The Beautiful Gamer

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My father always said that soccer was not a game for real men.

“I mean they wear those stupid shorts, and when a guy gets tackled, if you can call it that, the guy falls to the ground crying like a baby, until the umpire comes over to penalize the other guy! And what kind of score in 1:1?! And if is Nil:nil then both teams should lose their pay or get fired. That’s not a sport!”

I was lucky that I had an older brother who played on the gridiron. He is nice guy but a bit of a knucklehead. He and my father could get on like a house on fire.

I prefer soccer. They call it “the beautiful game” because of the way that it covers the whole field and ebbs and flows until that moment, whether it be beating a man, scoring a goal or saving one, when special skills are on display. It needs stamina too – one and half hours of continuous running up to ten miles in a game for some players. Some games are about bursts of power or speed, but soccer is about skill and endurance.

It was my game. I started by kicking a basketball around, but as It got scuffed so badly on the driveway, my father relented and allowed my mother to buy me a soccer ball. I eventually got three – one for the driveway, one for the grass and a third soft one to kick inside. Even in my room alone I would practice using my feet to keep the ball moving.

My mother said that she was happy that I had chosen soccer. She said that I was too small for contact sport. There is contact in soccer as she was to learn, but she was happy with me playing and getting prizes for being good at something. My father regarded every prize as a joke, as if I was winning awards for needlepoint.

I suppose that I thought that I would go on to play at college, but it turned out that I was even too small for the sport I loved. I got to 5 feet 7 and then I stopped growing. Everybody else in the team towered over me. As a shooter a whole area to be used on attack – competing for the ball in the air at the goal mouth – was lost to me. Ducking under people is limited where the ball is played on the ground most of the time. I had all the skills, but my size was going to defeat me.

I had hopes of a soccer scholarship to college. But that seemed to be fading away. Even though I was scoring goals the scouts were telling me that I would never make it. Then one of them said: “You would even be small for a women’s team, and many of them are desperate for players, especially strikers.”

It is the kind of statement that cut me like some of the things my father said, but it was from a soccer guy. When I got home, I just went online to have a look at soccer scholarships for women. I was amazed to see that they were worth more than men’s scholarships. The biggest at $60,000 worked out to $240,000 over a four-year degree.

I was just curious, that’s all. But somewhere around this time I started to get this crazy idea in my head that I could pretend to be a girl and go to college on a women’s soccer scholarship. There was one other thing that made it feasible, and that was my name – Tracy.

My father gave me that name without even thinking that it could be a girl’s name. There were a couple of football players called Tracy. I was named after them. But on paper I could be male or female. It is one of those gender-neutral names.

We had a girls’ team at school, but they were terrible. The best of the girls played a second game each weekend for the local recreation center junior girls’ soccer team. They were better, but their game was built on defense. They needed just one good attacker.

One of the girls in the team was called Wanda. Unlike most of the other girls in the team she was pretty and like to dress like a girl. She even wore eyeliner when she played soccer, and had her long hair braided neatly. To be honest, she was the only one that I noticed. I decided that I would ask her if she was prepared to add another player to the rec club team – an attacker.

“We really need one, Trace,” she said. “Is she good. What’s her name?”

“I am talking about me, but dressed as a girl,” I said. “Just for a bit of fun, that’s all. But I guarantee you will win some games with me up front.”

“I don’t doubt that,” she said. She knew what I was capable of. “But it is cheating – like serious cheating. We would be knocked out the league and lose all our points.”

“What points?” I knew that would hurt. She had no points to lose. “And how could they say you were cheating if you didn’t know. I would not tell the team that I am really a boy. Surely they could not penalize the team if the team did not know. I am just asking you because I might need some help to pass as a girl.”

She started to look me up and down. She started to think out loud: “There a two other girls from school so they will know you … but not your female cousin … but they may need to be brought in on it … fully deniable of course, like you say. We could pull your hair back and use a fake pony tail … that would work on an off the field. You actually don’t have strong male features … still, we would need to dress you up … and get you some breasts … and hide whatever you have down below.”

“Is that a yes?” I asked. Not then it wasn’t, but a few days later it was.

The only changes that might be hard to hide was the removal of a little body hair. I was terrified that my father would notice some hairs removed between and below my eyebrows, but it was done so the I could brush them together as a boy and into a smooth arch as a girl. I could conceal shaved legs in long pants.

Eye makeup and lip color could be put on and taken off, like the hair piece. A tight one piece swimsuit stuffed in places and worn under my playing strip provided the shape I needed. But all of this was easy compared to learning how women move.

It is not something that a guy ever notices, except maybe when we call out: “Hey Sweet Cheeks, can you throw me that ball back?” and every girl does the same thing tossing it from the elbow. It just seems that they are built differently.

I went out to rec center park with Wanda and learned all about girlish sport, and feminine movement in general.

