Life Imitates Art

A Short Story

By Maryanne Peters

My parents did not approve, but as I tried to explain to them, art is not what you want to do, it is what you have to do. They were right. It is not a job, it is a calling.

I had always been interested in artistic expression. I drew and I painted, and my teachers said that I had real talent. But what I really loved to do was perform. As an only child I could only perform before my parents, or a room full of stuffed toys. At least the toys were receptive.

But I am being unfair. My parents did support me, even while they sought to discourage me. They thought that art could be a hobby. If I had a real job I could do art on the side. It was not enough. I had to break away from the mainstream.

I went to New York City to become a performance artist.

My girlfriend went with me. Elena believed in me and seemed ready to follow me wherever I went. If that meant dossing down in some tiny apartment in a seedy part of town, then she was up for it if it meant that I could do my thing.

I started out doing street performances before I got together with a small troupe doing burlesque and music hall-type shows. I had some recurring characters, like Ivan Tujerkov the Russian gangster who picked fights with the audience; Dwayne Twain the hillbilly philosopher who did long meaningless soliloquies; and Rene Gauchiette the French waiter, who did mime and juggled plates. Then there were two female characters - Ophelia Balls the vamp, and Poppy Powder the virgin bimbo.

This drag act thing was only a small part of any of the acts that I did, but I was good at it. I would like to say that I was good at everything I did, but I had some advantages in playing Poppy. I was not tall, and I was slightly built, and I could sing falsetto. That was what Poppy did. She was the dumb blonde with a heart of gold character – trying so hard to be loved but never quite making it.

Maybe that was my problem too. I mean I had love. Elena loved me. But I never quite made it.

She was ready to stay with me until our daughter Mia was born. Then she realized that I could never be relied on to provide. I loved them both, but to me a life without art was worse than death. I watched them leave. It was the second saddest day of my life, only because I could always nurse hope that we might be together again. The saddest day was when I learned that could never be. That was the day that Elena was killed in a car crash with her parents.

Elena had returned to our home town and married a guy called Mike. I had never met him, but I had every reason to believe that he would be the provider that I could never be, and that he would make sure that Elena and Mia wanted for nothing. Now he was a widower caring for a child who was not even his blood.

I have to say that when I got the news, I was just about finished with everything. The show had ended, and my characters were being hired to be entertainment at parties. Rene was in particular demand because he could wait tables and he really could carry 3 full plates on one arm. But work was sparse and the lease on the latest apartment had expired. The larder was bare, and I was living of kitchen scraps from waiting jobs. When I went home to see my daughter and attend Elena’s funeral, I was not sure that I would come back to New York City.

I was not sure if I was ready to meet Mike. But he arranged to leave Mia with my parents so I could have time with her. That time rekindled my love for my child, and I went to see a lawyer about custody.

“Courts do not like to unsettle a child, even for a blood relative,” she explained. “The stepfather owns a business and his own home, the only home she has known. This will not be as easy as you might think. At the very least you must have employment.”

I went to see manager of the local bar and restaurant, a guy named Codey I knew from high school. The place was called ‘The Turkey Shoot’ and it was bigger than our town. By that I mean that folks came from other towns and even out of state to dine there.

“I saw you perform in New York City last year,” said Codey. “I can hire you to wait tables in character.”

“Rene Gauchiette at your service,” I said in a French accent.

“No, no,” he said. “The blonde chick. What’s her name?”

“Poppy can wait tables, but she is more likely to drop plates,” I explained.

“I want her, and she pays for anything she drops,” said Codey.

And that was how Poppy Powder rather than me, got the job. I did my first night the day before the funeral. In fact, I needed to work every night.

I stood near the back through the service. Mike was a big handsome guy. I could understand why Elena might have preferred him to me, although I nursed the notion that it was only a marriage based on material grounds. As an artist, I believed in pure love. Mia stood and sat next to him.

But when the time came for interment, he came over to me. He said: “Hello, I’m Mike. Please come with us. Stand with us and hold Mia’s other hand.”

His eyes were warm, and the gesture was the height of goodness. I stood and I shed a tear as the coffin was lowered. I looked across and down. Mia was sad but still too young to know grief. I looked up and saw that there were tears in his eyes as there were in mine. He had loved her.

I spoke to him briefly. I could not go to his home – I had to get ready for work. But I am not sure that I would have gone there, at that time. I was not going to return the kindness he had shown me. I said: “I am sorry if it might upset you. You seem like a nice guy. But I must have my daughter.”

To my surprise his reply was: “I understand completely. I will be at ‘The Turkey Shoot’ later, so come and see me. We can talk it through.”

I suddenly realized that I was compromised. I said: “Look, that may not be the right place. I will be in costume.”

“I saw you there last night,” he said. “It is no problem I assure you. I want to talk. I have access to a private place there.”

Well, the private place was his office. Corey showed me where. Upstairs overlooking the entire bar and a big part of the restaurant. I tottered in on my heels with the shaped body stocking and tits spilling out of my tight pink dress, and my blonde big-hair wig.

