

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Chuck Hansen trudged through the driving snow back to his rig parked in the lot of the Fargo Truck Stop. He had just purchased a bucket of so, so fried chicken, tube of Cole slaw, soft drinks and snacks. He figured that once this small storm blew over, he could be back on the road to Seattle. Driving the northern route in the winter was a definite pain, knowing that in western Montana he would be putting chains on his drive wheels. He was looking forward to cozying up in the well warmed cab and sleeper of his idling Mack tractor and watching a new DVD he also just purchased. Chuck was an independent driver. He had bought his Mack a couple of years back and was doing reasonably well. His home was in Red Wing, Minnesota so to speak. He was twenty seven, an Army veteran and never married. A good combination of circumstances for an over the road trucker. He stashed his purchases in the cab of the tractor and decided to do walk around of the rig to be sure that he wasn't being drifted in. He had started his inspection when he found the boy. Huddled up by the fifth wheel, the kid was in filthy jeans, sweat shirt, wind breaker jacket and torn sneakers.

'Jesus', he muttered to himself. 'Where did this little shit come from'?

It fifteen degrees Fahrenheit, with a twenty miles an hour breeze and snowing to boot. Dressed as he was, the kid would freeze in Key West time of year. He shook the boy and grabbing the groggy child, picked him up and put him in the cab.

He pulled a thermometer out of his emergency medical bag and stuck it in the boy's mouth.

'Christ, 95 degrees', he discovered.

He pulled an old twelve volt electric blanket out of the sleeper and wrapped the kid in it. He also plugged in an electrical cup and filled it with cold coffee out of his thermos flask. In fifteen or so minutes the kid began to stir. The coffee was semi hot and setting the boy up, still wrapped in the blanket, forced the kid to drink the coffee.

"Don't you dare refuse the coffee, boy. It's Sumatran, freshly ground from beans this morning," whispered Chuck.

The boy began to choke a bit, a good sign and Chuck reinsured the thermometer, 96 degrees. After an hour, boy became coherent and somewhat startled by his surroundings.

"Are you hungry, boy?" asked Chuck.

The kid nodded weakly and Chuck handed him a drumstick, then a breast, some mashed potatoes and finally two biscuits. Washing this truck stop feast down with Mountain Dew, the kid appeared to be alive.

"Where do you come from, son", asked Chuck gently. The boy just replied,

"Nashville," in a spot on Tennessee accent.

"Do you know where you are?" asked Chuck.

The boy shook his head, no.

"You are in Fargo , North Dakota. A fair piece from Nashville, and you ain't dressed for the weather."

The boy just held onto his confused look.

"Where are your folks?" inquired Chuck.

The boy just shook his head.

"How did you get here?" another nearly fruitless question.

Finally, the boy said something, "I was riding in a truck, not as nice as this and the man driving asked me to do something to his dong and when I refused, he threw me out of his truck here and just drove off."

"What an asshole," muttered Chuck.

For the next two hours, Chuck pried the boys story out of him, it nearly brought Chuck to tears. The described being left at a police station in Nashville. His mother had told him to stay seated on the bench he seated on, that she had to go to the bathroom and that she would be right back. He never saw her again. A search for his mother turned up nothing. His birth records, when found, revealed that his mother had not listed a father on his hospital records. He bounced from foster parent to foster parent for several years until he turned ten and then he was assigned to the county orphans home. Finally, after two years of abuse, he jumped ship and was picked up hitch hiking by the was hole trucker. No money, no clothes to speak of and no family to fall back on, the kid was seriously fucked. Chuck, coming from a solid middle class family was having problems comprehending this kids life, especially in the good old USA. By the next morning, Chuck decided to the kid under his wing. The sun was out, the wind still brisk as it always was in the Dakota's, Chuck told the boy, whose name it two hours to get out of him, was Cornell. Chuck asked if he had a nickname, something people called him other than Cornell? After listening to a litany of rather descriptive and uniformly crude renderings of which twerp was the only thing usable in polite company. So Chuck decided that Chilly would be the most descriptive. Cornell agreed that Chilly was something of an improvement as he shivered where ever he went around the truck stop. Chuck did make a couple of demands on Chilly as they approached the truck stop restaurant entrance.

“Chilly, my boy, you realize that you stink to high heaven and you clothes are nothing but rags. I'm going to rent you shower time and get you some new duds. To prove to you that I ain't gonna run off on you, I am going to sit on the bench right next to your shower stall, so that you can keep an eye on me. And....when you get cleaned up, we are going to buy you new underwear, jeans, sweatshirt, boots, winter jacket and a hat. All truckers have hats and if your gonna ride with me, your gonna have a hat.”

