Becoming Mommy

A Short Story Commissioned by Morfe

By Maryanne Peters

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Victor Carroll and Max Daniels had known one another since high school. They moved in different circles, but they lived close to one another and would often go home together. It was the kind of friendship where it was just them. Their other friends were groups, and each had their own, but when they walked together or rode their bikes side by side they were as close as two boys can be.

But life took them in different directions. Vic went to college and earned a business degree which took him into finance. He married his secretary and borrowed money from the company he worked for to buy a house. His wife Viola got pregnant and gave birth to their daughter Rosaline. To all intents and purposes, theirs was a happy home, but the leafy suburban streets hide many secrets and sadnesses.

Max was a talented musician and artist and won a scholarship to study fine arts. He looked forward to a future doing what he loved, but he never finished at art school. His tutors described him as “overly deliberate and tidy” and “a competent technician lacking in inspiration”. For an artist each one of words like that that is a dagger in the belly. He returned to music and joined a band. He was competent there too. But art of any kind can be the hardest of lives to live. Max with happy with his achievements, but they went largely unrewarded. He was poor and too proud to seek help from his elderly parents.

On the other hand, Vic was wealthy, but the key problem that he faced was that Viola was unbalanced. She was pretty and Rosaline took after her in that regard, but she never bonded strongly with her daughter. This seemed to make Viola a troubled soul. She did not want another child, even as Rosaline started at school. She was always looking for something else and Max and Rosaline were not it. She simply left. She left a brief note but never made contact with either of them after that, despite Vic trying to reach her.

In a way, Vic was happy she was gone. He now had the burden of caring for a daughter on his own, but with Viola there he was caring to two dependents, and only with the child did he feel able to meet the needs he understood.

At about the same time Max’s band broke up having failed to make it. He could not pay the rent on his apartment and he was short on cash. He never would have dreamed of contacting Vic to ask for money – it was sheer chance that brought them back together. Max was taking one of his guitars into a pawn shop and at the same time Vic was checking the value of some junk jewelry that Viola had left behind. Time had passed but they recognized one another immediately and they embraced.

Neither wanted to speak of their problems, but as the solitary friends they were at school they left the pawn shop and went to a coffee shop to talk, and it all came out.

“I have no job at the moment, so if you want me to help out at your place for a bit, I could do that,” said Max. “I wouldn’t want to payment. This is friendship - right? Just a room and some meals. Just until I get back on my feet?”

“That would work for me,” said Vic. “Rosaline is a great kid, but I can’t give her the parenting that I would like, being so busy at work. But I really should pay a childcare rate.”

“And I should pay rent and buy groceries, but I can’t at the moment,” said Max. “I can keep track and we can work it out later. For now, we both have an immediate need, and a way to fix it.”

Max didn’t have much, but it was moved into Vic’s spare room, and Vic was introduced to Rosaline. They liked one another immediately. Max painted portraits of all of Rosalines Dolls and soft toys, which made the young girl very happy. Next, he set about learning some basic parenting skills.

Top of the list was learning how a seven year old should dress, and also how to braid Rosaline’s long blond hair. Max had noticed from the photos around the house that since Viola had left Rosaline’s hair did not look good. It was not something that Vic ever tried to learn. Rosaline had some idea about braiding and offered to show Max by braiding his own long and thick brown hair, but Max decided that he would go on line and learn some new skills of use in caring for the child, as well as other skills in caring for the home and all those in it.

Rosaline was happy to help with the housework. She explained to Max that when her mommy was living with them, she was messy, and Rosaline preferred things tidy.

“So do I,” said Max. He had to recall the comment from his art tutor - “overly deliberate and tidy”. To Max much of modern art just looked like disorder for the sake of it. Hem had never really belonged in that place.

Max also discovered that cooking could be an art form. It was not just making a meal and understanding the flavors that worked together like colors on a palate, but presenting a plate to amaze. Max found a joy in the kitchen that was totally unexpected.000

“You’re turning into a real housewife,” Vic teased his friend, when sampling a dinner that was both eye-catching and delicious. “But seriously, you can stay as long as you like. This arrangement is working for all of us.”

But despite her happiness at that exchange Max became aware that it was not working entirely well for Rosaline.

Max found her after school playing with her dolls as if she was a mother caring for them, and then he noticed that she was crying.

“What’s wrong, Rosaline?” asked Max. “Why are you so sad.

“All my friends at school have a mommy, and even my dolls have a mommy - me, but I don’t have one,” she sobbed. “Mother’s time is coming up and I can’t join in.”

