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| Hiro  A Short Story  By Maryanne Peters  Some men find Asian women very attractive, but I never thought of myself as one of them. But there was something different about Hiro, and I just found myself drawn to her. She had glossy dark hair that she wore in a high bun, and she had large eyes by Japanese standards, which she wore heavily made up in modern style. Her nose was distinctive too, but attractive, and she had a strong chin.  I met her when she was performing her dance routine at the “Asian Pop Culture Festival” in Los Angeles. I was looking to scout some acts for a “Dance Exhibition” show that would start in New York with a plan to go on a multi-state tour. We had performers from all over the world, often traditional dancing brought up to date with techno beats. Her act fitted the bill. | Kayo Satoh | Trap | Know Your Meme |

She spoke only a little English and in a voice that was not sing song like other Asian women – it was deep and husky and remarkably sexy. It only added to her allure.

She had won a contest in Japan – in fact two contests - to get to America. The first was a regional contest that got her to Tokyo as “best female dance performer”, and then she won the national title with the first prize being cash and a place on stage at the “Asian Pop Culture Festival”. Travel included a ticket for her and a support person, and she had brought her mother, which I thought was charming. But her mother was forced to return to Japan because of an illness in the family. That left Hiro alone in LA, and I ended up looking out for her.

I took Hiro to the airport to see her mother off, and then I took her out for a meal. She talked to practice her English and there were the usual amusing misunderstandings and mispronunciations, and we laughed together about them. It was a rich laugh, and not the shallow giggle I was used to from young women of her age.

Being in the business of dance meant that I could have my share of women. Men would sometimes question me about sex with somebody who was supple enough to stand on one leg and kiss the knee of the other leg at full stretch. I would always say that sex with a dancer was the best, but the truth is that the only advantage was that she did all the work. I had married and divorced two dancers and I was not looking for a third.

Dancers from other cultures can be of different physiques and I liked that. I was ready for sex with some of them lined up at the festival, but Hiro seemed to me to be the most interesting, and I loved her humor and strange naivety. It was almost as if she was yet to discover her own sexuality.

I took her out for dinner the following night, and then invited her up to my hotel room, which was in the same hotel as hers and several other festival performers. My intentions were thoroughly dishonorable, but I could see that she was becoming increasingly uneasy, and I am not one to force myself on anybody.

I escorted her to her room, and when the door was open she suddenly turned to me and kissed me. It was a total surprise. It was a wet kiss with just a touch of tongue but there was something about it that left the impression that it was a forbidden moment and carried a sense of longing on her part. And then her door closed and it left me standing in the corridor wondering why I had these intense feelings. It was like the moment when a man realizes that he has never truly felt love before, because it feels like this. It left me rooted to the spot for several minutes.

The following day was Hiro’s last appearance at the festival, and also a busy day for me. I needed to sign up several performers for my show. Hiro would be one of them. I left messages for her to look me up, but she seemed to be avoiding me, or certainly not responding. It was the last thing I needed. I had work to do, and I was in love, and those are two things that don’t mix well. I was getting all the signatures that I needed except her, and that was the least of what I wanted from her.

To make matters worse I knew that she was due to fly back to Japan the day after, and I had to stop her from leaving. Even if she was going to break my heart and go, I needed her to tell me to my face. And if that was the case, I needed her to explain why her kiss the night before said otherwise.

I had promised all those who signed up a celebratory drink at the hotel bar. I messaged Hiro incessantly to come and join us, but she remained silent. The party was roaring but my heart was not in it. I made my excuses and went up to Hiro’s room.

I stood on the spot where I had fallen in love, and I knocked on the door. I could see through the peephole that the light was on. I started hammering on the door and calling to her, saying that I was not leaving until she came to the door. I said that I had important things to discuss with her.

Finally the door opened. She was still wearing her stage makeup, and her hair hanging to her shoulders but only wearing a hotel robe. I could see from the mascara streaks across her cheeks that she had been crying. I just entered the room and embraced her. It was to do nothing more than to tell her that she could count on me. Whatever it was, we could talk it through together

“No talking can help,” she said. “Problem too big.” It was a pitiful whimper. My heart melted.

“Let’s sit down and you can tell me all about it,” I said.

“I am not good person,” she said. “I lie you. I lie everyone.”

“Everybody lies,” I said. “It doesn’t matter. What matters is that you sign on to my show and you come to New York with me, and we can be together. There is nothing we cannot sort out, so long as we do it together.”

“No can sort out this,” she said. She let her hotel robe part as she sat on the sofa beside me, and it revealed that between her legs, just below a tuft of dark that should have thrilled me to see, was a penis. It was small, but it was definitely the ugliest thing I had ever seen.

I jumped to my feet in horror. I looked at it, and then I looked at her. The tears that filled her eyes streamed across the stained cheeks like a mountain waterfall. My heart still belonged to her, but she was not a her at all.

“I no want this,” she sobbed. “I explain … or maybe you go … and I go back Japan.”

“No,” I said, sitting back down more from emotional exhaustion than anything else. “Please explain.”

“Okay. I explain,” she began. “In Japan the name Hiro can be boy or girl. When I first do my dance routine I do it in the style like I am not boy but not girl. You understand? I am middle sex. Or no sex at all. I dance for boys and girls – both like me very much. You understand? Because my name is Hiro I don’t have to say whether I am boy or girl. The crowd decide. But first contest I win in Japan - I win girl’s contest. I win prize for girls. I cannot say ‘I am not a girl’. That would be a big problem. So, I say okay, I am girl name Hiro. When I go to Tokyo I ask my mother help me dress like a girl when not on stage. My mother does not like, but she do this for me because she is a mother, she is my mother. So then … I win national prize. My mother very proud. Father too, even when I dressed like girl. Father says to me ‘please, no dishonor our family. No say this is lie’. This make things very difficult for me. So I come to USA and I meet you. And …”.

Hiro had been talking with her head down, but in this moment of silence she lifted her head and looked at me with those big wet eyes. I could see her heart through those eyes. There was the longing in that kiss. There was crisis that she faced, and the feeling in the kiss that this was impossible love.

Was it? Was it impossible love? I sat down beside her. She pulled the robe up between her legs to hide the monstrosity that lay there. She had a look on her face as if praying it would disappear. Her legs were exposed – long and smooth, right up to the thigh.

I placed a hand on that thigh, as if to check that she was real. It made her gasp, as if I has entered the passage she did not have.

“I no like girls,” she said. “I like you. For you I will be a girl, if I can be your girl.”

That ugly thing had disappeared, or so it seemed to me in that moment, that her prayer had been answered. Because I had to kiss her, just to see whether it could be as wonderful as I remembered it. But it was better. This time there was the energy that comes with hope, and the heat that comes with passion, and the yielding which told me that she was mine and nothing could change that.

She joined my act and by the time we went on tour, she was my partner in every sense. She took advantage of the short break to have the surgery. She is now complete and a woman – My Hiro.

The End

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Erin’s seed: “A young Japanese American kid named Hiro (which is a unisex name in Japanese) wins a techno dance contest while dressed androgynously, and one of the local prizes is a trip to LA to compete for a bigger prize in a contest. The organizers have entered Hiro as a girl, so he goes along with the gag and competes as a girl and wins again, the back to Tokyo for the next even bigger contest, still dressing as a girl.”