

FICTION –SECOND PLACE
“Becoming a Woman:A New Perspective”

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“Hello Ms...” the doctor looked at his clipboard, “Murphy. Are you ready for today?”

A loud, ear shattering NO! was just on my lips but I restrained myself and answered calmly, “As ready as can be expected.”

The doctor chuckled with little humor. His stethoscope glinted in the sunlight that was coming through the window on the wall as he said, “My name is Dr. Lobenthaw and I’ll be operating on you in surgery.” Nodding in reply, I tried to keep from throwing up again in the small trash can at the foot of the bed.

“Don’t be nervous. A nurse will be in a moment to prep you for the surgery and then I’ll meet you in the O.R.” he said. I heard no sympathy in his voice. It sounded as if he just recited this speech already said twenty times that day.

He left the room and I began thinking about the last eighteen years of my life. My name is Robin Murphy and I’m a hermaphrodite. This last part of my introduction I usually leave out when I meet people because they are mostly turned off by the fact that I have breast and a penis. And today is about never having to say that again. I blame my parents for having to hide part of me from the world. Most parents in these kinds of situations chose right at the beginning if they want a girl or a boy and just chop off whatever part they want- or don’t want since they’re cutting it off. But no, mine had to be different from the bunch and let me make the decision. They didn’t want me to resent them later on. Well congratulations Mom and Dad! I do.

All I ever wanted to be was a girl. Instead of running around the house with Tonka trucks, I was in my mother’s lipstick and dressing up Barbie dolls. I loved watching the style channel not ESPN. I had a crush on Steven Cady not Cynthia Stevens (the two hottest kids in the sixth grade). In my definition I was the epitome of a female, except for one painful reminder I had every time I looked down.

“Miss?” the nurse that Dr. Lotbenthaw promised was snapping me out of my thoughts, “If

you'll put on this gown, a man will bring in a gurney to take you to the O.R.”

“Okay,” I said and went to the little bathroom and shut the door.

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I woke up after the surgery in a hospital room made even smaller than it actually was by the fact that about six people were hovering around my bed. I tried to focus my eyes on who everyone was. My best friend Shelly was in the corner with a white lily- didn't those mean death or something? She looked very pretty as usual but looked as if she was dressed for a funeral, which scared me a little. My parents were in the corner holding hands and whispering. They looked very tired. My dad replaced his usual three piece lawyer suits with jeans and his favorite Dolphins jersey. My mother had on those annoying windbreaker sweat suits that made a sweeping noise whenever you walked. I wanted to conjure up some anger at them, but all I felt was sympathy for there droopy faces. They'd been up since four that morning making sure I had everything that I needed for today. The three other people in the room were my annoying cousins- Danny, Derrick, and Darrin, the triplets. They were your typical 15 year old disgusting jocks with raging hormones; and only to prove my theory even more, Derrick was standing in the hallway trying to get phone numbers from the nurses.

I tried to sit up in the bed, a sharp pain formed in my side and I fell back on the pillow with one big whoosh.

“GAAAH!” I yelled as my head hit a little machine off to the right of the bed. That got everyone's attention. My parents stopped their whispering in the corner and came over to the bed, Shelly stared at me with huge wide eyes, and my cousins started laughing at me.

My mother ran over to my bed, “Oh honey, are you alright?”

“I'm fine mom,” I said rubbing my head. I tried sitting up one more time with my dad's help. It hurt like hell, but I did it.

“So cuz’,” Danny said, walking over and slapping me on the shoulder, “how does it feel to be a ‘whole’ woman?”

I gathered up enough energy to return his slap with a punch in the stomach. He doubled over, winded and knocked over the food tray next to him. “Kind of like that,” I said. Derrick and Darrin started another fit of laughing. I looked over to where Shelly was. She was staring out the window.

“What's with all the black, Shell? And don't you know that lilies are the flower of

death?" I asked jokingly. Shelly didn't find this funny. Instead of coming over and plucking me on the arm like she would normally, she chucked the lily in the trash can.

"Hello everyone?" a tiny nurse came into the room, "Dr. Lobenthaw says he'd like Robin to rest a little, if that's alright."

"I need to go anyway," Shelly said and rushed out, brushing past the nurse.

"We'll be in the cafeteria, sweets," my dad said and kissed my forehead. My mom followed him out with her own kiss and a swish of her sweats. Danny, Derrick, and Darrin were already in the hallway kicking a hacky- sack. I heard Darrin yelp in pain as Mom yanked him to the elevator by his ear while Danny and Derrick followed behind, snickering at their brother.

I checked to see if anyone was walking past the door before I reached under my gown to see if *it* was really gone...it was. I gave a silent cheer to victory, it was sweet. I was a girl and felt as if I could run through the halls and saying, "I am woman. Hear me roar!" And I'd do it if I could actually move the lower half of my body. It didn't matter that this blanket had a brown spot on it that for sure wasn't chocolate. Who cared that this ivy is jammed into my arm by some god forsaken med student or that my friend was completely freaked out by my *post*-manly state. Today was my day and I was not letting little things -like the applesauce tasting like the puking session I had this morning -get in my way. I laid back on my pillows and fell into a happy sleep.

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Shelly came into my room again at about 5:00 with her Nike gym bag and a large pizza hut box around the same time I woke up. My parents had gone home to shower, taking home the terrible D's, so I was all alone playing solitaire on my laptop.

She was staring at the floor as she walked in. When Shelly looked up from the linoleum, she came over and gave me a tight hug. I threw my arms around her and hugged her back.

"What's with the bag?" I asked, pulling back from her, not wanting to talk about all the hard stuff for now, she seemed to be more than willing to cooperate. I snatched the pizza box she had from her hands. "How did you get this up here? Derrick tried to bring Chinese and the nurse nearly strangled him with her blood pressure cuff."

"I flirted with the orderly," Shelly said as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. "These

are my bathing suits. I need you to help me pick one for tomorrow. I'm going to a swim party," she unzipped the duffel. I rummaged through the bag, pizza in hand. There must have been 20 different suits in there.

"Go to the bathroom and start trying them on," I ordered pointing to the little door across the room. Shelly went over and started the show.

We were half way through the bag when someone from the cafeteria came in with another tray of food. He was gorgeous! He had to be at least six foot two because his muscular frame wouldn't permit any smaller height. His hair hung in his dark eyes, giving off this mysterious air. I got chills just looking at him. He smiled at me and I for sure thought I would faint. He glanced at the empty pizza box on the chair.

"I guess you're not hungry," he said in a sexy deep voice. I shook my head and smiled. For the millionth time that day I thought how much I loved being a girl. Just then, Shelly walked out in the skimpiest blue bikini and cafeteria boy nearly dropped the tray. Well, everything can't be completely great.