The Scholarship

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My sister Hannah was a bad girl. She was smart but devious. She had all the abilities a young person dreamed about but she only knew how to cause trouble. When she ran off with Ivan Jenkins straight after Christmas, my mother was heartbroken, but maybe a bit relieved. She always thought that whatever was behind her problems, she needed to sort things out. Then maybe, she would come home. Or at least settle down.

One of the hardest things for my mother was that Hannah would miss out on the scholarship to Hamperdown School for Girls. With her natural ability Hannah had been able to get high marks, but it was her sporting skill that clinched the invitation – Hannah was a great soccer player. Just a natural.

Sure I was smart too, but not sporty like her. My passions were drama and music. But there were no scholarships on offer for those abilities. And so my fate was to go to continue at our local high school, infamous for its nickname: “the Jungle”. Violence and drugs were endemic. For a quiet guy like me, it was hell.

We were poor and living in a poor neighbourhood, but our mother had hopes for our future. Hamperdown presented big hopes. With Hannah’s departure the hope for at least one of her kids seemed dashed. That was more depressing than the absence of her daughter, but she felt that too. She was not as close to me as to Hannah somehow.

But she was not one to give up. So why should I have been surprised when she burst into my room a few days before end of term holding up a picture of me from the Shakespeare production.

“You can go,” she said excitedly. “You can be Hannah”. She was showing me the picture of me as Rosalind from *As You Like It*. The drama coach Mrs Feldman, had decided to do the play as it was intended with a young man playing the female role, for reasons that you might understand if you knew the play. The picture was of me at my feminine best. I was very convincing – many people had told me. Even when I was playing Rosalind pretending to be a man, some of the audience thought I was a girl (pretending to be a boy pretending to be a girl).

The idea seemed really crazy, but at the same time I was looking for any excuse to escape the Jungle. I was a victim there. My life seemed to be constantly in danger. Hamperdown was full of rich kids. It had great music, dance and drama facilities as well as looking at high performance sport. I really wanted to extend myself in the theatre. The Jungle had Mrs Feldman, and while she tried her best, she was fighting a losing battle. I would never qualify for any decent college.

I had thought that Hannah was so lucky to be getting away from all of this. Could I really take her place? My mother was convinced I could. She stood me in front of the mirror and pulled my hair back. She said: “We could weave some extensions in here and you could have a long pony tail just like Hannah”.

“You’ve forgotten one thing Mom,” I said. “I am hopeless at soccer.”

She had the answers: “The scholarship starts at the beginning of the season, so you can be out with injury. You can use my moonboot from last year. Then the next season doesn’t start for months. That gives you time to cement your place in the school.”

So I had about 5 weeks to get ready. I had to tell my friends that I was going out of town and that I might even quit school. There were only two guys that I really committed to stay in touch with – my besties Howie and Jim. Everybody else could follow me on social media – but I was not a regular poster.

I sort of let my mother take charge. She was so enthusiastic. She could not really afford it but she had me go to a salon to get the hair weave and a facial makeover. The ladies at the salon were really surprised that a boy would want to be feminized like this, but I assured them that is what I wanted. I told them it was for a drama project. My mother swore them to secrecy.

After the hair was woven in it was dyed with my hair into the same light brown shade with blonde highlights that Hannah wore. The facial makeover included some hair removal (although I did not have much going on there) and my eyebrows were plucked. It is truly amazing how a small change in the shape of eyebrows changes the face. I did not even need makeup to look girlish after they had finished, but when the makeup went on … wow!

My mother was thrilled.

She spent a lot of time showing me what to do with long hair. I had never realised what chore it was. I needed to learn a new way to wash my hair, how to use a conditioner, how to dry it, how to brush it, how to tie it back, and up, and braid it, and twist it, and curl it. It was not the kind of stuff my sister did with her hair, but my mother was clearly getting a kick out of showing me.

I have to say that I have always had an idea of how a girl should look, and that was closer to my mother’s vision than my sister’s.

My mother also spent time on showing me feminine movements and mannerisms. This really interested me. As an actor, I consider it my craft to be able to observe and imitate. I started to really look forward to putting all that I was learning into practice. It gave me a new appreciation for actors who genuinely play characters of another gender. It is not easy, at least to begin with.

With respect to voice I had something of a major advantage. My voice broke a long time ago but in my singing I have always been interested in getting to the high notes. With practice I have been singing in the octave C6 like a countertenor. Converting this skill to a female voice was easy. And I can easily sing across the alto range in full voice.

