absent far too long.

Arriving at the Chancery building, she quickly and surely made her way to the eighth floor. Her first stop was to see Edna and tell her something she'd kept to herself for almost two years.

Edna glanced up at the sound of Mary Ann's approaching footsteps and the look on her face changed as though a magician had touched it with his wand. A frown that had been there rapidly changed into a beaming smile and her eyes reflected a sparkle of love. Her heart had almost skipped a beat and her breath caught in her throat as she looked at the welcome sight of the lovely creature approaching. She quickly got up to greet her visitor.

"Mary Ann," she almost squealed. "Come here, you precious thing. God, but it's good to see you. So, this is why you called to say you'd be late. Damn, you look positively gorgeous." So saying, she gave her a bear hug that almost squeezed out what little air she had left in her lungs. "Are you visiting, or..." She left the rest of the inquiry unspoken but with a questioning look on her face.

Mary Ann closed the door behind her and daintily sat down; crossing her legs just like the lady she had evidently decided she was. "Edna," she began. "Please, sit down with me. We've got to talk."

Twenty minutes later, a furious Edna Theriot stormed out of her office and headed for the executive suite where she bulldozed her way into Chancery's office exclaiming loudly, "Walter Fannin Chancery, how dare you?" before the door slammed shut.

Ms Bourg flinched as it did so, but she reached into the middle drawer of her desk and removed a little black book. Into it she made a notation of Chancery's middle name, musing to herself, "So that's what the 'F' stands for!"

Less than an hour later, the door reopened and Chancery escorted Edna to the desk of Ms Bourg.

Chancery cleared his throat, "Maureen, Edna is going to give you a set of directions. See that they get carried out. Prepare whatever paperwork is necessary and bring it to me for my signature as soon as you can." He then turned to Edna, "Okay, Edna?"

She nodded her head in assent. Sighing, Chancery then went back into his office with the look of defeat. Maureen looked at Edna for a clue as to what was going on. She was soon to find out as a long list of instructions was rattled off to her. A look of surprise crossed her face when she discovered who Marion/Mary Ann really was and the reasons behind this unprecedented action. She knew, however, that whenever they tangled, Edna usually came out the winner.

After that chore was complete, Edna returned to her office and found an impatient young woman still sitting there. A smile was on her face, "Cheer up, my dear,

you're back in and no more nonsense. You can toss those damn male clothes of yours into the dumpster. The company's going to pay you back whatever they cost."

A look of surprise came to her face, "I didn't expect that. How did you...?" she started to inquire.

"You don't have to concern yourself with that. Come on, you're going back to work. I want to reintroduce you to the girls."

She then led Mary Ann down the hall to her office. Mary Ann knew they had to go through the keypunch room to get there. At the door, Edna indicated that she was to wait until she made her announcement.

"Girls," she began after she entered the room, "I've got some good news for most of you. I think you'll remember a couple of years ago that a young woman was promoted from your ranks. Shortly thereafter, a young man took over as my assistant. Well, I'm pleased to announce that the young man has departed and Mary Ann has returned to assume her rightful position as head of this department."

A look of happiness appeared on all but two of the young women present. They surged forward as she brought Mary Ann in to be reacquainted with her staff. They knew, of course, that Mary Ann and Marion were actually the same person, but they shared a comfortable past with the woman and felt a sense of discomfort with the young man. After the hugs and kisses that followed, Mary Ann managed to get to her office and the staff returned to their duties.

For the remaining two girls not in on the secret, the others soon filled them in. One simply refused to believe that the young woman who was now sitting in the office was really a guy, who they knew as Marion; she claimed that there was no way a guy could ever look that feminine or that pretty.

The rest of the day went by without any untoward event. Edna took Mary Ann to lunch at a nearby Holiday Inn restaurant and informed her protégé that she would soon be getting a raise in salary along with a company car. Mary Ann had tried to decline the offer but Edna was stubborn.

"Look, Honey, you deserve it. I think the company owes it to you for trying to change you. At least Walter Chancery owes it to you. So take it and no arguments. And besides, you'll be taking over for me soon enough. And I've got plans for you that'll require you to make use of that vehicle. The computer industry is soon going to change and I want you to learn all you can about it."

Mary Ann knew when to admit defeat. "Thank you, Edna. I just wish I knew how you did it."

Edna brushed it off as they finished their lunch with small talk of the day's politics, weather and who was doing what to whom.

It was sometime after 5 o'clock when Edna entered Mary Ann's office to find her going over the day's reports. She waited a bit until Mary Ann took a break,

whereupon she said, "Come on, I'm driving you home. I know you took a taxi this morning to get here."

"But, Edna," Mary Ann protested, "you live in Chalmette. That's on the other side of town."

Edna was determined, "Look, honey, I told you at lunch not to argue with me. There's no way I'm going to let you stand on a street corner waiting for a cab. Now, grab your purse and let's get out of this tomb. You can finish that up tomorrow."

Knowing further argument was useless, Mary Ann stood up and put on her jacket, then grabbed her purse from the credenza.

"Okay," she said, "let's go."

"Feel like a bite to eat?" Edna asked suddenly.

Mary Ann wanted to protest but thought better of it and said, "If you let me pay for my share."

The older woman shook her head, "Nope, not tonight, sweetheart. You're being pampered today, my pretty, so you may as well relax and enjoy it."

Dinner was at Copeland's on St. Charles Avenue and Edna was determined to order the most expensive item on the menu, Maine lobster, for both of them. It was while they casually ate their salads that Edna started to tell Mary Ann what was on her mind.

Mary Ann nodded as she replied, "I've always been here, Edna."

"No, my dear," Edna retorted, "You were someone else for two years. You're the one I missed seeing and talking to, you, Mary Ann, not young Marion who is your alter ego. I never told you this, my dear, but I sort of appointed myself your god-mother the moment I first saw you. I could tell for close to two years now that you were hurting; that something was tearing at you and I felt helpless. Now I know the reason for it. You don't know how many times I started to say something to you about it. Why didn't you come to me sooner?"

"I don't know, Edna. Mr. Chancery implied that if I didn't do as he asked, I would have to look for another job. I was afraid of starting over, and possibly not finding a job. You know how most people feel about someone like me. It's not easy to find someone as sympathetic or as understanding as you."

"That's their loss, honey. I've always believed in you and you made me feel proud of you today when you decided you weren't going to continue in a charade, and I never want that feeling to go away. I've come to love you as a daughter I would be honored to call my own. When I found out what Walter did, I could've chewed nails and spit them out at him. Anyway, I did read him the riot act this morning and there'll be no more of that nonsense. If those damn hard-legs don't learn a few manners at the progress meetings, then I'll read *them* the riot act or castrate them. And Walter better mind his P & Q's himself."

Mary Ann tried to hide a grin as she looked at her mentor. She saw a woman close to her forties who had a careworn face and eyes that held in them the mark

of some tragedy. In the years she'd known Edna, there had never been a time when she'd even thought about asking about it. She did know, however, that there was something about her that compelled Edna's interest in her. She said, "You seem to know where the bodies are buried, Edna. But you know that I'm also one of those hard legs."

Edna smirked, "You can wipe that silly grin off your puss, my dear. And, yes, I do know where the bodies are buried. I've been with the company from the beginning and I buried a few of them myself. And, as far as I'm concerned, Mary Ann, you're one of us girls; and don't you ever forget it! Not ever again!"

Suddenly changing her tone Edna said, "I suppose you've noticed I'm rough and gruff and not very diplomatic. I'm strictly middle-class and proud of it. I got where I am by beating men at their own game. The word in the halls is I have the personality of a sledgehammer, and you know what? They're right."

Edna glanced over at Mary Ann before continuing. She'd waited a long time to speak to her like this and wanted to say it all in a rush, but she caught her breath and slowly resumed. "You're not like that, honey. Mentally, I know you're a male, but you've got a regal bearing about you. Why, I bet if I put a book on top of that pretty head of yours while you walked, it wouldn't budge an inch. I've never heard you swear or raise your voice and I know that despite how you look, you are the gentlest man I've known. But, my dear, my eyes tell me you're a lady, a very refined lady. Whoever trained you in these things did a marvelous job. When I first saw you, I would never have dreamed in a million years that you were a genetic male."

Mary Ann had never heard Edna speak so before but she realized she must have done some research into her condition by her choice of the term "genetic male". She was both flattered by her feelings for her and embarrassed at the same time. She knew there was more, so she sat quietly and patiently listened.

"I want you to know that as long as I'm alive, you have a friend and a confidant. I'd like you to consider moving in with me. I'm an old widow and would certainly enjoy your company. And there would be no rules about dates and such. I'm a dirty old woman and know you need to relieve sexual pressure every now and again. And I suppose you have plenty of that, but that's not really any of my business. You see, I don't want to lose you now that I've got you back. I wish you'd say yes and make an old woman happier than she's been in a very long time."

Mary Ann was so moved she started to cry, something she very seldom did. She knew that, once more living the life of a woman, she was subject to the emotional peaks and valleys that accompanied womanhood and her renewed confidence allowed her to give vent to her feelings as any woman would.

Edna reached out and took Mary Ann's hand and said, "I think it's time for a trip to the powder room."

Once inside and seeing no one else there, Edna turned to hug her. "Cry it out, my dear. I meant every word. You're the closest I'll ever get to having a daughter of my own. You've been lonely, haven't you?"

Mary Ann simply nodded as she let the older woman comfort her. She rested her head on the older woman's shoulder and through the sobs, said, "Oh, Edna, I missed talking to you and I guess I love you, too, but I don't want to be a burden to you. I still need to work some things out before I answer your most kind and gracious proposal."

