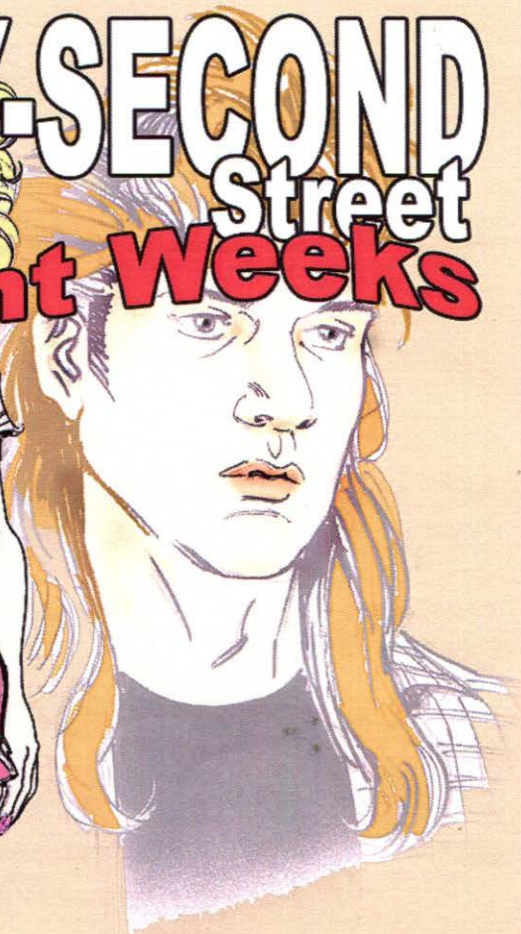
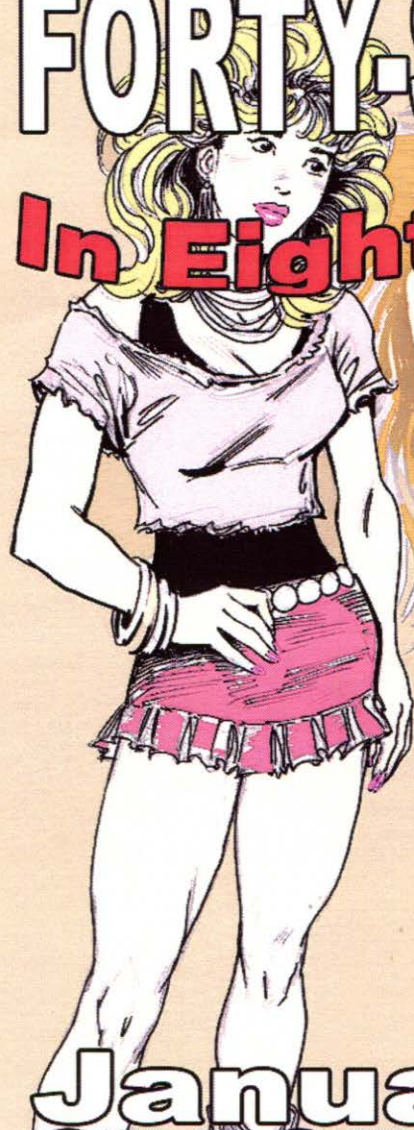


FORTY-SECOND Street In Eight Weeks



January
SNOWDEN

FORTY-SECOND STREET IN EIGHT WEEKS

by January Snowden

PROLOGUE: GIRL, INTERRUPTED

Sexual identity happens in a late stage of embryonic development. The first forty-two days in the womb the gender is indistinguishable. Testes for the penis take seven to eight weeks and ovaries take eleven to twelve. But externally, the genitalia is identical until the end of the eighth week.

Okay, enough with the clinical stuff. The title of our whimsy is so-stated as a journey. One that is taken roundabout incidentally, well, by incidents. The aforementioned “forty-two days” of gestation will be synonymous with Forty-Second Street which used to be a notorious sexual mecca of New York City, and thus, our metaphor for sex and or gender. By the end of forty-two

days, physical identity begins. Beyond eight weeks, gender is identified as female. Ironically so, because before the seventh week, although technically sexless, the fetus is virtually female. In between—eight to eleven weeks—the fetus may become male, and stay male. So, if it continues to develop beyond eight weeks to become completely female, it is as if it was a girl, interrupted. Okaaay, so I was not finished with the clinical stuff. I sowwy.