The hardest part of the whole thing for my mother was with my male parts. I was encouraged to research this myself. I would need to learn how to conceal my bulge. It was not a big package but as my mother pointed out, it might grow when I was among nobody but girls. That seemed to me to be a real possibility.

My mother proposed a drastic solution. She had learned that a certain type of birth control pill could effectively end troublesome erections. She had access to a supply and I could take them daily. She understood that the dose would not cause permanent damage, it was just to keep things under control.

As it turned out she was not entirely right. The pills also caused skin fat redistribution and breast growth, but that came later. At the time this all started, this just seemed like a practical step. I had researched how to “tuck” and there was no doubt that erections could be a painful problem. I took the pills.

And then, before I knew it I was at Hamperdown, pretending to be my sister Hannah, but really a boy in a school full of girls.

I guess it was “method acting” – totally immersing myself in the role. I was not really playing my sister, but a feminine version of me. But the role was complete and constant. It had to be. Hamperdown was a girls’ boarding school.

Sleeping arrangements were private booths in rooms of four, and toileting for each room was private, so I knew in advance that I could keep up my physical disguise if I was careful, but I needed to present myself and relate to other students, as a girl. Luckily, I latched on to some great girls who were ready to be my friends.

Although I wore my moonboot, I was taken into the soccer squad and became friends with the girls there. What worried me was that somebody might see through this, but as it turns out, sports scholarship girls are about the least girly girls at Hamperdown, so I had nothing to worry about there.

That leads to the next problem. When the moonboot comes off what am I going to do? I am hopeless at soccer, and even if I was good, how would I go in the changing rooms with no tits and a schlong between my legs? My feigned injury could not go on forever. I needed to have a plan.

My other friends were more in the arty set. I gravitated towards music and drama and those girls were different. I think that my biggest fear is that I would be found out and that would be that. I was well prepared, with the look and the voice, but the rest was just acting. Could other actors see that I was just pretending?

Things came together through dance and drama classes. I mentioned that I was convinced that I could pass as a girl because of my role in a gender-bending Shakespeare play. Well, Hamperdown was also casting for a work by Shakespeare. It was “The Merchant of Venice” where the leading lady (Portia) delivers her key speeches while disguised as a man. I had no real expectation of getting the role because I was a junior, but I was told that my male voice was so good that I was in the running for the lead. My moonboot would need to come off in time for the production.

I confess that I love Shakespeare, and not everybody does. I think that people who remember the lines and act as if it was a movie or TV, completely miss the point. The lines are verse and have to be recited as verse within the context of the scene. Anyway, I like to think that my love of the language came through when I perform any work by the Bard.

The director of the show asked that I be excused from sports so that I could concentrate on the play. I had won the role of Portia. The head of soccer was furious. I had been at the school for months now, without setting foot on a soccer pitch, which was the reason I was there.

As with many schools, there always seems to be a conflict between arts and sport. I just stayed out of it as best I could. When I was put on the spot I just said that I missed sport but I wanted to take advantage of a special opportunity in a big one-off production. In truth, I did not care for soccer and only wanted to act, but I could not say that while I was on a sports scholarship.

The production was to be a joint effort with a local boys-only School - the nearby Corneagle Military Academy. Jason Dommet was selected from that school to be my Bassanio. I would be lying if I did not confess that even then, I found him to be very good looking. Certainly all the other girls thought so. I told them that I could “keep it professional” without telling them that I was not attracted to men. Not then, at least.

Jason shared my love of acting, although he had other interests as well. He was a high achiever academically and he played tennis for the school and was in the track team. He also enjoyed Shakespeare, and told me that he understood it so much better after talking with me.

Opening night was a big deal. The Board of the School (which granted the scholarships) was in attendance, and my mother was there too, telling anybody who listened that her “daughter” was in the lead role. Everything went really well right up until the last few lines.

Jason turned to me and said: “Sweet Doctor, you shall be my bedfellow…”. He was holding my hands as we rehearsed, but what I was not ready for was the look in his eyes. It was a “you shall be my bedfellow” look. It threw me. I was drilled enough to get my last few lines out, but I was shaken – not by the look I got, but my reaction to it. In that moment, I wanted to be his bedfellow.

I wondered if I had become so totally wrapped up in my role that I was starting to respond as a girl automatically. How else can you explain why a normal heterosexual guy could have a thought like that?

All the school staff and officials were very pleased with me. It was agreed that despite being only a junior I was the stand out performer. My mother heard all the praise and she was brimming with pride. I heard her saying things like: “She has always played characters, ever since she was a little girl.” I never was, so where that came from I do not know.

