Solicitation

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

I don’t like prostitution. I have sisters, and even a daughter, although I have not seen her in a while. I think that prostitution demeans women. I worship women. I think that the female form is the most beautiful thing in the world. I think that the soul of woman – the giver of life – is too special to be sold and degraded.

These days prostitution is allowed in most towns and cities. The law against solicitation is just to keep the streets clean of behavior that might offend regular folks. That’s the way I see it anyway. We don’t want whores shaking their titties at respectable folks. I use the law when I have to.

I was out on Halloween night a few years ago. I was keeping the streets safe for the kids, but well after they were all in bed I kept patrolling even after the end of my shift, just to keep an eye on things.

It looked like solicitation to me, and the kind of in-your-face solicitation that I disapprove of – a scantily dressed woman trying to flag down a car. I did not put my lights on – I just pulled over.

“Officer, thank God you stopped.” It was a man’s voice. It was a guy in a dress looking for trade.

“Get in the back,” I instructed. I have a locking system and a grille. When you are a small town cop forced to work alone and you take in prisoners you need that. It did not surprise me when this perp stepped inside. It was as they say: Caught red-handed – whatever that means. Why red hands?

“I was at a party, officer. A fancy dress party with my wife. We had both been drinking. Chazz was supposed to be driving us home. He just drove off with my wife. She shouted out that it was over. Can you believe it? Totally out of left field! And she left me with nothing! Absolutely nothing – not even my phone. Just lipstick and mascara in this bag, and for some reason a tampon and a bunch of condoms.”

“No surprises there,” I said to the culprit. “I am taking you in. Soliciting.”

“No, no officer. I am not a transvestite, let alone a tranny hooker. This is just a costume.”

I could see in the mirror that the dark wig had been pulled off. It revealed a mop of blonde curls, far more feminine than the straight wig, when viewed with the smoky eye makeup and the bright red lipstick. I have seen pictures of girls like this – the pretty ones with only one ugliness – the sex organ that did not belong.

“Look, I don’t believe in the paperwork this late at night,” I said. “I just want to get you off the streets. I put you in the cells for a bit, then you get your call and you can go. This is small town policing. There will be no consequences so long as you promise to stay off our streets.”

My prisoner just slumped back in the seat. I guess that he had worked out that it was going to happen the way I said it would. They all do that in the end.

We have only two cells, and one I usually reserve for prostitutes. In the other cell there was already a resident – Jake Bowler, a mean, local troublemaker.

“Are you a man or a woman?” I felt constrained to ask. It is not what you are but how you identify, so they say these days. I really don’t understand anymore.

“I am a man,” came the reply. But there she stood – smooth body, long legs, heels, short skirt, maybe the tits were fake, but the fake hair was in her hand and the curls were hers, along with the big painted eyes and lips.

It seemed so wrong, but a choice was made. Into the cell with Jake this person strode.

I heard Jake say, “Hey, Baby, my dreams have come true,” just before I stepped out of the cell hallway and locked that second door behind me, too.

I had a call. A road accident down on 42. Officer Paul Deeks was on shift and he was in route, but calling for back up. I should have stayed at the station but no law enforcement officer likes to babysit prisoners while there are people in real danger.

I left the station, and did not get back until my morning shift started.

Officer Deeks said to me that the prisoners were over to me to process or discharge, but he added: “I don’t know why you put Jake Bowler’s girlfriend in with him. She had her period last night and made a big mess.”

He was gone before I got through the outer door and could see Bowler standing like an animal guarding a carcass that lay whimpering on the bunk.

I drew my weapon and shouted: “Jake. Step away from that prisoner and approach the bars.”

As I cuffed him through the bars I could see the blood on his hands.

“I thought that she was a woman, Pudge,” he said. “Well, I guess that she might as well be one now.” He was pushing it, using the nickname I only allow my friends and officers to use.

With that monster at bay I went over to the bunk. A bed sheet was jammed between the legs, soaked in blood. The face now smeared of the makeup, was white with shock. Medical treatment was needed. I knew that.

But I also knew that I was in trouble. Prisoners placed in custody by me are my responsibility unless properly transferred. I had put somebody into the same cell as a known violent criminal, and somebody that I should have known was no more capable of looking after himself than if he were a woman.

Now there had been a jailhouse assault. Not my first, but a serious one.

Jake and I both knew that his claim ‘I thought that she was a woman ‘ would never work. The tranny had said he was a man out loud. He chose the male cell. But that is just me searching for excuses. I should never have put him in there.

