

Female Troubles, Part 1 by DG Davis {Rated PG}

Synopsis: *The soup really hits the fan when a woman from Logan's past shows up with a 15 year old daughter she says is his!*

[All names, locations or businesses are either products of imagination or are being used fictitiously and any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental. All X-men characters belong to Marvel/20CenturyFox. Original character, Dr. Susan Harris, is again featured.]

Wow! Rare traffic jam at the gate. I yield right of way to an unfamiliar silver Lexus®. Wonder what it's about? Just returning from a three day conference, I'm anxious to see my hubby, eat something besides hotel food and relax.

There he is, my Bright Eyes. Shooting hockey pucks, he sees me, smiles and waves the stick.

Slowing to a stop, I roll down the window, "Hey good lookin', whatcha doin'?"

Grinning, he sends the puck sailing. Perfect shot! Raising the stick in victory, he skates to the edge of the rink. "Just wastin' time, darlin'."

"Must be nice. What's going on?"

He shrugs. "Not much. Classes let out yesterday, ya know."

"Right. See you inside?"

He winks. "Warm me up?"

I grin. "We'll see"

Pulling into my customary spot next to his black pickup, there's a Lexus and a tall, attractive, brown haired woman making her way up the stone staircase leading to massive double front doors.

Approaching, I call out, "Hello! Do you need help?"

"Oh, yes, thanks ever so much. I have an appointment with Professor Xavier."

"Oh, simple enough. Come on, I'll show you where to check in."

"That's very kind...Mizz..."

Offering my hand, "Doctor Harris, school Pediatrician, at your service."

Equally friendly, she reciprocates. "Marla Jennings, a doctor, too, but the Ph.D. variety."

Once inside the grand entry hall she pauses, gaping at the finery. "This is a school?"

"I know. Beats the daylights out of some of the places I've gone."

The woman nods in agreement.

Charles emerges from his office. Smiling benignly, he whirrs into the foyer and offers his hand, "Ah, Doctor Jennings, I presume?"

She appears surprised, but recovers quickly.

Charles doesn't react and briefly acknowledges me. "Glad to see you back safe and sound."

I smile. "The only danger was the risk of falling asleep during the lectures."

Charles nods.

It doesn't take a special talent to sense tension in the air, so I excuse myself, "I can see you're about to be busy. Bet I've got a pile of messages. Get with you later?"

"Indeed. Brief staff meeting at four."

Calling over my shoulder, "Okey-dokey. Thanks," I skedaddle for my office.

xXx

An hour later, perhaps less, I hear the visitor and Charles' voices outside my office. Finishing up a batch of e-mail, I motion them inside.

"I know you met a short while ago," Charles begins, "but Doctor Jennings wishes to be properly introduced."

For the second time, Marla offers a handshake. "I'm Wendy's mother and I thank you from the bottom of my

heart for saving my little girl.”

Instead of taking her hand I embrace her. “You’re most welcome.”

“Can I ask you what actually happened to Wendy before she was brought to your hospital?”

“Of course. Please sit.”

Interjecting, “Ladies, due to the sensitivity of the situation, I’ll excuse myself,” Charles exits.

I brief Doctor Jennings as thoroughly as I’m able, hoping I don’t repeat too much of what Charles discussed with her. She’s cool as a cucumber until I raise details about Wendy’s near-miss sexual assault. The topic brings both of us close to tears.

After a long moment of silent reflection Marla’s gaze tracks to my belly. “Looks like you don’t have long to go,” she queries with a knowing smile.

“I wish.” I pat my belly. “It’s twins.”

“Oh, bless your heart.”

She briefly scans my office, her gaze resting on photos on the shelves behind my desk.

“My sons,” I enlighten.

Eyes falling on a photo of Logan and me, her breath catches in her throat and she turns pale.

“Doctor Jennings, is something wrong?”

“Umm, no. No, nothing.” She straightens her posture. “I’m considering enrolling Wendy after Christmas. Will you continue caring for the students after your twins are born?”

“That’s my plan, after maternity leave.”

“I feel very reassured knowing you’re on staff.”

“Thanks.”

Marla’s eyes dart between the photo and me prompting me to ask again if something is wrong.

“It’s just...the man in the picture on your shelf... he resembles someone I knew.”

“That’s my husband.”

