



The Forty Year Old Virgin

A Lesbian Twist

Annette Mori

Chapter One

I shuffled my feet along the carpet, keeping my head down, not wanting to make eye contact with anyone just in case they looked at me and said, *you don't belong here*. The line moved slowly in front of the sign for Q through T.

Even though I saw the coffee, tea, and pastries laid out on the buffet tables, all I could smell was a faint odor of disinfectant that was probably used by the cleaning crew before the crowd of lesbians swarmed the hotel. After receiving my goodies, I planned to find a Starbucks. I didn't trust hotel coffee, especially when I couldn't smell it. I'd heard the Starbucks was within walking distance from the hotel and not inside it like most places. That was probably good for me because I kept picking up those extra pounds. According to the charts, I was pushing at least forty pounds over my *ideal* weight.

When I reached the table, I glanced up briefly to give the attractive older woman sitting at the table my name.

“Kathy Small,” I said thickly. I hated my large tongue. Even if my physical appearance didn’t give it away, which it did, my drooping eyes and my viscous speech impediment confirmed most people’s quick assessment.

I saw a brief moment of discomfort in the woman before she fingered through the cards and found my name badge.

“And here’s your ticket for the banquet.” She handed me the small red ticket. “I see you’re a virgin.”

Startled, I looked up. How in the heck did *she* know I was a virgin, except by assuming that someone with Down Syndrome never had sex, even if they had just turned forty, like me? “Huh?”

“A con virgin. You should definitely go to the session they have for con virgins and connect with the buddy they assigned to you. It helps to make

this experience more comfortable,” she replied.

My hackles went down, and I actually smiled. “Thanks.”

I waddled away, not stalked, slinked, or scurried. When you are a dumpy middle-aged woman who carries a lot of extra weight for your height and frame, you don’t gracefully go anywhere like they describe in all the lesbian fiction romance novels.

I put my short legs in motion and headed in the direction of the hotel exit to make the trek to Starbucks. I was in desperate need of coffee at this moment. Caffeine withdrawal was a foregone conclusion, and the pounding on my head reminded me it was way past the time I normally had my first cup.

†

Several round tables peppered the large space. I made a beeline for an empty table off to the far right and sat down, avoiding eye contact with everyone, even the jolly woman greeting each and every person who entered the room. She laughed and hugged a few people I assumed were the assigned buddies. Her presence filled the room with warmth. I wanted to feel her arms around me, but since I’d made a large arc to avoid any other human being, that wasn’t going to happen.

A couple of people ambled over to my table, even though I hoped few women would choose my table. I was fiddling with my name badge, and I smiled when they sat down. I felt better when I realized they were as nervous as I was. This was a novel experience for everyone in the room who wasn’t a buddy. I began to feel an affinity for these women.

A tall, thin woman with close-cropped gray hair remarked, “I really debated about coming to this session, but I heard the conference organizers do a great job of making everyone feel comfortable.”

I nodded.

The bubbly woman offering everyone hugs started to make her way to our table. She methodically reached out to those who had escaped her greeting when entering the room.

A large woman with short dark hair, adorable dimples when she smiled, and a cane hobbled next to the hugger. She wore thick black glasses that she pushed against her nose in an unconscious gesture that I suspected she

repeated several times a day. “Hey, Barbie, can you help me find my buddy?”

“Who do you have?”

“Kathy Small.”

I felt like a deer in someone’s headlights.

Barbie glanced over at my table and grinned. “Oh, she snuck by me earlier, but I was just heading over to say hello.”

The seat next to me was empty, and Barbie plopped down. “Hiya. Are you a hugger? It’s common knowledge I give the best hugs at the conference.”

“I like hugs,” I replied. The response sounded childlike even to my own ears and probably reinforced whatever stereotype there was about adults with Down’s.

“You big flirt, Barbie. It’s a good thing you have such an understanding wife,” the woman with the cane remarked.

Barbie laughed. “Hobble on over here and come and meet Kathy.” She turned back to me. “Rain check on the hug. Marcie is your con virgin buddy, and she’s the best.”

Barbie stood and motioned for Marcie to take her vacated chair. “So many women, so little time.” She seemed to float away as she made her way to the next table.

Marcie set her cane against the table and placed her hand on the chair, moving it over the edges almost as if examining it, before slowly sitting. Her eyes traveled in my direction but never seemed to focus directly on me. At first, it was a bit disconcerting, and I wondered why she didn’t make direct eye contact.

