Doing Without

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Make no mistake about – I was a masculine young man. When testicular cancer hit and I lost both my testes it was a huge blow. Even though fathering children was the last thing on my mind at that age, to be told that the line ends here is still a blow. Not just the notion of passing on my genes but also reducing the number of women who could find me suitable as a life partner. I could only shoot blanks.

The shooting was never in doubt. Dr Palgrave made it clear that I could still function sexually. With a cocktail of male hormones to replace those produced by the glands I had lost, and with erectile dysfunction drugs if required, I could achieve an erection and orgasm. I was told that my life need not change; that I need not feel inadequate; that I was still a man.

It does nothing to stop the sadness of loss. To know that my maleness was now in a specimen bottle as cancerous tissue. And to think that if there was a global apocalypse and the drug companies were to perish, my manliness would wither away. I was only a man by dint of technological advances in pharma. Without chemical assistance I was in limbo between sexes.

But I was keen to follow the plan and take the drugs. I wanted to be as normal as possible. So why could that not work for me? It did not take long for me to realise that my recurring ill health was connected to my hormone consumption. As Dr Palgrave explained, in a small number of people the liver works to break down introduced hormones, rendering them ineffective and causing side effects such as nausea and headaches, and sometimes permanent liver damage. Dr Palgrave said that we would need to experiment with other hormone therapies to find a solution. In the meantime, I would have to live in the nether-world of the sexless person.

The guys I mixed with (including maybe three genuine friends) all knew about my circumstances. My cancer could not be hidden and when I lost my balls I decided the best way forward was to answer the question truthfully. I could always add that I would be taking supplements and that there would be no change in who I was. But while a new treatment was looked for, there were changes.

Relating to women was much harder. I had a girlfriend at the time of the accident. Her name was Nina. She had been supportive initially, but as I recovered she drifted away. She knew that I could not offer her the future she wanted. No matter what you say about life in the modern world, ultimately a woman needs sperm. No luck here.

I did not seek a replacement. My partner needed no birth control but my sex drive was no longer pushed by testosterone. In fact, the knowledge that I was sterile had already worked to inhibit me. How do you tell somebody on a date: “Oh, and by the way I could never father your children.” With what little drive remaining now gone how could my friends and I stalk the bars as we had, looking for women to charm and ravish?

I also found that my facial and body hair became sparse and I acquired an almost childlike softness in my skin and hair. I had never been so different from my friends but I now appeared to be the odd one out. People would assume that I was the youngest of the group, or perhaps just the least athletic. That was not really true, but I was losing muscle mass and slowly but surely losing some maleness.

Then there was change in my mood. Testosterone causes aggression so without it I was definitely more placid. But this did not seem such a bad thing to me. Without aggression my life seemed simpler somehow. I found that I did not get upset by things as I had done. Or if I did get upset I was more inclined to cry rather than shout. If I felt like that I could generally hide these feelings, but they were there.

In fact I found that all the changes agreed with me. I found myself talking to my endocrinologist about perhaps not going back onto male hormones. Perhaps leading a sexless life? His opinion was sensible but disappointing: Society has men and women and no understanding or appreciation of anything between the two. Advances had been made regarding issues such as intersexed people, but he was right – sex is binary.

Then came the adrenal tumour. It now seems crazy to me that this was not picked up by the physicians attending me, but nothing was investigated until the effects of it were well advanced. Strangely, the tumour may have been advanced by cancer drugs I took, but it was benign so it would not kill me. What it did was produce estrogens (female hormones). In the total absence of androgens (male hormones) the effect was dramatic. Within weeks I found myself with small breasts and almost a female figure with hips and a rounded rear end.

Even when the tumour was discovered the doctors questioned immediate action, given that it was benign and I was suffering no “adverse effects” on my health. Because this combination of circumstances was so rare I found myself questioning why my body seemed intent on becoming female. First remove maleness, then make return to maleness uncomfortable if not impossible, now this! From the sexless middle drive me over the female.

When they scheduled surgery to remove the tumour I stopped the process. There were the usual risks of abdominal surgery which seemed to worry me now – they would not have before. But now I started to wonder about an alternative. Wondering whether letting nature gone crazy, follow its course, might lead me out of this.