Chilly just nodded, warily. Chuck reached into the Mack's glove box and retrieved a six foot metal, winding ruler and told Chilly to follow him.

While Chilly showered, Chuck scoured his cell phone for information on boy's clothing sizes, a subject he was totally ignorant of. Before he followed Chilly into the shower, Chuck took a waist, inseam, chest and foot measurements. A fellow trucker that Chuck had a better than passing acquaintance with came out of a shower stall and Chuck asked him to fill a short list of boy's clothing, enough for Chilly to eat in without being asked to leave. Chucks trucker friend was back with the clothes and change before Chilly left his shower. As Chilly toweled off, Chuck pointed to the pile of clothes and told him to put them on.

As the boy dressed, he started to cry. “What's the matter, bud. Don'tcha like the duds?” asked a perplexed Chuck.

Chilly whimpered, “I've never had new clothes before.”

Tears formed in Chucks eyes and he asked himself, ‘Oh my Lord, what have I gotten myself into?’ With tears rolling down his cheeks, Chuck muttered, “Well, bud. There's a first time for everything.”

With Chilly dressed and labels and tags hanging from his body, Chuck took the boy's old rags and dumped them into a large waste can. Clipping the tags from the clothes, which Chilly took issue with and using his comb, Chuck took the now sparkling Chilly to breakfast.

At the table, Chuck told Chilly, “Boy, you realize that we have more shopping to do. Your fine for here in the restaurant but, were going on the road and more rugged duds are needed. For the first time in his life, Cornell felt wanted.

Striding proudly across the parking lot, dressed in new jeans, cowboy boots, insulated jacket and Mack Truck baseball cap, Chilly was carrying two large bags of various types of everyday clothing while Chuck carried a large bag of snacks and soda. Helping Chilly navigate the tall steps of the tractor, Chuck told him that the next stop was Miles City, Montana. Chuck still had no idea of what he was going to do with the boy. Chuck pondered the problem of the boy for the next five hundred miles and still hadn't come up with a solution. Allowing for a couple of pee stops, they rolled into the truck stop in Miles City, an hour after dark. After eating supper, Chilly was wandering through the clothing section of the truck stops odds and ends section.

Chuck noticed that Chilly was apparently fascinated by the clothes in the small women's and girls area. Chuck didn't say anything, but kept an eye on the boy's interests. Chuck got them a motel room for night and began to notice the frailty of Chilly. Chuck figured that boy's slender body was a history of poor diet, he had seen a lot of that in Afghanistan. Chuck decided that since he was not in a big hurry, that they would stop in Missoula and not do the Rockies in the dark.

In Missoula, again Chilly seemed to linger in the female clothing area of the truck stop.

"I have a question for you, bud. You seem to like looking at ladies and girls clothing. Is there a reason or is it just curiosity?" asked Chuck.

Chilly, sitting on the edge of his motel room bed, replied, "The best foster home that I ever had, was a family with three daughters. The girls and I played dress up games. They would dress me in their clothes and put makeup on me and I would prance around with them as the fourth daughter. Their mother didn't mind and neither did the dad. He was an industrial salesman and was gone for two or three weeks at a time. The case worker caught me in a dress and despite the mother's protests, the county put me back into the orphans home. I was so sad. The best home I ever had and it was taken away from me because of a dress."

Chuck thought, 'The poor kid, never caught a break.'

Chuck sipped on his can of cola and asked, "Did you enjoy dressing up with the girls?"

Chilly suddenly became guarded, "Like I said, it was best the home that I ever had and I feel guilty that I ruined things for the family. They were barred from being foster parents in Tennessee again. It was all my fault and I feel so terrible about it."

Chuck held up a hand, "Don't get me wrong, Chilly, "I don't care about things like that. If your not hurting anyone, do it if it pleases you. As far as I am concerned, you can dress up in a barrel, as they will serve you in a restaurant. Do you want to dress like girl? It's no skin off my ass as long as you are presentable in my company."

An idea that he hadn't considered began to formulate in Chuck's mind. "Tell you what. Tomorrow morning, we'll stop at that strip mall across the highway. There's a small department store there and I'll give you a hundred dollars and you go in by yourself and buy whatever you want, but remember my rule, you have to be presentable in a restaurant and I am the judge of what's presentable."

Chilly's eye went wide and uncontrollably leaped off his bed and hugged Chuck.

'Oh Lord, what have I done,' wondered Chuck.

The next morning, Chuck pulled his rig off of a side road next the department store and he and Chilly started on the boy's next step. Entering the store, Chilly came to a halt and refused to move.

"What's the matter, bud?" asked a puzzled Chuck.

The boy, seemingly immobile, looked up at Chuck and whispered, "I've never been in a large store before. I don't what to do."

