Gender Flow

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

“I might consider myself gender-fluid,” he told her. “I just flow male 100% of the time. But one day, if I wake up feeling girly, I would put a dress on, just like that one.”

They had been strolling through the mall, Brandon and Marla, now dating for over a month. It seemed to both of them that it was getting serious. But Marla was disappointed with his attitude when she saw him interact with a gay person for the first time. It was a side of him that she had never seen, and she did not like it. It has started a discussion about gender. She meant it to be serious, but to him, it appeared to be a joke.

They were standing outside a fashionable boutique. On display in the window was a dress that had drawn her eye. He was standing there, teasing her about the issue of gender. It irritated her.

“You should be prepared for that day – the day you wake up feeling girly,” she said. “Go in and ask whether they have that dress in your size.”

He laughed. But she looked at him seriously. He was momentarily uncomfortable, but then he smiled. “Alright”, he said. “I will”.

That is exactly what he asked the shop assistant, a mature woman immaculately presented and dressed in the style of the boutique.

“Yes, we do,” the lady replied. But then looking him up and down she added: “But it will need to be worn with appropriate underwear. Fortunately, we stock that too. And shoes in larger sizes too.”

He was trapped. He looked at Marla. She had her hands on her hips. It spoke of immovability.

“Who knows how you might flow tomorrow,” she smirked. “But you should be ready.”

He took out his credit card and waved it at his girlfriend. She had won this one. He had lost. By how much he was yet to discover.

They went around to his place that night and had sex. She insisted that he hang the dress with the bags containing underwear and shoes behind it, on his closet door.

When he awoke in the morning she pointed at the dress and asked him: “How are you flowing today?”

“Manly,” he said, in his deepest voice. It was intended as humor, but somehow it felt uncomfortable to him. Almost like a lie.

Maria was annoyed, but only a little. She did not like him enjoying the joke, but he was a good person.

“Maybe something different tomorrow morning,” she said. “And I can’t stay for coffee today. I am going to be late for work. What about you? What are you up to today?”

“I’m researching all day,” he said. “I am not going into the office.”

He was wearing just his boxers as he kissed her on the way out the door. He didn’t need to put anything on straight away. It was going to be a warm day and he was not looking forward to wearing long pants all day, like he did every day. Shorts maybe?

Then he saw the dress. He smiled to himself. He wondered - is it really my size? To wear it properly he would need to put on the underwear. Just try everything on. Slip it on then slip it off. Easy. So easy to slip on.

He stood there, looking at himself in the mirror. For some reason he was trembling. Then for some reason he bent his right knee in front of the other and swayed his body slightly. It was a feminine gesture. He just did it, without conscious thought. The only conscious thought that he had was that something was wrong. There was something under the dress! He pulled up the hem. He could see it in the mirror. There was a bulge in his panties. An awful ugly bulge. He looked up the reflection and saw his face contorted in horror. His ugly hairy face.

“Oh my God,” he said out loud, but it hardly sounded like him.

What he should have been thinking was that the dress was wrong. But what he was thinking was that it was the only thing that was right. Everything else was wrong.

What should he do? What he was feeling was a sense of panic. As if his whole world was collapsing and so he needed to act quickly to prevent a catastrophe. Starting with ridding himself of every hair on his body below his eyebrows, and some from there too.

It took him the best part of an hour to do it. He could have stopped at any point. He should have stopped. But he stroked his smooth legs, he felt as if he had taken off some filthy overalls. He was clean at last. If he tucked his bits between his legs and clenched them together, he could look at his body and see something close to ideal.

The shape forming garments were a tight fit, and they contained breathing fabric in the right places which made them surprisingly cool. The dress he slipped on as easily as he had thought he could, and the shoes too. He stood in front of the mirror starting at the shoes and then following up the line of his shapely legs. The dress moved perfectly and felt cool and perfect for the day. The forming wear had done its job. The silhouette looked perfect from this angle and that. His eyes went up to the face, now smooth but still not right.

He gasped. How horrific! It was the face of a monster, or a monkey without facial hair.

