Cover Story

A Short Story Times Gone By

By Maryanne Peters

For somebody of my inclination, those were times of great excitement. Men were men and women were women. Only a short time before women were in uniform or in overalls – the war years. But after that, the fifties were an explosion of femininity. Women wore bright colors, patterned fabrics, flared skirts with legs on display. Breasts were on display too – bullet bras were “look at me and look at what I’ve got”. Hairstyles were curls or flips, or something ornate. Earrings were essential, makeup was loud. Austerity was over – femininity was extreme. A great time to me a woman! If only I was one.

There is excitement in risk too. Crossdressing might no longer be regarded as a crime, but it was thought to be the same as homosexuality, and that was a crime, in every state in America. Even after Christine Jorgensen burst onto the scene, it seemed that she was accepted as being a woman. Homosexual men had penises – penises used to sodomize other homosexual men. She did not, so she was not a man and not a homosexual.

I remember thinking as I read about her – ‘would I prepared to lose my dick to wear dresses every day?’ Even then, it was a toss-up. She just looked so pretty, and some of her outfits and hairstyles were simply gorgeous.

I kept my dressing secret because I had too. I could dress up at home, and even wear women’s underwear and stockings under the baggy suits that were men’s fashion at the time, but women dress to be admired, and that is what I wanted.

I got a college degree in politics and languages. My grandmother was German and also spoke Russian, so I had a head start in two other tongues. I was smart and straight out of college I was invited to join the intelligence services. I will not disclose which one, because at the time the well-known name for it was “No Such Agency”.

In those days joining the US government meant signing a questionnaire which contained not just the history of your extended family but also statement about your vices and your innermost thoughts. I wanted the jo and so I told a few lies. I now know that probably everybody did.

I manned up, I put my head down and I worked hard. But it seemed that the more of a man I was, the harder I worked and the busier I got, the more my need to dress grew inside me. Shaved legs and panties inside my pants were not enough. I needed to show off.

Washington DC was a place where all vices could be catered for. It was not an international city in the way that New York City might be, but it was a city full of internationals, and it had to cater for everything. There was a club in the city with a private back room bar I had heard about. I needed to dress up and go there, even if that meant losing my job.

The questionnaire I had signed was all about finding out secrets that might disqualify me. It is simple really – if you have a secret, you are open to blackmail, and if you are open to blackmail you are a security threat. It was well known within the organization that if you were open to blackmail then you should resign, citing “personal reasons” and no questions would be asked. But I did not want to quit, and neither did Marlon.

I recognized him immediately because he was not dressed. His only effort to remain incognito was a false moustache and a pair of eyeglasses with very thick frames. At least he was trying which is more than I could do. I just stared at him with what was (I guess) a knowing look, like – ‘I know you’. Which would have to mean that he probably knew me. Did he? I was so far down the pecking order from him. He was my boss’s boss. Right up near the top.

This bar was full of transvestites and transvestite admirers, and he was clearly of the second group. I suppose that I thought that being dressed was disguise enough. I had done a good job that night. I looked stunning, and I did not look like a man at all, which was exactly the look I was going for. Could he really see through all of that?

I suppose he had the training. He was older and had served in the war – Army Intelligence. He had stayed on in Europe rooting out ex-Nazis and communists outside of East Germany. You need to look through the disguise by looking at the eyes and behind them.

I had walked away and ignored him. I thought that I was safe. Then on Monday morning I was called to collect a file I was working on and take it up to the top floor. At first, I thought that he could not be that foolish. We both had secrets and we cold both keep them. But then when I was shown into his office I new that I had been marked. I was in trouble. He was too senior to suffer the same fate.

“I saw you at the club last night,” he said.

“Are you sure?” I said. “I was not ant any club last night. I have never seen you outside the office. I could swear to that.”

“I would not ask you here to have us agree to a pact of secrecy,” he said. “No, I have asked you here because I found somebody last night, but I never got to meet her. That seems to me to be a crime. She might be just what I am looking for. I believe that. I just need to know – that’s all.”

I was stunned. I mumbled something about having a second life but not being serious about it, but it was clear what he wanted, and he was not about to say no. Everything I had heard about him seemed to be dead right. They said that he was like a dog with a bone when he latched on to something. Now that something was me.