Marcie was a very large woman. According to those stupid weight charts, she was at least one hundred pounds overweight, but she carried her encumbrance well. Despite common sense, I found myself attracted to her. Unfortunately, I was in for another heartbreak. It hadn’t mattered in the past who I had a crush on. None of the women would ever give me the time of day. All they ever saw was the outer package, which was always a non-starter. I wasn’t a virgin by choice.

“Hi Kathy, I’m Marcie. First, I need to let you know that I have a severe visual impairment, so I hope you’re not bothered by my asking Barbie for

help finding you. I have some sight, but certainly not enough to read the nametags or see the finer details.” She smiled and showed off her dimples.

I nearly swooned. “Oh, no, not at all.”

She offered her hand, and I took it. I wrapped my small, stubby fingers around her soft skin, using both hands to clasp hers. I was in heaven.

“So, this is your first time at GCLS?” she asked.

“It is. I wanted to meet the author who wrote that book about the two young women with Down’s who fall in love.”

Marcie smiled again. “I heard she’s going to be a part of a panel on differently abled characters. I obviously want to attend that one. We should meet up and plan to sit together. I’d love to get your take on it.” She waved her hand in the air. “Obviously, you can see the GCLS participants aren’t a bunch of Xenas, Gabrielles, or their twins running around. It’s about time lesfic broadened their reach and wrote about women who aren’t rich, beautiful Goddesses ready to save the world with their kick-ass fighting skills. Maybe someday someone will write a bestseller about an unattractive, overweight, middle-aged woman like me.”

“I don’t think you’re unattractive. I love your dimples. I noticed them right away,” I blurted. *Did I actually just say that? Would she think I was flirting with her?*

She chuckled. “Can I keep you around? You’re perfect for my ego?”

I wanted to respond *for as long as you want*, but Barbie interrupted the session by bellowing, “Hello, all you gorgeous virgins...”

†

I knew they engineered the whole buddy program so the new conference participants wouldn’t feel like a fish out of water. Then they’d want to return the following year. I was pleased when Marcie reminded me she wanted to attend the Differently Abled panel. She also asked me what I was doing for lunch and invited me to join her and a few of her author friends. She needed to drop something off at her room and told me she would meet me in the vendor’s room at noon.

Occasionally, someone would glance at me and look away quickly, but I also received my fair share of smiles and nods. I wondered why I’d never ventured out and attended the GCLS Conference sooner. Hidden behind my

laptop, I'd communicated with several women about the various books I'd read, and some authors and readers had mentioned looking forward to meeting me.

I'd sent an e-mail to the author of the book about the two young women with Down's, and she'd also mentioned she was looking forward to meeting me. That made my day. I'd sent a follow-up e-mail revealing that I had Down's. She was so sweet, telling me she really wanted to talk to me, and she wished she'd met me before she wrote the book so she could have done a better job of writing an authentic novel. That made me feel special. I really wanted to meet her, so I moseyed into the vendor's room, hoping she would be there.

They filled the spacious room with tables covered in white tablecloths. Publishers and vendors lined the walls while attendees chatted at the table. Finally, I spotted Annalise, the author I was looking for. Her head was tipped back, laughing. An attractive woman sat to her right with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. Annalise turned to the other woman sitting on her left and whispered something that elicited an uproarious laugh from her.

I timidly approached the table, and all three women smiled broadly. I grinned back at them.

“Kathy?” Annalise asked.

“Were you expecting another woman with Down's?” I joked.

Annalise chuckled. “Hey, I saved you a copy of the book. I've already written something inside. I hope you don't mind.”

“Are you kidding? Thank you. How much do I owe you?” I asked.

“Not a dime,” she answered.

“Really?” Her generosity overwhelmed me.

“Absolutely. There's one condition. When I write the sequel, will you be a beta reader and give me honest feedback on what I need to change?”

I grinned. “I think I got the better end of the deal.”

“Oh, don't be so sure of that. I've been known to send my betas new versions every few days for them to review. I have a touch of OCD.”

Annalise handed me a copy of her book.

“A touch?” the attractive woman to the right interjected.

Annalise playfully smacked the woman. “Kathy, this obnoxious woman is my wife, Camille.” She turned her head to the woman to her left and

added, “And this is the famous and incredibly prolific writer, Janelle.”

“It’s so nice to meet you,” Camille said. “Annalise wouldn’t stop talking about how she looked forward to meeting you at the conference. If I was the jealous type, which I’m not, I would have tracked you down to ensure you knew she was happily married to mwah.” Camille pointed to herself and winked.

Clunk. “Shit.”

I turned and saw Marcie trying to navigate with her cane through the tables set up for the lunch crowd. She bumped into one of the chairs.

“They should allow for more space between those tables,” Janelle grumbled.

