



DECADENT *WESTERNERS,* GERMAN TRAIN

"SEXIEST" MEFITE CONTEST RESULTS

8 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT RAT SEX

Teenage Prostitution, **DANGEROUS TRANSACTIONS**

THE JOY OF PHONE SEX WORK

CONTENTS

<mark>4</mark>

0

Night Train From Berlin Decadent Westerners in Communist Germany

Communist Germany pjern

Entwined In Love, And Emboldened And Powered By It

Memories of the first time *dancestoblue*

Stuck in the Maze

Finding a way through high school attraction *Brandon Blatcher*

8 Things You Didn't Know About Rat Sex Yes, you read that right.

gaspode

Sexiest Mefite Contest

Where sexy is loosely defined and snark rules mandymanwasregistered Brave New Porn Working the floor at the

Fleshbot Awards The Whelk

Open Line

Setting up shop to be a phone sex worker By The Grace of God

The Sex Lives Of North Texas Teens

Data about teenagers in the Lone Star State Unicorn on the cob

Simple Transactions

Scenes from the work of a teenage prostitute *Ilovesocks*

The Second Battered Woman I've Known

A prostitute, a man, and a unlikely relationship *Meatbomb*

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ABOUT THE COVER PHOTO BY RHAPSODIE

For a number of years I have been involved in various self-portrait projects to explore and improve my photography. My partner loves being involved with my self-portraits, loves being a part of my creative process and seeing the final product, especially when I am less than fully clothed. There's something raw and energizing about being naked in front of the camera. It's helped me accept my body and bring out my sexuality, something we both benefit from.

EDITOR'S NOTE

INSERT YOUR OWN jokes over why this issue of the MeFi Mag is so late — so good I needed alone time; lost in a mire of frothy editorial impotence; just couldn't get it off — but now that it's here, it sure is worthwhile.

Editing this did make me acutely regret not sneaking out my copy of Hustler's style guide when I got the axe there. It was a prescriptivist pervert's primer, reminding all and sundry that "cum" was a noun (to the verb of "come"), and that Crenshaws were melons, ergo breasts.

Most difficult (not hardest) to edit was, no doubt, the results of the Sexiest MeFite contest (pg. 16), what with its ASCII art and probing questions. Of the three winners, Meatbomb also contributed one of a couple of stories that touch on sex work, "The Second Battered Woman I've Known" (pg. 34).

We also have two firsthand looks from women, By The Grace Of God's foray into phone sex (pg. 24), and ILoveSocks' necessarily anonymous "Simple Transactions." We do warn that readers sensitive to rape triggers should avoid that story (pg. 30).

In his second B-Sides column, Brandon talks about the girl that could have been his first (pg. 12); in an excerpt from a longer work, DancesToBlue writes about the one that was (pg. 6). Pjern's story isn't about his first, except maybe his first time doing *that* (pg. 4).

Unicorn on the Cob dispels some coming-of-age myths, at least for Texas teens (kids are less salacious than you'd think, pg. 26), and The Whelk ventures forth armed with MeFi Mag press "credentials" to cover the Fleshbot Awards (pg. 22).

And finally, Ardriril turns reproduction into code (which I hope I haven't screwed up too badly in editing, pg. 11).

We've had a wonderful first volume for the MeFi Mag, and we thank all of you for being a part of it.

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KlangKlangston (Josh Steichmann)

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Numerous MeFites requested and received a grilled cheese during the production of this issue.

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Night Train Berlin by pjern (Phil Jern)

I SEEM TO attract partners with definite kinks.

There was the one who liked "breath control" during sex, and another who wanted to make love outdoors in the woods, miles from civilization. Still another self-lubricated at the sight of a rope. Still, there wasn't anyone with the élan and flair that Judith had.

Judith worked in the same building that I did in Berlin, as an intercept analyst. We had shared a lunch table a few times, and there seemed to be a spark or two there. But I didn't have much of a clue about how to kindle anything with her romantically.

One of the perks of working in a walled city inside a communist nation during the Cold War is that the various Allied powers provided free transportation in and out of the city to West Germany. The American duty train went to Frankfurt. One weekend I boarded the duty train on orders from the First Sergeant, after having been picked up by the British MPs for being drunk and disorderly, having thrown several rocks over the Berlin Wall in an attempt to set off one of the land mines on the other side. "Mauerkrankheit" was all he said to me; then, "Get out of town for a few days." I was fine with that.

I ran into Judith at the train station: she was also taking a weekend off for some R&R and had no plans other than getting out of the city for a few days. We fell in together and went to a local pub called "Der Kupferkugel," where we sat in a cozy, dark booth drinking Glühwein until the train was due to board. Somewhere around our second pot of Glühwein, we really started to feel the spark between us (with the alcohol providing the flint, of course). Judith and I decided to ride the train together in a private compartment if we could, in order to talk and continue getting to know each other with a bottle of wine to share.

The major problem with this plan was, of course (the U.S. Army being what it was at the time) that the train we'd boarded segregated its passengers by gender — unless you were a family traveling together — and theoretically, never would the twain meet while on board. This plan, of course, was easily, regularly, and thoroughly subverted by horny G.I.s from day one. The plans simply called for as many couples in segregated bedrooms that wanted a change in this arcane policy to meet in the vestibule between the cars, and room swaps were then made until everyone was happy. Judith and I arranged a swap between us and two other couples until everyone was able to ride with their desired partner for the trip's duration.

