The Path to Success

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

This is the story of a man called Dan, or at least he was when all this started.

We worked in middle management for a large corporation. By middle I mean that there were people lower than us that we were responsible for, but it sure felt that we were close to bottom. There just seemed to be no way to find the next rung on the ladder, let alone climb it.

We both share our complaints, Dan and me. Not just in the office over the water-cooler, but even after work. I suppose that made us more than just work colleagues – friends perhaps.

That was why Chloe came as such a shock.

The company was suddenly looking for diversity in our ranks. Affirmative Action they called it. They promoted some South Asian guy who we both agreed was less qualified than we were. Then there was some radical lesbian who applied for a job and got it, despite the fact that she had no history in the industry, let alone the business like we did.

“It is time for me to make a decision about my future,” said Dan. “I am wasting my time as I am. I might as well do something I have been putting off.”

I thought that meant he was quitting, and I was not about to put him off. But for me it was like not having the courage to take a leap into the unknown after so many years “investing in the company” through the work I had done.

“On Monday I am coming to work as Chloe,” said Dan. “You’re a pal so I don’t want any shit from you. And you had better start referring to me by the proper pronoun.”

I had never met a trans-person, and even at that point I was not sure that I had. Was this some kind of trick to get a promotion to senior management upstairs? I may have laughed out loud, but it did not take me long to realize that he was serious. He was going to do it, and I was going to watch it happen.

But as it was said – use the proper pronouns. So she told the boss, and before the office closed on the Friday somebody came down to explain that from Monday Dan was going to be Chloe and that everybody needed to accept it and be supportive.

I looked around but she (about to be Chloe) had been given the day off. Everybody else had the chance to gossip about “the new girl” as we packed up for the weekend.

“You’re a friend of Dan’s – right? How long has this been in planning?”

I had to reply with total honesty – “I only just found out myself!”

So on Monday Chloe walks in and puts her handbag on Dan’s desk. She says “Hi Leon” to me, in a voice that could have been female, but it would need the work put in that she was going to put in over coming months. The same with the clothes – not a dress on the first day – a nice blouse and women’s slacks (zip at the side” and sensible shoes. And no wig either – Chloe had hair so she must have had it dyed blonde and styled over the weekend. It was short but it was styled so it looked fuller, and would grow quickly. She wore make up, but not too much. She said she had it done for her for that first day, but when it came to reapplying lipstick she was clumsy and that would continue for a few weeks. But I suppose that the big surprise was that she as quite pretty. That would improve too.

I suppose that first day I didn’t take any notice of the shape of her body. It seemed that the most important thing was to try to understand if this really was genuine of if it was somehow the basis for achieving special advancement within the company. It was not until she started to make changes in her clothing that we all became aware of the changes in her body.

That first week she did suggest that we go out for a drink as we often did, but I declined. I felt bad about it because the reason I refused was not the reason I gave – whatever that was. The truth is that I could not risk the embarrassment of being seen in the company of a guy dressed as a girl, and that continued even after it became clear that he did not look like that. He just looked like a girl, maybe because he was not trying to push it.

Her hair got long enough to put some bouncy curls in, and she suggested a drink again.

“Hey, I want a life outside work,” she said. “And with a new dress and hairdo, I could go out alone, but I don’t want to.”

I agreed that we would go for that drink. She bought the first round – beer for me and a wine for her.

“You know Ray Maunder from upstairs?” she asked. “He has asked me out on a date, and I am not so sure if I want to out with him.” It was like she was asking me for date advice.

“Just tell him that you are not into guys,” I said. I assumed that she wasn’t, just as Dan wasn’t.

“But there’s the thing, I am into guys,” she said. “I don’t know whether it is the hormones I’m taking or the hormones in them that suddenly seems to be drawing many of the to me, but I am keen to explore what is happening.”

“It sounds weird.” That was what I thought, anyway. “You can’t just flip sexual preference. Like, it’s hard wired. If you could change plenty of people would … like gay guys who don’t want to be gay.”

“I don’t know why,” she said. “I just know what I feel.”

She sort of looked into space and her sigh turned into a lipstick smile. In that moment I realized that I was in the company of a woman. There was no doubt about it. Feelings were more important to her. This person had changed. But more importantly, my view of her had changed. I was attracted to her.

I made me feel uncomfortable. I guess that was why I encouraged him to go out on that date, and that resulted in Ray taking steps to have her transferred up to senior management.

I am not saying that she was not worthy of promotion. She was smarter and worked harder than many of the people on the floor above, but then I was much the same. It was just that I never got noticed, and neither did Dan. Danni was something different.

She was growing in to her new gender, and growing out where it mattered. It was not just her hair getting longer but her breasts and he butt gaining volume and giving her confidence in wearing things that showed off her expanding assets. Still she knew enough about the sharp edge between sexy and slutty, often resolved with nothing more that a well jacket or a fashionable silk scarf. She nailed the buttoned up look until the day was over and drinks were being poured in the Boardroom for senior management.

The fact is that she was upstairs and I wasn’t. She was in amongst it and she had the smarts like many of the guys on her old team. It was just that now she had the bosses ear – I mean literally … to speak into, nibble on or lick out – or whatever she did to get the old man fast track her to the office next to his

But want about me? Why would I follow that path? I am not trans, or I wasn’t then. Sure I dabbled in occasional cross-dressing, as Dan knew. He said that I was always the prettiest of the two of us when we played around with clothes and makeup. It seems hard to believe when you look at Danni now, but I will take a compliment.

Then I learned that the boss had decided to retire and with the date settled he was free to propose marriage to his executive assistant, the beautiful Danni. Everybody gasped at the news but it seemed to me that there was no real surprise. Danni had decided what she wanted and how she was going to get it. We had both talked about that as being the key to success.

With the Boss retired to spend more time with his young bride there was a new man in charge, and a man who openly admired his predecessor’s choice in a woman – somebody built for sex and without the baggage that women can bring to a relationship, and somebody smart enough to be a true trophy wife.

Danni said I could make the same career choice and see where it took me. Her path to success

“Its all reversible these days,” she said. “But obviously I am never going back.”

I looked into it. All the initial stuff can be reversed, but it is expensive too.

“I can help with that,” said Danni. “I have plenty of money these days.”

So why not? It seemed almost like an extension of what I did at home, but now dressing for the world instead of my own private thrill.

Danni’s husband made the introduction and the new boss seemed happy to take me upstairs as the new Michelle. I am loving the work and all the attention I am getting.

Who knows, maybe I will follow Danni in my personal life too, although the new boss says I would need to get rid of what does not belong under a woman’s skirt.

Sometimes the desire for success calls for drastic actions.

The End

© Maryanne Peters 2020

1670