Of course, sporty girls are not the same. Female ball players can throw like a guy. Female tennis players. Golfers, volley ballers, play like men. They may not have the same power, but they play the same way. Wanda’s point was that I needed to appear to be a woman from a distance, and that meant learning how a woman on a sports field can be picked out. It had to come as second nature to me, and (as I well knew) that means practice.

“You don’t have to be pretty,” she said. “But the prettier you are the less likely it is that people will think you that you might be a guy. And actually, you could be quite pretty. But like anything else, that requires effort.”

My hair was just long enough and with a cut long in front that it could be pulled back and the fake hair attached. The connection between fake and real hair could be concealed with a large scrunchie or a ribbon in club colors. The long hair could be left loose or braided. It was a feminine look, so like Wanda I would wear a little makeup on the field.

“You can’t change with us either side of the game, but not all girls do,” said Wanda. “Arrive well before the game in your tracksuit, then slip it off and put on your boots.”

The first time that I turned out for the rec club team we scored two goals and we won the game. I loved it, because compared to all the other players I had the skills. I deliberately tried not to be too physical as male soccer players tend to be, because I was playing with girls. That was the only thing that our coach criticized.

“Tracey, you need to show more aggression,” he said. He was the father of one of the other players. He was very pleased to have me aboard but he felt that he needed to say something.

“I am sorry Coach, I guess I am just not that kind of player,” I said, in a voice that I had been working on, but came out sounding like a 10-year-old. It was something I needed to work on.

The Coach could not work out why I was not playing for the school team, but he was still able to provide support for an application for a football scholarship, especially after I had scored enough goals to get us into the inter-club finals. We lost, but that was because I called in sick. Finals was a big deal and I wanted to stay out of the limelight.

As it happened, I had got my scholarship. I told my father that I was going to college and it was because I played soccer. My brother was not going to college, but that was mainly because of his academic record.

My father suggested that before I went I should get a haircut, but I had been growing my hair. My ponytail was getting so ratty that even a pony would be ashamed, but I wanted a hairstyle that suited my feminine look – the look that said that I was no-way a guy.

Wanda got a scholarship too, but others missed out and she reminded me that I was somebody’s place by deceit. She was not happy about that, but she was happy that we would be sharing a room. It was not because we had anything going on – she said that to her I was a sister – but because we shared my secret.

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| But at about this time we heard the news that it seemed that I was not alone. There was a woman who had been playing college soccer under a scholarship for years, and she was not a woman at all. Her name was Athena Del Rosario and she had been playing all four years for the University of California Santa Cruz as their goalkeeper.  Nobody knew. She called it living and playing in “stealth” with nobody in her team, let alone the opposition knowing her secret.  “That is what I have to do,” I said to Wanda. “I just need to keep it under wraps, and then I can come out when I have my college degree. She got accepted in the end.”  “But she is transgendered, and you are not,” Wanda scolded me. “She is a woman trying to play women’s sport with a physical impediment. What are you?”  It got me thinking. But the simple conclusion was this: I was at college doing well and I was playing the game that I loved to play, and doing well there too. | Athena Del Rosario in 2016 |

But because Wanda was pissed about the whole transgender thing, she was the one who put me on the female hormones. We both to daily protein shakes and she doctored mine with hormones. She told me later that it was just to show me that transwomen were very different from a man pretending to be a woman – hormones do take from you some muscle and also some aggression. The strange thing is that it took me so long to realize what was happening to me.

When I went home for Christmas my father said that I looked like a girl.

“I told you that soccer is a sport for queers,” he said. “Now you are starting to look like one with the pony tail and everything.”

But for Christmas my mother made sure that it did not turn into a serious fight. She was full of praise for what I could achieve as a college boy. I was the first in my family to go.

But by summer break I knew there was something wrong. I guess that by wearing a bra all day I never really noticed what was happening to me chest, and by tucking my genitals away I never noticed what was going on down there. When I was getting ready to spend summer as a guy and go to the beach, it suddenly became clear that I would need to wear a bikini top, or I would have a lot of explaining to do.

Wanda came clean, but she was upset and blamed herself. The fact is that she was my only true friend at college because she was the only one who knew my secret. I hugged her and told her that I was sure that my body would recover. I never told her but I was still mad about what she had done. It was just that I could not afford to lose her friendship.

We never had a sexual relationship, but I would have been happy too. It was just that she was bigger than me and she was looking for a bigger guy than me.

But the fact is that the summer I had planned was not going to happen, so I spent it with her, as a girl. We got jobs working together waiting tables. I quickly found out that the flesh on my chest could be pushed up to make a cleavage which doubled my tips.

The hormones seemed to have no effect on my sporting skills. When the next season started I was playing better than ever, and I picked up the prize for the best player at the end of season. It turned out that Wanda had started putting doses back in my protein shakes. I guess it was professional jealousy.

At the end of our season, Wanda started going out with a guy on the football team – his name was Wade Gartrell. He was a big good-looking guy, but I heard that he had never had a girlfriend before Wanda, and there had even been a rumor that he was gay. He came around to pick up Wanda. He seemed nice, although he did look at me strangely.

