A Suite of Changes

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

The hotel was grander than he had imagined. The lobby was large with glass lift wells going up several stories to give a high cathedral ceiling with mezzanine balconies and large staircases between them. The reception area seemed a mile away.

“I have a reservation,” he said. “Here is my credit card.” From experience he knew that it was easier than spelling out his name. Plus, he was exhausted. There had been things to tie up at work, and then boxes at home. He just needed a bath and a power nap.

“Oh yes, we have a special room for you.” Some assistant manager seemed to have come over the top of the girl behind the counter and was taking over. “Attention to small details. I am sure that you will find everything in order. Here is your room number and key card. Mo will carry your bag. Thank you for staying with us.”

He followed Mo to the elevator, and the ascended in silence. The room was a suite but not overly large. It overlooked the city. He listened to the lighting instructions and tipped Mo on his way out the door.

He found the bathroom and turned on the faucet.

He sat on the bed to remove his clothes. By habit he folded all the items neatly on the bed, with the polished street shoes on top.

He had not noticed the bag when he had turned on the water, but he saw it now as he checked the temperature and lowered himself in. There was a shelf beside the bath to arrange the items on. Shampoo and conditioner – the real stuff, with a note “Hair before body”. He smiled.

There was a bottle of something else. Something called “Pilarid” with a large warning on the side, and instructions in all caps. “SET A TIMER FOR 5 MINS THEN MIX THE ENTIRE CONTENTS IN THE BATH AND STAY IMMERSED FOR THAT 5 MINS. EXIT THE BATH A SHOWER THOROUGHLY IN COLD WATER AT LEAST 1 MIN.”

“Hair before body”, he said aloud with a smile. He worked the shampoo into his full hair washing away the oil that maintained his manly hairstyle. The scent was floral with a touch of spice. After he let it sit and then rinsed off the conditioner seemed to be spice with a touch of flowers.

He took one from a stack of towels to tie up his hair while he set the timer on his phone and reached for the Pilarid.

He could feel it burn, but it was not an unpleasant sensation, like a physio heat treatment turned up a few notches. Still by the time the timer went off he was ready to pull the plug and jump out. Cold water seemed all that was needed to start with, but the fourth item in the bag was an all-over moisturizer which made his body cool and delightfully tingling.

Every single hair had disappeared

Item five in the bag was nail polish. It was not something that he was particularly familiar with, but he had pointed Sonia’s toenails on more than one occasion, when they were together. The nails on his hands were trimmed but well maintained. Why not? It was something to do. It would be relaxing.

There was another bottle in the bag – “Pilarid Face – specially formulated to remove facial hair”. Somehow this seemed a little more challenging. The day had produced the first roughness from thousands of follicles. He ran his hand across it as he did. What would it feel like? Different from a close shave knowing that these follicles had died? There was only one way to find out.

The instructions called for a complete mask for 5 minutes followed by cold wet washcloths and then moisturizer. It was here. It was in his hand. He was naked – naked of clothes and naked of hair. How free can a person be? He sat at the mirror and painted it on. There was a guide as to a line under the eyebrows, with protective covers. He was inclined not to go that far, but when the rest was done her relented.

He went to the walk-in wardrobe. There were clothes hanging up. Women’s clothes. He ran his hand over the fabric. Soft in places and in other places worked with lace and sewn on features. So much work. So different from a plain shirt or a pair of pants. There were shoes lined up too. Day shoes and heels for that special evening. On the dressing table was a hairdryer and brushes and a jewelry box. Everything had been thought of. The earrings were clip-on.

There was underwear in one drawer – panties and bras with gel inserts to cover any lack of shape. In another drawer there were stockings in their packages, and a variety of shades and patterns.

The timer went off. He went to the bathroom to tear of the mask and throw it in the toilet and bury his face in a cold wet towel.

When he pulled the towel away, he looked at the person in the mirror and he was startled. Or was it that the hair removed from between his eyes and the brows gave him that look. At least they were balanced and even. It could all be repaired. If he had gone too far it could be put right.

This was not his town. He was not here to be him. He was here to be somebody else.

He applied the moisturizer working it carefully into the skin of the face. It seemed to him that this was like virgin skin. His face had a fresh start. He had never paid much attention to skincare. That was going to change. This was something that he should enjoy doing, perhaps twice a day. He felt the bones in his face and the soft cheeks. A face is something to be treasured. How can he have been so blasé about it before now? Does it really need to be clear of hair before you appreciate it for what it is.

He pulled the towel from his hair. He now realized that there might have been something in the shampoo or the conditioner or both. Something to lift the shade of the hair and make it a little lighter – perhaps almost blonde when dry. He picked up the dryer and worked the hair with his fingers before taking the brush to curl it under.

His hair was full and long and yet he had concealed it from everybody. Other changes had been concealed but most had not even been started. Something are harder to undo than others. If you want to keep your options open, you have to know that.

Yes, almost blonde. And almost a perfect smooth bob, even in his own less than capable hands.

Clothes are just covering. Nothing final in that. You make your choices and you put your clothes on. If you don’t like it, take them off.

But first, the underwear. Women’s underwear – it was all there was. Little panties that had a panel in the front to conceal the hairless genitals that did not belong beneath something so pretty. The tight bustier with the gel filler put in before it was fully lifted and secured, to create a cleavage from his very own smooth chest flesh. And then the right choice of dress and shoes. There was a choice of earrings but the handbag chose itself. It was just perfect.

Just a touch of makeup. Could he do it. Eyeliner is a skill. Mascara needs to be slight. Lipstick can be done over as required. The trick is not to overdo it. This is not a drag show.

Any thought of that power nap seemed to have disappeared. He felt energized and invigorated. More than that, he felt beautiful. For the first time in his life, he felt beautiful. He stood in front of the full-length mirror and marveled at what he saw.

“Watch your elbows,” he said out loud, scolding the woman in the mirror in a voice that could have been hers – it was certainly not his.

The doorbell rang.

His body felt electric.

He started to tremble as he walked to the door. He opened it without looking through the peephole.

Mark was standing there. His mouth fell open and his eyes sparkled with joy.

“This looks like a yes,” said Mark.

“It’s a yes,” the woman in the dress said. “I hope you have the ring because tonight I will agree to becoming a woman and your wife.”

It was in his hand, but he slipped it back int his jacket pocket. He needed both hands and arms free to take her in them and kiss her as deeply as any man ever has kissed a true woman.

The End

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