Edna smiled at the tact displayed by Mary Ann even in the highly emotional moment she was going through. She continued to comfort her until she finished crying.

When they finally broke their hold, Mary Ann reached into her purse to get a tissue to dry her eyes. Edna was not finished, though.

"You've got something else on your mind, haven't you?"

Sniffing a little, Mary Ann replied, "Promise to keep a secret?"

Edna simply nodded.

"When you asked me to help Leslie Chancery get settled in, I started to refuse. Then I figured it would be a welcome break. I thought maybe she could become a friend. But when I saw her that first day...I think I'm in love with her, Edna. Only she doesn't know about the real me. We've got a date day after tomorrow and I don't know how I'm going to keep it, dressed like this. I don't want to ever have to wear men's clothes again. I also don't want to disappoint her, nor do I want to deceive her. Do you have an answer?"

Edna was silent for a long time. Instead of answering right away, she took Mary Ann over to refresh her makeup which had been streaked by the tears. She continued doing this for a while before replying, "Where did you plan on taking her?"

"Brennans."

"Ouch, fancy! Keep the appointment, honey. You'll find a way to tell her. Either she understands, or she won't. If you need me to help break it to her..."

"No, Edna," he replied quickly, "I appreciate everything you've done for me but this is something I have to do myself."

"Okay. I think you're all fixed now. Come on, let's go attack those lobsters."

Mary Ann smiled and nodded.

After the meal, while driving down Claiborne Avenue, Edna kept looking at Mary Ann, who'd grown strangely silent.

"I prescribe a nightcap for you, Honey," she said suddenly.

"But you know I don't drink, Edna," she protested.

"Then drink some warm milk, or cocoa. I'm serious. You need something to help you relax tonight. Why don't you take tomorrow off and get your hair done?"

"I've already got an appointment for Saturday morning with Julia."

“Okay. And once again, please get some sleep tonight. Worrying about the future is going to give you rings around those pretty eyes that no amount of makeup can disguise. Trust your godmother.”

When they arrived at her apartment building, Mary Ann leaned over and gave Edna a kiss on her cheek. “Good night, Edna. I’ll see you in the morning after I go to the DMV to straighten out my driver’s license.”

Edna quickly retorted, “That’s not necessary, Honey. We already took care of all that for you. Like I said, I know where the bodies are buried, everywhere. You get a good night’s sleep, my precious, and we’ll talk some more in the morning. Love you.”

“Love you too.”

The older woman watched as Mary Ann entered the building. Her heart was full and she knew she could finally release the grief she’d held on to for so long. Somehow she knew that Stephanie would approve.

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Arriving at work the next morning Mary Ann had found that her name had been changed on the office door. On her desk, she found a brown clasp envelope. In it were a new driver’s license, a new company photo ID tag, insurance card and the keys to the executive ladies room. She smiled at the expertise of Edna.

Mary Ann worked through the morning but her mind continued returning to Leslie. Several times she started to pick up the phone to call her but stopped short when it came time to dial her number. The pile of work on her desk just seemed to sit there as she found it hard to concentrate. She turned to stare out her window. How long she sat there she had no idea. Then the phone suddenly rang, interrupting her reverie.

She quickly reached for it, and the caller gave her the surprise of her life.

After she hung up, she looked for Edna.

“Got a minute, Edna?”

Edna smiled, “For you, all the time you want.”

“I’ve got to take off this afternoon and tomorrow. My old family doctor just recently passed away and it seems I was named in his will. The lawyer wants me to meet with him tomorrow. So, I won’t be able to make the progress meeting.”

“Don’t worry about that, I can handle it. I know the J.I.P. journal is up to date and I can fill in the rest from today’s run. Jennifer can fill in for you otherwise. You do what you have to do, then get back here. I don’t suppose you’ll be able to keep your date with Leslie tomorrow.”

“I’ll call her and explain. You’re sure now?”

“Go on, scoot. Get out of here. I’ll see you Monday.”

Returning to her office, Mary Ann reached for the phone and called Leslie. She explained the situation and asked for a rain check for dinner. She was in the hopes that this brief reprieve would give her time to think of a way to explain.

There was one more task to accomplish before she left town.

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The beauty salon catered to both sexes and usually was strictly by appointment. Julia knew Marion very seldom asked for favors so she agreed to squeeze him in. When Mary Ann walked in, however, at the appointed time, Julia positively beamed.

“Mary Ann, why didn’t you tell me it was you, honey?” she cried in excitement.

Mary Ann queried, “Is there a problem?”

Grabbing her by the arm, Julia ushered her into the booth, wrapped the cape around her and tilted her back to wash her hair.

“Just a wash and rinse, Julia,” she replied. “I’ve got to be on the road this afternoon.”

“Nonsense,” Julia retorted. “You’ve got time for a light curl. I’m tired of seeing that damn pony tail of yours. We’re going to restore you, my dear, if not today, then soon. I won’t hear any arguments. I’ll squeeze you in next Saturday afternoon and we’re going to do you up to the nines, facial, permanent, manicure – the works.”

Mary Ann protested, “You go to way too much trouble, Julia.”

“Honey,” Julia said as she washed Mary Ann’s hair, “I’ve missed you. You always had such delicious gossip. That stuffy Marion never had much to say and I’m glad that old hard leg is gone.” She eyed her then. “He *is* gone?”

Mary Ann nodded and smiled. “He may have to make one last appearance, but yes, he’s gone. But you know the hard leg is still there.”

“Oh, pooh,” Julia pouted, “You know I never cared about that.

“You’re more than that old thing anyway. I want to tell you, honey, that you stand out. As a woman, you’re positively gorgeous. You were never very comfortable as a guy and you always came in here lacking just a little of your previous confidence. Now, let me rinse this off and we’ll put a few curlers in that luxurious mane of yours.”

For the next half hour, Julia dried, curled and set Mary Ann’s hair until it looked full and luxuriant once more with its original vibrant color and not the mousy color it had become. Later, as Julia brushed through Mary Ann’s dry hair, curling it upward toward her face at the ends, she commented, “There now, you look like the beautiful woman you really are. Promise me, Honey, that you’ll forget about that old stuffed shirt and bury him deep. I like you better when you hold your head up high and tell the world, ‘Here I am, get used to it’.”

“I’ve already promised myself that, Julia. And thanks for squeezing me in today,” Mary Ann said gratefully.

Julia smiled as she looked at the beautiful girl in front of her. “We’ll catch up on the gossip next Saturday, doll. You go take care of whatever it is you have to take care of. Now come here and give me a hug.”

Mary Ann gratefully did so.

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It’d been a long time since she’d taken the scenic tour down Highway 90 but she needed time to think and there was actually no rush in her journey. She planned to stay the night with her mother and see the lawyer in the morning. She’d thrown a few clothes into a suitcase and was ready to seal it up when she took down one of the specially tailored suits and added it to the pile.

So she motored slowly as she passed all the little towns along the route and through the swampy area between Des Allemands and Raceland. As she passed the sugar mill and came into Raceland, she turned right onto highway 1 and headed for Thibodaux.

Further down the road, she passed Lafourche Crossing and it brought to her mind the times her father talked about the Civil War battle that had occurred there and how his ancestor, Jules Le Blanc, had been one of the Confederate soldiers that took part in the battle.

She noted as she passed that Nicholls State University had grown considerably since the last time she’d seen it. It was the school that Robin and Randy had attended. There had been a time when she had also wanted to go there, but that was when she was still a boy.

Reaching Thibodaux, she noticed that there were many changes but she took the dogleg road with easy familiarity and proceeded on to the turnoff that would take her home once more.

When her mother answered her knock on the door, a look of puzzlement appeared, then with recognition, a beam of light seemed to illuminate the face that peered out. The door was quickly opened wider.

“Mary Ann!!” she excitedly exclaimed as she briskly hugged her daughter. “I wasn’t expecting you. I thought you were still...”

“I changed back, Mom,” she replied before the question could be framed. “It was all a mistake, but I’m back for good now. Marion is a thing of our past.”

Her mother eyes glistened with tears as she replied, “I’m glad. You were never very comfortable with yourself trying to be a man. Come in; sit down. Tell me all that’s been going on with you.”

For the better part of the afternoon and early evening, Mary Ann filled her mother in on what'd been going on in her life, leaving out the part about Leslie. That would wait for another time. As the day wound down, Mary Ann finally explained about the call from the lawyer concerning the will of Doctor Vice and that she would make one last appearance as Marion.

That night after dinner, Mary Ann went into her old bedroom and saw that it'd been thoroughly feminized. Instead of the familiar brown paneling and bunk bed, there was a four-poster canopy bed complete with curtains and a white-skirted comforter highlighted with pink accents. At the head of the bed were satin-covered pillows and a bolster. The walls had been painted in a shade of pastel pink with a motif of bordering flowers. There were chintz curtains on the windows and a small vanity table that looked like an antique. It had ornate scrollwork around the oval mirror and the four drawers had intricate designs cut into their face. She quickly turned to look at her mother who had a beaming smile on her face.

"I had it done a few months ago, Honey. I wanted my daughter back. I know that now because I missed you terribly whenever you came as Marion. I'm so very glad you like it. And I'm so very, very glad you came as Mary Ann."

"Oh, Mom, it's adorable," she said, hugging her mother close to her. There were tears in her eyes. She knew that the love demonstrated by the changes in the room meant that her mother had finally accepted her as a daughter and was ready to acknowledge it openly to the world. The small level of tension that still had existed so long between them was suddenly and completely swept away in that acceptance.

