Revert to Default

A Short Story for the “Abducted” Contest

By Maryanne Peters

I make no secret of what I do within the Bureau – I just have to put up with the whole “X Files” thing. That is not a division called anything in particular, but there are unexplained phenomena that can benefit from being investigated by people who have a background in unexplained phenomena. My name is known and I might be called in.

If I investigated every case of alien abduction then I would need a staff of a hundred. It seems like almost everyday somebody within our huge country is picked up by a beam of light, has their anus explored and then they are dumped gently back in bed. Why would an alien race want to do that? It makes no sense.

I think that I have heard it all, but if there is one rule that is true for any good investigator – do not assume. Do not assume that the known criminal is the killer, do not assume that the husband is having an affair, do not assume that an outlandish story is nonsense until it is disproven. But, of course, I do not expect to be called in unless there is something truly unusual. There has to be something that convinces law enforcement that this might be worthy of closer analysis.

I was called in to a small town in Vermont to meet a person who was just identified as Jane Doe. I was told that this person claimed to be somebody called Sam Kilgour, a person who had disappeared from the town 26 months before her arrival. Jane Doe knew a huge amount about Sam Kilgour including very private and personal information, so she was being held for questioning regarding the mysterious disappearance. Jane Doe was insisting that she was Sam Kilgour. The problem was that Sam Kilgour was a man, and Jane Doe was definitely not that.

The second thing that was odd were the marks on Jane’s body when she called into the local police station. The police report said that she was covered in tattoos – lines and symbols that were apparently indelible but then suddenly disappeared. Fortunately they were photographed during the medical examination that she insisted on. That examination confirmed that she was female, but apparently a close relative of the missing man – a sister although no such person was recorded as ever having existed.

“I was abducted by aliens,” said Jane. “Along with a woman I was held prisoner. I fought to escape and finally I was released. They did this to me!”

There was no description of little green men or squid-like creatures. The aliens were referred to as being concealed and their work done by technology. It somehow made her story a little more plausible.

My curiosity was sufficiently aroused for me to make the trip. I flew to Burlington where I was picked up for the drive into the hills.

I had the dossier. It contained pictures of a very attractive young woman and pictures of the myserious tattoos. There was a doctor’s report saying that there was no sign of injury and that “Miss Doe” was a healthy young woman in all respects, including by chromosome – that is to say “she had always been a woman” in the opinion of the doctor. There were her statements – two taken a day apart and marked to establish consistency. And there was a statement from the mother of Sam Kilgour that mentioned several times – “There is no way she would have known that unless she was very well acquainted with Sam”.

As I said, sufficient unexplained information to interest me, but no evidence of any crime.

I walked into the police station. It was a small outfit, but it looked well organized. I was met at the door by the police chief. He struck me as one of those community oriented law enforcement officers that know their town and everybody in it, but also know their limitations. He had called in a detective from a neighboring larger town, and it was he who led us all into the interview room.

Jane Doe was seated at the table. She was wearing a disposable coverall as if she had been stripped of her clothes for evidence. She was not handcuffed to the table or anything like that, but she looked as if she was being treated as a suspect. It made me uncomfortable.

Or perhaps it was the look that she gave me. It was one of confusion but also as if imploring me to help her. The photographs did not do her justice, as cold images in the glare of a flash seldom do – she was beautiful – there is no better word. She had long honey blond hair that looked good even while lank and unwashed. She had eyes wide with concern and green as new fern, with long lashes. The zip of the coverall was down because the room was stuffy, so I could see the cleavage of two perfect breasts sitting unsupported. I cleared mt throat in order to remain professional.

“I am Special Agent Travis McGee,” I said. “I have been called in because of the unusual circumstances of your sudden appearance…”. Before I could say more, she grabbed my hand and shook it vigorously.

“Sam Kilgour,” she said, the voice high and feminine. “I am so glad to hear that my story is being taken seriously. These officers are well meaning I am sure, and my story sounds incredible, I admit, but this really happened. I am not who I appear to be. But here I am – I feel that I almost being treated like a criminal.”

“Well, that will stop now, I can assure you,” I said. “Chief, could you book us a couple of rooms at the local hotel, on the Bureau account. And we will get you some clothes, and something decent to eat. But for now I just want to ask you about these markings. Were you conscious when these marks were made on your body?”

