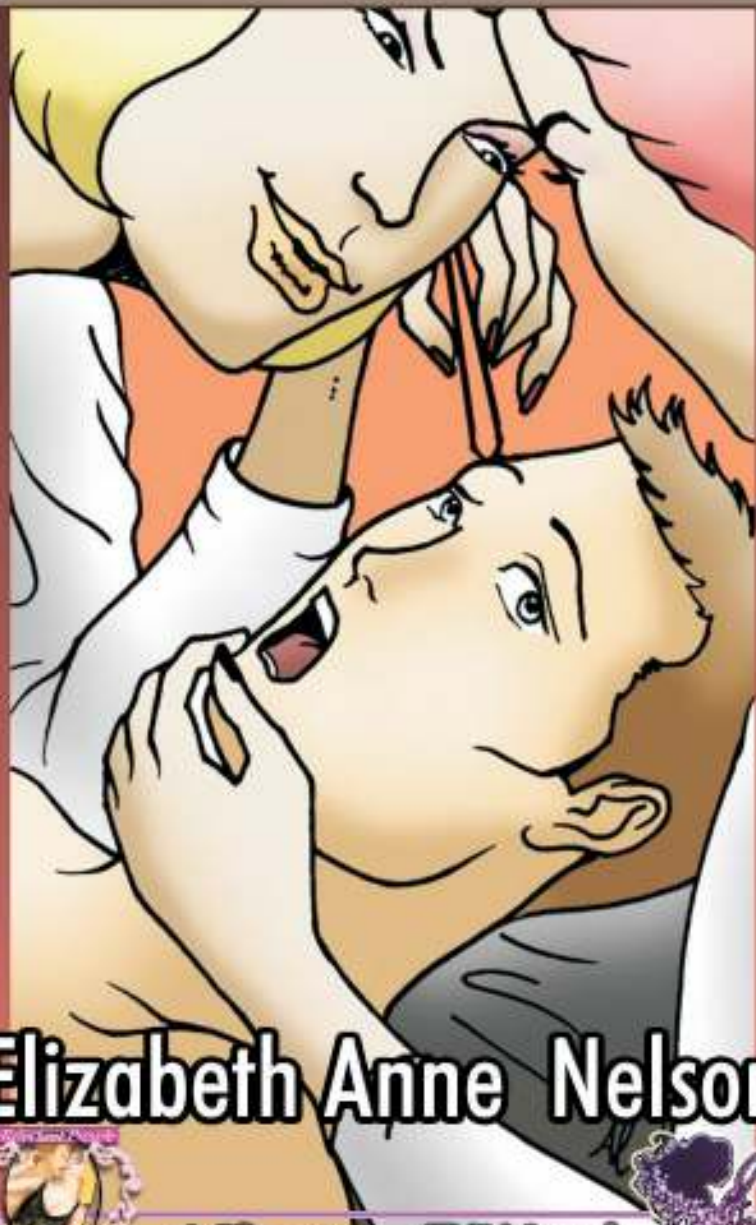


Celeste



Elizabeth Anne Nelson



A "Spectrum TV" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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CELESTE

By Elizabeth Anne Nelson

Long, thin firedogs ran towards the setting sun, slashing the darkening blue skies with blood red before massive rolling black clouds that now all but covered Lake Berdache.

Joe Benson gazed at the long deep green waves wondering when the storm would break. Shaking his head over the fact that the storm would curtail hopes of enjoying this last weekend of Indian Summer he retreated towards his cabin seeing, as he returned, Jack Dutton's car swing into the spot next to his own pick-up truck.

"Looks bad," Jack shouted above the growing winds. "The radio just announced that this one might be the first snow."

"Need any help with your bags?"

"No, thanks," was the reply as another car swung into the little gravel hard stand. "Hi, Dave!"

Dave acknowledged the greeting with a nod as Bud Norton, his riding companion stepped from the car.

