Nights at the Mall

By Maryanne Peters

I was one of those people who believed that I could beat anything if I set my mind to it. I used to tell myself that I was a male thing – women are no like that, which is why I must be a man. But I was wrong in so many ways. Plenty of women are just like that. I was more like hem.

But I fought as best I could. My resolve helped me through high school, which must be the hardest part. I told myself that I loved the muscles and he whiskers, and contact sport and winning. Bu here were still solitary moments when I all seemed like a lie, and when despite myself trying not to allow it, and tear or more would wet my pillow.

I joined the Marine Corps straight out of school. I was not until I left that I found out that many transwomen did just that – to have the woman force marched out of them. It seemed o work while I was busy, but in the times I was not, it all came back.

The best thing was the uniform. One suit to fit all, and essential men’s clothing, even though women in the Corps wore the same. Women’s clothing always seemed to have been attractive to me, not because I craved to cross dress, but because they reflected something feminine, and deep down inside me that was my nature.

When my term was up I took the discharge, but with some rank and a good record brough about by my “beat anything” attitude, I was hand picked to work for a security company.

“You have start at the bottom,” said Mitch Phelps, my new boss and ex Marine captain. “Mall cop, including time working sole charge at night.” It paid well enough, but it was also a stepping stone to something bigger. I could do it. They sent me to work North City Plaza.

The problem was that Bamboo Valley Plaza. But he problem for me was that Bamboo Valley Plaza was known locally as Bimbo Valley Plaza. It was comprised mainly women’s fashion boutiques and cosmetic stores, with Juvenate Spa as a major tenant along with two national department stores. This was a mall dedicated to feminine beauty. It was the very opposite of a bunk on a troopship, a tent in the jungle or a trench in the desert.

And the night shift was even worse. I was like a kid in a candy store – I mean locked in a candy store. An alcoholic trapped in a liquor store, or a glutton in a deli. All around me was what I craved. Every image made me almost scream – ‘why am I not her!’

My job was to secured the mall after closing, check to see the nobody was left behind and that all stores were locked and those who were alarmed, were active. I had the keys and passcodes so that I could gain access in an emergency, on the basis that use of them was logged. But after all was secure I could go up to the monitoring station and put my fee up, if I wanted. There was nothing else to do, except perhaps stroll around and stare in the windows, driving myself crazy.

One night I decided that I was going to do something that I would have called “out of character” but the truth is that my whole life up until then seemed to have been lived “out of character”. I was going to give in to my impulses. I was going to give into my urges and stop trying to hold back the dam towering over me. It would just be a one off – to get I out of my system. If things went really well, I would take one look at myself and be so disgusted that I would never do it again.

If I really thought that, perhaps I should not have tried to do such a good job, but then again, I had the attitude that not allow me to do just a half good job.

Perhaps I need to say it again – it was the temptation that surrounded me, but also the certainty that I would not be discovered. Only I could control access to the entire building, and there were no windows in from the outside world with a direct view to the concourses I would walk. I could be her, and nobody ever need know.

Every soldier understand that the success of any exercise involves planning, and that mean choosing he places I needed to access and in what order, and how I could prepare myself even before I turned up to work that night.

I shaved myself down at home. I could have just done my legs I suppose, put I did everything. It just seemed that once I was started I could not stop. Those legs just felt so good that I wanted to experience that feeling all over. I was the middle of winter so nobody would notice anything during the day – although after night shifts I slept through until afternoon and did not have to go into the office at all.

I went to the mall in my “Security” jacket and pants, but I felt different somehow, being smooth and excited. The first place that I needed to go to was a boutique called “Bas Forme” which sold corsets and padded bras and all the things necessary for me to modify my shape. I was trim and light, and still maintained some of the muscle from, military days, but softened without regular exercise. I had an idea about sizes but I had time to try things on and get I right.

Believe it or not, these were he first female clothes I had ever worn, bu hey were no for show. Still, even wearing them made me feel hugely relieved. I felt good, bu no aroused. I had in my mind that would have been weird, and not really who I was. In fact arousal had been rare for me through my time in the Marines (a good thing) and since (not a thing that worried me).

I was only borrowing these items, but I really thought that I should buy them as they we touching my skin, and more importantly, changing me. It was the restraint in my groin that seemed the most intimate. I decided that I would find a way to possess them, despite having promised myself that I would do this only once.

My next visit was to the larger of the two cosmetics stores. I dashed over there with only a robe over my under garments, barefoot on the cold floor, just swept and polished in the last hour before me locking up. I unlocked the store and switched off the alarm.

Cosmetics cannot be borrowed, but I had resolved that I would use only testers and tools used by the “beauty technicians”. I knew from my inspections of back rooms that these technicians worked to specific plans and all I had to do was to pick the style to suit my face shape (masculine) and my coloring (fair) and the time of day (evening). Out the back there were even video guides to help the technicians, who may no have had all the skills they held out to hold.

I surprised myself by doing a decent job, but before I was to consider the overall look I needed hair from the salon around the corner and something to wear – a cocktail dress perhaps, with heels.

In the salon there were wigs that I had seen, and a cap to rap up my own hair, now a buzz cut grown out by 6 months and about as long as I had ever worn it. I actually looked at myself in the mirror and wondered whether I could pass as a female with my own hair, but then I pulled on the wig and decided that I definitely could with it.

I suppose that this was the moment that I realized that this was not going o be a one off experience. I looked at the face in the mirror and this was not the look that would disgust me and persuade me never to do this again. Instead I looked at the face of a woman – an ingenue if you like – uncertain and a little scared by what she saw, but clearly pretty … perhaps because of that.

