



Facades

by

D.A.W.

All his life Jake Melton hid behind a mask. When he returned home, upon learning of his abusive mother's death, fate intervenes and his life is changed forever.

Author's note:

This is my shortest story to date, but it's one that hits particularly close to home as it covers a topic that I have personal experience with: abuse. There are some pretty strong parallels to my own relationship with my mother and until now I had not found the right story to broach the subject. That being said, while abuse is central to the plot, I tried not to dwell on it too much. This is different from the sort of story you guys have seen from me up to this point. The narrator is transgendered in the truest sense of the word and it's set in our own world with a little bit of magic thrown in.

Shout outs go to the following people: Beyogi who served as a beta reader and Maggie Finson who served as a beta reader, but also came up with the title for the story, and Holly H Hart for her superb editing prowess.



Sometimes your past has a way of sneaking up on you. For some folks that could be a good thing, but for me it nearly always meant trouble. Now I know what you're thinking, and it's not as if I lived a violent life of crime or anything like that. When you grow up in the sort of mess that I did your past isn't exactly something you like to dwell on. My father died when I was very young and my mother, discontent with her lot in life, turned to alcohol in order to cope. She was a mean, bitter and manipulative woman, and she made my life a living hell. I'd been lucky in one respect, at least, a lot of people who grew up in abusive homes were beaten. My mother only ever tried to hit me once, and by then I was both bigger and stronger than her. When she hit me, I hit back, and she never so much as laid a finger on me again.

My mother always had a handle over me. She knew just what buttons to push to get me to do what she wanted and she manipulated me with the skill of a master puppeteer and much to my shame I let her do it. My mother could read me like a book, and had known whenever I was keeping something from her, but there was one secret she'd never guessed at. Perhaps, she knew and just wouldn't accept it or perhaps the mask I wore was so convincing that even she couldn't see through my carefully laid facade.

You see, for as long as I could remember I'd been convinced I was meant to be born a girl. My memories of my early childhood were foggy at best, so I can only surmise that something scared me enough to bottle my feelings up and keep them concealed. I sometimes thought that my mother may have had played a hand in this, but I doubted I would ever know for sure, especially now that she is dead.

I hadn't spoken to her for years, and I'd been perfectly content to leave it that way so it had come as a pretty big surprise when I got the call about her death. The call came from an old friend, one whom I hadn't heard from in years, but one who had been on my mind nearly every day since I'd

left home almost ten years ago. Katie, my closest friend growing up, and the only person I'd ever truly loved. I spent years trying to work up the courage to ask her out, but I was far too afraid to put our friendship at risk. It seemed fate was not without a cruel sense of irony, in our senior year my hopes were dashed and I learned that devastating truth, Katie was a lesbian. She was only attracted to girls, and despite my secret belief that I was meant to be a girl, I knew we could never be together. Completely heartbroken, I left town once we graduated and never returned.

It was just two days before Christmas when I got the call, and as always I was spending the holidays alone. It wasn't that I didn't have any friends, but there were just too many bad memories and I would just as soon drown myself in alcohol and spend my Christmas in a drunken stupor. I'd only had two beers and was about to start in on a third when I heard the phone ring. I almost didn't answer it, but for some reason I had this nagging feeling that it might be important.

"Jake?" a soft and melodic female voice asked from the receiver.

My heart skipped a beat and I felt ice cold chills shoot down my spine. It had been almost ten years since I'd heard her speak, and despite the subtle changes that time had made to her voice I still recognized the speaker as Katie immediately.

Memories came to me unbidden and I fought to keep my emotions from getting the better of me. "Katie?"

"God, it's good to hear your voice. I just wish it were under better circumstances," Katie said from the other end. There was a distinct tone of tension to her voice and I just knew that something was up.

"Katie? How did you get this number? What's wrong?" I asked her feeling a lump form in my throat.

"It's actually Deputy Forenst now, I work for the Sheriff's office. Look Jake, I wanted to be the one to tell you. Your mother, we found her dead yesterday morning."

"Shit... How?"

"She took her own life. I'm sorry."

My hand, the one holding the receiver, started to shake and I felt all my bitterness and anger rise to the surface only to mingle with guilt and grief. My mother, my tormentor for so many years was gone. I wasn't sure how I should feel and I was having trouble reconciling the sudden flood of conflicting emotions.