Marla shakes her head. “It’s uncanny...the resemblance-- but he’d be much older.” Sighing, she adds, “Besides, he died.”

“I’m sorry.”

Glancing at her watch, she says, “It is late and I must gather up my daughter. Again thank you.”

xXx

Counseling myself, “No guts, no glory,” I slip into Sue’s office through the side door.

Hearing the click of the handle, she glances up. “Wondering if it was cold enough for you yet.”

“Ain’t cold, just invigorating.”

Cold hands on the back of my bride’s neck earns me a shriek. Flopping on the chair closest to her desk, I test the air for scents, making sure we’re alone. “We need to talk.”

Her face mirrors my sober expression, “Ok, what’s up?”

I suck in a noisy breath parsing a long-forgotten scent. Can’t place it. Friend? Foe? Dunno.

“Will you quit that,” she scolds.

I snort just to tee her off. “Who was here?”

“Oh, Charles located Wendy’s mother. She stopped by to say thanks for helping her.”

“Holy Crap!”

She snaps, “Beg pardon!”

“Susan, there’s something you need to know.”

“What is it?”

Uncomfortable doesn’t begin to define what I’m feeling. Stalling, I crack my knuckles.

She winces and snarks, “Are you going to tell me whatever it is sometime today?” as I crack my neck.

“Wendy’s... my...daughter.”

Sue dips her head slightly, never breaking eye contact. Outwardly, she looks calm, but that ain’t what’s going on inside. It seems like forever before she asks, “How do you know?”

I point to my nose. “Senses don’t lie.”

She goes quiet and I sense the turmoil swirling inside. She’s struggling to keep it together.

“Good heavens,” she exclaims in a low voice. “I just sat here and had a conversation with a woman you’ve had a child with!”

Silence and strong emotions hang in the atmosphere like ozone, filling me with the notion that if Sue had Storm’s power, perhaps I’d resemble a piece of burnt bacon.

She gets a handle on the anger. “So, what’s the story, Logan?”

“I don’t know.”

Anger creeps back into her voice. “What do you mean you don’t know?”

“Just that. I don’t remember.” It’s lame, but it’s the truth.

“Oh, for Pete’s sake, how could you *not* remember?”

The look on her face, the scent coming off her can’t scorch more than if she’d actually let me have it with a flame thrower.

She stands abruptly, flounces to the office door, shuts and locks it. Then, in rapid staccato fires off question after question, offering me no opportunity for reply: “Does Wendy have any clue? Anyone else know? Come on, Logan, from what you’ve told me, you’d have been bumming around Canada or where ever. Your memory’s intact from then, isn’t it? How could you *not* remember Marla Jennings?”

Sitting there, I take my licks, but the name 'Marla Jennings' strikes a nerve, very much like the moment Stryker stormed into Xavier’s School.

I know the name, can picture a face--but why? Where? My gut says she’s gotta be from the bad old Alkali Lake days, but *if* that’s true, then Wendy’s too young. Sniffing the air again trying to catch a remnant of her scent...hers is intimately familiar, but doesn’t twist my gut with dread like Stryker’s did...it doesn’t make sense.

“She’s a...” Sue fishes for a description, “a *very* attractive woman.” Sighing, she rubs her forehead. “Was her scent familiar?”

I nod.

“How familiar? Passing acquaintance or more than that?”

“More.”

“You’ve slept with her?”

“Yeah.”

Silent for a full minute, she leans forward and in a dark formal voice declares, “I’ve made it a point not to speculate about your past romantic life. It’s really none of my business, but just how much did you screw around?”

Raising my arms and waving surrender, “Don’t you think I’ve been beating my head against the wall since that kid walked in the place? All I can tell ya for sure is, if I knocked Jennings up, the kid should be older ‘n fifteen. I’m sorry, darlin’. I don’t what the deal is, but I guarantee I’m gonna find out.”

She turns to the photo behind her as the scent of her emotions shifts gears again. “Is she mistaken?”

“About what?”

“She said that you looked like someone she knew. Something like 'an uncanny resemblance,' but whoever she was talking about died.”

“She’s wrong about the dead part.” My smart-aleck answer doesn’t win me any points. “Is that all she said?”

“Uh-huh. She had to leave.”

“And takin’ Wendy with her, I guess?”

