She-Wolf

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

When you think about it, every crossdresser is a superhero. “He” spends his life in the shadows, perhaps shy and withdrawn - invisible. Then with a change of clothes he becomes “She” – a giant among women, powerful, fierce, perhaps eye-catching – a totally different person. Are these superpowers? He thought they were.

His name was Norman Wallace. He was an average man – non-descript. That means that if you were asked to remember the man sitting opposite you on the train you, if it were him you would probably be unable to describe him. You would probably say “ordinary looking” but more likely – “I’m sorry, but I don’t remember him at all”.

Some people do not want to be that person, but they just are. That was Norman.

But it did not matter when he could be Kendra. She was a very different creature. By her very presence she was courageous. It takes courage to walk down the street as a woman when you are not one. The world is full of haters, as Kendra well knew.

Norman knew it too. He decided that she must be equipped so he signed up for martial arts. He learned all the moves and was quite good at executing them, but despite ongoing study and practice, he simply lacked the aggression to make it all work.

So for a woman like Kendra the best defense is to be the best woman possible. Some might suggest that would mean dressing down – be plain or old. But Kendra did not want to be the woman to the man that Norman was and simply disappear into the background. That would not do.

Why even bother if Kendra cannot be the woman she so wanted to be? Why wear a smock when you want to wear a dress? Why wear moccasins when you want to wear heels?

The answer is to make Norman the disguise, just like a superhero. Kendra can be the real person. She can grow her hair and have her face cleared of whiskers and blemishes. She can take the hormones and keep her body smooth and soft. It was just that Norman had the job, in the electronics parts warehouse. To remain invisible he needed to baggy clothes and the cap in summer or the beanie in winter, drawn down over plucked eyebrows.

Every morning rather than a shave that was no longer necessary he would add a beard to his face and catch the train. He could work all day with people who often forgot his name and then get the train home, where he would pull off Norman’s clothes as if they were poisoning his skin.

Kendra would step forth. Even if it was only to stay a home and sew a little or watch video magazines or romcoms on TV, she was happy. But on some nights what would make her even happier was to go out to a bar.

She was not looking for sex, but Kendra was not shy like Norman.

“I have been stood up”, was her favorite line. She would say it to the barkeep when there was a man nearby.

“I could not help overhearing. I am alone to night too. Can I buy you a drink”?

It had to be a different bar, or at least a different night, if at all possible. Some barmen would remember and smile. You cannot say to her – “Not again”? She needs to do her thing, whatever that is.

Her thing was not free drinks either, although they helped. She wanted to be exotic and interesting, and to have somebody interested in her. She wanted to be looked at with desire, the way only a woman can be. She wanted to tell her story – she had a few and knew how to be consistent. She wanted a man to take her hand and say – “You are the most incredible woman that I have met in my life”!

It had happened – more than once.

“Can we meet again? Would you give me your number, or can I give you mine? What are you doing Saturday night”? She had heard those words too, or some of them, almost every time.

The answer had to be that she was not available. At the most take his number on the back of a coaster and throw it in the trash on the way home. Superheroes do what they do and then they leave the scene. They don’t do call backs.

The night of the first act started much like any other. This time the man pursued her out to the cab insisting that she call him. When they got out onto the street they walked right into an armed robbery.

A man and a woman, clearly wealthy were being held up by two men, one holding a knife, the other cutting off their escape. Norman would have turned and walked away, but Kendra was cut from tougher material, as she had been explaining to her current follower in their hours together at the bar.

Kendra was to discover that she had the aggression that was missing in Norman but that she knew all the moves and how they were to be executed. Further, the person she had explained that she was had a strong sense of justice, and that called for action.

It was a surprise even to herself. She called out to the man with the knife and when the other man moved to attack her she used his forward movement to bring him to the ground and then slammed his head on the pavement. The man with the knife came at her, and she disarmed him and left the knife sticking out of his shoulder.

It all happened so quickly and so automatically that she found herself walking back to take the cab and saw the man who had followed her out of the bar filming her on his phone.

What she did then was equally automatic. She opened the door to the cab and took her admirer by the back of the head to pull him into a passionate kiss. The purpose was to shock him into releasing the phone so that she could drive off with it, which she did.

