Diversity

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

“You have to be either gay or black to get ahead in this organization.” Luther drank deeply from his tall glass of beer. “I’m black, so you lose.”

I could only shake my head, but in agreement. But we were here to celebrate his elevation to a named manager on one of the key funds established by our employer. That meant not only the status but a share of the return based management fee.

“I’ve been working so hard,” I complained. “But you’re right. It’s the same thing all over town. Diversity is the word.” I was on bourbon. The quicker way to drown my sorrows.

“Man, you do work hard,” said Luther. “But worse than that, you’re smarter than most of the named managers. Smarter than me even. You deserve the spot. But you are not a woman, you can’t change your race, you can’t claim physical handicap, so you have to go LGBT.”

He was half joking, but only half. There was an idea behind those smiling eyes.

“I can’t be gay – I like women too much,” I said.

“What about bisexual?” Luther asked. “Come out as bisexual, or pansexual, or whatever.”

“If I even hinted that I was open I would have guys hitting on me. That I don’t need.”

“I can see that,” he said. “You are a pretty boy, with those big brown eyes.” He was enjoying this.

“If I was transsexual I would have to be a lesbian,” I mused. “Is there such a thing?”

“Sure,” he said. With a sudden look of seriousness, he added: “I don’t know much about it but I know that lots of male to female transgenders stay attracted to women. I think it’s very common. You should check it out.”

“I would seriously consider it, but I would need to do the whole transgender thing. I am not sure I could pull it off.”

“Bullshit, man,” he exclaimed. “Some of these trannies don’t look anything like girls. They just have to wear the dress, shave their nuts and say: ‘I’m a woman trapped in a man’s body’, and that’s it. Easy as. You could come out next week. Tell the bosses ‘call me Daphne from now on’ or whatever. Who’s to say you’re not the real thing.”

“And if I didn’t get the manager post?”

“Just go back,” he said. “Like, ‘I tried it, but I want to live as a man’ or such. Nobody can criticize you for that. But I tell you, none of the funds have a transgender manager aboard. I think it could be a winner. Seriously man, come and join the minorities.”

And that is how it started.

My business is research. Research and analysis, and decisions based on knowledge. So the next step was to thoroughly research gender identity dysphoria. Luther was right – ‘transitioning’ can be tried without commitment. But to fit the description I would need to go down that track. I would need to open myself to prejudice and perhaps derision. But that is what the minority must do.

Luther’s throwaway line “join the minorities” was strangely attractive to me. I felt myself to be rather dull and uninteresting. The thought of being one of a minority sounded exciting. And I could see from my research that the transgender community was generally intelligent and highly supportive. There was a community that could help me and involve me. By moving to the city and devoting myself to work I had lost contact with my old networks.

So, I decided that I would give this a try. I had recently broken up with my girlfriend, basically because I spent so little time with her. I only socialized with people at work. Beyond that I called my mother (who lived in a neighboring state) at least once a week, my brother (who lived and worked in Europe) once a month, and my father (who lived across the country) maybe four times a year.

I was able to find guidelines for transitioning. I needed to prepare my identity. I decided to go with Danielle Giselle Rawson for Daniel Gibbs Rawson. I changed my accounts and credit cards to D G Rawson.

I arranged to see my doctor and tell him my new story. He had only ever seen me once before (for a rash on my penis) so he had no extensive background on me. I had everything worked out and knew what to say to get the diagnosis I needed. I was surprised to learn that my doctor had two transwomen patients, on whom he had seen through a full transition, so he knew what to do. He said that a specialist opinion would be required for any irreversible surgery, but he could prescribe the drugs that I would need. I asked him for a certificate of his diagnosis for my employer and this he happily provided.

I took the prescription to the drugstore and collected two bottles of pills. I planned to keep them in my purse just for show. I really had no intention of taking them. One pill to suppress male hormones, suppress beard growth and sex drive. The other, pure female hormones that could see me growing breasts.

