The Apposite Sex

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Ronan knew he was in trouble – deep trouble. People had always laughed off his old-fashioned southern ways, but his latest was a step too far. Not only did the firm face an employment claim but potentially a federal investigation based on discrimination. And on top of that, the word was out that one of M&A Division’s largest clients, the hugely wealthy transgender investor June Turnovsky, would be pulling her business. This was a nightmare for the firm, and an even bigger one for him.

“You know what we always say to our associates,” said William Herbert, Head of Takeovers. “If you can fix your own mess, you might have a chance. But I can’t see how you can fix this.”

The truth is that Will knew that Ronan Asher was a competent lawyer – even one of their best. But given all that the firm stood for, he had to go. Transphobic behavior had no place in the Offices of Layton Pollock & Stein. But they would ask him to come up with a solution.

Their assessment of him was accurate – Ronan was clever, and imaginative in finding a solution.

“What if I came out as trans?” he said. Clearly as he spoke the cogs in his brain were turning – an idea was taking shape and the thoughts were coming from his mouth: “It was not transphobia it was frustration. I could publicly announce it and talk about transitioning. Then all those LGBT protesters would be on my side. It was a cry for help, not discrimination.”

“It might work,” said Will.

“You would have to keep me on,” Ronan said slyly.

“You would have to come to work as a woman,” Will replied, with a smile.

It suddenly dawned on Ronan that the consequences might be far-reaching. He loved working at Layton Pollock & Stein. It was the work he had always wanted to do. But if he stayed, he would need to pretend to be a transwoman. He would have to leave to escape the pretense. That time would come, but for now the important thing was to stay in the job, restore his internal reputation and build his experience. Then he could slid across to a good position in a place where he would not need to pretend to be a freak.

But more seriously, if he was to do this what impact would it have on his private life? Could he tell his friends that it was just a ruse? He would have to tell his girlfriend of course, but he could not risk the lie escaping. That would just aggravate the situation.

So, what about his friends outside the firm? What would they think? And his family and all his pals back in Alabama? Would he be ostracized? How long would it all last?

“I think I should contact June Turnovsky,” said Will. “If it gets past her and her account stays with the firm, she may be able to help. But you had better do the research.”

“Or I could just resign,” said Ronan, starting to voice his growing concern about his own idea.

“You won’t escape the federal case, and you will never be able to work in this town again,” Will observed – he too, had a legal background. “It’s a good idea, this trans thing. Perhaps the lesson learned is that transwomen can do the job. Now you might find that out first hand.”

Ronan gulped deeply.

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Amelia Crawford had been Ronan’s serious girlfriend for about six months. She knew that she was no great beauty, so she had set about acquiring all the skills to be one. She knew the limits of diet and exercise and how underwear could be used to shape a body. She knew how makeup could hide blemishes, make her nose look smaller and her eyes wider apart. She knew how to keep her hair looking fabulous. She was in event management and in that line, looks counted.

Creating Rosemary was going to be a challenge she would enjoy.

But when she first set to work, she realized that for Ronan, appearance was the easy part. He was not large and (unlike her) he was naturally slim – he seemed to eat anything he liked in any amount, without gaining weight. His face might seem non-descript as a man, but he had the fine features she lacked. He could be prettier than her. As she sadly might acknowledge to herself, plenty were.

“It is your actions that will catch you out,” she said, as she applied the eyeshadow. “You have to learn the feminine graces if you want to pass.”

“I don’t have to be a woman, just a trans,” said Ronan. He was still annoyed with himself with having to do this, but it was brought about by his own stupidity.

“Maybe in the office they will know who you are, but if you step out into the world do you want everybody to know that you are a guy in drag? Seriously? Plus, if you want to convince this client of yours that you are genuinely trans, you had better work harder on your behavior. That means your voice too. Follow that web tutorial I found for you. I can only do so much.”

It was now a matter of pride for Amelia. She was determined to make Rosemary a success. She dealt in successes. That was her business.

“I have been trawling through all the sites to understand this transgender thing,” Ronan said. “I know what to say tomorrow morning. Not everybody is successful at this transition thing.”

“You are going to be.” Amelia was scolding. “You don’t do things y half, do you?”

“You’re right,” he said. “All in”.

“This is highlighter,” she said, showing him the stick. “Please pay attention. You will need to be able to do you own makeup.”

