

ICE STORM

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Chapter 21 - Rockhard

One Sunday afternoon I knew something had gone terribly wrong at the Cross Dressers Support Group. The girl wearing men's clothing calling himself Benny had arrived on the verge of tears. The man wearing women's clothing calling herself Peggy sat stony faced without saying a word.

I had a dried piece of pineapple in my hand from the trail mix in bowls around the tables when I froze in place. "Hey, guys, I know I'm doing the wrong thing."

There were a few subtle nods of agreement in the silence.

I said. "Benny; you're about to break down and cry in a very girl like way. Peggy; you've frozen in place reminding me of a male teenager about to explode into violence. Nobody is saying either of you have to be anything, or say anything, or join in at all, but the shut down is noticeable. If you are facing a terribly difficult decision, such as involuntarily reverting, we can't be supportive, or even empathetic, if you don't tell us. And for Gawd's sake care for us enough to not saddle us with guilt if you slink out of here and commit suicide."

Benny wept. Peggy remained glacial.

I said. "One of you on each side of them take their hands. I don't know if this is the right thing to do, but we as a group have to do something for our feelings about ourselves."

One of the t-girls Suzanne tugged on Peggy's hand. "C'mon. What's up? Are you penniless living in the street?"

Both Benny and Peggy wagged their heads ever so slightly for no. "About to be. No place even to store my clothes. I hate my clothes."

"You mean your old clothes? Your clothes for your original natal gender?"

They both nodded so slightly as to be almost imperceptible.

I said. "Guys, do I have your permission?" Women called each other guys all the time, and the group had adopted the habit.

"You two are about the same size. Could you swap a bunch of clothes? Peggy might be thrilled if Benny still had a pink dress. Benny could be thrilled with a man's suit. Might that be possible? Might that give you something to talk about? At least with each other?"

The tension in the room took a long downhill slide in the silence.

Benny stopped crying. "That would be wonderful."

The next meeting they arrived together, and something had happened. They both exuded a joy we had never seen in either of them. They took everyone's breath away when they said they were dating. It came pouring out that Benny had a new job driving a delivery truck and had the money to pay rent. Peggy had brought all of his men's clothing to Benny, and had moved in with Benny. When things happen, they happen fast.

One of the t-men asked in his natural feminine voice. "Are you two intimate?"

"Yes," they were.

The entire group beamed at them with big smiles. Nobody wanted to discuss troubles for the rest of the session.

My head went into visions of whether they kept to their faux feminine and masculine roles for actual sexual intercourse, or just reverted. Turned out everyone else had similar questions, but we all kept quiet.

Peggy got a job at the front desk of an auto rental agency.

Early that next week I watched an electrical inspector at a work site. Mr. Rick had warned me the electrical inspectors had been taking the word of the master electricians instead of actually looking at the work. I followed them around with a clip board noting down anything that needed correcting. I received mean stares, but the site boss knew why I had arrived. He gave the inspector a fudged story about my being there in training to learn.

We had arrived at a main distribution panel for a floor receiving electrical and fiberoptic cabling when yelling broke out outside. A horn sounded for a dangerous emergency. More yelling erupted as I went to an exterior wall and watched outside.

The tower crane had hooked up to a refuse container built to roll off and roll onto a specialized truck. One of the four cables had broken loose of the heavily loaded container being picked up high in the building to be lowered to the ground. The other three cables were never intended to keep that load level on their own, and the end missing a cable drooped. People scrambled out of the way if that container dropped several floors to the ground. Instead, the crane lost control on the lower end. The whole thing had gone vertical when it dumped its load including heavy metal and hardened concrete scraps.

What a racket.

Fortunately no one had been hurt, but that crane arm come up way too fast from the sudden loss of weight in the load.

I held my breath fearing for the crane operator's life. The crane survived. They lowered that container to the ground.

I appointed myself as an inspector of what had happened. Down at the container all became quickly obvious. One of the big holes in the container's steel frame used for

securing it had completely failed at that hole letting go of the hook. Another hole had been seriously damaged before, and the other two weren't all that great either.

I found the site boss and told him. He called Mr. Rick who sent me back for taking images with my handheld, and I took way too many.

By the time I returned to the electrical inspection that site boss had gone.

The next week Mr. Rick had my front desk buddy Sharlene call me to come into the office. I found him in a huddle with all of his vice-presidents. "Hey, Sandy, come in."

I had never been in the presence of all of them at the same time before. "Uh, yes sir. What's up?"

"You formed a business, didn't you? That lunch catering thing."

"Yes sir. I don't run it." I didn't tell him that I worked with them on some Saturdays as they tried to understand their income and expenses. They had almost gone broke more than once.

"That's OK. Have a seat."

They were sitting around a table in the small conference room making it overcrowded. I pulled a chair out of a corner, slid my hand behind my skirt like a real girl, and sat down with them. I kept my mouth shut.