"Jake?"

"Yeah, I'm still here... I just... I haven't heard from my mother in so long and now to learn that she's dead. God, I don't know how to feel," I said, hot tears stinging my cheeks.

"Jake, I... if you don't want to come home. After all that woman did to you—"

"No," I said cutting her suddenly short. "I think I need to see for myself."

After a long conversation Katie offered to let me stay at her place and I reluctantly agreed. I didn't want to impose on her, but I had nowhere else to stay, as my hometown of Meridian was so small it didn't have a hotel and I sure as hell wasn't staying in my mom's place. I was still reeling from the news of my mother's death and I wasn't quite sure how to react. A part of me wanted to curl up in a ball and cry, and the other wanted to jump up in the air and shout out in glee. I know it sounds horrible, but my mother had brought me nothing but grief, and in a weird sort of way her death came as a relief.

I let out a long sigh, walked over to where I'd left my still unopened third beer and picked it up. I stood there holding it in my hand, and stared at it blankly for a moment. I shook my head, set the beer back down then sank down to my knees and started to weep.



"Dammit!" I cursed and turned my windshield wipers up to full speed.

It was Christmas Eve, and the drive to Meridian, my hometown, had been pretty sedate to begin with, but just a few hours in it had started to snow. It wasn't really all that bad at first, but the closer I got to Meridian the more heavily it came down. I could only see a few yards in front of me and it didn't show any signs of letting up. The mountain road that led into Meridian was hazardous, even under the best of conditions, and I was really beginning to regret my decision to come. I sighed, and flipped my car stereo on. Adam Gontier's voice screamed out the lyrics to I Hate Everything About You, and I could feel the singer's emotions as acutely as if they were my own.

The song had come out when I was still living with my mother, and had quickly become one of my favorites. As of late my musical tastes had moved away from the angrier and more angst ridden stuff I'd listened to in High School, but for whatever reason that particular song had remained in my playlists, and at the moment it was just the sort of song I wanted to hear. I hated my mother, I hated that her death had affected me as it had. I had never had any intention of returning to Meridian, but there I was, doing just that. It was as if my mother had reached out to manipulate me one last time from beyond the grave.

Still, it would be nice seeing Katie, despite how much it would hurt. I still had pretty strong feelings for her, and I knew those feelings would never be returned. It was strange that after so long that my emotions would remain so strong. Maybe I was just clinging to the unattainable so that I wouldn't get hurt by anyone else. It went to show just how pathetic I really was. I was afraid to get married, and afraid to have kids for fear that I would do what my mother had done to me and ruin my own children's lives. It was better that I remain alone so that the cycle of abuse could be broken, or at least that's what I told myself.

For the first time in years I found myself thinking about my gender identity. Well that's not really

accurate, I thought about it all the time, but this was the first time in a long time that I had really put any deep contemplation into it. Over the years I had carefully constructed an image of myself for the outside world to see. I did everything I could to appear as an ordinary guy, but that image was a lie. At one point I considering seeing a gender therapist, but the thought of hormone therapy and SRS held no appeal to me. I wanted to so desperately to be a woman, but I was tall and was pretty well built like a tank. With my face and body I didn't think I could ever make a passable woman, and I'd always feel like I was pretending to be something that I wasn't.

The tune changed to Norns by HeavensDust and I was about to reach down to change tracks when I caught a glimmer of light out of the corner of my eye. I looked up to find a pair of headlights headed right at me. I swerved out of the way in time to avoid getting hit, but I went flying off the road. For a moment my car teetered over the edge of the mountain's cliff, but then the car suddenly jerked sideways and everything went black.



My head felt like some deranged carpenter had been beating at it with a mallet as vision slowly returned to me. I reached up to touch my forehead and felt something warm and slick, when I pulled my hand away I found that it was covered in blood. I took a deep breath and thought I might pass out from the pain as stabbing sharp agony shot from the lower-left section of my rib cage. I groaned, and turned my head to take stock of my situation. My car's descent appeared to have been halted by a small copse of oak trees, but I had no idea how far down the mountainside I'd fallen, as the snowfall was so thick by then that I could only see a few feet in any direction outside the car.

