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| Gender Flow  A Short Story  By Maryanne Peters  “I might consider myself gender-fluid,” he told her. “I just flow male 100% of the time. But one day, if I wake up feeling girly, I would put a dress on, just like that one.”  They had been strolling through the mall, Gareth and Marla, now dating for over a month. It seemed to both of them that it was getting serious. But Marla was disappointed with his attitude when she saw him interact with a gay person for the first time. It was a side of him that she had never seen, and she did not like it. It has started a discussion about gender. She meant it to be serious, but to him, it appeared to be a joke.  They were standing outside a fashionable boutique. On display in the window was a dress that had drawn her eye. He was standing there, teasing her about the issue of gender. It irritated her. | Related image |

“You should be prepared for that day – the day you wake up feeling girly,” she said. “Go in and ask whether they have that dress in your size.”

He laughed. But she looked at him seriously. He was momentarily uncomfortable, but then he smiled. “Alright”, he said. “I will”.

That is exactly what he asked the shop assistant, a mature woman immaculately presented and dressed in the style of the boutique.

“Yes, we do,” the lady replied. But then looking him up and down she added: “But it will need to be worn with appropriate underwear. Fortunately, we stock that too. And shoes in larger sizes too.”

He was trapped. He looked at Marla. She had her hands on her hips. It spoke of immovability.

“Who knows how you might flow tomorrow,” she smirked. “But you should be ready.”

He took out his credit card and waved it at his girlfriend. She had won this one. He had lost. By how much he was yet to discover.

They went around to his place that night and had sex. She insisted that he hang the dress with the bags containing underwear and shoes behind it, on his closet door.

When he awoke in the morning she pointed at the dress and asked him: “How are you flowing today?”

“Manly,” he said, in his deepest voice. It was intended as humor, but somehow it felt uncomfortable to him. Almost like a lie.

Maria was annoyed. She did not like him enjoying the joke. “Maybe something different tomorrow morning,” she said. “And I can’t stay for coffee. I am going to be late for work. What about you?”

“I’m researching today,” he said. “I am not going into the office.”

He was wearing just his boxers as he kissed her on the way out the door. He didn’t need to put anything on straight away. It was going to be a warm day and he was not looking forward to wearing long pants all day, like he did every day. Shorts maybe?

Then he saw the dress. He smiled to himself. He wondered: Is it really my size? To wear it properly he would need to put on the underwear. Just try everything on. Slip it on then slip it off. Easy. So easy to slip on.

He stood there, looking at himself in the mirror. For some reason he was trembling. Then for some reason he bent his right knee in front of the other and swayed his body slightly. It was a feminine gesture. He just did it, without conscious thought. The only conscious thought that he had was that something was wrong. There was something under the dress! He pulled up the hem. He could see it in the mirror. There was a bulge in his panties. And awful ugly bulge. He looked up the reflection and saw his face contorted in horror. His ugly hairy face.

“Oh my God,” he said.

What he should have been thinking was that the dress was wrong. But what he was thinking was that it was the only thing that was right. Everything else was wrong.

What should he do? What he was feeling was a sense of panic. As if his whole world was collapsing and so he needed to act quickly to prevent total destruction. Starting with ridding himself of every hair on his body below his eyebrows, and some from there too.

It took him the best part of an hour to do it. He could have stopped at any point. He should have stopped. But he stroked his smooth legs, he felt as if he had taken off some filthy overalls. He was clean at last. If he tucked his bits between his legs and clenched them together, he could look at his body and see something close to ideal. Now it was the face.

He had shaved close, and the eyebrows were tidy but still looked bad. They looked like a man’s eyebrows. He looked like a man. It looked bad. And he had nothing to soften the look. Nothing.

He put a paper bag over his head, with holes cut out so he could see his reflection in the mirror. As he moved and the dress moved with him, it looked perfect. From the neck down he looked the way he ought to look. He could walk out of the house straight away. He could walk down the street and feel the sun on his shaved legs, and on his smooth arms, but not wearing a paper bag!