Anyway, eight weeks to get to Forty-Second Street is the time period of “traveling” our main character has lived as one gender. The journey unfolds just like a womb fluctuating to actuate the fetus to the final gender. How? Why? What else happens along the way? Well, that’s what our story’s about; told in eight chapters or metaphoric weeks. Okay, baby?

Arrival at the Street, as it were, in reality, is a crossroad called Times Square, often called “crossroad of the world”. Storywise, when this crossroad is reached, our “traveler” has decisions to make. What decisions? Well, what kind of book are you reading? The fun really is in the reading, darling..and that starts now:

WEEK ONE: CHANCE ENCOUNTER

She was attractive because she did attract. Raven-black hair swept away from her forehead down her back with only a hint of wave and curl, her black dress' shoulder straps were just wide enough to cover those of her bra. Only displaying minimal cleavage, the fullness of what was covered was impressive without being overly-endowed. True to form, the length of her skirt was deceptive as she sat; ridden up, just missing the exposure of the elastic tops of her black thigh-high stockings having sat, the length would normally be at the knees. On her feet were black, 3" chunky-heeled pumps. A vision in ebony, the only thing to mistake her for a goth was her sun-tanned skin and pale red lipstick, aside from other modest makeup. Her very modest-length fingernails, seemingly unadorned, were actually painted with a clear gloss. Other than her mouth, her blue eyes seemed so

bright, it was if they could glow in the dark. Waiting at the bar until she was told that her table was ready, she nursed a spiced rum on the rocks.

All of the preceding was catalogued in mere moments by an onlooker, as if checking out its prey before striking.

“Do you mind if I join you?”

“Why? Am I coming apart?”

That grew a frown.

Catching it, a big smile grew, intended to soothe. It did the trick.

“I apologize. Apart from being a cheesy joke, my defenses were up and I immediately go into bitch mode. People then leave me alone and aside from a verbal sting, no one’s really hurt. Especially me. But you look like a nice guy.”

“The nice guy”, noting that he is being spoken to in an undertone, swiftly suspects that the woman before him has her reasons and responds in turn. “Now why would anyone want to hurt a beautiful lady like you?” He then sits on a stool next to her.

After a heavy sigh, the “beautiful lady” says, “I just believe in ‘live and let live’, y’know? I don’t expect anything from you just because you’re a good-looking guy. Along that line, I shouldn’t be hurt because someone can’t take ‘no’ for an answer. You want to dress up nice, you don’t have women getting all worked up just because they won’t sleep with you.

“Whoa! Wait! You probably do want that! Never mind. Hole dug, jumping in. See ya!” At that, the “lady”, who had half-turned to speak to the “guy”, moved back to facing the bar.

Meanwhile, the “guy” had found great humor in what was just said, and laughed in muted hilarity; still respecting the curious need for low voices, whatever the reason. A reason he now carefully questioned.

“Forgive my seeming insensitivity. You’re right about people and double standards. We all have them, even

without meaning to, much less on purpose. Sometimes, we can't help it.

“Yes, I admit, your beauty did attract me to hit on you. Yet I was willing to accept rejection like a man and not like a pathetic whipped puppy. As for you, you could be a first-class bitch or simply a woman trying to find her way back into the world after a trauma. If it's the latter, I doubt any woman would disfigure herself to do so, if she was naturally attractive. You have every right to be yourself without some boor's preconceptions.

“Look, I'm at the bar because I wanted a table for one. I'm guessing that's the same reason as you. I bet we could have dinner quicker if we got a table for two. No strings attached, no expectations. Don't know about you, but I'm hungry. I came here for the food, not a date. We'll just be sharing a table for efficiency's sake. If that sounds amenable, introductions are in order, if only to be civil. My name is Scott. Scott Garland.”

Almost reluctantly, the “lady” faced Scott again, and said, “My name is Ray.” Then she caught herself. After a pause, “That is, my friends call me Ray. Short for Raynne, spelled with a 'y' and a 'n-n-e', which, in turn, is short for Lorraine. Raynne Storm.”

