Escape from Neverland

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Parker Ainsley Newhart was a pretty boy. There is no denying that. All the girls said it, and the boys would have to concede it, although they would never like to. To look like Parker did and be male, could be unsettling.

As he got older, people may have suggested that he was gay simply because of the way he looked. Parker would just laugh at the idea, and he had a laugh and a smile that seemed to charm people immediately, and make them grin back. So, were men who were not otherwise gay attracted to him? Would he consider a dalliance with a man, even by way of experiment?

“Never!” That would be his reply. “Never!” He would laugh, and the questioner would too.

Even in high school students may have called his appearance girlish, and perhaps teased him for it. But it was water off a duck’s back for Parker. He could easily have said – “I am born this way and I am not teasing you for being born stupid”, but that was not his way. His nature was too good for argument. What he lived for was fun.

His sense of the enjoyment of life seemed to be as contagious as his smile. When he joined a group the talk turned to how to make things even better. It won him friends and seemingly no enemies.

Some stranger might say – “Hey, what’s with that girly looking guy? Do you know him?”

“Oh, that’s Pan,” would come the reply. “He is a fun guy.”

He won the nickname Pan because when the school put on a production of Peter Pan, he got the lead, which usually goes to a girl. It was just agreed that it almost seemed as if the role was written for him. He was ageless, mischievous and almost magical. He was Pan – Parker Pan or Peter Pan, it made no difference. Pan.

“Pan is the Greek god of sex and fertility,” he liked to say with that cheeky smile of his. The story goes that he once fucked the moon, and that he taught mankind how to masturbate – I mean the god, the guy with that flute, not Parker Newhart.

Somebody teased Pan about his second name too. They started calling him Paisley, like a cross between Parker (or Pan) and Ainsley. Pan turned up the next day with a paisley shirt on. It was just like him to do that. He could turn an arrow into a pennant.

I suppose the big surprise was how well he got on with Gordon “Gorilla” Musgrove. Gor as we called him, may well have been described as the school bully. I mean he would pull people out of their chairs and take other kid’s lunches, and he was too big and strong to refuse. But the thing is, he would give the lunches away and offer seats to another, and anybody he chose as a victim seemed to become entitled to his protection against any other bully. His was a complex character but I suspect, fundamentally good.

He had picked on Pan once, and Pan had responded with his usual smile. It was enough for Gor to give him a nod of respect, for all to see. It was like copper bottom insurance.

Pan dressed like everybody else, paisley shirt excepted, and nobody ever saw him wear anything other than masculine, until the school production the year following “Peter Pan”. How could he not get the part of Peter. His name was Pan! There were plenty who thought that it was a girl at the top of the cast list, if only because this role is always played by a girl, and Parker can be a girl’s name too. But are green tights less than masculine? All they revealed to everybody was that Pan had a great pair of legs, and long ones considering his small size. They made the bulge at the top of them look completely out of place.

He was a great success in the role and even adopted the voice that would be expected of the character – higher pitched like a young boy, or a girl in the role of a young boy. Pan’s sister joked that he should go to the closing night party in one of her dresses, just as a joke, and just as a joke, Pan agreed.

The truth is that everything about Pan had drawn him those performances, and not just the name. He was a natural actor, if there is such a thing. His family said that he was always putting on a show even at home – a real ham. He could hold an audience, even if it was only an audience of one. That was his charm, and his defense. Everybody loved Pan, but some more than others.

Gor had been working behind the scenes in the production, building and shifting sets. He was at the after party and that was where he saw Pan in a dress with a barrette in his shortish hair and a little makeup. Pan was laughing about it and hamming it up with girly poses and the like, but Gor was just staring.

Poor Gor was just confused. There is no reason to believe that he saw Pan as being anything other than a guy like any other guy before that night, but after that, things changed. It was like Gor could never look at Pan again without seeing the pretty girl at the closing night party, just dressed in male clothes.

Pan could see something of what was going on – he is no fool, and a natural actor needs to be able to read his audience. Maybe he told Gor to snap out of it, but there was no sign of that. Or maybe Pan just decided to run with it because he liked Gor. Not that it was anything sexual – or not then anyway. Gor was protective of Pan in his way, and it seemed that Pan enjoyed being protected.

All that everybody else at school saw was that Gor and Pan were getting closer, and Pan was changing – he was slowly becoming more feminine. He grew out his hair and kept it straight and shiny, and he started wearing more colorful tops and even pastel trainers. And Gor liked what he saw.

Who knows about what was Pan’s sexuality before all of this? He denied being gay and always seemed to be interested in girls, but maybe he was hiding something. Or maybe he was just uncertain. Some people are. Some people never know their sexuality until they fall in love, and then some discover that what they thought they were, they weren’t.

I am not talking about Gor, or not intending to. I think that he was attracted to women, and he never would have fallen for Pan had he not been dressed as a girl at that party, but he did fall, and he fell hard. It seemed clear that Pan understood that, and he was not about to hurt his friend.

School graduation was on us soon enough and with that the final prom. The thing is that nobody was surprised when Gor turned up with Pan on his arm, dressed from head to toe like a woman. If there was surprise it was that the top of that dress seemed to holding two respectable breasts, and that Pan seemed to be able to move in grace and style even in heels.

Anyway, they only had eyes for each other and the seemed to be clinched tightly in slow dances, and even in the upbeat ones, almost oblivious to the music. It has to be said that Pan looked beautiful that night, with hair up and nails painted and professionally done make up. But there was still the old Pan with a smile for everybody and a funny quip.

It was not as if we even thought of him as transgender. I think somebody suggested it at the dance, but Pan just laughed.

“Lose my crown jewels? “Never!” That was his reply. “Never!”

So, it was just Pan, putting on a show for all of us, but mainly for Gor.

But years later we all discovered that when Gor went off to college on a football scholarship, Pan went too, as his girlfriend.

Last I heard they got married, which I guess means that Pan became a woman, and said yes instead of never.

The last that I learned was that Mrs. Parker Musgrove was doing a reprise of her school production role and playing Peter Pan in some regional theater production, so I guess that confirms it. It is usually a woman who takes that role.

The End

Author’s Note:

Erin’s sent me a seed about a girlish boy – “he's a natural ham and plays it up getting his family laughing … even the school bully thinks he is too cute to beat up. He eventually ends up playing Peter Pan …”.

I had a vision of this person and I wrote this.