My doctor gave me some material on “Transgender Support” but I decided to go to a “feminization studio” for specific advice on how to present myself. I explained that I was about to present myself to my employer as transgender and I wanted a look that fitted into a professional and corporate environment. I also told them that I would be a lesbian. I guess I thought that would ensure that I was not presented as too sexy.

I received some good advice. Many of their customers were looking for the ultra-feminine look or even close to full blown drag, but they understood that I wanted a more subdued look.

“You have major advantages over most of our clients,” said Marilyn, in charge of hair and makeup. “You have a full head of hair with enough length for extensions. A wig will not be necessary beyond your first week or so. You are not overly tall and you have a slight build. And you have the perfect face for a successful transition – fine features, a good mouth, and great eyes.”

“So, you think I should get hair extensions?” I asked.

“Not yet,” she suggested. “I know from experience that if you are to back out of transition it is likely to be within you first week at work, or following your first family get-together. I suggest that until you have those things out of the way, don’t push it too hard.”

“That sounds sensible,” I replied.

“But you will need to do something about that voice,” she said. “I can refer you to websites and links to coaching videos on the female voice and general posture and etiquette. You will be surprised at how differently we girls do things. I understand that you are a girl inside, but unfortunately you have been living as a man to long and you will need to shake off male behaviour as soon as you can. Follow the coaching and your true nature will be second nature before you know it.”

I made an appointment for early Monday morning to come in for a makeover.

And with that I was ready to confront my boss, “the Master of Funds”, Bede Cranston, with the news.

“Well Danny,” he said. “I have to say that I am very surprised. I always considered you to be a ladies man. But I want to let you know that we are an equal opportunity and progressively minded employer, and we will be fully supportive.”

“I will be a lesbian,” I said, pointing it out again. “I do not expect my change of gender to affect my choice of partner.”

“But it may affect your partners choice of you,” he said. Which was something that I had not really thought about. As a woman, attracted to women, the only women who would be attracted to me would be lesbians. Suddenly this seemed a flaw in my thinking, and cast into doubt my whole logic. How could I find a partner who would let me fuck her with my penis, if she was expecting me to have a pussy instead?

“How can we support you?” he asked in a friendly but slightly paternalistic manner. I almost felt that from that moment I would be treated as female, as something slightly inferior or needing of special care. But perhaps he was just genuinely trying to help.

“I would like an announcement made,” I said. “With your permission, I will be in a little late on Monday, and from then on I will be Dannielle rather than Daniel. You can still call me Danni.”

“So you will be wearing women’s clothes from Monday?” he asked.

“Yes,” I said. “I am familiar with the dress code for female staff and I will be sticking to it.”

“I suppose you will be avoiding pants now that you are free to express yourself,” he said. Which was quite the opposite to my thinking. Smart pants were on the allowed dress, and I had assumed that I might wear them most days. But he was right. Would a transwoman new to the role wear pants on her first day as a woman? Not likely. Luckily, I had still to buy my wardrobe, and I needed to rethink it.

At the end of the trading day Bede called the fund managers and analysts together to make the announcement. There was stunned silence. That was until Luther shouted from the back: “You go girl! Welcome back Danielle!” And he started clapping and everybody joined in. Some of the women came up to me afterwards to welcome me to womanhood. A couple even said that it was a little sad that one of the better-looking guys was now out of reach. I said: “I think I am going to be a lesbian,” but I don’t think any of them were listening.

I agreed to meet them after work for a “girls get together.”

Some of the guys also spoke to me, led forward by Luther. He laid it on a bit, with stuff like: “I have always known my pal was holding something back”. Surprisingly there was a huge amount of backing, but a lot of uncertainty on how to talk to me.

For that reason I was pleased to get away and chat to the girls after work. I quickly began to realise that my whole circle of friends was going to change. I mean, I was friendly with all my co-workers but I now understood that I was friendly with the guys in one way, and the girls in another. Now it was turned around.

They asked what I would be wearing on Monday. I was now leaning towards a suit with a skirt. Would I would be wearing a wig? What colour? Shoes with what size heel? Did I know about gel soles to make it easier on my feet? Did I need help with accessories?