Instead I spent a sleepless night wrestling with the realisation that I had turned gay. I not only wanted Jason to fuck me, I wanted a pussy between my legs so that I could be fucked properly.

It does not help when your fellow cast members and even friends in the audience have noticed. I got: “Jason really, like really likes you”, “Isn’t he gorgeous”, “You are sooo lucky that he wants to date you”. He never even asked me out. It was as if everybody could see chemistry there, except us. We were only feeling it. I was, and I am sure he was too.

We had only three more performances, so we needed to keep it together for the play. But those words got to him every night we played it, and to me too. It was like Shakespeare’s words were magic and making us fall in love, despite the natural barrier we faced.

After the last performance Jason told me that some of the cast were getting together for the traditional closing night party. I told him that as a junior I was barred, but that I might be able to sneak away. It was a crazy thing to consider. If I was caught it was all over – the scholarship, the drama programme, Hamperdown – everything. And for what? A chance to party with a boy who I could never be with?

But I did. I sneaked out. I went to the party. I spent the evening with Jason. I had the good sense not to drink too much alcohol, but sense ended when he put his arms around me. I kissed him. All the time. We just spent the evening with our tongues stuck together.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I had age on my side so it could go no further. Twice I needed to remind him: “Jason, I’m a junior.” It would have been statutory rape.“When is your seventeenth birthday?” he asked. That was the age of consent in our state. When I told him, he said: “I can wait until then.” “I’m not sure that I can,” I panted. I should not have said it. It was just what I was thinking. There was no thought in my head that the only reason that I could not have sex with him was that I did not have a vagina for him to enter. I had a penis. Not a big one, but a penis, with an ugly pair of balls hanging below it. When I got back to my room later that night, the thought of it made me burst into tears. |  |

Fortunately, the soccer competition was over, but the soccer coach asked me to join the squad for off-season fitness training now that my leg was good. This new set of worries allowed me to forget a little about the Jason problem. But I was not unfit and was at least able to go running. It was the coach who told me that I needed a training bra.

Somehow, despite the irritation that now seemed so obvious, I had completely missed the breasts that had developed on my chest. My mother’s birth control pills had not only curtailed erections, but had seen me develop breasts, hips and a female behind. I should have been worried but all I could think of was how my new shape would make me more desirable to Jason.

I started to find myself becoming more girly. I was easily the most girly of all those in the scoocer training squad, and I was the only one who was not a girl. I mixed more with the drama group socially, and “the it girl group” who were into fashion hair and makeup. Somehow it seemed like a better fit for me.

Without even one minute of game time, the soccer coach knew that I was lost to the team. As soon as a ball was introduced to the drills I was hopeless. I pleaded that I was just a little out of touch, but I think that Coach felt I had gone over to the other side somehow. I was the very opposite of a female jock, or what the other girls called a “jockette”. He said that he would need to advise the Board that I would be dropped from the soccer squad. It was over. I was very upset and I called my mother to cry over the phone.

As a boy I never really cried. Now that I was a girl I found myself very close to her and able to share all kinds of emotions. She told me that she had lost my sister long ago. She told me that I was the girl that she had always wanted Hannah to be. I was her Hannah now. She was not expecting the old me to come home. I felt so happy that I just wished I could hug her down the phone line.

It turned out that she called the Board and my drama teacher. The Board had never granted a drama scholarship before, but they had decided to give me one, so that I could stay at Hamperdown. All my friends including some of the girls on the soccer squad, were happy for me. I had come to realize that as a girl, I was popular.

I did stay on at Hamperdown, right the way through to graduation. Apart from the small amount of time that I needed after summer break to recover from my surgery, I committed myself 100% to school. By the time I was finished Jason was in college out of state. We had not seen each other for a while so I figured that things were over for us. Even if they were not I figured they would be when I came out as trans on Facebook, the day after graduation.

But I was wrong. I had a call from him. He said that he wanted to see me. He said that he could not believe that I had once been a guy and he wanted to see whether what we had those few years before, was real. He wanted to know whether, if he saw me face to face, he could still think of me as female even though he knew the truth.

He took me to dinner. I said to him: “You know the magic words.”

He said: “Sweet Doctor, you shall be my bedfellow.”

I threw my arms around him and kissed him. “I shall be, my Bassanio.” And I was. And I remain, to this day, his loving and satisfied, bedfellow.

The End

© Maryanne Peters 2019

