The Bedsit

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

“I have good news”, he said. “There is still no room at my place, but you can at a bedsit just down the hall from us. And better still the rent is minimal.” Harry seemed pleased with himself.

“What’s the catch?” I asked. London was a hard place to find anything, let alone in his location.

“Well, the room is already occupied, so storage space is limited,” said Harry. “But the tenant is away for an extended period. Your rent is just a contribution to what she is paying. Her stuff is still in there.”

“I don’t have much anyway,” I said. “Living light.”

“The room is fairly small,” he said. “There is a toilet and a bath. No shower I’m afraid. There is nothing much in the way of a kitchen. You can boil a jug. But you can have a key to our flat and use our kitchen. Come and have a look, right now.”

There were two flats plus the bedsit on the second floor of a four level property. The bed sit was isolated by the stairs and what had been the original bathroom. Through the door there was a bay window opposite with good light but no view of the street. Behind the door was a wardrobe. Beside the double bed was a dresser. The bathroom was almost as big as the room, with a large bath, a vanity and a toilet.

The bedsit looked occupied but tidy. There was something about that tidiness that made me feel that I did not want to disturb it. The truth is that like most young men I was untidy.

The decoration showed a woman’s touch. There were lace curtains decorating the bay window. The dresser and desk were plain white, perhaps “French Country style”. The dresser had a large mirror and two large boxes symmetrically arranged. The bed carried pillows and decorative cushions. On the wall above the dresser there was a Monet print, and on the opposite wall a corkboard with some photos and souvenirs pinned to it. The room smelt vaguely of some alluring perfume – slightly floral and definitely feminine.

“Her family is paying the rent, so you cannot disturb anything,” explained Harry. “Really, we are just cleared to offer it to visitors over night, but she will be away for months, so you can move in. But do not unpack too much, just in case.”

The space was light and airy, and even a little warm in the first chills of autumn. I felt good about it. Of course, I agreed to move in.

In keeping with arrangements, I keep my stuff in two cut down apple boxes under the bed and two wine cartons in the wardrobe. To look at it you would barely know that I had moved in.

As I said, I found myself curiously tidy and concerned to maintain the look and feel of the bedsit. It even seemed to keep its fragrance, perhaps because I would open the boxes on her dressing table for a time each day. The larger one had scents and cosmetics, and the smaller one some jewellery and hair ornaments. The top drawer had the spill over of such items. Below that was a drawer of underwear, below that lightweight tops, and the bottom drawer had warmer clothing. Everything very orderly.

In the bathroom the vanity had even more cosmetics, hair straighteners and curlers, brushes, combs, hair-ties and pins, shampoos and conditioner, hairspray, depilatory creams and waxes, skin treatments – barrow loads of feminine accoutrement, none of which I felt I could disturb.

The modest rent that I was paying met services and also contributed to the kitchen and occasionally the shower in Harry’s flat. I would use their fridge and eat there when there was a meal on. I kept nothing much in my bedsit. But the truth was that my room was warmer and lighter than every room in Harry’s flat, which was the 2-bedroom set up, at the back of the building. I was quite happy to spend time in my room.

The tenant had a basket of magazines beside the bed, which I would flick through in idle moments. They were all women’s magazines, but I found them curiously stimulating.

I had found work locally at a call centre. On a nice day it was a walk away from my bedsit. It was just a temporary thing, but the pay was not bad and there were bonuses on offer, and there was added pay for working special shifts. The thing with shift work is that it does mess with a social life. Perhaps that led me into becoming a little introverted, and spending way too much time at home.

I had my laptop which I kept on my desk by the window, but it was not really suitable for gaming, so more often I just watched TV shows or movies.