“I think they did,” Annalise said, “but then the Burning Desire group pushed some tables and chairs together this morning when they were eating breakfast. I don’t think they intended to create an obstacle course.” Annalise stood up, and Camille and Janelle followed suit. I joined them when I figured out they intended to create space between the tables.

“Hang on, Marcie. We need to move some tables and chairs around a bit. Why don’t you grab that chair a couple feet to your right and have a seat? We were just about to grab some lunch, and we’ll join you,” Annalise suggested. “It’s just Camille, Janelle, and me. The rest of them took off for parts unknown,” she added.

“That sounds wonderful, Annalise. I’m supposed to meet my virgin buddy, Kathy Small, who is dying to meet you, and a few of the rowdies from Burning Desire. How many chairs are at the tables?” Marcie asked.

“Kathy’s been hanging with us. She’s right here. There are eight chairs around the table, but I’m sure we can squeeze a few more in. How many are coming?”

“Three, and oh, I saw Barbie on the way, and she wants to join us as well.” Marcie laughed. “Well...I use the term *saw* lightly, since a blurry image is about all I see these days. I suppose accosted might be more accurate. The big flirt grabbed me, placed a big smackaroo on my cheek, and then asked if she could crash our little lunch party.”

“Wonderful. I haven’t received my Barbie hug yet today,” Janelle said.

“Me either,” Annalise added.

“Kathy,” Marcie turned her unfocused eyes in my direction. “I’m sorry I didn’t realize you were here. I haven’t heard your voice yet. Annalise has

such a distinctive lilt to her voice. She's not too hard to pick out in a crowd. We aren't overwhelming you, are we?"

"Oh, no, not at all," I answered.

I was on cloud nine. I felt like I'd made it into the cool kids' group, which had never happened to me before. I suspected my thick voice, with its distinctive speech impediment, would be just as easy to decipher from the crowd. I wasn't sure if that was a good or bad thing. She hadn't asked about it, and I hadn't confessed anything to her yet. I wanted to establish a relationship before she started making assumptions about me. I was considered high functioning, but it was difficult to establish a different first impression with most people.

I got upset the first time someone told me I was high functioning. They couldn't understand why the term was offensive. It felt like a backhanded compliment along the same lines as, *but you're so pretty for a lesbian.*

Chapter Two

Since the Differently Abled panel was scheduled for right after lunch, Marcie and I followed Annalise and Camille into the room where she would be speaking. Annalise was charming in her nervousness. I realized at that moment that perfection doesn't exist in anyone. I would've assumed Annalise was utterly comfortable in her skin and could address a group of fans in her sleep, but Camille stroked her arm to calm her. She looked a little green. I felt sorry for her.

The moderator did a great job making the panelists feel comfortable. When Annalise answered a question about the marketability of writing about characters with disabilities, I listened intently.

"You know, the book I wrote almost did not see the light of day. But I believed in the story and insisted a fair number of readers wanted to see the book published. In the end, I agreed to some revisions that made it more marketable. I knew from the start that some readers would love it and others would hate it. It was disheartening to learn that one beta admitted that she might be shallow, but she wanted her main characters to fit her ideal fantasy. Unfortunately, my young couple didn't hit the mark for her," Annalise explained.

Another panelist added, "I disagree that books with differently abled characters won't sell well. My book did."

"If readers want books that don't always fit the ideal of beautiful, rich women who sleep around, but are just misunderstood, then we have to vote with our pocketbooks," Annalise said. "It's easy to find fault with publishers who don't support books with women of color or women with disabilities, but they are only producing what we'll buy. Sappho gave a compelling talk about what sells and what doesn't. Moreover, she had

indisputable market evidence to support her claim. The charts were eye-opening. My publisher confirmed that their own data mirrored Sappho's."

"Yes, but is that because publishers aren't offering those kinds of books for people to choose, or because they are not desired? Chicken or the egg, chicken or the egg," another panelist argued.

"Good point," Annalise agreed.

"Let's take some questions or comments from the audience," the moderator said.

Marcie raised her hand and stood up.

The moderator nodded in her direction, and Camille whispered, "Go ahead, Marcie. You've been recognized."

"Personally, I'd love to read a book about an old, fat dyke who can't see shit but finds the love of her life." Marcie chuckled. "You know there's a lot more old, fat dykes reading books than Xena Warrior princesses. So you gonna write your next book about someone like me, Annalise?"

"Sure. I'd love to write about a witty, beautiful woman with a visual impairment," Annalise fired back.

"You know your wife is sitting next to me," Marcie cautioned.

Annalise chuckled. "Yup, I do. I'm not the one with the visual impairment."

