

PROLOGUE

Incarceration has always been considered a severe punishment. Moreover, what if an unfortunate person is imprisoned in the own body with no chance of escaping or liberation? By an unfair twist of cruel fate, something mysterious, unknown even to scientists, triggers gender identity disorder and as a result, an exquisite mind is trapped in the wrong body. The chance of drawing this hellish ticket is one out of thousands.

Can anybody envision the misery of existence while being torn apart inside yourself between your own mind and body? The only thing you can do is to cry out your imaginary scream. You daydream how you would open your mouth and scream so loud that the entire world around you will start to fall apart like a house of cards and crumble to pieces together with the shell of your unwanted body. You dream of screaming until everything around you transforms and your physical appearance transfigures.

This is what a person born in the wrong body wishes for, but in reality, the unlucky earthling can only scream silently for understanding and acceptance. Scream to stop being ridiculed, humiliated, bullied, and rejected. This is one continuous cry of a lifetime. The shout of a human being on the edge, in a desperate hope of finding an exit from the labyrinth of despair and a way into the hearts of others.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

Angela was born into what seemed from the outside to be a perfect family. John and Carol Erickson were prominent members of the city's elite. The privileged society of Canada's capital, Ottawa, consisted mostly of politicians, successful executives, fortunate heirs of old money, and other representatives of wealth and power. These rulers of inferior people were like Greek Gods on Olympus, but they had to pay a price for their elite positions. To climb up to the mountain's peak of human dreams and desires is a long and laborious task. Just one unacceptable by society act or any indication of family dysfunction can push an honored member to the edge of the abyss and none of the privileged would offer a friendly hand. Most of them would even enjoy watching someone else's downfall. The outcast, once fallen from the pedestal, will never have a chance to rise again. As long as John Erickson could remember, his primary goal in life was to climb higher and higher, therefore for him the sky was the limit. His pace to fame and power had no compromises and in order to achieve his desires, nothing and nobody could stop his ambitions. In his early days, John worked as a lawyer in a prestigious law firm, then ran his own firm, soon after he abandoned his legal career for politics. Not long ago, John Erickson was the mayor of Ottawa and then he left this position to serve his country as the Minister of Defense. His wife, Carol, was an environmental lawyer and well known in the country and abroad. She was just as power hungry as her husband. This couple played their high stake games right, supporting each other in every decision and action. For them, the birth of their little girl was the perfect addition to their image of an ideal family. John and Carol already had a child, a one and a half year old boy, Ronald, however the birth of a girl was considered by the couple as a sign of perfect completion because now they had children of both genders. The proud parents named their newborn daughter Angela, the name reminiscent of

angels, and often called her Angel. If they only knew what a destructive surprise God had presented them with!

Most of Angela's early childhood memories were connected with the family house and surrounding land. Actually, as far back as she could remember, the house had always been a part of her life. All events, one way or another, were associated with the large, two-story Tudor house with its lavishly landscaped lands. The facade and interior of the Erickson nest corresponded perfectly with the family's moral standards and high-class images. The interior copied traditional English styles, with an abundance of dark wood furniture, antique paintings in heavy frames, tapestries, expensive porcelain, and unique Oriental area rugs. The house exterior had white stucco divided by wide boards of dark wood and gave the house a strict and solemn Tudor style appearance. From a distance, the house with a few protruding chimneys and red clay shingles resembled a small castle. Tall, mature trees and dense, elaborately trimmed bushes added greatly to its curb appearance. In the backyard, a gardener created a little paradise, which the kids were allowed to admire, though they were prohibited from taking flowers or walking on the flowerbeds. Brother and sister didn't really care about the exquisite, colorful arrangements and preferred to play at the far end of the property, where none of the gardener's work can be seen. When you are a little kid, all trees seem taller and larger than they really are, and for Ron and Angela, the small forest growing at the back of the property was a wonderful place, promising all kinds of mysterious adventures.

Angela's mischievous, not girly behavior drove her mother to despair. More than anything, Carol wanted to have a little doll, which she could dress in pretty, colorful dresses adorned with ruffles

and lace and whose long ash-blond hair she could arrange in adorable styles with ribbons. Angela's childhood memories were split into two kinds. One part was black and white, like an old, monotonous, uninteresting movie full of unpleasant scenes. The other part was like a 3D movie, as colorful as a rainbow and interesting like a fairytale, full of amusing fictional characters living in an enchanting world.

