Loyal

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My cat died. I never thought that I would be so attached to an animal, but I was to Spanky. They say that cats are not loyal like dogs are loyal. It is true that cats don’t give you the same look as dogs, but they snuggle better, and Spanky was a snuggler. I guess she proved to me that snuggles are what I needed. Lots of people do.

But I was loyal. I had driven a car for Mr. Kendall Jessamine for 17 years. I joined him straight out of high school. I moved into a room in his apartment and I had a place to stay at his country house and his beach house, and drove between them more times than I can remember. I even flew to his place in the Bahamas even though I barely ever drove the car there. I guess he just liked having me around. He liked to talk sometimes, and I was a listener.

Driving was something that I could do. I was never much good at anything else. My mother (God rest her) taught me to be polite and courteous, and that is a another qualification for my job. Drive the car, open the door, make sure the chiller is stocked and back seat cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Be a courteous driver too, and never get frustrated or upset. Mr. Jessamine always valued calmness as well as devotion.

I felt I had a purpose and that meant that I was not concerned with seeking a life outside my vocation. When I was not driving or otherwise helping Mr. Jessamine where I could, I would read, and attend to my plants, and Spanky would be with me every night, and some nights Helen would be there.

Just because I am quiet doesn’t mean I don’t see things, and what worried me about my boss was his loneliness. I never had anybody to lose, but his wife died about 12 years in to my time as his driver. She died in his arms which was the way they both wanted it.

He had kids but it seemed that all they were interested in was his money. He told them that they would get it when he died and they just too it for granted. They pretty much left him alone. He used to like to get hugs from his grandkids, but they were all too old for that now, or so they said.

I don’t know about these things, but somebody told me that there is research that physical contact for the elderly helps them to live longer. I mentioned it to Mr. Jessamine one day, and the day after he told me that it was true.

“The problem is that I have a problem with trust,” he admitted to me. “Remarriage is out of the question and I would never dream of paying for intimate contact that was not genuine. The truth is that probably the person I am closest to in the world may well be you, and because I am of an ancient generation I won’t be accepting cuddles from another man.”

“Maybe you should meet Helen,” I said. It just came out of my mouth and the moment that it had I wished it hadn’t.

“Who is Helen?” he said, making things very complicated.

“I am sorry, Sir. I should not have mentioned it. Now I may be forced to make an admission, and it is one that you may disapprove of being of that generation.”

“Now I have to know,” he said, and I was forced to confess.

“I hope that I won’t affect your view of me Mr. Jessamine, but I have been known to cross-dress on occasions. When I do, I am Helen.”

“I would like to meet her,” he said.

“She can’t drive,” I said. I am not sure why. I suppose I meant that I had never driven as Helen, so she doesn’t drive, which is not the same thing. It also made me sound like I was a bit crazy, like one of those people with more than one personality. But Mr. Jessamine just smiled.

Would she like to join me for dinner tomorrow night?” he asked.

I was conflicted. My job means a lot to me. Some people may think that it should mean nothing, but it was what I did, and I found it rewarding. But on the other hand the person who made it rewarding was my employer, and I could hear in his voice what sounded to me like loneliness. Maybe just for a night Helen could offer him some company, just for an evening.

“Well Mr. Jessamine, please just remember that I am me and she is someone else,” I said. “I don’t want things to get weird between us.”

“It will just be a dinner here,” he said. “I will have cook prepare something and take the night off. It will just be the two of us – me and Helen – if that’s alright? Say 6:30?”

I spent a time worrying about what I had done, but the following day I drove Mr. Jessamine and he never said a word until around 4:00 pm when he said – “When we get home you can finish for the day. I am expecting to entertain a lady tonight.” There was not even a wink.

When I told him that I was an occasional cross-dresser I should have said occasional but regular. Unfortunately regular does not make you better. All it means is that I kept my body free of all hair, and I have done for years. I always wear long pants and long sleeved shirts. I kept my hair shortish and I had a wig that I could wear to be her.

