

## Chapter 2-Fourteen and Beyond

“Something weird is going on with my body,” M announced one morning. “Everything feels weird. So many changes. And my chest is sensitive, especially my nipples. I never know how I am going to feel when I wake up in the morning. And I’ve noticed a weird sticky ointment on the sheets some mornings. Or sometimes there’s blood.”

Luke worried how Sue would handle a Q&A with Moss. A bewildered Moss asked, “Am I in trouble?” Another coin toss was required to see who would first talk to M. Luke won and took M outside for a sex education lesson.

Resurrection Plants, covering the entire backyard, set the stage for Moss and Luke’s discussion. These plants could survive extreme dehydration and were the only vegetation allowed due to water shortage. Sue had watered them earlier so they transformed themselves from dormant brown balls into lush ferns within hours. From the lawn chairs, Luke and Moss saw the sun playing with the plants bouncing shadows and light.

“M, first I want to tell you how proud I am that you are brave enough to question what is happening with your body. Most teenagers don’t do that. They are embarrassed. I’m not sure if you realize that you are special. I’m not just talking about being smart. You have an amazing physical quality that few people possess. I want you to know that you have both male and female genitalia. I don’t want you to think of this as a problem. I know that at school you never see other kids naked. So I wouldn’t expect you to understand. And it’s unfortunate that sex education at school just deals with the basics, pregnancy and STDs, but none of the nuances. I’ll explain the male stuff to you and Mom can give you the rundown on your female organs.”

Moss was speechless, unable to figure out what questions to ask. It reminded Luke of the people who were placed in pods for forty years under the assumption that their stage-4 cancer,

dementia or deadly virus could be cured in the future. Luke witnessed this on the reality program, *Capsule Cure*, where the subjects woke up and had the dilemma of what to ask for first.

Luke realized that Sue had the more difficult task. Even now, when the 22<sup>nd</sup> century was dangling before humanity, being a man had continued to be the advantageous sex. Lower maintenance than women. Once Luke finished with the genitals, he found a way to explain Moss's breasts. "You are going to have a buff chiseled chest, something I could never achieve. You can go shirtless when you jog and enjoy the stares of envy."

If Moss developed out-of-proportion breasts, Sue would take over.

Moss finally spoke, "You make it seem so simple. I thought I had a bunch of questions, but maybe it's the female stuff."

Luke handed Moss a read-chip called, "Sexual Parts" and said, "If you have any more questions, this read-chip will answer them. There are pictures and explanations."

Although Luke despised the use of modern technology like the read-chips, he had to consider it progress; this micro-chip that acted like a contact lens and contained unlimited information *was* miraculous. The images and words went directly to the brain. Unfortunately, the use of books and Kindles had become obsolete. Moss's mouth dropped with the input of all of this new information.

After the talk, Moss's body parts caused anxiety. For fourteen years there had been no curiosity. No discussion about bodily functions. Moss had no memory of being potty-trained. Before talking to his mother, Moss huddled in the bathroom and stared in the floor-to-ceiling mirror. With the read-chip, Moss discovered that the genitals of a male and a female were both a part of Moss. The examination was intriguing. The read-chip mentioned wet dreams, the reason

behind the moist sticky liquid that Moss found many times on awakening. This was *sperm* used to fertilize a female's eggs during intercourse. The read-chip identified this location as a *vagina*, only to be found on a female.

But what was Moss? Rather than dwelling on the complex function of sexual organs, Moss went the practical route. Confusion began about using the pronoun *he* or *she* has used by the other students in class. Even the terms *feminine* and *masculine* left Moss bewildered. The pronoun *they* never caught on. When Moss read about transsexuals and how they would feel that their body parts didn't match their gender, Moss could not relate. In the mirror, the strong chin, curly blonde hair, endless eyelashes and defiant features all made sense. Moss tried to imagine the freedom of not being defined by the penis or vagina or breasts. How to treat them as gifts. Spinning the idea of having both types of organs would make a unique journey. With Moss's confidence level rising, Moss went to find Sue.

The smile Moss brought into the kitchen where Sue was making bread was infectious. Her trepidation, derived from Luke's assessment of how the talk went, disappeared.

"Mom, I was all confused after talking to Dad, but after checking out the read-chip and doing a self-examination, I feel much better. Hopefully, you won't be telling me anything that changes that."