I picked up the victim. I was amazed at how light this body was. The subdued whimpering continued.

On the way out I said to Jake, “This will be the one that does you in. I will make sure of it.” But the truth was that Jake was the son of Norman Bowler, the most important man in our town.

I took this bleeding creature to the clinic, and I waited until the doctor came to see the poor thing, and was still there to hear his report.

“He will live, Chief Pullman, but not the life he should have had. It looks like the chain belt worn by the crossdresser was used to strangle his genitals. The testicles are both ruptured beyond repair and the penis is very badly damaged. He’s sedated now, so you won’t get much out of him.”

I went in to see the victim anyway. It’s part of my job as I see it. You hate crime when you see the damage it causes. Good police officers hate crime.

But this was my doing, too.

I headed back to the station and Jake’s father Norman Bowler was there. He was ready to pay police bail – the informal arrangement we use given that the judge only sits in town once a week. But he had been speaking with Jake, and it seemed that they already had a plan for the boy’s defense. He walked into my office and sat down.

“My son tells me that you put him in a cell with a transsexual,” Norman said. “Jake tells me that the poor boy tried to operate upon himself … wanted to rid himself of the offending junk, as it were. Jake tells me that he did his best to help, but the boy lost a lot of blood. The way Jakes says it, his heart sort of went out to this poor crazed soul. The tale touched my heart too.”

“I think you’ll find that a hard story to make stick, Mr. Bowler,” I said. “I think that you’ll find that this man was no transsexual.”

“Like I say, if this fellow was of that persuasion, then, as my son has prevailed upon me to help, I would foot the bill for the proper corrective surgery, and perhaps a little something to help this newly created woman, on her way. And P-Paul, Chief, I would add that if the injury was self-inflicted then neither you nor your department, would have any liability in the matter. Just think on that.”

He had a point, just not the one he thought he had. Bowler was wrong about the department, and me, not having liability. We are always responsible for the safety of prisoners, even in the case of self-inflicted wounds. But the victim would never go along with it, anyway. And Jake would get away again. Which wasn’t what I wanted.

I had a busy day and I went back to the clinic after work. Still, I am never really off duty so I took my case book to take a statement and get it witnessed. I’d done a lot of thinking during the day and I thought I could sum things up.

The victim was conscious.

“I’m sorry for everything that happened to you,” I said. “I didn’t even get your name.”

“Does it really matter anymore?” he said. “You might as well call me Nora, because I am neither a man nor a woman, now.”

He was propped up in his hospital bed and even with his face cleaned of makeup, he still looked like the person I had taken into custody for solicitation – the person I thought was a woman. Maybe I was just putting that face on him, but he looked no less female that many other girls without makeup on.

“That brute’s father came to see me earlier,” he continued. “He tells me he owns this town. He says that I can have a lot of money if I claim that these wounds are self-inflicted – that I am transgendered.”

“I’m going to prosecute,” I told him. “Jake has to pay for what he has done. But I also want to apologize for my part in what happened … off the record.” I didn’t want to make things harder for me or the department if this went to court, but I had to apologize, just for my own dignity.

I had more to say but he raised his hand. “Before you go further, I want to tell you that lying here I have had time to think. I will never be a functioning man again. My wife has left me. I work for her father, so my guess is I have no job, and no money. This guy Jake may never pay for his crimes, but if he does, he won’t be paying me.”

“Mr Bowler is not just proposing to pay you money. He wants you to have surgery. He wants you to be something that you are not.” This was already going in a strange direction.

“I don’t know what I am at the moment,” he said, picking at the coverlet hiding his flat chest. “But I know that I am poor. So I guess that it is just a matter of price.” He began to weep, silently, dabbing at his eyes with a tissue. It looked startlingly feminine.

I did some more thinking. I never did open my book. We would have to collaborate on something carefully written later. We’d want to cover everything without outright lying. We stared at each other for a time.

“Let’s get you as much as we can, then.” I finally said. “Jake will mess up again some time and I will be prepared to nail him. So let’s make sure that the surgery is the best that money can buy, and that you get a fair start in your new life. Norman Bowler has deep pockets.”

He just smiled at me. He knew that he had somebody in this world. Something strange happened to me in that moment. A little flutter in the chest maybe, and a warm feeling all over.

I leaned over the person in the bed and kissed the forehead lightly.

“Welcome to the world, Nora,” I said. “If you are going to be a lady, let’s make sure you are a wealthy one.

The End.

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*A sequel will follow*