My Father’s Debts

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

Gambling is an awful addiction, just as bad as heroin. It takes over the mind and you steal from your work, from your family, from anybody to provide money to feed your habit.

My father was an addict and he would play anything. Poker, blackjack, roulette, even slots or the simple draw of a card, roll of a dice, or toss of a coin. It was like wait for the ball to drop or the card to turn was a rush. I have seen it - the wide eyes and the moist brow.

My father was sick. What son would not try to understand?

Do not think for a minute that my father traded me to pay his debts. My father loves me, and I love him. If I had refused, he would have taken a bullet for me. I don’t doubt that. I was just not prepared to let that happen.

He had exhausted all legal avenues for gambling. He has exhausted every dollar that family had. But still he could not stop.

“The Red Room” private club was an illegal joint, and nothing short of cash would satisfy them. They work on running up debt, and then squeezing blood from a stone. My father offered to do any work for them, and that might have included committing crimes at their request.

My father came to me. He had nowhere else to go. My older brother had cut him off. What could I do? I had no money. I was trying to study and working nights to survive. I suppose the only thing I had was a talent, of a sort.

I had worked at a number of bars including one that had a weekly drag show. That was where my act got a start and I worked on it, refining it so I would get paid to perform. It turned into a stage and floor show, a” comedy drag routine where I played “Polly Tix”, a sort of Stephen Colbert in a wig and frock. If the act was a little weak then I made up for that by looking great.

I could put the act on in The Red Room – if they wanted me?

The manager said that if I was any good, I might buy my father a day or two, so I did my best. What I was not excepting was for Enzo to fall for me.

Enzo was the son of the owner of the place. I guess that he was gay. He knew that I was a guy. It was just that he liked his boys to be girls. He was quite particular about what he wanted. He wanted me.

“I can make you father’s debt go away,” he said. “But your ass will belong to me.”

I told Enzo that I would do whatever he wanted if he would make sure that my father was not maimed or killed. I did not understand that he meant his statement literally.

“Baby, all I want is you,” he said.

He didn’t want me on stage – he wanted me in bed. He didn’t want Polly – he renamed me Paulina and he wanted me to be his girl, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It could no longer be an act. It had to be full time. No wig – hair extensions; No falsies - breast implants; and hormones to soften my body.

It sounds like a horror story, but I was ready to take on my father’s debts. I was a good son. You might say that he was a bad father, but the truth always seemed to be that he was in the grip of something beyond his control. I chose not to tell him what was going to happen. I just told him that I was leaving home and I was going to work for Enzo to repay was owed.

“Just promise me – no more gambling!” That was the only thing I asked for. But like I say, even though his promises was sincere, some things cannot be changed by just words.

I moved in with Enzo and I became his mistress, I guess. I had expected to be something very different. I thought that it would be all about sex, and I was ready to accept a few minutes of discomfort every day or so if it would keep my father alive. But Enzo wanted it to be more.

“I want you to feel the way about me that I feel about you,” he said. I could see in his eyes that it was something other than gay lust. I had done drag and I knew what that was like.

And he started talking about me becoming a real woman – as in bottom surgery. Again that did not seem to fit. He hated to here me talking about my childhood as a boy. He said that he only wanted to think of me as I was – Pauline.

He was not ashamed to take me out and have me on his arm. All that was required was that I look did, and I always did. I used to tell myself that it was because I was a performer, and performer wants to present only the best to her audience, but after a while I came to understand what it means to be genuinely admired, in particular by the one person who matters.

My father had no idea what had happened to me, but when Enzo said that he was in trouble again and that Enzo himself had cover the debt with a seedy underground bookie, that I knew that I had to confront my father.

I told him that I had found out and he should come to visit me at Enzo’s mansion. When I came down the stairs he did not recognize me, and that would be understandable. But I spoke to him firmly.

“You see, Dad! This is what I have become to cover your debts. Take a good look. You son is gone! I have to be Pauline now and submit to being bum-fucked by your loan shark. This is where you have led your family.”

He dropped to his knees and wept. But I told him what Enzo and I had agreed. He could not be trusted so he would come to work for Enzo as his chauffeur – living in where we could keep an eye on him. He quickly agreed.

“How much do I owe. When can you go back to being my son?” he asked.

I suppose it was then that I realized that I really had given this no thought at all. I suppose that it had become so easy being Pauline that I really did not care whether I went back at all.

I remember that evening I looked at Enzo over the dinner table with fresh eyes. I had seen him as the enemy who had forced me into a perverted pact, but when I looked in his eyes I saw a man who had fallen hopelessly in love with a woman, who was not really a woman.

I put down my fork and I stepped out of my chair and walked down the table and dumped myself in his lap. I kissed him on the mouth. I could feel his arousal through the thin, tight dress he liked me to wear.

Perhaps I was not a girl on that night, but I am now. Each day as his woman after that made me a little more of a woman. I wonder if it is love. Can it be?

Dad has been a success as Enzo’s driver. We have kept him away from temptation. He has come to respect Enzo and even to like him. Certainly he owes him, even though the money debt has long disappeared. He owes Enzo his life and his daughter.

He says that when it comes to giving me away, he will be a proud man, and I feel that day might come soon. But Dad says that once that is done he has been rethinking his future considering my success. He has actually asked Enzo whether he would mind having a mature women as his driver.

The End

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