There was a face appearing in the mirror in front of him. The expression on the face of this woman, as yet a stranger to him seemed to move from puzzlement, through curiosity, to obvious admiration.

Amelia put her face beside Rosemary smiling at her achievement, until she realized that her guess was right. Compared to this woman, looking through her own makeup, she appeared decidedly unattractive.

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Rosemary Asher stepped out of the cab as she had been instructed, swinging her legs out. She had spoken briefly with the cabbie and was pleased that he showed no sign of guessing that she was anything other than a young professional woman.

She paid the fare with a healthy tip, and he gave her a smile that seemed to carry a whiff of desire that made her smile as she stood on the kerb. She could see her imperfect reflection in the glass doors of Turnovsky Tower. She was wearing a dress because Amelia said that a transwoman would be aching to wear one. It looked good. Rosemary knew how a girl should look. She looked even better than that.

The heels were sensible, but not flat. Again, it was intended to show Ms. Turnovsky how much she wanted to express herself as a woman. She found it easy to walk across the sidewalk, heels clicking, with a gentle breeze wafting the soft skirts against her bare shaved legs. The gaff was surprisingly comfortable – the body-shaping corset less so, but tolerable.

She lifted her chin. She could feel eyes on her. Men turning to look - some women too. Somehow that gave her confidence to walk as she had been taught: Like a woman, not a man imitating a woman. She took the lift the high floor where Turnovsky Capital had its offices. In the mirrored panel she thought she could see the man standing behind her lean forward to smell her hair.

She had it done that very morning. Her own hair with expensive invisible extensions woven in, lightened in color and styled for volume. She pushed a lock against her own nose before flicking at back towards the sniffer. It did smell good. He squeezed past her a little too close at his floor. She smiled.

She crossed the reception area and placed her business card on the counter as the receptionist was on a call. The card had the name: “Ronan Asher, Counsel & Corporate Advisor, Layton Pollock & Stein”, but the name “Ronan” had been crossed out and she had written above it “Rosemary” in the rounded script she had been practicing along with her signature.

She pulled out a compact to check her lipstick. She was quite new to this, but it was perfect.

“Ms. Asher,” said the receptionist. “You are a little early, but Ms. Turnovsky asked that I send you straight in as she is just reading your reports now.”

“I hope she likes early,” Rosemary said, in the voice that she had spent hours perfecting. Although it was not her intention, it had become a sultry Southern drawl, but unmistakably a woman when heard over the phone.

“She does. Come this way please.”

June Turnovsky was standing with same papers in her hand, the backdrop of the skyline behind her affirming her power and influence.”

“Rosemary,” she said, as if greeting a long lost daughter. “You look marvelous”.

“Well, thank you, Ms. Turnovsky.” The dixie lilt was like warm caramel.

“Call me June. Please let’s sit in the comfortable furniture over there. I want to discuss your reports, but first we need to get behind us that horrible pre-transition experience.”

Rosemary was hoping that it would be ignored. There she was, an utterly convincing woman, playing the part to a tee, and she was bringing up the thing that started it all. But it was her office. She would need to roll with the punches – smile and follow, sit correctly, wait for the boom to fall.

“You would not be alone in angrily suppressing your true status, young lady,” June began. “Everybody reacts differently. I make no criticism now that I can see the real you. I just want to help you to be the best woman you can be. I have been through everything myself, my Dear. I know how hard it can be. I have read your reports. You are clever and resourceful. Just the kind of transwoman I would like to encourage and support.”

“Thank you, June. Does this mean that you are staying with Layton Pollock & Stein?”

“If you will be on my account, of course.”

Rosemary could hardly constrain her joy. She felt like jumping up and punching the air as Ronan was want to do. But she smiled with restraint, although June could obviously see her joy and relief.

“I want to give you that name of my endocrinologist,” said June. “I have him on an annual retainer, so it will cost you nothing. I have a top surgeon available as well, but the most important thing for you now is to get the chemistry right. No, please, don’t refuse me. It is the least I can do. He is a wizard. You will notice the effects within a week, and no liver issues. Believe me. He can see you tomorrow.”

Rosemary gulped.

“Now let’s go through these reports,” said June. “Where can I put a big chunk of my money to good use.”