“Hit a bit of snow just west of here, maybe two hours out,” Bud noted swinging two pink suitcases and a vanity box from the trunk. “I hope you have plenty of wood for the fireplace?”

“Enough for the weekend inside and probably enough for all winter in the shed,” Joe replied opening the cabin door. “Jack, you have the south bedroom. Bud, the one next to mine. Dave can have the attic bedroom across from Bill. Say, when is Bill coming in?”

“Bill is tied up with a business deal so he had to take a rain check,” Dave said carrying his bags through the door. “He was kind of put out. He has the loveliest new canary yellow knit and is just dying to show it off.”

“Wait until you see my eggshell blue, party dress,” Bud noted moving pink suitcases into his bedroom.

“I’ll start the fire,” Joe suggested taking a large box of kitchen matches from the living room fireplace mantle. “Jack, I have the kitchen all set up.”

“Hint, hint,” Jack laughed closing the south bedroom door so that he could change in private.

Joe watched the little flames from the tinder began to grow against the soft pine scented kindling. Satisfied that the fire would soon heat up the suddenly chilled living room he went to his own bedroom to undress.

Minutes passed in the silent living room as the red and yellow flames curled uncertainly around giant logs seeking a way to pierce the thick hardwood bark. Strange flickering shadows filled the wood paneled room as outside the wind began to cry against the coming storm.

The south bedroom door opened to reveal a tall woman with short black hair set in page boy style. Closing the bedroom door she smoothed the skirt of her black satin maid's uniform before adjusting her white organza bib apron and walking into the kitchen where Jackie began to prepare the supper meal.

In a few minutes three other lovely ones (two ladies and a young girl of about twelve), appeared from their bedrooms to meet in the living room, which was now lighted by the cheerful flames of the large fireplace.

"Why, June, that is really too divine," Jo exclaimed glancing at the egg shell blue, party dress of lace over taffeta that had transformed Bud into a much younger and happier pre-teen June. "Where ever did you buy it?"

"Why thank you, Jo," June replied, delighting in the compliment by doing a little girlish modeling turn that revealed a swirl of lacy petticoats for the others. "At Angela's."

Davida was about to say that the manager of Angela's was a T.V. but Jackie entered with a tray filled with before dinner drinks which the maid dutifully presented with a curtsy to each of the would be ladies (with a Shirley Temple for little June), who thanked their maid with polite delight over having Jackie as a part of their little group.

When Jackie withdrew Davida told all about Angela's manager and the beautiful wardrobe that the manager had shown in strictest confidence.

In a little while Jackie re-entered to announce that supper was served in the dining room so the ladies quickly took their places at the candle lit table to await the service of their maid, who traditionally ate elsewhere to continue the illusion of a proper servant.

No sooner had they started the salad when a knock sounded on the cabin door causing no end of conster-

nation as they looked silently from one to another wondering who it was at the front door?

Finally, Jo glanced at Jackie and smiled saying, "I think that it might be Billy, and if it isn't I am certain that we may quite easily pass as three women with a child. Perhaps you should answer the door, Jackie, since that would be proper for our maid."

"Yes, ma'am," Jackie replied, a bit uncertainly, but with a dutiful curtsy, before passing into the living room as the others watched.

When Jackie opened the door a warm wind passed into the cabin to brighten the cabin fireplace and candles.

In the doorway stood a young man dressed in a white shirt and slacks that seemed almost as bright as his strangely white hair.

"Whom shall I say is calling, sir?" Jackie asked with a curtsy, wondering if he was an albino. But, seeing that his eyes were a clear, if not frosty gray, she knew that the hair was the result of other causes.

"Bill said that I might come," he replied lifting two white leather suitcases. "I am called Celeste."

"Please come in, Celeste" Jackie asked with a sigh of relief. "We have just started supper and I can set a place for you while you change."

"Thank you," Celeste noted with an amused smile as he entered and gazed upon the ladies in the dining room. "It will take me just a minute to change."