I could not leave until we had agreed that he would visit my apartment and visit “my lady friend”.

He came around the following evening, straight from work. I left early so I could make an effort to dress up. Not dressed for an evening out, but an evening at home, just as if I was a pretty wife welcoming her man home after a hard day’s work. It turned out that it was just what he wanted.

I had never touched a man like that before – taking off his shoes and massaging his feet, and then taking his jacket and massaging his neck and letting him breath in my feminine perfume. But it was as if I was born to do it – as if I was born to be a woman and a wife. I suppose that we all see the shows on TV and can model ourselves so easily.

I had made him a meal. It was not great, but I was a better cook than most guys. I promised him that I was working on improvement.

“You have done good work at the office,” he said. “Don’t think that I am too high up to notice. In fact, I am looking for an assistant. Somebody with your skills and language abilities. It would be helpful if she could type and take shorthand too.”

“She” was the word he used, but he was looking at me. I have to say that I was struck dumb. I just had an image of myself in a beautiful frock taking shorthand as he admired my legs. It was so exciting that I almost had an accident there and then.

“There would be travel too. And my assistant must be well presented. There would be an extra salary allowance to cover that. You would need to reapply under another name, but don’t worry about identity papers and a passport – I can arrange all of that.”

Not everybody in my position would say yes, but I did.

From that very night I felt free. I felt as if those suits that I used to wear were like an iron maiden. You know – those steel chambers with spikes inside designed to cause you pain and injury. It was like I had been living in one until then and now I was released into the sunlight.

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| The fifties were just such a wonderful time to be a woman. Men’s clothes were just so awful, but women’ clothes were just so completely fabulous!  Wigs just down work, Hair has to be pulled back so your pretty face can be shown off. That meant that I needed to grow out my hair and pull it back and use hats or wiglets until I had enough volume.  For work I liked to use professional styles with a fairly high neckline, but go for loud and contrasting colors. Sexuality is all about the hourglass figure and the legs. That means good corsetry and high heels, but then those are two things that I was always crazy about. Now I get to wear them all the time.  During the day that is. At nighttime there are so many beautiful options – nighties and peignoir outfits. Why have the gone out of fashion. Do women not have men who long to see me in such an outfit. I have! | A picture containing wall, indoor, person, red  Description automatically generated |

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| A picture containing person  Description automatically generated | I went redhead when he became more than just my boss. Nobody was surprised. They all said they could tell from the moment he hired me that he was going to win my heart.  Oh, and hormones. Do you know about those. Those breasts are all me. Imagine that. And my hips and butt have added volume too, but I keep this rest of me trim.  Not skinny though, girls today look so bony, don’t you think. What kind of a man goes for bony women? Not my man, that is for sure – he like his woman to look like a woman, even if she is not … please allow me a shy giggle.  Anyway, he bought me the necklace on our trip to Europe. I travelled under my new identity – with “Sex: Female” and everything. For an agency that does not exist my employer is mighty resourceful. |



It’s the sixties now and I have gone blonde. But we are married now and I have been “Jorgensened”.

The End

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Erin’s seed: “It's the fifties and America is paranoid about spies. A young crossdresser gets a job with a government agency but knows he will have to keep his hobby secret, but he loves going out and getting admired. Still, he takes the risk, and while at one [transvestite] club spot he sees someone he thinks he recognizes and who may have recognized him. Now he has a dilemma, this person is in his chain of command, his boss's boss in effect. He gets called in to see the guy and is confronted, they have to keep each others secret …”.

Sammy said:

My best friend in college was from D.C., the eldest son of one of the leading real estate magnates in Washington. His mother was a beautiful Southern belle bohemian painter who was keyed into the most "extreme" elements of the aesthetic culture there. In the late 50s and early 60s she hob-nobbed with beat poets, folksingers, abstract painters and "alternative" intellectuals. She glommed onto me well before her son did (I was in real denial) and regaled me with stories about outre personalities, taboo establishments, and "aberrant" lifestyles. I've always wanted to write about what she told me. Your story brought so much of that front of mind again. Maryanne, as you know, so much was going on in the past we've barely scratched the surface. Another good story. And deserves a deeper dive.