He had shaved close, and the eyebrows were tidy but still looked wrong. They looked like a man’s eyebrows. He looked like a man. It looked awful. And he had nothing to soften the look. Nothing.

He put a paper bag over his head, with holes cut out so he could not see his reflection in the mirror. As he moved and the dress moved with him, it looked perfect. From the neck down he looked the way he ought to look. He could walk out of the house straight away. He could walk down the street and feel the sun on his shaved legs, and on his smooth arms, but not wearing a paper bag!

He went to his desktop to look for a local salon – a place that could do everything that he could not. Everything. That was what he wanted. He wanted to walk proud. It was a beautiful dress. The person wearing it should as beautiful, or at least try to be.

He did not have far to go. But how far can a person go wearing a paper bag on their head? He needed to catch an Uber.

“Are you GM,” the Uber driver asked. The paper bag nodded. “Hop in, Lady.”

Perhaps that last word should have shaken Brandon from his delusion – but was it a delusion? He cleared his throat, and in as high a voice as he could muster, he simply said: “When we get there, please park as close the front door as you can.” Which is what the driver did.

When Brandon had bundled out and rushed into the salon, the Uber driver muttered under his breath – “Women! Who can understand them?”

The driver had taken the paper bag in his stride, but the beautician manning the reception desk in the salon seemed singularly unsurprised. She simply posed the questioned: “A bad hair day, Sweetie?”

“The worst,” squeaked her anonymous customer in the pink dress. He removed the bag.

“Oh, I see,” said the receptionist, now that the sex of her customer was revealed. “We have a lot of work to do, if that is really what you want.”

“Oh please,” he said. “Everything that you can do. I never want to look like this again.” He was holding his wallet in his hand. He did not own a bag, although that seemed stupid. He put his credit card on the counter to assure the receptionist that he was willing and able. She snapped it up greedily. “The Works” does not come cheap in a place like this, as this customer would soon find out.

Brandon took a seat, and a senior member of staff came over to make her expert assessment of the problem. There was a mountain to climb, but this skilled beautician was up for a challenge. Not only had she had many long years turning plain girls into prom night or wedding day beauties, but she had transformed a few men in her time, and this one had bone structure that would work.

“You have enough hair for extensions and a complexion that will benefit from a deep cleansing facial,” she said, gripping his chin. “Shaven all over but not here, so we can drag this awful growth out by the roots. Then we will need eyebrow shaping, a little plumping of the lips, those ears should be pierced…”.

She was waiting for him to say stop. Everything that she was suggesting was close to permanent. He would not be able to hide much of what she was proposing. If he was going to terminate, he would need to do it now.

“A manicure and pedicure too, I think,” she continued. “This mousy color is not you at all. A shade of blonde I think.”

“Just do it,” said Brandon. “I just can’t bear to look at this.” His voice was still high pitched, but by more than the desperation of his mind. Words seemed to flow from his mouth in that manner, without him really trying.

He hated the mirror in front of him. The head on his body disgusted him. He wanted it to go away. All that he could do was close his eyes. Close his eyes and think of something that would make him happy.

It was a curious dream. Brandon was on a beach wearing a bikini, with breasts bursting out of the top, and nothing at all in the bottom part of it. A man was walking up from the sea. His body still wet from his swim making his tanned chest glisten in the sunshine. His muscles were hard and as if cast in burnished copper. He was wearing small tight trunks, oddly in pink. They could not conceal a huge cock that seemed to be growing in volume as he got closer. The bikini and the body it barely covered was having an effect on this stranger. The swimmer longed to hold that curvaceous body, and to penetrate it. And that body craved him also.

Brandon’s cellphone rang and he answered: “Hello?”

“Brandon? What is wrong with your voice?” It was Marla. Marla?

“Hi Marla.” He wanted to see her. Would she like his new look as much as he did. His toenails were being painted. The finishing touches.

“You sound strange,” said Marla’s voice. “I have finished work. Do you want to catch up? Say the “New Chemistry Bar” is 30 minutes?”

