The Cabin in the Woods

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

The weather was closing in when we saw the smoke rising from a spot in the valley to the west. The ridge where the trail was cut marked the boundary of the park, and we knew that this was private property, but we were cold and tired, and frankly not fully prepared for these conditions. Surely in this isolated place we might be offered some shelter and warmth.

But as we left the ridge there seemed to be a band of brambles that formed a natural barrier. We both had rolls of foam to sleep on and we used these held in front of us to push on through. Then as we got into easier undergrowth the rain started. The trees seemed to concentrate it into a series of bucket loads dumped on our heads. The slope turned slippery and we both fell many times, skidding past the rocky bluffs and trees. We could hear the sound of the two creeks to the right of us become torrents in only minutes.

Then we saw the cabin below us. It seemed surprisingly large – well-built but not new. But the best thing was to see the chimneys and the smoke rising from them. It spoke of warmth.

We could also hear the sound of a generator engine from a shed and could see electric lighting outside and light within the cabin.

I could see that there was a vehicle track that came up from the riverbed. There had to be to allow such a structure, but there was not a road for miles. The way in must be up the course of the stream for many miles. And that river was now in flood.

The veranda allowed us partial relief. It seemed almost strange to knock on the door. Who would expect visitors in such a place as this?

The door opened and warmth spewed out. It was partly from the large open fire that we could see through the doorway and partly from the smell of hot food, but mainly from the smile of the lady who stood in the doorway.

It was the most remarkable sight, and totally incongruous. The lady who greeted us looked as if she was just about to leave to attend a costume ball. That was clearly a wig on her head in an ornate arrangement, her makeup was dramatic, and she wore what I now know was a pink tulle ball gown with pink heels visible as she raised the skirt.

“You poor things,” she said. “Come inside”.

Those last two words were more welcome than a glass of cold water after days in the desert, but it was clear to both of us then that this was not a woman at all, despite the high lilt. This was a man in drag – although one who managed a very attractive appearance as a woman.

We dropped our wet kit on the veranda and stepped inside so that the door could be closed. Then we could see another person in the room at the large woodburning stove in the kitchen area. She was also in a ball dress, but blue, and was wearing an apron over the top as she attended to a pot on the stove.

“Come in and get those wet things off,” the lady in blue said – evidently another drag queen. “You are lucky that we have plenty of food. I will just double the pasta and vegetables.”

It seemed like paradise or would have been had they been real women. But this was more than we had hoped for.

“I’m Esmerelda but you can call me Effie,” said the one in pink. “And that is Arabella but you can call her Belle.”

“Ladies,” said Rodger, because in the circumstances it would be plain wrong to address them in any other way. “So nice to meet you and thank you for your hospitality.”

“You are so welcome,” said Effie. “We will not be receiving any visitors until the river level falls, and as you can see we are dressed to entertain. Now I suggest that you get those clothes off immediately and get warm by the fire. I will find you something dry to wear.”

The idea of them receiving visitors seemed so odd in such a place, but the idea of getting dry was a welcome one. Effie scurried off and Bella went back to her kitchen tasks. I looked at Rodger and he looked at me, and beside the benign fire we peeled the wet clothes right down to our jockeys. It would be hard to imagine anything wetter.

Effie returned and said: “Well, I am guessing you are not hunters?”

“We’re just hikers,” said Rodger. He seemed as aware as I was that she was being critical of our physiques.

“Well, they say that if you ain’t hunters, then you are prey.” It was Bella looking from the kitchen.

“Take those wet shorts off too,” said Effie. “We have a back boiler water jacket behind this fire, and the stove too, and the pipes will get everything dry in a jiffy. Now, don’t be shy. It will probably not surprise you to hear that you have nothing we haven’t seen before … daily in fact. Get ‘em off. And I am sorry that the only underwear I can offer is ladies underwear and you are just lucky we have small sizes.”

Rodger and I looked at one another. But what do you say when you have been invited in to shelter from the storm? Do you say that we know you are raving queens, but we ain’t?

Bella hustled over and said: “There is nothing to be ashamed of. There is just the four of us here. And I can tell you that there is not a stitch of men’s clothing in this house except in that puddle you have made there. So get comfortable. Pull on the panties and something to go on top, and I will get us some drinks before dinner.”

“But first we need to get some D-paint on these forearms and legs,” said Effie, lifting Rodger’s arm. “You have come through the brambles up by the ridge. There is poison in those thorns. You will have huge painful welts in an hour if you don’t apply the right stuff. And we have plenty.”

