

Make-up An Instrument of Peace-Dr. Barbara D. Parks-Lee-Washington, DC

Like an onion, Malcolm's clients peeled back the layers of their souls as he worked his miracle make-up artistry for them on his day job. He was conflicted because he could never share his layers.

Being professional, he knew he had to be objective and not to become personally involved. However, one patient, a child whose body was half one color, half another, touched him. The challenge was to find a way to blend the dark chocolate and vanilla to a color that would honor both colors.

Malcolm thought of mixing a permanent make-up pigment that could be painful if tattooed or one that might be a compound that could be blended into a color-blending pill that might be prescribed to effect immediate change. However, how might such a change affect the mental state of this pre-adolescent?

The color distribution made for a different challenge, for the child's body looked like a vertical line had been drawn all the way down his body. The client's condition was not physically painful, only mentally disturbing to a child shortly to be a teen-ager who wanted to fit in, to belong.

Malcolm had become a make-up artist when he discovered make-up magic to transform, sometimes to make the extraordinary the ordinary, to make imperfections perfect. As a child he knew how it felt to be different, never to be able to fit in totally, always to be afraid of being revealed for who he really was.

Malcolm's family had always stayed to themselves after the incident with his grandfather being violently attacked had caused them to relocate to a remote area, away from his school, their town, and its bullies. When Malcolm was being home schooled, his family's secret was easier to hide. He taught himself the intricacies of camouflage using make-up whenever he had to venture from home.

Once he became an adult, his skills with make-up led him to work where he could make a positive difference in others' lives. His coworkers thought him strange, aloof, and secretive, but they recognized the value of his skills to his clients. He was the consummate professional who did his job, treated everyone kindly, and, at the end of the day, left as quietly as he had arrived.

Malcolm often questioned why he was so different, but his family told him to accept his uniqueness. Only once had anyone, a cousin at his grandfather's funeral, tried to share how their family came to be different. Before Malcolm could get all the details, his cousin was shushed. All Malcolm heard was something about how his grandmother had rescued, nursed, and grew to love someone who fell from the sky, someone who became his grandfather.

Grandfather's skin was different, mottled almost like that of a burn victim, but without the scarring. He never appeared without being covered from head to toe in strange metallic-

looking garments. An empath, he felt what others were feeling, knew what they thought, and doted on Malcolm. When Malcolm asked him why he dressed the way he did, Grandfather told him where he came from, everyone dressed that way.

Only once, after his grandfather's funeral, had Malcolm opened a box of his grandparents' papers. What he found was puzzling. What he saw was strange writing in a text he could not understand, but one line, in English, for place of origin listed the planet XZK4Q for his grandfather.

Was his grandfather from a galaxy beyond Earth's? Might that explain his strange dress, his ability to feel for others? His grandmother caught him looking at the documents and tried to explain that love could unite disparate souls, even when they were from different planets.

It was only then that Malcolm began to understand why his skin looked the way it did, why humans seemed to be afraid of him, why he had been bullied once others observed his strange grandfather.

It became clear then why he could feel another's pain, why he always knew what someone was thinking. As the grandson of a space alien and a human, he recognized his hybrid status. He also understood the bicolored child's dilemma at being different.

Although he never completely solved the boy's color on a permanent basis, he did manage to encourage the boy to use his uniqueness as a way to show others how to be accepting of all people, regardless of how they appeared. Malcolm's semi-permanent make-up did allow the boy to blur the lines of color to a more even tone on occasion, but underneath, another hybrid being would always know he had been blessed—or cursed—to have the best of both galaxies.

Malcolm never married or fathered children. He refused to run the risk of having a child whose skin or coloring might cause pain that might not be eliminated by his father's make-up artistry. Never was he able to peel back the onion-like layers of his hybrid existence. Though he was alone, he was never lonely. Clients from all over the universe sought him out so he could use his artistry to help them to be accepted.

His family's secrets would die with him. All he could do was hope that all beings, regardless of their origins or appearances, would one day be able to exist in peace.