Max put his arms around her and held her close. “I wish I could be your mommy, sweetheart,” he said. “But you just have to understand that you have the best daddy in the whole world.”

“I know that, but could you be my mommy, Max? Could you? Please? Even just pretending for a while?”

Max heart swelled. He had become so close to this child in only a few weeks and already felt that he would do anything to make her happy. With a big comforting smile on his face, he said - “What would I need to do?” He was thinking that at this age everything must be so simple for a child, that even her father’s old school friend could fill such a huge hole in her life.

“We could put you in some of mommy’s clothes,” said Rosaline excitedly. “Daddy keeps them in the attic. And you could do your hair like mommy. You are so clever with hair. And maybe paint your face like mommy. You are so good at painting faces.”

Max’s heart melted to see her so needy. There was no way he could refuse. He pulled down the stairs to the attic and they both went up, and went through what was there – not only clothes but also hair ornaments and makeup in abundance. Viola was vain as well as pretty, and a little extravagant with it. Curiously, it seemed that Max and Viola were a similar size. Even her shoes seemed to fit at a squeeze. They brought down some items and spread them out in Rosaline’s room.

“This stuff is for grownups,” said Max. “If I am the mommy then you are my daughter and the dolls are just our friends, and we will all play together.”

Rosaline nodded enthusiastically.

“I need to get into this underwear first,” said Max. “Under these clothes I do not look like a mommy should look.”

“I understand,” said Rosaline. “You will need to shave your legs.”

Max was a little startled, but he had to agree. He took some of the garments into the bathroom. He had had a shower, and in there he shaved his legs and his armpits, and washed his hair. He dried himself and felt strangely satisfied with the smoothness of his body. He slipped on Viola’s underwear and used what he could find to build some padding where it was needed. He then blow dried his hair with a side parting and tied it up on top.

He was good at painting faces and was to discover that the same applied to applying makeup to his own, spending time outlining his eyes so that that the blue stood out, and painting his lips to look full and luscious. He wondered whether he should have done this, in case Rosaline would seek to do the same, but he decided that she was a girl who knew how mothers dressed and he would have to meet her expectations.

Rosaline was most impressed with the look. “I think that you might be prettier than my real mommy,” she said.

Max smiled, and did a little pose. It seemed to him that Rosaline was trying to encourage him with kind words, but in the mirror he was pleased with what he saw – especially for a raw beginner. “Which outfit do you think I should wear?” he asked.

Rosaline found something nice and Max slipped into it, and put on the shoes as well. They both looked at his reflection in the mirror. They could easily have been two females – mother and daughter perhaps. Rosaline looked up at Max and put her arms around his constrained waist. She did no have to say anything, but Max knew what she was thinking – it was as if Rosaline’s mother had returned for a visit.

“What game should we play?” said Max.

“Let’s play “American Idol!” said Rosaline. “Every toy can put on a performance and then we need to be the judges, but you need to use a mommy voice – not a daddy voice.”

“I will do my best,” said Max, putting on a higher pitched voice that sounded a little awkward to him, but perfect to the child. I sounded a bit like her real mom, who had smoked to many cigarettes and could sound a bit husky. “Alright Rosaline – who are we going to see on stage first? What will they be doing?”

It seemed that the child had a lot of toys, and whether the act was dancing or singing or just doing silly voices, so of the performances became involved and time when by quickly. It was when Rosaline’s unicorn “Tusky” came up to do showjumping assisted by Rosaline that Vic arrived home and was not even noticed until he walked into the room.”

“Bravo, Tusky, it’s a big yes from me!” The taller judge was clapping furiously until she noticed Rosaline’s gaze, and she spun around to see Vic standing there. Her mouth fell open and she struggled for words.

Vic too, found himself speechless. He was confused to start with, as if confronting a stranger in his home, but a welcome one – an attractive woman, with a face a little like his friend Max. But then it slowly dawned on him what was going on.

“Oh, Vic, please forgive me!” It was still the voice of the woman. Max had to clear his throat to rid himself of it. “It’s just a game. We had an idea that I should dress up as another lady judge. It’s American Idol, you see? I shouldn’t have used Viola’s clothes. It is my fault. I apologize. I will get changed immediately. Please forgive me.”

“No, don’t get changed on my account,” said Vic, the trace of a smile appearing on his face.

“Oh – what time is it? The meatloaf is in the oven! I need to get the vegetables on”. Max was on his feet, and about to get busy.

