

# ABBY

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## Chapter 9 - Loan Applications

The lawyer Leslie Sander's face hardened as she became annoyed with me. "Abby! You just can't leave well enough alone, can you? The government doesn't have to keep you anymore. You go making trouble for the County Board Chairman and his old cronies and they just might throw you out on the street. Or worse, spin a story or two and have you committed to the State Mental Hospital for serious and for real. What would Kim, Sheri, and all the others do then? No, don't go there."

I could hear the whine in my own voice. "I just can't ignore what I see, and they told me to."

She leaned back in her creaky old wooden chair in her office, took in a deep breath, and came forward again. "But he didn't mean for you to make life harder for him by causing trouble. I ought to put you over my own knee and give you that spanking you so richly deserve. You are totally out of bounds wearing girl's clothes."

My heart sank.

"They may let you stay a while longer as that lawsuit works its way through the Courts. But that's no guarantee the State Board will let you and your facility have a license. A transvestite in diapers as a state licensed operator? Give me a break."

At least she didn't laugh in my face.

She frowned again. "How serious are you?"

"How serious do I have to be? I was abused. We were all abused. Just what do they want us to do? Die? Commit suicide? Make a big scene with the press? How much more serious do we have to be?"

Leslie leaned forward in her chair with her elbows on her desk and her chin on her hands. "You grow on me. This is crazy. You are going to do this on your own or it won't happen. You are going to raise the money yourself without anyone's permission. You have to do something dramatic to overcome your young age and wrong voice which are against you."

I just sat there in deathly silence. My stomach was a knot. I took a very deep breath to loosen it which didn't work. "What do I have to do."

"You are going to form a new charitable foundation for the Manson House." She turned to her computer screen with her fingers flying across the keyboard. The printer whirred. She handed me the Articles of Incorporation for a foundation. "You are coming to the Chamber of Commerce Civic Awards Banquet Thursday evening of next week. Cost is \$185 each for you, Sheri, and Kimmie, and they have to come too."

"\$185? Yikes! They wont like that. We don't have any money."

"You asked what you have to do. They have to come too. You are going to walk the walk and talk the talk starting now. Tell everyone you meet that you are forming a non-profit charity for the Mansion, and that you need an Advisory Board. Visit the service clubs of Kiwanis, Lyons, and Rotary. Pick one, join, and participate. Your age is under 35 so join the Jaycees, too."

She paused. "You are launching a political campaign without the benefit of running for public office. You are creating your own public office. The only way to succeed is to raise that money."

I buried my face in my hands and wept.

She didn't interrupt. She didn't put her arms around me and do a 'there, there'. She sat there as I pulled myself together and stopped being a helpless little kid.

I sniffled as I felt so awful. "I don't have any money."

She reached for her purse and slapped money on her desk. "You owe me seventy five bucks. Sign it and mail it this afternoon. You have just enough time to take it to the Post Office." She was a whirling dervish writing a cover letter, envelope, and a check to the state government. Those were all for filing that paper she had made.

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Thursday evening of the following week the butterflies in my stomach refused to fly in formation. Tara was driving the bus. I was not happy as we got out at the parking lot of a Country Club. Sheri appeared to be tormented, and Kim wasn't much better. Megan and Peggy kept hiding in the back. I tried to hold their hands but they were having none of it. In the parking lot Leslie Sanders arrived out of the dark. I wondered if she had waited until we arrived. I hoped not, but she probably did. I wet my diaper in nervousness. Leslie grabbed my hand with the iron grip of the maiden aunt and in we went.

The young women at the sign in table were positively glowing. They were not

showing any of the psychological distress of the people at the Mansion. Leslie put a finger down on my name tag laid out in alphabetical order on a table of tags. I was grateful I didn't have to say a thing right then. The boy in my voice would have given me away embarrassing me. I fantasized the surgery for changing my voice. The name tag read my first name of Abby in big letters and below that my Metzger last name not so big. Under that was my title Chair and further down the long name Manson House Foundation. My business cards were conveniently in a pocket the seamstresses had made in my woman's suit jacket. Between the makeup, the hair style, the lipstick, the dangling earrings, and the business skirt-suit, I was extraordinarily good looking.