“Yes.”

She doesn’t hide her anxiety saying, “Logan, she’s planning on enrolling Wendy after the Christmas break.”

Leaning my head back, thinking over the past couple days, I know any hope of this problem going away just

evaporated. I groan and mutter, "How much more screwed up can things get?"

"I don't know. How many more little surprises are out there?" She sounds mad again.

Don't wanna hurt her, but there's no option. Locking my eyes on hers, hoping she'll read my regrets, I admit, "I don't know...but...probably more."

"Lovely," she retorts icily.

She breathes deeply and I sense her struggle with her feelings. Sympathy? Understanding? Devotion? Acceptance? Love? The mix is overpowering, but a comfort.

She comes to my side, gently stroking my cheek. "Ok, Bright Eyes, how shall we handle this?"

We? She said *we*. That ain't what I figured on. Relieved, but emotionally beat, my voice sounds it. "Don't have a clue yet, darlin', but..."

I'm cut off by a thunderclap telepathic message, '*Anytime you two are ready, the staff would be pleased to have your presence for the **four o'clock** meeting.*'

"Oh, shoot!" Sue glances at her watch. "We're late."

What I think back to Charles ain't fit for polite company.

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Perfect lady that she is, Sue looks embarrassed and slips into a seat. Me? Staff meetings are a crock and I ain't shy lettin' on about it. With what's just gone down, neither of us are focused. She fakes it better: expression bland and hands mostly clasped in front of her. Every once in a while she twiddles her thumbs or pushes an imaginary stray lock of hair off her face.

Not me. I gotta pace, pop my joints, drum my fingers on anything handy. Growling would be nice, but even I know that's pushin' things.

Charles clears his throat, declaring, "Now, for the last item on the agenda. Of course, you're all aware of our recent guest, Wendy. Her mother has decided to enroll her as one of our rare tuition paying day students."

That gets our attention and it ain't lost on Charles either. Guess we're projecting pretty strong, but he doesn't mind surf. Me, anyway.

He continues, "I have her application and I'd appreciate if you'd all look it over," and passes copies out. "Scott, before you leave on holiday, will you have time to run the usual background checks?"

"Not a problem."

"Barring Scott discovering something untoward, everything seems to be quite in order." Charles glances at each member of his Team before zoning in on me. "Does anyone have any questions or concerns they'd like to address?"

Under the table, I feel a squeeze on my thigh and catch Sue's encouraging look.

"Yeah," I answer. "But not here, Charles. I need to talk...in private."

He gets it and clears the room.

I wanna knock that wiseacre expression off his face as he says, "I've been quite aware there's been something on your mind for the past day or two."

Son-of-a-gun has been inside my head. "Then you already know."

"I sense you've been unusually preoccupied and uneasy lately. I'll admit to being curious, but no, Logan, I haven't violated your privacy."

Don't smell a lie, but I still hafta force myself to relax. Drumming my fingers on the tabletop, Sue covers my hand with hers. A gesture of support.

Straight to the point, I level, "Wendy Jennings is my daughter."

Charles, never losing eye contact, steepled his hands together. "Are you one-hundred percent certain?"

"My senses haven't let me down yet."

"Indeed," Charles replies wearily. Looking like he's got the mother-of-all-headaches, he massages his forehead, "Alright, Logan, how aware are you of her circumstances?"

“Other than she’s my kid and what’s in her paperwork here, nothing.”

“And her mother?”

“Biological or adoptive?”

“Either.”

I shake my head. “Don’t remember.”

“Curious,” he reflects. “Doctor Jennings said that *both* of Wendy’s biological parents were deceased.”

Sue reinforces, “She mentioned that to me.”

“Perhaps Scott’s background check will shed some light on things. In the interim, it would be negligent and unethical if I did not share this with Doctor Jennings.”

Springing from the chair, my objection borders on violence.

With a gentle touch Sue persuades, “Logan, Charles is correct. He’s legally obligated.”

I go off with a string of ripe curses before emphatically declaring, “It’s *my* responsibility. I’ll talk to her.”

Immediately reaching for the telephone, it isn’t long before Charles connects with Marla. Switching to speaker he begins, “Doctor Jennings, this is Charles Xavier.”

“Oh, hello,” is the slightly static-y reply.

