Bordello Boys

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My mother said that she prayed that her children would not be male. A brothel is no place for boys.

But I was a boy, and so was my real cousin Dee, and my pretend cousin Jay.

Dee was older than me by three years, but Jay was only a few months younger than me, so we played together. Dee looked after us a bit, I guess. Both of us looked up to Dee.

I suppose I first became aware of our situation when Dee was set to leave elementary school, so I would have been around 8 or 9. Our elementary school was close the building that we lived in, what had once been a large home in the middle of the city. My mother and my aunt lived in one of the top two floors set aside for permanent accommodation, and there were still two floors below plus the basement for the business. At night we never went downstairs, and the basement was permanently off-limits, but during the day we had the run of the downstairs halls and the street down as far as the park.

But when Dee finished elementary school, the Junior High School selected was miles away. Dee was pretty unhappy about losing contact with schoolfriends, but not as unhappy as learning that from the first day at that new school, he was to become a she.

I understand more about it now. The idea is that if anybody who works in the business has a child, and they want to keep that child and stay working, they need to follow the rules. Every mother wants to have her child with her in the first years of life, so that was allowed. But after a certain age, children in a brothel do not belong. That particularly applies to boys.

We had girls at the business. By that I do not mean young women, I mean children. Of course, they were not for hire, but no man objects to the presence of young girls. Old men dream of what little girls become. Boys, on the other hand, become men and men visiting a brothel do not want to see men. Boys cannot stay. The problem came to a head when Dee’s mother put up a fuss.

My mother was less than understanding. She would always say that pregnancy should never happen. It was bad for business. If it happened, she would say that the options are: “Abortion, adoption or relocation”.

Now Dee had already broken the rules by staying upstairs way past his early years, but we were living there too, and as my aunt was the boss, I suppose she let it go. But it was always on the understanding that after elementary school Dee would be sent away, like all boys before, and many girls. The rule was that only girls had a right to stay. Little children and girls.

I also think, with time to consider it, that neither my mother or my aunt, liked men. They were the essence of the business, but not the kind of people to have around 24/7. I am leaving aside whether or not they were lesbians, I mean that they did not like men in their space. For them a male child was not a man, so long as he was nothing but a child.

At 11 Dee was hardly a man, but he was starting to act like one. That meant that if he was to stay there would have to be some major changes. No man-like behaviour could be accepted in the house we lived in. This was a household of women and children only. So, if Dee was no longer a child, he would have to be female.

Now, it was not as if there was no choice. Dee could have said no. Relocation was an option. Maybe if it was me alone, I would have called for that. I would have said goodbye to the home of my childhood and chosen to go to private school, or to accept a life in the country better suited to a boy. Even prostitutes can have family who could take an innocent young man in. We didn’t have such family, but others did.

I can say now that if I had family, or anybody who would take me in, I would have done that. But like us, Dee did not have anywhere to go. And maybe it was because of me and Jay. We were three. He was older and we were younger, but we were three. He would lead and we would follow. Where he led us, it was nothing but fun and happiness. So much happiness that all the filth and sadness of the life of our mothers we never saw. Maybe Dee just could not leave us to that.

Dee was the best person I have ever known.

So, he was enrolled at Junior High School as Delicia, so that we could still call her Dee. And we all got about preparing her for her new life as a girl.

“It will not be forever,” said Dee. “When we I go to high school, I will cut my hair and burn the dresses. We can all go back to being boys.” That sounded great. But for now, if Dee was going girl, then we were going girl too. That was how Jay and I ended up following. We were three.

I suppose that we could have put it off until we were set for Junior High, but we wanted to do the same thing Dee was doing. We could hang out as three girls and have just as much fun. Dee was still Dee, and I was still Sammy, now short for Samantha, and Jay was still Jay, now short for Jaylee. The only difference was clothes and hairstyles. That is what we thought.

But then we learnt about puberty. I was 9 almost 10, so I knew something about it. At 10 kids are smart enough to know that girls and boys are not so different but that it would all change before high school. Dee needed to take medicine to ensure that she did not change into a he. We did not need to, but Dee got some of what she was taking just to try.

Later I was told that the reason why Jay and I are so little is because of that medicine we took. We are not so little for girls now – just a bit above average – but we are too small to be boys. Jay is taller because he took the medicine later. But we all took it before puberty so that we would not grow up into boys. Not until we were allowed to, that is.

Our mother’s had nothing to do with it. I say it now in case you think that my mother and Jay’s mother wanted us to be girls. That is not what they wanted; I believe. But they wanted us around, and so by being girls we could live at home for as long as we could pass as girls. Maybe they thought that puberty would come, and it would be over. Maybe they thought that it had already come when it should have, and we were just doing a good job of hiding it. I don’t really know.

We had made the choice, and we had to live with it.

“It’s great that you have decided to dress up to stay with me,” my mother said. “Just so long as you look for a life outside of this place. Study hard and meet people who know nothing about where you live. Find yourself a real life.”

To us we had a real life as bordello boys, but now we needed to adjust to living as pre-teen girls. I now know what an important time that is in the life of any girl. There is so much happening in terms of finding a place in the world and forming styles and attitudes that might last. Just imagine how different it might be if you were a little girl with an ugly secret in your panties.

