The Rancher’s Daughter

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Chapter 1

Horace Bewley loved his wife like he loved his land. He could look at her in the same way, and thank the good Lord that he had been blessed with all that he could ever want. He had her, he had the Iron Tree Ranch, and he had 5 strong and healthy sons. He just wanted her to be as happy as he was.

“Pat is my last child”, she said. “I so wanted a daughter, but now the chance of that is gone”.

He held her as they looked out over the western meadows. He wanted to give her the world, but in this one thing he had failed.

“Pat would do anything for you”, said Race – as he was known. “You know he would”.

“You need to approve”, she said. “It is just until he leaves home. Luke will be going to college soon, and even though he after all the others, Pat will go soon enough. Choices can be made then. I will not stand in the way of any the kids making their own choices. I know you feel the same way”.

“I do”, he said. “If Pat will do it then it is his choice. And then when he gets to college age, he can make his final choice. But that is some way off – after Luke there is Marcus, Jimbo and Sam – who is almost 14 now”. Some of them will want to stay on the land, I hope.

“Will you tell him what I want”, she said. She turned to him to look him in the eyes. She knew that if she did that, he could never refuse.

He just looked at the sparkle of hope in her eyes and kissed her to say yes.

They climbed back on their horses and rode back down to the ranch buildings – the barn and stables, and the homestead. In large part Race had built all of this himself. The original house that they had started with now served as a bunkhouse for the two farmhands he had taken on as the herd had grown. But all the boys do the work – even little, long-haired Pat.

On Saturday afternoons like that day, he would have a barbeque for all the workers prepared by him and his sons. So they were all there when he got back, and while their mother went upstairs to change there was a chance to take just his sons to one side, and tell them all.

“Now boys”, he began. “We have a good life here. But some good things require sacrifice, and I am going to be asking just one of you to make a sacrifice … for your mother. I am telling you all, because you will all play you part”.

“Just name it, Pa”, said Luke, the oldest and their natural leader.

“Your mother has but one regret – one sadness – and that is that you boys were not blessed with a sister. She is past childbearing now, but I still want to give her that child, and it be our blood. So I am asking one of you boys to be our daughter”.

All eyes turned to Little Pat, his mother’s pet.

“Do you want me to do it”? It was Jimbo. Everybody was surprised. Rough and ready Jimbo aged 15.

“Well I was thinking it might be Pat”, said Race. “Certainly your mother would see you as the one”. Race placed a hand on the small shoulder of his youngest boy, not as big as the others were at that age of twelve, but sharp as a tack. His mother had already had him wear his hair longer than his brothers.

“Are you talking like sex change, Pa”? Pat asked.

“Don’t be foolish, Son. You mother just wants somebody to dress like a girl and go shopping with her and the like. And next year go to high school as a girl and do the things only girls do there. She just wants to have a daughter to take through those times. When high school is over, any of you have the choices of what life you lead, so this doesn’t need to be permanent. But for high school it cannot be here where you are known, Pat. It will be a high school in the town to the South of here, not so much further away than your current school.

“Away from my friends”?

“You don’t want to have your friends see you as a girl do you”?

“So no more boy stuff”? Pat sounded disappointed.

“Son, you don’t have to tell your ma, but while you are with your brothers, we can do the same old stuff we always do together. We won’t tell if you won’t. How about that? you can be a girl at home, but with us, you are still a man”.

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“That sounds good, Pa”, said Pat. “I want Ma to be happy, but I am not sure I want to be a girl”.

“It’s only until college, Pat. It is only until you are old enough to make your own call. Nothing your mom can do will be something we can’t undo when the time comes. I promise it”.

Chapter 2

When Luke came back from college for the summer break it seemed that a lot had changed. Marcus had completed a successful football season and seemed a much better player that Luke had ever been. Jimbo had won a prize for some landscapes he had painted and Sam was fighting off the girls. And then there was Pat, now going by the name Patricia, or Trish. There was the biggest shock.

