New Forms

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

I have to hand it to Caitlyn Jenner. She is not a person that I can agree with about much, but she certainly had the courage to transition later in life. It was her example that persuaded me to take make the decision I had been putting off for years.

To say that my wife was disappointed with my choice would be a gross understatement, but I think that she knew it was coming. Even before we got married, I told her that I was wrestling with “my feminine side”. After we were married, we burnt the last of my women’s clothes on a bonfire at her parents’ country property. It was meant to put everything behind me.

It did not stop any of my thoughts, but to be honest, after one child, then another, and then Harry our third, I never had time to ponder on who I was. I was a husband and a father before all else.

Work too, kept my mind on other things, but it was not the working life I had wanted. I had qualified as an architect and I had visions of leaving my mark on the world with great structures. But with the home life I had, somehow the inspiration seemed short. Fortunately, I was the best qualified structural engineer in the firm, so I was always busy with calculating the viability of the work of others. But being buried in figures about the moduli applicable to spans seemed like the death of ideals, but certainly it curtailed creativity.

What put it into focus was when Ken Gilmore and Rob Stoltenberg left the firm to set up their own “loft studio”. They were doing the stuff I had always dreamed of doing – avant garde forms and challenging use of space. But they never thought to invite me along.

If I was dissatisfied at work, that was not the case at home. My wife May was loving and attentive to me, if somewhat prone to stress without cause or reason. My oldest son was off to college and I had two more sons in High School with active social lives, so sitting in front of the TV at nights was usually just the two of us.

I suppose that when the nest is emptier it tends to prompt a couple to think about the future.

I had more or less thought that my chance at transition had passed me by, until Caitlyn showed just how well a manly man could transition to womanhood. I had the advantages over her in being quite a bit younger but also in being much shorter. I still had a full head of hair and fairly small hands and feet. And I had money, and that could solve any other issues.

Of course, May thought that this would be the end of our marriage, but I said it did not have to be. I suppose that in making a decision to transition you have to be prepared to lose your wife. If that is the case then I was, but it was not my preference.

I think for her it was more about the shame that her husband was not the man everybody thought I was, rather than facing the future as a lesbian. She could never accept that I was a woman so lesbianism was never a consideration.

I wanted to tell the boys. I did it over Thanksgiving, the night before we were having guests over. My oldest son was shocked. But he said I should keep it in the family for now – I should push ahead if I needed to, but maybe if it was too hard, I could go backwards without anybody knowing.

My second son was more supportive. He said that it was my life and my choice. He almost scolded his mother for crying through the whole thing.

Harry was just upset. He was always the closest to his mother, so he shared some tears with her. I think he realized as she did, that there was nothing they could say to make me change my mind.

I took the advice of my oldest and I did not announce it to the wider family, but I resolved that I would do one year later. Instead I set about making the changes to my body.

Like Caitlyn, I moved to modify my facial features first. I wanted to be an attractive woman. Maybe if I failed there, I might have wanted to throw the process into reverse, but I thought that unlikely. But I booked the surgery and told the people at work that I was having some work done to make myself look more youthful.

I suppose that when it was all done, I learned something that I was not expecting – I was invisible to 90% of my co-workers. Some noticed that I was trying to look younger. One even asked me whether I was “exploring a more gender-neutral look”, but most never noticed at all. And this was quite major work I had done – brow bone ground down and scalp pulled forward, nose and chin reduced, and skin tightened with the loss of sideburns. People did not notice, or they did not care. It was a little deflating

May noticed and May cared. She found it hard to look at me. At that was before I did anything else. It took ages to grow my hair and for the hormones and hormone blockers to have any effect. And that meant that it was so gradual that nothing was so big a shock for her, until the last of the surgery.

Even for me too, the change was gradual even though I was watching my body every morning and most nights. Nothing perceptible, until you look at the before and after images.

But if anything, the thing that I noticed most was that my creativity seemed to be returning. In fact, if I am honest with myself, it was arriving, because it had never been my strong suit. It seemed like the most obvious change in me was my outlook. Well before my hair was long enough to style, or I felt able to pluck my eyebrows or wear lipstick in public, I started to see for the first time. I mean that I started to see shape and color in things that I had never seen before.

I wondered if the chemistry of being a man had been holding me back all this time, or was it my life? Had I surrendered to drudgery and lost artistic ability? No. This was new. This was something that I never had until I had the essence of womanhood in my veins.