“Let me do that,” said Vic. “Why don’t you finish the game, Miss … what did you say your name was? Let me help in the kitchen. You are staying for dinner of course. We could do with having another lady joining us for dinner, couldn’t we Rosaline?”

“Oh yes, can she stay for dinner, Daddy? said Rosaline. “You don’t mind do you Daddy?”

“Please stay for dinner,” said Vic.

“Then let me finish he cooking,” said Max. Somehow the feminine voice had returned without him even being aware of it.

“Just wear an apron over that beautiful dress,” said Vic, grinning. He led the way to the kitchen and pulled one from the pantry door. “Allow me to tie it?”

Vic tied it at the back looking up to see the hair drawn up a the back of Max’s head. It was so unbelievably feminine that it seemed to trigger something in his lions. Had he been way too long away from the company of a woman? This one seemed to be so real. So much so that he stood when she came to the table and slid her chair under her bottom as she sat, something that suddenly seemed to acquire an erotic meaning.

“It’s just a game for Rosaline,” Max whispered.

“But I am enjoying it too,” said Vic. “Please don’t stop until after she is in bed tonight.”

And so Max remained in a feminine form throughout the meal, and continued that right up until Rosaline delivered another blow.

“We have a mother’s festival coming up this weekend,” the child said bursting with enthusiasm. “Now I have a mommy we can all go to the show.”

“What is this about?” asked Vic, looking at Max.

“I don’t know,” admitted Max. “What is this about, Rosaline?” 2350

The little girl adopted a serious pose, as if to instruct adults in the mysteries of life – “Every year my school has a special night on the night before mother’s day to say thank you to all mothers, or people filling in for mothers like Max. I was sad because I had no mother to go with me to the special night, but now I do – right, Daddy?”

“I think that celebrating mothers is a great thing,” said Vic. “And who would have believed that Max here could make such a wonderful looking mommy?”

“Oh no,” said Max. “You want me to go to an event dressed like this?”

“We will need to check what is the expected dress standard, of course, but a mommy should look like a mommy.” Max could see that Vic was smiling, but this was no joke being played – no tease. It seemed to Max that Vic was struck but his appearance as a woman, and wanted to see more.

“I don’t think that this is a good idea,” said Max.

“Oh please, Max. Pleeeease!” Rosaline started to look very sad very quickly.

“It’s just one night, Max,” said Vic. “Although, to be the perfect mommy I think that we should get you ready for the big day starting tomorrow. It will be my treat. I will make sure that you mommy looks her best for this mother’s festival, Roz.” It seemed as if Max’s opinion barely mattered. Rosaline was clapping her hands with glee.

“What do you mean starting tomorrow?" asked Max.

Vic’s plan was simple – for the next few days and right up until Sunday, Max was going to be Maxine Daniels, and dress and act accordingly. It seemed like a massive thing to ask of him, but the truth is that Max could not refuse his friend for all that he had done, and he was committed to Rosaline’s happiness and this had now become a big part of that.

Vic brought home some special garments for Max to wear “to present properly”. These included the form of a woman that could be worn under clothes, which added gel-filled breasts, pinched the waist in and the butt out, and concealed any sign of male genitals. Vic suggested that Max wear it “to get used to it for Saturday night.” Vic also bought some other clothes for Max to wear so that Viola’s could be returned to the attic.

Max decided that the best way to deal with a tidal wave is to ride it, and he threw himself into the role of Maxine, dutiful wife and mother, applying his artistic flair and natural good humor. Whether Max noticed it or not, Vic and Rosaline found themselves often looking at one another with satisfaction – Max was perfect in both roles.

On the day of the Mother’s Night, Vic arranged for Max to attend a salon to have his hair and makeup done for the evening, but the beautician in attendance insisted that the work to be done should start from a properly prepared canvas. Max had to endure some discomfort, but by this point he was strangely excited at the prospect of stepping out of the salon into the open air dressed as a woman, having entered wearing a tracksuit with his feminine clothes in a garment bag.

It was Maxine who stepped out into the sunshine that afternoon. I was she who sniffed the air and sensed the fragrance of flowers a man would never had noticed. It was she who flipped to hem of her dress across a shaved leg to check that the painted toenails that matched the polish on her hands, were visible though the stone encrusted sandals. It was she who giggled a little to herself knowing just how good she looked as she walked around the block even though the car was -parked just outside the salon.

But if Max felt outrageously feminine in a way that no man should, it was to pale when she got home and Vic presented her with the dress he had bought for her to wear that night.