"Touché. Too bad you're married." Marcie put her considerable girth back down on the chair.

When I say considerable girth, I'm not describing her in that way to be mean. I happen to prefer women with a bit of meat on their bones. I don't particularly care for the scarecrow look. A taut, muscled body is overrated, in my opinion. Not that I would know this, but a woman with curves might feel a whole lot better lying next to me than bones protruding and poking me in the sides while I sleep. I wanted to whisper to Marcie that I wasn't married, and I agreed with Annalise. She was a witty, beautiful woman whom I would love to read about and wouldn't mind touching, just to feel her soft skin under my fingertips.

†

After the panel, Marcie and I went our separate ways. I didn't want to appear too clingy, so I made an excuse and decided to see the sights. I

hadn't done much traveling in my life, and I wanted to make this a vacation. I'd never been to this city before; I'd never been anywhere besides Ellensburg, Washington. In my mind, a trip to Seattle now and again didn't really count as travel.

I'd been surprised when Marcie suggested we catch up later and go to dinner together. She heard the restaurant in the hotel was excellent and asked if I wanted to join her. I quickly said yes and assumed we would meet other people. Even though I presumed she'd only asked me out to fulfill her buddy obligations, I was happy to spend more time with her. Every time she smiled, and I caught a glimpse of her dimples, my stomach did a mini gymnastics routine.

I was running a little late because I'd taken extra time to blow dry my hair. I wanted it to look just right. It was the only feature I felt any amount of pride about. It was ridiculous. I knew that. Marcie had repeatedly explained how she couldn't see the finer details, but a small part of me had a fantasy that maybe, just maybe, we would find ourselves alone somewhere, and she would run her hands through my hair and feel her way toward an accurate visual.

Marcie was sitting in a booth by herself with a glass of white wine in front of her. There were only two place settings, and my heart pounded as I realized no one else would be crashing the party. I envisioned a romantic dinner just like in the romance books I read. I wondered if this was a date.

"Hi. Is it just us for dinner?" I asked. I didn't quite believe my good fortune.

Marcie turned her head in my direction. "Is that okay with you?" Her voice sounded tentative.

"It's perfect," I managed to say as I sat in the empty chair across from her.

"I hope you don't mind, but the waiter came around and asked if I wanted a drink, so I got a head start with a glass of wine. I'm sure he'll be back around again in a few minutes. I didn't know your preference, or if you drank wine, so I didn't order a bottle."

"It's okay, I don't drink. The only time I ventured out and ordered wine, I received such a disapproving look, I never did it again. I didn't really care for the wine anyway," I confessed.

"Where'd you grow up, Utah?"

I laughed. “No, I think there’s a certain viewpoint that would suggest that people like me shouldn’t or don’t drink alcohol.”

“Okay, maybe not Utah, but Mormon?” she asked.

I was at the point where the rubber hit the road. I didn’t want to reveal that I had Down’s and end my fantasy evening. This might be the closest I’d ever come to an actual date with someone I wanted to explore a relationship with. If I told her, I ran the risk of the date skidding to an abrupt halt. On the other hand, I just wanted to rip the bandage off and get the hurt over.

“I have Down Syndrome. People can’t imagine us with a glass of wine in our hands. It doesn’t fit the picture in their head of the happy, innocent, childlike adult.” The words came out thick and heavy like black tar.

“Oh.”

The awkward silence hung in the air, and I couldn’t help feeling the acute pain in that one word. It said everything. I didn’t want to cry in front of her even if she couldn’t see me. I knew she would hear my sniffles.

“Excuse me.” The chair scratched across the floor, and the noise appeared to startle her from her internal reflection.

Chapter Three

I ran into the bathroom and barricaded myself behind the bathroom stall as I gathered a fistful of toilet paper to stem the flow of tears. I probably cried for at least five minutes before I heard the outer door creak open.

“Kathy? Are you in here? It’s Annalise. Marcie sent me to find you. She feels horrible. Can you please come out and talk with me for a minute?”

“I’d rather not. Can you just tell Marcie I’m not feeling well?” I answered.

“No, I won’t. Look, I’ve known Marcie for a long time. She is a wonderful woman—compassionate, loving, funny, and human. She hasn’t been as excited about another person in years. I think you two need to finish your dinner and allow one another a bit of grace. Stereotypes are the way of the world because humans need neat little boxes to place everything into so that we can make sense of a complicated existence. We all do it, so no matter how evolved you think you are, you’re lying if you don’t admit to that human flaw.”

Annalise was right, of course, but it cuts deep when you are the target of those stereotypes. “It hurts.”

