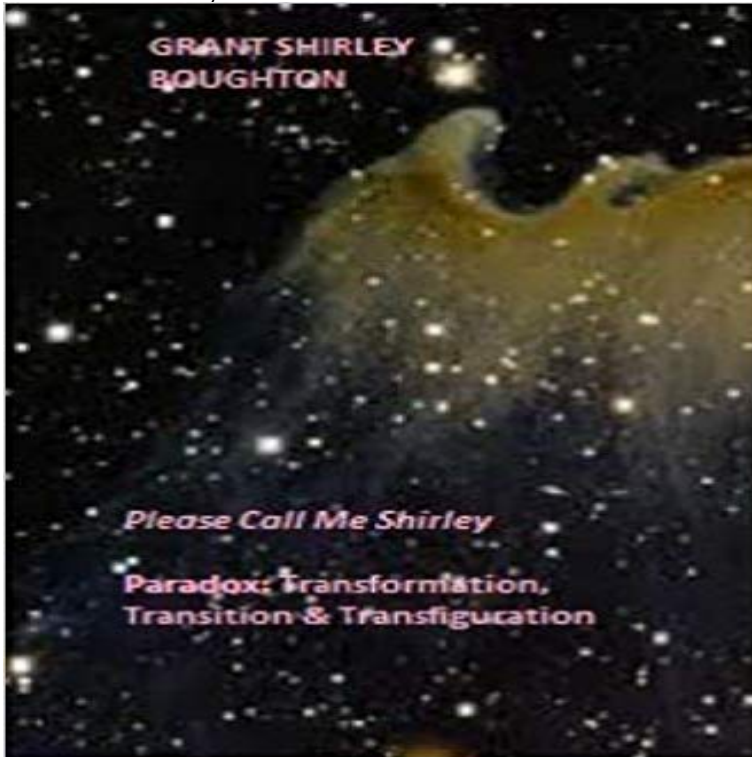


PARADOX: Transformation, Transition & Transfiguration: Please Call Me Shirley



This is my story, a story of self-discovery. It is a story of intense internal struggle and dysfunction marked by often self-inflicted wounds. It is a story of survival against all odds. It is a story filled with travel, adventure and courage in the face of adversity. But above all, it is a story about the transforming power of love. I have been a husband, a parent, a grandparent, a soldier, a scientist, a clergyman, and a respected community leader. Trying to come to terms with my gender identity and sexual orientation confusion has significantly impacted my life's journey and altered my world view. When I began writing this story in June 2000 most of the things that provided security and structure in my life had collapsed around me. What I considered to be my life goals and objectives had been shattered. I was labeled by the State of Florida as a sex offender, and was virtually unemployable. I had been effectively cut off from much of the community service work to which I had devoted so much time and energy. My faith community had cast me aside. My life had been turned upside down. I knew from the Christian scriptures that Jesus the Christ tells us to be not afraid, but I was very afraid. Was there really any hope for my future? How would my future play out? What was God's plan for me? I felt that I had stepped off a cliff and that I was in free fall with no points of reference. In May 2014, as a post-operative male-to-female transsexual woman, my perspective, my mental, physical and emotional health has improved dramatically. Our marriage bond of over 36 years is stronger. I am fully engaged on many levels as an advocate and spiritual guide for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community and for persons living with HIV/AIDS. Through this book, by telling my story, I hope to help younger transgender persons (and those who work with us and love us for whom we are) that

there is a way though that we can and must survive and thrive that we can serve a needed place in this world. Some of my actions have been at odds with my basic moral character; my temperament has been at odds with my career choices; that my spirituality has been at odds with my religion; that my gender identity has been at odds with my body shape! These disconnects have created severe internal conflict and dysfunction for me in the past. My life seems to be a paradox, exhibiting apparently simultaneously contradictory natures. I have finally integrated these disparate life threads that threatened to tear me apart. To understand to be able to find emotional balance and peace I had to look deep into my past and deep within myself. I had to be honest and candid with all those who touch my life. I had to discover the essence of my soul. I had to discover who I am at the core of my being before attempting to transform my wounds and reclaim my life's purpose. In the process toward wholeness I have experienced death and rebirth, transformation, transition and transfiguration. Along the trail I have encountered other worlds, other cultures and many individuals who have served, for me, as beacons of light and hope in an otherwise often dark world filled with bigotry and oppression, hatred and violence, cruelty and warfare, greed and exploitation, hunger and poverty, flood and famine, and pestilence and earthquakes. In looking back I discover that I have followed in the path of my Celtic Druidic and shamanic forebears and that this path clearly shapes my future role and purpose in life. The Druidic ideals include always seeking truth, speaking truth to power, and always seeking justice especially for the poor and underserved within the community. I pray that I too may serve as a beacon of light and hope for other wayfarers on their own individual journeys through life. Only others can judge whether or not I have been successful in this sacred endeavor. This book unfolds the details of the first sixty-nine years of my journey toward wholeness.

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