Angela very clearly remembered her first black and white encounter with her mother, which happened when she was a little over three years old. The siblings were catching frogs by the pond. These frisky and slippery jumping critters had no clue that the children would release them right after and they flatly refused to participate in the game, stubbornly jumping back into the small pond covered by fluorescent green substance. The pond was another fascinating object for children. In their vivid imagination, all kinds of swamp witches lived under the green surface, which covered the water like a blanket. In their minds, tiny fairies definitely must have danced every night on the numerous large waterlily pads floating in the pond. When tired, fairies would rest on flower petals as if they were hammocks. On one Saturday afternoon, curious little Angela, in her pink and white outfit, fell into the stinky, stale water. Ron helped his sister to get out, and terrified, she ran to their mother, leaving chunks of disgusting swamp slime on the marble floor and the antique Persian rugs in the hall. She appeared in front of her elegantly dressed mother, soaking wet, stinky and dirty. Instead of ribbons, pieces of waterweeds were in her hair.

“What the hell is wrong with you? Where have you been? Don't you dare to move! Stay where you are!” Disgust and anger twisted Angela's mother's face and she couldn't control herself.

“You are a dirty, stinky little monster,” she screamed, visibly shaking.

“Mary, Mary!” She called the babysitter. “Take this disgusting child away from me! I cannot believe that she is my daughter! I don’t want to see her!”

Mary loved this little girl with all her heart, but for a child, nobody can replace a mother. Mary gave Angela a long shower, and afterwards dressed her in pink pajamas. She laid Angela to bed, read her bedtime stories, but Angela was so distressed that she couldn’t fall asleep. She closed her eyes and pretended she was sleeping. When her babysitter finally left, Angela started crying. She cried so hard and for so long that only hiccups stopped her cries. Eventually, whining quietly, she cried herself to sleep. Her beloved mother didn’t come to comfort her, nor did her father.

Exhausted by tears and heartache, little Angela slept in. When she opened her swollen eyes, she saw that the sun was already high. Seeing the shiny orange sun and bright blue skies covered by fluffy cotton like clouds, which were slowly floating, by, the little girl started playing one of her favorite games. She imagined seeing different animals or fairy tales characters in the sky.

“This cloud looks like a dog. Where does it hurry?” Thought the little girl in wonder and delight. She saw more and more imaginative animals, but suddenly, black and white memories of the previous day’s event overshadowed the bright colors of the summer morning. Desperation’s vicious and tenacious claws suddenly caught little Angela. Instantly, she felt like a traitor’s fist had hit her hard in her stomach. Badly needing her parents’ love, hugs and kisses, gasping for air, shaken and terrified, she ran toward their bedroom. On this beautiful Sunday morning, she

hoped to find her parents there. Before Angela could open her parents' bedroom door, she heard again her mother's angry voice. It was identical to yesterday and the sound of it struck the girl like a lightning flash. Angela's small hand was on the doorknob, but she didn't dare to enter her parents' bedroom.

"John, we gave birth to a monster!" Mother's voice, like a bucket of icy water, shocked Angela to the core of her body. "I don't know who she is. I only understand that she is a weird freak!" Continued Carol.

"Dear, please take it easy. I think you have a tendency to exaggerate a lot. Angela is only a three-year-old girl, for heaven's sake! Give her a break!" Her father's voice gave some comfort to stunned and desperate Angela.

"I am telling you, John, she is not a girl, she is a weird freak!" Her mother's voice was pitched high with emotions, and her righteous indignation took its full course. "You are too involved with your work and pay little attention to Angela's strange behavior. She doesn't play with dolls, she doesn't like what other girls adore, she hangs out with Ron and prefers to play with his peers. John! She likes boys' games! She has no interest in traditional girls' activities! I don't understand her! She is a weird freak!"

Angela had no idea what weird freak meant but by the tone of her mother's voice, she realized it was something terrible and mother called her by that name three times.

"I think we have to call an exorcist. She has an evil spirit inside her. I can't love her."

This was the last thing that Angela learned about herself. Tormented by the overheard conversation, a little angel dressed in pink pajamas adorned with lace, ribbons, and ruffles ran back to her bedroom. She ran as fast as she could, her long blond hair waving behind her. While running, she cupped her mouth with both hands to prevent screaming. This was her first silent scream, first of too many to follow.

Later in her life, being grown up, Angela would think if she recorded all her silent screams, it would accumulate days of a desperate human cry.

From the first experienced shock, the episodes of Angela's black and white memories started to become extraordinarily vivid, overshadowing her rainbow memories. These joyful recollections had the tendency to fade away as Angela grew up. As time passed, her dislike of girly stuff became even stronger.