The front of my car had crumpled inward and I was pinned against the steering wheel. All attempts to free myself were an exercise in futility and only resulted in more pain. The good news was that I could move my feet, so I wasn't paralyzed. My biggest concern was that I was bleeding pretty badly, and if someone didn't find me soon I feared I might bleed to death.

I gave up on trying to get free and focused on trying to keep warm. I was wearing my coat, which provided a great deal of insulation, but it was damn cold, and snow was drifting into the car from a crack in the rear window so I knew that it wasn't going to be enough. I slipped my hand into the sleeve of my coat and lifted it up to the bloody gash on my forehead. Short of tearing off a sleeve I didn't have any means of cutting off the blood flow, so my coat sleeve would have to do.

I found myself drifting off and I realized it would probably be bad for me to fall unconscious again. I'd banged up my head pretty good, and I thought I might just have a concussion. I fought against my drowsiness and did the only thing I could think of to keep myself awake, I sang. Like my mother, I'd been gifted with a pretty good singing voice, and one of the few good memories I had of her was of the two of us singing together. Of course, the first thing I could think of happened to be 'White Christmas', which seemed an oddly fitting tune for my current predicament.

Singing was second nature to me, and it didn't take me long to turn to more melancholy tunes like

'Everybody Hurts' by REM, but as I struggled to stay awake the lyrics started to slip from my mind. I eventually just started to scream out in misery. I don't remember all of it, but I do remember calling out to whatever god, goddess or gods would listen to me, begging them to end my pain. I didn't want to live anymore, I hated my life, I hated my body and I didn't want to live with it any longer.

I could never bring myself to completely discount the possibility that there was a God, but I'd never really put much stock in the idea of a wise, merciful, omnipotent and omniscient god. If there really was a God, and He really gave a fuck about any of us, why would He put us on this earth to feel so much pain? If He really cared about His children why didn't He try to alleviate our suffering? Then again maybe His power was limited and He was just as helpless as the rest of us, or maybe He just didn't give a damn.

I suddenly felt a hand on my shoulder, and turned my head to stare into the eyes of the most beautiful woman I'd ever laid my eyes on. She had long blond hair, a dazzling set of green-eyes, and she stared down at me with a calm reassuring smile. She tugged at my sleeve and I felt myself being lifted gently from the car and placed back down on the ground.

"Jake," she whispered kneeling down next to me. "I'm sorry that I've never done enough for you."

"Who are you?" I asked.

"Someone who has watched over you for your entire life," she smiled.

"W-what do you want?"

"What I've always wanted, to protect you and help you to be happy," she said, reaching down to cup my face as a single tear ran down her left cheek.

"I can't undo the years of abuse and mistreatment you've suffered at your mother's hand, but there's one thing I can do that should make your life a little more bearable," she said with a thoughtful smile as her hand slid away from my face.

"Hey, what—?" I protested as she pressed her hands into my chest.

"Shh, don't worry. It's all going to turn out alright," she said with a very slight smile just before a blinding white light filled my vision.

"Your bitterness is understandable, but know this. God is real and he does care," I heard her whisper as darkness closed in and I felt myself slip back into unconsciousness.



I woke to find a brilliant bright beam shining in my eyes and for a very brief moment I thought that my mysterious rescuer was still there, but realized that the light was coming from an ordinary flashlight. I groaned and shielded my eyes against the beam's golden luminescence.

I briefly took stock of my situation remembering the accident and everything that happened after. And there was my body... it felt strange. Something was different, but I couldn't quite figure out what it was.

"Jenn?" A familiar voice asked, and the light faded away to reveal the face of the newcomer.

'Jenn? Who is Jenn?' "Katie? God, is that you?" I said with a loud gasp, and couldn't believe my ears at the sound of the voice coming from my mouth.

'God, I sound like a woman!' Maybe the reason my body had felt different was because it actually was different. I hurriedly reach up and grabbed at my chest and let out a loud squeal at the pair of fleshy globes I found there. They were breasts, but how?! The woman that had freed me from my car... it was her doing, I just knew it!

"Jennifer," Katie knelt down to touch my shoulder with a reassuring smile. "You've been in an accident, but you're going to be alright. An ambulance is on the way."

