One too Many

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Even with the curtains drawn in vain attempt to help me cope, it seemed that the room was in directly sunlight, or that I was in a Nazi interrogation room facing a searchlight I kept my eyes open as only slits, or was it the 1 ton block sitting on my head that was keeping them mainly closed?

“You had better get your act together. Last night was stag night, which is something you will never do again. Today is bridal shower!” The voice was unmistakable. It was Kay Herbert, the mother of my best friend Kane Herbert. She was Colonel Kay Herbert, US Army, to be exact – a woman not to be messed with, but I was allowed to call her Kay.

“Jesus, what was I drinking?” was all I could think to say. My whole body felt as if it had been pickled in vinegar. And my chest felt constrained somehow. It was not a usual hangover, but it was a hangover

“Coffee,” she said. It was not an enquiry, it was an instruction. The mug was in my hands, and it was hot but ready to drink. I swung my legs and sat up on the cot I had been lying on. I took a slurp.

Where was I? There were smells that I was not familiar with – not unpleasant but heavy.

I looked down at my legs, and I got the shock of my life. They were my legs alright – I wiggled my painted toes to make sure. My legs without a single hair on them – long and smooth and surprising soft as I reached down with my free hand to pinch myself.

And at the top of my legs my crotch seemed to be encased in some special garment. It was a white garment or maybe two, decorated in lace and extending up to my chest where two breasts appeared to nestle in bra cups.

“You’ll be wearing that through to the wedding tomorrow to get you into shape.” I looked up at Kay who was talking at me, shaking my head to bring me back to reality. “Don’t worry, you can use your bowels and you can pee sitting down, so it is all good for the next 36 hours.”

“What the fuck?” If that is not what I said then it was what I was thinking.

“I want to tell you how much I appreciate you agreeing to do this for Kane and for my family,” she said. She had a look of dewy eyed sincerity that I knew was real because it was so not her, but still I did not understand.

“I am sorry Kay, exactly what am I doing? This is all a bit fuzzy.” One of my classic understatements. Here I was dressed as a woman with shaved legs … or were they waxed? And breasts – how was this possible. I put down the coffee and cupped them.

“Just a good bustier and some well placed padding,” said Kay nodding at my “breasts”. “We did not have time for anything else. The wedding is just over 24 hours from now, so we needed to work within a time constraint.”

“Wedding? Kane’s wedding?”

“Your wedding,” she said. “You and Kane. As we agreed last night. You will be Beatrice.”

Was the fog clearing? What happened last night. Something went wrong even before we started drinking, which was why we drank far too much. What happened to Beatrice?”

“I told her that I was in love with somebody else and she has gone.” The words came back to me, and the image of Kane saying them. That is what triggered the massive drinking session in place of the bachelor party. Last night the wedding was off.

“What do you mean, I will be Beatrice?”

“It is what you agreed last night,” said Kay. “We have the wedding of the decade that I have been planning all year. There is no way that this operation is not proceeding as planned. We just needed to replace the bride, and you volunteered. Remember?”

“I’ll do it.” I did remember saying those words last night. I remember that they triggered a wave of cheers. Kane had called his mother and she had turned up at the bar and basically taken charge. It was her way.

“I can’t be a bride,” I said.

“Oh yes you can,” said Kay adamantly. “Take a look at yourself, and this is just for the bridal shower.”

She seemed to step aside to reveal that we were in some kind of windowless beauty salon. There was a big mirror that took up the whole of one wall, and I could see in the distance the light was shining on the confused face of a girl. It was me.

I stood up. I was wearing only the corset-like bustier as she called it, and restraining pants. My thin body looked totally feminine, and above it was the face of a young woman, smooth jaw, pouting lips and plucked eyebrows. My hair was bound up in some kind of scarf. I wore it long, but it seemed to me that there was much more hair than I was used too. I could feel the weight of it.

“I don’t look like her. People will be expecting her,” I protested. But the truth is that I did look a lot like her. She had a bigger nose than me. I looked like I could be her prettier sister.

“Her friends and family are not coming, and they would be the ones expecting to see her,” snapped Kay angrily. As for your friends, they all know. And the personnel from the base, well, they don’t know her and I am sure that you will not disappoint.”

How could I have agreed to this? I started to remember Kane pleading with me. He was always hard to refuse. Was it his idea?

I was drunk. How drunk do you have to be to agree to dress up as a woman and go through a marriage to your best friend?

Kay was in command mode, that was clear. “You slept far too long but as you can see, we took advantage of your semi-consciousness to get things done. But now we need to get a dress on you and get you to the bridal shower. You can call it an intensive briefing session. You will be surrounded by females and you will be expected to soak up feminine behavior all afternoon. And work on that voice. Nobody wants to hear the bride sounding like a man as she says her vows.”

“What about Kane? What does he have to say?” Could my best friend come to my rescue?