"Celeste may use the other attic bedroom," Jo suggested causing Jackie to take one of the bags and lead Celeste to the upstairs bedroom.

“Bill hadn’t mentioned any Celeste,” Davida announced to the others once assured that Celeste was out of range of their conversation.

“Probably just met her,” Jo noted. “How else would she know?”

“Well, it is strange that he wouldn’t tell someone,” Davida countered with a near pout while Jackie returned to set a fourth place at the table.

“Did Bill say anything to you about Celeste, Jackie?”

“No, ma’am.”

And so silently they awaited their unannounced guest, who soon walked down the cabin stairs and entered the dining room to astonish all with a beauty which far surpassed what they assumed to be possible.

Celeste’s snow-white hair was now shoulder length and rested in a smooth roll along pale creamy white shoulders. At each lovely shoulder was a golden circular moonlike broach that glowed as if hiding an inner flame while its pin held the delicate folds of a shimmering white Grecian styled evening gown...

“Why, Celeste, you are beautiful,” Jackie announced with a curtsy before holding the chair for Celeste before the others, who speechlessly watched.

“Perhaps I should introduce you to the others. Celeste, may I present Jo, Davida, and June, our little girl. And I am Jackie, their maid, and yours, Celeste, if you wish?”

“Of course, my dearest,” Celeste replied in a warm soothing voice that was strangely feminine; but, yet bore a musical quality that seemed strange to their ears like the tinkling clearness of a distant bell. “I do hope that I shall not inconvenience you all in my pres-

ence. It is so seldom that I am able to roam within the freedom of such lovely hostesses."

"We are pleased to have you," Jo answered politely, wondering at the awkward wording of Celeste's compliment. But the outside noise of the suddenly raging storm interrupted Jo's thoughts.

"It sounds like we are in for it."

The conversation flowed between the ladies over the first winter storm and the possibility of being snowed in, fashions, and such small talk as delighted their whimsy until Jackie cleared the table and suggested that after dinner drinks would be served about the fireplace where it might be warmer and more homelike.

Once about the fireplace they accepted their drinks, with hot chocolate for June, while Jo asked if Jackie might like to join them and postpone doing the dishes.

Jackie took time to change and then returned to the circle of ladies dressed in a simple blue silk, shirt waisted dress.

"I should think that tonight would be an ideal night for the telling of stories," Jo suggested to the hushed group hearing the thunderous winds clash about the outer walls as the great fire danced happily casting its lights throughout the room.

"Please, no ghost stories," June pleaded with pretended childlike tones that caused the others to laughingly try to brush aside June's fears. "I just can't sleep on nights like this, and..."

"Of course," Jackie responded with a gentle voice as if soothing a child. "It is too nasty out for ghost stories, and heaven knows this place seems lonely enough."

Celeste smiled.

“Why shouldn’t we each take turns telling stories about transvestitism. Certainly I should be interested to hear such stories.”

“Well, I’m not too good at storytelling,” June protested uncertainly.

“Oh, come on,” they all pleaded and soon Davida agreed to start the stories.

“During the last war I served as an intelligence officer in the Middle East, in a very ancient city called San’a, the capital of Yemen,” Davida began placing aside the wine glass to adjust pale green satin skirts as Davida sat back in the large easy chair and watched the fire as if trying to remember the tale.

“If you have read the delightful tales from the Arabian Nights you should find this ancient city quite disappointing. For certainly the grandeur that once was has passed into the mists of the past.

“But there are those who can remember at least the days in the near past when the Turks ruled much of the Middle East and the sheiks still held to their old ways instead of being educated in the West and driving modern cars. One of those who remembered the old days was the owner of a coffee shop, a place where strangers gathered to talk of the progress of the war and to swap information for a price as he told of the old days. And here is one story that he liked to tell...”

THE FIRST TALE: YOUR TURN

Long before the fall of the Great Turkish Empire there lived a powerful sheik, whose fighting men stirred such awe that even the mighty Turk sought to avoid combat with him.