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It had been a few weeks since Amelia had spent the night. Amelia had been attending to events out of town but since she had got Rosemary had explained that she was working all hours now that she had the ear of one the large HINWIs (High Income New Worth Individuals) who retained the firm. But the truth was that the last time they had had sex was not successful, and now things were much worse … more flaccid.

“Let’s go out on the town,” Amelia suggested. “Just as two girls. That’s what you are now right it?”

“It’s just too hard to be one thing all day and another thing after work,” sighed Rosemary, in the voice that had become her own. “Not that there is much after work time these days. So sure, that sounds like a great idea.”

They arranged to meet at “Bar-Mitzi”, a classy little joint not far from Rosemary’s apartment building. Amelia thought she had got there first, after she had cast her eyes around the small bar. But then, with a drink in her hand, she noticed the woman standing across the room with three men in attendance. Could it be?

“Rosemary.” Was it a question, or was she scolding her?

“I am sorry fellas,” Rosemary drawled. “This is my night out with my girlfriend.” And she broke free and took Amelia across the room.

“May we join you?” one of the men asked.

“Give us at least 15 minutes for girl-talk,” Rosemary instructed.

“You look beautiful,” said Amelia, quite stunned by the appearance of someone who was her boyfriend. “Who did your hair.”

“Do you like it. Actually, I did it myself. It seems like when I am not working, I am developing my womanly skills. I have a whole lot of those to catch up on. So, I am following the hair tutorials online. It’s all done with hairpins – see?”

“It looks great. Your new friends are obviously impressed.” There was a whiff of bitterness in the words.

“Well I am learning about guys from a very different perspective these days.” Rosemary took a sip from the cocktail they had paid for. “Men will do anything if you smile just for them.”

“I wish that were true,” said Amelia. It had not been her experience. Why did Rosemary have to look this good? It was almost insulting to real women. She needed to ignore him – the hair, the eyes so well made up, the drop earrings. “How’s work?” she said.

“Hectic,” said Rosemary. “Now that I have all that transphobic thing behind me and I am onside with June Turnovsky and so the firm, things are looking better than ever.”

“Does thing mean that you have a better understanding of trans-people?”

“Transwomen are women. I know that now. I am not so sure about transguys.” Rosemary was checking herself in the mirror on the wall. She did that a lot.

“Shall I get us another drink?” asked Amelia. For some reason she had slurped the one she had bought rather than sipping it.

“Don’t be silly. Those guys will be hovering over us in a few minutes. We don’t need to buy drinks tonight.”

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Amelia had got very drunk. She was one of those women who tended to be a melancholic drunk. For the latter part of the evening she was feeling very sorry for herself. She may even have called herself a failure. It was not work she was talking about. She was still doing well. She felt a failure as a woman. The man she had put her hopes on seemed to have gone, replaced by a woman who appeared to be just the kind of pretty over-achiever that she hated.

Still, Rosemary was there for her. She had held her hair while she threw up in the ladies’ room. She had helped her outside, and rather than get into a cab and risk soiling it, she had taken to her apartment to sleep it off.

It was there, on the couch, where she woke. The sun was rising. There was a bowl to barf into on the floor (thankfully empty) and a glass of electrolyte on the side table beside her head. There was the smell of coffee in the air.

Amelia’s head seemed to be clamped in a vice – hard to lift and in pain. She grunted.

“Awake at last.” The voice was girly and chirpy. Rosemary. In that moment she hated her.

Amelia swung her legs to the floor and felt her head almost explode. “Fuck”, she said. It seemed to say it all.

“I was going to take a shower, but you can get in first,” said Rosemary. “But I have made you a big cup of coffee.”

The pull of the beverage was enough to draw Amelia across the room. She looked up and saw Rosemary. Even without makeup she looked pretty, with the curls from last nights updo now around her shoulders, cover in a bulky but short white terry bathrobe. Amelia knew how she would look, even not hungover, and it would be bad.

Still, she had woken beside Ronan before on may occasions. She always looked good enough to him for them to kiss, and to have morning sex.

Somehow, despite her splitting headache, her mind turned to that. But first she needed that coffee.

“Hmm, thanks Babe,” said Amelia. “I am feeling better already. Thank you for looking after me last night. I feel like an idiot for drinking too much.”

She came close to Rosemary and reached out under her robe for the penis that would be waiting there for her. It was there, but only just.

Rosemary’s robe fell open, by whose hand barely matters.