"I hope not. The read-chip should cover almost everything you need to know, but I need to explain the way the female organs work in more detail. The easy part are the breasts. I don't know if they are going to get much bigger than they are now. They appear to be a hybrid."

Moss asked, "What's that?"

"They combine the masculine and feminine aspects of the chest."

Sue held back talking about the mammary glands as the source of milk for infants. A doctor would need to determine whether Moss was capable of having children. *God, the thought of that seemed otherworldly!*

“Now this next part is much more difficult to explain. You noticed that there was blood in your underwear. This is normal. It’s called *having your period*. I should have told you about this before you reached this age, but somehow, I didn’t think it would be happening yet. I didn’t start having my period until I was fifteen.

Well, here goes. Women bleed a little bit from their vagina. I think you know what that is from the read-chip. This is how the body gets ready for a baby one day and there is this thing called a tampon, which I’ll give you later, which catches the blood so it doesn’t go into your underwear. And you might have stomach spasms, mood swings or acne.”

“Mom, does that mean that I will be having a baby?”

“I don’t know, Moss. I’ll make an appointment with the doctor, and he’ll be able to tell you more. I think that’s enough for now. Between what your father told you, and my explanation and the read-chip, we don’t want you to get overwhelmed.”

“Mom, since I’ve never see anyone naked at school, are there other people like me?”

*Where was Luke? How do I answer a question like that?*

She answered, “Moss, everyone’s a little unique and special, so it doesn’t matter if there are other people like you or not.”

Sue felt incompetent with her answer. Suddenly the kitchen overhead light flickered, signifying that the solar energy equipment needed repair, a drawback of having a hundred-year-old home, unlike new houses that ran on nuclear energy. But the elation expressed in Moss’s face

was like a beacon of light in the dimmed kitchen. And Moss's curiosity mirrored a burning flame that fueled a craving to learn.

Moss's pediatrician told Sue, "Based on what you are describing, I think it's best that M sees a gynecologist for a thorough examination. She'll be able to explain what is going on with M's body." Apparently, gynecologists were the exception to the rule about robots and telehealth.

The pediatrician's visit triggered a regret that Sue had had shortly after Moss was born. Why had she not asked, "Is there anything to this rumor that what used to be a rare instance of being born a hermaphrodite is becoming more common? Are hermaphrodites immune to the virus?"

But at this time, the answers to those questions felt superfluous compared to the trauma Moss might encounter at the gynecologist's office.

Sue recalled how frightening the experience had been for her as a teenager. Those vivid memories began when Sue's doctor told her, "Please try to relax. I can imagine how difficult this must be, but this is something you have to go through as a woman."

Even after hearing those reassuring words, when the doctor touched Sue's genitals, she felt as if she had been violated despite the gynecologist being female. The intensity of Sue's grip on the armrests caused the nails on her index fingers to break. For a second that pain took away from the cold instrument entering her body. Her absent mother, in the waiting room, ignored the crying and scolded Sue afterward. "I am so embarrassed. You actually wet your pants. Your father can take you next time."

Sue did not want history to repeat itself when she held Moss's hand. Because of her nerves, it felt like Moss's hand was comforting *her*. With Moss's legs apart, the doctor examined the genitals. Sue could not read the doctor's poker face during the surprisingly quick exam.

As the doctor led Moss and Sue into her office, Moss became fascinated with pictures of women on the wall; disabled, pregnant, hefty, stick thin, and transsexual.

As they sat, the doctor spoke, “So everything looks good. No cysts, no irregularities. But I need to explain that the uterus is completely developed. And when I looked at M’s most recent lab work, an abundance of *testostrogen* is present. This is a new term for intersex, a combination of testosterone and estrogen. That means that M is capable of having a child. I just wanted to be upfront with both of you because I see a lot of girls age fourteen who are having children.”

Because Sue was startled to hear the doctor refer to Moss as being a girl, she was unable to stop the dialogue.

“Seems like fourteen is the new eighteen. And sex has become more fashionable for the under-thirty unlike years ago when the interest in sex was almost non-existent. Anyway, at some point, you’ll need a prescription for the FTO’s (free tablet one).”

Sue considered the mixed message about the name of the pill that would prevent pregnancy. *Free* did not refer to the cost since there was no cost for any medication. Did it mean freedom to have sex without any consequences?