He went to his desktop to look for a local salon – a place that could do everything that he could not. Everything. That was what he wanted. He wanted to walk proud. It was a beautiful dress. The person wearing it should as beautiful, or at least try to be.

He did not have far to go. But how far can a person go wearing a paper bag on their head? He needed to catch an Uber.

“Are you GJ,” the Uber driver asked. The paper bag nodded. “Hop in, Lady.”

Perhaps that last word should have shaken Gareth from his delusion – but was it a delusion? He cleared his throat, and in as high a voice as he could muster, he simply said: “Please park as close the front door as you can.” Which is what the driver did.

The driver took the paper bag in his stride, but the beautician manning the reception desk seemed unsurprised. She simply posed the questioned: “A bad hair day, Sweetie?”

“The worst,” squeaked her anonymous customer in the pink dress. He removed the bag.

“Oh, I see,” said the receptionist, now that the sex of her customer was revealed. “We have a lot of work to do, if that is really what you want.”

“Oh please,” he said. “Everything that you can do. I never want to look like this again.” He was holding his wallet in his hand. He did not own a bag, although that seemed stupid. He put his credit card on the counter to assure the receptionist that he was willing and able. She snapped it up greedily. “The Works” does not come cheap in a place like this.

Gareth took a seat and a senior member of staff came over to make her expert assessment of the problem. There was a mountain to climb, but she was up for a challenge. Not only had she had many long years turning plain girls into prom night or wedding day beauties, but she had transformed a few men in her time, and this one had bone structure that would work.

“You have enough hair for extensions and a complexion that will benefit from a deep cleansing facial,” she said, gripping his chin. “Shaven all over but not here, so we can drag this awful growth out by the roots. Then we will need eyebrow shaping, a little plumping of the lips, those ears should be pierced…”.

She was waiting for him to say stop. Everything that she was suggesting was close to permanent. He would not be able to hide much of what she was proposing. If he was going to terminate, he would need to do it now.

“A manicure and pedicure too, I think,” she continued. “This mousy color is not you at all. Blonde I think.”

“Just do it,” said Gareth. “I just can’t bear to look at this.” His voice was still high pitched, but seemed to flow from his mouth in that manner, without him really trying.

He hated the mirror in front of him. The head on his body disgusted him. He wanted it to go away. All that he could do was close his eyes. Close his eyes and think of something that would make him happy.

It was a curious dream. Gareth was on a beach wearing a bikini, with breasts bursting out of the top, and nothing at all in the bottom part of it. A man was walking up from the sea. His body still wet from his swim making his tanned chest glisten in the sunshine. His muscles were hard and as if cast in burnished copper. He was wearing small tight trunks, oddly in pink. They could not conceal a huge cock that seemed to be growing in volume as he got closer. The bikini and the body it barely covered was having this effect on him. He longed to hold that body, and to penetrate it. And that body craved him also.

His cellphone rang and he answered: “Hello?”

“Gareth? What is wrong with your voice?” It was Marla. Marla?

“Hi Marla.” He wanted to see her. Would she like his new look as much as he did. His toenails were being painted. The finishing touches.

“You sound strange,” said Marla’s voice. “I have finished work. Do you want to catch up? Say the “New Chemistry” is 30 minutes?”

She had finished work. So what time was it. He realized that he had been at the salon almost all day. But it showed. They had done a fantastic job. He was happy.

“Say 45 minutes,” he said. “I need to buy a bag.” That and some jewellery to set off this plain pink dress in a style suitable for an evening out. Including earrings to put on in place of the studs – something dressy. There was a place two doors down.

Unfortunately, Gareth seemed to have acquired that curiously feminine trait of being a slow shopper, with a tendency to want to see the bag at every angle and in daylight, and the need to try on the same pair of earrings on three times, together with at least three other pairs. And the matching necklace needed to be shortened.

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| It was closer to an hour before he arrived at the bar. Or should we say, she arrived.  The End  © Maryanne Peters 2019 |  |