Darts of Cupid

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

I like bars … way too much. There was something about the warmth of the place, and the noise, and the lighting, and the smell of liquor. I liked drinking too. Not beer. That bloats you – especially if you are only my size. I like tequila. It’s smooth and gets you to that level of happy that is just right, pretty damn quick. After that, it is not about getting falling down drunk, but just maintaining that level.

The reason why you need to be happy and not stupid is all about hand and eye. If you are too drunk, you will miss the target.

I had my first dartboard as a kid. I hung it in the garage. If the weather was bad, I could throw darts – sometimes with other guys, sometimes alone. Doing it alone is practice, I guess. You do it enough and you just get better. Not everybody gets to be good, but after finding basic ability, it is all about practice.

Plenty of bars have a dartboard. They keep the darts behind the bar, or guys bring their own. I would sometimes bring my own and have the bartender keep them for me.

“Yeah, I am pretty good at darts,” I would say. But if you then produce your own set of darts from your jacket pocket they are going to be wary. The bets will not be too high. But you say: “These darts are a little heavy for me. Let me just ask the barkeep if he has any other sets.”

You start with a few wayward throws. You might say: “I can usually do better; I can win this; sure, I will up my bet; that was just lucky, that throw.” It’s all about lifting the stake, and then putting the win down to dumb luck, so they will play you again. If they think it is just luck, they might even double up.

You can lose deliberately but judge the time right. Get into a competition and then give them hope that they can close you out. Then you come back and collect. Sometimes time that for near to closing time.

I always left any bar with a dartboard, with more money than I walked in with. Always, except just that one time, and that was what changed everything.

I should have guessed that it would happen. Maybe I really was lucky – which was why it took so long to happen to me.

It was a bar I went to a few times. It started as four of us playing, but after a few losses by the others it was just down to me and Big Tom, the local tough guy. I threw the winning bullseye and I turned to him with a smile, expecting him to hand over the agreed cash. But all I saw was the fury in his face. Then I felt the pain in my groin. I must have fainted.

“Massage hemorrhaging of the left testicle” is what they called it. It swelled up to the size of a softball. I was walking like a cowboy of fifty years in the saddle for two weeks. The inflammation was supposed to fade over time, but there was an infection and I lost that nut. I was assured that it would not affect my ability to father children, but we will never know if it did or not.

The bad thing about an injury to the balls is that people just laugh. I mean, the pain was serious, and I actually lost an organ as a result of this - one of the two nuts I had at the time. But when you say that you were stabbed in the nuts with a fistful of darts, people just snigger.

After the removal, one of the nurses said something to me which stuck in my head. She said: “Testicles invite violence. If you were a woman you would never have been stabbed in the balls.”

Maybe she meant that women can’t be stabbed in the balls because they don’t have balls. But the thought that I took from it was that even if guys don’t like losing to a woman, they are not going to beat her up if they do lose.

I suppose that the lesson is ‘don’t bet on darts with tough guys’, but any guy can potentially get tough, except me maybe. That means everybody is a potential attacker. Which means simply ‘don’t bet on darts period’. But that did not work for me – it is what I did. So, what next?

I was looking in the mirror, the way you do when you feel sorry for yourself. Perhaps you know what I am talking about. You look at yourself and you call yourself pathetic. Not man enough. Girly maybe, like if you pout or look at yourself sideways, you could be. I could be? Could I be?

I had never cross-dressed before. I mean, not even for a joke or fancy dress. But I figured that if I was going to pull this off, I needed to go an expert. I would need to make sure that I could do it. Imagine so angry guy beaten at darts unmasking me as a man. It would lose the other ball and then it would be all over. The nurse said that I could get away with shit if I was a woman, but I was not that and I could not afford to be found out.

I decided to go to one of those feminization boutiques. These are places where a regular can see what he looks like as a woman, not just by using a face app but by walking out and presenting himself in public as a woman. That is more than a look, it is the whole package. I knew that much.

“You could easily pass if you lose the attitude,” she said to me, or I think she was a she. Her name was Carla. “You are not large and you have good bone structure. You could be pretty. But it is your swagger that will give you away. You need to start from the ground up.

She put me in a body stocking, a dress, a wig and makeup to show me what I might look like. I thought that I looked hot. But she said that I would be picked as male in seconds. Was I serious or not?