And so it came to pass that the Turks paid great sums to his treasury to barter an uneasy peace, for truly gold brings together strange friends and the Turks were adept at its peace making powers.

From the wealth of his peace and his personal holdings the sheik added to his harem of twenty wives and many concubines. And like many great warriors he began to tire of blood and sought out the delights of his harem and palace, which pleased the Turks.

But, there lived in a neighboring sheikdom a young man, who hated the Turk and would have nothing to do with his gold nor did he spare any of his hatred when he discovered that they had accepted the Turkish peace.

So certainly he did not care for his peaceful neighbor, whom he thought was not fit to carry the sword. This youth, carried away with the fires of hatred in his heart, conducted raids into his neighbor's sheikdom and boasted that his neighbor was too weak and womanly to protect any more than his harem.

When this tale was brought to the sheik; he grew quite angry and then for some strange reason shrugged saying, "I can let him wait his turn. He is young and he knows little about protecting harems and such."

With this the sheik let it be known that he would be pleased to sue for peace with the young firebrand and that perhaps they should fight a common enemy. He also noted that no doubt the young sheik was too violent of will to accept such a meeting, for only the brave would enter an enemy camp...

Of course, young Abdul Ibbin Sha could tell a challenge when he saw one so he went without the advice of his counselors, who knew the meaning of treach-

ery. But the young only follow the emotions of their will so he rode alone to the palace of his enemy.

The young sheik was greeted as a friend and his older neighbor was pleased to see that the boy was not only very brave but also quite handsome.

“We cannot fight amongst ourselves like animals. A wise man seeks to live in peace,” the man announced waving away his slaves as they sat man and youth within the royal chambers. “It would be truly sad if such a beautiful youth would fall before my sword.”

“I am a warrior, my father was, and his before him until the Book lists Adam, the first of man,” the youth boasted. “I came here to hear your terms of surrender or war.”

“Is it true that you boasted that I no longer could fight? And that my harem was all I could protect?”

“Yes. And if you were a man you would meet me in combat over such an insult.”

“But, perhaps it is true,” the man, who was sheik, replied with a smile. “And since you are so truthful you should at least see what I try so hard to protect.”

In disbelief the youth arose and followed the man across the royal chamber and past two sword bearing eunuchs, who opened the large doors that led into the sheik’s private household harem.

“A harem is a very interesting place,” the sheik stated to the youth in a brotherly voice. “And as you can see mine is quite protected as you so rightfully said.”

“I think that I would prefer to return to the royal chamber,” the youth suggested seeing the smiling women, the silken and jeweled marble rooms, and smelling the gentle fragrances that fill the rooms.

“Perhaps you should wait your turn,” the sheik replied and then changed the subject by saying, “I find the harem is really quite confining and often I cannot remain here too long, for I prefer to ride and hunt. But, there are times when a man must seek the comforts of his sex and delight in the soft pleasures.

“It is often my desire to eat the last meal of each day here and rest from the hunt. Perhaps you might join me, and we shall discuss your terms for surrender.”

With this the sheik clapped his hands and four slave girls appeared bearing large towels and implements for the bath.

“Perhaps you would prefer to bathe alone and then we might meet again,” the sheik stated with a wave towards a room that contained a large sunken pool.

“I assure you that you are quite safe within the harem, for haven’t you said that I am able to protect those inside?”

The youth laughed suspiciously.

“I shall not kill a guest in my house. By Allah, that I swear,” the sheik stated causing the youth to shrug and follow the slave girls into the room with the bath, while the man smiled to himself and turned to talk to his Chief Eunuch before he allowed the slave girls to prepare him for the delights of the bath.

The young sheik stood silently as the girls undressed him and placed his belongings by the pool upon a pillow. He then allowed them to scrub his body with oil before they laughingly helped him into the warm pool which to his amazement was filled with the fragrance of roses.