When I did mix with co-workers we had a good time, but the subject of work was never far away. In some ways things were quite competitive, but we also had fun with quite a lot of practical jokes. People made fun of other people’s accents or voice styles. It was a standing joke as to whether any of us could spend a whole interaction with a client in another voice. I was actually quite good at it. My favourite characters that I could pull off were Geraldo the Filipino, and Sanjay from India, but I could also do Luba the husky Bulgarian girl. I could do a lot of sales with her, and the callers never realised they were talking to a man.

Anyway, back at the bedsit some weeks after I had moved in, I thought nothing of my first foray into the tenant’s wardrobe. I simply was undressed and I slipped on one of her silk dressing gowns. I am not a big person and it was a perfect fit. I was just going to run the bath, and I had noting suitable, but it was just so comfortable that I found myself wearing it that evening, and then more often afterwards.

As the evenings grew a little cooler I found myself going through her clothes rather than my meagre options, to find something suitable to wear in the privacy of my own place. The prior tenant had some wonderful fluffy sweaters which I loved to wear. I also found myself putting on her leggings. To my surprise they were a perfect fit. They are the ideal thing to wear around the house in cooler weather – stretchy and really comfortable. You can curl up on the bed with your legs under you without feeling any constraints like if you are wearing jeans.

I found myself checking out the look in the full-length mirror in the bathroom. Fluffy sweater and leggings. “Does my bum look big in this – ha ha”. In fact, my bum looked pretty good in that.

Things started to get weird when I found myself trying on her shoes. I don’t know what started it but imagine my surprise when I found they were a perfect fit. And she had maybe 20 pairs stacked up in the wardrobe. I learned one thing that I never knew – that if my bum looked good in leggings, with high heels on as well it looked three times better.

I think that I was just looking for some boots that I could wear out after both of my pairs of shoes had got hopelessly wet and did not seem to be drying out. That is London for you. It was a stupid idea as I would never wear any kind of women’s clothing outside the bedsit. At least not at that point. So, I just tried on every pair of her shoes, some pairs more than once.

When the point did come, and I had to go out to collect a parcel, I wore a sweater, a pair of her jeans, high boots with heels, a woolly hat and her electric blue coat. I snuck out down the stairs and snuck back in later. At the parcel counter the man called me “Miss.” I felt more than satisfied that I had pulled off my first public crossing dressing, even if really unintentional (I thought), by being totally passable as a woman. I felt a little titillated. Is that so strange?

I may have been able to pass because of my hair, which was poking out under the hat pulled down on my head. I have always had naturally curly hair and have had a tendency to let it grow for months before having it cut. When it does grow it just seems to stay in an unruly mop and not look that long, but if I pull out a curl it is much longer – like way below my shoulders.

So, the next weird thing that happens is that I am having a bath and I see her pink razor and special cream in the basket, and I decide to shave my whole body. That’s right, everything below the neck I shave off. Clean legs, smooth arms, nothing on the chest, I even shaved off my public hair. And just for good measure after the bath I use a “depilation mask” on my face.

I loved the feeling drying off with one of her super-soft towels. And when I went to bed that night I wore one of her silk nighties. The feeling was so smooth and wonderful it actually gave me a huge erection.

But the following day it felt like a huge mistake. I worried that somebody might notice what I had done. My arms and legs were covered at work, but the “depilation mask” was so effective that there was no hint of a beard. It was as smooth as a woman’s face. I just hoped that nobody would notice until the whiskers returned, but that took quite a while. I felt that some colleagues did notice, but nobody said anything.

Then I did it again a few weeks later! Just as I was starting to look like me again. I am not sure why. I just liked the smooth feeling I guess. I ran my hands up a down my body. I was getting really excited this time. I needed to jack off. When I went to bed that night I needed to wear some of her panties under my nightie, panties with one of those panty liner things stuck inside, in case I dribbled. I really slept well that night.

I actually wore those panties with a pad in them, to work the following day. About half way through the day I realised that this was very odd behaviour. I wanted to go to the toilet and take them off right then, but that seemed an over-reaction. I kept them on for the rest of the day, and in fact I didn’t bother taking them off until bed that night.

