Gran’s Tale

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Well, if you want to talk about gangs, and that kind of life, you might be surprised to know that both your grandfather and I, were involved in gangs when we were younger.

I will tell you the story if you like, but do not interrupt me. I should tell you first that the story contains sex, violence and bad language, but nothing much more than what is on TV these days. I am sure that your parents will forgive me.

So, I will tell this tale from your grandfather’s perspective.

In the 80’s, your grandfather was part of a group called OPD. Do not ask me what the letters stand for. To be honest, if I ever knew I have forgotten. You can ask him. But this group was partly a business, and partly a social club, but it was violent. And your grandfather was in charge, because he was physically the strongest. He still is a very physically powerful person. You all know that.

Now, there was another group in town called Scorpions. Not “The Scorpions” – just “Scorpions”. And the leader of this gang was probably the opposite type. His name was Titch Gillies. He was called that because he was small, but what he lacked in size he made up for in ruthlessness.

Anyway, there were running street fights between OPD and Scorpions every weekend for a year or so. And there was organised crime too. I will not go into details because it is all behind us now, and I do not want you to think ill of your grandfather. What I can say is that both gangs had strong motives to completely destroy the other. That would mean a lot of blood spilt.

Then one night, an OPD man was killed in a fight. I told you there was going to be some violence. Anyway, Titch did not do the killing but there were questions about his part in it – serious questions. The Police were looking for him. Titch went to ground, as a precaution. Rumour had it that he had left the country. But this was in the early days of cell phones, so Titch could stay in touch without disclosing where he was. He could still rum his outfit while in hiding.

Now, I will not go into the details but your grandfather found Titch. He caught him and he bundled him into the back of his van and took him off to his aunt’s seaside cottage. You know the place, up on the cliffs. We still go there sometimes. It is very isolated.

So, he did not tell anybody simply because he had not time to discuss things while he was wrestling with Titch. But when he got to the cottage he started to think about what he should do with his prisoner. Should he kill him? I think I can say after so many years together that, despite your grandfather’s reputation in those days, that was never an option. And even if it was, it probably would not have been an end to Scorpions, so why do it?

Should he hand him over to OPD and let them deal with him? That could result in Titch’s death and all-out war between the gangs. And for now, nobody knew about Titch being his captive. He had Titch’s mobile phone. In those days it was a big unit, and texting had only just become a thing. But it occurred to your grandfather that he could control the actions of Scorpions if he could control Titch.

Of course, that was impossible. Titch was a vicious little brute, wrestling to escape. Your grandfather had a gang and a business to run. He could not stand guard day and night. But he did not want to involve anybody else. At least not at that point. He wanted to find a way to keep his prisoner quiet, but still capable of communicating. He wanted to use Titch to steer Scorpions to his advantage. That is how clever your grandfather is.

He was able to use Titch’s cell phone to pass messages to Scorpions that Titch had moved to deep cover, but that he expected reports and would give instructions by text only. He knew that there would need to be talking but first he needed better control over Titch.

If you can remember the cottage you may remember the concrete column in the middle. Well, your grandfather decided that if he was going to leave Titch he needed to give him some ability to look after himself. So, he chained him to that column by the ankle. Now when you are chained by the ankle, you cannot pull on any pants. But your grandfather said to Titch: “That’s OK. Fortunately, you are the same size as my aunt and she has lots of dresses that you can pull on over your head.”

Titch was not amused. But he had to get changed sometime. He virtually had the run of the cottage, and he could even go outside, but only a little way. He could sleep in the cot, he could go to the toilet, make himself a meal. He had the run of the cottage, but of course it had been stripped of anything that might allow him to escape.

So, he had been left for a few days and your grandfather came back with some supplies. So, the way he says it, he walks into the cottage and Titch is behind the door ready to hit him with a frying pan, but he throws him to the ground. There is Titch, now on the floor, wearing one of his aunt’s floral dresses, his longish hair all over the place, and your grandfather has an idea.

But first he says: “So what was your plan, Titch. You knock me out or kill me, and you are still chained up? Maybe we both die here. You kill me then you die of starvation? Is that a good idea?”

Titch doesn’t care. He is going crazy. He has to get out of this place. He promises to make a call and follow a script that is given to him, telling Scorpions to leave OPD for the moment and push into another town, with precise instructions on what to do. But after that, Titch regrets it. He thinks: ‘this guy is never going to let me go’.

But your grandfather says: “Look, if your people follow my plan, you get bigger but not at our expense. If things go our way, we could both win.” But Titch just snarls like a mad dog.

So, when your grandfather returns the day after he holds Titch down (because he is so much stronger) and he gives him an injection. Then he strips Titch and he ties him to the column. He puts his hair in a shower cap and paints his whole body with this green paste. Then he leaves him naked.

All the rest of that day and night, Titch’s skin is on fire. He thinks that this is some kind of torture. He swears that he will kill your grandfather somehow, even if it means he dies of starvation.

The next day your grandfather is back. He cuts the ties and takes him outside to the limit of the chain, and washes the paste off with the garden hose. Titch’s skin is sort of slightly burnt and all the hair has gone. He gives Titch cream to cover his body and soothe the burns.

“What are you doing to me?” asks Titch.

The reply is: “Have you ever heard of Sun Tzu? No? He was a Chinese general and a philosopher of war. He said: ‘keep your friends close, but your enemies closer.’ I am going to keep you close. I am going to give you the opportunity to get out of here. You are going to be my girlfriend.”