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The lawyer greeted her as she entered the private office, "Good morning, Mr. Le Blanc. Won't you have a seat?" As they settled down, the lawyer seemed to be reluctant to inquire about something but he forged ahead.

Mary Ann, suited like Marion, but still acting like the woman he was more comfortable with, sat down in the functional desk chair and crossed her ankles.

Looking at her, he was puzzled by the incongruity he saw. He saw what appeared to be a young woman dressed up in a man's suit. However, the suit didn't reveal any feminine curves. The only thing he had to go on was the hairdo and a hint of makeup on the face.

"I was under the impression that you were living as a woman."

Mary Ann smiled, "I wasn't sure what this was all about. I still live as a woman but decided to appear under the name you contacted me with. This suit is specially made to conceal certain, ah, attributes."

Nervously clearing his throat, the lawyer resumed. "I see. Well, I won't keep you long. As you know, your family doctor recently passed away and in his will he left specific instructions regarding you. There is also a sealed letter that you'll receive before you leave.

“The gist of the will is this. When you were hospitalized, the doctors on your case were faced with a problem. If they did nothing and let nature take its course, you would’ve been permanently confined to a wheelchair. It seems your upper body was developing too quickly and your crushed legs weren’t keeping pace with that and wouldn’t be capable of supporting your body once they were healed. So, the doctors took an unprecedented step by changing your upper body growth. They started to give you a daily dose of estrogen and other supplements.

Mary Ann interrupted, “That’s a female hormone, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” he nodded. “They thought they had the process under control but unfortunately they discovered, too late as it turns out, that they had forced your body to mature as a young girl instead of a young boy. They couldn’t discontinue the hormones, so they continued with the treatment, even though they knew your body would irreversibly become that of a young woman. They did manage, however, to balance the dosage out so that your sperm would remain unaffected.”

“Mr. Walters,” Mary Ann spoke during the brief pause, “Are you telling me this was not a chemical imbalance as my parents were led to believe?”

The lawyer shifted uneasily in his large cushioned chair, “You’ve got to understand that the steps they took were not exactly normal and they could have been construed as unethical at the time. They made decisions with your health uppermost in their minds and didn’t want to see you confined to a wheelchair. There’s an old adage about ‘best laid plans’.”

“Burns,” Marion said absently.”

“Pardon,” Walters said.

“Robert Burns,” Marion replied. “‘The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft gang agley’.”

“Yes, uh, well, the doctor was never happy about that lie he felt he had to tell at the time and he wanted to make amends to you after he passed on. A trust fund was established by the doctor and certain of his colleagues with the stipulation that it be used to further research into gender discrepancies. It seems there are many boys who have been forced to live their lives as females for one reason or another. Some, by accident, others are cases similar to your own.”

Mary Ann again interrupted, “What has all of this to do with me?”

“Yes, of course. Part of the fund was set aside to an account in your family’s name. You may not be aware of this, but your mother has been receiving a monthly allowance that she thinks is part of your father’s retirement fund. The doctor stipulated that she was never to know where these funds were coming from. Part of the instructions in his will was that we tell you this and inform you that you are now entitled to a portion of those funds. My secretary has a statement of just how much that is currently. You can elect to let it remain until you retire or immediately draw a monthly allowance.”

“I see,” Marion said quietly. “You mentioned a letter.”

Walters paged his secretary who then brought in a brown clasp envelope. Opening it, he took out two envelopes. These he handed to Marion. One was sealed, the other wasn't. He opened the sealed one and read:

*Marion (or Mary Ann):*

*I'm going to keep this short because I know you've been through a lot in your life. In many ways, I feel that it was more my fault than any other. There is no way I can begin to make amends for what I've helped to turn you into. By now you know that I've set aside some money for you as a way to partially atone for what I've done. I also want to sincerely apologize to you for what I turned you into, neither a man nor a woman. I hope you can forgive me but I won't blame you if you can't find it in your heart to do so.*

*I've tried to make amends over the years by paying for your special education and helping your mother pay some of the other bills that came about when your father became so despondent and finally passed on. Your friend, Randy, was instrumental in arranging these things. He understood what you were going through more than anybody else.*

*My only wish is that I could've told your father the truth. He died of a broken heart, knowing he was unable to see his son grow up to be a man. He had no way of knowing that your choice of wanting to live as a woman was the best solution for you. My only regret was that I lost his friendship over this.*

*What I did at the time is what I thought best. We never know sometimes what comes of good intentions and our intention was for you to walk again, not be confined to that damn wheelchair. During the late 40's and 50's, I saw too many of your age permanently confined to wheelchairs with wasted or amputated legs from Polio and other diseases. I did not want that for you.*

*Please forgive an old fool,  
(s) Jason Mark Vice, M.D.*

He looked up to see the lawyer busying himself at his desk. He cleared his throat and asked, "Do you know what's in here?"

Waters shook his head, "No one knows what the doctor wrote to you. He left me specific instructions that it was for your eyes only."

"I see," he responded. "Do I have to make a decision about the fund right now?"

"No, you can call me anytime you decide. I'll give you the necessary forms and you can mail them to me later. I trust everything is to your satisfaction."

Opening the unsealed envelope, Mary Ann extracted the single page within and read it. His eyes widened when he saw the amount but he uttered no exclamation. Instead, he calmly looked at the lawyer, "This is a considerable amount of money. How did the doctor accumulate such wealth?"

“He was a shrewd investor, and his family was not exactly poor. They had a hefty income from oil land. His will also named many charities as beneficiaries of his estate. This money was meant as a settlement for any pain and suffering you may have had as a result of his actions in your medical case. He knew you wouldn’t have accepted it while he was still alive. This way he wanted you to consider it as a legacy from his estate.”

Mary Ann nodded and then rose from her chair. She extended her hand to the lawyer as a woman would and said, “Then let us leave it at that, sir. I’ll let you know in a few weeks of my decision.”

Before leaving her hometown, Mary Ann decided to visit some of the places she’d known as a boy. Her first stop was at the St. Patrick cemetery where she placed a spray of mums on her father’s grave. Nearby was the grave of her fraternal grandparents. Her grandfather had died while she was in the third grade and she now found it difficult to remember how he looked. Her grandmother had died while she was in what would have been high school. She came back for the funeral but her father had asked that she not tell anybody her real identity. She was explained away as a distant cousin. She’d never forgiven her father for that.

But time and tide... She could no longer keep the hatred she’d once felt. She tried to remember the loving father he’d once been, the good times they shared and the holidays when they spent an all-too brief time together. She now regretted not coming to his funeral but the hurt at the time had been too great and she’d only paid her mother a visit of consolation, electing not to go to the funeral home or graveside service.

When she stopped at Joubert’s General Store, she noted that there had been a few changes. The gravity gas pumps she remembered had been replaced with their modern electric counterpart. The parking lot was no longer just a shelled area but had been asphalted over and the area in front of the store where a million soft drink bottle caps had gone to die was just another smoothed-over spot. The building itself had not been changed except that the paint seemed to be flaking in large patches off the old cypress planking that formed the walls. When she entered, she saw that the only change had been the removal of an old potbellied heater that once stood in the front. Everything else was just as she remembered it, down to the aged gas lighting fixtures on the walls and ceilings.

An elderly gentleman behind the counter eyed her as she came in and continued to do so as though he were trying to figure out who she was. Not very many strangers came into the place. His curiosity got the better of him as he asked, “Good morning, Miss. Don’t I know you?”

She smiled at the old man, whom she recognized almost immediately as her old school bus driver, Jacques Theriot. “No, I don’t think you’ve ever seen me before,” she countered.

He smiled back and said; “I just know I’ve seen you before, somewhere. It’ll come to me. May I help you with something in any event?”

“No, merci, I was in town and I remembered the times my father used to bring me here on Saturday afternoons a long, long time ago,” she hinted as she saw that he was not going to quit trying to remember where he’d seen her before.

“Your father... Who might that be,” he inquired.

She thought about it for a moment pondering if she should tell him the truth or fabricate another lie. Her mother had indicated that she would not be ashamed if anyone found out the truth and the time for concealment had long since passed. So she looked at the old gentlemen and said, “Mr. Theriot, you do know me, but not as you see me now. My father was Matt Le Blanc.”

She could see his Adam’s apple bob a couple of times while he swallowed hard and he stared even harder. His eyes widened as he did so and when he found his voice said, “Marion? Marion Le Blanc! The boy who had his legs crushed in... Mon Dieu, Mon petite; qu'est arrivé à vous?”

“Son' une longue histoire,” she replied.

“Ce doit être,” he responded. “Comment long vous avez été comme ceci?”

“Since after the accident,” she said relapsing into English. “My body was all messed up and it caused this to happen.”

“No wonder you never came back,” he said also resuming his second language. “What is your name now?”

“You can call me Mary Ann, but only my body changed, you see. I’m still the same person I always was and I’m still legally Marion.”

He then sat down on a stool and said; “I think I see a lot about your father, now. He was ashamed of you, wasn’t he? Mon Dieu, J'aurais été aussi. PARDON... MARY

ANN: YOUR MOTHER, HOW IS SHE DOING?

“She’s doing fine.”

He stared at her for a long time before he spoke again, “You’ll have to forgive on old man, mon cheri, but this is a lot more than I’m used to. What are you doing now?”

“I work in New Orleans,” she informed him, “at Chancery Unlimited.”

“Tell your mother hello for me, and tell her that... Tell her that I understand - now.”

She smiled and said, “I’ll tell her. Au revoir, Monsieur Theriot.

Ayez un bon jour.”