Sue wanted the doctor to stop with so much information, but Moss seemed intrigued by the discussion and advice. Moss asked, “So I guess I am both a boy and a girl. I could get pregnant and also make a baby *with* a girl.” How did Moss come to this acceptance? Did Moss not question his gender or sexuality?

The doctor laughed and said, “So Mrs. Windward, do you have any other questions? If not, I’ll get your prescription sent to your pharmacy. Nice to meet you and Moss.”

How rude to not answer Moss’s question and to switch around where the assumption was that Moss would be having sexual relations now. The experience soured Sue and confirmed that

Moss being a hermaphrodite was new territory and that she could not rely on the medical field for direction in bringing up Moss. She would have to carve out her own syllabus for Moss.

On the drive home, Sue said, “You seemed so calm about everything. I know we never talk about your sexuality or gender. Are you sure you’re okay with not being male or female?”

“Mom, can we wait until we get home so we can talk about this with Dad?”

This language felt surreal to Sue, not the kind of words coming from a fourteen-year-old. Had their living in the bubble of the past damaged Luke’s and Sue’s grip on reality? The oldies station started playing “Nowhere to Run.” After auto manufacturers stopped including mobile radios, Luke had jerry-rigged a way to install this antique form of communication in their EV. Luke knew that without music Sue would unravel just as if one pulled a thread from her old cotton T-shirts that were no longer made. To save the environment, all clothing was now made of synthetics.

The words of John Lennon’s “Give Peace A Chance” were written on Sue’s shirt. Lennon would have been ecstatic that peace had been attained. If only all of John’s dreams envisioned in his song, “Imagine,” had come true.

On their return from the gynecologist, Sue and Moss could smell a roasted, buttery, sweet smell coming from the plant-based pea protein burgers that Luke was preparing in the kitchen. He had become an expert disguiser of the bland taste. After the bygone era when GMOs had been outlawed, the world food shortage brought back a new version of Genetically Modified Organisms.

Luke instructed Sue and Moss, “This is a special celebratory dinner. I got some great news today. My sabbatical was approved for nine months through June. That means I can home

school you, M. Who better than me and your mom to teach you? Between the two of us, we have forty years of experience.”

Without speaking, Sue’s frown told Luke that he had done something wrong.

Damage control had him say, “This was a lark. I didn’t think I would get it. It’s only been five years since my last sabbatical. Neither of you seems very happy about this. Should I withdraw my request?”

Moss jumped in, “No. It’s just a shock for me and Mom. I know you probably think it will be easier for me to get taught by you rather than at school, but I need to be social, and being stuck at home won’t allow for that.”

Sue added, “I agree with M, but for now, let’s table the discussion. We’re both starving and we have a lot to process from what the gynecologist told us. M wants both of us involved.”

Luke brought the burgers with condiments to the table and watched Sue and Moss inhale their food. After all, this was quite different from their daily diet of rice and beans. The last time he saw Sue devour her food happened during her pregnancy with Moss.

After dinner Moss said, “It turns out that I can get pregnant. Apparently, I have all the equipment to have a baby. What do you think, Dad? I would be one of the first hermaphrodites to give birth.”

Luke looked at Sue for confirmation, and after she nodded, Luke said, “Yes, that would be amazing. That’s a bigger shock than my news. I guess this is a double celebration. I’ll get the coconut ice cream.”

Moss stopped Luke and said, “The doctor wants me on the FTO’s, just in case. I’m only fourteen. I don’t have any idea who I would be attracted to anyway. You know, maybe it is a

good idea for me to be home schooled. I've never thought about being a boy or a girl. I told the doctor that maybe it didn't matter, but I don't know *what* I am."

Sue responded, "You don't have to label yourself. The three of us will figure out this gender and sexuality thing. And Luke, even though I wish you had told me about the sabbatical earlier, it may be one of the best decisions you've made."

The meal ended with the refreshing coconut ice cream. The remainder of the evening found Moss, Sue and Luke feeding their reading addiction, a three-party read-chip group. The theme of the Great American Novel had brought them to *The Sun Also Rises*. The Hemingway novel contained Lady Brett Ashley, one of the best female characters written by the author. Sue said, "Ashley could be considered a man in drag based on descriptions of hard drinking, being broad-shouldered, having short hair, and being sexually cruel. But that's the point that Hemingway was making about male and female characteristics."