By this time, the train was rolling along, clearing the

Wall, and heading for the engine change at Potsdam. The East Germans were not about to let a train full of decadent Westerners run through their territory with no supervision, so the train stopped inside a fenced enclosure with a row of armed guards (complete with Kalishnikovs) assigned to watch each car. One such guard was standing right outside our window. We had been watching him guard the train for a bit when one of those sparks I mentioned earlier suddenly kindled into a full-blown conflagration between the two of us. I was looking out the window when I heard Judith's voice in my ear saying, "He doesn't know what decadent is. Let's show him," followed by the warmth of feeling her teeth and lips on my earlobe.

I just about had time to think "holy shit" before all control of my higher functions and faculties abandoned ship and headed for the alternate command post just a few inches south of my belt.

In very short order, Judith and I were out of our uniforms in a manner not typically imagined (much less proscribed) by the U.S. Army's regulations. If it came down to it, I was just going to have to quote the part about an officer being "appropriately attired for the activity in which he is engaged." Unfortunately, the activity in which we were currently engaged inevitably attracted the attention of the East German kid stationed outside our window. That poor guy had to stand there absolutely motionless while we cavorted with abandon. His forced denial of what was happening right in front of him seemed to, in some strange way, intensify the sensations I was experiencing, as if his feelings were somehow transmuted into my body. I was dimly aware of the jerking motion that signaled the train resuming its journey. Judith never so much as paused as the train gathered speed, her lips being firmly occupied with my command and control center while the guard outside the window continued to pace along our car.

I finally looked at the young man's face as he broke into a trot, trying to keep up. He made eye contact with me for just a split second before experiencing something of a Wile E. Coyote moment as he briefly levitated, then fell out of my line of sight. He'd run out of platform before we ran out of steam, so to speak.

The guard had literally just vanished — poof — like a cartoon character. I craned my neck a bit and saw that he'd landed on his feet, still running, until he slammed head-on into a signal post. The sight was so ludicrous that I couldn't help myself: I burst into hysterical laughter. Judith came up for air and gasped: "What?" I explained what had just happened outside our window. We spent the next solid hour lying on the floor of the train compartment together naked, laughing hysterically. All I had to do was say "poof!" and it started up all over again.

We had that one magical night, Judith and I. The rest of the overnight train trip is indelibly burned into my memory. If I die thinking about that night, the undertaker won't be able to get the grin off my face. Somewhere, there is an old East German soldier who tells a story that begins: "One night I was guarding the Americans, and you won't believe what they were doing on the train!" I'd love to meet that guy now, just to hear the story from his perspective. MFM





Entwined In Love, And Emboldened And Powered By It

by dancestoblue (Stephen Nielsen)

"Submit yourself to Clotho with a good grace, and let her spin your thread out of what material she will. "Love nothing but that which comes to you woven in the pattern of your destiny. For what could more aptly fit your needs?"

— Marcus Aurelius

Sunday, November 3, 2002, 7:50 p.m.

Another gray day already gone — the gray and the rain of the day are passing into history. I may be the only one acknowledging them; this may be their only record. So I will treat them warmly, and with love say goodbye to the gray and the rain of this day, once so young, gone now forever.

May they have peace.

And may I have peace, and you, also. I've got a head

start on that: I have meditated for twenty minutes, and I have a fresh latte, and though it is decaf it is still sacred, almost holy — to come right from meditation and into the presence of this latte is a matter of grace, a proof of the existence of a loving benevolence which underlies all things.

So, I have all the tools in place, my feet propped on the paint bucket, my fingers poised and eager to tell you ... what? I don't know. I started writing a while ago and tossed it, finished cleaning the kitchen, meditated, made the almost-holy latte, returned to the keys.

It wasn't that I spent a lot of time in the deans' office, but I breezed in and out pretty regularly, once or twice a week, maybe. Sometimes more. A lot more. There were two deans, and I'd ended up with Mr. Hutt, one of the kindest guys you'd ever want to meet. I could go

long in describing this relationship, but I'll use my newfound writerly tools and paint just a faint outline of this fine man: he was kind and understanding, and he believed in me much longer than I ever would have been able to believe in me, given the lie I constantly presented to him by continually showing up in his office. Mr. Hutt gave me a lot. The last strokes in this brief outline of him are scratched in sad colors: I was moved, saddened, many years later when I heard of his death. He was one of the few people from my haphazard life at that time who really seemed to care about me.

But this is not about him, this is not about the love of a man given freely to a liar — these words are about another love. I walked out of Mr. Hutt's office that day, his love sliding off my careless soul (got off again, ha!) and saw one of the loveliest girls I'd ever seen in my life. Maybe lovely is not the right word: she sat in that brown wooden office chair in her brown furry bear-looking coat, her face flushed from the cold and set for the coming confrontation with Dean Keys, her eyes so sharp, fear and fight mixed into a big bright blue, her freckles set against her pale skin, her soft red hair framing the whole. I of course had to be cool, and so did not hurl myself onto the floor in front of her, sobbing — I was after all a senior and she obviously a snotty kid — but My God! She was hot, smoke curling off of her edges. She did not even see me, but her beauty burnt into me.

But I was cool, and I was out the door and on to

whatever class. But not long after that, my best friend, Tommy, was dating a freshman or sophomore and he set me up with one of her friends, who I went out with a couple times, and it so happened that in this circle of girls was the aforementioned searing redheaded beauty from the deans' office, and it also happened that, for whatever reason, she saw fit to chase after me in every way she could.