If this was going to go forward, these would be the people I would be closer too. I could talk sports with the boys, but would my opinion matter now?

I had a couple more days and then the weekend to get my wardrobe together. Once I told them that there was clamouring to be involved. In the end of the four girls with me that night, I had two with me on Friday night, two with me at the rag quarter on Saturday and three with me at the Star Mall on Sunday. I learned that a girl is never short of company when she is ready to shop.

Looking back on it, I was far too ready to accept recommendations from my co-workers. I figured that as they were all familiar with the required standards and well presented, they would choose well. But they had no regard for how new I was to all this.

The shoes were a little too high and the bras required breast forms a little too big. Some of the dresses hugged my slim hips a little too tightly. Overall, the look was a little too alluring.

I wore the suit on Monday morning on my way to the studio. I only had tissues stuffed down the front of my bra. I had no wig so I just washed my hair and tried to brush it to give it body, in a style that was at least not male. With the girls I had bought some make up and had application lessons on both Saturday and Sunday. I surprised myself by doing a decent job. With makeup, I could even get away with a bad hairdo.

At the studio I was prepared for the full makeover. I had shaved closely but Marilyn to me that I would need a found a thick foundation to avoid a five o’clock before the day was out.

“Are you taking your tablets,” she asked aggressively. I had the bottles in my handbag and she watched as I took one of each. “You do not have serious facial hair but you will still have a battle keeping it at bay. That means serious makeup that you may have to reapply if you go out after work. I suggest that you do not shave this weekend. Come in on Monday and we will try proper depilation. And make sure you take your pills. There will be no major changes for months but you will keep the whiskers at bay.”

I was not sure what she had in mind, but after I had worn the heavy makeup for a day I willingly swallowed the pills, and I was to submit to the “depilation” the following week.

Before the final eye makeup and lipstick was done, Marilyn plucked my eyebrows. She said that she would only do a little and work on the shape with a brush. The idea was that I could still step back from this whole thing if I wanted. This week I would have the option to pull out of transition. But I was determined to see it through.

The last step was a wig. My natural hair was a mousy brown but this was a blonde wig. It was cut in a long bob with bangs.

I looked good. I walked out of there with head held high. I took a cab to my building and paid the man with cash from my ladies purse, from my hand with the painted nails. I was ready.

My first day as Danielle was a huge success. I found that I quite liked wearing the skirt. The makeover had included waxing my legs and in pantyhose they looked really good. The shoes were hopeless for walking on hard surfaces but in the carpeted office they were Okay. The bra and the weight of false breasts on my chest was a new experience, but I quickly adapted. The only discomfort was the shaping and concealing panty that I needed to wear. Just the hint of an erection was agony. Once again, I found that the promise of the effect of the pills was becoming attractive, but only in the short term, I promised myself.

As should have been the case, the new me carried out the same work with the same level of proficiency accepted in the same way. The only difference was that Bede remarked that I looked really good as a woman (although he added that I should “not take that as a sexist remark) and some of the other guys seemed equally surprised. I even found a door being held open for me here and there. You only notice these things because they are unusual.

Otherwise it seemed that everybody was going out of their way to just ignore the fact that the man they worked with turned up one day dressed as a woman. It made it very easy for me. I remember thinking that I was lucky to work in a place like this, surrounded by people who did not judge me for being different. I another place I might be abused, or just sniggered at, but here there was acceptance.

The girls rushed around me over lunch break, complimenting me on the wig and the makeup, and confirming the choices of clothes and accessories. Outfits to be worn on following days were discussed. I felt a bit like a full size Barbie doll in the hands of grown women. But given their excitement and friendliness it was natural for me to respond positively.

I went home and I felt really good. As directed I had bought a nice feminine robe for just wearing around the apartment, and some ladies’ slippers. If felt good. I finished up some of my work on my laptop and then I watched a romcom on TV before bed.