Christmas was coming around again and I was dreading going home looking the way I did. When I looked in the mirror my problem was so obvious. I had small titties and an even smaller wiener, and my hair as now down over my shoulders and probably due to the hormones, it was soft and thick. I had been using depilatory cream on my face so regularly that it seemed that no whisker would ever re-emerge. In short I looked like a girl. The pretense had become fact. I did not want to face my father.

I sent a message to my mother that I had a chance to go out of state to a special training camp and would not be home for Christmas. She was heartbroken, but I said that I would be able to call.

Wanda went home for Christmas. Wade came around to see her off and as she drove off he asked me when I would be leaving.

“I am staying here,” I said. “I have problems at home.”

“Me too,” he said. “I have football, but I have some problems at home too, and I don’t think that Wanda will be able to help me solve them.”

It seemed an odd thing to say, but I told him that if he needed somebody to hang around with outside of his football team, I would be available. It just seemed like a good thing to do, and a college town can be a lonely place during Christmas break.

I was pleased when he called. I asked him if he wanted to go to a bar and drink beer, but he said that he did that with the guys, and with me he would prefer to go to a folk music club and drink some nice wine. I got dressed up in one of Wanda’s outfits because I did not have much of my own, and I went out with Wade.

I was a heterosexual guy. I always thought that I was normal. I never looked at another guy in a sexual way. My experience waitressing had brought me into contact with plenty of guys who desired the woman that they thought I was, but I never felt anything about them. But somehow things were different with Wade. In many ways he reminded me of my father, who was a footballer like him when he as younger. I felt that I had been drifting apart from my father for many years and just the idea of having Wades arms around me seemed like getting back to him.

But that sounds weird. Maybe it was just the wine and music, and the intimate environment of that little club, and two people sharing limited space and limited time.

We went back to his place. I should not have done it, or let it get that far, but he led, and I followed. We kissed, and it did not seem weird at all. But when our lips parted, while I wanted more, I knew that it could not happen.

“I want to, but I can’t Wade,” I said.

“Babe, it is up to you,” he said. “But there is something about you that is special. I think that we should be together. Tell me why not.”

I swallowed hard. How many “girls” have been in this position? He was a big guy, and he could beat me to a pulp. I was in his place. I was a guy wearing a dress, cruelly deceiving another guy into believing that I was female. I almost felt that he would be justified in hurting me. Do you trust somebody that you think is a good person not to kill you?

One thing I did know was that he deserved an explanation. I was not about to just run from his place refusing him without explaining why. I swallowed again.

“Wade … I’m not really a girl.” There. It was said.

He looked at me blankly. I suppose I should expect that. What I did not expect was for him to say – “Show me”.

That stunned me. He did not throw me out the door. I did not seem as if he did not believe me. Why would he want to see that offending thing that rendered his girl disgusting to all men.

But I did what I was told. I lifted my skirts and pulled down the tight granny pants that kept the pathetic junk hidden.

“Motherfucker” he said, surprisingly softy staring at my exposed crotch. “Well, I guess this confirms it. I must be gay.”

He took me into his arms, and he kissed me like there was no tomorrow. But there was a tomorrow – and I was there, in bed beside him when it dawned. It had been a night of total bliss and orgasms beyond all imagination.

“I have a game three days after Christmas, but I you want to have Christmas dinner with your parents and then another with my parents, we had better get ready right away,” Wade said.

We had time to get gifts and for me to get a new outfit and pay my first visit to a beauty salon.

We called ahead to announce our arrival. We went to his parent’s house on Christmas Eve.

“We were worried you were gay,” his mother said. “But we are so happy that you have found Tracy - such a pretty girl - at last.”

Wade just had to explain that I was a special kind of girl. His father had trouble at first, but what seemed more important was that nobody should know that his rugged footballing son was gay, and with me on his arm, nobody would.

“And you’re a sportswoman too?” Mr. Gartrell said. “I am not a follower of soccer, but I understand most of the world is.” He reminded me of somebody.

The next stop would be a harder one. We arrived at my house and my mother came to the door to see a man and a woman standing there. She was expecting that, but for me to be the man. But she was only confused a moment. She looked at me and realized, and simply ushered us inside.

“Honey, Tracy is home, and she ha brought a young man with her.”

“She? What are you talking about?” My father came bustling into the hall. If he was puzzled before, he was now completely perplexed.

Wade knew what to do. He stepped forward and thrust out his hand.

“I’m Wade Gartrell, Tracy’s boyfriend,” he said.

My father instinctive took his hand, but he was looking at me. I had taken off my jacket and adjusting my curls and then proudly taking Wade by the arm.

“Wade plays quarterback for my college’s team, Daddy,” I said, being sure to give him that new name.

He just stared at me. But then he realized that Wade was gripping his hand, and his eyes went back to him.

“Wade Gartrell? Yes I think I have heard of you. You’re playing well I think. Thank goodness Tracy has no bought one of those soccer players home for Christmas. ‘The Beautiful Game’ – give me a break!”

The End

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