I went down to a bar and drank, using my own money. I watched some girls working over some guys. Girls hardly ever buy drinks – pretty girls, never. I watched. It was like I was looking at women for the first time. I was not looking for what they might let me have, but for what made them tick. That was the day when I realized they are not like guys at all. Could I really pretend to be one?

I went back to Carla and said that I was ready to try.

“We are not talking something that you can put on and take off like a baseball cap,” she said, pointing at mine. “This will mean no man-time for you if you want to get away with this. These changes will mean that you are stuck in a new gender until you decide that you cannot handle it.”

She said that I would need money too, but I had some put away. I just seemed to me that if I wanted to do what I do, I would have to be somebody else, at least for a while.

I started with a full body wax and hair extensions. I would need to follow a strict skincare program and learn to look after long hair, and I would needed to practice walking in heels – low ones to start. And I needed to do everything I did in a different way.

I started by perfecting my girly dart throw. I reinvented my technique with a style that was definitely not masculine, until it worked. And then everything else was practice. As I explained that is what makes a successful darts player, and it is what makes a guy a successful woman to: Practice, practice, practice.

I could style my own hair and do my own make up. I did it well enough and I got better over time, just like darts.

Carla gave me some hormone patches. She said that they were just for my skin and to keep my dick from jumping at the wrong time. I did not want to use them, but once they were on, I left them in place.

I stepped out as a woman and I walked around the streets for a couple of days before I stepped into a bar. It seemed to me that a bar was an intimate place where I could be picked, so I made a point of testing out my ability to pass at supermarket checkouts, in coffee bars or stores. I used the voice I had been working on and I pulled out my purse and handled everything just as a woman would. I was ready to get back to business.

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| Carla said the I had made it when I rocked woman-in-men’s-clothes, so I wore a man’s shirt over my dress, and I stuck with a bust line that was not to out there. I was trying to be sexy without something that invited a come on. My legs were definitely my best asset, so I made sure to show those off.  This was the look that I was going for. A girl who can walk into a bar alone and order a shot, but pretty enough to have a guy offer to buy her drinks.  I could make my way over to the darts board, and watch the guys. Maybe sit on a stool and cross those assets of mine, to lure one over. Then I could sneakily start talking about darts. |  |

“That looks like fun! … Yeah, I have thrown some darts once or twice, but you guys look very good … Are you taking bets then?”

My first time out started like a dream. I never bought a drink and I walked out with cash in my pocket. But the best value out of that night was learning. I learned that guys buy you cocktails – maybe because they think that is what you should drink but more likely to get you drunk quicker as they go down like a soft drink. I learned that if they are losing, they buy you more colored drinks, so you have to learn how to spill them or tip them somewhere. I learned that drunk guys like to touch you, and you have to draw the line at what you can accept.

I made a few mistakes that night, but I chose the bar carefully. It was well away from my neighborhood. If I was going to make mistakes I was going to make them in a place I was not going back to. By the end of the night there were suspicions, and I learned to play it all the way, and then get the hell out of there.

Carla was right. There could be no man-time for me while I was doing this. I needed to live a breath as a woman, so that there were no mistakes. I needed to be a new me. I needed to get up and put on a dress, style my hair, do my daytime makeup and go out. I needed to grab a coffee and a muffin at Starbucks as a woman and greet people and respond to flirting men as a woman.

I started to understand how important it was for a woman to pay attention to her appearance and that meant staying well. As a guy I did nothing, and that was easy. But that did not suit the person that I was trying to be. Carla gave me a job at her salon, but she suggested that I might like to help out with a sales job at the boutique next door. For a while I did both.

I started to get busy, which was the opposite of what I used to be. But I still depended upon throwing darts. It was still the largest part of my income, but it was just what I did. It was just that now I was a girl.

And when the hormone patches ran out, I went to a doctor and asked for more.

“Are you a transwoman?” she said. “I would never have guessed it. You present very well. I know how important the hormones are for you, but you are a new patient and I have no records, so I just need to run through a few questions…”.

I really knew nothing about transsexuals. I know that may sound strange given that I was living as a woman, but it was never something I felt I needed to research. I just said that this was the way I was, and she seemed to understand. She held my hand.

“We can talk about the next step in your transition over time,” she said. “Are you sexually active? Are you taking precautions? There are things that you should know about anal sex. Let me take you through this pamphlet.”

