Across the Table

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Part 1

It turned out to be the moment that changed my life, and triggered me to change my sex, which must be the most momentous decision that a person can take. But it started with nothing more than an ordinary business meeting reviewing a proposal that I cannot even remember – neither of us can.

To put a decision of such scale down to a single event would be to ignore the background, so I won’t. I will say that up until that meeting I considered myself as being a heterosexual occasional transvestite. I had always been interested in women’s clothes. I found women attractive, and I found a fully dressed woman perhaps more alluring than a naked one. The suggestion of what lay beneath seemed more exciting than just seeing it.

I always said that dressing up was just a way of being able to admire a well-dressed woman in the privacy of my home – or at least the semblance of one. Then there was the added thrill that what lay beneath the clothes of the lady in the mirror was not what it seemed. But it was about me – it was for my pleasure and nobody else’s.

I understand that there are transvestites who feel that that they need to be seen, and regardless of the risks that might be entailed they feel the urge to step out into the public eye and reveal their feminine selves. That was not me. I had never thought about another person seeing me as a woman, even though I considered myself blessed as making a more attractive woman that most men ever could.

As for my sexual orientation, I had been with women, and I had been with incomplete women – women with male genitals. I would always like to watch them perform a little fully dressed, and then strip slowly. Sometimes I would use their bodies but just as often my own hand would bring me to climax in their presence. It seemed heterosexual to me.

I had never contemplated being on the receiving end of sex, because it seemed to me that would involve anal sex, and that I found distasteful. For me sex should never go with excrement. That would seem to soil or debase something that should be an act of love.

Perhaps that makes me a romantic, and if I am that then it gives me no cause for shame. I suppose that I was looking for love above sex, and I had visions of how it might come about. Those dreams often involved an art gallery, or a garden, and two people, a man and a woman, whose eyes meet, and they both know in an instant.

A business meeting is not where it would happen, in my imagination. And certainly not one involving just men.

I think that there were six of us sitting around a table, maybe three of each side, but I cannot be sure. There were only two people who counted – him and me.

The proposal was in front of me, and I was looking through it when the proponents took their seats. Without looking up I waved them to their seats. I had gone through it before and highlighted some things that I would refer to in order to make sure that I stayed on point with my questions. But then I looked up and he was sitting there.

Anybody who tells you that love at first sight is not a real thing has no idea of what love is. It is a spark in a room for of butane. When it happens you know because the whole room is on fire.

Unrequited love is a thing, for sure. People can fall in love with people who are indifferent to them, but I have learned enough to know that if people witness spontaneous love, they know, or at least they know something is happening. He was to tell me later – “When you looked up, I felt we had made a connection”. It was a massive understatement. He had destroyed my very foundation.

I knew at that moment that here sat the person I wanted, and who I wanted inside me. I know now what straight men can never understand that about sex – that dipping a piece of your anatomy into another is casual and almost meaningless, whereas for somebody to allow you inside their body is a huge leap of trust and sacrifice of your inner space. That was what I wanted. I wanted him in my inner space.

In an instant, that made me gay, or perhaps female in my soul, but as I sat there I felt only confusion to the point of agitation.

As a professional I trusted myself to get on top of the situation, and something inside me did. I think I muttered – “I am sorry, so deep into your proposal here … and you are … ?”

“I am Dalton Kerridge,” he said, reaching a hand across the table. “I wrote the proposal on behalf of my clients here …”. I was almost fearful of touching it in case I swooned, but again I summoned something inside me to cope. I shook his hand and there were other introductions and handshakes, but it all seemed irrelevant. All I was concerned to do was to see him again which meant that I would confirm the Bank’s interest “subject to further analysis”. But from that point I would need to let my colleagues pose the questions while I continued to stare at the meaningless pages in front of me as my world swirled into oblivion. I had fallen in love with a man.

But I am an analytical person, which I why I am (normally) good at my job. I had to find an understanding of my situation and consider the options.

Option 1 might be to find out if Dalton Kerridge might be gay. If yes, then propose a relationship by telling him that I was gay too, but a virgin. If not, go to Option 2. “I am actually a woman!” – then propose a relationship – man and transwoman. If there was to be no relationship then I was effectively back where I started – the unrequited love situation with a possible lifetime of angst, perhaps with self harm and ending in an early and welcomed death.

I called him and arranged to meet him again, privately and in a social setting. I said that investment is more about people than numbers, or some such bullshit. I reasoned that if I was going to somehow segue to a personal conversation about sexual orientation from which he might wish to withdraw in a hurry, then it was best to meet on neutral but populated ground.