There was a girl in the family at last. Standing on the porch beside her mother, Trish was wearing jeans but with embroidery, and a patterned blouse, and her hair had some soft curls and was tied with a blue ribbon. She looked so pretty that Luke was taken aback.

When they sat down for a big welcome-home dinner, Luke noticed that Trish spoke like a girl too, and that she had picked up unmistakable feminine behaviors, under the watchful eye of her mother.

“Now don’t do that, Trisha. That is most unladylike. We don’t do that sort of thing. Come and help me in the kitchen.” Everybody could see just how happy his mother was to have a daughter, and Trish seemed happy that her mother was happy.

“Trisha will be going to High School in the fall,” his mother explained. “She won’t be going to the local high school in case questions are asked, but Sam has agreed to change schools to the further town so that she has a sibling there.”

“That sounds good,” said Luke. “Are you looking forward to high school … Trish?” He was still a little uncertain with the name. He was still a little uncomfortable with the sight of his brother so completely feminized.

“It’s going to be great,” said Trish. “Me and Ma have got together some nice clothes to wear. She says that I am still a bit of a tomboy. Can you believe that?” Trish adopted a very girlish posture which unsettled Luke further.

“Well, in the house and at school we expect appropriate behavior,” said her father, Race. “But tomorrow the tomboy in you can come out with us to Boundary Valley to shoot some buck, if you like.”

“Can I Ma?” said Trish.

Her mother kissed her on the head to say yes. They were a country family. A girl needs to know how to run a wire fence and shoot a buck, but also how to set a table and sew a dress. Trish was learning, and learning well. She was the daughter her mother dreamed she might be.

“Just be careful,” she said. “You are my treasure.”

So the six of them rode out in three UTV’s in the morning, and parked up as they came to the end of the woods. Trish was in clothes that a boy might wear but with a colorful neckerchief and her hair tied up in a bun with a floral scrunchie. She wore gloves to protect her hands.

She rode with Luke, as he had suggested. He wanted to know more. He asked her how things were going.

“The hardest thing has been leaving all my friends behind,” she said. “Ma is home-schooling me until high school, and I had to tell everybody that I was going to live with an aunt. But Ma keeps me busy. I figure that some extra skills won’t be so bad. It is just that she has put me on the hormone stuff.”

“What’s that?” said Luke, although he could guess.

“Ma wants me to develop as a girl in high school. She says that she wants to share with me ‘becoming a woman’. It sounds a bit crazy – right? She says that she knows I am not going to have a period or anything like that, but she says that I will ‘blossom’. I don’t know about it, but you can see how happy she is – we all can.”

“We owe you for this Pat,” he said.

They pulled up once they were in amongst the trees. Race sorted through the rifles and ammo. He offered one to Pat.

“I’ll take the 236 if I can,” said Pat.

“It is a bit light for buck, Pat,” Race said. “A girl’s gun.”

“But I am a girl, Daddy,” she said with a sly grin.

Chapter 3

It was Trish’s first day of school and she wanted to make an impression. Sam was waiting outside, as it was his first day at the new school too – the Bewley kids Sam and Patricia would be starting together, Sam in 10th Grade and Patricia in 9th Grade. Marcus would be driving he and Jimbo to the local school, and after today, Sam could drive the Dodge the longer distance. But their mother would be going with them today. She was dressed smartly, and so was her daughter.

Jimbo looked on as she added a few curls with her curling wand.

“Pretty girls get on so much better at high school,” her mother said. “Don’t you think your sister looks pretty, Jimbo.”

“I think she is beautiful,” said Jimbo. “I only wish I could look like her.”

As soon as the words had left his mouth he knew that he had dropped a bomb, and there was no picking it back up and putting it back in his pocket – it had already gone off. His mouth moved like a fish, searching for words in a barren sea.