This was a situation that Chuck had never considered. He motioned for Chilly to follow him as he walked up to a cashiers station.

"Could I see the manager, miss," Chuck asked the young lady behind the counter.

"Is there a problem that I can help you with, sir?" she replied.

Taking a deep breath, Chuck said, "My nephew here, is going to need some help with his shopping and I don't feel that I should be influencing his choice by assisting him."

The cashier looked at Chuck with a mixture of puzzlement and admiration, "I'll get one of our Associate's to assist the young man, please wait over by those chairs." Chilly followed Chuck to the row of chairs and sat down next to him.

A short time later, a middle-aged woman came to Chuck and introduced herself. Chuck asked her to sit down and he launched into the unusual request.

"If I understand you correctly, your nephew has had some experience with cross dressing and has expressed interest in pursuing it? Queried the woman.

"That's more or less correct," said Chuck, "we are on our way to my home in Seattle," he lied, "so, with us being on the road for next few days, I figured that this could be the perfect opportunity for Chilly here, to act out his fantasy without unfortunate and lasting consequences."

The woman paused and said, "Chilly, sweetheart, please stand up and take off your jacket and turn around." After a few seconds, she looked at Chuck, "You know, we may have something here. This may take awhile and I warn you that it may come to more than a hundred dollars, but I am sure that we can produce a young lady that you can take into a restaurant."

Strangely relieved, Chuck just said, "Have at it, I'll be right here."

The woman stood and took Chilly's hand and said, "I am Mrs. Rogers, and we are going to fix you up, honey. Please come with me."

Chuck motioned for Chilly to go with the woman. A few minutes later, the cashier came over to Chuck and told him that his 'project' was going to take a while and that he should wait in the small cafeteria.

Four hours later and halfway through the paperback novel that he had bought, Mrs. Rogers, accompanied by three other women and a pretty twelve year girl appeared at Chucks table.

“Mr. Hansen, the beauty department would like you to meet Sherrie.”

Chuck was amazed, no, more than amazed. The young girl’s hair was cut, lightened and formed into a page boy with bangs. Chilly now had pierced ears with faux diamond studs, a discreet thin necklace, rings on several fingers, a bracelet and bangles on her arm's all off setting the semi short A Line dark wool skirt, pale blouse, wool button up sweater, dark tights and Mary Jane shoes. Observing Mr. Hansen’s approval, Mrs. Rogers added, Sherrie is also wearing light makeup and a training bra with padding.

Chuck looked Chilly and asked, “We’ll Sherrie, do you like it?” Sherrie nodded and gave Chuck a big hug, revealing her perfume to the startled trucker. “Ladies, I wouldn't have believed that this was hiding under the mop I brought in a while ago, thank you, thank you. And just how much do miracles cost here?”

Mrs. Rogers said, “So far, about three hundred dollars, but girls are high maintenance items and Sherrie is going to need some girly jeans, tee and sweat shirts, sneakers, another skirt and blouse along with at least two handbags. We are looking at about five hundred.”

Chuck could do nothing else but, nod. Two hours later, Chuck with Sherrie now outfitted in her girly jeans pulled into a different motel and Sherrie changed into a skirt and blouse to visit her first restaurant enfemme.

Following a successful dinner, Chuck sat Sherrie down and ran his plan for her by the now more confident youth. “I have a friend in Moses Lake, Washington state that is the Mother Superior of a Catholic Convent that runs an all girl's school. I want to stop there and have you meet the lady. If you like the lady and the school, I will arrange for you to be enrolled.”

Sherrie’s face began to show concern.

“You can't ride shotgun on a big rig forever. For one thing it would be illegal and if we were caught, you would be right back in some government institution. The school is well regarded and you do need an education and if you still want to live as a girl, you need to associate with other girls and develop the proper social skills. Sweetheart, I don’t want to see you in another institution, you would never survive. At least let's stop in Moses Lake and meet the people, if you don’t like it, we'll think of something else.”

Suddenly frightened, Sherrie suspected that Chuck was trying to get rid of her. It didn't make sense though, he had rescued her, spent more money on her alone in the last three days, than all of the people she had known all of her life put together had and asked for nothing in return.

She had had contact with government social services and nothing good ever came of it. She desperately did not want to lose Chuck, but knew that he was telling the truth about her riding around the country with him. And.....didn't he refer to her as his nephew and what was Catholic?