It was wonderful for me — a loser with the girls, always out of my element, always out of my depth — it was great to have this sweetie chasing me, and for me not to have to do anything but continue to date the other gal and let her come on. It was the damnedest thing, and I think it was the first time I'd been chased, certainly the first time I'd been chased hard. She did the most fool things, and said the most fool things, she wrote fool messages and pressed them into my

hand, impossible to figure out more than a word or two of any written message, but also impossible to miss the real message she was sending in every look and with every gesture.

It was all so easy. I really was not in it, and did not have to be. She came all the way over to me. I could be cool, and I was cool; she was just someone to go with, a complete dope in so many ways — she did and said the damnedest things, indecipherable, in code, mysterious but nonsensical — that I couldn't take her seriously. But I could not miss the fact of her caring, which was not encoded at all. She was a huge fire, blazing toward me, and I could not help but turn toward that warmth.



Untitled 2002 dancestoblue (Stephen Nielsen)

How wonderful, to be able to be cool yet warmed at the same time. I recommend it.

I was a virgin. I never will be sure if she was or not; she ever was and ever would be a liar. You just couldn't count on what she said, even if it was said clearly enough to understand what she was trying to communicate. Regardless, she told me that she was a virgin, and I needed to believe her, and I did believe her. It is comical now, looking back through long years of experience. I wonder what it was that made that seem so important ... no, no, that isn't true, I do remember. What is comical is that I actually believed what I did. Though I was raised in the heat of a sexual revolution, in my stupid heart I was still clinging to some outmoded ideal. I wanted to be with only one woman my entire life, I wanted to be her man, and with her have children, and a house, and a picket fence, and a life.

At the time, being open to love with her constituted a commitment for life. I had to let down some of the cool, though I didn't let it down much. I had to trust her completely with my heart — she'd have the keys in her small freckled hands. We were children, but we began to talk about a life together, and we began to hold to one another in a different way, and to touch even; her hand began to take on an entirely different meaning.

I wish to god I could explain to you how it felt to be on the receiving end when she turned her eyes upon me — here in my chair thirty years later, my fingers stop, stunned by it still. She could not put clear words to things, but the size and the power of the need that radiated from her, through the most beautiful blue eyes I've seen to this day, flattened me, pounded away at my cool, burned through my fear. I said "need" and I think that is the right word, but that need was entwined in love, and emboldened and powered by it. There was something in Kathy that was broken, and in these looks she laid it right out in front of me, needing me to hold something or help her hold something. And it was perfectly clear she'd help me hold anything I needed help holding.

First love.

Was it special?

Was it holy?

Did her soul touch yours?

Does her soul still touch yours?

I came to need her very, very much, lust turned love, as time passed. I opened to her in ways that I did not know existed.

Without even thinking, damn sure not understanding, I trusted her completely.

She knew it all.

There were no secrets.

Warm.

Free.

Naked.

Open.

Safe.

Her breast my church.

First love.

I needed her ever more as my life came undone. Her consistent love was the one thing I had. I did not know that. I found out.

A Fire Set Into My Soul

"And think not that you can direct the course of love..." — Khalil Gibran

Monday, November 4, 2002, 5:07 p.m.

Meditation. Latte. Rain. Cool. Soft gray, imbued with gray tints. This afternoon even thicker, traffic noise more muted, tire-swish narcosis more hypnotic. It is an afternoon as luscious as dessert — I want to eat it, I want to savor it, it is melting, it is pouring onto my soul as the dessert onto the tongue, a quiet joy, an inward sigh. The light in this room is completely perfect, the blue coming through the stained glass also pouring gently, joyfully, into and onto my soul.

There is no one else to sing Kathy's song and it seems it must be sung, the song of that love, the whole of the song, the pretty parts and those that bring pain in the singing. I have this keyboard nestled in my lap, but I am not steering this thing, the words lead, my hands move to the words given.

Kathy had a way of happiness, I never could understand the mechanics of it, but when she was happy the very air around her was suffused with joy - she radiated a light heart. Another look of hers that stops me still in the remembering: the look of complete abandon that captured her when she was free and happy. Her energy poured through her eyes like light through diamond, but warmer than any damn diamond, lively, friendly, approachable and safe. She didn't have words for it or for how she got there, but she loved to be there, and my heart stopped to see her in that happiness and freedom. It made no sense whatsoever but it flattened anything in its sphere, knocked it to nothing, blew it apart. When she was caught in her pain she could sometimes turn to this part of herself and free herself, and unless you were a pure fool you'd catch the ride, too, and not ask minor questions about whether she'd just lied to herself or to you to get to where she got.

Though I needed to remain cool and she came to me much farther than I came to her, the place where we came together became a place that was very important to me, and this happened well before I had any idea that anything beautiful was occurring. It slid in without my knowing, a neat trick, a fire set into my soul. I was there at the ceremony yet did not see it happen, I did not feel the soil cut open, the seed planted, the soil gently tamped back — the deft, practiced hand of the gardener moved in silence. I do not remember being asked. Its roots tapped to our hearts and began to encircle.

It became a holy thing to me, and I think to her also. When I tried to discount it, talking big when out drink-



ing with my friends or in my cool toward Kathy, that fire flared and burned me from inside, and that is I think how I became aware of it; the foundation stones were set without my knowing, slid softly and pleasantly into place as in a fast-moving dream. Words were said and eyes met and hands touched and hearts beat fast and as one, and the roots wrapped silently and firmly, and from them branched other roots and from them others.

When first we made love, every circling root turned inward and ran deep.

I have made gentle love since then but this was my first love and my first making love and never before and never since has my heart been this open and never shall it be.

We get this once.

I was too young to negotiate hotel rooms, we did not want to make love in my bedroom or her bedroom in either of our respective family homes, all of the family energy encircling us. We made love with one another for the first time in my sister's bed, she and her husband out of town or out on the town, my sister still young enough to easily remember the need for privacy and time, a small kindness that I'll never forget.