“Would you like to be a girl like me?” Trish asked. Jimbo felt that the words were meant to tease him. He felt angry with himself. He felt that he needed to put a stop to this, and to assert himself like the man he was becoming.

“I meant that I would like to be popular,” he said. “Don’t twist my words.”

“If you looked like me then maybe you would be popular,” said Trish, but Jimbo had stormed off. Trish looked at her mother in the mirror. “I am excited about high school, Ma. I have decided that I like being a girl.”

She felt the same way when she got home that night, perhaps even more so.

“All the girls are really nice, and the guys … well, they just stare at me. But not in a bad way.”

“What about you, Sam?” asked Race.

“It is easy for girls, that is for sure,” said Sam. “There are some guys that are friendly and some who seem to dislike me for no reason, but most of them are just suspicious. I guess that I am just lucky to be the youngest of four boys. I can look after myself. They just don’t know it the way that they did at our old school.”

“That is why you are there and I am grateful to you for it,” said Race. “After Luke all you older boys had the support of older brothers. People don’t mess with the Bewleys because there are a bunch of them. But just like Luke, you will benefit from being the older brother at school, looking after your sister.”

“I’m happy with it, Pa,” said Sam. “This school is short of sporting skills and I have those. I will get on top of it soon enough. And as for Trish, well there are a bunch of guys who want to be my friend just so they can date my sister.”

Trish was beaming. Jimbo asked to be excused from the table.

“What is wrong with Jimbo?” asked Race, of the whole table.

“Can we talk about that later,” his wife said.

Chapter 4

Race fidgeted. He was not at home in a suit and tie, but he had volunteered. He needed to be there for his daughter. It was a special evening for her. But he would keep a low profile. He was just the father. The night was for her, and for her date, Shane.

“All that I ask is that you respect my daughter,” he said. “You respect her wishes and that you make this Junior prom night is as happy as it can be.”

“I will, Sir,” said Shane with a seriousness that this father of five admired. This was a good young man. If he lost a son and gained a son-in-law like this, he would be happy.

“They do take their time, don’t they?” Race said after a pause.

“I don’t know why,” said Shane. “To me she would be beautiful in rags and smeared with mud.”

“Very poetic, Son. I can see why she went for you.”

“Are you ready gentlemen?” from the top of the stairs his wife appeared looking radiant, but she was just the opener. She descended the stairs quickly to stand beside her husband and primed her camera for the obligatory descending the stairs shot.

Then she came into view, and the men drew breath.

She was a vision in an electric blue dress with a white bodice decorated with sequins, split to reveal two fulsome breasts created by the hormones and assisted by her mother’s genes. Her long hair was piled high on her head in a myriad of pinned curls, with delicate well placed curled tendrils dropping down on to her porcelain shoulders. Her makeup was dramatic, but still displayed well the innate beauty of her strong features and warm blue eyes, almost the color of her skirt.

“Wow,” said Shane. He fumbled for the corsage he had brought with him. White had been requested.

Race trembled. He was a strong man, but was trying to keep his emotions in check. Maybe once he had imagined a moment like this, but then he had five sons. He was proud of all his children. Almost every day he felt that way, but to see a son of his score a touchdown, or break a pony, or shoot a deer at 400 yards – that made him proud. But not as proud as this. Not as proud as seeing the fruit of your loins look as beautiful as this.

“You look fabulous Honey,” he said. The camera flashed a few times and then he felt his wife squeeze his arm. This was her moment. This made it al worthwhile.

There were more flashes as Shane presented his gift, including one with him handing it to her on one knee while she held a delicate manicured hand to her face in surprise.

She giggled in a most girlish way. This was going to be a special night. She just knew it.

It was going to special because unlike Trish, she had dreamed of this moment all her life.

“Are you ready Jem?” asked her father.

“Thank you, Pa,” she said. “Thank you for everything. Thank you for understanding.”

“I have always wanted daughters,” said Race Bewley. “I just never knew how much. And now I have two.”

The End

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