It was not every day, but I found myself trying on other clothes in her wardrobe. Everything seemed to fit me. I found myself parading in front of the mirror. I told myself that it was just a distraction driven by boredom, but inside me I felt that it was more serious than that. It was getting close to being a perversion. I wanted to go outside dressed like this, just because I felt like a bird in a cage. It was one thing that I now only wore women’s underwear day and night, but dress as a woman on the outside? In public?

It was turning into an internal battle. I would put on a dress and some heels and then have to wrestle with myself not to run downstairs and out onto the street.

Then came the craziest impulse yet. One evening I was just looking at her hair straighteners. With this tool was an instruction book and some special solutions to be used after shampooing. I found myself wondering what my hair would look like with just a little experimentation. I shampooed my hair and put the solution in, then after it has dried a little I straightened my hair. I combed a centre parting with smooth shiny locks hanging each side of my face. It was truly lovely. Without my natural curl the hair hung down to my shoulders.

What else was there in the bathroom storage? Curling tongs – also with a manual. Playful curls. Side parting and curls. Hair slide with a flower. I found myself draped over the basin still looking at the mirror, with my hand on my oozing cock. I was all drained out. I could barely drag myself to bed.

And when I woke in the morning and when back to the bathroom, I saw that I had girly hair. How could I hide this at work? I had a soft smooth face and big curls framing it. Even without makeup I looked so feminine. I was gripped with a panic.

The obvious answer was to cut my hair. Call into the barber on the way to work and get a buzz cut. Then grow a beard. A buzz cut and a beard do not work with a dress. My problems would be over. But I could not do it. I actually could not grow a beard – I tried. And cutting my hair. I could not bring myself to do it.

I contemplated calling in sick. But then what happens tomorrow? Will I do this whole thing again tonight. Is this my life now, wrestling with perverse urges then masturbating myself to exhaustion? I felt as if I needed to break this cycle. And if I was strong enough to fight it, maybe I could just surrender and carry the consequences?

I went to the dresser and opened the makeup box. I found a magazine with the article “The perfect look for the office girl” – pretty hair, well applied but simple makeup. I propped it up and went to work. I imagined that my hands might shake as I acted on my forbidden urges, but it was not like that at all. Even though I had never done it before I found my hands moving easily over the colours and the brushes. It was almost as if I had done it every day. I did not even need to look at what was on the table – what I reached for was there, in my hand.

I put a dress on, pantyhose and heels. I put some things in a shoulder bag. Checked my hair and face. I went into the hall, down the stairs and out into the street. I walked with confidence. I got on the bus. A man stood for me. I smiled in thanks as I took his seat. Nothing could be more natural.

When I got to work I moved to my chair. I could see my supervisor looking at me through his glass walls. He hurried out towards me. There was some gossiping going on, but by my guess only a few recognised that it was me.

Before he could say anything, I said loudly: “I have come as Luba, the Bulgarian girl today.”

There was a moment of silence. I am still not quite sure what was going through his head. It may be that he was just coming over to find out who this strange girl was who had got through the card access door to the call centre floor, and then my male voice threw him right off. But everybody else was silent too.

A smile appeared. He said, just as loudly so everybody could hear: “Welcome Luba. Will Sanjay be coming tomorrow?”

Everybody who was listening laughed out loud. I did too. Or it was more of a little girly Bulgarian titter than a laugh. I used the voice the whole way through the day. I made plenty of sales. But more interestingly, I engaged with people more as her. I found myself relating to people as if I was her. I suddenly realised that women have greater abilities to sense what is going on at the other end of the telephone. I seemed to have acquired that sensitivity, even though I was not a woman. How is that possible?