Well, can you imagine Titch’s reaction. I told you this story had bad language. He it comes out. I’m a respectable woman these days, so I am not going to repeat it.

So Titch is told that the injection is female hormones and mild sedative, and he will be getting that every few days until he starts to calm down. And that is what happens. Every time you grandfather visits it is like Titch is setting some new trap to kill him. But it always ends the same, he is held down, given the shot, left with fresh supplies, now including things like perfumed soap and shampoo and a tube of lipstick. And he leaves him women’s magazines, old ones from his mother’s collection - lots of them

Then one day your grandfather walks in and there is Titch, sitting down with a magazine. He is wearing a dress and stockings – because you can put those on under the ankle cuff, and it was getting cold at that time of year – and he had washed his hair. Back before it was long as was a style in those days, but tied at the back of his head. But washed with the “volumizing shampoo” it was looking like a girl’s hair.

“Is this what you wanted?” sneers Titch.

Now your grandfather, he says that he was shocked, not because his nemesis is not trying to kill him, but because he looks so good. Nemesis – it means your biggest enemy. What happened that day, was that he saw through Titch to the woman inside him. Titch did not know there was a woman inside him, but it turns out that there was.

So, your grandfather says: “We need to take you into town for a makeover and one final adjustment and you will be perfect.”

So Titch is thinking: ‘This fool is going to take me to town. Without the chain on I can escape.’

But your grandfather is no fool. A couple of days later he comes back with two injections. The hormone shot and another drug that sort of puts Titch in a barely conscious state. Titch sort of feels that he is in a trance. The ankle cuff is unlocked but he just watches and does nothing. He sits in the car unable to move. He is led into the salon and just sits while all the work is done. Just watches as they pluck his eyebrows and dye his eyelashes, colour and style his hair, apply the makeup and lipstick. Just allows himself to be led to the surgery of the doctor who provided the drugs, the doctor being controlled by your grandfather. Just sits lies there on a table while his testicles are removed under local anaesthetic. No, I can explain that to you later. All it means is that, on that day Titch ceased to be a man. He was not yet a woman, but he ceased to be a man.

Titch felt nothing for some hours. He sat in the passenger seat of the car while your grandfather introduced him: “This is Leticia, a friend of mine from out of town.”

“Wow, she’s a real looker, Boss.” Titch could hear the words, but as in a dream. It was not as if she was fighting to say something, she just did not care. The passenger vanity mirror was down and all she could see looking back at her was this perfectly made up woman, with the styled blonde hair, looking back at her blankly.”

Did I say her? That is because at this point Titch had already become Leticia. Maybe not completely, but for the purposes of the story it is easier to call her – ‘her’.

It was only later, when everything wore off, when she had an icepack on her empty sack, that the enormity of it became clear to her. But she was past angry. She just started to cry. And she cried and she cried.

It is not hard to wonder why. She had been on the hormones for ages. She already had little breasts on her chest. Her skin was soft and, now fully recovered from the burning paste weeks ago, and regularly moisturised with perfumed creams, it was soft and without blemish or hair. She was, if you like, chemically female. She was starting to respond as a woman.

The following day when your grandfather came to call he brought champagne and glasses, and a readymade boeuf bourguignon casserole. He told Titch to dress for dinner. She put on a dress and brushed her hair. She put on some mascara and lipstick. She sat through dinner. She still felt a bit like a zombie. Like she was powerless and this was just happening around her. The whole way through dinner he kept referring to her as Letitia. He asked her to smile, but she could not. When dinner was over there were tears in her eyes.

He came to her and pulled her up and held her. He was big and powerful and Titch was small and now as weak as a lamb. His arms could envelop her completely. The night was cool and his embrace was warm. And she needed physical contact. Titch had a girlfriend, or maybe two, but he had not had any physical contact with anyone, for months. He thought that if he was responding it was only because of that.

And the night would be cold, so the thought of that embrace that night deep did not seem so wrong.

They had sex that night. I told you this story had sex in it. No, she was not a real woman, but two people can still have sex in other ways. It just requires lubrication. There is a little pain at first, if you are not used to it, but after that it is very pleasurable. Especially if the man is gentle and tender. Your grandfather is a great lover, I should know.

So Titch woke up lying across his chest. Her hair in his face. Her tiny breasts up close to him. They would not stay too tiny for long.

She made another call that day, as your grandfather suggested. But this time he explained everything to Titch so there was an understanding of what he was trying to achieve and how it could benefit both gangs. There were other calls, but Titch could not keep that going. He was changing. Within a few more months he did not even sound like Titch. There came a point where Titch suggested to senior Scorpions that they should meet with your grandfather to discuss a merger of interests. When asked whether Titch was going to come out of hiding to be there she said: “I will try to be there but carry on without me.”

She was at the meeting but hanging off your grandfather’s arm. Your grandfather explained that he had been in discussion with Titch for months and the whole thing had been planned together. He said that Titch was still a wanted man and might never return, but he was watching all that was happening.

And she was. The business was expanding and the profitable parts were strictly legal. There was less need for violence. The social element was still strong, but the only violence in later days was a scuffle in the factory canteen or any one of the 15 bars and restaurants owned by the wider organisation. Titch and your grandfather had built an empire and crime was now well behind them.

Things were settled enough for them to go on holiday. They were able to close the end story for Titch and give her the operation that was needed to complete the job before the wedding.

When do I come into this story? Oh, you silly children. Your grandma Teesha is already in it. Do none of you know what my real name is?

The End

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