That latte is long, long gone, the day turned night and that night turned cold. A quiet Monday night in Austin, but not in my heart as I remember what happened, and lay it out here. This is remarkably painful.

I stopped writing and went out into the night a few hours ago, to an AA meeting, then to see my Texican-Mexican friends at the greasy Tex-Mex joint down the road and pick up a few more Spanish words, now back home. I knived some colors onto black paper for a friend who's hurting, who liked something she saw that I had painted on that sweet, thick black paper. Maybe it'll give her a lift.

I read some of what I've written tonight to a friend, and while he knows me well, he had no idea about this piece of me, I don't believe he even knew I'd been married. He knows how I paint — we've painted together — and I told him what I've told you, that this writing is as the colors, the words call for whatever is next. I am amazed that I have gone in this direction, amazed also that this writing is so difficult and my heart so stirred. It is an effort to stay with this — I'd much rather be off and running toward something light and fun. No, that is not true. While part of me would much rather be off running toward something light and fun, it is clear that a larger part of me wants this told. I will follow that lead. Given the terms of my commitment to let the words direct me, I will follow that lead.

Bedtime.

The Human Story

"The way you make love is the way God will be with you." — Rumi

Wednesday, November 6, 2002, 8:40 p.m.

...1,450 words about fun emergency psych ward stuff...

Thursday, November 7, 2002, 2:00 a.m., 3:00 a.m.? Late late late late late late late...

You've now seen me through the first part of my journey toward new psych drugs, and you've probably heard all you ever would want to hear about manic depression — do we now return to the burning love of yesteryear? Or do I hang with manic depression and psych clinics until we're so goddamn bored with it all that we look like the lost souls on a locked ward, wacked out on heavy, heavy anti-psychotics, fiery eyes deeply damped now by little red pills? Head back to my sister's bedroom and the first time, the flowers I gave Kathy, her beautiful skin? Do I head out into completely new territory, fresh ground for these fingers and these keys?

I'm going to take a moment or two to decide here see if you can guess what direction I might head in, and I'll do the same, and then we'll compare notes to see if either of us was right.

I'm so glad that my first time was with someone I loved, cared for, cared about, who cared for me. I've been with whores and I've had my share of one-night stands and one-week stands and one-month stands and I don't know what all. I've made trivial the beauty of sex many times in many ways, but one thing that I got right was being with someone important in my life the first time. It was perfectly safe and warm and wonderful in her arms, seeing her and being seen. The Human Story — I could not believe it, how beautiful to share that with her. And the roots sank deep and twisted 'round, they pulled us tight and held us close, and in that close warm hold there was nothing to hide and we were safe and we were happy as any two lovers have ever been.

We became fervent converts, ecstatic charismatics in a religion which we'd only just discovered, a faith we'd founded, in which she and I were the only adherents. We worshiped, together.

We were believers.

I was the pope, and got to wear the cool hats and shit. We worshiped in cars, and in her bedroom, and in mine, and in parks and in fields and in whatever bed we could climb into, and anywhere else. And we loved and kissed and talked soft and sometimes we were rough and rolled and stumbled and tumbled, but always it contained that safe love. Always. I told her — I'm so, so lucky, I got to tell her, looking right into her eyes — and she told me, too. And those roots entwined and the love grew and devoutly we practiced our religion, we deepened our faith, we worshiped, together. MFM

Transfer By Ardiril (Tim Volk)

; tail recursion

Place your hand over your genitals and apply pressure. Emotions, aspirations, some gist of right and wrong: a void, all. The universe desires only that you fuck. This is your purpose in life, your role in the universe. To procreate.

You give or you receive. If neither, you are nothing, surely not an iteration, barely an inanimate object--a waste of space or wasted space. You may protest. Yes, you may. Passionately.

The universe obviates conceit.

A lick of this and a snatch at that. Incubate, suckle, and nurture. Repeat (often).

Vertical Gene

; A fully functional Tim Volk parse with bootstrapping side effects. ; I lisp, therefore I am.



SEX IS ODD. The act is comical and what most of us will do to engage in it even more so. The chemical processes in our heads are like tiny demented people in the head of giant robots, frantically pushing buttons and pulling levers in order to drive these fleshy machines into collisions with each other, simply so there're more people around to do more collisions and make more people.

Rochelle taught me that, how odd sex can be, both physically and mentally and all she ever did was lay a single finger on me.

She discovered me in ninth grade, no doubt when I was roaming the halls, a Catholic schoolboy suddenly free in the wild halls of public school. Or at least large. I had gone to the same school for eight years, got used to its I-shaped layout, where the cafeteria and church were at opposite ends with classrooms alongside a long corridor.

Now I was in large square, scurrying about in seemingly nonsensical twists and turns, trying to find which room of strangers I was supposed to be with at each hour.

The first time I recall noticing her is when she was noticing me. I was sitting in homeroom, when I heard someone say, "There he is." Looking up I saw three girls walking by the door, all three dark-skinned, with dark hair. All were looking at me. Not knowing what the hell was going on and more concerned with figuring where all my classes were for the day, I returned to looking at my schedule and the poorly drawn map of the school.

Eventually, she and her friends found me in the hall. Again, it was the threesome, Rochelle pointing and saying "That's him," and smiling as her friends smiled too. I smiled back, embarrassed and awkward, and mumbled something resembling "Hi," and then scurried to 3rd period math.