I raised the possibility with my friends. I said that I would declare myself to be “of indeterminate sex”. That does not mean “genderfluid” which implies a choice of moving between masculine and feminine personas. No, my problem was physical. My body was changing, not me. To put it mildly my closest friends were horrified, but curiously understanding. There is a lot about losing your balls that makes your friends more than sympathetic.

It seemed like the question that really troubled them was “Are you turning gay?” The truth is that sex of any kind was simply not in consideration. I was simply looking for a way of leading my life with invisibility. So gender neutral clothes, longer hair, but no attempt to appear female.

But despite that, the new me was more often accepted by strangers as female. I started to realise that even in pants and a sweat-top, without makeup or jewellery or any feminine trappings, I looked like a girl. And not an unattractive one either. To add to that my breasts now appeared to poke out through any T-shirt and all but the baggiest of clothes. People would say: “Can I help you miss?” I came to realise that nobody but my friends saw me as a man. And even they were starting to have doubts.

This was not my choice, it was just how things happened. If I used the men’s public toilets I would be stared at, or on one occasion accused of being a fag just on my appearance. In women’s toilets, nobody even noticed me. So where do you go to pee?

Of course, I was not interested in the attention of men. I kept a drab exterior but that did not stop some men from showing interest. And the funny thing about being looked at with interest is that it does make you feel good. Women had no interest in me now, but men (or at least a few of them) appeared to.

My old girlfriend Nina caught up with me about this time. She called me to tell me that her uncle (who I got on well with) had died. Did I want to go to his funeral? We arranged to meet. When she saw me she was truly shocked. She asked me why I was now living as a woman. But I told her I was not – this was just how I looked. I was wearing jeans and a loose fitting cowboy shirt, longish hair free and no makeup. But still she asked the question.

When I turned up to her uncle’s funeral I wore black suit with my hair slicked back into a rat tail. She said that she was half expecting me to turn up in a black dress. As it was some people, including her brother, thought I was a girl in a suit. It made me think how awkward it was for me in such formal situations.

Nina asked me whether I had ever considered wearing women’s clothes to go out. I told her honestly that I never had. I considered myself “a sexless man”, not a woman. But she suggested that I should try.

She pointed out to me that there were other things about me that were less than fully male. She said that I no longer seemed to walk like a man, and that some of my hand gestures were feminine. The idea seemed ridiculous. I had never consciously made any changes. She also said that she had noticed when she first called me that my voice was not as deep as she remembered.

She suggested that we go out with a couple of her girlfriends and make it a foursome. These were new friends of hers that had never met me before. She felt confident that they would never guess I was not a girl if I would let Nina prepare me first. That seemed so far-fetched that I would have put money on it, if I were a gambling type. Just as well.

I confess that the whole idea got me thinking. I had been a man. Now I was in limbo. No man’s land. The land where somebody who is no man, can exist. Could I look at how things are on the other side? Just a peek.

So on Friday afternoon I went round to her place so she could work her magic.

I have to say that I was not ready for just how far she was prepared to go. She had me shave my legs. She had me wash my hair is some special preparations and then she put my hair in rollers! Then she “tidied up” my eyebrows. That meant plucking them. Not too aggressively, she promised. But there was no mistaking the feminine shape. She then applied full makeup – foundation, blusher, eyeliner, false eyelashes, and lipstick. She used stick on nails and pink nail polish.

She had a dress and shoes in my size. She had a handbag for me, and a carefully selected bundle of contents. Then she produced underwear. There were a pair of panties which were made of robust material designed to keep me in shape, and these had the effect of allowing for my penis to be constrained and concealed. The truth is that it was now fairly insignificant. And my ball sack was empty.

Then came the bra. It was the first time I had ever worn one. She had done some measuring earlier in the week. She showed me how to put it on. And as my breasts nestled perfectly into the soft cups, I started to feel that this was somehow the right thing to be wearing. When I looked at myself in the mirror I wondered how I had been able to hide my breasts. They seemed quite big.

I had a good look at myself and struck some poses. The bra accentuated some cleavage and panties showed camel toe, and the legs were long and shapely. Even without the dramatic evening makeup, and the hair in rollers, I looked gorgeous! How was this possible?

The last step was to finish the hair. As she brushed it out I could see that the colour was a little lighter somehow, but she swore that it could be just washed out later. The hairstyle was just so feminine it was unbelievable that this was me.