As she passed the old church, she noted that a fresh coat of paint had recently been applied but that little else had changed. The palm bushes in front were showing signs of new growth after their annual pruning for Palm Sunday and the small statue of the Virgin Mary still stood in its place by the bayou side.

When she stopped at her old school she got a mild surprise. It being summer, she didn’t expect to see anyone there but it was a Saturday and there was a group of boys and girls playing baseball on the fenced in diamond. As she approached

the building, she spied an older gentleman sitting in a folding chair by the school cafeteria. She also noted, as she got closer, that the door of the school was open.

Seeing her approach the man quickly stood up and asked, “Good morning, Miss. Are you here to see the game?”

“No,” she replied. “I was visiting my mother and I thought I’d come by and visit my old school. I didn’t know there would be anyone here today.”

“I see. Well, it’s just the local kids taking part in a summer program. Keeps them off the streets. So, you went to school here. Not very long ago, I bet. Would you care to go inside to see your old classrooms?”

“I’d like that very much,” she replied as she inwardly smiled at his flattery. “Is it all right?”

“You just go in and help yourself. What’s your name?”

She smiled, “Mary Ann Le Blanc. Thank you, Mr. ...”

“Lucas,” he replied. “Bill Lucas. I’m the custodian here.”

“Thank you, Mr. Lucas.”

The outside of the two-story building hadn’t changed at all from what she remembered, except possibly for a new paint job. The thought popped into her head that there must’ve been a paint sale at Joubert’s, which probably explained why the store itself hadn’t been painted recently. Deliberately, she made her way to the upper east wing to see the last classroom she ever sat in – the sixth grade. The small empty desks were all lined up neatly facing the now green chalkboard and the teacher’s desk was still in the Southwest corner. From the vibrant red in the stripes, she could see that a new flag with fifty stars had been attached to the wall above the chalkboard. How many times had she pledged allegiance to one with forty-eight stars? She noticed that the bulletin board was empty but a green corrugated border remained.

The old noisy ceiling fans she remembered were gone and instead of the old incandescent pendants there were now fluorescent fixtures that gave a suffused lighting to the room. The ceiling seemed lower but she recalled with a smile that she was much shorter at the time. The old radiators were still there but she noticed new air-conditioning ducts lining one wall. A new door had been cut, leading into the seventh grade classroom. She wondered at that but then recalled that fire codes called for two exits from every classroom.

For a while, she just stood at the door and took in these details, almost wishing that things hadn’t worked out as they had. Perhaps it was a trick of the lighting or just her wishful thinking but she imagined she still could see her old classmates sitting there, listening to Mrs. Fruge going over the days lessons. She picked out her friends Randy and Robin who were just as she remembered them. And sitting in the second seat of the third row was Karen Dupont, a girl she never got to know as much as she’d once wanted to as young Marion. The sounds of the young people outside playing caught her attention and she walked over to the windows of the South wall to see them.

The memories of the six years she'd attended the school flooded over her. There had been parties for Halloween and Christmas as well as the series of class plays given for the parents. Her third grade play came to mind then. Randy had a big part in that one, she recalled with a smile. There had been the egg hunts at Easter and, for Valentine's, the exchanging of cards with one's classmates. Each memory seemed to tumble into the next as she recalled them with fondness, but her reverie was interrupted by a masculine voice. "May I help you, Miss?"

Flustered, she turned and saw a handsome young man who appeared to be a year or so older than she was. He was muscular but not overly so and his honey blonde hair had been trimmed quite short. He was wearing a pair of khaki pants and a blue sport shirt open at the neck. In his hands, he held several folders and was looking at her with a smile. His eyes showed more than a passing interest.

"I'm sorry," she replied. "I'm afraid I was lost in a bit of melancholy. Mr. Lucas said I could look around. I was just remembering the few years I spent here as a student. My name is Mary Ann, what's yours?"

"Chester," he stated, "Chester Stanley. I'm the temporary principal, taking over for the late Mrs. Stack until the School Board names a new principal. I teach seventh grade here now."

A feeling of surprise and sadness came to her as she asked, "I hadn't heard. Was it recently?"

"Just before school let out last term," he replied, gazing at her intently. "I'm sorry if I appear to be staring, but you do look familiar. I just can't place you. What's your last name?"

Mary Ann had recognized him after he'd stated his name. He'd been in the class ahead of hers. He was always the big sports jock around school. There had been a time when, as young Marion, she had played side-by-side with Chet on the baseball team and basketball courts. But that had been what now seemed to be a lifetime before. She hesitated a bit before answering.

"Oh, I'm sure you don't remember me. I left when I was in the sixth grade."

"I still say you look familiar," he countered. "I can almost see you in this classroom but something's just not right. You didn't tell me your last name yet."

She sighed and said, "No, I didn't, it's Le Blanc."

"Le Blanc," he repeated thinking back. "There was only one family of Le Blanc's here, Matt and Rebecca Le Blanc. But they had a boy...Oh, my God! Marion!!! It is you," he finished as realization and memory coupled to complete the picture he'd been desperately trying to form while at the same time a shock of unexpected discovery flashed across his face.

She simply nodded as he looked at her in amazement. For a while, he was speechless but he eventually found his voice again. "You were in that tractor accident back then, weren't you? Both of your legs were crushed. How did you...? When did...? I'm sorry; this is a bit much for an old country boy like me."

Reaching out to touch his arm she said softly, "It's a long story, Chet. I'll tell you if you want to hear it. I suppose it's time I did tell someone else about what happened."

In his office, Chet graciously poured two glasses of orange juice and offered one to her. She politely accepted and took a sip before she began.

"You remember Randy Lane and Robin Lester?"

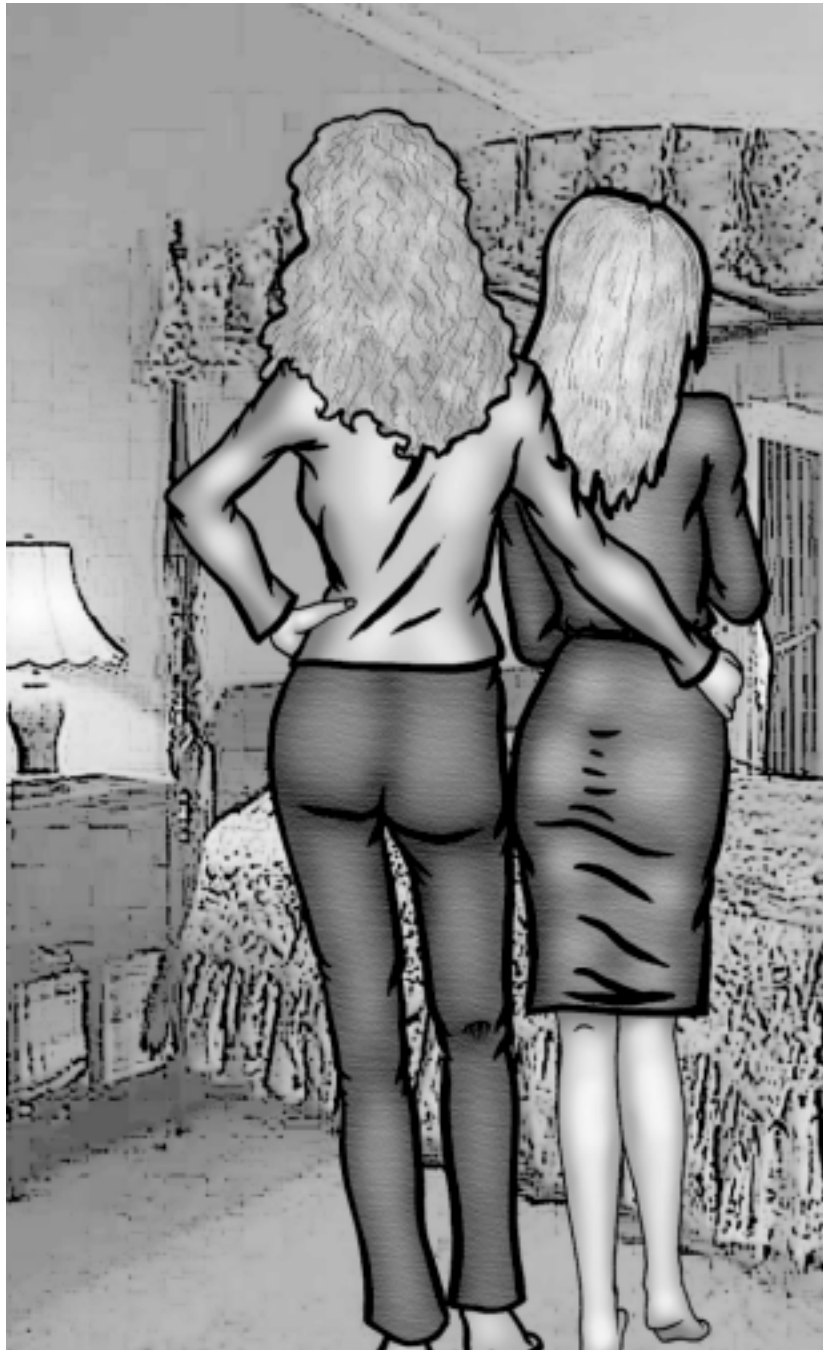
"Yes, I remember them quite well," he answered. "Randy sure had us fooled when we were young. He's just finished his first book, you know. Have you seen it?"

"Yes, he sent me a copy," she acknowledged. "Well, they were the only two besides my parents and Miss Stack who knew what happened to me and why I never returned here. As you can see," she said indicating her body, "I wouldn't exactly have fit back in."

"They changed your sex in the hospital! Then the accident..."

