Hiding from Guilt

A Short Story from an Idea by Erin

By Maryanne Peters

He woke in a room he did not know, but yet he did. It seemed strange yet familiar. The curtains had been pulled and sunlight was flooding in. The room was apricot and white, but with a wooden chest of drawers and large dressing table at the far end. There was nobody in the room, but there was a sound coming from the adjoining room. There was somebody there. His body stiffened, as if in fear. But why?

A man appeared in the doorway of that room – the ensuite bathroom. It was … it was Jason. Jason?

“I didn’t want to wake you,” Jason said. “Let’s make love tonight. Remember that we have a meeting at the adoption agency at 3:00.”

The man he knew as Jason stepped towards him. He clutched the sheets. “Make love”! What was this nonsense. Jason planted a kiss on his forehead and left the room.

He was deeply confused. Surely it was a strange dream. He should pinch himself. Twist a nipple.

“Oh my God!” The words came out, thankfully not to loud to be heard by the man Jason just gone. He sat up with a start and looked at his hand, and the shaped and painted nails. And the nipple he had pinched was pink and sore and crowning one of two perfected shaped a well sized breasts growing from his chest. And on either side of his face was a curtain of long honey brown hair, rich with a floral scent.

“What the fuck,” was just a whisper. He pulled back the covers. He was wearing a loose nightie, so loose that the breasts had fallen out the top. Extending down the bed were two shapely hairless legs. His, because he wiggled his toes to check. But what was between them?

“No, no, no!” The answer was nothing. Just a small tuft of soft pubic hair, and some anatomy that was clearly not his. “This cannot be happening!”

He swung the legs out of the bed. Fluffy slippers were waiting and they slipped onto his feet as if he did this every morning. But he paused there. He did do this every morning. Straight after they made love. Straight after she and Jason had made love. She, with her husband Jason.

“She” stood and rushed into the bathroom. There was the mirror. Jason’s shaving cream on the vanity as usual – she had to put it away as always. And then she saw her face. Her beautiful face. It was not him, it was her. Well, not quite him, but him as her.

They say that most people are attracted to people who look like themselves. It was certainly true of MMM and NNN. People called them a perfect match. His hair was dark, and her’s was not. It was this color. Hers was a natural honey blonde.

She opened the left hand drawer. Her drawer. His shaving stuff went in the other drawer on the right. But there it was in the left drawer – the hair color: Honey Blonde. And the hormone patches and the dilator. The dilator. She pulled it out to look at it.

Everything was all wrong. This was him. And yet in the mirror the hands stroking that hairless face and checking that the long hair was indeed real, were not him. And the tool in the other hand – that was hers – for dilation, and for the care of her vagina.

It seemed huge, but she knew that she could take the whole thing up there. With just a little of the lubricant from the tube, but first she needed to pee. She turned her back to the flush, lifted her flimsy nighty, and sat. It was just like every morning. His robe was inside out, the door handle was dirty, and some paint was chipped off the bottom of the door.

She thought: ‘That Jason. I love that man by why can’t he just do the little things that I ask of him?’

She stiffened again. This was wrong – all wrong. But the stream into the bowl made her relax. She took some toilet paper. Wipe down towards the ass. Look after your vagina. It cost you plenty. Words that she had heard and committed to memory, after the surgery.

So she was him, or she had been. How long ago? Somewhere time had been lost. The world had changed. She stabbed at her upper thigh with a fingernail. Wake up! But she was awake.

She knew where to go to find the panties and the bra and how to put them on. And then just the simple dress she wore around the house, one of 12 just for that purpose, in colors to suit her mood. Grey today.

She looked at the dressing table where she would spend a while, but she needed to understand what was happening. There was no time for that. How can a man wake up in the body of a woman and feel as if this might just be normal?

Downstairs that instinct led her to the kitchen. She knew it so well. The contents of every cupboard and drawer. The bench was clear except for the recipe book, with a place marked by the shopping list. Dinner for Jason, with everything bought the day before. Candles, wine and her great cooking. Ad sex afterwards. Something tingled inside her. It was not him at all.

There were no answers here. The living room. Everything in its place. The wedding photo on the sideboard. It was her and Jason. The happiest day of her life, although most days since had come close. She had to smile despite the distraught confusion.

She knew that there was an album in the top drawer. The wedding scrapbook. The invitation read: “Delia Hammond will be wed to Jason Fox …”. Delia?.

She spoke aloud, the walls to be her witness: “But I am not Delia. I was married to Delia. I was her husband. Not Jason.” Those in witness seemed to close in. She felt suddenly trapped as if all the air had been sucked out of the room. She staggered for the back door and out onto the terrace.

“Who am I?” she whispered. She had been a man once. Now she was a woman and a wife, and happy to be both. But all memory of who she was before seemed to have gone from her mind. It seemed unnatural, and wrong. How cold she solve the mystery. Where were the records kept?

There was a small alcove in the living room with a desk and a chair and a laptop. The desk drawer was locked by she knew where the key was. There were documents in there. She scabble through until she found new birth certificate. There it was: “A sworn statement by a licensed physician has been received indicating that the gender of this individual born in the Commonwealth has been changed by surgical procedure.” Previous name Lyall Thomas Hammond. New name Delia Hammond.

But that did not make sense either. Yes, Lyall was her name once, but why Delia? She was somebody else.

She sat down and flipped open the laptop. She searched for Lyall Thomas Hammond. She pushed enter, and her world collapsed.

It was all there on the screen. Not the wedding between Lyall Thomas Hammond and Delia Grace Kiel – she found that later – no, not that. It was all about the accident. All about the death of that Delia, the wife of Lyall, that moment when the car left the road and she was killed and Lyall barely a scratch. The one who should have lived had died. He could never live with that fact.

The tears were flowing. It was not a conscious thing. She groped for her phone.

“Delia, what’s wrong?” Jason’s voice immediately gave her the ability to use her own.

“It all here Jason,” she sobbed. “Everything about her death. All of it.”

“Honey, I had to stop for gas, so I am not far away,” he said. “I am coming right home, Okay? You just wait there. Just put aside whatever you are reading. I am coming right now. Everything will be Okay. Are you listening Honey? I am turning around. It’s about us now. It’s not about them.”

She took the box of tissues and went over to the sofa to sob some more. There was no mascara on the tissue. She realized that she must look awful. She rushed to the mirror in the hallway.

How could she be thinking about makeup at a time like this? She scolded herself for it. But she was not Lyall and she had not been him for years. She was Delia, in honor of the woman who died, and so that this woman could live on, and her husband cold be consigned to oblivion.

And Delia could not bear to look this bad.

But there were still tears when Jason got home. Her body was still convulsing with the grief and shame. But now it was in his arms.

“This is all too much for me,” she sobbed as he squeezed her tight.

"Your life is a tribute to the woman who died. In a way he died, not you,” said Jason. “So you have nothing to feel guilty about."

In his embrace she felt as if she had everything in the world, but somehow that made it worse. She had her life, and her man. Had Lyall ever held his Delia like this? Was he the kind of man Jason is, or was he ever really a man at all?

She pulled him closer. He was the cure. These feelings of remorse had been crushing her, all over again. Had this happened before? She needed to escape, maybe again.

“Let’s make love,” she whispered.

The End

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Erin’s story seed: *A guy is in a car accident killing his wife and child. he tries to hide from his guilt by drugs and kind of wakes up to find out that he is living as his dead wife in a small town and one of the locals has fallen in love with him. it's all told in flashback and at the end we find she's getting married*