The rest of the week went by in the same vein, but I declined to go out on Friday night or to accept invitations over the weekend. My intention was to just spend it as a man in secret. As instructed I did not shave so that I was ready for treatment on Monday. I wore sweats and let my prick and balls dangle free. However, I did take the daily tablets to keep things at bay. I just wanted to watch sports on TV and drink some beer from my fridge. It was like I was girly during the week, but manly on Saturdays. ‘This could work’, I thought.

The only person who could see me like this was Luther. But when he came around I was trying some things on. He rang and I let him up. I was going to get out of the figure hugging knit dress but I thought ‘forget it – he knows the score’. I let him in.

“Hey baby,” he said with a smile. “Love the dress. Not so keen on the face.”

“Didn’t you know,” I said. “Every girl looks like this without her makeup.”

He laughed. He helped himself to a beer and fell onto the couch. He said: “Man, I got to say it, you look good as a woman. I could have jumped you myself.”

“You might have found something you didn’t like if you had,” I said.

“Now for the good news,” he said. “We talked about diversity Friday and your name came up. Not even a week in skirts and you could be our trans poster child. Have you ever heard of June Turnovsky?”

“Turnovsky? Turnovsky Trusts? I have heard of Jacob Turnovsky.”

“Not any more you haven’t,” said Luther. “Jacob is now June. Millions to invest and we are just one of five being considered. You may get an early call up.”

“But I am just starting this,” I protested.

“This is what you wanted. I told you it could happen. You be ready, now. Your cash could be rolling in from next week.”

He stayed over for a bit and we watched a game, ate pizza we ordered in, and drank beer. I did not know it then but it would be the last time I ever did that. At least in the same way.

The following morning at the studio I went through the painful depilation procedure. It left my face slightly inflamed, and then it was covered with moisturising cream. I was not particularly presentable that day. I spent the day in the resource room doing deep research.

Bede came in to talk with me.

“This is the price of beauty,” I said, pointing to my face.

“I am sure it will be worth it in the end,” he said. “How will you look tomorrow.”

“Good I hope. My face will be Okay and I am having my hair done tonight. I hope to ditch the wig.”

“Excellent,” he said. “We have a potential client we would like you to meet.” He watched me look at him curiously and then continued: “June Turnovsky is a wealthy transgendered woman who is considering placing a large chunk of family funds with us. I suggested that the management team of a new fund we are setting up would include our only transgendered employee – you.”

“Are you offering me a fund manager position, Bede,” I asked.

“I am saying if this fund takes off you will be one of five managers, with a share of fees based on return on top of your current salary package. But without June aboard There will be no fund. I am hoping that she might be able to relate to you. I have suggested a meal with her tomorrow night.”

My first night out as Danni. I was suddenly a little uncertain about presenting myself outside the office. I had even avoided public transport and walking outside for any great distance. Now I was to be thrown into a social environment. I felt suddenly unprepared. All I could say was: “What shall I wear?”

“I don’t know,” said Bede. “Ask one of your co-workers. The dinner will be in a private booth at ‘Solar’. Fairly informal I think.”

“Wear the red dress,” I was told later. “With the patent black heels and the matching bag.” There was general excitement among the girls that I had a prospect of advancement. In the whole firm there were only three women as full managers out a total of 36, and now the newest female was to be elevated. The hopes of them all were with me.

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| That afternoon I went to my appointment to get the hair extensions. I really did not think I had enough hair to extend, but these were sort of woven in close to my scalp. I ended up with long blonde tresses. I thought it was way over the top, but Marilyn from the Studio who was with me, insisted that this is what I needed to fast track through my transition. | extensions before and after - Bing Images |

“Managing hair this long will be a task,” she said. “But there is no escaping it. This is what life as a woman is like. If you cannot handle it then they can be cut off.”

The extensions were originally straight, but I had them in curlers overnight. Marilyn did a house call to my place in the morning to take out the curlers and comb out the curls, and give me another make up job on my now totally smooth face.