"It was real, Chet. It wasn't an excuse and no, my gender didn't change, just my body. According to the doctors, the only way I could walk again was to become what you now see. Otherwise I would've been forced to live out my life in a wheelchair. I know we're older now and hopefully can accept things like this but could you honestly have accepted me like this back then? Could any of the teachers or the people in town have accepted this *change*?"

Chet had to turn away at that question nervously, "Back then? I don't know,



Marion...Mary Ann. I honestly don't know."

Mary Ann sensed the conflict that he must've felt. His years of experience and education versus how he may or may not have felt when he was only thirteen or fourteen years old was now challenging him. She wasn't sure how she herself would have reacted at that age had it been someone else. Maybe she, too, would've been as open-minded as Randy and Robin; at least she liked to think she would've been.

Turning to face her squarely, Chet said, "I'd like to think I wouldn't have treated you any differently but I know that probably wouldn't have been the case. Children tend to fear anything different and you definitely would've been different. Even the teachers would've been hard-placed to accept, and for that I apologize personally to you and to everybody else who has ever stood in those shoes. I'm sorry I never followed up on your condition. I know I don't have to say these things but I feel someone should. I say this because when I look at you, I see a very beautiful person who deserves to be accepted for what you are, not what you might look like on the outside. I see you with your head held high and ready to accept what the world throws at you. Children follow their parents' lead and yes, you would've been considered a freak to them because their parents would've considered you a freak. So much for the fine upstanding citizens of this town. Now I understand what happened to your father and why."

She nodded as she replied, "That's more or less what I've thought for a long time. It's why I left and stayed away. I've accepted what I am but it wouldn't have done much good to force that on anyone here. It was by sheer accident that you were here today. I just meant to take one last look around and never come back after today. There are many good memories here and yet there were some old ghosts I just had to bury."

He rose from his chair and stood before her, reaching out to take her hand. "Mary Ann, if Randy and Robin can keep your secret then I sure as hell can and I'd be highly honored to be in their company. But, I think you need to tell everyone. They need to be told what happened. This community has been too damn straight-laced and the current Reverend...Sometimes I'd like to put my fist in his damn face."

"Chet!"

"I'm not going to take that back. You've got to come home. We need you here to show the smug hypocrites their own hypocrisy, and to show the Vauchons they're not the moral compass they pretended to be all these years." His entreaty was almost pleading.

Mary Ann shook her head, "No, Chet. I can't do that. Revenge has never been my style. I won't hold you to keeping my 'secret'. Tell whomever you like, even the Vauchons, those who are left. Mr. Theriot knows and now you. But, I've got a life in New Orleans now and this place won't be any more than a flag-stop for me on my way to somewhere else."

"Then this is Good-bye?"

“No,” she said as she stood up in preparation to leave, “Let’s just say au revoir - until we meet again.” With that, she leaned over and gave him a kiss on the cheek.

He wanly smiled and said, “You’re right - until we meet again.”

As she left that day, she felt a sense of relief, because she no longer had to keep the secret that had kept from her hometown for half her life. The news would probably spread quickly and she would return again with her head held high and unafraid of what anybody would say or think, with her mother by her side, supporting her.

On her drive back to New Orleans, Mary Ann’s mind returned to Leslie and the problem of how she was going to reveal her secret. The simplest thing would be to knock on her door and walk in dressed as Mary Ann and tell her she was Marion. How would she react to that? There had to be a neutral ground where they could meet and talk. Finally, she made a mental note to call Edna when she got back home.

## Chapter Six

Sunday in the Crescent City is normally slower than other days. The city wakes-up a little bit later; with the exception that during football season and Mardi Gras, the rules change. Perhaps it’s because of the usual Saturday night partying that occurs on Bourbon Street in the Quarter. Such partying and the prevailing *laissez faire* attitude is one of the reasons why it has often been called *The Big Easy*, a name that most of the native citizens resent and openly detest.

Mary Ann woke up with a start that Sunday morning. Her alarm clock had gone off and she quickly remembered that she wanted to get up early. Throwing on her sheer robe, she went into the living room and picked up the bag of toiletries and makeup she’d purchased at D. H. Holmes the evening before when she returned to town. She wanted to luxuriate in a bubble bath and pamper her body with the bath salt and oils she’d selected.

As she started the water, she stepped out of her nightclothes and stood naked. Her hands then began to slowly caress her sides and her breasts. As she reached the nipples, she felt them stiffen. Their sensitivity had never diminished and she always felt her body react when she touched them. Then, ever so slowly, she moved her hands down to her hairless groin area and felt the small penis and testicles. She fondled them and, using her hand, she cautiously tucked everything into the hole from which they’d once descended. When she released them, they once more descended and she gave them a gentle squeeze. She knew it would take much more than a simple touch to arouse them, for the hormones that were still part of her daily life kept them dormant much of the time.

Then, after she poured the various emollients into the hot water, she stepped into the tub and allowed herself to sink into the resulting bubbles. It was there that she luxuriated for close to a half-hour, allowing her body to become re-moisturized. When she’d toweled herself off and applied body oil to her refreshed

body, she went to her closet and chose a long black gown with a crossover neck, scalloped lace at the shoulders and midriff, shirring at the waist and a pair of matching panties. Over this she put the matching sheer robe. A pair of high heel sandals completed her lounging outfit. The nylon gown rubbed against her bare legs and gave her a renewed sense of comfort and confidence in being the woman she had become.

Sprawling on the couch, she began to read the day's paper in a slow and leisurely manner. Her stereo was playing some of her favorite music from the Fifties; not the rock 'n' roll songs but those songs that still had a tinge of the Forties in them. Songs by Perry Como, Patti Page or Jo Stafford were among her favorites. She felt very relaxed as the day wore on; not facing any deadlines gave her time to think about what she would tell Leslie. She'd come no closer to a solution when her doorbell rang in the afternoon.

Quickly belting her robe, she opened the door and saw Walter Chancery standing there. He was comparing the number on her door with something written on a piece of paper. When he looked up and saw her, he was startled, "Excuse me, Miss. I was looking for Marion Le Blanc. I must've been given the wrong address," he said, then started to leave.

Mary Ann stopped him. "Entre, Mr. Chancery. You have the right apartment."

He quickly turned and took another look at her. A little over six feet tall, he stood there, attired in his usual open collar sport shirt and khaki pants. His face was deeply tanned from long hours at construction sites. He had the muscular build of a man half his age, but his hair had begun to show the first telltale signs of gray. When he first saw the beautiful woman at the door, his eyes hadn't strayed very far from her breasts. Now, he looked directly into her face. Recognition was immediate. Slowly and with a rapidly reddening face, he did as she'd asked and entered the apartment.

Graciously she said, "Won't you have a seat. May I get you something to drink?"

"No, thank you," he said absently, not able to take his eyes off her. He saw what was, visibly, a very beautiful and desirable young woman but he knew that she was in reality a young man. He began to feel an unwanted stirring in his groin and it shook him. Her breasts floating free in their loose confines, kept luring him and he had to concentrate to not let them affect him. Rapidly turning to find a seat, he quickly recalled the reason he was there.

A brief moment after Mary Ann resumed her seat; he took his and cleared his throat. "Marion...Mary Ann, I think you know why I'm here."

"One could hazard a guess," she answered cautiously. "You didn't have to come all the way over here to apologize."

Flustered, he said, "But I didn't...Okay, I apologize. I'm sorry. Edna's told me in the last couple of days more about people like you than I ever really wanted to know. I guess I was wrong. I can see how you would have feelings like everyone else. But, I've got feelings, too, and the reason I'm here is about my daughter."

“Leslie,” she responded with surprise in her voice.

“Yes. I found out that you took her out to lunch a couple of times before you...changed back. I also understand that you were supposed to take her out to dinner Friday but that you had to cancel for some legal business. Mary Ann, I don’t want to see my daughter get hurt.”

Mary Ann was silent for a moment, then said with all the sincerity she could muster, “I don’t want to hurt her. I’ve never hurt anybody intentionally in my life.”

He exhaled noisily, still flustered by her appearance in an exceedingly sexy outfit, “Damn, it’s hot in here. I think I’ll take that drink.”

Rising, she went into the kitchen. Her movements were followed intently by Chancery who still could not take his eyes off her delicious orbs that were so damn inviting. He even swore to himself, sotto voce, “Damn it.”

But Mary Ann did hear his exclamation and paused. Slowly, she began to understand. Excusing herself, she went into her bedroom and exchanged the sheer robe she was wearing for a soft floor-length velour one in a burnt umber. Returning to the kitchen, she said, “I don’t drink the hard stuff myself and all I have is whiskey or wine. Is that okay and do you want ice?”

“No,” he said. “I’ll take whiskey, straight.”

He watched her carefully as she returned with the drink and looked relieved by her change of clothing. Taking a gulp of the offered drink, he seemed to calm down and continued. “Thank you,” he said with obvious relief.

She smiled as she resumed her seat, saying, “Does my body disturb you, Mr. Chancery?”

He swirled the drink in his glass for a moment and said, “Yes, I suppose it does. I’d sworn I’d never tell this to anyone else, but you have to understand what I’m trying to say. When you first started working at the office, I didn’t know that you were...”

“A freak,” she supplied.

He shook his head, “No! Well, maybe...I know better now. Well, anyway, truth be told, before I knew the facts, I had the hots for you.”

Mary Ann’s arched her eyebrows in surprise but said nothing.

“Go on, laugh if you want to,” he quickly uttered.

“There’s nothing to laugh at,” she stated simply.

