

Lady Marin

By Sheila Raphael

## Chapter 1: Postmortem

Brad Yayger first laid eyes on Lady Marin at a café in L.A. during a business trip. The Lady was touring town on vacation, and happened to be seated in the café near Elvira Wilshire's table. She observed Brad approaching Elvira and chatting her up. She made the usual mistake of thinking that Brad was Elvira's husband. It was not until their conversation turned toward Canis Personality that the Lady realized her error.

When Brad asked Elvira if she heard anything about Canis Personality through the grapevine, the Lady's attention grew more focused. It was the opposite of a romantic interest. Brad complained about a racist gesture Canis had made with respect to her own children. Elvira asked Brad who the father is. Brad had yet to be read-in on the use of a Naval officer's stolen semen in their I.V.F. regimen. He believed that his own semen had been used. Instead, his giz had been sold on the black market to unwitting dupes. That was when the Lady realized the two were just old acquaintances. (It was an ironic crossing of paths because of Lady Marin's own experience with the same Naval Misfits behind the semen theft ring.)

Brad was in the midst of getting his head back into the technical domain after an exquisite hike in the Santa Monica Mountains the day before. He typically stayed over the weekend on business trips in order to get a cheaper air fare and take in some of the local sights. Saturday was spent in the Hollywood Hills with walks through business districts featuring boutique shops and odd ball museums.

Brad was not happy with his fake-ass relationship with Canis Personality. When they started dating in '95, Brad mistook her for a compatible partner. He should have seen the writing on the wall when she treated him in a shabby manner. Their first significant tiff occurred just a few months into the relationship. He presented her with gifts each month on the day that they consummated their relationship with good sex. He bought her hedgehog and mice pastries and a bouquet of bearded irises. He wrote her a poem on a gift card. It was on such an occasion when she exhibited her canine qualities.

If he was as wise back then as he was in '99, he would have dropped her like a hot tamale. Instead, he was duped into purchasing a house with her in the Oakland Hills near Piedmont. It was a gentrified neighborhood with a few working class hold-outs scattered here and there. When a college buddy asked if the house is in a working class neighborhood, Brad replied, "If you consider doctors and lawyers to be working class, yes."

The Lady observed as Carry Grant approached Brad and Elvira with the avidity of a puppy meeting his owner after a long absence. Brad appeared to be a bit older than Carry, but that was because he is much older than he looks. He was actually quite senior to Carry, and it showed in the way he calmed the young man down and got him seated at their table. The Lady was unimpressed with Carry's slovenly appearance and his garish wristwatch. On the other hand, the way he charmed women with his smile and boyish conduct got her a bit wet between the legs.

Brad introduced Carry to Elvira and the eavesdropping café customers as a sales support dude working at Musk-Koggi, the famous C.G.I. (Computer-Generated Imaging) firm. They claim responsibility for the Warner Brothers' recent box office successes. He also introduced Elvira as a theater lady who had been

in a few Warner Brothers productions herself. It was really impressive that Brad brought the artist and the techie together at the same table.

Carry and Elvira hit it off instantly once they realized the Warner Brothers connection. Carry also impressed Darla with his jokes about animal sounds. At first she wondered why a pig would say, "Okay buddy, pull over," and why mom thought that was funny. Brad noticed the deer-in-the-headlights look and explained to Darla that people call policemen pigs because of their beastly behavior, especially towards people of color. Darla almost understood, but she was not quite sure what Brad meant by "color." Elvira cleared it up by pointing to a dark-skinned man in a corner of the café who was rattling his coffee quite nervously.

"That guy over there is a person of color because his skin is darker than ours. He looks like he might be the victim of beastly harassment the way he fidgets." Indeed, Aaron Alexis had been a target of harassment by the Naval Misfits. They claimed that he was not a nice person, as if harassing someone to the point of going postal was a nice thing to do.

"Do you have a license to be that cute?" Carry was putting on the charm for Elvira as if she were one of his teen-years lingerie customers. Brad could see right through the whole thing because he had the same habit. He told Carry to back off with the love for now. Another lady at the table, Karen Dorchester, told Brad that Carry seemed like a cool dude to work with.

It was just then that Brad started in on Carry's garish wristwatch, and the ladies said their good-byes. Alone with Carry, Brad began speaking some alien language about Warner Brothers and something called Stow Rage. The Lady was being exposed to Computer Geek for the first time.