“You have naturally good skin,” she said. “Now we have got rid of those whiskers we can see that you don’t need to much makeup at all. Just blusher, eyeliner, mascara and lipstick. And tonight, just some eyeshadow here. If you are meeting another transwoman you will need to show that know how much is too much.”

So that morning I turned up for work without the wig and looking way better than I had the week before. Last week the guys had done a good job of ignoring me. This week they could barely keep their eyes of me. Guys were walking into desks around me, I was drawing such attention.

Bede said: “I think you are causing an office disturbance looking that good.”

“They will just have to get used to it,” I smiled. I wanted to give him the impression that I was happy to be seen as feminine and attractive. But the fact is, I was. I started to wonder if I was getting into this too deeply. I was not just happy that I was pulling off the whole transgender thing, I felt somehow ‘womanly’. I liked the way I looked and the way people looked at me. Women admired me. Men wanted to fuck me. I was special.

I was not a bad-looking guy. Many women found me attractive. I never had trouble pulling girls. I had the looks, the good job, money in my pocket and confidence. But now as a good-looking woman I seemed to have something else. It was not just confidence, it was more like … power.

I went to the restaurant with Bede straight after work. I spent some time in the ladies’ restroom (my second office) working on getting the eyeshadow and extra eyeliner just right, and then I was ready.

They must have been early as we got there on time. The man she was with stood up and greeted me warmly. She was seated and just extended a hand to shake mine gently. She was in her forties I guess. She had strawberry blonde hair to her shoulders. She wore stylish glasses and she had nice eyes well made up. Her nose and chin were slightly prominent but looked entirely right. She had a friendly smile.

“Danni, I’m so pleased to meet you,” She said. “And you again Bede, thanks for coming. This is my husband Walter.” The man who had already greeted me was tall and he seemed a man who would look equally good in a three-piece suit or dressed as a cowboy. Sort of rangy but distinguished looking. “Come and sit by me, Danni, so we can talk.”

We took our seats and ordered drinks and then the meal. The whole table was engaged in general conversation about markets and investment portfolio management methods, so it was not until we were eating the first course that we had the opportunity for some one on one.

“I understand that you are new to transition. How are you finding it?” she asked.

I answered honestly, because I could: “Of course I was worried, but I am finding it really exciting. Of course there are challenges, but challenges make us better – right? Now as a woman I can dress how I feel. I love the choice of clothes and looks. I can be a new person everyday if I like.”

“Does that make you a different fund manager everyday?” she asked.

“If you think I should say ‘no’ because investment decisions should not depend on how I feel, then I might disappoint you. Of course research and analysis are our primary tools, but when it comes down to close decisions it is something else. I think if you wear colour and feel positive you will take chances. I am not sure that I had ‘women’s intuition’ before, but I think I’m picking it up.”

“Do you have a partner?” she asked, “In life, I mean.”

“Not yet,” I replied. “That is not why I transitioned. I have not fully explored it but I think I will probably be a lesbian.”

“I started like that,” she said. “I had always been attracted to women. But after my surgery I was curious, and one thing led to another. It really is the best kind of sex, man on woman, especially if you are the woman. Even outside the bedroom, there is something about being with a man that makes you feel more like a woman.”

“I can understand that,” I said. She was transgendered after all. I was just pretending. I prayed that she could not see through me.

“And with Vince we have a great relationship,” she continued. “I think that he knows that everything he does that makes me feel more like a woman, makes me love him more.”

“That sounds wonderful,” I said. “If only I could be that lucky.” I guess that I was thinking that everybody wants to find love, and when they have it keep it strong.

In the morning at the office Bede was fizzing with excitement. I was still awash in blonde curls but I was using a hairband to keep them back. He steered me into his office.

“You’ve done it,” he said. “We have the seed money for a new fund, on the condition that you lead the management team. Socially responsible, LGBT friendly of course, but return oriented with a high that standard risk profile. She said something about “trusting transwomen’s intuition”, whatever that is.”

“I know what she wants,” I said.