“The young master is really quite beautiful,” a slave girl mused as she stepped into the pool with him once she had removed all of her clothes but for a



strange metal belt that was adorned with a wooden rod which stuck out from the smooth groin of the belt.

Noticing his interest in her belt she laughed.

“It is a chastity belt. Our master wishes to keep us pure from the stain of love of man. After a time one adjusts to the rod, but you need not worry of such things.”

With this the two girls giggled and tended to their duties of washing the slightly embarrassed sheik. After a time they helped him from the pool and guided his naked form into another room causing him to remember his clothes and sword, but when he turned to re—enter the room with the pool he discovered his way barred by a closed iron door.

“Our master wishes that you have clean new clothes suitable to your station,” the slave girl suggested causing him to shrug and return his gaze from the bolted iron door to the luxurious surroundings of the room he was in.

Before him the girls gestured towards a large sitting cushion and placed by the cushion a silver pot of coffee, its rich fragrance filling the rose scented room.

“If the young master wishes he may have some sweet coffee while we dry his lovely form.”

Accepting a cup of coffee, he sat upon the cushion and sipped from the cup as they performed their gentle duties. In a way he could see why the sheik liked the comforts of the harem for really he felt quite relaxed and when the girls began to gently massage his body he mused over these delights and allowed them to take the cup from between his fingers before helping him to lie down upon the cushions that they placed behind him.

A bit sleepily he yawned hearing the tall girl say.

“I am sure that the young master will love his stay in our master’s harem, for as long as he stays here he will need not fear anything; since our master protects us all quite well.”

“I...” he began to interrupt only to feel ever so tired... “You have drugged me...”

“Yes, little one,” the other girl murmured placing his head in her lap as her assistant placed a brazier by her side and handed her a curling iron which she carefully set to his black curls. “The drug will make you very docile; but, you may not go to sleep.”

“I don’t understand,” he managed to whisper from within some strange dream like existence; which denied him the ability to move and yet he could still hear, see, and speak.

“Our master wishes for you to feel perfectly at home, so we are your hand maidens.”

“Hand maidens?” he murmured watching the other girl go to the iron door and knock three times causing the door to swing open to reveal the Chief Eunuch and two slave girls, who entered the room. Looking at the Chief Eunuch he managed to whisper, “I have been drugged tell your master that he swore by Allah not to kill me!”

The Chief Eunuch nodded with a grin and motioned for one of the girls to place the small wooden box she carried by the youth.

“Our master will keep his word,” the eunuch replied in a gentle but high voice as he noted with amused interest how the girl had changed the youth’s hair.

“You shall be indeed quite the most beautiful in the harem by the time it comes to be your turn.”

“My turn?” the youth asked in disbelief as the slave girls began to take tweezers in their long fingers and tweeze the unruly hairs from his eye brows.

“What is this. What are you doing to me?”

“Why preparing you for our master,” a slave girl giggled taking his hand in hers and carefully preparing them for a manicure. “And there is so very much for us to do, little one. And so much for you to learn.”

“Learn, do,” he repeated uncertainly, for only the women in his tribe were treated thus by handmaidens and... “I demand that you take me to the sheik!”

“He is with his first wife,” the Chief Eunuch replied opening the wooden box. “My master has twenty wives and fifty concubines.”

“But, he promised to have supper with me tonight.”

The youth hoped against hope that he was just being teased by his old enemy, that this was some sort of joke, “Certainly he means only to scare me by this. I have been brave have I not?”

“Brave?” the Chief Eunuch asked with concern. “I did not know that you had to be brave within these walls. I am not brave, nor are any of the others. You and we are protected from harm and therefore we need not be brave, only obedient, and docile.”

“Do not fear, little one, we will help you learn all that you must know,” a girl said as she and another girl took his feet and spread them apart. They began to prepare his toenails as they had his fingers which now glittered with red polish.

“After all we have seventy days before it is time. And by then you will have learned much of that which will please our master.”