I swallowed hard and nodded. Had I hit my head harder than I thought? God I really hoped not! Whatever had caused my sudden transformation had fulfilled the deepest desire of my heart and I was pretty sure I had the woman to thank. Who was she and why had she done this? For a moment I thought she might be a goddess, but then I remembered what she had said about God being real. Then it came to me, and the answer seemed so stupid I almost laughed. She was my guardian angel. I'd always discarded guardian angels and their like as nothing more than silly fairy tales and wishful thinking. Clearly, I was going to have to rethink a few things.

"Katie, what time is it?" I whispered reaching up to touch my old friend's face.

"It's just past one in the morning," she replied with a slow intake of breath.

She was so beautiful and I felt a slow smile creep onto my face as I realized what being woman meant. Not only did I have the body I always wanted, but I had a chance to be with Katie. I said a silent prayer in my heart of thanks to whatever God had sent the woman--no my guardian angel--to me. My past may not have been all sunshine and daisies, but I could see a glimmer of what my new future might entail and it looked to be very bright indeed.

"Katie come closer," I whispered.

Katie furrowed her brows, and leaned in as I had suggested. I reached up and grabbed the collar of her shirt, then tightened my grip and pulled her closer still.

"Merry Christmas, Katie," I whispered just before locking my lips around hers in a kiss.

As she broke away she stared done at me with wide eyes and the beginnings of a smile as she whispered the words, "Merry Christmas" just before I pulled her in for another kiss.



I stared down at my mother's face and grimaced. She had once been a very attractive woman, but no longer. Years of alcohol abuse and a laundry list of poor health choices had taken their toll. I actually looked quite a bit like her in my new form, and every time I looked in the mirror I saw a younger, more attractive version of her face looking back at me. She looked calm, almost peaceful laying there in the casket almost as if she were asleep. I turned my back and leaning heavily on my cane I limped back toward the door where Katie was waiting. The viewing was just getting started and the funeral services would be held later on in the day.

The crash had left me in pretty bad shape, but it could have been much worse. I had a few broken bones here, a sprain or two there, the big ass gash across my forehead and of course my body was covered in bruises. I wasn't what you would call thrilled about my injuries, but I think I could live with them especially considering the other ways in which my body had changed.

As near as I could tell I was a fully functioning woman, and I had my beautiful guardian angel to thank for that. Reality itself appeared to have changed along with me. Everyone in town knew me as Jennifer, or Jenn as Katie preferred to call me. They had no memory of a Jake Melton. To them I'd always been Jennifer. For the most part everything was pretty much the same, but there were subtle differences. Apparently, in this new reality Katie and I had dated in High School, but we broke up before I left town for college.

I didn't dare tell anyone what had happened for fear of getting locked up in a mental institution, so I was forced to be a bit roundabout in my inquiries. The doctors said I may experience a bit of memory loss due to my head injury, so I had the perfect excuse to ask questions. The odd thing was that my memory seemed fine. Maybe it was the work of my guardian angel.

It was odd, people I'd known my entire life treated me as if I were a completely different person, and to their knowledge nothing had changed at all, though I think it had more to do with my physical gender than anything else. Still, I worried that my life as Jake had been wiped from existence. Or had it? Was my life really all that different? Jake and Jennifer were really the same person, the only real difference was that they had been born into bodies of different genders. Which begged the question: Does our physical gender really dictate what sort of person we are? I had so many questions, but I thought that perhaps I could find those answers through prayer.

I did tell one person about my change, and I'm sure you can guess who. At first when I told Katie, I made it sound as if it had all been a dream. Then a weird thing happened. She remembered me or more accurately my male self. She was a strong believer in God and she was quick to proclaim my transformation His work and a miracle to boot. Not that I was going to disagree, mind you. How the hell else was I supposed to explain what had happened?

My mother had made my existence miserable, but I wasn't going to let her influence the course of

my life any longer. I had a chance at happiness and I was going to take it. As I drew close Katie reached out and grabbed my hand to provide support. I leaned against her and she wrapped her arm around my back as she led me out of the funeral home and into the light of the day.

I smiled and closed my eyes leaning my head against her shoulder. I thought I was going to really like my new life.



The End

Comments, no matter how short, are very much appreciated. If you liked this story please take a minute to leave a review. Criticism is welcome, but only when presented in a constructive and positive manner.

As my other stories this is a work of fiction and as such any resemblance to real life individuals events or locations is purely unintentional. Only Fictionmania, Bigcloset Topshelf, & tgstorytime.com have permission to post this story and my previous works unless I state otherwise.