Downstream

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

“Thanks to your illustrious leader we are miles off our flight path,” he said.

I was still in pain, so it took me some time to work out what he was saying. He had put my ankle in a splint. He seemed to know what he was doing. He checked to see whether it was broken. He guessed not but said it would need to be immobilized. He fashioned a splint from branches that he had cut away using steel part of the wing structure. That piece of steel was to become the key tool of our survival. The wing axe.

“They should still be able to see us?” It was a question from me, born of hope more than anything.

“The jungle is covering us. The wings broke off and are some way back, so maybe they can be seen. As for the cabin, well we are all that is left of that.”

It was an eight-seater when it took off from Rio Branco near the border of Bolivia and not that far from Peru. The flight to Manaus should have taken us four and half hours which we were told was the maximum range for this aircraft, but the route had been flown by it often before. Still, the co-pilot was dropped so that my boss could take his seat, and I sat in the back with some bags beside me, and no view of the scenery. It was the safest place to be.

Callum survived because he pulled so of those bags in front of him and Jessica just before we crashed. But she did not make it. A strut punctured the cabin wall and then her chest and killed her instantly. The four seats in front being the pilot and my four colleagues, were totally crushed. We could not even try to get them out.

I could see that Callum was a survivor, and my only hope. He pulled Jessica out and wept, but only for a short time. He realized that we needed to survive. But first he tended to me. I was grateful, beyond anything you can imagine.

He was right about the jungle. We seemed to have just parted the foliage being as we were just a missile without wings. But the impact that had sheared them off had reduced our speed, so at least the rear of the cabin was intact. But it was not home for us. The bodies in front, or what was left of them, were soon staring to smell.

He buried Jessica as best he could, and then he went back to look for other signs of wreckage. I almost begged him not to leave me, but I held on to myself. I had always thought of myself as being as brave as the next man, and maybe I was, but you have no idea how something like that can make you feel.

You have escaped death, but only temporarily. Death is all around you in the jungle. Not just jaguars and giant anacondas, but spiders and mosquitoes and even poisonous frogs. The water and even the air seems pregnant with disease. I sat there waiting for his return and living the horror that he might dies himself or lose his way back.

I knew that my life depended on him, even if I were not temporarily crippled.

When he did come back, I felt such joy that it seemed unnatural, but he did not have good news and that put me back down again with a thud.

“The wings are under the canopy too,” he said. Maybe some broken treetops are visible, but I don’t think we can count on that. We need to start a fire. Maybe that will be spotted.”

They call the Amazon a rainforest for a reason. Even when it is not raining it is wet. Lighting a fire and keeping it going is no easy task. But he set about gathering dry wood and I sat by the fire with my leg in a splint, feeding it an ensuring a steady column of smoke.

We stayed in that place for five days. We ate food that was in the airplane and some jungle fruit and fern roots that he knew were edible. We never even heard a search plane.

We did not hear the sound of the river either, but on one of his gathering excursions Callum came upon it. It was large and slow moving. It could have been one of hundreds of rivers than size that feed the Amazon. There was no way of tell where we were.

“Our best hope is to go downstream. We are surrounded by balsa trees. We can build a raft.”

We relocated to the bank of the river. The crash site had become infested with flies feeding off the human remains. We made a new camp, with the tail opened up for a roof. He had me make cord to help lash the logs together from the fabric lining the cabin. He had found wire from the fuselage to provide the principal binding, and with the wing axe now sharpened to a good edge, felling and trimming straight balsa logs was easy.

He said that the raft could be wide because the river was wide, and we could take some belongings. I had nothing except the bags I had been sitting with. These contained nets for capturing the birds that we were looking for, for tag and release. Those nets we put to good use.

But it was a bird that had made my boss ask the pilot to drop and investigate an unusual sight. I cannot even tell you what it was, and nor can Callum as neither of us had a clear view, but the pilot had done what was requested and followed this high flying bird well to the west of our flight path.

It was not lack of fuel that caused the problem, but a major electrical problem. The panel above the pilot just burst into flames. Everything shut down including the radio, and the pilot was burned and incapacitated. My boss took over the controls and said that he knew how to fly. Perhaps he did and the problem was mechanical or electrical. But he last I knew was the call to brace.