“Tonight is a celebration of mothers, and I think his dress can be called a celebration?”

Max felt tears welling up in his eyes, and his only thought was that they would ruin the makeup. He could only mutter – “Oh, Vic. I don’t know what to say. It is just so beautiful.”

“Not as beautiful as it will be with you in it,” said Vic. He was right. And it made Max feel as if he was floating on air just to wear it.

There was a part of Max that wanted to throw his arms around Vic and kiss him, just for bringing such joy into his life, even if that joy came from a totally .unexpected direction. But there was also the restraining thoughts – that Vic was a man, and a friend, and this was just an extended game of children’s dress-up.

But Max took Vic’s arm as they walked to the car, and she held Rosaline’s hand with the other.

“Your hair is so beautiful Max,” she said as she took her seat behind her mother for the night.

“The style is a French Roll,” Max explained. “And it was talked into having the blonde highlights. I was shown how to do this style myself. Imagine that?”

“It suits you,” said Vic. He was fighting his own feelings. Who was this person sitting in his passenger seat, with her beautiful hair and perfect makeup, and her painted hands holding the clutch bag in her lap about those shapely legs?

He could only introduce her as “Maxine, a close friend of mine for many years and a mother figure for Rosaline in the absence of Viola who has been gone for quite a while”.

The other women warmed to the newcomer in their midst immediately. Who wouldn’t, at a function where women are there to be honored?

Some remarked that they admired he “stepping in for Rosaline’s mother, who – let’s face it – is a self-centered and irresponsible woman!”

“Not every woman is cut out for motherhood,” said Max, trying to excuse Viola somehow, although it might have sounded as if it was a claim that she was – “she” meaning Max.

The mothers were paraded and applauded and in some cases sons and daughters stood up to say a few words of thanks. Max didn’t even notice that Rosaline had taken the stage until Vic motioned that she should turn around to see Rosaline at the microphone.

“Maxine is not my real mom, but you don’t have to be a real mom to give a mom’s love, and you don’t have to be Max’s daughter to love her like a daughter should!” Rosaline smiled at Max through the applause and then hurried off stage and into her arms. Everybody around them could feel it, like a heat wave from the explosion of love, radiating out from the mother and child embrace.

“That was the most wonderful night of my life,” said Max as they stepped back into the car. “But it is late, and we need to get a certain public speaker to bed without further delay.”

Vic was curiously quiet on the way home. His head was full of thoughts. But Max and Rosaline chatted endlessly about the friends from school and which were the mothers that Max had met, and who she liked best.’

“You know, women are so good with other women,” said Max. “I never realized before how close women can be with one another. I guess it is the kind of thing men can never understand. It really is special.”

But the chatter had to end when Rosaline was finally home, and washed, and tucked up in her bed. There was a special kiss for Rosaline who reached up to stroke Max’s hairdo. They smiled at one another as closely as two people can. Vic watched it from the doorway, and blew his daughter a kiss before he turned out the light and closed the door.

“Do you feel like a nightcap?” he said to Max. “Because I do.”

“Sure,” said Maxine in the voice she had used all night. She watched him pour two glasses of liquor. They had shared a drink like this before, but never like this. They were still standing as the glasses met and they both took a heavy first sip.

“You were magnificent tonight,” said Vic. “You are magnificent.”

“Vic, I loved tonight, but I feel as if I have slipped into a dream so deep that I can’t escape from …”.

Max had no time to finish those words because Vics face was against hers and his tongue was in her mouth, and she wanted nothing except him.

Their arms became entwined and somehow they managed to stagger together like a creature with 4 back legs, bumping into walls and slurping and groaning until they reached Vic’s bedroom. Somehow Max was able to remove the pins from her hair so that it fell about her shoulders like cornsilk, with his hands buried deep in it.

There actions seemed driven by their lizard brains – that primal node that controls the instincts of a man, and of a woman. It is a drive that must end with penetration, and with submission, and logic or sexual conventions have no place. So only when Vic was deep inside Max and they were both calling out to God himself, could any horizon appear.

“I want you to stay the way you are tonight,” said Vic. “I want you to stay here, with me, and with Roz. I want you to live as my wife, and as Roz’s mother.”

“This is too much to ask of me,” said Max. There were tears in her eyes. “This is all so confusing. I feel as if I have become another person – a person who can love you as a woman. But that is not what I am. We are kidding ourselves. It was just a game. I know that it seems real … I wish it was – but it is not. I am not the person that you want … or you need.”