I had asked some personal questions at the first meeting and I was fairly confident that Tony (as he called himself) was not gay, so I went straight to Option 2, in a fashion.

“I have to tell you, Tony, that your proposal is not something that the Bank would be interested in normally, but I could pull something strings to make it happen, for purely personal reasons.”

It sounds awful that I would do such a thing, but love makes us all scoundrels.

“I am just advising these guys and helping them with the numbers,” said Tony. “But I think they have something worthwhile here, so tell me what you propose, and I will consider it. I promise that I will be discreet.”

I must have swallowed deeply, as I was about to change my life, or at least start a change that, even if I chose to pull out later, would mark me forever. But I am a person who makes decisions and stands by those decisions. “Precisely because we don’t know one another, but you strike me as a thinking man, I want to ask a personal favor of you which if you agree to it, would place me in your debt, and compromise myself a little. I may not look like it, but I am a transwoman, if you know what that is. I am on the edge of transitioning from male to female, but before I do that, I am seeking some reassurance that I am taking the right decision. I need to present myself to somebody who will be frank and honest – to receive an opinion … your opinion.”

“How interesting,” he said. He did not look surprised at my revelation. He did look interested. “What qualifies me to give an opinion?”

“Well, to be very frank, you are exactly the kind of man who I would be attracted to as a woman. I mean you are good-looking and fit, and you are clearly intelligent and resourceful.” What I could not say was that I was crazy about him – in all the circumstances that would appear insane.

“And the Bank would back the proposal after this reveal?” He was properly focused on results.

“No. I want honesty,” I said. “I will recommend your proposal before you see me as a woman. I don’t want dishonest compliments for the wrong reasons. I want to know what you really think.”

“I am looking forward to this,” he said. I wasn’t, but yet I was driven to it now.

Part 2

When I did all of this I was strangely confident that I the woman I sometimes pretended to be sometimes would be so attractive that he would fall for her, but when have made a date and approved the funding, I set about preparing for my first outing in public, I had a major crisis of confidence.

It seemed to me that all transvestites are adept at self delusion. You just have to look at some of the awful images on the internet to know that. Many are of men who look nothing like a woman, and yet clearly believe that they do. It seemed that I could be one of those.

In making the extra effort to pass this test and hopefully win the heart of the man who was by then the object of my obsession, required steps that almost seemed to rob me of the chance to back away – to retreat to the tragic Option 3. For instance, I decided that I needed to rid myself of a beard and that shaving was not enough. At the same time I decided to wax my boy as well. I had an idea that total and lasting hairlessness would have a feminizing influence, and in that I think I was right.

But perhaps the most difficult thing was finding a feminine voice and feminine mannerisms, and it soon became obvious that I would need help. I hired somebody – a successful transwoman who lived the life of a woman “with stealth” as they say – nobody knew of her male past.

“You poor thing,” she said. “I love already. You have to be ready for drama and grief when he discovers your accident of birth.”

“Actually he knows that I am a man,” I said. “I just want to see if he can be made to forget that fact.”

“But you are wrong, sweetheart,” she said. “You are not a man. You are a malformed woman.”

That notion was a huge help. At that time I still did not view myself as transgender, but I understood that I now needed to be. It was the single biggest boon to my presenting a feminine face to the world. The second thing was taking off the week of the date and having hair extensions put in.

I just did not want a wig. I have always had a good head of hair, and it could be styled to look even better, with proper extensions. I had the extensions put in early so I could learn what longer hair was like, before I went to the salon on the afternoon of the date to have it styled. To take full advantage I had it put up and swept across the front. The salon also did my makeup.

I decided to arrive at the restaurant bar a little late to make an entrance. By that time I had already been outside my home dressed as a woman and I felt comfortable, but I was still nervous. In fact it was more like dread, because it struck me as I walked to the bar that there was a stark choice to be made based on what was about to happen – the choice between Option 2 and Option 3 – between love and happiness, or loneliness and anguish.

He had already taken a table, but he stood up and came towards me. I smiled.

He came up to me and kissed me on the cheek by way of greeting a blind date, which I suppose I was. I have to say that it was one of the most exquisite moments of my life – to be that close to somebody I was in love with and to feel his strong arms holding my upper arms made me feel so weak and female.

“You look wonderful,” he said, maybe as if suggesting that the job was done, and I had passed. But then he added – “I am looking forward to spending the evening together with you.”