It was an attempt at a landing on the river. That is an expanse without trees. But it did not happen. We hit the trees and the plane came apart. The last piece to stop was the fuselage. The engine crushed backward taking out the front two rows. The row holding Callum and Jessica was largely intact, as was the row behind.

All the baggage was in the belly of the plane now crushed or buried. Callum had a bag with some food. There was nothing else except that Callum found Jessica’s suitcase. It was somehow thrown clear, perhaps when the cargo fairing was ripped just before we hit the dirt. Anyway Callum decided to keep it with us.

“It is all that is left of her,” he said. “If we were walking out, I would not bother, but there is room or the raft. We can find other things as well, but it needs to be easily removable.”

We took cushions from the seats, and our shelter from the plane’s tail, and we fashion paddles from the tail flaps lashed to stout wooden poles. We were getting hungry but so long as we were busy that did not seem to matter. But then I was able to use one of the bird nets to catch some fish from the river, and we realized that this would work for us. The net was very fine line and quite wide mesh to be invisible, but if it was used in layers it was strong enough for good sized fish.

Still when we pushed off the bank we had been in the vicinity of the crash for 10 days with any sign of searchers. The thing about the Amazon basin is that all tributaries led to the Amazon River and civilization, so the only question was how long we would need float on the river.

“The Jurua is a 1,000 miles long because it meanders,” said Callum. “if we are on that and it flows at just a mile an hour, it would take us over a month.”

That is Amazonia for you. You have no idea how big it is until you are stuck in the middle of it.

I wanted to be helpful, but until my ankle healed, which it did, I was stuck on my ass. Add the that the fact that I am weak at the best of times, and I was malnourished and depressed when we set out. I was burden and I knew it.

More than once I thanked Callum. It was not that I thought that by thanking him might reduce the risk of him simply rolling off the raft to drown or be eaten by piranhas, I really felt that he needed my thanks. Then one day he just said it:

“Just stop with this. If you really want to thank me, you can suck my cock.”

I looked at him to see if he was joking, but he did not seem to be. Was I that grateful? What is another man’s cock in your mouth? Your dentist puts a finger in your mouth – that is no big deal. A girl puts a tongue in your mouth – maybe not often enough in my case, but any human tongue is much the same as another. Right?

“I am not gay, but I would do that, if you wanted it.” And just like that it was said.

He looked away from me. He looked up at the sky.

“I do miss sex,” he said. It had been 10 days. I had my cock sucked in Rio maybe 10 days before that, but that was petty much the only sex I had in a year. “But I am not gay either. So you will need to make some adjustments.”

I suppose he knew what was in Jessica’s suitcase, which makes it all the stranger that he should bring it along. Or maybe it was just because it was the better part of her. It was full of her good clothes. Not the clothes that she wore on the trail to the source of the Amazon, but what she would wear in Rio or Sao Paulo. And hair and body stuff and cosmetics too.

“I don’t want to look down and see a man sucking my cock,” said Callum. “I want you to be as much like a woman as you can be. Then when I am done, we are all square. Ok?”

It was not quantifiable for me. How can you put a price on a man saving your life, not just once but every day you are in the jungle. But I this was all that it would take for him to say we were even, I could do it, no matter how distasteful.

You must have heard the joke about that man in the village who had done many great things many times over but bore the name “Joe the cocksucker”. His complaint: “But it was just one cock”. But that was in a village. We were alone. Neither of us would speak of it again, ever, after it was done.

My hair was long before I arrived in Brazil, and I had not cut it since. It was mousy and straggly, but there was hair color and volumizing compounds in Jessica’s bag, and creams to remove the beard from my face and my body. There was makeup and eyebrow shaping templates, and false eyelashes. I knew what all of this was as I had a sister close to me in age.

Callum took the splint off my ankle. It was stiff but healed enough for all I had to do. That was not much. Polish my body, wash my hair in the river, put on some of her underwear and clothes, dry my hair in the sun and brush it, and tie it up with a ribbon. And then the makeup. I had seen my sister do all of this, but it was trickier than I thought. It took several attempts to get right.