I suppose that is the first thing that we all learned, Dee first. Nobody at school knew that she was not a girl, not even the staff. She had to hide her package, and she was able to learn how to do that from one of the “special ladies” in the brothel. As for above the waist, thanks to the drugs she was developing just like all the other girls in her class. Junior High is puberty school for girls, although for boys it comes later.

We were developing too, even on only half doses, maybe a little too early. We were still in elementary school as boys, just changing into girls on the way home.

To say that Dee developed like other girls is not quite right. Of course, there was no menstruation period. That is a big deal, so Dee needed to fake it once she knew how to behave. She said that it seemed like every girl in her class reacted differently, but she decided to be one who had dealt with it at home and was fully comfortable. I think that we are just lucky that none of us needed to go through it.

But the pre-teen years are about trying things out for the first time. For girls that means clothing and hair styles, types of music, and types of people. Long before full high school, Dee had decided where she fitted in. She decided that she was interested in fashion, and she got us interested too.

I suppose when you think about it, the deeper we got into clothes and styling, the further we moved away from masculine pursuits. But it was not really deliberate. Dee liked the joy of it, and we felt her joy and joined in. She was not nerdy, or rich enough to be preppy, she could not be sporty given that little problem, she was not a goth, or a punk or emo, and she did not want to be a loner. She did not want to be in the popular clique because it was sensible to stay a little anonymous given our situation. In the fashion group nobody asks where you come from, just what you are wearing.

We had plenty of stuff to work with. We lived in a house full of women, and there were several who sewed, including Dee herself in order to get things done.

After school we would dress up and go window shopping with Dee. No just to look at styles but also to visit the second-hand boutiques and junk stalls for ideas and fabrics. We liked designer stuff too, but it is how you wear it. A Chanel bag is great, but a Chanel bag with a tassel or a scarf tied around one handle, is super stylish

Jay and I grew our hair in elementary school so that we could tie it up when we got home, and pay with hairstyles with Dee. We got really good at it. We just had to subdue it over night so that we could be boys at school. But Dee never went back to boy mode … ever. She was having so much fun that Jay and I could not wait until we could put an end to this masquerade - being boys during the day, that is.

It may sound weird, but that is how it felt. We were having so much, but not as much fun as Dee. When the first day of term came around and we went to Junior High in dresses, we were overjoyed.

By then Dee was heading an arty and clothing student group, and we were junior members as her “cousins”. It was a great introduction. But only a year later Dee was off to high school, blazing a trail for us there too.

It is hard to know when exactly Jay and I gave up the idea of returning to being male. I think that for Dee it happened right then, in that last year in Junior High School. She did not tell us, but by the time she was in high school she knew that she was going to stay female.

She did not tell us, and maybe if things had turned out badly, I would have been angry at her for not doing that. I mean, she was the leader and she led us in that direction. But we followed because we liked the place she led us into. I still do. It is just that we lost a chance for another life, all three of us, even if we might never have been happy in that life.

I think that for Jay and I things became irreversible when we went to High School. Our unbreakable trio had slightly drifted apart by then. Dee had a boyfriend by then, and we did not spend as much time with her. Her boyfriend was a jock named Ham – Hamilton Granger III. She told him about her secret after they had dated for a while. He dropped her and he was too embarrassed to tell. But when another guy started moving in on Dee he got jealous and then it was back on again.

Dee talked about making a life with him. “I am not into girls,” she said. That seemed obvious.

Jay said that she was still ready to go back to boyhood, even if that meant dropping out of high school. The problem was that Jay, like me, had breasts and nothing much between the legs, and she was gorgeous too – better looking than me and Dee. As one of the fashion girls she dressed well, always had great hair and makeup, and was being sought after by the popular set. Of course, guys were interested in her. She drove them crazy by rebuffing them.

I looked good too, but I worked hard. I had decided that I wanted to be in the business of fashion. It seemed unimportant to me whether that career would be as a man or a woman. If you like, I had a choice. But for now, expressing my love of women’s clothes by wearing them, just seemed right.

I was not interested in guys, but I was not interested in girls either.

But it was a guy who turned things for me. His name was Victor and he was persistent. The thing about persistence is that it is annoying at first, and then you find yourself flattered by it. He was always trying to do romantic things to win my attention. In a moment of frustration I told him that he should not be interested in me because I had “a genital deformity”. I don’t know what made me say that. I suppose I just did not want to destroy him completely.

A day later he was back, talking about the miracles of modern medicine or something like that.

“I don’t want to see it if you don’t want to show me,” he said.

I showed him. He was shocked. I put it back and I thought that was that. But I was surprised to find that I was crying, and when I did, it became a shuddering sob.

Victor put his arm around me and said: “Hey Sammy, there is no problem that can’t be solved. There are plenty of girls just like you out there. We can find a way to fix this.”

The word he used was “we”. Previously I had only ever seen that “we” meant Dee, Jay and me – the Bordello Girls. Now I suddenly realized that I needed somebody in my life to be a “we” with. It needed to be somebody who would always be there – somebody persistent.

After her operation Dee married Ham and Jay and I were bridesmaids. Victor was with me too, looking for pointers for when our day arrived. And Jay arrived looking as fabulous as usual and on her own, but ended up pairing off with Ham’s best man. Who knows where that might end?

In the meantime, she is a runway model for my first fashion show next week. Everybody from the house will be there. My mother is very proud. I have made the life for myself that she wanted.

The End

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