I had to pull out the images from the folder. The one I was referring to had been written in large symbols across the chest. The other marks appeared to be for possible surgery, although no scars had been recorded by the doctor. The large symbols were different – just 2 symbols, like a binary code. A message perhaps. My eyes were drawn to her chest, perhaps for the wrong reasons.

“Yes, I was conscious. They wrote that after I tried to get away,” she said. “I struggled but they used some kind of force to hold me down. I was powerless. Then a beam just appeared and wrote the symbols.”

“I see. Was the woman you mentioned in the room when this took place?” I asked.

“Yes,” said Sam. “She was not a fighter. Has she been found? Is she alright?”

“Not yet. Bu it appears that she cooperated and you didn’t,” I said. “Perhaps you were too hard to handle and discarded?”

“But why do this to me? Why turn me into a woman? What do I do now?”

“That is what I am trying to find out,” I said. “I will send this image and these symbols to colleague of mine in cyber crimes. Hopefully he will get back to me today. In the meantime, lets get you something to wear so we can get you a late lunch.”

“That would be great,” said Sam.

“Loretta has put together something is her size,” said the Chief. “Plus some shoes.” I nodded and he went off to collect them as I had the detective dispatch the image to my expert in the Bureau.

“I can’t wear this,” said Sam. She held up the dress that had been offered, and the women’s underwear and sandals.

“I suggest you put them on and will go shopping for something more suitable, perhaps after lunch,” I suggested. “It is a warm day out there and that outfit looks more comfortable than what I am wearing.”

She agreed. We left the room and she got dressed in just a few seconds, as if to prove that she was not female. Everything else confirmed that she was. She looked perfect in the dress, but still a little dishevelled. “I really need a shower,” she said. “I have to do something with this hair.”

“You can cut it, but not yet,” I said holding the door for her. “Look there is a ladies’ salon across the road. Perhaps they can freshen you up a bit. I can pay. I realize you have no money.”

We walked across the road. There was no traffic to speak of.

“You may need to adapt to living in the body you have,” I said. “I know this must be hard, but I don’t think anything is likely to change.” I could not help but admire her beauty. It seemed a blessing to the world. The thought that she might butcher it seemed so wrong.

The truth is that my job is to keep an open mind but deal with any investigation based on accepted science. The fact is that there is no evidence of past alien visitations and there should be for there to be any truth in the person’s claims. But if you want to get to the truth you need to listen and check the story you hear. It was more likely that this person was indeed a Jane Doe whose mind had been disturbed somehow. She needed to be treated with care and understanding. Perhaps the truth would emerge. Perhaps the real Sam Kilgour might be found from evidence she could provide.

I dropped her outside the salon and sat on the covered porch to go through the file again.

I was called in to pay the bill as the final touches were being added. It had been about 40 mins and her hair had been washed and dried. It shone like spun gold, and I could see that she was wearing just a little makeup. Just the lightest mascara revealed the length and curl of her eyelashes and a light lip color showed the shape of her lips. I was staring.

“They insisted,” she said with a smile. It was the first I had seen from her. I was a smile that could make a man weak at the knees, the way it did me. “They gave me a some things and a little bag.” It was a giveaway but somehow in her hand it looked like a designer clutch.

I pointed towards a small restaurant further down the street that I had checked out. She walked beside me, smelling of floral shampoo. It was difficult not to feel aroused. I told myself that she was a victim of some kind, traumatized by an event that still remained a mystery. She might even be mentally ill and suffering from delusions, although my experience of these alien abduction cases was that those reporting them were surprisingly sane – simply misinterpreted dreams and misunderstood natural events.

We sat down across from one another. We both ordered a burger with extra salad.

“The problem is that I only have memories of a male life,” she said. “If it were not for that I think I could get used to living as a woman. Somehow it seems to add an extra spring in my step.”

“It would seem a shame not to put your considerable assets to use,” I said, almost immediately realizing that it was the wrong thing to say. “By that I mean that you appear female, and I imagine it would be hard work to appear male.”

She did not seem as disturbed by my awkwardness as I was. She said – “I suppose that being in a female body I should feel like one of those female to male transsexuals, you know, in the wrong body. But I don’t feel that way. I feel like this body is mine and I am still me. It is hard to explain.”

“You have to live with what you have,” I said. “I used to wish that I had blue eyes like my father.”