“You are not going to call me by her name, are you?” I had to ask.

“You’re nothing like her,” he said. “Not as tough. But just as pretty.”

It felt good to have him say that. I may have shown it with a smile or even a blush.

He said: “I will call you Phoebe. Do you give head, Phoebe?”

“Yes, I do!” I said it softly, and a little coyly. I thought that he would like that.

He was standing in the raft with the pole that he held to keep us in the middle of the river, stripped to the waist with the sum on him. He was like a god. I dropped to me knees before him.

I struggled with his pants. In the end I just loosened his belt and pulled them down. His boxers were already tenting. I swallowed deeply and pulled those down too.

And there it was. Another man’s penis now rising to tumescence and rigidity and taking on the hue of fresh hot blood.

Having got to that point, putting it in my mouth was surprisingly easy. It was hot, and it seemed to fit. It seemed that my mouth was meant to receive it. I explored the feel of it with my tongue. He shuddered. I looked up and I could see that he was happy – not smiling but just relieved and relaxed, with his eyes closed.

I knew what to do. Who doesn’t. I had never given a blow job before, but I had received one or two. There needed to be lots of spit and you need your lips to move back and forth along the penis, and perhaps linger on the tip every now and again. Use the tongue. Look up.

This time his eyes were open, and staring at me approvingly. He put his hands in my hair, freshly washed and colored and brushed – girl’s hair.

“Oh Baby, that feels sooo good,” he said. I could me his cock was bigger and harder and hotter than ever. I could see that I was doing this. His eyes closed again and he was moaning. This was me. I was giving pleasure, but also to somebody that I admired to the point of worship. What could be better?

Better is when you feel that pleasure burst open and taste it in you mouth. That is when you know that what you have done means so much. It was still oozing when it came out. Like melting ice cream running down the cone. I just had to lick it off.

He looked down at me and smiled. He said: “You really make a great girl, you know?”

It was only then that I realized that my own panties were full of jizz. I was so caught p in what I was doing that I had not even noticed that I had cum too.

I swallowed the last of it, and I had to ask: “Did I do it as well as Jessica did it?”

“Baby Doll, she never did it,” he said.

I liked the way he spoke to me when I was his Baby Doll. I kept the dress on. I smiled at him when he looked at me and he smiled back. Something had changed. In fact, everything had changed.

He had said that this would make us even, and perhaps it was that way, but only for a few hours.

“The water is getting faster just ahead,” he called out to me. “Check everything is tied down and then grab a paddle and get on the other side.”

I did what he said. I always did. But as the water started to run and swirl I started to get afraid. Perhaps it was because I was wearing a dress, or maybe because I had just sucked cock like a submissive fag, but I found myself crying out in a pathetic girly voice, that it was getting to hard for me to handle.

“Hold on,” he said. But I was not strong enough, or just not up to it. I found myself in the water and then dragged under the churning water, as if in a washing machine.

I thought that In was going to die. It that moment in the water, with sunlight shining through the liquid and then blackness as I tumbled over and over, it seemed as if time had slowed so that my death would be a drawn out one. But it seemed certain.

And then he was there. I seemed barely conscious, or perhaps I just wanted to be. He pulled me to the shallows and held me in his arms. He kissed me. She said that it was mouth to mouth resuscitation, but it seemed like a kiss to me. The kiss of life.

“You have to wait here,” he said. “I need to get the raft.”

It was not damaged. The rapids were barely even that. I just panicked, I guess. It seems that I am like that when I am around him. It seems as if he makes me weak and dependent. Or is that me? I want to be rescued, as a damsel in distress craves her knight.

But I did slip. It was an accident. He did not want to hear. I owed him my life again. I owed him another blow job. But this time I was looking forward to it. I wanted it. I wanted to give him the reward that I had given him before that I knew meant so much to him.

I wanted to be pretty for him too. That is not always easy when you are on a raft on a river in the dark and damp jungles of Amazonia. But I did not want him to be gay. He should not be that. A man like him would only take a woman, so that is what I had to be if I wanted to be taken. And I did want to be taken.