I was suddenly aware that as my skin dried it was becoming painful. I decided to take the lead. I pulled on the “panties” which were a thigh-to-waist, tight-fitting garment in a neutral tone, so tight that my genitals needed to be positioned with effort to achieve comfort. Then I sat on the chair to receive the attention of my overdressed nurse.

D-paint seemed to be just that. Thicker than the old-fashioned calamine that my grandmother had used for child sunburn, but similarly soothing. But it was blue rather than white and seemed to get more blue as it dried. Rodger relented and accepted the same. We could look at one another and smile. We looked like two sexless spindly blue aliens, made more so by the fact that Effie had put our wet hair in matching pink towel turbans.

The fire warmed the outside of our bodies, and Belle had produced some “corn liquor” to warm the insides. As we lay there, I am sure that is seemed to us both that we had lucked out. Sure, they were not real women, but they had rescued us and were now attending to us and preparing a meal that smelt fantastic. It was so far from hiding under our ponchos in the cold chewing on a stick of jerky as to seem near to heaven.

“This is our time to shine as women,” Bella explained. “I admit that we go over the top, but the truth is that this is the only place where we can. But it does mean that we have standards. We do insist that everybody at the table dress for dinner.”

“And we mean dress,” echoed Effie.

Rodger and I looked at one another and had to laugh. Maybe it was the corn liquor or just the comedy of our situation. He grinned at me: “Why not?”

So I said: “Dress us as you will, ladies.”

They both giggled and clapped their hands with glee.

“First, we’ll have to do your hair,” said Effie.

“And that means getting rid of those whiskers too,” said Bella. “Makeup never goes on a hairy face properly. I should know.”

I had a moment of doubt, but I looked at Rodger and it was clear he was up for it, so I was too. It was how this whole expedition had started. He was up for it – I had doubts – he didn’t – then before I knew it we were up a mountain in a storm. And now I was halfway down a mountain, in a warm cabin, naked except for neutering panties, and painted blue. What could be any stranger? Having my hair done?

“Sure,” I said. Was it the corn liquor and its warmth in me? Or the warm cabin and the warm smiles of our new friends, and saviors?

Both Rodger and I had hair that was not short, but not overly long either. Nobody would have said that our hair looked like women’s hair. But as it happened all it took was the right solution massaged into wet hair and then a blow dryer in the hands of an expert. Suddenly our hair looked lighter and fuller, and with a side parting and a barrette in mine, and a thin band across Rodger’s, we had been changed.

Then came what we thought was the shave. The shave oil seemed to numb or faces and then what we thought was an electric razor was run over our faces. I never looked closely. Thinking about it now we may well have been sedated in some fashion, but I am not accusing them.

But we sat through the makeup and the “tidying” of our eyebrows with not a word of objection. And when the padded bras and slips came out, and the dresses to be worn over them, we wore it all without a whimper, and perhaps even with a titter to match theirs. And then the shoes – like theirs with high heels, totally impractical for our location, and for both Rodger and me, and unlike the dresses, strangely a little too large.

“Now we are ready for dinner, Ladies,” said Effie. I have to say that when I looked at Rodger, I was ready to laugh at my friend dressed in drag, but I could not. It seemed that somebody had stepped in to replace him – perhaps his twin sister. And the look on her face was like mine. It asked: “Who is this woman before me.” He was not him, and perhaps I was not me?

“Do you want to see yourself,” said Bella. I nodded. “You look just wonderful,” she added.

There was a mirror in one of the two bedrooms downstairs that seemed to be occupied by Effie. I tottered over to that room on my heels, feeling weirdly excited at the prospect of meeting my twin sister.

And when I did, my reaction surprised me more than she did. I just saw her and felt that I was at home. What is home? I don’t mean that the cabin was home – I was a stranger in this place. Home is a place where things are secure and where you can be happy or sad as you like. I suppose that there are people who never know a true home, and those like me that never knew that they had never had one before that moment. She was home. She was my home.

Bella led me back to the table and sat me down. She had food to put out – pasta with ragout over it and sprinkled with Parmesan, and vegetables in serving dishes. And there was wine too, and a toast:

“Here’s to four ladies having a girls’ night out in the mountains,” said Effie. Our glasses chinked and we drank, and we ate.

For that night Rodger said that he would be Rosemary – it was one of the herbs in the meal. But when Effie asked: “And who are you?” I did not choose a name starting with the same as mine.

“I am Vanessa,” my lips spoke. It was like there was a woman inside me whom I did not know who had suddenly been freed, and her name was Vanessa. Her voice was soft and high. I could see that “Rosemary” was surprised by it, but when three out of four are talking at a high level, Rosemary could hardly stay down there.