Some of us went for a drink after work. I had sort of fallen out of the habit of doing that, as I seemed to have become accustomed to spending evenings at home, but I agreed this time. I was not Luba at the pub, but I was not me. I kept speaking in a female voice simply because any other voice would have been weird. It was sort of a female me. And I drank wine instead of beer, which was not really me. But then, I wasn’t really me at all.

When I got home I just masturbated like crazy. I imagined that the girl in the mirror was not me, but Luba the Bulgarian, who it turns out, is a real slut. She thinks that I am hot, and she will do anything to turn me on. For the first time in my life I stuck something up my anus. I had found the dildo and gel some weeks before, but now I was using it. Whispering at myself in the mirror.

I was so excited I hardly noticed the discomfort – not until the next morning. Then I felt violated – by myself. I wondered if shoving something up myself like that made me gay. I did not feel gay. I reasoned that I was attracted to Luba, and she was attracted to me. It was a man on woman thing, both ways. That is not gay, is it?

But I decided I did not like Luba. The girl in pub last night was nicer. The girl without the Bulgarian accent. A much nicer person. Maybe, the female version of me. She needed a name. I decided to call her Sally.

It was Sally who turned up to work the following day. This time my supervisor was only partly surprised. He told me after work that he never thought I would have been able to pull off Sanjay in any event, but that he had received positive feedback on the new girl – Sally.

“She can stay,” he said. “I really don’t care how you come to work provided that you do your job, and you have doing well lately. And we do have a dress standard, but you seem dressed appropriately - I suppose that is as a female now?”

I suppose it was, although quite how I got to this point I could not understand. I was now Sally 24 hours a day. I decided that I needed to introduce Sally to Harry and the other people in his flat down the hall. I went around there on Saturday morning, as I had not been in the flat at all during the week.

Harry and his flat mates, Andre and Denise were having breakfast. I walked in with a floral dress on and my hair pulled in to a small high ponytail, with slides either side to keep it tidy. I said “Hello” and walked to the fridge to get milk.

Harry clearly recognised me. I was playing it cool, but I was quite ready for his jaw to drop in shock, or maybe disgust. Instead he just said flatly: “Who are you supposed to be?”

“I’m Sally,” I said, pouring out some of the communal cereal, and sitting down, smoothing my dress under my thighs. I just wanted to act naturally, as if something really weird had not just happened.

“You look good,” he said, without any trace of irony. “In fact, you look a lot like the full time tenant of you bedsit. So, I suppose you will be wanting the rest of her stuff.”

When I looked at him with puzzlement, he went to the sideboard and took out a large biscuit tin. He put it in front of me, as if I should know exactly what it was and what was inside it. He waited for me to open it.

Inside it, were packets of two types of pills, two silicone breasts and a booklet entitled “Sex Affirmation Surgery – A Guide for Transwomen”. I had to ask Harry: “What is this?”

“The past tenant was transgendered too,” he said. “I thought you didn’t know her, but you are going down exactly the same path as she did. So, I am guessing that this must have been left for you.”

I was going to say: “I’m not transgender”. But I stopped myself. I started to wonder if I was. That could explain everything that was happening. Is it possible to be transgendered and not know it? Was I? I punched two of each of the pills in the box and swallowed them with a spoonful of cereal. That appeared to answer the question. For Harry, and for me too.

I took the box back to my room to get my bag. I slipped the fake breasts into my bra. I just loved the way they jiggled on my chest as I walked to the call centre in my heels. These were the highest heels I had ever worn, but I seemed to be able to walk easily, having practised in smaller heels to that point. The click of the heels, the flutter of the silky material of my dress on my shaved legs, and the jiggle of my new breasts, made me feel fantastic. Somehow every day until that day had seemed dull and grey, if not depressing.

My high continued all day at work. All of my co-workers seemed so accepting. I was still the fun person who did the foreign accents, but now all of my accents were female.

It was not until I received an insult on the way home that my happy bubble was burst. Two guys walking towards me looked at me and laughed. They called me a “mincing fag”. I held it together but when I got home to my bedsit I burst into tears.