Even in myself I started to see something else. I started to see the woman that I could be. Like Michelangelo not seeing his block of marble, but what lay within it. He just had to free his David from the stone before him. I had to be free.

The new me first took form in the clothes that I wore. Just as a was seeing color for the first time, in needed to wear color. Just a little at first, as I slowly transitioned, but then I started to wear dresses. It seemed to me that a dress is a canvas upon which any color in any style can be presented. And not just color, but the cut - the use of the body to give shape to the fabric, or the use of another material to give fall and movement. How can a man express himself with his clothes? There is no comparison.

If I wanted to be female before, I now understood how important it was that I embrace this change.

My hair too: I had thought about wearing in a short bob, maybe colored pink or blue, but that seemed too limiting. Now that I had a good hairline and a good amount of hair, I felt that I needed to grow it so that I could put it up or down in a variety of styles.

What men do not understand about women like the one I had become, was the need to be able to adopt a style apposite to the prevailing mood. That means not just the occasion but also the way I felt when I got up in the morning. That could vary, but in my new form it was never depressed, as it often was when I was a man.

But I still was. It still seemed that the last leap was the longest one and riskiest one, as if there was a chasm below that could kill me. But that was an irrational fear. If I accept that I was always a woman, the last step is not a step at all. This Michelangelo needed to chisel away that last vestige of manhood.

May was horrified. She had watched her husband transition, and now saw him come down from his separate bedroom every morning in a huge variety of female clothes and step out in public as a woman. The loss of my penis meant more to her than it did to me. I now understood that it was just a minor impediment to my future. To her it was the end of our relationship.

I was sad to lose her, but it was inevitable. I got my own place. She got the house which was more than 50% of joint property.

My sons were surprisingly accepting of the changes in me. I suppose that this is down to a better public understanding or the whole transgender thing. But it did occur to me that all three of them regarded their father as being dull and uninteresting, whereas this new parent was intense and engaging.

At work things were changing too. I was starting to really design things instead of just joining the dots and measuring the distance between them. Under my female name I was growing a reputation.

That was when Ken Gilmore and Rob Stoltenberg invited me to join them for a meal. I loved their work, and the studio style of their design aesthetic. I was keen to join them. I wanted to impress them.

I have to say that I went all out to look good for that dinner. It was not as if I was flirting. I had no interest in pursuing sex or any relationship, and if I had I would probably have assumed that it would be with a woman. All that I had done; all that I had become, was about me being me. When I dressed for that dinner, I was signalling that I was changed. There was not a trace of the person I had once been – a man. They would only be able to see what I was now – a woman.

I knew that I had made an impact the moment I walked into that restaurant. Ken and Rob both rose from the table with eyes as wide as dinner plates.

I greeted both of them, by presenting my softened hand with barely a grip. It was not what I intended. I wanted to make an impression as being a modern professional woman, looking to make an impact. But somehow in their presence I felt overwhelmed. Both of them were good-looking men, high achievers, true talents in their field, powerful.

I had been sexually attracted to women all my life, or one in particular – my now ex-wife May. But here in the presence of these men I realized that yet another aspect of my personality had changed drastically. I had been presentling myself as a woman for some time, and noticing that some of the glances that I had received from men could properly be described as lustful, but until that even I had never returned that feeling.

Now I was wondering if they could see it in me. Did they know that I wanted to have sex with either of them? Maybe even both of them. My pussy, which had only just become truly comfortable, felt tingly. I could not help but smile.

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| As I scooped my dress to sit down, they both started to tell me about how much they admired my recent work – how different it was from anything that I had done before … - it is always hard for a man to say it, so I spoke to make it unnecessary.  I called it “the Ultimate Remodelling Job” and “My Physical Retrofit”. I said that like many projects it was hard work, but the results were totally satisfying. They both agreed.  But they were only looking at the exterior. Architects have a greater appreciation of what lies beneath the form – I am talking about structure, detail, and call it foundation – what I was sitting on.  They both got to see and explore, but not together. I am not that type of woman.  They invited me to join them as a partner, and so I am a partner to both of them, as time permits.  We are very busy. Good architects always are. People want to create forms that are beautiful and functional. | A person sitting on a table  Description automatically generated |

The End

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