“Great. You have a room upstairs in advisory, and two desks on the floor here for grading and analysis. In a few days give me details of the required resources. Let’s start making money.”

That night, Luther took me out to celebrate.

“Well hell, Girl,” he said. “Your fund could be bigger than mine in a year. That’s minorities working together, right there.”

“But I am stuck in dresses for a while longer,” I complained.

“You belong in dresses,” he scolded. “You should be booking in to have your pole turned into a hole, that’s what everyone expects.”

“That’s not going to happen,” I said. “But I will have a white wine rather than a beer, thanks. Beer just seems too gassy for me these days. I guess I have flipped over that far.”

“I cannot imagine you cutting off that pretty hair and trading that outfit for a grey suit,” he said.

The words stuck with me. When I took off all of my makeup that night, and pulled my hair back so it was barely visible, I still looked like a girl. And I still looked pretty. I was worried for a moment, but then I released my hair and shook it out. I found myself pouting at the mirror, and checking for a hair between my brows. It was becoming increasingly harder to shake off my “girl mode”.

What I had said to June was true, or had become true. I felt that I had different views on different days, given me multiple perspectives, and that I was developing an instinct that I never would have trusted before. I wondered that if this was women’s intuition, then why there were so few successful female fund managers. Or perhaps it was just a man become female that had this approach. Whatever was behind it there was one thing that could not be denied – it was extremely successful.

My fund was quickly outperforming every fund in the whole firm, including the high-risk funds. It even came to the attention of the rating boards. It was just called our “T Fund” and nobody ever asked what the T stood for.

June was very happy. She had arranged for other investors and my fund was growing. There was now a waiting list that only she could jump. She insisted that we make lunch together on Wednesday a regular thing. It was half business and half “trans talk”. It was always enjoyable.

“I wonder if you would consider having my son join your team as an observer,” she said over the lunch table. “He is clever but I despair of him. He is 30 and wastes his time on hair-brained start ups.”

“I didn’t know that you had a son, and I would not have guessed you could have had a son who is older than me,” I said, with every intent of flattering her and ingratiating myself. It worked. So my next line was more blunt: “I have a team. But if you want him to be able to observe, then of course you are my best client and you can ask for anything.”

“Meet him and see whether you can put up with him. I’ll bring him next Wednesday.”

And that day, a week after, was the day I met Peter Turnovsky.

June and I were already seated when he came in. He was quite the most good-looking man I had ever seen, in the flesh. Of course I know what a handsome man is, from the movies or magazines, and none ever registered with me in any way. But when you meet a man like Peter in real life, and when he takes his hand in yours, and you know he likes what he sees, tell me that you cannot be affected, no matter what your orientation.

Now I have always been attracted to women. From the moment I started my life as Danni I continued to be attracted to women, but I have to say that my attraction changed over time in the role, in very subtle ways. I became more interested in how a woman presented herself, how she walked or stood among people, how she dressed, how she styled herself. I know now that my interest in breasts and bottoms had waned to almost nothing.

It seemed to me that my attraction to Peter Turnovsky was of the same type. He was tall and carried himself with confidence and style. He wore a suit as easily as if we a t-shirt and boxer shorts. His brown eyes sparkled with intelligence and just a hint of mischief. His voice was like a cup of hot chocolate, mellow and sweet. There was nothing about him that I did not like in the first 30 seconds.

I had enough presence of mind to start to wonder if he might think he had cast some kind of spell over me. I tried to remain cool, and just a little distant. I talked about our investment philosophy and different views brought to bear so that selecting investments and the extent of investment might be a cooperative process.

“I think people are important,” he said. “I back people. If I meet somebody I like to think that I know whether they are a good investment or not, based on who they are.”

He was looking at me. It was as if he was inviting the question: ‘would you back me?’ That was not the question at all, and I was not about to ask it. But he was willing me too. We just smiled at one another as if we each knew something.

“Danni has said this is a favor to me,” said June. “You’re not making decisions here. You are watching her and her team make good decisions. I’m hoping it might help you make a few.”