The trick to being Helen was makeup, and I had developed a look that was (I thought) a balance between ladylike and slutty. My face was not strongly masculine. I had developed eyebrows which I back-brushed as myself, and smoothed across as Helen. When I was her I would sit with my legs crossed at the thigh, and eat and drink in what I thought was an elegant way.

I had feminine clothes but not many. Helen never left my room so she favored nighties and peignoir sets, but sometimes she would dress up. I had corsets, constraining panties, breast forms and a push up bra. I could put together a look, although everything was a little bit worn. The evening dress.

I had a sudden thought that my voice would be wrong. Helen never spoke, for very obvious reasons. But she might need to that night, so I did my best to lift my voice and record it on my phone to get it right.

Even though I thought that I had done a good job with everything, I was nervous when I went into the main part of the house to meet with my boss as Helen. The house was deserted but as I walked past the formal dining room I could see that the huge table was prepared for a meal for two, across the table, with candles and cloches over the plates.

Mr. Jessamine was waiting for me in the sitting room. He was standing by his bar area, wearing a dinner suit and bow tie, and looking very smart and perhaps more youthful looking than normal, or perhaps that was the smile.

“You must be Helen,” he said. “I am so pleased to meet you.” I walked over and he took my hand delicately and kissed it.

“I am pleased to me you too, Mr. Jessamine,” I said. My voice seemed to sound like Mary Poppins for some reason, but it was clear that he liked it.

“Please call me Ken,” he said. “You don’t work for me, do you Helen? This is a date, so call me Ken.”

“Alright, Ken.” I smiled. He had set the rules. While I was her our relationship would be different. When I went back to being his driver this could all be forgotten, and he would be Mr. Jessamine again.

“I have made us a cosmopolitan cocktail,” he said. “Please join me.”

“I don’t usually drink,” I squeaked. I don’t ever drink. I am a driver. “But I suppose this is a special occasion?” It seemed right that Helen should drink. She was not me. She could enjoy herself.

Not being used to alcohol it was a bit of a shock, but not in a bad way. I think that I may have giggled voluntarily.

“How delightful,” said Ken. “And you really do look exquisite tonight.” He seemed genuinely impressed with my face, but I could see him looking at the wig as if he recognized that it was cheap, which it was. The dress was not expensive either, but I only had two. I spent more money on the underwear that it seemed he would never see. But it was for me.

“So, you don’t get out much, my dear?” he asked.

“No,” I said. “I am sorry that I don’t have something nicer to wear.”

“You should wear nothing but the finest,” he said. “You should be pampered at the beauty spa as my late wife was. I think it might produce better results for you. Are you hungry? Cook has produced a 3 course meal. The appetizer awaits us, but we will have to get the other courses ourselves. Are you useful in the kitchen?”

“I think so,” I said. I prepared my own meals in that very kitchen from time to time. I prided myself that I was very good with leftovers.

“Ah, the perfect woman,” he grinned. “Tell me about the food you like. Food is always good conversation when you are eating.”

Suddenly it seemed like he had opened the door for me to start chattering about something we never discussed. The thing is that after all these years spent together in the car, including some lengthy conversations, food had never come up. Before we knew it, we had eaten a large meal and I had drank a good part of my first ever bottle of French wine.

We had gone to the kitchen together to put together the other courses, and then we took all the plates and glasses out and put them in the scullery, which seemed to be a space he had never visited before.

“This really has been a wonderful evening, Ken,” I said, using that name easily now. “I would love to do it again, but sadly work commitments won’t allow it. I am so sorry.” The truth is that I had enjoyed myself so much that the whole evening seemed somehow sinful and not to be repeated.

“I don’t think that I am ready to accept that,” said Ken, visibly crestfallen.

“Would you like to hold me?” I had a sudden urge to experience physical contact with another living thing, or perhaps it was the look on the face of somebody who meant so much to me. Spanky was gone, and he was old and it seemed that what he needed was the same thing I wanted.

He looked at me with a look of uncertainty, and I wondered whether I had ruined everything.

“Yes,” he said. “Would you allow me to?”

We hugged standing up, and then we moved to the couch and just held one another. It was wonderful. It was not just great for Helen, but for me too. And I really let that I was helping to keep Ken living. That not in the sense of being alive, but wanting to be.