She deleted the video, without realizing that it had been on media throughout. She left in the cab what she thought was a phone cleansed of her image.

At the warehouse the following morning Norman ignored the animated discussion, until he realized that it could be important. Nobody addressed him, but her overheard the words.

“Get a load of this chick in town last night. Pretty little thing, dressed to the nines, took out two armed robbers outside a bar. Sent out live last night and now copied on to a dozen platforms”.

There was no sense in asking to look. Norman never sought any attention. He just did his job.

At home he was able to view the video. Kendra would not be able to go out for a while. The problem was that she was not the type of woman who could be caged like that.

She needed a new look. Dowdy was not an option. More dramatic. Something that said ‘I am beautiful, but don’t mess with me’.

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| It needed a fancy hairstyle, and Kendra was ready to learn how to do this at home. It needed the right outfit too. Dress with a leotard underneath, as if ready for action, but a super-feminine top that said ‘’I’m really just a girl’.  Cap it off with off color make up and earrings with a nail-polish to match them.  But she was not going looking for trouble. She would chose another bar in a completely different location.  It is true that trouble always finds those who will go to extremes to avoid it? It can often seem that way. That first outing only a few days after the events that have called the first act, Kendra found herself in the middle of the second. | A picture containing person, wall, indoor  Description automatically generated |

This time it was a carjacking and it took place before she had even walked into the bar. A motorcycle pulled in front of a late model German sports car and a man pointed a guy that the driver telling him to get out and leave the keys in the ignition.

Once again where Norman would have retreated, Kendra found herself advancing, her heels clicking on the road in front of one another as if it were a fashion show runway. The back of those heels flew through the air and knocked the man with the gun in the head. When it hit the roadway he was already unconscious.

The man on the bike slipped over trying to motor away. The point of the same heel passed through his hand so that he cried out. Another man incapacitated.

But it was then that Kendra realized there were many people standing around, and some were filming. There was no cab. Nowhere to run. But the motorcycle was still running.

It had been years since Norman had ridden, and that was on his uncle’s farm trying to do the tricks his cousins could do. But they say that some things are not forgotten, and riding a bike comes to mind. It did for Kendra. The engine roared and she was gone in a flash.

The evening was ruined, and so the television beckoned even as she sat of the sofa in her finery.

“The She-Wolf, as they call her, the anonymous lady super hero apparently fighting crime single handedly, has been caught on film again, this time wearing white”. The roving reporter continued but the words seemed lost through the violent sequence that rolled over and over on the screen.

“Who is the She-Wolf”? the man on TV continued. “This high fashion high kicking icon of female empowerment. The police are now calling her a vigilante and asking her to turn herself in. I spoke with Captain Brand … Surely she is just stepping in as any responsible citizen should, captain”?

“This woman is clearly skilled in hand to hand combat”, said the handsome middle aged policeman on screen. “Probably ex-military, maybe even special forces. None of the local martial arts gyms have seen anybody like her, but the techniques are recognized. But she is very dangerous. Somebody could get killed”.

“Some criminal, you mean”?

“Everybody is entitled to life, and to due process. This She-Wolf is potentially denying these”.

The TV replayed her riding off. The hairdo she had spent time on had unravelled a bit, but she looked good. That she approved of. She resolved that she would try again the following night – a Friday. A new outfit and a new look – it was all so easy to do dressed as a woman. This kind of superhero had no one costume, but many.

But this time she resolved that she would avoid trouble. It was just that trouble seemed to find her.

That following day at work Norman felt oppressed. He was beginning to understand that he had no life. She had the life, and he was there just to kill off the daylight hours. It was not a proper existence. He had always been quietly accepting of his life. He now realized that he hated it. It seemed to have no purpose. There was a purpose to life, but it was not his.

A few days later when the sun had gone down, Kendra rode the stolen motorcycle back into town and left it where she had found it on her previous excursion. She was wearing black lycra and boots, but she had a tight knot dress rolled up, and this time an appointment at the hairdresser. There are only a limited number of styles that somebody can do well alone, even with the skills she had acquired. She wanted something to suit her mood.

In the salon she pondered on whether she should buy a bike. Norman never would, but she was different. The two rides had given her a taste that he had never had, not even when he learned to ride. He not only had no life, it seemed as if he would never have one.