“That’s what Edna said when I told her how I felt and she showed me your personnel file. I was angry at being fooled. But, it wasn’t at you. I was angry with myself for being a fool. Why, even if you were a...complete girl, you’re my daughter’s age, or close enough to it. I felt like a dirty old man.”

“Mr. Chancery,” she interrupted, “I didn’t ask for this body. For a little less than twelve years, I was a happy and healthy young boy with his whole life ahead of him. Then an accident occurred which put me into the hospital for a very long time. Before I turned thirteen, this body you see is what some well-meaning doc-

tors who saw it as the only alternative to my ever walking again turned me into. I was not consulted in the matter. Had I been, I'm not at all sure what decision I would've made. But fate has decreed that this is what I will always look like – a woman. I've accepted the hand I was dealt by fate and that means I'm different and that's all. But, aren't we all different from one another in one way or another?"

"I know that now," he acknowledged. "Edna has been ramming this information at me since Wednesday." Pausing, he took a sip of his drink. "Well, to get back to my sad story. When you were promoted and started attending the weekly job progress meetings, it was all I could do to keep my mind off you.

"Yes, yes," he continued before Mary Ann could speak, "I know you never dressed other than in the most businesslike manner. Not once do I ever recall you wearing anything that could be construed as alluring or enticing in any way. But the fact is, those business suits you did wear and that red hair of yours served to make me hot and bothered to no end. I'm just glad you never wore any slacks or pantsuits. That would've been too much for me. There, I've said it."

Her soft voice broke into his anguish. "Is that why you wanted me to dress and behave like a man? Not because of the field supervisors."

He looked into her face and said, "Yes. I couldn't stand seeing you as a woman knowing that you could never...well, you know?"

"Have sex with you," she said bluntly.

He swallowed the rest of his drink in one gulp and said, "Yes, damn you." Realizing what he'd just said, his face turned crimson and he quickly said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean that."

Mary Ann quietly said, "Yes, you did, so don't apologize. I understand the way you feel."

His eyes were pleading, "Do you? Do you really understand?"

"You wanted to get into my panties and when you found out those panties had a penis in them, you thought you were a sexual pervert, or perhaps that *I* was one. Then you became angry with yourself for being made to look like a fool, even if it was only to yourself." she stated quickly and with firm assurance.

He face reddened and he said slowly, "I wouldn't have put it so crudely but, yes, that's it exactly. Only I know now that you aren't a deviant and it was a mistake that could've been made by anyone. When I asked Edna to have someone meet Leslie at the airport, I didn't dream she would pick you. But she did and now Leslie has come under your sway. She's too young to understand all this and when she finds out the truth, I feel she'll withdraw even more into herself. I haven't always been the best of fathers but I do love my daughter and want what's best for her."

"As do I," she stated softly.

"If I could only believe that," he said still doubtfully. "There are so many other considerations."

“You mean like sex,” she countered.

His look of shock amused her, but she continued. “Mr. Chancery, there is very little that can shock me. I’ve had to endure things you couldn’t begin to imagine and I think I know why you feel as you do. You’d like to have grandchildren and you don’t think that would be likely if she went so far as to shack up with, or even marry, me. Just for a moment, remember that I am officially a male. Do not be fooled by how I look. I do have the equipment to give you a grandchild. And yes, I do occasionally get a hard-on.”

Chancery’s face again turned red with embarrassment as he stuttered, “I...didn’t mean... You...God, but this is such a mess.”

Seeing his distress Mary Ann asked, “Would you like another drink?”

Composing himself he said, “No, one’s my limit.”

Mary Ann then asked, “Mr. Chancery, do you miss your wife?”

His quick glance answered her question but he said, “Yes, I do. I miss her very much.”

“And you’ve felt lonely, haven’t you?”

He merely nodded as he cast his gaze downward.

“Mr. Chancery,” Mary Ann continued, “I’ve been lonely too. I’ve been lonely half my life because it’s not easy to find a young lady who would accept me. All I ever wanted out of life was to find someone who would love me for myself, despite how I look on the outside. It’s not easy to approach women without being thought of as a lesbian. I hope Leslie will be that someone who understands and returns the love I have to offer. But I won’t find out if you try to keep her from seeing me.”

“Look, Marion or Mary Ann, I know I can’t keep Leslie away from you if her mind is set on seeing you,” he stated. “Ever since her mother died, she’s also been a very lonely girl and probably sees you as a friend. I suppose I spent most of my time attending to business and haven’t spent very much time with her. But she is my daughter and all I can ask is what any father would. You treat her like the lady she is and tell her the truth.” Then, after a pause in which he eyed her again and how she was dressed, he finished, “I guess I know you will.”

Suddenly rising, Chancery offered his hand to Mary Ann. She accepted it and also stood. “I have to be going,” he said. “I’m supposed to be at the Country Club to meet Leslie. I want you to know that I don’t hold any ill feelings toward you. It’s all been my fault. I think I need to tell you one thing more before I go. There was a rumor floating around the office that Marion left the company and was replaced by a young woman. I’m sure my daughter will hear it tomorrow morning.”

She nodded, “You’re saying I can use it as a way out, is that it?”

He sighed, “I’m not suggesting anything; just passing it on. If Leslie wants you, she’ll find you. I can’t honestly give you my blessing right now but I won’t stand in your way either. If Leslie truly loves you, then there’s not much I can say or do to change it.”

“Thank you, Mr. Chancery. I don’t know if it’ll work out with Leslie. I hope it does,” she said as she shook and released his hand.

Looking around the apartment, Chancery slowly made his way to the front door, escorted by Mary Ann. When he stepped over the threshold, he turned and said, “There’ve been a lot of changes in my life. I find that you are not at all what I first thought. I guess I can accept that. Good luck, Mary Ann.” Then, without warning, he leaned over and gave her a kiss on her cheek, then just as suddenly turned and walked away.

Mary Ann just stood there for a long while watching him walk down the hall to the elevator and then into it. He glanced back her way as he stepped in and waved at her. She waved back and then slowly shut the door, falling back against it to catch her breath. For the first time in her life, she felt like she needed a stiff drink but she settled for a very deep breath.

Her steps took her to her bedroom where she removed the velour robe and sat on the bed for a while to think. In time, she stretched out on the satin covers and went to sleep. Her dreams were still bothered by how she was going to break the news to Leslie.

As she was developing a plan, she reached out for her bolster and hugged it to her in a manner that she wished she could hug Leslie.

## Chapter Seven

Dawn the next day found Leslie awake early. Her night had been a restless one alternating between chills and lustful sweating, so she took a cold shower to hopefully refresh herself. A cup of coffee and a few pieces of lightly browned toast were all she allowed herself at breakfast. A slight nausea still clung to her stomach and she was more than anxious to return to the office and look up Marion. Her efforts to contact him on Saturday had met with failure and her father had asked her to meet him at the Country Club on Sunday, preventing her from calling. When he hadn’t shown up on time, she was prepared to return to her apartment but he eventually got there in time for them to enjoy a Sunday afternoon meal. He later took her to a movie at the Orpheum Theater. Her amazement at his sudden attention to her made her feel warm and loved. What amazed her most was his failure to mention Marion again.

As much as she tried, she couldn’t concentrate on her work that morning. She’d had to retype the same press release four times and still hadn’t got it right. She wanted to call Marion’s office but kept putting it off. Her desire was to see him face to face so that she could be assured he was all right. Then she heard the office gossip rumor about Marion leaving and his female replacement, Mary Ann. Her heart didn’t want to believe it, but she knew that he’d mentioned something about a lawyer. Could it have been something so important that he had to quit Chancery? How could he have forgotten about her? She had to find out and there was only one person in the company she felt would give her straight answers.

It was after 2 o'clock when she exited the elevator and made her way slowly through the maze of hallways and office cubicles. She looked through the glass walls that housed the giant Honeywell computer in the center of the floor. Glancing at the directions in her hand, she made a left at the first intersection and went three doors down. She paused at the door and looked inside, seeing Edna poring over a computer printout with a red pencil, making a check mark every so often.

Tentatively, she raised her hand to knock on the door when Edna looked up and, after a moment, smiled. "Well, I've been wondering when you'd show up down here. Get in here, little missy, and give me a hug."

Leslie replied as she hugged the older woman. "Hello, Aunt Edna. I've been kind of busy up to now so I decided to take a little break and see you."

Edna was all smiles, "So, how's my only niece doing? They're not working you too hard up there in public relations?"

Shrugging, Leslie said, "All I'm doing is typing out copy and cropping pictures. I can't wait until I get into something more important."

"All jobs are important," Edna replied. "Your father wants you to learn about all departments. Wait until you get down here."

Leslie didn't reply immediately as she absently tugged at her left ear lobe. Edna saw the move and smiled to herself. She leaned back in her chair and said, "You want to tell me about it, Honey?"

Momentarily startled, Leslie replied, "Tell you about what, Aunt Edna?"

"What's troubling you," she stated.

"Is it that obvious?"

"I've known you all your life, Leslie. When you're nervous and don't quite know what to say, you tug at your left ear. So, quit chewing on it and spit it out. This is your dirty old Aunt Edna. Remember me; rough and gruff and no holds barred. I'm not a politician or diplomat, Honey, nor am I the socialite your mother was. So say what you have to. Nothing you can utter will shock me."

Openly smiling at the private joke, Leslie replied in almost one breath, "It's about Marion Le Blanc. He and I...That is...Oh, Aunt Edna, I think I'm in love with him."

Edna raised her eyebrows every so slightly, "Well?"

"I can't find him," she almost cried. "I heard through the grapevine he was no longer with the company. He was supposed to take me out to dinner last Friday but he called and canceled, saying he had a legal matter to attend to in another part of the state. I haven't heard from him since. He wanted to tell me something about himself and I can't help but wonder if it had anything to do with this lawyer visit."