Rick said. "Give Sandy a Confidentiality and Loyalty Agreement."

The VP Tom took one out and laid it on he table. "Sandy, this is super hush hush. Read that form and sign it."

I did both. "OK, sir, what's this all about?"

"We have a telephone call warning us that the recycling service we use is about to be shut down for violations. And so are their competitors. All of them have been dumping site refuse illegally. And worse, they have been taking animal remains from the veterinarians and dumping those too. We can't get past Monday without a haul."

The VPs agreed.

"You have a lawyer?"

That one in the Cross Dressers group came to mind who had done the incorporation of Pies On The Run. "Yes, sir."

"Good. Go incorporate something. After that is in progress, go talk to every banker you know. Visit their office. Tell them you have the financial backing, which is us, to form a recycling company. Take a pause as they think. Then share with them the secret. Ask them if they could find out if they have a line of credit to a recycling company. If they do, ask if you could take over their equipment. Got that?"

"Uh, sir, you jest."

"No, Sandy, not at all. Go do it."

“Yes, sir.”

Rick continued. “Don’t for a minute expect reciprocal honesty. Don’t tell them the next part of that suit against the Union is about to grow legs. More will be drawn in for their role in that reporting on the police. Our competitors and those recycling companies may be disqualified from bidding. You follow?”

“No, sir. I mean I hear what you are saying, sir, but it doesn’t make sense to me.”

“I’d take the time to explain, but you have to hustle right now this afternoon. Call me when the banks close and let me know what they said.”

My diaper almost demanded attention when I called Rick, but I only reached voice mail. I went through a McDonald’s drive in for a quick dinner. I reached him on the next try.

“Sandy; call Jake at Rockhard Recycling. He is a big ole rough guy with meaty hands. You’ll have to weather a little attempted intimidation with him. He’s a rough ole guy covering he is a softy inside. His people cheated on him which is about to close him down like all the others. Tell him I told you to call, and let me know what he does with that.”

When I punched icons for the number Rick gave me my handheld read out ‘Rockhard’.

The voice came through as gruff enough. “Yeah.”

“Is Jake in?”

“Speaking. Wacha need?”

“This is Sandy. My boss Rick Blanchard told me to call you.”

He cut me off. “He did, did he? Yeah. He scared the bejesus out of me. Get your butt over here now.”

“Uh, sir, did Rick tell you anything about me?”

“Oh, yeah, he said you’re his champion fight picker even if you wear girl’s clothes. Well, get on over here and let me see how cute and sexy you are.” He gave me the address.

Rockhard had been located on the undesirable side of an industrial park between a concrete company I had learned not to like and a smelly garbage company. I drove right on by those two, parked in a more hospitable office park, refreshed my lipstick, adjusted my bra, and did my best with powdering my face. In the mirror I saw I had managed to cover over my masculine facial pores. My nail polish had chipped a little, but maybe that could be a good image for construction. I brushed my hair with a little conditioner managing to pull on a few knots the hard way. The head rest of the car seat could not be the place to pull my hair together in back forcing me out of the car. That worked for tucking in my blouse into my waist band and arranging my skirt properly. My diaper would have to wait.

Their lot had a jumble of recycling containers, trucks for rolling those on and off,

a few dinged pickup trucks, and a car.

I let myself in the unlocked front door. I raised my voice. "Mr. Jake, sir?"

"Back here." The voice came across as rough as before.

I followed where I thought the sound came from. I found myself on an oil stained floor of a large repair bay with one of those roll off trucks elevated a little on jacks.

The door behind me banged open frightening me. That big, tall, broad, muscular, and fat guy wore a one piece coverall stained with grease and grit.

If I had been a real girl I might have been scared to death. Instead, my right hand went across my belly reaching for my gun in my shoulder bag.

"Jesus. Rick didn't tell me he had a beauty queen working for him. You ain't no guy in a disguise."

"Yes sir, I'm a guy. You can tell by my low voice. Did Mr. Rick tell you why I dress like a girl? It's just a disguise."

"No, girl, he didn't tell me nothin' like that. Rick's a good man. Now come on in the office and tell me what this is all about."

I didn't get past three sentences when Jake cut me off and told me Rick had called back and told him everything. "He says you have formed a few businesses and know bankers. Is he lyin'?"

I said. "I might not say it that way, but I've never known Rick to lie. At least never to me."

He said. "Good. Your hand went for your gun when I surprised you. OK, girl, if Rick says we have to do business, I'd rather it be with someone who has held their own in a few fights. Intimidated drivers can't last in this business. Look at what they have done to me. Tell Rick I said yes, send it over to the lawyers, and let's shock the shit out of the drivers some day soon. Rick tells me you reorganized his purchasing department. You get you pretty ass in here tomorrow, sharp, at 7:30. We, you and me, have to figure out who we keep and who were part of the problem around here."