The dress was perfect for an evening out, dark grey showing my breasts on top and a little too short on the bottom. It had little sleeves that hid the fact that my shoulders were a little too broad, probably the only vestige of a male past still visible

Nina had me practice walking in the heels, but they were a wedge style and no too high, so I easily mastered it. Also, a little bit of practice in handling my handbag, and freshening my lipstick and mascara during the course of the evening, and then we were ready.

She was right. Her girlfriends accepted me totally. I made the occasional blunder but as Nina explained I was from the country and lacked a little sophistication.

The other surprising thing was how easily I slipped into the conversation. Thankfully the discussion was not out of the pages of a woman’s magazine, but covered subjects that I could speak about. We had a few drinks at a bar and then we went to dinner and continued talking.

After dinner somebody suggested another drink at another bar. I was having such a good time that I agreed. It was there that we were approached by four men. We were in a large booth and the men suggested that in exchange for a free round or two, we could squeeze up and share. In my circumstances I was not keen, but I was outvoted. As things go we found ourselves paired up. I was paired with Jimmy.

Jimmy was the quietest of the group, but clearly an intense person. Like me, he had studied economics. He had some forthright views and we ended up in an animated discussion. He was a little exasperated with my opinion and I sort of felt that he did not like me much. I was fine with that. It was just one night in drag so I didn’t need complications. So imagine my surprise when at the end of evening, when the girls had had enough, and the boys were beginning to realise that sex was unlikely, he pushed a note into my hand as he left.

He must have written it when I was in the toilet or something. It said: “I want to know you better, Call me [then his number], Jimmy”.

The following night I went out with my male friends. I washed my hair but it was still too light. It even had some curl left in it. And the eyebrows still looked like Kim Kardashian. I had to wear a baseball cap pulled down low, all night.

We all got into a cab on the way home, and one of the guys pulled off my hat while we were playing around on the back seat. Everyone fell silent in that moment. I had way too much hair. And it was light colored. And it was unmistakably a girl's hairstyle. And the eyebrows screamed feminine.

To put it mildly, the situation demanded an explanation. So, what better than the truth. Last night I went out as a woman. I told them. They had no idea what I was going through and I told them that too. I was close to tears and I think they knew it. As a man I never cried. I was not the same person anymore. They knew that too.

Once again, true friends respond with understanding, and these guys were my friends. Somebody told me that I should never feel that I needed to dress as a man if I wanted to dress as a woman, and everybody warmly agreed. I was agreed that we would catch up again the following day (Sunday) and that if I wanted to dress as a woman, I should.

So I did. It was not the easy option. The best thing would have been to turn up in sweats and just be one of the guys. But I still had the bra. And when I put it on, I was reminded that not only did I have a female body that was becoming increasingly hard to hide, but it was a good body. It was an attractive body. The weather was too good for all-covering sweats. And I had a beautiful body.

I wondered if I could do as good a job as Nina had done the night before. I researched a little on make up as I knew that it was not the same as night time. I went down to the store and bought some items. I bought some single pot makeup, some eyeliner and mascara, lipstick and nail polish, and a shoulder bag to carry it all in. I selected a bag that I thought was gender neutral, but everything else was not. Finally, I bought a curling wand. Just as well it came with instructions.

So with just a little makeup and not to much work on the hair I thought that I had put together a very good look. I added a summer dress that I had bought and new sports shoes with pink socks, also from my morning shopping spree.

The guys were throwing a football around when I got down to the park where we were to meet. They did not notice me and I had an idea that I would run in an intercept the ball, but it is hard to run even in low wedge heels, in the grass. Instead I had to walk up and just stand there.

They stopped. Somebody said: “Is that you?” and I sort of did a twirl. After initial gaping amazement one laughed, another slapped his thigh, but they all agreed I looked great as a girl.

I explained that this was not a permanent thing – I was just giving it a try. But I guess I felt that this was a good way to face the world. I was not hiding some medical condition that could be derided or at best misunderstood. Instead I was in the open and nobody could see anything other than a normal woman.

The usual pattern was that we would play around for an hour or so, before walking to the nearby stadium to watch the afternoon game, and then go to a local garden bar for drinks. The problem was that I found myself even more incapable with the football than usual. My strength had been dissipating for months through my condition, but I still had skills. Now with a dress on those skills seemed to have abandoned me completely. Instead I ended up as umpire and cheerleader.