Edna stood up and sat beside her niece in the other office chair in front of her desk. Taking Leslie's hands in her own, she replied gently, "I know about that appointment, Honey. But the office gossips got this one a little wrong. Yes, Marion

left, but he's not really gone. I know that doesn't make sense to you right now but he's still here, just not in the way you would think.

"He wanted to explain this to you himself but that meeting with the lawyer interfered with his plans. He called me Saturday night when he got back into town and asked me to set up a meeting with you this afternoon. I know I shouldn't be doing this, but I'm going to tell you what happened. First, however, I have a long story to tell you. It's about a young boy who was involved in a very serious accident and how he became a beautiful young girl called Mary Ann. Let's go over to the sofa and get comfortable, okay?"

Nodding, Leslie let her aunt lead her to the sofa. Then, Edna began to tell her Marion's story.

Much later, Leslie just sat there in amazement as Edna finished, "So, she came back as Mary Ann last Wednesday because she could no longer live a lie and I've never seen her happier or more relaxed. She's got her old confidence back and is very comfortable with herself again; except in her feelings about you."

Leslie's heart skipped a beat, "About me?"

"Yes, honey. She's in love with you. But she's not quite sure how you'd react to her outer appearance..."

"You keep saying 'she' and 'her'," Leslie interrupted. "Is she a man, or a woman?"

A smile crossed Edna's face. "I explained that to you, honey. She's both; but you'll just know when you see her that she's every inch a woman and a refined lady in every meaning of that word. When you do see her, you'll know what I mean. She's a very fine lady but she's also a very lonely young gentleman looking for love and companionship and happiness. And when I say gentle, I mean exactly that. Go in and see her. She always works after closing time to check the daily reports. Go to her and let her talk to you. She never tried to hide what she is. You can thank your father for her trying to live like a man for close to two years. But when I found out the truth of the matter, I read him the riot act, telling him never to interfere with my department or my protégé again or I'd rescind the proxy on my twenty-one percent of the company's stock."

"You didn't," Leslie said, shocked.

"I'm going to tell you something else, dear, and it's not to leave this office. When she first came into my office, I fell in love with her because she reminded me so much of Stephanie. And when she told me her story, my heart completely melted and I couldn't bear to ever part with her. I wanted to keep her close and have for more than four years now. The fact that she is still legally a male doesn't matter to me. I've found out that a person is so much more than a mere sex organ. To me she is a woman, totally and without question. I like to believe she's how Stephanie would've turned out had she not passed on, all too early."

Sensing the sadness in her aunt's voice Leslie hugged her as she finished. "Stephanie wouldn't want you to keep mourning for her, Aunt Edna."

Edna patted Leslie's back and said, "Yes, I know that now. You see, it was because of Mary Ann that I learned to accept the past. She's been through a lot more than I could even begin to imagine and yet she's remains a vibrant and charming young lady. Go talk to her, Honey. You won't be sorry."

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The auburn-haired girl was poring over the reports on her desk with such singular concentration that she didn't hear anyone enter the room. Leslie stared at her for a long moment. She had on a trim gray business dress suit that complimented her marvelous petite figure. A gray plastic hair band that revealed her shapely ears held her hair back. Her face was strikingly beautiful; her makeup accenting the cheekbones and giving her eyes an alluring quality. Her lips were full and lusciously beckoning with a subdued auburn tint. Leslie could feel her heart pound and she found herself short of breath. She had to reach out to grab a chair to keep from falling.

The noise broke through Mary Ann's concentration and she looked up to see a visibly shaken Leslie. Her eyes were open wide, her face had momentarily lost some of its color and her breathing was labored. Momentarily stunned, she sat there but Leslie's distress caused her to rise and go to her aid.

"Leslie, sit down, honey. You look faint."

Mary Ann's hand holding her elbow sent a warm shiver through her body as she helped her to a chair. Then she went to the credenza behind his desk and poured a glass of water from a carafe sitting there.

"Here, drink this slowly," she said when she gave her the glass.

Leslie was speechless. Even in her distress, she observed Mary Ann move swiftly and surely, like a young woman. And she couldn't help but notice her well-formed legs that stood out under the skirt in sheer hosiery. The mounds of Mary Ann's breasts captured her eyes and, in passing, she noted the heels on her shoes had to be over three inches high. She then peered into Mary Ann's face and saw a look of concern there, but so much more. There was a brief look of helplessness that captured her heart even more than it had before.

After she calmed down a bit, Leslie looked at Mary Ann and said, "God, but you're gorgeous! It is you, though. Under the makeup, I can see that it is you. Oh, Marion, I thought you had left and now I see you like this. You really are a woman. Is this what you wanted to tell me? Is this why my father didn't want me to see you?"

Mary Ann smiled, "I'm glad you think so, my dear, but there is so much more to it than that. I'm not really a whole woman but I'm not comfortable any other way. I really am a genetic male. And my name is legally Marion, but I prefer Mary Ann. Are you feeling okay now?"

Leslie nodded her head as she returned the glass to Mary Ann, who placed in on her desk. She had so much to say but found it difficult to begin. Mary Ann,

sensing her unease, began for her. “Leslie, I wanted to tell you that this is the real me. But I was afraid you wouldn’t understand, particularly after I decided to return to the life of a woman permanently.”

“You mean you like to wear women’s clothes and all that?”

Mary Ann paused before replying. Finally she said, “I wear them because they fit my body and my body is that of a woman. The suit you saw me wear as a man had to be specially tailored. But there’s another part of me that wants and desires what you are, a beautiful woman I think, no, I *know* I’m in love with. But, if you find that hard to accept, then I won’t blame you. I know it’s hard for most people to accept my dual nature. I learned to accept myself a long time ago with the help of some very close and understanding friends. For a while, I allowed myself to live a lie, and was very uncomfortable. As you can see, that charade is now over.”

Leslie hesitated to ask her next question but she felt she had to know. “You mean those breasts are real?”

Mary Ann answered, “As real and as sensitive as yours, my dear. Touch them, if you want to be sure.”

“Do you like...boys?” she continued, a bit shaken not making a move to do as Mary Ann had suggested.

Mary Ann reached out to take her hand and again felt the shock that she remembered, “No, I’m not inclined that way. There was one time when I started to try it, but when he found out, he ran screaming for the door. I never tried again. I won’t lie to you, Leslie. I had a lover for a long time but she and I knew it was only temporary. I guess you could say she was a dirty old aunt who wanted to protect and love me.”

“A dirty old aunt,” Leslie repeated remembering what her aunt had just said only that afternoon. “You don’t mean Aunt Edna.”

Mary Ann frowned in puzzlement, “Aunt Edna? Who is Aunt Edna?”

“Your boss, Edna Theriot.”

She chuckled humorously as realization illuminated her, “No. Edna is just a very close friend and confidant, as well as my boss. I would never jeopardize that relationship with sex. No, the person I’m talking about is someone else entirely. A very special person whose identity I can’t reveal. Besides, how is Edna your aunt?” She was now thoroughly puzzled.

She looked at him in surprise, “I thought you knew. She’s my father’s sister.”

A look of comprehension crossed Mary Ann’s face as she replied, “So that’s how she did it.”

“Did what?”

She looked again at Leslie with a smile that literally beamed its way into her very soul. “Never mind,” she replied. “Leslie, I know we’re meant for each other. I want you to consider carefully what I’m about to ask. I want you to marry me, but I’m willing to wait for your answer. Get to know me. I know it’ll be strange going

out with what looks like another woman. But in this city, very few will notice, or care. Or, you decide what we'll do. My heart is in your hands, Leslie."

"Oh, Mary Ann," she cried. "You don't know the half of it. You see, until now, I've never been attracted to boys. I've always been attracted to girls. I've never had sex with a guy in my life but I did have a...relationship in college. I don't know why, but from the very first time I saw you, I wanted to jump your bones, and that's when I thought you were a guy."

Mary Ann smiled. "I'm not sure what you mean but if you want you can think of me as both your boyfriend and your girlfriend. I can assure you, though, that I'm more girl than guy. But, there's enough guy left to do what's necessary, for both of us."

The emotion that Leslie had been feeling erupted into tears as she pulled Mary Ann to her and held her tightly. Their close physical contact caused her to feel once again that euphoria of passion and, yes, even lust. She knew that she would soon be soaking wet. She wanted Mary Ann just as she was, and to illustrate that point, she took Mary Ann's face in her hands and kissed her with a passion she never knew possible. The taste of lipstick on her mouth sent a shiver through her that shook her entire body.

Mary Ann responded with a passion that had been building in her own body and she felt an erection beginning. This was something she hadn't experienced in a long time, except for a few times with Dixie. She wanted Leslie, body and soul. Before things progressed too far, however, Mary Ann pulled back and said, "Honey, not here. Not this way. I'm not a slut and neither are you. I want you more than life itself, but we have to be sure. I'll take you home and we can talk about it tomorrow."

Leslie was reluctant to stop and she knew that what Mary Ann had said was true. But the urge that was in her would not go away and she reached out to Mary Ann. "Let's go to your place tonight, Mary Ann. I want to be with you tonight. Please say yes." The pleading look in Leslie's eyes softened her resolve and she agreed.

As they walked out of the office holding on to one another's hand, Mary Ann saw Edna standing by the elevator in the lobby. Silently, she slipped her a package. Looking at it, Mary Ann saw that it was a package of condoms. Startled, she looked at Edna as she smiled and said, "Little did I dream of this when I asked you to meet Leslie at the airport that day. At best, I'd hoped you two would become friends. So be careful, my two dears - my two girls. I expect each one of you to treat the other like a lady. Don't you hurt each other and don't do anything your dirty old aunt and godmother wouldn't do. Now, both of you give me a hug before you go."