But a helmet would ruin her hair. Besides, even if she was bad ass today, next time she might be ultrafeminine. A bike was not practical for every look. Change was her superpower.

She found a seat at a new bar. It was a tasteful one this time. So tasteful that the barkeep felt that he should ask her if she was alone, as trade was no tolerated there.

“I am waiting for a gentleman friend,” she said.

“Will any gentleman do?” the man behind the bar sneered.

“What are you suggesting?” asked Kendra, with rising irritation. “Do I look like a prostitute to you?”

“You look wonderful,” said the barman, retreating a little. “We just have a policy.”

“Do you know who I am?” she said haughtily. Then, not wishing to draw too much attention she whispered - “You might think twice before taking on a she-wolf. Now, get me a large glass of pinot grigio.”

He did as he was instructed, but also took some time to make a call from behind the bar.

She drank and admired the manicure she had received an hour or so earlier. If she wanted to keep it she would need to wear gloves at work. It would just be so much simpler if her very own Clark Kent did not have to exist. Could she be a super hero all the time?

Some time later a man walked into the bar who looked familiar. He sat several seats away to order his drink, but then offered to by her one.

“I would not normally accept,” she said. “But it looks as if I have been stood up.”

“I’m Roger Brand,” he said, offering his hand. She took it before she realized that she knew the name too. This was Captain Brand, the policeman hunting down the she-wolf.

“You look familiar, Roger,” she said. “Have you finished work for the day or are you still on the job?”

He smiled. He said: “You’re a very cool lady. If you know what I do, then you know that I am never not on the job. But let’s just say that while I responded to a call following a request to all bartenders, that I am here in an unofficial capacity.”

For some reason Kendra felt invincible. Here was somebody who had described her as dangerous. That was how she felt. He seemed relaxed. She felt that way too. She kept her eyes on him as she sipped her wine.

“I am intrigued, Captain,” she said.

“You strike me as a very interesting woman. A very resourceful and capable woman.”

“Interesting. Capable. Resourceful. Yes – all of those. And a woman – sometimes.”

He smiled. “But always a lady, I think?”

She returned the smile. Life is complicated enough without making unnecessary disclosures.

“The fact is that the she-wolf has had a noticeable impact on city crime despite just two outings by my count, although it seems like any woman wearing haute couture has the bad guys jumpy,” said Captain Brand. “My official position is that law enforcement is for Law Enforcement, but as I said, unofficially I am here to talk.”

“I am just a lady who enjoys clothes, a nice hairdo and a drink,” she said, raising her glass.

“And unofficially I enjoy having you around,” he said. “How can we work together? I have a few situations which call for a remedy that is … shall we say … extra legal. Making the city safer, but not some things that police can do.”

“I thought that you were all about ridding the streets of a vigilante menace?” she said.

“Oh, that,” he said. “The fact is that I went home and had to suffer an attack by my two daughters. They are only just in their teens and a looking for a solid female role model. Their mother died two years ago. They are huge fans of the She-Wolf. She has empowered woman to not accept abuse. In this city rapists are being beaten off, and it is down to her. Down to you, I think?”

“What are you proposing?” she asked. She reached into her bag and pulled out a compact mirror to check her make up. “I would do anything to give away my day job. Not that I don’t need an alter ego, just not the one I have got.”

“I think that I could arrange something,” he said. He was beginning to realize that he could not give his girls the attention that they needed.

“So a partnership with the police?” she said.

“Well, not officially. A partnership with me.”

Change was her superpower. But if every crossdresser is a superhero capable of becoming somebody new, what happens to that power when Norman has gone and only Kendra remains? Is a man like Roger Brand who increasingly became more demanding of Kendra, her kryptonite?

Suffice to say that the partnership was a good one, and it still continues. It turned out to be something that could not be arrested by mere anatomy, although the truth can sometimes shock the unexpecting.

And now the She Wolf has to budding she-wolves in training. It has become something of a family of crime fighters, and a happy one at that.

The End

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*Erin’s seed was about superheroes, which is not my thing, but she sent me the image. “A high fashion superhero - I am not ruling this wacky idea out” was what I said.*