Oddly we seemed to talk endlessly and excitedly about all manner of things, but without any of us learning much at all about one another and why we were together that night. All we knew is that the exhaustion of the day’s labors finally took over and I found myself in an upstairs bedroom asleep.

When I woke in the morning, I discovered myself in a nightie with my panties still on and with flakes of the blue D-Paint all over the bed, and in those paint flakes, all the hair from my body.

The bed had been warm, but the room was cold. There was a pink robe for me to wear and fluffy slippers. I went into the hall and saw that there was a shared bathroom in the opposite direction to the stairs. I was busting for a piss. I pulled down my panties and was all set to hose the bowl when for some reason I turned, and I saw Vanessa looking at me in the mirror opposite. Her hair was a mess and the makeup only remained in traces but the horror on her face seemed to speak to me. It seemed to say: ‘Sit down, Girl. Don’t piss like an animal in a field!”

I pulled down the seat and I sat. My bladder opened and the warm flow seemed to me to a pleasure I had never felt before.

It was a shared bathroom. I looked up and there was Rosemary looking down at me. I say Rosemary because with the tousled hair and smudged makeup there was little of Rodger to see.

“Still Vanessa?” There was no surprise in the voice.

“It’s a house of ladies,” I replied. “Who am I to lift the seat?”

I went downstairs where I had intended to confront Effie and Bella with removing my body hair without my consent, but somehow that did not seem important when I saw them. They were both in the kitchen. They were without their wigs but they both had hair only a little longer than mine but cut in clearly feminine style. It seemed that these were not two men who just dressed up for short stays in a mountain cabin, but men who quite possibly lived as women.

“Vanessa, how do you do it?” asked Bella. “You have just got up and you look gorgeous!”

Something made me reach for my hair to fluff it a little. I had to smile. As it passed back across my cheek, I realized that too was smooth. My beard was never heavy, but this seemed irregular.

“Did you sleep well?” asked Effie.

“Unbelievably well,” I said, with the voice of Vanessa coming out without thought. “I think that we must be fully recovered, thank you. Can we walk out down the valley?”

“Why ever would you do that?” said Effie. “The hunters will drive us out tomorrow morning. They drive up the river. It is miles of riverbed. Rocks and shingle and still plenty of water after the rain. It would take you ages to walk it. They can drive us all out.”

“The hunters?” I have to say that I asked the question and never really got a reply. Instead, I got hot coffee and waffles with syrup, which seemed more important at the time. Rosemary appeared beside me to receive the same.

“While you are dressed as ladies in this house – as you should be – you must learn to cleanse, Girls!” Bell scolded us with a smile. “But we can do beauty shop and hair salon after breakfast. It is what we do to pass the time up here.”

Somehow it did not seem a bad idea. We had recovered, that was true, but we had surrendered to the mountain. Rather than walk out we would accept the lift. We were due out the following day anyway. It was over. I would not say it to Rodger, but I could see that he was of the same mind.

We had two new friends with a curious hobby. We could hardly push them away in their generosity. We could play their game for another day. We could rise the following morning and put on our dry clothes and leave this place, with a fond memory of a strange weekend.

And that day unfolded just as it should. It was a game, and we were players. It was largely their game and our role was as human dolls to be dressed up and painted and to play parlor games and giggle like schoolgirls. It seemed hard to believe that we could spend a whole day enjoying this, on top of the previous evening, but we did.

And somewhere along the line, on that day, we both had our eyebrows plucked and our ears pierced. Do not ask me how or when. It just happened. We must have been caught up in the moment. It was dress up – Effie and Bella’s favorite game. I remember that I approved of Rosemary and she approved of me, and that seemed just fine. How could we be so stupid?

And then, just before nightfall, we heard the roar of a powerful engine outside, and then another. We followed Effie to the window looking towards the river and we could all see two huge 4x4s coming up from the cutting, spitting gravel and mud and exhaust, like angry monsters arriving to feast on us.

“Oh my God! There are here!” Effie was in shock, but it betrayed delight.

We could see that there were four men – two in each vehicle. We ran around to the side by the door to see them pull up and step down. All four of them seemed very big.

It suddenly occurred to me that I was standing in a cabin in the woods dressed from top to bottom in female clothes, with makeup on my face and my hair arranged. Only now did it seem strange and call for an explanation. What could it be? Our clothes were wet, and this was all that was on offer. It seemed ridiculous. We could have been wearing a blanket.

There was no knock on the door. This was their house, and that was clear. Four men staring at four other men dressed as women.