I liked her, but I also felt that I needed the patches. I went through all of this with her although it seemed to have no application to me at all. It never should have. It was just a ruse, that’s all.

It was easy to have a girl’s life during the day revolving around the boutique, the salon and the coffee shop, where men did not feature, and a lady hustler’s life at night, when men were simply marks. But then everything changed.

I met Jed in the coffee shop. Plenty of guys approach girls in a bar, where you just wave the away, or move down the bar, or go to the ladies room. All women do it, and all men know they do, in a bar. But somehow an approach in the daytime is just this easy:-

“Excuse me, is this seat taken? Can I put my tablet here? It is very crowded at the moment. I was hoping to get a little work done, but it is hardly worth opening up. Hey, have we met? I’m sorry, no we haven’t met but I think I saw you in a bar last week throwing darts – cleaning up as I remember. My name is Jed – what’s yours?”

At the start I wished my cup was empty so I could say my coffee break was over, but when it was and he offered to get me another, I said yes.

I was talking to a man without lining him up for a game of darts. Somehow that was refreshing, especially after the first part of the day talk shop and nonsense at the Salon. So I told him my name, and I accepted that second coffee and we shared a muffin.

“Do you drink without playing darts?” he said.

“It seems like every bar has a dartboard,” I said.

“Not the ones I go to,” he said. “I was only at the bar over on the West side because I went over there to look for something, in connection with work.”

I had to ask. It was a clear invitation to do so: “Who do you work for?”

“I work for Cupid Corp,” he said. “Have you heard of us?”

“You are a dating agency, right? Or matchmaking”.

“Personality matching,” he said.

“Could you find a match for me?” She smiled.

“Now let me see,” he stroked his chin. “Simply based on what I know … you are confident; you are competitive; my guess is that you practice at darts; so you don’t mind taking advantage of a hidden skill; you are concerned about you appearance but not vain; you try to look relaxed but you are concealing something; you understand men … perhaps better than most.”

“You know all of this from seeing me in a bar and taking to me in a coffee shop for 15 minutes.” I was intrigued rather than insulted by his bluntness, and his accuracy.

“I confess that I watched you in that bar for a couple of hours,” he said. “And I have seen you here before, and watched you from over there. Talking to people can sometimes result in know less. People lie, even when told that the truth is essential to what they want.”

“It sounds like you are stalking me.”

“Not stalking, in my view. I am searching. You see, I have to admit to the failure of my own product – at least my may personal case. People lie as I said. I have not found anyone. I have made a study of body language and I use that rather than words to understand people.”

“What is my body language telling you now,” I said, giving him my best fuck-off sneer.

“It is saying that you want to know me better, but that you don’t want me to know that.”

He was good. I thought: ‘What a fascinating man’. But I also found myself admiring his good looks and how confident men look so much better than any other men. Such men are worth turning gay for. That was what I was thinking. He smiled – it was almost a leer, as if reading my mind.

I was momentarily disoriented. I remember that. I remember trying to hide it, but thinking that he would see through that. I needed to take control.

“Well, I can put an end to any aspirations you may have in my direction at a stroke,” I said.

“If you are going to tell me that you are a lesbian then I won’t believe you,” he grinned.

“Worse than that,” I drew my face closer to his – almost close enough to kiss; certainly close enough to whisper: “I am a man. I have male genitals in my silk panties.” There. I leaned back.

“So there’s you secret,” he said. His coolness in the light of my stunning disclosure was exasperating, but somehow made him even more interesting. “I have never made love to a woman such as you before, but I would certainly like to.”

“You want to have sex with me?!” I was surprised.

“I have wanted that since the moment I saw you first,” he said. “Every thing since then has been a revelation. What do you say we leave this place. Is it too early for a drink. I don’t think so. Lets go to that little bar around the corner. It is the kind of bar you like.”

“Do you play darts?” I asked him.

“Rarely,” he said. I was not sure whether he was lying, but I was a hustler. You have to back yourself to win.

“I tell you what,” I said. “We will go to that bar and I will play you. Say best of three games. If you win, I will let you make love to me. If you lose, we will part company and you will stop stalking me, or whatever it is you are doing. Fair?”

“Agreed!” he said.

So, we did, and I lost all three games.

Not that I am complaining.

The End

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