The Nature of Crime

A Short Story from an Idea from Erin

By Maryanne Peters

Clarke Bradley made his way to the private booth, walking with assurance in the high heels that were a part of this costume. The booth was at the back and elevated, giving a full view of the show. It was accessed by a screened ramp which made it clear that it was not open to the public. Donovan Albrecht was seated there. Although Clarke did not know him, he had been sent there to meet him – the owner.

“Ah, Breeanna,” the seated man rose to greet him. He was short – about the same height as Albrecht but in heels she was so much taller. He was around 40, and looked toughened by both ancient brawls and the rough and tumble of commerce. He did not extend a hand but held Clarke softly by his naked arms and air kissed either side of his head, even nosing the tumbling wig.

“I am so pleased to meet you!” Clarke gushed the words, but it was part of the hostess act. The performers would interact with the audience and continue to be larger than life. But it this case, this was the Boss, and Clarke could guess the importance of the situation. “You asked to see me?

“You make a very attractive woman,” said Albrecht, motioning the man in the dress to sit at the booth but not directly beside him. That was reassuring.

“Thank you,” said Clarke. He had to say it, and to sit, of course. “Some of the girls say that I barely look like a drag queen.” Which was true – some did, some spitefully.

“I wonder if that is what you really are?” said Albrecht. “I have to admit it, I am very taken with your appearance, and I would like to offer you a special contract, if you are interested?”

Clarke Bradley was. He worked in a warehouse during the day, and he hated it. It was only his performances at “The House of Wo-Men” that made his life tolerable – even joyful on some nights. But it seemed important not to appear too keen.

“I have a job, but I am always looking for advancement,” Clarke said.

“I am looking for a hostess for my office”, he said. “It will be daytime work. You can still work here if you like. But the role I am offering is for a woman – a special woman. Perhaps a woman like you, if you might find this package acceptable?”

He slid over a few pages stapled together. It was later revealed to be a contract, but the top page was a summary of terms.

But Clarke had already started talking: “A woman like me? But of course, I am not a woman, as you know. I am a …”. Clarke’s painted lips stopped flapping as the figures caught her eye. “This says monthly?”

“That’s right,” he said. “But on the terms set out.”

“And this wardrobe and grooming allowance?”

“You will need to look your best,” he said. “I am told that you have hair under that wig?”

“You need to understand that I live as a man,” said Clarke.

“I have no need of Clarke Bradley, “ said Donovan Albrecht. “I am hiring Breeanna.”

“You don’t think that I am gay, do you?” said Clarke.

“I don’t care so long as Breeanna is not gay,” he said. “Is she?”

“I don’t know.” It was an honest answer. She was a character. She flirted with men. She had never had sex with a man. How could she? She was not real. He was never her for long enough to find out. She never lasted more than an evening. Like Cinderella or the Sugarplum Fairy.

There were more pages. Words to read and understand. The whole thing was a shock, and confusing. But somehow exciting too. It was the thought of escaping the drudgery of his day, rather than taking his nights into the daylight.

Albrecht was looking at her. She felt suddenly powerless in that stare. It must be how a woman feels if propositioned by a wealthy stranger. The mere fact that it was under consideration had established that she was a slut, now we are just determining the price.

“I will need to think about it,” she said meekly, perhaps even in the voice she kept for Breeanna. But that was who she was – at this time of day anyway

“Of course,” he said. “There are the terms written down for you there, so take it. The rules are set out, but you should know that they boil down to just one thing for me. If you take this job, I never want to see you as a man. Not ever. I would find that offensive … personally. Do you understand? The moment I first saw you I wanted you to be a woman. I mean here we are, so I hoped that you would be a woman. When I found out you were not I thought that it was a crime against nature. That is a crime that I have no time for.”

Clarke was to discover that it might be the only crime he could say that about.

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Breeanna Clark had taken to wearing a small plug in her butt, and to using panty liners. It was not that she wanted to create a gaping back pussy for Donovan Albrecht’s enjoyment. She never wanted that. It was just that she leaked from time to time, and that was an embarrassment.

It was soft and comfortable that she was barely aware of it as she walked into the offices of Donovan Albrecht and Associates, where she now ruled the roost. She was only aware of it because Albrecht had come around for his regular sex the night before, and she could still feel him inside her and all over her despite the douche and two showers.

The first time had been horrific. He had drugged her. He had done it to others he explained. He was a rapist. He had raped her. It is not gay if a man is sodomizing another man against his will. The same goes for him taking her when she was in fear of him. But was that the case now?