Catching the inevitable chuckle, having second thoughts, she sighed again. “Maybe this isn't a good idea. I'm the way I am as a defense mechanism. I don't set out to pick fights; most definitely not to get physically hurt. What I just said is practiced, if asked while I'm dressed this way. Men tend to leave women with 'permanent PMS' alone. You really do seem like a nice guy. If we just share a table, I won't be comfortable until you know the truth. I feel I can tell you without you causing a scene.

“My name is Ray Storm. But Ray is actually short for Raymond. I'm a man.”

0000

At that, Scott attempted to stifle a second laugh. Yet before Raynne could retort, he had gotten up from his

seat. Raynne was half-relieved that he had gone. Like anyone, she did not care to be laughed at. Particularly after she had been a 'practiced, efficient woman' for quite some time now. Yes, while Raynne was born male, upon donning the wherewithal of the female, she felt deserved of all of the nouns and pronouns, as well as all else due a woman. But only half-relieved, the other half was disappointed instincts; somehow intuitively assuming that she could trust the handsome man.

Scott did return shortly. Upon doing so, Raynne was ready for him. "What did you do? Out me to the restaurant? Am I being asked to leave?" she hissed, still speaking softly, without thinking. "Or are you simply here to continue to make fun of me?" Raynne's lips trembled at her last query, her bravado evaporating at the sudden realization of having to leave the restaurant in shame. "This is what I get for thinking you were someone I could trust. I'm such an idiot!" She then started to rise, her eyes glassy, about to tear.

Seeing this, Scott whipped out a handkerchief. "Now, now. Dry those beautiful eyes. There's no need for a rain-storm indoors.

"Whoops! Very bad choice of words. Not making fun. Your name's so unique, it just popped out. Come on now, our table's waiting."

"Our' table?" Raynne sniffed.

"That's what I was doing," said Scott. "Changing a problematic two single reservations into one easier table for two. Apparently, as I'd assumed, they were reluctant to give a table that seated two or more for just one. When two 'ones' became two, that table became almost instantly available."

Feeling just a little relief, Raynne dabbed her eyes so as not to mess her makeup, as Scott, with his arm around her shoulders, ushered her to follow a waiter's lead to their table.

Left alone to peruse the menu for a while, Scott spoke in a normal voice. "Raynne, I hope you can see that I'm trying my best to prove to you that I really am a good guy.

Anytime you want to leave, feel free. I just wanted you to know that. I feel that you still do, because you could've caused a very humiliating scene of fighting me as I walked you to this table, but you didn't."

Assuming to be safely ensconced, having an impression to speak in a normal volume herself, Raynne is beaming inside, as she says to herself first, 'I'm no stranger to being outside. I've always told men I'm a guy because I don't want to be beat up. There's no law against crossdressing here but I've heard a few stories of "girls" that look too good to guys who won't take "no" for an answer. Not wanting to spoil the illusion, they paint themselves in a corner from being afraid. The guy gets grabby while thinking he's "Mr. Irresistible" and then finally grabs the wrong thing. Suddenly then, it's her fault! Like it's a crime to want to look nice; even though it is a man wanting to look nice as a woman.

'So, given the odds, I say fuck the "illusion"! I always tell them up front. Then they can't say they weren't warned. I can defend myself but it'll be just my luck they'll have "friends" to "help" them. So much for being manly on your own if you can't handle being "fooled" into seeing something your dick wants but can't have...normally. Still, so far, all have backed off, thinking I'm just a bitch that doesn't want to be bothered...until this guy.

'I did feel as if I could trust Scott, though. Maybe woman's intuition? I've been doing this so long, I feel that I've been blessed with that feeling and it seemed to work so far. For a moment I thought it finally let me down; that I was fooling myself. I really could use a friend while looking like this. Maybe a born-female. Dare I think a guy could be it instead of a girl? I've already told him the truth. Should I push it further, to see if he could really handle it? Or is this "sharing a table" bit just another smooth angle to get into my panties, only to be surprised, even though I told him who I am?

'Oh well. So far, I'm guessing if I'm wrong, he won't cause a scene now either. Well, here goes...' Then aloud, "Why did you laugh at me, Scott?"

“Well, to be honest, with a name like Lorraine Storm,” he said, “yes, I have heard it shortened simply to ‘Raine’ even with or without an ‘e’ on the end. But with Storm as a surname, it’s cute but some will chuckle. I’m sorry if I hurt your feelings.