Sue, always the teacher, had Moss and Luke dozing from her rambling. By eleven, all were preparing for bed. Moss had no trouble getting six hours of rest while Sue and Luke prayed for sleep. Every night Sue said, "They cured dementia, heart disease and diabetes, but not insomnia!"

And this particular night rendered them sleepless as they endlessly looped a series of what-ifs.

Luke suggested, "I don't think staring at the ceiling is going to help. What if we write down the obstacles we're facing and lock that paper away so we can get to sleep?"

Sue stated, "Write? There are no writing utensils or paper here. Just talk into your beamer."

“Talking about beamers. I can’t believe that this is the only way to communicate. I long for the day when we had iPhones or iWatches. And of course those transport Beamers were a failed experiment. Trying to transport people from place to place by dissolving their atoms and then having them show up in another city was a risky proposition and you know what happened.”

“Yes, the people who were guinea pigs ended up having problems with their organs. They never felt the same. But a new company has been taking over the production and promised it will be foolproof. That’s why they’re asking everyone to keep their devices. It might take years, but eventually there will be an update.”

Luke laughed and said, “Back to M, I don’t see how we can help. We have no idea what it would be like to have male and female organs. M could be a woman for a month and then a man?”

Sue replied, “And then we could give him a test as to which M likes better? Which M feels more comfortable with? And if M wants to live life as a man, then surgery would be done to remove the vagina? That doesn’t work. M still has a uterus. There are no simple answers to this. And what if M still can’t decide? M isn’t a *he* or *she* or *her* or *him*, and I guess “M” replaces the pronoun, especially since we can’t use *they* which I hate anyway.”

“Look, M seems to be open to the idea of home schooling. And we’ll make sure M has a chance to be social, just not under the confines of school. We’ll try it as an experiment, and then reevaluate in six months. Oh, before I forget. I’ve been doing some research about hermaphroditism, and it is very prevalent in southern Africa. I think we should plan a trip so that M can meet other similar people. I think it would be a good thing for the three of us to help deal with this issue.”

Before they finally got to sleep, Sue started chuckling and whispered in Luke's ear, "You know, I was just thinking that men have never had to deal with having a monthly period. I can imagine women all over the world cheering this. I know M isn't identifying as a boy, but he sure seems to give off those vibes. Oh, I just thought of something else; women would never have penis envy."

Sue's words unsettled Luke and long after Sue began lightly snoring, he finally succumbed only to be awakened by nightmares.

With the semester winding down, Moss decided to brag about getting home schooled and the trip to South Africa. Moss was curious to see the reaction. Would Moss be missed? Envied about the safari?

Moss felt unencumbered. What would it be like if the entire school were naked? The talk of equality felt disingenuous. The teachers and government preached, "We are all alike. No income inequality. All treated compassionately, no matter what race, gender or sexuality."

Schoolmates felt generic, never showing their bodies. When diabetes was cured, obesity stopped. Yet according to the doctor, girls as young as fourteen were having babies. But where? No one at school talked about sex or bragged about doing it. Must be underground.

Learning a new way to dress meant wearing a costume or mask. Soprano or bass voice? Walk like you were banging against the sidewalk or gliding over the cement? The clutter prevented Moss from running track thought-free, no longer being able to focus on breathing or just letting the body work seamlessly to beat one's personal record time for the mile. As calves, arches, and ankles pounded dirt, Moss thought about the film *Barbie* which was celebrating its seventieth anniversary. During the screening, it became apparent that Barbie had no genitals and

lived in a bubble. With Moss having *two* genitals, the option of being sealed off from reality was not available.

After running track, Moss followed the tradition of showering in private stalls. While soaping up, Moss's hands felt compelled to spend extra time on the penis and vagina as though being introduced to a new pleasure center. Flipping between the two organs made Moss feel dizzy with excitement. And during the rinsing process with the water cascading down the body, Moss took flight. No longer surrounded by four walls, giving the sensation of hovering over the showers scattered throughout the gymnasium bathrooms.

“Hey, what are you doing in there? I need to get ready for my next class. Let me in.”

That voice of Burt brought Moss back to earth, and as the door opened it felt like the floor tiles were cracking. Burt gasped. Moss forgot to wear a towel. The feeling of the tiles separating and making a large hole felt like being dragged down into hell.

But Burt would not let Moss sink. Burt shouted, “Hey, look at Moss. He or she or it has a cock *and* a cunt. Moss should join the circus.”

