Solicitation II

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

I have said it before - I don’t like prostitution. I don’t like it because it degrades women and I think that women are special – two women in particular.

I have a daughter and her name is Abigail, or Abby. When she came into the world, she changed me. I had new priorities. I wanted to make the world safe for my girl, or at least our town a safer place. I decided that the police work that was then only a stop-gap following my discharge from the army, would be my career, and I worked at it. But our town was too small for Abigail’s mother. She left and took my sunshine with her.

And I have a second and current wife, of a kind, and her name is Nora. She gave herself that name, because by an accident (if you can call it that) she said that she was neither a man nor a woman. But that was then. A lot has changed.

As the story goes, I was out on Halloween night a few years ago and I saw a pretty woman dressed like a whore trying to flag down a car. I arrested her for soliciting which was against town ordinances at the time. That was how I met Nora. Neither a man nor a woman? Well, like I say, a lot has changed.

I made the biggest mistake of my life putting her in a cell with our local villain, Jake Bowler. There as a risk in it, but I made a point of picking Jake and taking him out a bar when he got drunk but before he hurt somebody. He was in the cell and spoiling for a fight. Nora insisted that she was a man, and the only other cell was set aside for women. I should have put Nora in there, but as it happened it was not all bad in the long run.

Jake Bowler decided to remove Nora’s manhood that night. She almost died. It was easily attempted murder. But there was a problem in laying charges – there always was with Jake Bowler. That problem was Norman Bowler, Jake’s father and the richest and most powerful man in our town – the owner of the business that kept the town alive.

Norman and his lawyer claimed that the injury to Nora was self-inflicted. They wanted her to admit it. They said that she was a transsexual, and in a state of drunken depression she had decided to carry out some self-surgery, or at least remove her balls.

Norman made me a proposition. He said: “If she really is a transsexual then I would meet the bill for the proper corrective surgery, and perhaps a little something to help this newly created woman, on her way. And remember, Chief, if the injury was self-inflicted then neither you nor your department, would have any liability in the matter.”

In effect they were buying the victim off. It would not be the first time Norman had done that.

It seemed to me that it was not my call. It was for Nora to decide. There she lay in the hospital. She still had curls in her hair and not a whisker on her body, and even without makeup on she looked like the woman I had picked up. To me she looked fragile and feminine, and in need of a man.

I mean that she needed somebody to stand up for her. She was about as low as you can get. No job, no money, no home to go to, and no sexual organs. What Norman was offering was new sexual organs and money, and the job and the place to stay, well I offered that.

“If you want, I will prosecute,” I said to her. “But if you support their case that you wanted this, and you accept them making for you a vagina, then I will have to get back at Jake for what he did to you, in some other way. That may take time. Maybe you can help me do that? Maybe you can take their help and their cash and stay here and help me deal with the Bowlers in time.”

She said that she had nobody she wanted to call and have them at her bedside. The woman she had been with had walked away. As for her family, she said that her father was closest, but she wanted neither him nor the ex-girlfriend to know about what had happened. It was private and she felt shameful. So, I was her only visitor.

I told her that there was room for her in the house I had which came with the job. And there was work at the police station too, once she was well enough.

“But that would be work for Nora,” I emphasized. “You have to accept what has happened. You should try to live with your new gender. It will be something you can work on. It will get you back in the groove.”

A small town police officer learns a thing or two about people, but if there is one great truth it is that people don’t have time to feel sorry for themselves if they are busy. The same is true in the words “idle hands are the devil’s playthings”, which everybody in law enforcement knows to be the truth. But people with a goal have no time to be sad and no time to cause trouble.

Nora moved into my house and she moved into the Police Station. Her job in the morning was to get the files out of our secure room for the day’s work and make the coffee and generally cater the morning roll call. She ended up working a shift on reception where she refined a telephone manner to reflect the gender forced on her. Mid afternoon saw her knock off work and go to my house where she cooked a meal for me and sometimes visitors, and she cleaned house.

Since my wife and child had left, I liked to do an evening shift too, which is how I found Nora at the very beginning. She ended up working the radio shift at the station so we could finish together. She was good at it. It included receiving some calls, and she was patient and calming. She was coming to terms with her loss, and finding her way.

She would stay in touch with me by radio, checking my location and updating me on any other officers on duty. As on the night she was attacked Officer Paul Deeks also did evening shifts and she worked with him too.

I don’t think it was a planned thing, but before long, our relationship became romantic and then physical.

I have to say that I hoped it would be the case. The truth is that I always saw Nora as female even that first night when she wasn’t. I never saw her any other way and I could never look at any image of her past life. It seemed to me that would not be good for me.

But Nora still thought of herself as a maimed man in drag, pretending to be a woman to humor me as her rescuer. To change that opinion of herself all it took was time and love. I think that she understood that my feelings for her were those of a man who desires a woman. She could see and feel it every day, whether we were together or just chatting on the radio during those empty night shifts.

Maybe she thinks that she just gave in. I was so quietly persistent that she accepted that first kiss. But it was not like that. I prefer to think of her discovering her true self, and discovering that if somebody loves you hard enough, you just have to love them back.

Anyway, she moved into my bed, and about a month later I had a call from Abby that she was having problems with her mother and asking if she could stay with me for a bit. Abby and Nora got on well. In many ways it was Abby who really brought Nora into womanhood. She was only just getting to that point herself, and as Abby reached puberty Nora wanted to share it with her.