Rinse and repeat, several times over the course through September and into October. This girl, one who I never would

have noticed, was clearly stalking me, and in a good way. I mentioned it to Tony, my best friend, and he nodded, saying, "She's alright. You know she lives right around the corner, down by the bus stop, but up on the hill?"

I knew where it was. All I would have to do is walk up the street, make a right and walk down the hill. It was another stop on the school bus route, just not the one where we caught. She was never on the bus though. One of her friends was already old enough to drive, so she caught rides.

The chance meetings in the hall continued. She'd point me out, I'd smile and say hi and then go about my day. In the mornings and afternoons, I'd pass her house on the bus. It was a simple two-story, amidst a community of two-story suburban homes. There was nothing special about it, nothing to make it stand out. Except I knew the girl who went in and out of that house, the one who I'd stumble across in the maze of corridors. The rest of the world drained away when she spoke, but not because I was interested. Her desire was a mystery. We had said nothing more than, "Hi." I had no desire to say anything more. Why would she want to talk to me, when I had no interest in talking to her? Several times during the school week, the mystery would find me, no matter what route I took through the maze. There was no cheese to be had, only the bitter grain of conversation. It may have been good for me, but I did not want it.

She did not attract me. In the right light, she was cute. In the wrong light she was ugly. More often than not, she was simply in the light that made her appear plain to me, someone I'd never notice.

It happened on Halloween, the first conversation. I was home alone, waiting for some other friends to come by later. There was a knock on the door and then a look through the peephole. The three girls were there, Rochelle and her friends. One of them stood closed to the door, while Rochelle stood in the back, clearly embarrassed, but nowhere near as embarrassed as me. This was not going to go away.

I sighed and rested my forehead against the door, even as her friend knocked again. The door was metal, cool on my skin. The knocking vibrated through me.

"Is anyone home?" someone whispered from the other side of the door. Rochelle. Damn it, I knew her voice.

"Oh, he's home," said one of her friends, "I heard something." Again, the knocking.

Sighing, I undid the lock and turned the knob. I opened the main door, but not the screen door, just leaning against the frame.

"Hi," I said.

"Hi," said one of her friends, the larger one with short hair. She swept back her arm in Rochelle's direction and said, "This is Rochelle."

I nodded, said, "I know."



hellojed

8 Things You Didn't Know About Rat Sex

By gaspode (Brigitte Todd)

Female sex behavior is utterly hormonedependent; if the male is sexually experienced, his behavior is not dependent on hormones.

2 Females are "in charge" of the mating — this is called pacing behavior.

3 What really turns the males on is the female proceptive (soliciting) behavior. This consists of hopping, darting and ear wiggling.

If the male is not responding sufficiently to the female's solicitations, she will often mount him.

 $5^{\rm The}$ female receptive posture is called the lordosis posture (because of the curvature of the spine).

6 Both sexes, but predominantly males, autogroom following intromission.

Inter-ejaculatory interval in males can be as little as 3 minutes.

Semales are in behavioral estrus (heat) every 4–5 days. They also ovulate and mate on the day of parturition, which is one reason why rats are such effective breeders. MFM

"Do you want to talk to her?" the friend asked.

No, I did not want to talk to her, I thought. I did not want to be in this awkward situation with this girl I did not know or want to know. But I also didn't want to say this to her in front of her friends on cool Halloween night, as she stood on my porch.

"Give me a minute, I'll get my jacket and walk you home."

"You know where I live?" Rochelle asked, surprised.

I nodded and said yes. She beamed and smiled and replied "OK." By knowing this, I had made her happy and wasn't that a good thing?

I got my jacket and we walked to her house, her friends trailing a respectable distance behind. We talked of school and teachers and classes and the neighborhood. When we reached her house, she asked me "How come you never talked to me?"

I smiled sheepishly, said, "I don't know," and shrugged my shoulders.

She looked at me for a moment, then smiled and patted my arm. "You're just shy!" she exclaimed and then placed her warm lips on mine.

After that, we were an unhappy couple. She was crazy about me, flat out. I thought she was OK. Decent company, particularly if she was willing to expend a lot of effort chasing after and then admiring me. But she loved talking to me, hanging out with me, walking around with me. I never said much, we never talked about anything earth shattering, like Star Wars, science fiction or even kung fu movies. I did not and do not understand how someone cannot be interested in those things. She wasn't — totally hated them and would switch the conversation and we'd talk about school and teachers and classes and the neighborhood.

But the chase was tiring and she grew steadily angrier with me for not chasing her, calling her more.

"I don't know how I can continue loving you!" she angrily declared on another, colder winter night as I walked her home.

Love. There was no concept of the word on my end, especially for her. All I knew is that I wanted sixth period chemistry class to last longer, so I could continue looking up Jill McGavin's short skirts or continue flirting with Jamie Ganem, whose eyes and body were wiser than any other girl's in school. Even the exotically named Jael, who walked so slowly with her perfect curves down the hall, or the peppy and perpetually smiling Andie seemed for more interesting.

But Rochelle's lips were nice and she liked placing them on mine, pressing her body into mine. I would place my arms round her, feel the heat vibrating through her body and listen for the sigh that signaled she was wanting. Thoughts of my house, so empty for hours after school, except for seven goldfish in the basement, filled my head.

I could have her, but didn't want her. My body responded in all the right ways, did all the right things and was ready to no longer be a virgin. But my mind wasn't there and wouldn't be there. So I never walked her to my house, and never stayed at hers; it was filled with brothers and sisters and aunts and a grand-parent. I fed the fish, placed my hands on the glass of the aquarium to see if the water was cold, down there in the dark basement. Then I went upstairs to watch television or play video games, anything to avoid homework.