A rush of spectators headed toward the shower stall where Moss stood using hands to hide the embarrassing revelations from the school. Even in a gender-fluid environment where male, female and transsexuals shared the same space, a freak had been identified.

A choir of scorn bellowed, “Hermie! Hermie! Hermie!”

Burt pushed Moss's hands away from what boys considered their *jewels*.

“Hey, I bet you can fuck yourself. Why don't you show us how it's done. You exotic freak!”

Nausea overtook Moss and because of the onlookers, the stall door was blocked. A trapped Moss turned the shower faucet on. As the students rushed toward Moss, the slippery tiles

caused a pile-up giving Moss a getaway by jumping over the aggressors. Moss grabbed a pair of Levi's and a T-shirt from his locker and quickly dressed and left the building. The incident convinced Moss that home schooling was the *only* option. Moss had not heard the term *exotic* used as a description. Initially, it sounded positive until it had a negative feel to it and confirmed that Moss was *the other*. With the scream of "*Hermie*," there was no doubt that it was offensive.

If the incident was reported, would that further bring unwarranted attention to Moss? And telling Sue and Luke would be damaging. Plus, the event had caused Moss to lose that glimmer of mischievousness that could have been used to fight back.

Getting through the remainder of the semester would feel like the symptoms of LDIS (*Long Duration In Space*) from which astronauts suffered. Moss had read, "*It feels like your body is an accordion, being squashed together and then separating. Two halves that only find relief in the middle. Only that period when you leave Earth and before you attain the force field of true outer space.*" That was what would happen to Moss if being forced to be a boy or a girl.

At school the following day, Moss felt invisible. No one spoke to Moss but that also meant no taunting or bullying. No heckling. The response to saying "Hello" to friends elicited a half smile. When Moss tentatively opened the school locker, expecting to see graffiti or the words *freak* on the locker walls, it was undisturbed. When Moss got onto the soccer field, teammates and coaches ignored Moss. Was it possible to play in a vacuum? Moss was being shut out by classmates and faculty. Moss felt destitute after knocking on Professor Mingo's office door and getting no response.

"Mr. Mingo, can I come in? I want to talk to you about my paper on evolution in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century."

When Moss entered, it became apparent why the Political Science teacher had not responded. Mingo's leg was in a cast. Moss was surprised to see that the design of the sock that covered Mingo's toes matched the design on the cast. Moss loved the idea of socks being a fashion statement serving multiple purposes of keeping Mingo's toes warm and a conversation piece.

Moss tried to engage the professor and said, "I've done the best I could on this, but I was hoping you could set aside time to go over it before I turn it in."

The way the professor silently nodded his head felt like Mr. Mingo would not be helping Moss with the essay. As though whatever Moss submitted would be fine. It felt like any student/teacher relationship had become obliterated. Moss was disappointed because the professor was a wordsmith and etymologist. Moss had hoped that the way Mingo studied the origins of words, he would help explore the origins of the term hermaphroditism. Moss had felt a bond with Professor Mingo because the professor would scold any students who made fun of Moss for attending class barefoot with only socks. Additionally, when Moss decided to specialize in Comparative Political Science, mentoring with Professor Mingo would be essential.

Mingo's conservatism and Moss's liberal leanings had made for impassioned debates. Moss had a first taste of attraction of opposites when spitting retorts at each other during their political disputes. Mingo wanted a return to the past while Moss enjoyed the process of evolution despite the angst it had caused being intersex.

For an observer, the debates were more like their brains participated in a boxing match. Just when Moss thought that Professor Mingo was down for the count, the professor would revive and hurl the words, "Why is it that you want to burn down the system? As though the

Constitution doesn't work anymore, and we should start from scratch. It's been around for three hundred and fifty years!"

And then there was the day that Moss saw Mr. Mingo jogging outside of campus, shirtless, causing Moss to obsess about the teacher. The way Professor Mingo's chest complemented his bald head made Moss tingle. When Moss looked in the mirror and saw a hairless chest with strange sprouting breasts unlike Mr. Mingo's manicured chest and smooth stomach, frustration resulted. Why did Moss want to emulate the teacher? And the man was almost thirty years older than Moss!