“Terribly sorry to bother you...”

She cuts in, “No bother.”

“Some information has come to light and I believe it will have an effect on your decision regarding Wendy’s enrollment.”

“Oh. What might that be?”

“I think it’s best discussed privately and in person. Might I impose on meeting with you here, tomorrow morning?”

“Well, yes, I suppose. The earlier the better. I’ve a shopping date with my daughter.”

“Shall we say nine o’clock then?”

“Nine it is.”

“Thank you, Doctor. Good evening to you.” Clicking off the phone, Charles is sincere when he says, “Yours is not a position I would wish to be in. What may I do to assist?”

I shrug. “Soon as I come up with a plan, I’ll let ya know.”

“Very well.” Then, before telepathically calling the staff back together, he says, “I have one request.”

“Yeah?”

“Please brief Scott. This information needs to factor in with his background check.”

I curse some more. “Ok, but only after I’ve talked to Jennings. If she decides not to enroll the kid, there’s no point.”

Charles nods in agreement.

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Bright and early the next day, we’re one tired and stressed couple sitting in Charles’ office. Coffee, tea and breakfast pastries beckon, but Sue, too nauseated from morning sickness, and I, in a foul mood, have no appetite.

I think the honeymoon officially ended last night. We fought like we never have before. I lost it, smashing a beer bottle on the kitchen counter. She threw a shoe at me on my way out the door. Of course, I made her cry—more than once. We managed to declare a truce before going to bed, but she had her sniper rifle trained on me this morning.

“Good morning,” Charles greets with tempered cheer.

Grunting, I shake my head, staring past him. Sighing as she eases into a chair, Sue complains, “I’ve definitely had better.”

Nodding solemnly, he inquires, “Coffee? Tea?”

“Tea’s fine, Charles. Thank you.” Adding, “I’ll get it,” she proceeds to the side table.

Striding over to the fireplace, I pick at the Christmas garland draped across the mantle. “Nothin’,” I grumble. “I expect Doctor Jennings shortly. I assume the two of you wish privacy?”

My answer’s laced with venom, “Nah, thought I’d invite the Jerry Springer Show. Broadcast it all over the country.”

A protracted silence follows as Sue settles back into an over-stuffed chair, closing her eyes against waves of nausea.

At five minutes past the appointed hour, Marla Jennings appears escorted by Ororo. Sue and Charles press palms with her. My back to them, I stay glued to the fireplace, senses full on.

“Terribly sorry to be late. The freeway’s a nightmare,” Marla declares. Reflected off an urn on the mantle, I see her surveying the room.

Charles starts the ball rolling. “Doctor Jennings, as I said on the telephone last evening, some information has come to light that has a direct bearing on Wendy.”

“Go on,” Marla urges.

“It’s a rather delicate matter involving Doctor Harris and her husband. If you’ll forgive me, I’ll leave you in their care,” and, bidding a rapid exit, no one has a chance to disagree.

I see the reflection of two women staring each other down.

Marla’s scent and her voice shake a memory loose with the force of a whack by a two-by-four. I turn to face her. “Hello, Marla.”

Marla’s entire body stiffens at the sound of my voice. She gasps, goes pale and grabs for a chair. Finding her voice, she sputters, “Jim Logan? It can’t be! They told me you were killed---that something terrible happened.” She hesitates and blinks. “No, I don’t believe this. The Jim Logan I knew would be a much older man.”

In no mood for drama, I cut her off. “I’m not dead. I haven’t aged and I want you to tell me about my daughter.”

Her mouth opens and closes. Once. Twice. Finally composed, she meets me with equal force. “What are you talking about?”

“Don’t play games, woman.”

“Rest assured I don’t play games with my child. How do I know you’re really Jim Logan?”

Without a word, raising my hands, I slide the claws out.

She gasps. “They...they used to be bone.” Obviously bothered, she looks away muttering, “I’d heard rumors of such technology before I transferred.”

“Weren’t no flippin’ rumors, babe,” I snarl. “Covered me in the crap from head to toe.”

“How? How did you survive?”

“Ain’t important. I just did.”

“I’m truly sorry, Jim.”

“Not as much as I am.”

Silence ensues for what seems an eternity before Marla speaks. “I must have your word that nothing of this will get to Wendy. Unless you agree, I shall walk away from here.”