So we drifted apart and at some invisible point broke up. If she wasn't calling, we wouldn't talk. If she didn't visit, we wouldn't see other, except in the maze.

For a while, she gave me looks of anger when she looked my way at all. Mostly she just ignored me, as her friends glared at me as they all walked by. I shrugged my shoulders at appropriate times and kept walking.

Eventually her mood softened, and she returned to smiling when she saw me. There was no approach on her end, no pointing out or attempt to get my attention. But when she had it for a few seconds she would smile, causing me to smile and we'd pass each other under florescent lights and move on.

Time passed, scenes shifted. Ninth grade ended, we moved from middle school to high school. The maze was larger now and spread out over two floors of sprawling red brick and lockers. Rochelle and I continued as we were, occasionally nodding and smiling. Her house still stood out to me, as if I knew some secret about it, something I didn't understand.

Then, one day during lunch she physically touched me, for no reason, out of the blue. I was sitting at one of the long, brown tables, arms folded and listening to a conversation friends were having. It was at a boring part, listening to two people argue back and forth. I was tired from having to get up early, and was listless and half listening, wishing for the day to end and release from the maze.

Suddenly, a single finger slipped under my sweater and pressed my left shoulder. The touch awakened me, like a spark tingling all over my skin. Then the finger traced a line along my neck and shoulders, under my sweater, hot and knowing. I looked up, startled and wanting and found Rochelle's eyes on me.

"Hi," she said, waving casually as she continued walking past me. Her manner and tone indicated she had no idea what she had done. I knew what she had done, yet had no idea how. Even as desire flamed, I knew I still did not want her, did not want the baggage that chasing her would bring. But for once, for a few seconds, I wanted the effect she had briefly had on me.

Like any teenage boy, my body was ready. But for once in this relationship, so was my mind. I probably could've had sex way before that point, but wasn't interested; my mind was elsewhere and on other people. To get to the point where at least I was ready and willing took a strange and random act on her part, one she wasn't even aware of.

But like rats in a maze we had no idea where we were or where to go. So we wandered away from each other and became lost with other people. MFM

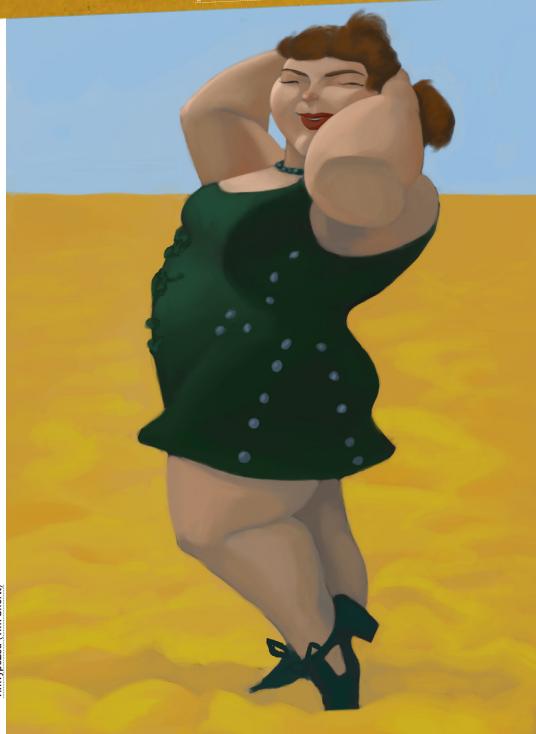


Detail of a public health advertisement in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. It depicts an airplane representing the AIDS virus running into a skyscraper which is protected by a condom.

msbrauer

Sexiest Melite Available Entest,





TimTypeZed (Tim Shortt)

It's a given that we, as MeFites, are one big group of sexy motherfuckers. But that's not what this contest is about. This contest is about twelve sexy people willing to go to their keyboards and wow the internet with their keen understanding of how MetaFilter processes sex. We know it has something to do with melting cheese and fine haberdashery, but let us look to the top three winning answers to truly understand how. Much thanks to both goshling and <u>herrdoktor</u> for their assistance in constructing the sexy questionnaire.

MEET JOSEPH GURL

- 1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? Skorponok
- 2. *How do you like yr taters?* French fries coated hot dog on a stick
- 3. What is your position on grilled cheese? Cincinnati Hot Plate
- 4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

They are worn and/or admired by precisely the kind of people with whom I would never have sex shenanigans. *5. I know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine. (fill in the blank)*

The SAT

MEET DOCTOR_NEGATIVE

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? This represents the range of reactions: (-_-) or :-@

- 2. How do you like yr taters?
- Mashed, then licked; butter is optional

3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

Place a square table such that its edges are aligned with points of the compass. Place a circular white plate on the south side of the table such that it is exactly centered between east and west and the span of one palm from the table's edge. Upon the plate is delivered the sandwich, which will be rye bread with a mixture of sharp cheddar and Swiss cheeses. If the sandwich is to contain a tomato slice, let it be so. The butter shall be unsalted and in no way adulterated. Thus the supplicant approaches the grilled cheese; in his heart is the true yearning of one approaching bliss. A moment of reflection before any laying on of the hands shall commence; it is proper to respect the cheese and to observe its character. The too-eager supplicant is advised to remember that hot cheese is hot, and it presents the supplicant with its true duality, both dangerous and desirable. The too-worshipful supplicant will seek to prolong the agony/ecstasy of remaining in the presence of the cheese unmolested, and is advised to remember that cold cheese is cold and no one likes cold cheese.