I think that I might have blushed. It is not something that I do but I felt my while body flush with heat. Anyway, I took my seat, and the menu and we talked.

He asked me about when I first knew that I was a woman, and how I coped with being transgender as a child and as a teenager and through college. I lied, and with remarkable ease despite never having done it before, or not much, anyway. I have always believed that lies will be found out so they should be avoided. I encounter lies all the time in my job, but a few small jabs will usually shatter them.

“Are you planning surgery?” he asked. Was this a jab?

“As I explained to you, I am seeking some reassurance that I am taking the right decision,” I said.

“If you want to know whether you present as female, then you have failed,” he said, leaving me taring at him in shock and horror. “What you have convinced me of is that you are female. There is no presenting here. You are who you are, and you’re a woman. And I can tell you that once you are done with that surgery, I would like to meet you again, and have dinner again, but I will pay. And perhaps we could meet again after that?”

It was like a dream come true. Option 2 was a success. All that was required was that I surrender my body to the knife – that I submit to being neutered and irreversibly modified. My future as a man and a conventional marriage and possibly a family would need to be forgotten. The payoff was not guaranteed, but just like any investment, there will never be a payoff with making the investment. Every deal carries the risk of failure, it is just that some failures you can come back from – not this one.

It left me with a lot to think about. He talked about himself for the rest of the evening. I took it all in even though my mind may have been elsewhere. I seem to be able to do that – to be processing something else but then later recall the words spoken to me while I was doing that. I formed the view that Dalton Kerridge was a competent financial engineer and that his numbers and assessment of the businesses would be sound.

I also became convinced that I would need a vagina and to get him inside it as soon as feasibly possible.

Part 3

I came out as transgender at work the following week. I sent in emails on Sunday night and too another day off on Monday to go shopping and to let the gossip run crazy so it would settle by Tuesday morning when I turned up as a woman. I knew that I was valuable and that my job was secure. The boss told me his only concern was whether I could front clients, but when he saw me, he said that he was 100% comfortable.

“It is not about presenting as female,” I said, “I am female.” I had simply decided that I was. When I am in, I am all in.

And there is a lot of work in making this thing real, and it takes time. There is hormone therapy, and counselling and assessment, and the planning for surgery. I really did not have much time for dinners with Tony.

His file was on my desk, though. I was conscious of the fact that his was an investment that was outside the ordinary for us, so I needed to watch it to make sure it was a success and that I would not be questioned as to why I stepped outside accepted criteria. In particular, if I was to have a relationship with this man, tongues would wag only if he failed.

I called him a couple of times when the required reports threw up something of concern. I remember on one occasion I mentioned that I had surgery booked.

“That is great news,” he said. “And remember, that means that we have a date when you have recovered.” I was thrilled to hear those words. It seemed like that thought was driving me on. Looking back on it, it seems crazy that somebody could be pushed to such extremes by a romantic dream driven by a single homosexual rapture. But it still had me dreaming of Tony Kerridge most nights as I lay in my nighties and felt my growing breasts and my shrinking penis and loved what I was becoming.

But there is nothing like pain to bring you back to reality. There was pain, and it was considerable. It made me wonder if all those real transwomen might not feel it the same way? It is just that for them losing their male genitals is the fulfilment of a lifetime dream. For me it seemed only an immediate obstruction to getting what I wanted – an obstruction that I was prepared to bulldoze aside with surprisingly little serious consideration.

Tony had heard that I was off work for a while and that I would be returning to work on the first Monday of summer. He sent me flowers, and to my surprise many people did. There were other things too, silly little girly gifts and cards. I smiled and I cried, because I can do that now.

Whatever residual pain there was left me on that day. I was fully transitioned and I was happy.

In fact when Tony called me to remind me that he had first rights to a first date with me as a woman I had to give him the bad news that I had already been taken out to a private dinner by two other clients – both older men, multimillionaires and totally besotted with me.

Love can be strange. In can be as hot as the fire that first day, or as warm as all my dreams of him, and then the fire goes out and the coals cool, but for a woman like me coldness is not in my nature, as I have recently discover.

I will remember the day that I fell in love for the first time, across the table, and on the strength of that I did let Tony make love to me late one night in that very same meeting room across that very same table, but in case you haven’t realized it already, I am in the money business, and I am good at it.

The End

© Maryanne Peters 2023

*I was in a business meeting once and a guy was the whole package - my mind wandered - I started to imagine that I would be become a giggly bimbo in his presence - it took a lot of control to finish the meeting!*

3375