She had finished work. So what time was it? He realized that he had been at the salon almost all day. But it showed. They had done a fantastic job. He was happy.

“Say 45 minutes,” he said. “I need to buy a bag.” That and some jewellery to set off this pink dress in a style suitable for an evening out. Including earrings to put on in place of the studs – something dressy. There was a place two doors down.

Unfortunately, Brandon seemed to have acquired that curiously feminine trait of being a slow shopper, with a tendency to want to see the bag at every angle and in daylight, and the need to try on the same pair of earrings on three times, together with at least three other pairs. And the matching necklace needed to be shortened.

It was closer to an hour before he arrived at the bar. Or should we say, she arrived – Brandon was now Brandi.

She arrived at the trendy bar “New Chemistry” in the small lane off 28th Street, there was just a glimmer of confusion as she glimpsed her reflection in mirror well placed to ensure that a woman should not enter this establishment looking less than fabulous. But just that glance reassured her. The hair was perfect, the dress outstanding!

She walked through the arch and felt the eyes of men upon her. She liked the feeling, like stepping out of a cold house into a warm summer day. But she kept her eyes and her chin up. She could enjoy the gazes without looking back. She was looking for Marla.

Then she saw her, looking impatient. Brandi had underestimated the time it took to get her ready. An apology might be due, but for now a smile.

“Brandon?” It seemed almost bizarre to address this woman by her boyfriend’s name. But her shock quickly turned to anger. “Is this some sick joke at my expense? Is this about your claimed gender fluidity?”

“Darling,” said Brandi. She grasped one shoulder and came close enough to air kiss Marla on each cheek and let her smell the floral scent on her smooth neck. She knew not to ruin either of their makeup work with direct contact, although it seemed to Brandi that Marla had taken little effort to freshen up following her day at work. “I am so sorry to be late, but you know how things are. When I flow feminine it takes a little more time to make sure that you look right.”

Marla scowled. “What have you done to yourself?” she demanded to know.

“It was like you said when you had me buy this dress yesterday,” said Brandi. “I generally flow masculine but someday I might flow feminine. I guess today was one of those days.”

“Very funny. But what about the hair. And there is no hair on your arms … or anyway except here!” Marla took a curled lock off his shoulder as if it were a smelly rag, and then flicked it away.

“Careful Girl, that was expensive,” said Brandi. “I have been in the salon all afternoon … actually all day. And to tell you the truth, I loved it”.

“I need a drink,” said Marla, clearly exasperated.

“What would you like?” said Brandi. “Let me buy. A cocktail perhaps? Something sweet and colorful? Like those just crossing the bar. Two of those.” Brandi was waving to the bar tender with a limp wrist and a shrill voice. Marla felt like looking for a place to hide.

Brandi just had time to check her lips with a compact mirror before the barman said - “These two have been paid for by the two gentlemen at the end of the bar.”

“How wonderful,” said Brandon, stretching her pretty neck to see the two generous patrons.

“Don’t!” said Marla, but it was too late. Brandi had shot off a small smile and a wave, and even mouthed the words “thank you” with her freshened lips. It was all the signal that the two men needed to head down the bar, their eyes bright with expectation.

They hardly had time to say anything before Brandi took the lead again. “I am not sure what we are drinking but it is delicious. Thank you so much. I may drink them all night … if you’re paying.”

“Pretty women should never have to pay for anything,” the first man said. “My name is Luke, and this is my colleague Austin.”

“You boys work together?” said Brandi. “You look like financial highflyers, looking to unwind after a week of making millions.”

“That’s actually fairly accurate,” said he one named as Austin. “Except we are in pharmaceuticals, not finance. But we have had a good week. What about you ladies?”

“We’re not interested,” said Marla.

“Not interesting,” Brandi blurted out, reaching out to squeeze Marla’s hand. “We’re just office girls. She meant to say that we’re not very interesting. We would rather hear all about what you do, and try to pick up some pointers on how to become rich … or at least let some of what you have rub off onto us.”