Thus, I have no position ON grilled cheese, but rather am looking adoringly upon its southern face from very near, the lover and the beloved.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

Now see here, you're just not paying attention. Casual sex should be casual. You can wear sweats and have pizza after; burping and farting are optional.

5. I know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine. (fill in the blank)

Achieving out-of-body states through Tantric colon cleansing.

Optional extra credit: ASCII image of yourself that may or may not show up properly formatted (no more than \sim 65 characters wide)

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01

MEET HERRDOKTOR

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? (_!_) WHEN I'M SITTING I HAVE A FLAT BONY ASS

2. How do you like yr taters?

WHEN FRESH I LIKE EM HARD BUT WHEN SOFT I WARM EM UP TO GET EM HARD AGAIN. ALSO LIKE TO DIP IN SAUCES AND CONDOMINTS. MMM CONDOMINTS. (sic. for humor value -Ed.) *3. What is your position on grilled cheese?*

I LIKE MY GRILL CHEESE GOOPY AND OPEN-FACE. OOOH LA LA.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

NOT AT ALL. I SPORT NEITHER AND HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT MY VISAGE PROMPTS BOTH GIRLY COOS AND CURLY GOOS. SPLORT SPLORT. SEXXXXXX COMPLETE! 5. I KNOW MORE ABOUT THE MICROCLIMATE AND TERROIR OF YON HIDDEN VALLEYS THAN YOU CAN POSSIBLY IMAGINE. OR AT LEAST I'D LIKE TO. LET US EXPLORE! HO!

MEET MEATBOMB

I am proud to accept this unanimous nomination! 1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked?

:)

- 2. How do you like yr taters?
- Obedient and docile

3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

I am the grilled fucking cheese master, I even put sliced tomato all up in that shit, with mayonnaise.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

This question is moot – such items are strictly forbidden on my compound.

5. I know more about winning this award than you can possibly imagine.

MEET PSOAS

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? 80

2. How do you like yr taters?

Smothered in Taco Bell fire sauce and eaten piping hot. *3. What is your position on grilled cheese?*

Well, it's like: "Do you go to town on it directly? Do you start nibbling around the edges? Do you wait until no one can see you ('cause sometimes it gets a bit messy and is not for the squeamish casual observer)?" And I'm like "OM NOM NOM NOM, MUTHERFUCKERS!"

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

It's more dressy-casual, but they don't call my style "nuevo zoot-suit picante" for nothing. Also, it matches the wet-vac scars surprisingly well.

5. I know more about hermitosis than you can possibly imagine.

MEET ZOMG

- 1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? o.O
- 2. *How do you like yr taters?* Passionately.
- 3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

I happily eat grilled cheese sandwiches and then make more.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

I don't have casual sex shenanigans, only serious ones. Fedoras are encouraged. And as for pinstripes, remember that scene in Cousin, Cousine? Yeah. I learned my lesson. 5. I know more about liquid waveguide UV-visible absorption spectroscopy than could possibly be imagined. I've seen things you ... humans ... wouldn't believe, etc.

Optional extra credit:

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### MEET BRINA

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? x_O

2. How do you like yr taters?

Hardcore, all varieties. Fried, scalloped, mashed, boiled, baked, herb roasted, stuffed. But no tots, please. *3. What is your position on grilled cheese?* 

I make the best grilled cheese in the goddamn world. My grilled cheese is so exceptional that men who have fed upon it have been known to fall down at my feet in a dead faint. They tell me my grilling techniques make their knees tremble. They say I've got grilled cheese skills like they've never seen before. They beg for more.

I won't tell you what kind of cheese I use, or what kind of bread, or even what kind of grilling apparatus — those are trade secrets. But you should know that every person I've ever grilled cheese for has told me I could be a professional chef, if I wanted.

And you know, I would grill cheese for a living, under the right circumstances. You just watch. One o' these days, you'll find my little grilled cheese shop is more popular than 'craft.

Err ... we're just talking about sandwiches, right? 4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

Ever seen a pinstriped patent leather bustier? Or a fedora with a built-in ball gag? No? That's because you haven't met me.

5. I know more about the life of L.M. Montgomery than you can possibly imagine.

### MEET FRAULA

Strawberries are hot

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? <3

2. How do you like yr taters?

With cream and fresh strawberries

3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

Do you mean cream cheese? Into which you dip strawberries? Oui. Oh oui.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

I prefer small polkadots on a deep red ground. Abundant fertility. *wink*

5. I know more about Maine Coons than you could possibly imagine.

### MEET THE WHITE HAT

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? 8=================================!?

2. How do you like yr taters? SEALED IN A FOIL PACKET AND THEN GRILLED OHYEAAAAAAH

3. What is your position on grilled cheese? Missionary.

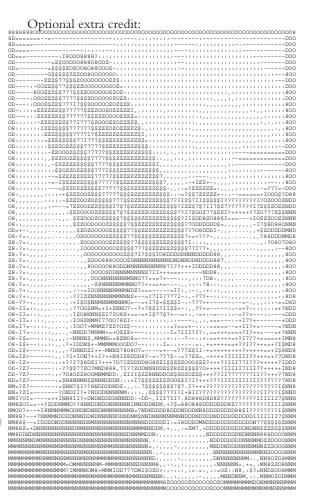
4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

Casual sex in pinstripes is like causal Friday at the Vatican.

5. *I* know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine. (fill in the blank)

YOU

### YOUR BEDROOM





### MEET CORTEX

Retrieving Sexy Anteriorly

1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked?

Trick question. The ad hoc multi-character punctuation glyphs that best describe my naked form are all emotipros.