Only Professor Baker could compete with the sensation Moss felt staring at Mingo. Ms. Baker taught math with mischief and playfulness; the numbers seemed to dance in her head. On the first day of class, when she stood in front of the room, Moss thought about how she lived within her body and her movements suggested such energy. Moss fantasized about undressing her, not for anything sexual, but only to admire the artistry. Unlike the male chest, fully exposed, Baker, like all females, kept her breasts hidden—a mystery Moss wanted to unravel. Moss toyed with the idea of becoming a sculptor and how Baker would be a perfect subject. What would it take for Moss to interact, having both a vagina and a penis?

Recently, these thoughts became pronounced during the night. The brain was filling up with Professor Mingo. But then like a pendulum, an image of Professor Baker pushed her way into Moss's psyche. Moss's fingers traveled to the vagina opening. Both feelings competed with one another; Mingo and Baker, Baker and Mingo, while the cock and vagina gained traction. What was happening? The body was crying for a release, reaching a peak followed by discharge and letting go. Out of control. The body had a mind of its own. Muscles rebelled and Moss crashed and thankfully fell asleep wondering whether this could be recreated again in the future.

But since the incident in the shower, both Mingo and Baker treated Moss like a non-entity, worse than confronting Moss. Unfortunately, at the same time, the warning about spasms during menstruation and acne hit Moss like a sledgehammer.

Before classes started again the next fall, Moss volunteered to help the science janitor dispose of nuclear waste. The process of changing its chemical and physical composition to immobilize and package it before storage and disposal had become an easier task toward the end of the century. Of all the personnel and students, only the janitor acknowledged Moss's existence. No longer invisible. Not only would Moss's actions help with college applications, but the kind of focus and detail skills needed for the task would stop the out-of-control obsession with being a freak. Unfortunately, the short-lived benefits crashed.

“Did you know that the teachers, Cloris and Jay, are having an affair?”

Moss said, “I only know teachers by their last name.”

“Cloris Baker and Jay Mingo.”

Hearing about these idealized professors felt like a green-eyed monster lurking inside Moss preparing to get unleashed. Moss had read about jealousy, and with this news, Moss felt consumed by this new emotion. How could Moss look at these fantasy figures again that he had put on a pedestal?

While Moss wrestled with the betrayal of Cloris and Jay, a surprising distraction happened -- Halloween. A normally despised holiday until Moss thought, *Yes, it's another form of hiding, only this time wearing a costume was an approved disguise.*

Moss told Luke and Sue, “Can't I go as myself? As a hermaphrodite?”

Sue hit back, “Is that really how you want to come out to the world?”

“Everyone knows what I am. Why not use Halloween to out myself and, rather than being laughed *at*, *I’ll* be laughing at myself.”

Luke said, “You’re not thinking clearly about this. I feel like you would be degrading yourself. There isn’t anything funny about being a hermaphrodite.”

As the holiday approached, Moss realized that it would be flirting with disaster to expose dueling genitals to the world. Instead, Moss went to the neighborhood Halloween party dressed as a snail -- a subtle reference that few students would recognize as being a hermaphrodite since a snail had both male and female parts.

As Moss roamed through the sea of costumes, Moss no longer felt invisible. Strangely, being unrecognizable afforded Moss a form of acceptance -- fitting in. Moss became intrigued by a theme of Visitors from Another Planet. Although no official contact by the world had been made with life on the other planets in the solar system, the revelers were dressed as aliens from Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, Mars and Venus with T-shirts identifying their respective origins. Varied appendages signaled the differences between planets; claws rather than fingers or a crow with little hands on the edge of its wings.

The evening ended with the awarding of a costume prize just as Moss was thinking of heading home. There was deafening applause when the winner of the most inventive costume was announced. Moss froze. The winner was dressed as half-man and half-woman. Makeup on half the face along with an oversized breast. A long beard on the other side of the face. Fear and fascination competed for attention as Moss’s eyes traveled down the body trying to determine whether the awardee was male or female. A question mark was embroidered on a flap of material hanging from the waist. Taunting the audience. Twirling around. Tempting the breeze to expose

the hidden genital or genitals. Moss could not move until the revelation, unable to look away.

The frenzied crowd kept shouting, “Show us! Show us!”

And like a magic trick, there was a sleight of hand as the flap disclosed a penis *and* a vagina. If Moss blinked, he would have missed it. Was it real? To the audience, the whooping and hollering satisfied their lust for what they would perceive as a *freak of nature*. For Moss, he hung onto a moment of not feeling alone. There was a camaraderie he hungered for. Moss no longer felt like a visitor from another galaxy.