It should have felt weirder than it did. These friends of mine were totally accepting of me, and I loved them for it.

There were a few awkward moments: A mock tackle from behind with a hand on my breast, a ball between my legs revealing my pink panties. They were accidental and I was OK with these things, but for the guys who were trying hard to accept me, these were a little strange.

At the game the guys really noticed that I was being noticed. Other guys would stare at me. Some dude I did not know but who was friends with one of us asked him: “Hey, who’s the babe?” I think the reply was “That’s my Aunt Mildred” or something like that. My honor was being defended.

Watching rather than playing sport was easier. I have the knowledge and we could all talk the plays through just as we always have.

But at the garden bar, the first thing I did was freshen my makeup, and when I sat back down they could see. It prompted one to say: “You sure make a good-looking girl” which of course, made me blush. Then I ended up drinking wine instead of beer because for a while now, more than one beer makes me feel bloated. In this environment, I am less one of them, but still one of the group – if you know what I mean.

But it was a great day. When we shared a taxi home I asked the guys “How did it go? Me as a girl I mean?”. I got the reply back that they did not expect to see me as anything else from then on. I guess I should not have been surprised, but it felt good. They could see that I had turned a corner, maybe even before I did. I think people who are that close to you often can.

I called Nina and told her all about it. She suggested that we go to the Mall late tomorrow, and buy in a few more things.

Then I had to turn up to work in the morning. I wore my gender neutral clothes but decided to tell my boss that I would be wearing women’s clothes from the following day. He was surprisingly OK with it, and asked if he could make an announcement. It was his idea that I buy a cake for my “re-birthday” and share it over the coffee break. I later found out that my boss had a transgender brother/sister. He gave me time off at the end of the day.

I met with Nina and we had a real splurge on clothes, shoes, accessories and makeup. The first outfit I tried on I wore out of the shop. It was liberating. I started to act really girly. I suppose I was a bit subdued in front of my men friends, but with only her, in the mall, on a shopping spree, I just let it out. It was silly but fun. We finished the day with a manicure, and I got my ears pierced.

I am still not sure where all of these feelings came from. I started my story by saying that I was a masculine young man. I was, but there must have been something feminine inside me somewhere. It took the illnesses to bring it out.

Whatever in me that was still male was snuffed out by Danny. He had moved into town and was working with one of my old pals. He was invited out to drinks and I was there. He told me that he could not believe that I had ever been a man. I teased him by saying that it was not true, and that I had spent years pretending to be a man to make friends with the guys around me. We all laughed.

But later in the week he called and asked me out on a date. It was a bit awkward because I had assumed that I was still attracted to women. I was close to Nina but there was (of course) no sex, or even real intimacy. That was something I missed. When we met for dinner and he walked me home with his arm around me, I decided that maybe my sexuality had shifted to. At my doorstep, he kissed me and that confirmed it.

On the second date he asked whether I would like to stay over at his place. I said I would but I needed to keep my panties on. He played with my breasts and kissed me all the way down, even nuzzling my pubic hair. I was so ashamed that I had a penis. Luckily it never stirred, but when he was kissing me it discharged some fluid that I needed to clean up afterwards.

I woke in the morning in his arms. I was as happy as anyone could be. I started to imagine life as a wife to a man. This man in particular. He wanted to see me again. He wanted to sleep with me. He wanted to have sex with me. I wanted to have sex with him.

Surgery is a big step, but after the cancer and the tumor it seemed like a small thing. It was not, in fact, a small thing. What followed was some pain and discomfort, but I had a purpose now, and purpose makes hardship easier. I appointed Danny as my “Dilator in Chief”. First he used the tools I had been given, but then I took him inside me flesh on flesh. It was the most wonderful thing. Just thinking about it makes me tingle.

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| Our wedding was a huge affair. I only had one bridesmaid – my good friend Nina. But I had three male “Bridal Attendants”. Danny had two sisters and a female cousin beside his best man, so it all worked out.  Of course as a man I had never dreamt of being a bride, but having been one I truly understand what a special thing it is. I made sure that I was at my most beautiful, but you be the judge.  The End | Image result for bride |