

Short Story

"The New One"

I hate stereotypes, I really do, but some people just seem to live up to them and then, the stereotypes are just validated, and it's really just a bitch. 'Cause then I'm torn. I want to like the person, but I can't get past their being so contrived and cliché.

Jossi's new boyfriend is a stereotype-right down to his firm, I'm-so-masculine, let-me-grind-your-phalanges handshake. He has that look about him. Nice face, nice build, little bit of pot-belly, his deep voice a little forced, polo shirt, beige duckhead slacks. But when Jossi told me he put a neon Budweiser sign over his bed, I knew it: this boy was definitely the shortest distance between two fixed points; not a bend in sight.

Jocelyn is my oldest and dearest friend. We go way back to the seventh grade when, by way of a self-introduction, she frogged my arm in homeroom. I wolloped her back, always a feisty white boy at heart, and she tossed a book at me, which I dodged, and we both ended up in detention hall. Friends forever. Amen.

We wanted to room together in college, but we figured that idea wouldn't fly with the University Housing Authority. So we settled on the same dorm, just different floors. Things progressed through the first two weeks of classes nicely enough--we had English together--and now she'd brought this new boyfriend of hers to meet me.

"Steve, I want ya to meet Randy, who I've been telling you about."

Christ! She must really like this one, to be on such good behavior. The last time she came to show off her new beau, the conversation started with:

"Hey, bitch! Steve! C'mere and meet my new one. You'll like him, he's got a cute ass!"

Jocelyn wastes no words. Unless she's in serious lust. Or up to something I should be worried about.

Randy and I exchanged pleasantries:

"Hi, nice ta meet you." I smiled, trying to play Jos's little niceness game, and wondering what to expect; as if anything of Jos's doing could be the realm of the expected.

"Yeah, how'sit goin'?" Typical. Probably all the English he knows. That and, "Any more in the keg?"

He seemed uncomfortable; he kept gnawing his nails and looking at me sort of expectantly, like he suspected any minute I would start lisping and swishing. He was really afflicted with what I call The Straight Boy Blues. He was intimidated by a gay man who looked him "straight" in the eye, and didn't dress like Judy Garland.

"I've got something for ya," she smiled up at me, from her five-foot-four-inch little body. Her hazel eyes had that wicked look of hers that means I'm really in deep shit. Last time she gave me That Look, she hung a poster of a full-length nude male on the outside of my dorm room door, for everyone's viewing pleasure; and this ain't exactly a co-ed wing. The next day she hung up a poster of Heather Locklear in its place. My poor roommate just stays confused.

She pulled a white square of cloth from her bookbag, and smiling that ever-so-disarming grin of hers, handed it over. I faked a smile back at her, already scheming for a way to get her, if it's what I think it is. I unfolded the cloth. It was just what I most feared. A size large white cotton t-shirt with a big, bright red capital "G" on the chest; one that would've made Hester Prine blush.

I tried to scowl at her, but we both ended up laughing. Randy kind of chuckled, still having trouble being cool around me. I had asked for it. Jocelyn's last birthday, I gave her a similar t-shirt, (only hers had a scarlet "A" on it), while her Baptist grandmother was watching. Grandma Barefoot was not pleased, but Jos wore it to school anyway. But I had a real chore talking her out of wearing the damn thing to the Prom. She's completely incorrigible.

Of course I wore the shirt right then. What's risking my life by coming out to a whole dorm-full of people that I barely know, compared to my wonderful friendship with Jossi-bitch Barefoot?

-Don Suggs

• • • ——— TV CONDOM ADS URGED BY SURGEON GENERAL ——— • • •

The New York Times News Service reported that Surgeon General C. Everett Koop is strongly supportive of condom advertisements on TV. Koop testified before a House subcommittee that the ads were "necessary" and "a positive public health benefit" in stopping the spread of the disease AIDS.

Koop noted that AIDS has hit the black and Hispanic communities especially hard, and urged that advertisements be aimed at these groups.

However, all three major TV networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) have voiced opposition

to the commercials, professing that their viewers would find them unacceptable because the ads could be perceived as an endorsement of contraception or sexual permissiveness.

Rep. Henry A. Waxman, D-Calif., accused the networks of being hypocritical. "While portraying thousands of sexual encounters each year in programming and while marketing thousands of products using sex appeal, television is unwilling to give the life-saving information about safe sex and condoms," he said.