Leslie did the slightest flip of her head I was to follow. Within fifty feet she was introducing me to someone who seemed as old as my grandfather. By the fifth cluster of people she openly introduced me. "Abby; tell them about your needing an Advisory Board."

So much for concealing my voice, but no one scowled.

Kim, Sheri, Megan, and Peggy were no help sticking with Tara like wallpaper. Or maybe like flypaper.

By the time we sat down for dinner I had a handful of other peoples' business cards and invitations to talk to the Chamber. Plus invitations to speak to the Jaycees, the Rotary, the Kiwanis (whatever the hell that was), and the Lyons with their eyesight program. Some woman lawyer running for the state legislature was the President of something. I felt worse than being the little kid among the grown ups with all these business leaders. I was feeling sick when Leslie grabbed my hand. She towed me through the crowd and introduced me to the Mayor.

I felt lucky I didn't throw up on the spot. "Mr. Mayor, Ms. Sanders is correct I want to form this Foundation and fund it, but I can't lie. Do you know who I am?"

He took off his glasses and examined my face. "No, young lady, I do not. What is it that you are so anxious to tell me?"

I almost threw up before I realized he had called me a feminine word. "Do you know that old Mansion House north of town that burned down?"

His eyebrows told me he didn't remember.

"Sir. I'm a victim of a criminal slave operation that was in there." I blushed heavily. My mouth would not work.

To his credit he waited.

"And so are dozens of other people. They wrecked us, and now we have to wear diapers all the time. The families and employers of most of the victims who went

home couldn't stand it. They came back."

I thought there was an area of silence around us with everybody listening to my secrets. But Tara told me later that was only because I was so focused on this Mayor.

"If you want it badly enough, it will happen. Ms. Spencer, do you believe Abby here is genuine about this?"

"To the bottom of my heart. She is their elected representative. She has demonstrated her leadership. If she can't do it then no one can. They know they are in for a very hard time if they can't find a way to lift themselves up."

I almost puckered up.

"Then make it so. That place has become a public disgrace. Something has to be done before the whole town is demoralized for decades. Only a generous person can speak of generosity without a catch in their throat. You have to give this everything you have to give for having such generosity with integrity. What's the next thing you need to do?"

I held up my fist full of business cards. In the dim light my red fingernails were much too dark. "Advisory Board."

He took my cards and flipped through them. "You'll need better than this. Can you come to my office Monday morning the week after next? Say 11 o'clock? Can you run a Foundation?"

I ordered myself to be still inside, but my voice gave me away by cracking and going weak. "I have to." I didn't add another word for a moment, and then lightning flashed through my head of what he had said. My voice became powerful. "I am prepared to do whatever it takes, and to give this everything I have to give. I have to save all of us no matter what. If that means hiring others who know more than I, how do I find them?"

"That Advisory Board. Who are your Board of Directors?"

"The victims determine who is on the Board. We haven't finished that decision because we don't know what we need to know."

His face relaxed. "Honest answer. Call my assistant so we can schedule enough time." He handed me his card.

My legs felt like pudding as he turned and walked away.

Kim said she almost leapt out of her skin with joy and excitement when she heard of the upcoming meeting at the Mayor's office.

Two weeks after that first meeting I was back in the Mayor's office a second time with a room of people. I had a smelly accident just before leaving the Mansion, but the others had quickly changed and cleaned me. They hugged me, and slapped my padded butt as I was heading for the exterior door. "Go, Abby, go. Your best is good enough." Tara drove me.

He told them just how awful this was, how young and inexperienced I was, and how crazy this was for me to take on. But this was a pressing need. The County and City needed this before they were assessed a judgment of far more than they could afford. He did say he had talked to the Judge who had said this was all so out of bounds she was watching.

I told them I would do whatever they said starting with how often to meet. I also said my goal was to make the Foundation a nationally recognized expert in healing people with our psychic damage.