“I am too old for anything inappropriate, but I wonder if you would mind escorting me upstairs to bed and perhaps lying with me a little before I go to sleep,” he said. I could not say no.

The whole thing seemed to be following its own course as if neither of us had any part in making it happen. My dress came off and stockings came off and he saw my delicious bra and panty set, and the fact that I was smooth all over. He went to the bathroom to get undressed and came back in pajamas.

I think they call it “spooning” – I was curled up and he was behind me with his arms around me touching the naked parts of my body – not my fake breasts or my hidden genitals. The only bad thing was the wig. I wished that he did not have to put his face in that fake hair. I felt I had to apologize.

He went to sleep. I was able to slip from his embrace with him only slightly stirring. Helen’s last act was to kiss him on the cheek. I gather up my clothes and shoes and tiptoed back down the stairs. At the bottom I took off my wig and Helen was gone.

The following day I resolved that there would be no mention of that wonderful evening. It was to be as if it was my dream and never real. I would not raise it when I drove him to his morning meetings. I had expected an early call for that, but none came. I ended up asking the housekeeper where he was.

“For some reason he caught a cab,” she said. “He said something about you not being able to drive.”

I wondered if it was because he couldn’t face me. He had gone to sleep cuddling another man, and it was my idea. That would mean that I really had blown it. I had been so stupid, giving in to my perverted urges and now my job was at stake, not to mention any self-respect I might have.

It seemed sensible to do something, so I texted him to say – “I am available to pick you up. Please call”.

Soon after the phone rang. It was him. But he gave me no time to talk.

“Please don’t say anything,” he said. “I don’t think that I can listen to your voice. You see, I only want to hear Helen’s voice. I only want to Helen. I have arranged for you to attend that spa I was talking to you about. They are ready to take you now. You were so close to perfect last night, but just a few changes, as you are prepared to allow them. You can say no if you like, but that would disappoint me.”

I started to say something. I was about to assert that Helen was not real. But he would not allow me to speak.

“I only want to hear her voice. I want to say this – that have served me well and as far as I am concerned you will have a salary for life whether or not you ever drive again, but if you are with me then Helen is not, and I need her. Do you understand? Are you there, Helen?”

“Yes.” Helen spoke.

I knew where the spa was. I had driven Mrs. Jessamine there when she was alive. It was one of those residential places where you stay for anywhere between a day or a week, and my appointment was for a week. They had a list of procedures that Ken had agreed to pay for, starting with surgery on my brow and my scalp to create a feminine hairline for the hair extensions. There was laser treatment on the face too that would further feminize me, and hormone therapy too.

I still felt that I was fundamentally male at that time, so it seems like an easy thing to say no, but somehow I couldn’t. I guess that it was loyalty more than anything. He said my salary was safe even if not for my life then for his, but this was the only job I had ever known, and he was the only person I was close to. But some special bond had developed between us. It was something that made me recognize his need for intimacy and to offer up myself so he could have that, not matter how strange in might seem.

The lady asked me whether I was ready to submit to the treatments. She said that they were - “permanent but reversible, and I have ben told to confirm to you that the cost of reversal at any time will be met by Mr. Jessamine.”

Before that moment I never imagined that I could ever be Helen for longer that a few snatched moments in the evenings, or a night lying I my bed in a nightie dreaming that I was her. Now I had the opportunity to become her, for a month or a year or perhaps a lifetime. Nobody would care if I did. But if I didn’t there was one old man who would care, and very deeply.

I signed the releases and agreed to what followed. I told myself that it was just a temporary thing. I would back out in time, or perhaps I would wait for Ken to pass on and then I would go back to being whatever I was before this happened.

But the truth is that Ken seems so much younger since I have come into his life. There is no sign of him dying any time soon, and I am glad of it. We are very close, and every night we go to sleep holding one another. The only different is that I now have breasts, so I only wear panties to hide my groin from his touch … although he has suggested that we fix that too.

We are devoted to one another, although his children are still trying to understand it, or perhaps what it might mean for them and theirs.

I call it loyalty.

The End

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