Ain’t in the mood to bargain, but there’s an innocent kid at stake. *My* kid. “Agreed.”

“Good.” Aiming for control, she presses, “And, one other thing, I want to know what happened to you, all of it.”

She’s stalling. “Maybe you oughtta tell me,” I snarl.

“I don’t know. That’s why I’m asking. When my division transferred from the Alkali Lake compound in eighty-seven, I never heard from you again. You did say you’d keep in touch.”

“Stuff happened. What about Wendy?”

“What do you want to know?”

“Everything,” I roar, sick of her game.

“All right, I’ll tell you. Yes, you are her biological father and I adopted her. I’ve raised her on my own for all these years.”

“There’s a heckuva lot you ain’t saying. If you knew all along I was her father, then who’s her mother?”

“You don’t need to know.”

“I don’t need to know?” I’m this close to smashing her pretty face. “Damn it, I’ve got a right to know.”

“The dead don’t have any rights.” She meant to wound with those words.

Keyed on the escalation in tension, Sue interjects a voice of reason. “Doctor Jennings, Logan’s not dead. We both agree not to divulge anything to Wendy. Please help us come to terms with this. It’s been just as much of a shock to us.”

Marla’s lips twist into a cynical smile. She leans back into the chair, relenting, “I suppose you’re right.”

Her eyes are remote, her voice unsteady. “Jim...Logan--is that what you call yourself now? I truly had no idea you were alive. I’d heard there had been a terrible accident at Alkali Lake and there were few survivors. At the time I wasn’t even certain you were still attached. But I hadn’t heard anything from you since I’d left, so I assumed the worst.”

She ain’t lying. Working to get my own fury under control, another feeling, curiosity, burns inside my chest. Does she hold the key to the past I ain’t got back? “What did else did you hear? Who told you about it?”

“I ran into Lucien Diebel a few months after it happened.”

My gut twists hearing that name.

She continues, “He told me. He said there was some sort of accident, but he didn’t elaborate. He’d been hurt--left with hideous scars on his face.” She looks at me thoughtfully. “You were there, weren’t you? You survived. Why am I telling you this?”

It takes everything not reacting to what she says. “I survived, but my memory didn’t. Luc say who else survived?”

“He said Will made it out alive and a few junior personnel.”

Hearing the name Will, Sue stifles a gasp. “Sorry, queasy morning for me.”

It’s my turn with a comforting gesture for my wife. She leans into the hand I fluff her hair with.

Marla flashes Sue a knowing and sympathetic smile.

“Doctor, is Wendy your only child?” Sue asks.

“Yes.” Marla steers the conversation back to me. “That’s all I know, Logan. I haven’t seen or heard from anyone since then.”

I nod, acknowledging she’s still on the level, but enough about me. “Marla, who is Wendy’s mother?”

Her scent immediately changes. “I told you. I don’t know.”

“You’re lyin’.”

“How dare you!”

Anybody ever tell the woman I can’t be beat? “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet. Now tell me what you know.”

“No. Even if I did know, I won’t. Her mother is dead and it would be unethical to divulge that information. Wendy’s records have been sealed and will remain that way.”

“I can find out.”

“I suppose you can, but I’m warning you, if you do anything to upset my daughter, I guarantee you’ll live to regret it.”

“She’s not *your* daughter.”

“In the eyes of the law she *is* and *you* have no say. If I even think you’re going to try anything, I’ll slap a restraining order on you.”

My laugh is humorless and cold, but I temper my words. “I promised I wouldn’t do anything to hurt her.”

“Yes, you did,” Marla reinforces. Struggling for calm, she continues, “One thing I do remember is you always seemed to be a man of your word.” Sarcastically, she adds, “Though not so much in the romantic follow-up department.”

“He’s improved with time.”

Atta girl, Susie.

“Yes.” Marla cuts Sue a dismissive glance. “I suppose I can see that.”

The room’s startin’ to stink with feminine hostility and if I had any sense, I’ll find a rock and crawl under it.

Standing, Marla declares, “I’ve had quite enough for one day. There’s much to consider before I make a final decision about Wendy attending this institution. Kindly tell Professor Xavier I’ll be in touch. Happy Holidays,” she says with rancor before turning on her heel and storming out of the room.