“Don’t let June make you think that I have not been successful,” Peter said to me. “I have a success rate twice better than any angel fund in the city.”

We chatted about commerce in more general terms. It was enough to show that he knew the markets well. Before leaving we swapped cellphone numbers and I told him to report to the office the following day, a Thursday.

I had a busy afternoon, but by the time my head cleared on the way home, I found that one thing dominated my thoughts - Peter Turnovsky. I wanted to phone him just to hear his voice. I thought I might call and just say: “Sorry Peter - I pushed your number by mistake – see you tomorrow.” Maybe just to hear him say: “I’m looking forward to it.” I did not make the call. It was logic over impulse. But it was a close thing.

Then I dreamt about him. I dreamt about him kissing me. Like a man and a woman, with me as the woman, of course. I was able to get back to sleep again, but I was shaken.

In the morning I wondered if I should not cancel him completely, and how I could do that without upsetting June. But what was I afraid of? Nobody can turn gay by meeting one guy for an hour or so. Or can they? Can you love women and still fall in love with a man?

What was it June said? She had been attracted to women, but sex as a woman was better. Now she had a man and she was happy. Why had I never found a woman who had made me truly happy?

Peter was early. He was waiting for me. I introduced him to everybody and then made excuses not to be with him. I even pretended to be on the phone. Through my glass walls I spotted a girl from research chatting to him and laughing. I was suddenly jealous and wanted to go out and tell her to get back to work.

None of this was rational.

I told him that we could not have lunch together. “I am her to observe you, not your staff,” he said.

We had a meeting at 3:00 to discuss a target. I had two teams prepare independent presentations. Bit recommended investments but for different reasons. I questioned them – who was wrong? Or are both wrong? If there are two different analyses there is a problem, even if the conclusions are both positive.

He stuck with me for the rest of the day.

“Can I take you for a drink tonight, or a meal?” he asked.

“The whole team will meet for a drink tomorrow night,” I said. We reserved a section of a bar on the same block every Friday. He could come to that.

“That sounds great,” he said. “But to get to know you a little better, let’s get together on Saturday. Not a date. I have an opening of a wine store I have invested in. There will be others there but I will be a chance to talk.”

He clearly felt that I was keeping a distance for professional reasons, when I was really trying to to avoid the risk that I might throw myself at him. But I could hardly say no so I agreed.

At drinks on Friday Luther was in my ear. “Tell me you don’t want to jump the tall guy,” he said. “You are tearing his clothes off with your eyes, girl.”

“He’s a man. I’m a man, under all of this. So how can that be?” I said.

“If you are a man then I am white,” said Luther. “Try looking in the mirror.” I tried that earlier in the week. I felt as if my maleness was slipping away. Attraction to women was like the last connection, and that was flimsy at best.

After lunch on Saturday I went to see Marilyn and get my hair done. I told her that I wanted something sophisticated. I gave her a little background on Peter.

“You need a man in your life,” she said. “You work way too hard.”

“But you know what I am,” I said. “I cannot have a man in my life. I am a man.”

“Transition is change, no matter for what reason you started it,” she said. “You begin as a man, and you evolve into something else. You don’t know what you will be at the end. Will you be a woman or only partly a woman, or will you find yourself back where you started. Its not only who you are but who you meet on the way. They say, it’s a journey.”

“I have known this guy 72 hours,” I said. “Could I be in love with him.”

“The way you are talking, I can think of no other word for it,” she said.

I emerged with my hair in a stylish updo, and evening makeup. I had the dress to go with with it. I looked as good as a girl could.

I arrived fashionably late, and told the people at the entrance I was there to join Peter Turnovsky. They gave me a glass of wine and I started to stroll past the racks. I saw him in the distance and raised my glass. He came towards me. His eyes were wide – almost crazed.

“You look fabulous,” he said.

“Good,” I said. “That was the look I was going for.”

He lead me to a few people and had me engage in conversation with some. It was good to be talking about something other than finance, and something that I found interesting – good wine. Marilyn was right, I work too hard and I only know one thing. I was feeling relaxed.