“I know, hon. Please come out. I’ve got a good feeling about you two, but you’re both going to have to take a risk and let down some self-imposed barriers. Marcie refers to herself as a fat, old dyke, and you toss up the fact that you were born with Down Syndrome as a reason why no one would ever be interested. Both of you telegraph the same message: I’m not worth getting to know. I just want to smack your heads together and knock some sense into you.”

That did it. Annalise had teased a chuckle out of me, and I cracked open the door. “Thanks, Annalise. Do you really think we might have a chance to, uh, explore something?”

“I do,” Annalise stated.

Annalise squeezed my arm before walking away, leaving me standing before a dejected-looking woman. Marcie’s head was bent, but when I approached, and she heard the legs of the chair scrape across the floor, she looked up.

“I’m an ass. I’m sorry. I can’t believe I reacted the way I did. You must think I’m a horribly shallow person, and right about now, that’s the way I feel. Can we just rewind before you joined me and I became an insensitive jerk?”

“It’s okay.” I sat down. “Can I please tell you a few more things about myself, other than I have Down Syndrome because it isn’t who I really am? It’s just a small part of me.”

“I’d love that...um...you know to learn more about you. That was my intent when I asked you out.”

So it had been a date. That gave me a small amount of hope.

“I have a college degree and work at the local library. I’m what most people refer to as high functioning, although I don’t really like that terminology. There are a lot of myths about people with Down’s, and although I really don’t wish to focus on that aspect of who I am, I want to provide some education for you at some point. I read a lot, so I think I can keep up with any conversation you wish to pursue. I am definitely not confused at all about my sexuality. I am one hundred percent a lesbian. I live alone with my two cats, make a decent living, and think you’re beautiful.”

Marcie blushed. “Thank you for giving me a second chance.”

“Um...one more thing about me... I’m not just a con virgin. I want to be completely open and honest with you. If that’s a tad bit too much information...” I let my words dangle.

Marcie’s dimples appeared almost instantaneously. “Hm, well, I’m not either—a con virgin or any other kind of virgin. So I think my buddy role might just have to expand a little. I wasn’t always an old, fat dyke...”

“I’ll make a deal with you. Stop calling yourself an old, fat dyke, and I’ll keep telling you how beautiful you are.”

“Deal. I won’t be able to see your beauty, but I can definitely feel it. Sometimes there are advantages to being visually impaired. It has allowed

me to refine my other senses and develop my sense of touch, well...I haven't had any complaints yet."

I didn't have flirtation skills and wasn't the kind of person to play coy. So I wasn't going to try to provide a witty response. Instead, I took a chance and reached across the table, placing my hand on top of hers. Her hand was soft and fleshy. We weren't quite holding hands at this point, but I'd made physical contact to let her know I was interested.

She maneuvered my hand until hers was the one on top and began stroking my palm. It sent shivers up and down my spine.

"Would you be offended if I touched your face? It helps me see you, kind of like a rudimentary type of Braille?" she asked.

I hesitated. What if Marcie didn't like what she *saw* through her touch?

"Trust me," she added.

"Okay."

Marcie leaned forward and brought her hand to my face, mapping my features. When her thumb brushed back and forth across my mouth, I felt a rush of arousal.

"Your lips are full and soft. I bet they are marvelous to kiss. Would it be too much to ask for you to bring your chair closer and let me sample your glorious fruit with a brief kiss? Perhaps this could be an appetizer for the full meal that I hope we will share together, if not tonight, perhaps very soon."

I imagined a new movie about a forty-year-old virgin, but this time, lesbians would play a prominent role, and there would be another interesting twist. Life was definitely looking up for me.

"I'd like that."

I tried to be graceful when I moved the chair next to her, but I wasn't very successful. It was awkward and noisy, but that didn't make a bit of difference. When her hand found its way back to my face, she used it to guide her lips to mine...Nirvana. That's the word that came to mind. She didn't try to push her tongue into my mouth because that would have rushed things too much. As her mouth captured my bottom lip, I felt the gentle caress that only lasted a few seconds but managed to cause quite a stir in my body. The first kiss was electric and one that I'd never forget. But it was only the first of many to come and, like she said, the precursor to the full

meal. My life truly began at this conference when I was a GCLS con virgin. In fact, I lost my virginity twice that year.

Note from the Author

Although this is a standalone short, not based on characters from previous novels, if you enjoyed the story and/or the writing style, I hope you will check out my other books from Amazon. Similar to this short, my novel, *Unconventional Lovers* features a young couple with Down Syndrome. Here is a link to my Amazon page:

<https://www.amazon.com/stores/Annette-Mori/author/>