

ICE STORM

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Chapter 19 - White Top

I saw something had gone wrong when I entered the church basement for the Cross Dressers Support Group. I took a chair without my normal upbeat style. Maybe I should have tried, but for once that didn't seem such a good idea.

One of the regulars had become an alcoholic and did two AA meetings a day. She called those meetings sandwiches for being at both ends of her lonely black days. She held up a plastic card and read the real AA version of the step about admitting to God and another human being our faults.

I couldn't stand it. "OK. What's got you all so down?"

They went around the room one at a time, but never said what had become different. One of the t-girls broke down and cried. The he inside the she clothes finally let the cat out of the bag, and she made it all my fault, too.

I felt myself sitting up ready for a fight.

She had been rejected for working at Pies On The Run.

I asked. "How come?"

On of the others spoke first. "We are nearly broke from too many people. We had a growth spurt, but it didn't spurt enough."

I asked. "And everyone is mad or sad at everyone else?"

Nobody disputed that.

I said. "So. Find or create another business. Don't glare at me. Or am I supposed to invent this out of the blue?"

The leaden silence became poisonous.

Some stray comment from one of those bankers at the Jaycees came to mind. Or could that be from the car dealer? "I have an idea, but need to check first. You guys shouldn't depend on me so much."

Their eyes became angry with that comment. That had been too close to home for most of them.

"OK. I'll see what I can do. Everyone returning next week? Yes? The entire group

has to approve or someone will feel hurt thinking they were left out, or from favoritism. No absences next week. Yes?"

A few nodded.

"Everyone."

Begrudgingly everyone agreed.

I asked a bank loan calling officer I had met at the Jaycees about my idea, and she agreed. "Form a taxi company. We finance the cars. You charge the drivers a hundred dollars a day. Run it off a cell phone." The car lease was \$500 a month. \$100 a day rental by a driver times twenty working days a month was \$2,000 a month. Gee, a trained monkey could do this. Maybe an untrained one. The t-girls drove using their masculine voices. A t-man used his woman's voice on the phone as the dispatcher. I owned the company because a woman lawyer coming as a sometimes t-man formed it for me with my money. She hurt at least as much as everyone else. My having her do it made a big boost for her self esteem.

At church hospitality I asked around for any light industrial space for lease. Kaboom – we had a warehouse where a t-girl exercised the guy inside her for oil changes which grew into light repairs. It grew more as a car repair business, but that came later.

They needed a name. The first leased car came as all white which suggested 'White Top Cab'. Someone found the style of hats bus drivers used to wear, so we bought enough of those in white as a ready memory hook.

The company almost failed financially leasing too much stuff, but we survived. Then they thrived as I learned from Rick about staying out of their way.

That expanded Pies On The Run. They could make the meals. Delivery had been their headache. Now they had a ready built in delivery service.

A very special guest came to the support group. She looked vaguely familiar. She disclosed himself as Lisa the Pastor's brother. He took awhile to find his feet in the group. When he did the taxi company hired him and he ran around to the restaurants for more business delivering meals for those restaurants.

That t-girl remained so unhappy feeling she didn't fit in no matter what any of us said.

I had to try. "What have you tried doing? That is, before you ever came here."

"Florist shop."

I took my handheld in its baby blue case out of my shoulder bag from under my spare diapers and next to my revolver. I pushed icons bringing up Google maps. "There aren't any floral shops on the side of town of our warehouse. How about a floral shop?"

Her eyes said he didn't believe he could do that.

"Aw, c'mon. Just start. Print fliers that Pies and the drivers can take around. Emphasize delivery. That way the first orders are filed by purchases from the other

floral shops. It's not much, but it is more than nothin'. And who knows, fake smiling and see what happens."

One of the t-men caught it. "Oh go on. The way Sandy just said that it can't hurt. I wish I could."

"You lost your job?"

"The girl inside the men's clothes sniffled for a few tears."

"What did you ever do?" Lightning streaked through my brain. "I'm so tired of the expense of all my new clothes I've even thought of taking up sewing. Did you ever sew anything back when you were a girl or a teenager that is?"

His head nodded ever so reluctantly.

I slapped my forehead. "Why didn't I think of this before. Let's go to Goodwill and Salvation Army and see if I or we can buy a sewing machine. What else do you need to make me good clothes?"

"Patterns."

"Where can we buy those?"

"Crafty Planet."

"One set?"

"No. Need a pattern for each style."

"Expensive."

"No. \$2.99 to \$8.99 each." His face became less mean spirited. "Might be wise to buy the fabric there instead of on the Internet until we find out which fabrics work best for you."

I asked. "What else would help?"

He said. "Buy a leotard and wear it for taking measurements, plus photos for the proportions." He eyed me closely. "Next Saturday we go shopping together. You need costume hips for this to look right, too. How serious are you?"

"How serious are you? If we buy this stuff will you do it?"

"Dress form. If you want really high quality stuff, I can do better if we have a dress form."

"How much?"

"Look in Amazon."

I did right then and passed him my handheld. "Which one?"

"Ninety bucks ought to buy a good one. They have many choices. Are you really

going full time with women's dresses and staying with it?"

"I do already." I stood up, held my hands out from my sides, and turned completely around in place.

"Your shape isn't quite right. Us girls can see it. By the time your diaper bulge matches your masculine arms and legs you going to need a bigger bra cup with front and back padding."

One of the ones who had been silent but whose face radiated thinking said. "Website. White Top Tailor and Seamstress is going for the transgender market for serious and for real. OK, boys and girls, make your faces seem right and everyone is a model for the good of the cause. For getting us all up out of our misery and make this world a better place."

One of the white top people interrupted. "Florist in one corner. Custom tailor in another corner. Pretty soon we'll be a mini-mall."

I pulled my blond hair over my shoulder. "My beauty salon put up a poster of me as a promo. How about we take photos of the first product and make fliers for taking around? Keep the costs down until the cash flow can afford a spiffy website."

"Bull shit. This is going to fly because we are going to make it fly. Sandy you have been trying to get us on the team of ourselves. You have cared about us more than we cared about us. I get it now. White top cab is a good name for a taxicab company. How about Cedar Falls florist because we meet here. We'll come up with a spiffy name for the clothing business."

"Exquisite Fit Tailors" flew out of somebody's mouth.

A t-girl named Joyce hadn't said much until now. "What make's the money?" The he inside the she made a short pause. "Creativity and marketing. People hate selling. We can form more businesses, but have others do the work. Let's put an add in the newspaper such as 'Interviews Tuesday 10am; honest work for transsexuals only.' We set up chairs back there." She flipped her head toward the big unused open space. "Cheap way to start, and we'll see who and what shows up."

"Make it so."

White Top Cab put a slogan on their delivery way bills. Emergency Delivery. They received orders for delivery needing trucks which they rented at U-Haul until the rental costs exceeded the monthly financing costs if we bought our own.