She chose to make herself available, because that kept him happy, and his happiness was useful. Especially since she liked her job, working for him. It was not just the money and all that did for her – it was knowing that she was good at it. She was a good administrator – organized and firm. And the staff knew that she was close to Albrecht. She invited their input, but there would be no argument if she disregarded it.

But she found herself wondering what had happened to Clarke Bradley – the person she had been? He had reappeared early in the role. She remembered the injunction well: “I never want to see you as a man. Not ever.” She had thought could be a man so long as Albrecht never saw it, but it quickly became clear that she could never do that. Not anymore. Even in jeans and desert boots and with no makeup and hair tied back as a man might wear it, doors were opened for her and she was addressed as “Miss”. Whether Albrecht saw it or not, she could not “be a man”. Not so long as she was Breeanna. So she had simply given up. It was easier that way. Just as it was easier to take Albrecht inside her butthole and then wash it out afterwards.

“A Mr. Jordan Mitchell is waiting to see you,” said EEE, her personal assistant.

“Ah yes, the property management consultant,” said Breeanna. “Show him in.”

She rose to greet him and prepared her professional smile before he turned the corner. And the into her office walked a man who made her heart jump, and she suddenly understood that the sexually orientation that Clarke Bradley had jealously protected, even while being humped by Donovan Albrecht, no longer existed.

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It had been the perfect evening, even through all the mystery. She had asked that they pretend to inspect the building near the restaurant where she had concealed a change of clothes and a dark wig. Jordan was amused at first but went along with it. But as they shared their meal, he began to understand that she was genuinely hiding from somebody.

“If you are in some kind of trouble, perhaps I can help?” he said.

“I just wanted us to go out together as a man and a woman, but I have to tell you that I am involved with my employer, Donovan Albrecht, and he is … let’s say overly possessive.”

“I have only known you for a couple of weeks but I find that hard to believe,” he said. “You seem so very in control. Why not tell him “hands off”? Harassment is against the law. Employees do have rights.”

“I value the work that you are doing and don’t want our working relationship to end, but I think that you need to know that Donovan Albrecht is involved illicit business activities. He is not a man who can be refused. Not ever. I don’t want to get you into trouble, but here with me, that is exactly what you’re in.”

“I wouldn’t be anywhere else,” he said, reaching across the table to take her hand in his. “Regardless of any danger.”

“You are wonderful,” she said. “I think I may have already told you that. But your charm will not get you out of this situation. I feel guilty for dragging you into it, but I just feel that kissing in the cleaners’ cupboard is not enough. For me anyway.”

“I too want more,” he said. “More than that. More than this.”

“Well, that leads to my other reason for wanting to meet you outside the office, but in a public place, but somewhere that Albrecht or any his associates would be unlikely to enter – a French restaurant like this. It is because have another secret. Something much worse than the fact that I work for a violent criminal. Listen to what I have to say. If you do what I think you will, it may save your life – the life I have selfishly threatened by falling in love with you …”.

There were tears in her eyes now. Real tears. He squeezed her hand reassuringly. What secret?

“There can be nothing selfish in that,” he said. “Because I am in love with you too.”

“Not in a minute you won’t be,” she sobbed.

“I don’t care what he will do … or what you may have done. It doesn’t matter to me.”

“It is not what anyone has done – it is what I am. I’m a man.”

She was expecting him to pull his hand away. Maybe she even felt it flinch. She was ready for it. She was ready for her heart to be broken. It was now on the table – a heart of glass

“You are trying to send me away,” he said. His hand may have flinched, but it still held hers

“That is the last thing I want.”

“You want to save me from Albrecht, so you are telling me this bullshit.”

“I am telling you this because you deserve a real woman. Not something like me, who cannot give you the life you might want … or the life I might want too.”

He wanted to disbelieve, but he knew it must be the truth. But he squeezed her hand. The face in tears was somebody he cared about. How could he let go? But how could he get past this news? Did she have a cock? He hated himself for even thinking about that.

“We need to get you away from Albrecht,” he said.

She was shocked enough for the tears to stop. Was that all that concerned him? It seemed unbelievable that he was still holding his hand. She squeezed back.

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Donovan Albrecht could not remember her name. She was pretty in a way that some girls are, with smooth skin and minimal features – not like Breeanna at all. Not a heart-stealer like her. She was not here.

“What do you mean gone?” he asked the girl, who was clearly aware of his mood and becoming fearful.

“She has not turned up for work. Her desk is clear too. And her work folder is not where it should be.”

“Bitch!” he said. He was angry yet he felt a grief too. The emotions seemed to merge as he looked about.

“The federal agents say that somebody has to talk to them,” said the frightened girl.