“We should probably go somewhere a little quieter for that,” said Luke. “We would happily buy you a meal at the nice little restaurant next door, once we have finished our drinks.”

“That sounds great,” said Brandi.

Marla leaned close in and whispered in Brandi’s ear – “Are you crazy?”

“I’m just flowing,” Brandi whispered back. “Maybe on a bit of a girl wave at the moment.”

“I’m baling out before the shit hits the fan,” hissed Marla.

But they finished their drinks and left the bar, Brandi accepting Luke’s arm and Marla Austin’s – if only out of curiosity.

The restaurant was small and quite busy, but it seemed as though a table could be made to appear with a whisper and something slid into the maitre’d’s pocket. The women, because they were both that, sat quietly nibbling on their antipasto while the men spoke about the new product that had been developed that would make their company millions, through their own work as the marketing whizz kids behind the success of other products.

“We would love to share details, but it is all very secret at the moment,” said Luke. “Have some more wine. It is a Nebbiolo and really very good.”

“You seem to know lots about everything,” cooed Brandi, stroking his arm. Marla kicked her under the table, but tried not to show the growing fury using a passable smile.

“I am sure that the tiramisu is everything you say it is, but we can’t say for dessert,” said Marla, looking at Brandi and jerking her head sideways. “We have work tomorrow. Come on, Brandi.” She almost snarled the last word.

“You go, sweetie,” grinned Brandi. “I can work from home again like I did today. You’ll make sure I get home safely, won’t you Luke?”

“Of course,” said Luke. “But Marla, please stay.”

She was already on her feet, staring daggers at the stupid girl who had once been her boyfriend. She said – “I won’t be waiting up for you, so don’t wake me when you come in.” It was code for ‘you’ll be sleeping on the sofa’. Brandi just smiled.

“I’m calling it a night too,” said Austin once Marla was gone and his prospects with her.

“Understood,” said Luke. “You go and I will pay the bill. As for you, Brandi, perhaps you might join me for a nightcap.”

Brandi smiled.

But Marla did wait up. She wondered whether Brandon’s big mouth and careless attitude might have got him all the way to a stranger’s bedroom where a nasty discovery might have resulted in a beating or worse. His phone was going to voicemail and there was no way of knowing where he was. Despite her stress she finally fell asleep well after midnight.

The alarm woke her at 7:00am. At 8:00 she called in sick, and it was not until after 9:00 that she heard a key in the door.

But it was Brandi who walked in, wearing that dress but with her extended hair brushed back into a neat ponytail and he makeup freshly applied.

“24 hours ago, you were a man, making love to me. Now, what are you?” shouted Marla.

“Well, let me see,” said Brandi, striking a very feminine pose. “Considering that I have been made love to as a woman 4 times in the last 10 hours, I don’t feel much like a man anymore.

“That’s disgusting! You have been bum-fucked by that man Luke? Did he take no notice of what you have between your legs?”

“Well actually, he said that it was just what he was looking for,” said Brandi, hands on her hips and looking every inch a lady in control. “It turns out that their secret drug is a powerful estrogen. He has given me a shot. He calls me his cute little guinea pig. But I need to get this dress off. Do you have anything I can borrow? He wants to take me shopping. He is downstairs, waiting for me.”

“You’ll have to wear what you are wearing,” said Marla. “That was the thing that go this all started. It is like a curse that dress, from the moment you put it on.”

“The dress was only hanging on the wall when I started to think the way I do now,” said Brandi. “Although even then it seemed to be talking to me. It was just like I said, although I did not realize it was true when I said it. It was like a pink flag marking a fork in the river, telling me which way to flow.”

“Gender fluidity is one thing, but how do you go back from this?” Marla asked, holding with a tinge of disgust, one of those pretty curls draped across a face she hardly recognized.

“I’m sorry, Babe, but you can’t swim against the tide,” said Brandi, with no tine of regret. “I have to go with the flow. So, here, take my keys to the apartment. There is nothing here I need.”

He could have been referring to Marla as well. She certainly felt it like that.

Brandi spun easily on her heels and was gone. Flown.

The End

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