Maybe I should have stopped here and backed out? I had proved something hat perhaps I did not want to prove – I made an attractive looking woman. How would things have been if I had chosen to consign his to an experience that way I had intended, and gone on with life as a man?

But I didn’t to that. The plan was always to stroll through the mall as if it was full of people on a Saturday afternoon, to look in the shops and thumb through the racks upon racks of gorgeous colorful things and perhaps try something on and walk out wearing it – but always remembering where I got it from so that I could put it back.

I found shoes too. I had thought that my feet might be too large – to man like – but I was wrong. I was only a little larger than average. There were plenty of styles in my size, including elegant heels to go with the cocktail dress I had chosen for the evening, and with a clutch to match – empty but perfect.

I spent that whole night window shopping and changing outfits, and even moving up in the height of my heels. It was wonderful. But like Cinderella there was a time limit and in my case it was before dawn. I had to unwind everything, put it all back where it belonged and turn back into a pumpkin or a rat, or whatever I was.

But an experience like that does not cleanse the soul, it just feeds the desire. As the sun rose, I put my head down to sleep as I always did, but it could not happen. I was already thinking about the night to come and for the real me to step forward again.

Despite not sleeping much I was full of energy when I went into the company’s office that afternoon.

“I don’t mind extending my time on night shift at the mall,” I told Mitch. “I am enjoying the solitude a little. You know, the Corps was all about the guy next to you and he team beyond that, and well, I just need some space.

“Sure, finding yourself. We all have to do it at some point in our lives,” he said. He seemed like a guy with wisdom – somebody I would have liked commanding my unit.

If there was any -part of me that wanted to back out, he was out of the picture. I was wired waiting for sundown, like a jack-in-the-box with spring crushed down, or more like a jill-in-the-box to jump out in blonde curls and red dress.

I went to the Bas Forme Boutique before they closed with the underwear I had worn, having washed it when I got home.

“The person who stole this yesterday handed it in to me and gave me the money to pay for it, asking that I don’t get the police involved,” I explained. “It was a difficult thing for this person to do, so I offered to try to deal with it this way.”

They took the money, and I officially owned my first piece of female clothing. Once the place was locked down I went through the same sequence as he night before – get into my shape, paint my face, pull on my wig, find something to wear and then walk he mall just like it was daytime. I even stopped for a latte a the coffee bar, but I was a mug of instant coffee made a the monitoring station. Sill leaving the mark of my lipstick on the mug seemed strangely satisfying.

Spring fashions were already in the women’s stores and after a few nights I started to try on day dresses and to experiment with lighter makeup, almost as if testing the extent my ability to pass, bu it always seemed to me that I was still a thoroughly convincing woman. But perhaps I was kidding myself? The only judge was somebody else, and taking to the mannequins as if they were real people started to seem like slow approaching insanity.

It seemed that I had trapped myself in a futile fantasy. Surely getting out of it would be easy? Just walk away. Put everything back he way you found it like you did every morning, and burn the shaping underwear. Easy.

I remember when I tried. I went back to the hair salon and pulled off the wig and cap underneath and threw them on the counter angrily. I fluffed my hair as if to restore my masculinity. I threw my head back and bellowed in a masculine way. I just glanced in the mirror and there she was. There was a girl with pretty eyes and tousled hair looking angry with the world and outrageously pretty.

I just slumped into the chair, as if the guy who refused to be beaten was now thoroughly defeated. I knew that I would be back that night. I had to be her.

Maybe I was a little down when I passed through the office that day. Mitch noticed me and called me into his office.

“Tough night last night?” he asked.

“Nothing happens, if you can call that tough,” I said. He must have seen something in my face.

“Maybe a day job would suit you better?” he said.

Was this an exit for me? Without my nights at the mall how could I meet these outrageous urges. But yet I did not want to give her up. He seemed to sense my reluctance, which really made no sense. The night shift was nobody’s favorite – mall cop but without people.

“We have something that will pay three times what you are getting but will be hours you are more used to. I mean by that working in the day and sleeping at nights. It’s a bodyguard job. It is for an important client – a female client – somebody looking for a woman with all the skills. She asked if I had somebody and I said --- maybe?”

“Who would that be, Boss?” I really had no idea what he was talking about

“Well, I don’t know her name, but you must,” he said. “She stalks the halls of the Bamboo Valley Plaza at nights. She can be both glamorous and informal – just what our client is looking for. But she is still finding herslf I think?”

He spun around the laptop on his bench, and there was a split screen showing four of the cameras at the mall, with the one at the bottom right showing me throwing my wig onto the counter at the salon, mussing my hair and staring at the girl with the spiky pixie cut who remained.

“I have a feed from the mall to my desk her, and a few weeks ago I caught sight of her and I have been watching her since then. I have to say that she has captivated me. I was wondering how I could ever meet her in person, and this job came up and … is she available?”

“Cap, you must think I am some kind of creep?” I said.

“No. I actually think that what I see on he screen eery nigh is pretty close to perfect, which is why I find myself staying up at night to watch her. Surely you will allow me to meet her? She is driving me crazy. Would I be able to take her for dinner tonight, before your shift starts.”

“No,” I said. His disappointment was so palpable it was heart wrenching. “As you know, for the time being anyway she only comes out at night, but you could meet her for breakfast.”

I actually had to head back to the mall early. I needed to buy some clothes and makeup. I was not about to go on my first date as a woman with borrowed stuff.

I don’t work at the mall these days, but I still visit as often as I can. I know the place very well and it reminds me that it is all real now – I walk around among people and window shop as a woman like me likes to do. Instead I work alongside my husband – you might know him – Captain Mitch Phelps USMC Retired.

The End

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