It pleased me immensely that they were there for one another, sometimes laughing and sometimes crying, but always together. Everything seemed perfect. I almost forgot about the promise that I had made “to get back at Jake Bowler”.

But somebody like that is bound to get into trouble again, and when I heard that a transvestite had been attacked, I was not surprised when officer Deeks said: “It’s Jake Bowler”. Still, I went to the scene first to look at the injured “lady”. I have to say that living with Nora made me more readily accept that these people are entitled to be addressed in the gender they have chosen.

The ambulance was there, and on the gurney inside the paramedic was attending to some facial injuries to the victim dress in a flouncy pink outfit, the blonde wig clutched in her manicured hands.

It was Jake Bowler. I don’t mean that the assailant was Jake Bowler, which is what I thought Paul was saying over the radio, I mean that the woman in pink was Jake Bowler!

“He won’t need to go to hospital tonight, Chief,” the attending medic said. “Maybe a precautionary X-ray in the morning, but I can see nothing broken except maybe a little pride.”

“She,” I corrected the man. “You mean she won’t need to go to hospital.”

A lesser man may have laughed at this situation, but the correction was serious, and looking at this person had me halfway between the rage I felt for the man, and my new-found sympathy for the woman she might be trying to be. This was no fancy dress. Bowler was alone. There was a need on display. Jake Bowler was a secret transvestite.

“I will need to take a statement from you, Miss Bowler,” I said, in all seriousness. “Can you come to the police station with me?”

She looked at me with both eyes swollen from blows rather than tears. She said nothing. She stepped down and headed for my cruiser.

“Don’t forget your wig, and your handbag,” I said, taking those along.

I called Nora on the radio. “Leaving the scene and bringing in the victim for an interview”. On a whim I added a personal message – “Can I pick you up a late-night snack, Darling?”

I checked my passenger in the back seat in my mirror. She looked sad.

The radio crackled. “Something sweet – like me.”

“Is that Nora?” my passenger asked.

“She will make you one of her special hot chocolates,” I promised.

Which she did. My sweet Nora made a hot drink for the person who had cut her up and left her to die. And as she did she gave her a little stroke on the back to reassure her that she was safe.

“Tell Chief all about what happened,” Nora said. I always smile when she refers to me as “Chief”. She does in bed sometimes. She said – “Can I ask – what is your girl’s name? You look like a Bella to me.”

There she sat while I was preparing to take her statement, this sad lipstick smeared creature whom I had known as Jake Bowler, a spoiled and vicious villain, on the edge of tears, the hands gripping the mug of chocolate shaking. A small voice from inside this person whispered softly – “Emily”.

“What a pretty name,” said Nora. “Emily”.

“I don’t want to press charges,” the small voice spoke again. “I just want to forget all about it. I don’t want anyone to know.”

“There were other witnesses,” I told her. “I collected some names at the scene. I take a very dim view of this kind of violence. There will be charges laid. With or without them there will be talk. This is a small town. The Bowler family are well known. Maybe it is Emily who will need to explain what happened tonight.”

“You’re not Jake,” said Nora. “He is one of them. He is bad, but only because he is a reaction against who you are. The real you is good and gentle. I understand that now. The real you is Emily. I could never forgive Jake for what he did, but Emily I could forgive. She has suffered like I did.”

There were tears in Emily’s eyes. “You were just so pretty, without even trying. I could never be that pretty. I just lashed out. There is an evil in me. It just came to the surface. I am so sorry for what I did.”

“Well, it turns out that there was something unpleasant about me too, and you cut it off,” said Nora. “It turns out that I am a girl too, just like you. We can be girls together”.

Before I knew it they were hugging one another, just as women do.

I got my statement, and it was enough to follow up and arrest a couple of guys and lay charges. But the problem is that even when they plead guilty, with a good lawyer and a busy prosecutor deals are done, and when the victim is “one of those transvestites” the penalty is never as much as it should be. I understand that better now, but I still don’t really understand. Assault on a woman is a dreadful crime, even when that woman is not perfectly formed. Are any of us.

We got a house guest too. Emily came to stay because her father would never accept the new Emily.

Once Emily felt confident and with Nora beside her, she stepped out with a new hairdo and a pretty dress, and before long the whole town knew about it, being who she once was. I don’t think that there was a soul bar one, who did not think this was an improvement.

Yes, old Norman burst into the police station the following day accusing me and my Nora of turning his boy gay.

“Is this your idea of a punishment for a youngster’s mistake, you and that she man who shares your bed?” he yelled.

I told him that there was no she man, whatever that might be. Nora was a woman before his bully boy son took to her. And I said that we had all discovered that the bully boy son was not real. He was a creation of a young woman trapped in a man’s body, wanting so much to win his father’s approval and to deny his own feminine nature, that he lashed out.

I offered to mediate. I offered to introduce Norman to his daughter. It took a few days before he was ready to do it.

Emily looked as pretty as a picture.

“This is me Daddy,” she said, in a voice that could have been a middle school girl. “This is who I am. This is who I am going to be.”

Norman was speechless. He just stormed out, shouting something about disinheriting his child, to nobody in particular.

But he never changed his will. He died in a car accident not that long ago. That made Emily a very wealthy young woman and well able to afford all the surgeries to make her a complete and very attractive one too. She was awash with proposals but ended up accepting one from our very own Officer Paul Deeks – a simple enough fellow but with a good heart.

Nora was maid of honor and Abby was a flower girl, and I escorted the bride down the aisle.

Ain’t it funny how things turn out?

The End.

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