“I have something to show you in here,” said Peter. The sign on the door read “Refrigeration Plant – Keep Out”. Once inside Peter turned to me and said: “You cannot stand before me looking like that and not allow to kiss you.”

If that was a request it was poorly played. He was going to kiss me anyway, the only question was what I was going to do when he did. That was quickly answered. I melted like butter. His tongue was deep inside my mouth and I was begging for more. My hands were behind his neck holding his face to mine. It was a higher plane of existence.

“Watch the hair,” I said, breaking off. “You’ve already ruined my lipstick.”

“I have been wanting to do that since I first laid eyes on you.” He said. “I think you are the most beautiful, intelligent and most fascinating person that I have ever met.”

“I feel the same about you,” I said. I did. He was.

“Let’s get out of here,” he said. “There is a restaurant around the corner.”

Somehow that night seemed to have run by. Was I talking about wine for longer, or had we been kissing in the plant room for hours. It had been a whirlwind that I was caught up in, so disorienting that it seemed as if it was not happening to me. How could it be? I could not be kissing a man like that.

The restaurant had largely emptied out when we took our seats, but we still sat at the back, it a private booth where we could snuggle up but still gaze into one another’s eyes. We talked about the menu and we ordered something.

“Do you believe in love at first sight?” he asked.

“That’s hardly a question for a first date,” I teased. “But if it is intended to get me into bed that you should know that I have had no surgery of any kind.”

I was smiling, but he was not. He went suddenly pale.

“I didn’t know,” he said. “June didn’t tell me.” He seemed confused and upset. For some reason I felt a sudden panic. Was he about to tell me that he loved me? Surely he could not have thought that I was a woman? But his expression answered my question - He thought I was a woman. A real woman. He thought he could love me.

I had no idea what to do. I tried to order my thinking but it was not possible. I just knew that I could not stay here with him staring at me like that. I burst into tears, got up from the table and I ran. I ran to that well known haven for the confused - the ladies restroom.

What kind of a mess was I in now? I was once a normal man, now every thought in my head did not belong there. Every thought was about him. I did not want him to not love me. I could not bear his disappointment in me.

There was a knock on the door. No woman would knock. It was his voice: “Do you need your handbag? I have it here.”

I went to the door, opened a little and put my hand through. I snapped: “Of course I need it. What am I?” I expected it to be placed on my waiting hand so that I could retreat back into my refuge.

“You’re a woman,” he said. He put nothing in my hand. “If you promise to come back to the table I will give you your handbag.”

“Give it then.” Now I was angry with him. But more angry with myself for not collecting it when I ran away in the first place, even in the state I was in. Some things a woman can never abandon, her handbag being top of the list.

I was committed to returning, so I had work to do to tidy myself up. I wanted to look even better than when I had first arrived. He could wait. And when I was happy with the way I looked I walked back and sat down.

I felt as if I owed him the truth. The whole truth. But how could I tell him that I was only pretending to be trans to get access to his mother’s funds? I mean, his father’s funds.

“You should have told me that you were trans,” he said.

“But I’m not,” I said. “I am just pretending. I feel that the time has come for me to leave all this behind. I should cut my hair and have these breasts removed, and go back to who I was.”

He took my hand and looked me in the eyes. “I don’t want that,” he said. It was clear that he did not believe me. He thought that this was some tranny tantrum.

“I mean it,” I said. “I am done with this.” Strangely I felt another tear run down my flushed cheek.

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| “What if I told you that I don’t care?” he said. “What if I told you that I have discovered tonight that love at first sight can happen? That it has happened to me?”The pause seemed to last an age, but I cannot recall thinking of anything, except that I knew that he did. Love me, I mean.“That would change everything,” I said.Our meals arrived.“Please don’t talk about going back,” he said. “I only want to talk about you going forward. You may call me old fashioned, but if I am going to marry you I insist on you having a vagina.”“I like old fashioned in a man,” I said.The End |  |