“You had better show them in, then,” said Albrecht. He needed to compose himself.

There were three of them. Two looked like accountants, but the third looked like an enforcer. For a moment Albrecht considered calling somebody in to stand behind him, but these people were law enforcement. Unlike him, they had rules they needed to follow.

“Mr. Albrecht, my name is Marlon Fischer and I am with the FBI Financial Crimes Section,” said the man who would do the talking. He introduced the others, but Albrecht took no notice. He leaned back in his chair. He was confident. Things were tidy. He was a criminal but not a financial criminal. He dealt in drugs and “protection”. They were not here for that. If they were this would be a SWAT team with rifles spotting laser beams on his chest. Financial? Breeanna looked after the legitimate stuff. She turned out to be good – there were even auditors.

He shook some hands, but wanted these people gone as soon as possible. He said: “What’s the problem?”

“Well, we have been looking into your property portfolio,” he began. “There are some problems here. Your recent flurry of acquisitions has required a large amount of debt.”

“It can all be serviced from rentals,” said Albrecht. It was a brilliant idea. Launder cash by buying slums. Receive rents in cash from tenants that might not even exist. Bank clean money. Breeanna had been a revelation. But where the hell was she when he needed her?

“Well, there is the problem,” the man said. “And your high valuations are also based on the healthy rental returns. Those high valuations have allowed you to leverage into other purchases. Some fairly derelict buildings which are now fully tenanted and revalued up to very high sum … based on rental returns.”

“Yes? What is your point?”

“Well, we decided to have a look at one of your recent purchases, and that led us to look at all of your purchases. And what appears to be missing in your fully let buildings, is tenants. We have spoken with a few residents who appear to be just squatters who have never paid anything, let alone the quite high rentals that have been paid and banked.”

“My property manager is not at work today. She may be able to answer these questions if we could … reschedule?”

“It is not our concern as to where the money that is being banked is coming from, although we will certainly be reporting this to local police. No, this is a federal matter because you are borrowing money from banks out of state and our concern is that you may have defrauded your lenders. The valuations are big problem. We have spoken to your valuer who has confirmed that his valuations were based on rental receipts only. He will have to answer to the American Society of Appraisers for his deficiencies there, but we are satisfied that he had no part in any potential fraud. Your staff provided him with the rent rolls and proof of deposit, and his values were drawn from those. Mr Jordan Mitchell has kindly given us a reappraisal of the buildings based on actual tenancies. I have a sheet with the figures right here. That is the values claimed in this column, this is the actual value, and here is the difference. We will be advising the banks and they will take their own action, but unless you have an explanation we will be placing you under arrest for bank fraud, and we will be doing that right now.”

Albrecht looked around his office. He had always talked about having a second way out. His grab bag full of cash with in the safe within reach. There was a gun in the drawer.

“As I said, this is not my area. If you would let me make a call to my property girl she can answer these questions.”

He used the phone on his desk where Breeanna was on speed dial, and on speaker so they could hear. But he wished he hadn’t. The “no such number” tone erupted as if it were machine gun fire directly into his chest.

“Donovan Albrecht, I am placing you under arrest,” said the enforcer, as he was pulled from his chair and pushed face down over his own desk.

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“I have to say that I have burnt my bridges here, my Darling,” Jordan said. “The ASA will not take me back after all this. I will have to find another job.”

“I am in the same position,” said Breeanna. “I won’t be able to go back on stage in a drag show again. As of three weeks from now I will be disqualified, just like you.”

I don’t want you back on stage anyway,” he said, kissing the parting of her hair. “But why disqualified?”

“Well drag artists are men dressing as women, and in three weeks’ time I will have a gift for you that will mean that cannot be me. I will rap this gift in silk and lace with a pink bow right in the middle, and you pull off the wrapping …”.

“It sounds wonderful, but how,” he scolded her, realizing what she was describing and picturing the real her in front of him, naked. “How could you afford that?”

“Well, like you I have been less than honest,” she said. “Like you for good reason. And it was never his money really, was it? It was his victims’ money. I felt justified in taking just a tiny proportion of it, which turns out to be quite a large sum. Do you think that I am a bad person?” She pouted playfully.

“No my Darling,” he said. “You are perfect.”

The End

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*A mobster falls in love with a drag performer who insists that he's straight but the life the mobster offers is seductive, except he'd have to be en femme all the time. After a time, he gets tired of it and goes out in the world dressed as a guy but he makes a TERRIBLE guy now, everyone calls him miss and the guys hit on him so he takes one of them up on it and they date. The mobster finds out and boy is he PISSED! You write the ending*