“No contact with the groom before tomorrow,” she said. “But I suppose that you can call him. Actually, I will get him for you now. Now come and sit in this chair. Sonia needs to brush out those extensions and check the color.

For the first time I was aware that there was somebody else in the room – the hairdresser, whose name was apparently Sonia.

I sat and stared. Kane had always said that his mother was like this. He said – “You can’t fight her. You just need to roll with it.”

She thrust a phone into my hand.

“Kane, is that you Buddy?”

“She sent me an image. You look beautiful Pal.” It was him. I was expecting him to be laughing at my predicament, but he was serious. “I want to thank you for doing this. Nobody could expect any more from a true friend. Mom gets her wedding and I get what I want too. I owe you big time. It will take me a lifetime to make things best for you, but you can count on me.”

I have to say that I cannot remember what I said. I didn’t really understand what he was saying, but I knew that he was counting on me to do this, and so I was ready to do it.

I said – “See you tomorrow then.”

There was a squelching sound on the other end of the phone. It never occurred to me that it was a kiss.

Sonia brushed out my hair and tied it back at the top, and she applied makeup.

I honestly felt as if I had become a different person. I looked like a woman.

Kay drove me down to the beachfront. I was greeted by only five other girls but I knew them all. They were the girlfriends of some of the guys. There should have been another four of five of Beatrice’s friends, but as everybody agreed “Six is enough to cause havoc!”

I just needed to pace myself. I was partly because I had overdone things the night before but also because I was under instructions from Kay – and intensive briefing session. She must have told them too. I was constantly being picked up on things that I was doing wrong, but in a good-humored way. In fact, I think I learned that day how much more fun a group of girls can have over a group of guys.

“Practicing the vows in the girliest voice possible” was the first game we played, followed by “Trying to get a discount from the bartender in the girliest voice possible”. Everybody agreed that I had won both. The truth is that a great bridal shower is when you all feel drunk until you get home, and then you realize that you are not.

As arranged I stayed that night with the replacement bridesmaid, but Kay would be picking both of us up in the morning to take us to the salon.

Kay insisted that my hair be put up in an ornate updo. She said – “We don’t to weddings by halves if I am in command” – which she was.

The wedding dress was a work of art, and when it was zipped up and I was swaying in it to see how it felt, I suddenly realized that everything was different. By that point I had probably spent a full day dressed as and acting entirely as a woman, and it just seemed natural somehow.

“It is your day,” Kay whispered, somehow suddenly a mother and not a colonel. “You live it the best that you can.” She was mearing a very attractive “mother of the groom” outfit and instead of her hair being a regulation bun it fell around her shoulders in ultra-feminine curls.

I hugged her. There may even have been tears in my eyes, which is why all bridal makeup must be waterproof.

There were shoes with a heel no higher than the ones that I had tottered around on the day before. There was a garter – borrowed, old and blue worn under the new dress to cover all superstitions. I was ready.

“This is General Bryce Collinge who agreed to walk you down the aisle when we first announced my boy’s wedding,” said Kay, introducing me to a man that I recognized from the news. Perhaps this was why the wedding was so important to her? He wore an army blue dress uniform with a board of ribbons that was huge, and a warm smile that I returned shly.

“May I?” said the general. I was led to an army staff vehicle festooned with white ribbons and Kay helped me to get in and arrange my dress.

“I need to race to be with Kane,” she said. “But the general will look after you.”

The general did. He put me at my ease and made me laugh, which was just as well. I still had no real understanding of what was going on other that I was doing a huge favor for Kay, and somehow for Kane. But people depended on me and I was not going to let them down. Plus the last few days had been fun, even what I could remember of the night with the boys.

So we drove slowly to the chapel. General Colling (Bryce) took my hand as I alighted from the vehicle then gave me his arm. As the music started everybody turned to stare at me. It is strange to say it, but I felt so proud. Kay was right – this was my day. Everybody was looking at me, and I knew that I looked fabulous.

Then I saw Kane. He was looking at me with eyes that almost made me shiver. It was that look. I had seen it before. Not that often, and always he would look away when he realized he was doing it. It was a little unsettling, but also comforting. I decided that it was a look of longing.

I stepped Up beside him. The general shook his hand and took his position beside the beautiful Kay Herbert. I glimpsed the look she gave him, before I looked at Kane.

There was that look. No turning away now. No need to hide it now.

“This is what you wanted all along, isn’t it,” I whispered.

“I wanted to marry a woman,” he said. “But as I had to explain to Beatrice, it could not be her. I am in love with you, you see. I always have been.”

And somehow I knew that all along.

The End

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*Very short seed from Erin: A drinking contest goes wrong and one of the contestants wakes up and he's dressed as a bride! Tthe wedding is in only an hour or so and the groom’s mother has put together a bridal shower …*