Late the next afternoon, the pair arrived at outskirts of Moses Lake. Following another uneventful dinner, aside from Sherrie being complimented upon being such a pretty girl. They returned to the motel of the day. Chuck, surprised at Chilly's transformation to Sherrie becoming so complete so rapidly and so naturally. He was convinced that this was the right course for the 'girl'. Dropping the trailer at a truck stop, Chuck drove bob tail to the Convent school. Sherrie was both fascinated and intimidated by the school. It was a two story brick structure with a statue of a woman wrapped in a sheet out front and there were older women dressed black and white garb she was unfamiliar with. Chuck had done a number of local hauling favors for the school in the past, towing trailers from here to there locally, at no charge of course. Chuck was a Lutheran by practice and choice, but performing tasks for any church or creed, gratis, was not beneath him.

Mother Superior Mary Elizabeth saw Chuck immediately and with Sherrie in tow, the bargaining began.

"Mr. Hansen, how good of you to stop by To what do I owe this pleasure."

"Good Mother, I have brought you a problem that I hope that between us, can be solved," said Chuck.

"An eloquent plea, Mr. Hansen. Is that problem sitting next to you?" asked the Mother Superior.

Chuck nodded and replied, "This young girl next to me, I found huddled next to the fifth wheel of my tractor in Fargo, North Dakota."

Mother Mary interrupted Chuck, "So Mr. Hansen, you present yourself at my school with a minor child, that you have no legal claim to hand and have transported over several state lines. Is that the crux of this situation?"

Chuck had no other defense other than, "Finders, keepers?"

Startled by the answer, Mother Mary burst out laughing. "I think I know what you want," continued the Nun. "Answer a few questions and I will give you my decision. First, how old is the girl? Secondly, to your knowledge, where is she from, thirdly, does she have any living relatives, fourth, is she Catholic and lastly, how much are you prepared to donate to the school?"

Chuck looked at the Mother Superior and said, "You left out a question, Mother."

"There's more?" questioned Mother Mary.

"Err, yes," said Chuck, "You didn't ask about the girls actual sex."

Surprised, Mother Mary cocked her head and peered at Sherrie and asked, "Dear, are you a boy?"

Tears started to stream down her face and she nodded, yes.

Mother Mary told Sherrie, "Your quite pretty and you would not be the only boy in skirts here. I am going to have you take a tour of the school and dormitory with Sister Janice while Mr. Hansen and I discuss the situation."

The office door opened and Mother Mary's secretary entered and asked, "A tour, Mother Superior?"

"Yes, this young lady....?" "Sherrie," added the Mother Superior. "Yes, Sherrie is applying to become a student here, so give her the 'good' tour."

Sherrie looked at Chuck and he smiled and waved her out.

The Mother Superior looked at Chuck as the room emptied, "OK Chuck, give me the whole story and leave out nothing."

When Sister Janice and Sherrie returned from the tour, the Mother Superior told Sherrie to sit down and pay attention.

"Did you like your tour of our school, dear?" Sherrie brightened, "It's the nicest, cleanist place that I've ever seen."

Mother Mary accepted that answer with a slightly lifted eyebrow. "You realize that we expect our students to put their best effort with their school work? And, those students living in the dormitory are expected to assist in the cleaning of the dorm? Mr. Hansen has suggested that your religious education is virtually non-existent. Although Mr. Hansen is a Christian, he belongs to a minor sect and your instruction will be in accordance with the practices of the Holy Church. If you can agree to these conditions, I will accept you as a student and boarder. Do you agree?"

Sherrie looked at Chuck, he nodded and Sherrie agreed.

"Come over here sweetheart," said Chuck to Sherrie. Patting his knee, Sherrie sat on it. "I want you know that I am not abandoning you. I will see you every month. I have a long contract with a company based in Red Wing that takes me to Seattle every month. I will stop and see how things are going and if you are having problems here that you don't think you can handle, I'll take you with me, OK?"

Sherrie buried her head in Chucks shoulder and nodded.

“You have a lot to learn and the Mother Superior is the best person that I can think of to do that, and I think that you will be very happy here, if you give a chance, OK?” Chuck lifted Sherrie off of his knee and taking Sherrie's hand and put in Mother Mary's and looking at the Nun, said, “I'm giving charge of a blank slate here, please take good care of her.”

With that, Chuck gave the girl a big hug, a kiss on the forehead and with a smile and a wave, walked out the door. Mother Superior Mary Elizabeth wrapped an arm around the sobbing child. “Come along Sherrie, let's get you settled.”

EPILOG: True to his word, Sherrie saw the semi tractor with Chuck Hansen Trucking stenciled on it's doors pull into the school's parking lot. Running across the lot with her uniform skirt flying, Sherrie waited impatiently for the tractors door to open. Chuck stepped down and hugged the girl asking, “How are things going sweetheart?” The girl smiled, “Uncle Chuck, you were right, I love it here.” Chuck smiled.