They had never had anyone say that to them before. They owned my success as their own. All of a sudden none of them cared one whit, not one, about my diapers, my wrong voice, or even my cross dressing. None of that mattered anymore.

Within a month I was planning a golf event when I hadn't known a thing about the game. If I had been asked, I actually disliked that game. But they hadn't asked, and I didn't have to play it. I just had to organize the event.

I admitted privately and then in a big circle at the Mansion everything I was going through. At one of those big meetings we realized that we were over working the women and their care-taking skills. The men took over the laundry with the constant flow all day and late into the evening with smelly yucky diapers. We all had difficult feelings with that, which Tara used that to bring more difficult feelings to the surface. She organized and assigned people to groups. The men took over managing applying and removing the handcuffs and ankle chains as decided by Tara, Pat, the police, or a big meeting. Pat remained in those special handcuffs much of the time. She never went out of the building.

The Jaycees made me uncomfortable. The guys drank too much alcohol and talked about sports and fast cars and the gals let them get away with it. I summoned my strength to talk to two women one night about the Foundation. They didn't put up with my temerity. Boom. The Jaycees were organizing a team among themselves for identifying which businesses in town to ask for donations. They put together the draft brochure which a printer put into better form and printed. They Jaycees went back to the churches of their youth and talked with the Pastors and the youth groups. The church youth carried the brochures by hand all over town. No mailing costs, and something better as their personal contact begat more personal contact for the Mansion House, and for terrified me. I wet so much at those meetings I went straight to the changing station when I returned. Whoever was on diaper changing duty would invariably tow me with a hand clamped around my wrist to a changing mat. Tara would

arrive quickly, and help remove my gorgeous clothes. She would take a quick look at me and make a fast decision. That was whether to handcuff my wrists and put me in Kim and Sheri's little baby outfit. She was right in sometimes I needed an intense dose of care-taking. The people on duty for changing and pumping did their best for my feelings, too.

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A woman business group heard about all of this and decided they and their community had better make this right. Or as right as they could. They put me onto the idea of asking for pledges instead of donations. There were bankers in the Jaycees whose bosses were in those service clubs. The service clubs all wanted an update speech. I could just feel the anxieties wash over my back like acid every time I had to give another talk.

I told a big circle meeting at the Mansion House about my reactions to giving talks. About how my back felt like acid flowing over it.

A woman who rarely said much stood up, silently walked over to me with tears in her eyes, and gave me a hug. In her arms I was shuddering and sobbing. Her voice wasn't all that strong at first. "We have to do better. We have to let Abby know how much we value her. Maybe back off on that little infant training thing. Just a little maybe. She is out there in the public. She is struggling. She has the wrong voice. But she is the one of us who is out there. We too have to go out in that community and walk the walk and talk the talk with her."

A week later forty Mansion residents in dresses and diapers were at nearly that many street corners bearing a placard. "Need Help" was in big letters with more written below. The next week the front page of the local newspaper was completely occupied by us and our plight.

A young woman banker from the Jaycees called our front desk. How soon could she visit. At least the police were honest with her about that odor. She asked the police to ask me if I knew what a business plan was? The police relayed back that I had no idea and neither did anyone else.

One of those arrived with a cover letter requiring a pledge of secrecy. "Show us how you can repay the loan. We have a need to make such a loan as part of the requirements for the Community Reinvestment Act." When I called her on the phone she tried explaining that to me. All I remembered was that bank regulators insisted they have such a program.

Kim found three women to serve as bookkeepers whether they knew any accounting or not. They had to use Tara's computer until we talked the bank into the finance committee needing its own. We held a big meeting in a circle when the difficulties became too difficult about allocating expenses.

We all struggled with what we could and could not do with the amount of money we had been told was the maximum available. It was an awful process for people whose self esteem was so low it couldn't cast a shadow at sundown. None of us understand business finance anyway. But we were learning even with the screaming fights that broke out. When that happened Pat, Tara, and the police waded in with more handcuffs.

This all came to a halt when the police woman on duty at our front desk called loudly there was an important telephone call.

The bank couldn't fund us. Our location on a swamp was vulnerable to flooding with the next strong hurricane.