“Oh, that witch!” Sue exclaims, hearing the main front door slam. “I have no idea what you ever saw in her.”

“Yeah, she always was.” After last night’s ugly battle, I ain’t stupid enough to *actually* explain my past attraction to the woman.

We sit quiet for a while. Don’t know about her, but I’m worn down. I could use a beer---no, a bottle of whiskey.

Draping my arm over her shoulder, I pull her close. “I’m sorry to put ya through this, darlin’. But I’m glad ya stuck with me. I might’ve lost it without ya.”

The soft whirr of Charles’ wheelchair breaks the moment.

“Ya heard?” I ask. A simple rise of his eyebrows says he did.

We sit in silence before Sue comments, “Something doesn’t ring true. For a woman who has only one adopted child, she acts like,” gesturing to her belly, “she knows exactly what I’m going through.”

“She’s lyin’ about something,” I agree.

Charles concurs. “Indeed, all is not as it seems...and curiously, I have great difficulty penetrating her thoughts.”

A rap on the door and a clearing of a throat interrupts. “Excuse me, Professor.” It’s Summers. “I ran the background check on Wendy Jennings. Thought you might want it before I headed to the airport.”

“Certainly,” Charles replies motioning him into the office. “Scott, close the door, please.”

With efficiency of motion, Scott Summers does so, dropping a CD-ROM onto Charles’ desk and snatching a pastry from the nearby side table.

Popping the disk into his machine Charles quizzes, “Anything significant requiring our immediate attention?”

“Maybe,” he answers between bites of blueberry Danish. “Doctor Jennings indicated Wendy was adopted on the application. Well, darned if I can locate anything in any public records anywhere.”

“She told us just now Wendy’s records were sealed,” Sue offers.

“Ok, that might be so, but when an adoption takes place, even if the detailed records are sealed, you can usually find out at least the date and locality the adoption took place.”

“You’re sayin’ there *ain’t* any records?” I grill.

“I’m saying I can’t locate any.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“It means one of a few possibilities,” Charles interjects. “One, her adoption may have been a private transaction...”

“Yes, but even private adoptions are registered somewhere,” Sue cuts in.

“...a private transaction of the illicit variety or no adoption took place at all,” Charles finishes. Allowing revelations to sink in, he says, “Scott, thanks for your timely efforts...”

“Let ‘im stay,” I say. “Saves me goin’ through all this crap again.”

“As you wish.” Charles focuses his attention on Sue. “You made an interesting point a few moments ago.”

“What?”

“You seem to think Doctor Jennings empathizes far more with your condition than you’d expect?”

“She certainly gave me that impression.” Thinking for a moment, Sue shakes her head. “Are you suggesting that Marla Jennings is Wendy’s biological mother?”

“Timings wrong,” I say. “Trust me, I’d remember hookin’ up with her in the last fifteen years.”

Scott shoots a sideways glance my way. “I’m missing something here.”

“Yeah, Scooter, Wendy’s my kid.”

Slack jawed, “Sheesh, whadaya say to that?” Scott mutters quietly.

“If ya know what’s good, nothin’,” I warn harshly.

“Right, Logan.” Scott glances at the clock on the corner. “I’ve got a flight to make.” Just about to exit, he pauses at the door, “Hey, Merry Christmas! See you guys,” meaning me and Sue, “in a couple days.”

“That’s the plan,” Sue grins.

Still coiled like a spring, I reiterate, “Everything that went on in this room today, stays in this room. Got that?”

He’s insulted and fires back with, “Heck no! Thought I’d stick a banner on the back of the 767 for half the North American continent to see.”

Out of my seat and about to deliver an adamantium knuckle-sandwich, he counters with, “Goes without saying, Logan.”

I sneer and rumble warning from deep in my chest.

Once Scott’s out of earshot, Sue gently scolds, “Was that really necessary?”

I flash her the same nasty sneer, but keep my mouth shut.

Charles waits for emotions to settle a bit, then levels a heavy question, “Have you two considered how things will be handled should Doctor Jennings finalize Wendy’s enrollment?”

Sue glances at me, her expression and scent committed to following my lead.

I slam one fist against the other. “I’ll burn *that* bridge after I cross it.” But I’ll bet serious bucks we won’t see either of ‘em again.

Continued in Female Troubles, Part 2