“As you can see, we have visitors,” said Effie to the arrivals.

“Fuck yeah,” said the man moved to the front. “Four guys, and now four gals.”

I decided that the best thing to do was laugh. I mean, the situation was laughable. We had thought so when we first arrived at the cabin and met the men pretending to be Effie and Bella, clearly, they knew these four men well. Now it seemed all the more risible with two strangers roped into this backwoods drag routine.

“We are just a couple of hikers who lost our way, and as you can se we have been clothed and fed, I chuckled with just a tinge of concern. “We were hoping to bum a ride out with you guys. The walls of this valley seem a bit steep for us to climb back up the trail over damp ground.”

“You are not going anywhere, Pretty Missy.” The words and the expression on his face wiped the smile of mine.

“Nothing we like better than virgin pussy,” said another, stepping forward.

Rodger spoke for us: “Hey now, this is not ‘Deliverance’.”

“You’re right Girly,” said the man in front. “There is no deliverance for you here … not tonight anyways. Now, we bought some liquor and a buck to be roasted. So, you ladies have work to do, and then when that is done, you will get your reward.” He patted his crotch. It looked as if he had a turnip stuffed down his pants.

“That’s right,” said another stepping forward. “Boys like us like three things: bucks, trucks and fucks.”

I looked across at Rodger. He shared my look of horror. Effie was beaming. Bella had he hands on her hips and was smiling.

“Now, Jed, you bring that carcass on in here so I can dress it properly,” and the rest you get the supplies in then have a wash. You know we dress for dinner here. We don’t go to all this effort to be pretty to lie down with dogs.”

Two of them went back outside, but two remained. The one in front was looking me up and down while the other walked over to Rodger and across: “Now, what’s your name, Honey?”

“I am Rodger,” said Rodger.

“No, you ain’t,” the man snapped back. “I will ask you again, and if you give me shit like that, I will put you over my knee right here.”

“Rosemary,” she corrected herself looking floorwards

“That’s a pretty name,” he said. “A sweet smelling herb. You have pretty hair. Which room are you sleeping in?” His hands were touching my trembling friend, and there seemed like there was nothing I could do. You don’t know how true it is: “Paralyzed with fear” until you are standing there unable to move.

“Have Effie and Bella prepared you properly?” the one closer to me now asked. “I would not want to hurt you, but somebody like you could make a man lose control.” This brute was now touching me – stroking my smooth cheek to show me his gentle side. That was all I could hope for – that he might be gentle.

“What she said was true,” said Bella in the background. “They just fell down the hillside. It is not up to us to prepare them. So, you had better make sure that they are consenting before you do anything. Anything less would not be right.”

“Fell down you say,” he never took his eyes off mine. “Like an act of God. A miracle to deliver another two women so that everybody can be happy. Four guys – four gals. You want everybody to be happy, don’t you?”

“Yes,” I said. What could I say? But yes to what? He still says that just one word is consent. That word.

He picked me up as if I was made of polystyrene, and I felt as if I was. I was completely in his power. I wondered later too, if they had used drugs. How could any man just let it happen? Rosemary too. As we climbed the stairs, she was behind me being carried by her man, just whimpering.

And moments later both of our buttholes were oozing semen, and we would never be the same again.

He was surprisingly gentle for such a big man – or big to me anyway. He said: “You are way too pretty to be a man. We just need to open you up and you a gonna find how good it is to be a girl.”

And so he opened me up.

When it was over and I was stretched and filled, I thought he might cast me aside in disgust, as perhaps I would if I had been him. But instead, he took me in his arms and held me close, and I felt that I was being comforted and protected, even by the person who had done that to me. And I slept in his arms not as his victim, but just as his.

And when he woke, he kissed me on the lips. My lips felt so full and soft against his – like women’s lips brushed by the bristles on his face. I would never have such bristles again on my own face, and maybe I realized it even then.

And as time has gone by, I have come realize that it was just the way my husband said it was. We had fallen off that trail by act of God. We willingly became women, both of us. It was little by little perhaps, but we both let it happen. There were no drugs, no threats, it was the pull of the desire to be women, and the desire to have sex with men that made us do it. We just never knew that we had those desires until that trail, that rainstorm...

Not until we entered the Cabin in the Woods.

The End

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Author’s Note: From this suggestion by Erin: “Okay, here's another. A backpacker discovers a cabin in the woods filled with women's clothes. There's a woman, no a man, living there. It's a retreat for crossdressers the man explains. He comes to get away from stress in his life. You see where this goes?”