“I am trying to tell you that I have fallen in love with you,” said Vic. “I don’t know how it happened. I don’t know if this makes me gay, but if it does, I don’t care. I don’t want to be without you.”

“We need time to sort this out,” said Max.

“Sure,” said Vic. “We can sleep on it, but in my bed.” It sounded like an instruction, and Max decided that he could do that. But first he would need to undress and take a shower and even wearing the nightie back to bed Vic could see that the body of the person that he had made love to was not female.

But curiously even with the nightie, the impression was that Max was a woman. She had brushed her hair and it was hers. Her chest was flat but smooth. Her body was shaved even down to the pubic hair which what remained concealing nothing of any great size, above long feminine legs.

Even in the morning Vic reached out to her and seemed to stroke every part of her body except the parts that would have spoken the truth.

But Max knew the truth and he had decided what he needed to do. He loved Rosaline so this would be hard, and he was falling in love with Vic so that made it even harder, but the only way to resolve his inner turmoil was to leave.

He got up while Vic was in the shower and collected a few things and left.

Vic and Rosaline were both distraught. They spent most of that Sunday just holding one another, and hoping that Max would walk in the door to tell them that it was all a misunderstanding. For the first time he could remember, Vic called the office to take a day off “for family reasons”. He had not even taken the day off following Viola’s departure, so it was strange that on his only day off, she should return.

She knocked on the door because she had lost her key, or more likely discarded it. But there she was, years after leaving and cutting off her family completely, stepping back into the home she had abandoned.

“Where is she, this woman who has taken my place?” she demanded. It soon became apparent that through some channel or another she had heard about the woman who now claimed to be Rosaline’s new mother.

“It seems that I cannot keep women in my house,” said Vic dolefully. “She has left just as you did.”

“Well, I’m back Vic, and I want us to try again,” said Viola. “I know that I have let you both down. I’m asking for another chance.”

Rosaline was sad to lose her new mommy, but also happy to find that her real mommy had returned. She made her feel welcome with a big hug. Vic saw that a realized that perhaps I was Max who had reached out to Viola. That might make sense. Max was conflicted, and restoring things the way they once had been might be the solution, from that point of view. The problem that Vic faced was not as easily resolved as in the immature mind of his daughter. She could love freely. The problem with Vic was that he now understood that if he had ever loved, the it was Maxine who held his heart.

Vic was right not to trust Viola. It was only a few weeks later that the strain started to show in the face of his ex-wife. This life was not for her. She was envious of another who seemed to live it with joy, but she could not. She told Vic that she was leaving again.

Vic had never stopped looking for his friend Max, but it was only when Viola was packing her bags to go that he realized that he had been looking for the wrong person.

“I went up into the attic to find some of my clothes and I found boxes of men’s clothes in a size way too small for you. Lot’s of them. Who do they belong to and why were they left here? Well, its none of my concern anyway. I am out of here.”

Vic realized that he should be looking for Maxine.

He adjusted his searches and he name soon came up. She was working as an art tutor in a city just over the State line and she was doing hair and makeup part time. Vic phoned to see when she would be in and when she finished work, then he drove over to find her.

He timed his arrival perfectly. Maxine had just finished work at the salon and was on her way out the door as Vic walked in. They looked at one another for a moment, but that was all it took. They knew what the other was thinking – that kind of longing cannot be hidden. The other ladies in the salon saw it too.

“Vic, I’m so sorry,” said Max. “I did come back, but then I saw Viola there so it seemed that you got your family back, the way it should be.”

“So you didn’t call her?” asked Vic.

“I wouldn’t know how too,” said Max. “But you deserve a real woman. Viola is that, with all her flaws. I can’t be that, despite every I have done since I left.”

The problem is that I don’t love Viola,” said Vic. “I love you. And Rosaline loves you too. Even while Viola was there she told me she wished that you were her Mommy. Yes, Viola has gone again, and this time for good. We want you back. But wait … what have you had done.

“Oh Vic, I never went back to being a man, not for a single second since I left you,” said Max, the tears starting. “You made me a woman that last night we were together … or perhaps I was always a woman but you made sure I could never be a man again. I have had the surgery. I am still healing, but I am doing well. I have a life as Maxine now. It is just that there a coupling of things missing.”

“Well, it is not breasts,” said Vic, for the first time noticing that she was wearing a V-neck revealing two perfect breasts.

“No, Silly. It’s you. It’s you and Rosaline. That is what is missing in my life.”

One of the women watching them called out – “For God’s sake kiss him, Maxie!”

So she did.

The End

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