“Second, when you said you were a man, you did drop your voice, but in no way did it sound like a man’s. It sounded like a woman’s bad imitation of trying to sound masculine. Whoever hurt you for you to go through all this trouble is a total bastard and he spoiled your life for any decent guy out there who wants a life with you.

“Again, I admit to checking you out, but I didn’t dream of getting you to bed tonight. If I got lucky, great! But I don’t play with damaged goods..and I do mean that in a good way. Okay?”

Rayne’s inner light was filled with incandescence at this. She has indeed found a friend who understands her situation. Or does he? In any event, she simply smiled at Scott, with just a “Thank you” for now, as the waiter had then approached for their meal order. After their food had arrived, Rayne Storm felt a need to relay her story.

0000

As both enjoyed their meal, between bites, Rayne told about growing up on a farm, the youngest of six...all boys. Her father believed in the saying about keeping his wife barefoot and pregnant. Pregnant, anyway. Barely having weaned one child, months later, she was pregnant with the next. She was actually ecstatic in being able to bear children and Rayne’s father was more than pleased to accommodate her.

Still, after five very healthy boys, she did want a girl. When Rayne was born, before birth, it looked as if she was going to get her wish as even periodic checking Rayne’s birth throughout gestation, Rayne was much smaller in the womb than her brothers. It was not until her penis appeared on a late sonogram that her mother knew that Rayne would be yet another son.

Weirdest thing, though. Raynne did not know how it happened, but there was so much talk and hope of her being a girl, when she was born as a boy, Raynne was to be named La Roy. This fanciful appellation possibly was the reason for two clerical errors on her birth certificate.

Told later as a young child that Raynne was to be named after a relative named Leroy, the parents wanted to put their own spin as La Roy; two words yet still a whole first name. With all the talk about hoping and wanting a girl, despite end results, the hospital put an 'F' instead of an 'M' in the "sex" box, and it remained unchanged. In writing La Roy, Raynne guessed that the "La" instead of "Le" caused that. (Her parents most likely innocently ignorant of the difference in the letters, "a" is feminine and "e" is masculine in many languages.) But the hospital goofed again, when for some reason the "o" in Roy turned to an "a", making it La Ray.

Her parents spotting the error of Roy and Ray, were somehow blind to the sex mistake—Raynne saw it on her own when the document was finally given to her—and only concerned themselves with her first name. As if having tunnel vision when only her name was brought up, her father confessed that he really didn't care for Leroy—the name, not the relative—after all and seeing 'Ray', instead of opting for Larry, called her Raymond. Ray for short. All done by word of mouth, without filing for a legal name change.

Raynne digressed for a moment, saying that all through school, because of registration using the birth certificate name—again overlooking the gender box—La Ray came up and Raynne followed another boy's lead that she was with a few grades whose parents named him Cornelius. His middle name was Philip and he impressed that name and Cornelius was rarely brought up, to be shot down. So when La Ray came up, Raynne requested to be called Raymond, which got shortened to Ray; classmates first, then teachers. Nobody ever said anything about the 'F' on her birth certificate, and again, Raynne did not see it herself until it was given to her when she was on her own.

If sonograms were any indicator of anything significant other than gender, Raynne did not grow up strong and robust as her brothers. Called names like “Runt” and “Shortstuff” around the house, that was a strict family privilege. Anyone, from adult to child, ever maligned her, had to deal with her five big brothers. Raynne was an easy target. In addition to her small stature, her voice never deepened at puberty. Raynne guessed that the best way you could put it was a stereotypical effeminate sound. Otherwise, she can only assume that what you see is what you get. Dressed like a boy, Raynne was a boy. It was that simple and virtually everyone saw and accepted her then as a he.

While a sparse handful noted a difference—only seeking to tease and torment; bullies generally saw anyone smaller or meek as targets—the rest of the whole treated her as male. Dressing up much later on, Raynne admitted to only then trying to sound a little softer, knowing how soft her voice already was. But knowing how high her voice is normally and yet not thinking, it was not until tonight when Raynne went overboard in trying to really sound male to Scott when she discovered exactly how genuine it was, easily taken as a woman being dressed as one; being only slightly softer while femme-dressed, or so she thought. It was, indeed, all in the perception of who you looked like at the time. As an adult, what with some clothes being classified as unisex, this was an exception; a very pivotal one for her.