“Fuck, you’ve got breasts!” The shock made Amelia’s headache go away, but to be replaced with some deeper agony.

“Hormones,” said Rosemary with chilling indifference. “There is really nothing I can do about it. It’s down to June’s endocrinologist. She called him a miracle-worker. They really are quite big, but I will need to go under the knife to get the right shape.”

“The knife! You are talking surgery!”

Rosemary was cupping her breasts and looking at them – was it admiration? Amelia realized that there was no Ronan anymore.

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“You really do look wonderful today,” Will Herbert said, as Rosemary walked into his office. He was looking at her breasts and she knew it. She normally would not wear something that showed some much cleavage to work, but today she had a lunch meeting with some corporate raiders and she knew how to throw these guys off their game. She had learned fast

“Now Will, you should know better than anybody how comments like that could get you into trouble. Anybody else might consider that sexual harassment.”

“Well, maybe it is.” As Head of Takeovers, Will’s office had no windows into the office area. A succession of secretaries hinted at his misdeeds, but he was always able to remain discrete.

“I am hoping to close this deal today,” said Rosemary, as businesslike as she could muster.

Will rose and walked over to the window, saying: “Come over here I want to show you something”.

Rosemary followed direction. She stood beside him but at a distance. He moved closer.

“You can see the logos of some of our targets on the top of the buildings from here.”

This was bullshit, and Rosemary knew it. She was waiting for his hand to touch her. It was just a question of where. There it was. Clutching one buttock.

“Will, you know that I’m not a real girl right? That makes you a fag, doesn’t it. Remember, where I am from, we hate fags.”

The hand was gone. Will turned angrily. “I’m not a fag”.

“Really? Do you want to suck my cock, or pull it? That is what I do for sex these days. So, if you want to have sex with me that is what you will be doing. Playing with another guy’s cock make you a fag.”

“Now it’s homophobia.” There was a look of desperation on Will’s face that made Rosemary smile.

“Who? Me? Little old trans-girl me?” she squeaked.

“That’s right. You are not a guy anymore. So, if you are looking for a girl, I guess you are looking for a lesbian?”

“I don’t like lesbian’s either,” said Rosemary, turning on her heel and walking out of Will’s office, slamming the door behind her.

For some reason, there were tears forming in her eyes, which she was fighting back for the sake of her makeup. But it was not Will’s words and actions that were causing the distress, it was her own. If she did not like men who liked “chicks with dicks” and she did not like lesbians, what chance did she have to find intimacy with somebody? To find love?

Rosemary Asher retreated to the ladies’ room to have a quiet sob before preparing herself for that meeting.

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“I guess it is just the way I was brought up,” said Rosemary. “We don’t tolerate differences so well down home.” She sipped the champagne. The deal has closed. She would receive a healthy bonus. Her client had made millions.

“It is hard to criticize people who know no better,” said June. “But you should … know better that is.” Yet despite this incongruous backwardness in the new young lady, June liked Rosemary, and not just because of the deal they were celebrating.

“I can be whatever the world wants me to be, but at home I will be me. So, if I am old fashioned, I can be that in private. But I just want to share my privacy with somebody,” said Rosemary, watching the bubbles in her glass.

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| “Are you telling me that you are only transgender because you think the world wants you to be that?” June had never imagined that. It was just that now that the others had gone, it was just the two of them, transwoman to transwoman, just talking.Rosemary had to stop herself and think: What am I? Am I pretending?“Whatever I was, I am a woman now,” she said.“You are right, except for one little detail,” said June. “And a very successful woman. I think that you could never have achieved this level of success as a man. You have learned to use you physical assets, as was obvious today, but I see a feminine psyche at work too. I know what it looks like. I see it in you. You have found yourself.”“But it is lonely.” Rosemary looked up at the ceiling, trying hard not to descend into sadness. | A person posing for a picture  Description automatically generated |

“I have found love,” said June. “I married a man, but more importantly I married a person who loves me. The sex hardly matters to me. But if it matters to you, then to follow my course there is only one thing you need to do.”

“Eliminate that little detail?”

“I’ll book my surgeon for you,” said June raising her glass to her young friend and advisor.

Rosemary smiled as the glasses chimed.

The End

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Author’s Note:

I did introduce the wealthy transwoman June Turnovsky in my earlier story “Diversity” and she was also a substantial property owner in the town of Triton featured is some of my other stories.