As they parted, Leslie turned to a smiling Edna and said, "Thank you, Aunt Edna, but which one of us is your Cinderella?"

Edna said simply, "Both of you, my dears. The glass slipper fits both of you."

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That night in bed, Mary Ann carried her relationship with Leslie to a new level. They eventually collapsed in each other's arms, spent from their passionate love-making. For the first time in her life, Leslie knew what it was like to be a complete person. She snuggled against Mary Ann's luscious breasts and was quickly asleep. Mary Ann soon followed her as she purred with contentment and love for the creature she now held in her arms after their night of passion. She knew that there would be many more nights like this one and she would no longer have to fall asleep with a bolster between her hungry thighs.

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From the  
August 21, 1972  
New Orleans  
Times Picayune

Chancery – Le  
Blanc Wed In  
Unusual Cere-  
mony

Leslie Marie  
Chancery,  
daughter of Wal-  
ter F. Chancery  
and the late  
Thelma Brous-  
sard Chancery,  
was wed to Mar-  
ion Richard Le  
Blanc, son of the  
late Matthew L.  
Le Blanc and  
Shelia Cramer Le  
Blanc. For the  
ceremony, the  
bride wore an  
exquisitely-  
tailored white  
tuxedo with  
satin trim and  
white custom-  
fitted dress boots



with a two-inch heel. Her hair was coiffed in a classic pageboy. The groom was attired in a shimmering off-the-shoulder wedding gown of white taffeta with a beaded bodice, cathedral train and satin inserts. Elbow length gloves, a white sheer veil with appliqué and a pearl cluster tiara, an antique pearl choker and pearl drop earrings completed the groom's ensemble. Her shoes were white high-heeled sandals with Grecian straps.

The Matron of Honor was Edna Chancery Theriot, Robin Michelle Lester was Maid of Honor and other bridesmaids were Lisa Brown, Frances Adams and Lindsay Vice. They wore floor-length green taffeta gowns with an empress bodice. The best man was Chester Stanley who wore a white tuxedo similar to that worn by the bride. He was accompanied by groomsmen Phillip Gresham, Jacque Patin and Grady Augustine, who were also similarly attired. Ushers for the occasion were Phillipe Des Allemands and Gregory Carlton.

Also in attendance was Tiffany Cramer Carlton, maternal aunt of the bride and her husband Etienne, Mr. & Mrs. Ramsey Carlton III, Dr. John Deshotel and his companion Priscilla Bouvier, Mrs. Lavinia Dumont, Mr. & Mrs. Alfred Le Bourgeois, Mayor & Mrs. Moon Landrieu, Mr. & Mrs. Chatsworth Osborne, Mr. & Mrs. Etienne Fontenot, Dr. & Mrs. Irving Tichner, the Honorable Jackson Bourg, Judge Ray Garrison, Dr. Benjamin and Francesca Duralde, Penelope Duralde, Francesca Claiborne, Felicity Carlton, Jennifer Deshotel, and appearing briefly at the ceremony and reception was the reclusive Jennifer Anne Hebert, the well-known author of romance novels.

The mother of the Groom was dressed in an ankle-length blue sheath dress with gold appliqué and the father of the bride wore a simple brown business suit with a white shirt and simple black tie.

The reception was held at the Municipal Auditorium. Pete Fountain and Al Hirt both made impromptu appearances and favored the party with a bit of jazz entertainment accompanied by the band hired for the occasion. I also have it on reliable authority that the renowned photojournalist Randolph Presley Lane made a short appearance at the wedding and reception. I later learned that he and the groom attended the same grammar school and were very old friends.

The wedding cake was a scrumptious three-tiered affair of Dutch chocolate with white icing. In place of the traditional figures of a bride and groom atop this piece, there was instead a double-filigreed heart entwined together with a pair of turtledoves in flight above them. The groom's cake was of white chocolate and had only a plastic replica of white high-heeled shoes on it.

After the reception, the couple left for an undisclosed destination to begin their two-week honeymoon. On their return, they plan to take up residence in Chalmette with Ms Theriot and return to work at Chancery.

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This reporter would like to add that this may not have been the highlight event of the season, but it was a most pleasurable experience and Ms Carlton and Ther-

iot can be commended for their expert planning of the event. I've attended many weddings in my four years as Society Editor, but I can't ever recall having a more joyous time and a more surprising turn of events.

Also to be commended is the construction crew of Chancery Unlimited who assembled in Audubon Park the exquisitely simple yet elaborately detailed temporary open-air chapel for the service in a matter of two days. The pictures that appear with this story don't do it justice. It's my understanding that Walter Chancery is going to dismantle it so that it can be reassembled for anyone who requests it. I think that this coming June, he will have quite a few requests.

From the August 23, 1972 edition of the Times-Picayune  
Editorial by the Society Editor

This city has borne witness to many unique events throughout its long history. One such event occurred last Saturday and was reported in Monday's edition of this paper. It was the report of that event that spurred an unprecedented amount of feedback to this editor and this paper. That is why I've taken the highly unusual step of placing this very first editorial in the Society section of this paper.

The event was the society wedding of Leslie Chancery, daughter of Walter F Chancery, CEO of Chancery Unlimited, to Marion Le Blanc in an outdoor ceremony held at Audubon Park. A wedding attended by many celebrities; including the Mayor of this city and the well-known, but reclusive, author Jennifer Anne Hebert. (The full list of notables can be seen in Monday's coverage.) What was unique about this wedding was readily noticeable by those who attended the ceremony and became known to the city at large in the aforementioned coverage.

I want to state to all our eagle-eyed readers that there was no error in the report. Absolutely no typographical or proofreading mistake occurred. I personally edited the story and can attest that what I wrote was accurate; but I now see that a bit of explanation needs to be forthcoming. The couple in an exclusive interview they granted me during the reception supplied this information.

Marion Richard Le Blanc is a genetic male but for more than half his life he has lived as a woman called Mary Ann Le Blanc, due to a medical condition that gave him a female body around the time of his puberty. His is a body I can guarantee that some of the fairer sex, including myself, would kill for. (Yes, they are real, and don't ask me how I know that.)

In speaking with some medical specialists at Charity Hospital and Touro Infirmary, I found out that there is no one term for this condition. Some call it *intersex* others call it *transsexualism* and I've heard no fewer than three even more vague terms. The experts referred me to the work of Dr. Harry Benjamin for more details. I found that whatever the name, it is not an uncommon occurrence and a primary reason for it is the fact that female hormones become dominant forcing the body to develop female characteristics like broader hips, narrower waists and female breasts. This usually occurs at puberty before the development of body

hair, an Adams apple, final bone formation and other male characteristics, such as larger skin pores.

During their interview, the couple told me they decided to switch roles because of this condition and other, private reasons, they would not elaborate upon. I think I can safely say without fear of contradiction, that she was the loveliest groom it has ever been my pleasure to see or meet at such an event. Her deportment and dress were impeccable and she impressed me as one of the most refined ladies it has ever been my pleasure to meet. She was gracious, witty, charming and at ease with who she is. I know many genetic females who could well learn from her. (Yes, I used the feminine pronoun deliberately because if you knew her as I do now, you would be hard-pressed to consider her a man, even though that is what the official record shows. And anybody who can walk as elegantly as she did in four-inch spike heel sandals deserves my respect and admiration.)

The bride was equally impressive to this reporter, for she also demonstrated an ease and comfort in the minor role she'd evidently selected for herself. Although not as outgoing as her mate, she managed to overcome an evident shyness to explain many of these things to me, saying for the record that she felt more comfortable in pants and slacks than in a dress and that her husband was far more qualified to fill out the wedding dress than she was.

During the interview, I could not help but see the chemistry between them. I don't believe I've ever seen such a deep sense of love and understanding between two people in my life. They exhibited a completeness that I've seen in very few couples. And so, once again, this city has been witness to a very unique event, one that can well be placed in the category of fairy tale endings. I firmly believe they will indeed live happily ever after in a love more true than I've ever seen before. Their story should serve as a lesson in what love is all about. Perhaps even we foolish "normal" people may learn from it.

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February 20, 1974 – New Orleans States Item

Born: Sean Walter Matthew Le Blanc, 8 lb. 2 oz, February 14, son of Mary Ann (Marion Richard) Le Blanc and Leslie Chancery Le Blanc, 9:45 am at St. Charles General Hospital.

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July 15, 1974 – New Orleans Times Picayune

Mary Ann Le Blanc named Comptroller at Chancery Unlimited.

Edna Chancery Theriot named to Board of Directors upon her retirement as Comptroller of Chancery Unlimited.

...Plans to devote her retirement years to help raise her grandnephew/godson.

## Cajun French

To those who may be unfamiliar with certain Cajun French words here is a brief glossary of terms often used in South Louisiana.

Tetu - Literally, Hard Headed; stubborn

Comment Ca Va – How are you doing?

Ca Va Bien – I am doing fine.

Oui – Yes

Mon Dieu – My God

Mon Petite – My Little One

Ci Vous Plait – If you Please

C'est tout (Finis) – That's all (The end)

Au Ruvoir – Until We Meet Again

Adieu – Goodbye

Bon, Bonne – Good

Bataille Royale – Royal Battle

Mon Ami – My Friend

Mon Cheri – My Dear

Rouge – Red

Le Blanc - White

Ayez un bon jour- Have a Good Day

Entre – Come In

Merci – Thank you