Back at school, if you bullied Raynne, her brothers' presence was generally all that was needed. Continue to call her any kind of derogatory names or just plain pick on her small size, and you looked at a beating. It was to serve as a lesson for no more performances, for either the same kid or someone who did not see the penalty. Ironically, her brothers never got in trouble if they were physical in defending her. As time passed, she would discover that many men have such voices and are very heterosexual; having their family, wife and kids, never dreaming of an errant thought about themselves. And so it was with her. But the dominos began falling that changed everything, even before she left home.

As soon as it was early enough to handle chores, from the eldest to the youngest, they all became farmhands. Raynne had her turn, but because she was not built like her strong father and brothers, she just could not do it as well as them. Her mother came up with the solution of desperately needing help around the house, looking after eight people, including herself, on a daily basis. Everything Raynne said that she was not ordinarily privy to was told to her by her mother during quiet times, when they were alone, by the way.

It worked well for her, doing “women's work”—it was never called that, but it was vastly different from outdoor chores. Sewing, cooking, cleaning. It was almost as if Raynne could not help it in doing these things superbly. As proud as her brothers were in helping their father, she developed the same pride in helping her mother. Indeed, getting acclimated and proficient, it was as if Raynne was another mother. Never teased about this aspect even from her brothers, Raynne gained equal respect as her mother had, in keeping home and hearth proper. Which came in very handy, from lack of a better way of putting it, because in her late teens, just about to graduate, her mother died of breast cancer and Raynne inherited her life in full, as it were.

As school finished, for a few years, Raynne continued to play surrogate mother. Not once wearing anything feminine. Still, Raynne knew that she fretted over her brothers and father just like her mother did. Raynne knew because “Runt” had been replaced as a kidding jibe for “Mom” or “Mother”. At worse, with a smile, she was called “Li'l Mom”. Particularly if Raynne needed something for the house or patched up a scrape of theirs from them working, nagging them to be careful and such. Treating even her father the same..

Then, tragedy struck again, as her father had a heart attack. A bad one, but he didn't go abruptly. There was time for goodbyes, with an admission that the farm was failing. If he had lived, he would have stubbornly tried to see it through the dry spell but things truly did not look good as it was. He made his oldest promise to strike the best offer, making sure that when it came to dividing eve-

rything up, that Raynne got a bigger share, assuming that life would be harder for her. He made all five promise to care for her, no matter what road Raynne chose. Raynne didn't think of it then—she was and is 5' 5" of slight build; her brothers were over 6' and very muscular—but she would later assume that he knew she would grow more to a feminine side of life and he did not want her abandoned.

Selling everything, the siblings all vowed to keep in touch as they went their separate ways. Raynne, as a young man, got a clerical job and a nice apartment in the city. Life was rather mundane until one day Raynne went shopping in a department store. Going into the first entrance nearest her, Raynne found that she had to travel through the women's department. To this day, Raynne does not know what she went in the store for, because she was stopped by a saleslady at a makeup counter near the entrance, who was very anxious to make a sale.

Mistaking Raynne's tee-shirt and jeans for unisex, not to mention the short hair for some sort of woman's boy-cut hairdo, Raynne now knew that her voice did not hurt matters as the woman went into a high-pressure sales pitch. While many models are even boyishly flat-chested, it was Raynne's total package that did not leave room for doubt that Raynne was a woman to her. Raynne now knows that crossdressing is a sexual turn-on for some, but not having worn anything feminine up to that point, although untucked—something she later learned to do to perfection, if only to see herself look “right” in bra and panties—her soft cock was indiscernible at that time.

Funny thing, as Raynne remembers it now, taken by surprise of the offer of a free makeover, what with her having to get between Raynne's legs to work on my face, Raynne never got sexually excited by her own beauty. It was not that Raynne did not like girls—Raynne had very little experience with women at this point; although just one-night stands—once the makeover was offered, Raynne was thinking only of 'herself'. Knowing she was taken for female, Raynne really wanted to see if cosmetics would indeed make her attractive. At the time, she easily went along without argument because something inside