It was conversation, however meaningless. As a professional habit I would often use a situation like this to learn more, but for some reason that seemed inappropriate here. We just talked – about food, about the background music playing, about Vermont, about small towns versus big cities. It seemed as if we shared many things.

Every law enforcement officer knows the rules about personal attachments formed with victims or witnesses, or even perpetrators. These are forbidden. No exceptions. It was just that by the time we got to our hotel we seemed to have reached a point where physical contact was inevitable.

We looked at the two rooms that we had been given, both next to one another. I offered her the larger one, but it had a desk so I borrowed that to spread out my papers and take another look as she took a shower, first tucking her beautiful hair into a shower cap before she closed the door.

How could I not believe her? It was not the attraction to her – I was still a good enough agent to understand the rules for assessing credibility and it had nothing to do with general appearance. It was about looking at body language and responses to cues. Then there were the facts – a biological sister? Sam Kilgour’s mother had only two children and the eldest was accounted for. Then there were those markings that simply disappeared. It may seem like a small thing, but it was unknown to me.

She stepped out wearing a robe. She took off the shower cap and let the hair tumble down. I felt an arousal tent my pants.

She had washed her face and she looked at herself in the mirror noticing something was amiss. She reached for the little bag the salon had given her.

“You are going to think this odd, but I have an urge to apply the mascara and lipstick,” she said. “I just feel a little naked without it, when I am an entertaining a man.”

She looked at me with a sly smile, and then suddenly realized what she was doing. An anxious and confused look came over her that concerned me enough to bring me to my feet and draw closer to her.

“I really don’t understand any of this,” she said. “I shouldn’t be, but I am hopelessly attracted to you.”

The feeling was mutual. We both knew it. It didn’t matter that neither of us understood it. When eyes meet like that, lips must meet too – it is only a question of time. Some call it the amygdala taking over – the part of the brain that drives the base instincts including sex. I prefer to see it in less visceral way. Call me a romantic. But if time as the question, then the answer was immediate.

We simply found one another in a passionate embrace, all arms and tongues. The bed was there and she was almost naked. Through joint vigorous effort and the loss of a few shirt buttons I was soon naked too. Penetration was inevitable, orgasm was unbelievable.

The sun had not even gone down as we lay on the bed in that special afterglow when jus the touch of fingers on the flesh of another brings indescribable joy. Our eyes were still locked. It was like nothing else in the world mattered, or even existed.

Then my phone rang.

It was not something I could ignore if only because it was the call I expected.

“You were right,” said the caller, some cyber expert computer nerd who was just the person I expected him to be. “It is binary code. It is its own language but I ran it and I saw the function that it performed. I suppose it is what we would call “revert to default” – the returns a format to its default settings. It is an instruction to do that. Does that make any sense?”

It did not then. I put down the phone.

“What is it?” she asked.

I looked across. She was naked beside me. She was beautiful for sure, but I understood then that I was in love. I leaned over and kissed her breast, cupping the nipple with my lips. Her nipple.

Suddenly my brain licked into action and out of the emptiness that only truly great sex can produce. Her nipple.

“I think I understand why you are now a woman,” I said.

“Well, I am that, as you have just proved,” she said. “Please explain why.”

“From what you say your captors encountered two types of human beings. One was compliant and gentle. The other was resistant and violent. It would seem that the best way to deal with you was to return you to the default state – to make you female.”

“I don’t understand,” she said.

“In the embryo the default state of development is female. The early embryo has other throwbacks to evolution, such as a tail, but it is basically female in form. What happens is that as it develops there are signals from a tiny additional gene sequence on the tail end of one chromosome that make changes. The vagina closes up which is why a scrotum has a seam. The clitoris becomes the penis, the sex organs descend but they still leave the Mullerian ducts of a vestigial womb. There are still traces of the woman on a man that have no place on him. The nipples for instance.”

“You mean to say that being a man was just an add-on and now I am the person I always was deep down – a woman?” She was hardly shocked – more pleased than anything.

“I don’t know how this happened – it may have been alien visitation or some secret earthbound technology, but the writing that simply evaporated now makes sense – doesn’t it?” I suggested. “Revert to default – deal with the problem by going back to the original settings. Maybe we have all done it once or twice. Anyway, it’s an idea – it’s an explanation.”

“As an explanation I like it,” she said, giving me a special look. “Now, when will you be ready to make love to me again?”

I reached down to check my add-on. I was hardly surprised that it was ready.

She giggled playfully.

The End

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