It was only a matter of time before it went further and to anal sex. He was gentle, as a man as strong and powerful as he is, can be. But I needed to feel that power. I needed to be as small and smooth and tender as a girl can be, so that he could be the only man there.

It seemed as if he was the only an in the world sometimes. I would sit preparing the fish that the net had brought in and looking up at him, now just in his boxers, tanned by the sun and muscled by the pole he carried and worked the water with. To me he was the reason that I was alive. And what was I? I was his pleasure, and proud to be that.

At night we would tie up to the bank and get into the shelter and a net to keep away the insects, and cuddle together as the rain poured down. Whoever I had once been was gone, so I would have been happy if that river had no end. We could have just floated down it forever, with each day bringing new scenery and more of Callum and his penis and his tongue.

But their ordeal was not yet over, even as they thought it was. They heard it before we saw it – an outboard motor around the bend in the river. We were both very excited but when the boat came into view I became worried. It was like a canoe but with a transom – it had two men aboard and they were not returning our smiles. The boat was full - nets that I was familiar with, and cages. As they drew alongside I could recognize the contents of the cages – rare birds I my field.

“Poachers,” I whispered. I took hold of Callum’s arm, comforted by the feeling of his muscles tightening with adrenalin.

They called out in Brazilian. It was not a language that I knew. Others did the talking. Callum spoke back with some slight knowledge of their tongue. I was looking at the birds from the raft, but just my gaze was agitating at least one of the men. The other larger one was just staring at me.

“Eh Bonita, you … me…?” The larger man made a gesture which was not familiar to me, but the intent was clear. He wanted sex. He stepped off the boat and onto the raft. The other smaller man tied their boat to the raft and reached into a waterproof box between his legs.

The larger man reached out to take my arm. The sound that came out of my mouth was involuntary but completely feminine – a squeak of distress. But when I looked across at Callum to my shock he was not looking at her as he should be, as he always did. He was looking at the man in the boat pulling a pistol out of the box.

“Get your hands off me,” I said. He did, but not because of my words, but because of the groan from his colleague who was holding in front of him a bleeding stump where the hand that carried the pistol had been.

And over him stood Callum, with the wing axe in his hand. He kicked the hand and gun into the river, leaving the wailing man to turn his attention to my attacker. The big poacher pulled a knife from his belt, but it was no match for the tool that Cal had made. Even as he lunged with the knife the axe cleaved his skull and got stuck there. Man and axe toppled backwards and into the river.

Callum turned back to the smaller man, who was desperately wrapping the stump of his right hand. Callum pulled him from the boat and pushed him into the river. The man shouted at us and for some reason was trying to tread water with his right arm in the air. The reason became clear when the blood hit the water. He screamed as the piranha consumed his body.

I threw her arms around my man. Yet again he had saved me. I looked up at his face. What had just happened?

“He wanted what belongs to me,” said Callum. “I could not bear any part of another man entering you.”

I released the birds and then we sunk the boat, taking nothing except the small amount of food aboard. We would need to continue downstream on our own, as we had, increasingly happily until that awful day. Callum had killed to save me. It was a dreadful thing, but it locked us together.

But rivers do end, as ordeals do, and adventures. It was not even the Amazon they reached. There was a settlement on our river, and a fisherman that we met upstream from it dragged our raft to that group of squalid houses. To everybody there we were a man and a woman rescued after surviving a plane crash. He was Callum, and for the time being I was Jessica, although that was to become complicated when her family learned the truth.

We were taken by speedboat to Manaus and then flown to Rio. We refused the suggested medical check-up – in my case the reason was obvious. Somehow nobody guessed that I was not a woman. I put it down to the fact that I was. Somehow Callum had made me a woman by making me his woman.

As it happens, Rio de Janeiro is the home of plastic surgery, including genital surgery. I can say now that I never would have considered had he not suggested that it was a way that we could be together. That was all I wanted. In fact, it had got to the point that it was impossible to imagine life without him. I was his, you see. And I needed him to live. It is as simple as that.

It is not that I owe him anything for saving my life – that thought is well and truly buried. It is that I have no life without him.

As for what happens from here, who knows what lies downstream for any of us.

The End

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