“I own the place,” he explained. “But it is not my principal business. Ever since Elena died, I have been doing my best running things out of here at night, so that I can be with Mia. But I need to get back to work my day job, but I can spend time with her in the evenings. It is crazy to hire a nanny when you have the day to spend with her if you want. My lawyers have said that stability in her home environment is important. That is my place. Shifting her around is not the answer. I have plenty of room. Come and stay at my place and share custody with me, by agreement. We will see what happens.”

My parents house was not a long term option for me. Why fight if we had the chance to both participate in Mia’s life without a fight? It seemed logical, but more important, right.

But I had to ask: “You didn’t tell Corey to insist that I work in drag, did you?”

“I have nothing to do with the management of this place,” he said. “In fact, when I first saw you, I called down to him to ask who you were. When he told me, I could not believe that you were a guy in drag. You just seem so … perfect.”

It was the present tense. Poppy seemed perfect to him. And that was how Poppy Powder, rather than me, got to stay in the Mansion on King Street, with Mike and my daughter Mia. But not straight away.

And it was a mansion. There was room for me. There was room for a football team. Mia had a big play area adjoining the kitchen. And also adjoining that play area was an empty conservatory-like room, with a large easel standing in it.

I am not sure how much of this was planned by Mike, but everything was telling me to stay. My room was fantastic, and Mia’s room was between my room and Mike’s. The house had beautiful gardens and a tennis court and a swimming pool.

“You can put your costume on here,” said Mike. “’The Turkey Shoot’ is not well set up for live acts. Keep your stuff here and I can have you picked up and dropped off”.

The idea was that he would come home before I got changed and take Mia outside so that she would not be confused by my costume.

I remember in particular, the night of the big thunderstorm. Lightning knocked out power at ‘The Turkey Shoot’ so I went home early. Mike was sitting in the lounge having a scotch and he invited me to join him. I was resplendent in my bimbo outfit, and ready for a drink having herded all of the customers out into the storm in the dark.

There was a serious flash of lightning and clap of thunder and Mia ran down the stairs crying. When she looked at me in my blonde wig, she seemed a little confused. Surely, she did not recognise me, but she seemed to be uncertain as to who to run to.

“Yes, that’s your other daddy,” said Mike. “Sometimes he dresses up as Poppy. Say hello to Poppy.”

“Hello Poppy,” she said, looking heartbreakingly cute.

There was another flash of lightning and she ran to me, probably just because she was looking in my direction. I held her tightly against my breasts.

“Just remember,” I explained to her. “You are twice as safe because you have two daddies to look after you.”

“I have a daddy and a mommy again,” she said holding me tightly. “You will be my Mommy won’t you Poppy?”

And that was how Poppy rather than me, became her other parent.

Well, that story is true, but a bit misleading. The truth is that by the time of the storm things were already changing. I had grown my hair out. I was taking pills to soften my look. Mia may have seen me fully made up for the first time that night, but she knew that she only had one real daddy, and the was Mike. Mike looked after both of us. We were his girls.

That is because I was becoming Poppy. She was taking over.

Every night I worked at ’The Turkey Shoot’ more and more people accepted that the pretty waitress was not a performer at all, she was just Poppy. It was a case of life imitating art. Or art becoming life.

The day after the thunderstorm I put on one of the pretty dresses that Mike had bought for me and I went into town. I strolled down Main Street and I looked in all the shops. Everybody knew me. Plenty said: “Hello Poppy, wasn’t that storm last night just awful?” Some asked after Mike and Mia. I would smile and chat in my Poppy voice. It was the same voice that I think I had always used when talking to my daughter. It seemed that I had no other voice now.

I went in to visit Mike at his office. The one in town, not the one above the bar. Maybe there was someone there who had never been to ‘The Turkey Shoot’ – one who did not know who I was. But they would have found out when Mike greeted me. I was his.

He took me to lunch that day – the day after the storm. We just gazed at one another. I was Mia’s mom now. He was Mia’s dad. I guess that makes us … well you know.

Mike had fallen in love with Poppy. He told me that he thought he was in love when he saw me on my first night working at ‘The Turkey Shoot’ - before he even knew who (or what) I was. “It was love at first sight,” he said.

And Poppy had fallen in love with Mike. Although they had never met, he was the father of her child. They both loved the same daughter, why shouldn’t they love each other.

I suppose that only an artist, or a hopeless romantic, can appreciate that love can transcend all that is physical. How can a man who could love and be loved by a woman like Elena, fall in love with a man? If you knew Mike, you might think it possible. He is the best father, and I do not have to compete with that, because I am a mother now.

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| Now my concern is to be the best mother that I can be. And to be deserving of the love of her father.  I am still Poppy, but not the creation of the artist anymore. My breasts are real now, and not as big as the character, but that hair is still blonde – not styled as big as the wig. The makeup might be a little too much, and the dresses a little too tight, but I know what my man likes.  As for what I have in my panties, well, what life does not provide, art must fashion, and a true artist fashioned what I now have between my legs and what my husband now worships.  The End  © Maryanne Peters 2019  Author’s Note:  Maybe people have noticed that my output has increased lately. I am trying to devote myself to the fiction that pleases so many of you, and I am looking for sponsors on Patreon to help me do that.  <http://patreon.com/maryannepeters>  Hopefully I can escape all my work commitments and just write TG fiction.  Maryanne | A couple of people posing for the camera  Description automatically generated |