I needed to try to understand what was happening and why. Looking around the room I started to wonder what it was that had triggered in me the need to cross over a gender line. Had the previous tenant been the same as me? A regular guy now lying on my bed with my body shaved and curlers in my hair?

If I did not want to be heckled as a fag the answer was simple – get a haircut and be a man. Why would that be so difficult? Why was it so unthinkable? Because that is what it was. Instead I looked at myself in the mirror and asked myself: “How can I appear more female? Is it the walk? How did that guy know that I was not a real woman?”

I resolved that if I was going to live this way, I had better do it right. But there was really no “if” in my thinking. Somehow the idea of abandoning my journey into womanhood just seemed to have been discarded without any logical assessment.

The booklet was on the dresser – “Sex Affirmation Surgery – A Guide for Transwomen”. Was that what I was? A transwoman? To find out, I would need to read it.

It all seemed very complicated. There were complicated assessments and a very long transition process set out in the book. But the chapter on “Surgery” included what appeared to be a “no questions asked” Thailand based surgical clinic. Well, not quite no questions, but certainly an option that appeared to cater for a need that appeared to me to be becoming quite urgent. I needed to be rid of my genitals.

I had to accept that the way that I felt was beyond any reasoning. I just knew that they did not belong there. It was not quite disgust, but it was close to it. When I looked at myself naked, I saw the smooth skin, the widening hips, the developing breasts, the shaved muff, and that thing hanging there. It was just wrong. Only when I tucked it back between my legs could I see the beauty in my body. And it was beautiful.

I had never thought of myself in that way. My body had only been a vehicle, but now it was a work of art. Something that I had a hand in creating. Something that I could touch up every morning to look just that little bit better every day.

My hair too, had grown out so that I could present it in new and more attractive ways each day. All of the tools were right there in the bedsit. She must have had hair just like mine. I needed to know more about her, so I sat down with Harry.

“Technically she is still in occupation,” he said. “I told you that her family are paying the rent. Because you are just short term, you are only paying a contribution, which goes into the gas account.”

“You pay for the gas out of that account?” I asked.

“No,” he said. It is just accumulating. I am not sure why it is called the gas account”.

I wanted to know how to get in contact with her. He only had an email, and her surname - Kitteridge. I decided to write her:

“Dear Miss Kitteridge, I am staying in your bedsit in London and I find myself on the same path as the one I understand you have taken. I am in the process of transitioning from man to woman and I would appreciate any advice or guidance that you may have for me. Regards, Sally.”

A day later I received a reply:

“Dear Sally, attached is a link to a surgeon who can deliver that outcome that you need and desire. Your Gender Assignment Surgery savings should have accumulated to a sufficient level, and the user name and password to forward the deposit for the procedure are attached. Welcome to womanhood and good luck. Regards, Fenella Kitteridge.”

It had completely escaped me how long I had been living at the bedsit, but all the money I had been paying to stay there had been paid into an account to pay for surgery that I had never even imagined that I would need. I knew now that I did.

When I looked at myself that night – the night that I read the email, and I checked the funds, and I paid them out, and booked to appear at the clinic, I realised just how changed I was. I had long hair and my body was that of a well-developed woman. Only the disgusting genitals showed any part of the past.

I never gave them a thought when I lost consciousness only a month later. I welcomed the new me and any discomfort brought me only joy.

I did not go back to the bedsit, except to pick up a few things. I left most of what I had behind, for the next resident of the bedsit.

The End

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Author’s Note: After I started this story somebody told me about a Roman Polanski movie called “The Tenant”. I have never seen the movie, and now I think that I don’t want to. But what is unusual about this story for me, is that it is the closest that I have ever come to magic. Generally, I avoid magic as a premise, as I am looking for realistic circumstances that cause what might easily be, an unrealistic transition. Here the motivation for the change, rather than the change itself, might appear supernatural.