### 2. How do you like yr taters?

I like my taters like I like my snowclones: derived from fixed phrases such that they can through nonce fulfillment of a parameterization scheme be applied, often but not always to with humorous intent, to a wider variety of contexts than the unaltered source material would permit. *3. What is your position on grilled cheese?* 

I'm fine with grilling the cheese if that's a consensual choice on the part of the cheese and there's a clearly established safeword.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

Another trick question. Fedoras and pinstripes are specifically for formal or semi-formal sex shenanigans. And you'd better take the fedora off if you're doing it in church. 5. I know more about the attested variant uses of the "I know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine" template than you can possibly imagine. Here, let's go back to my place and I can show you my blog post about it.

### MEET FORKTINE

sexy mefy

- 1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? Dancing Banana, of course.
- *2. How do you like yr taters?* Hot and dripping.
- 3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

There is no position in which grilled cheese is not good.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

A lack of fedoras and pinstripes ensures that I can have sexual shenanigans.

5. I know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine. (fill in the blank)

my imagination

### MEET SEANYBOY

- 1. What emoticon best represents how you look naked? -@-
- 2. How do you like yr taters?

BOILED FOR THREE HOURS WITHOUT ANY SEASONING. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO HAVE YOUR TATERS.

3. What is your position on grilled cheese?

GOD. I REALLY HOPE NOBODY SAYS MIS-SIONARY HERE. THE QUESTION IS ASKING FOR AN OPINION. NOT A SEXUAL POSITION. ANY-WAY GRILLED CHEESE IS DANGEROUS AND TOO EXCITING. AS IS CHEESE. AND MILK. AND GRILLING.

4. How are fedoras and pinstripes relevant to your casual sex shenanigans?

THESE ARE THE CLOTHING CHOICES OF STEREOTYPICAL PIMPS. AS SUCH I DO NOT AP-PROVE. THIS IS ALL ACADEMIC THOUGH, AS I DO NOT APPROVE OF SEX, CASUALNESS OR SHE-NANIGANS EITHER.

5. I know more about _____ than you can possibly imagine. (fill in the blank)

YOUR SLEEPING PATTERNS AND CHOICE OF SLEEPWEAR

Optional extra credit: FEAR MY ASCII ART SKILLS:

 $\bigcirc$ 



### THEWINNERS







### Astral Mod: Meatbomb "Yet another proof that divine acclimation is infal-

"Yet another proof that divine acclimation is infallible, and democracy superfluous. I stand before you as the sexiest Mefite as foretold in the prophecies. Right thinkers will ignore the other two pretenders, their titles are meaningless baubles as they bend deeply in supplication to the One True Sexy Mefite."

### Member: Lrina

"I am amazed and flattered and honestly sort of scandalized that you all share my deep and abiding love for Lucy Maud Montgomery, as I am certain that's what compelled you to vote for me for world's sexiest MeFite. It's invigorating to think that so many others are also such great fans of Anne Shirley, Emily Byrd Starr, et alia. You've finally convinced me it really is a good idea to write Anne of Green Gables and O-Rings*, my forthcoming erotic novella concerning the kinky adventures of Anne and Gilbert, and their friends the Reverend James Meredith and his wife Rosemary."

*Technically, it will probably be called Anne of Ingleside and O-Rings, to ensure that none of the taters are tots.

### Mod: cortex (Josh Millard)

"I'd like to thank the scare quotes that made it possible for me to be nominated one of Metafilter's 'sexiest' mefites; the passive voice was also thanked; and kudos is due to kudos for being a singular Greek loan word. In these trying times, it's important that we be able to come together, and I consider it a hopeful sign for the future that coming together with your mom did not involve very much trying at all. God bless and/or fail to exist for you all."



# RANKS

BY THE WHELK (JOHN LEAVITT)

**IT IS FRIDAY** evening and I am standing in my closet wondering what you wear to The Fleshbot Awards. Fleshbot, the sex-positive wing of the Gawker Media empire, is throwing an awards show to celebrate the finest achievements in the field of sexcellence, or something. The concept is a bit hazy but my latent anxiety about being near Professionally Pretty People manifests itself in no less than three full outfit changes. Is it black tie or white cock ring? Dressy dress down? I stare long and hard at my tie rack. Oh lord, please don't let me be under dressed.

Full Disclosure: I was a guest editor for Fleshbot Gay for about two weeks about a million years ago. When you edit a site that features the word "genderqueer" as much as "double penetration," two things happen. You become completely numb to sexual imagery within hours and you become unmoored from what constitutes mainstream and acceptable topics of conversation. What you don't get is a sense of what to wear to an awards show for the best in alt/art/sex things. I settle on a brown suit with a pink shirt and dark purple tie. I look like a bruise.

No matter. I am a serious journalist dammit. I grab my yellow legal pad and favorite Pilot P-700 (fine) pen and head out.

Outside the Highline Ballroom I meet my friend Kate and her date for the evening, the performer Jiz Lee. Since Jiz Lee is an Official Fleshbot Crush Object, I huddle close to them as we approach the mass of lines and men with clipboards, just in case MefiMag isn't quite as strong the press credit as I thought it was. There are different colored wristbands for different lists; I am directed away from Kate and Jiz into other, smaller lines. It's hot in the ballroom and I'm repeating my name and press affiliation like rank and serial number. Finally, a confusion of assistants erupts and clipboards are passed around until I'm ushered to the left and up the stairs, to the mezzanine press ghetto, far above the Professionally Pretty People.

I had nothing to worry about. The press ghetto is a cross-section of respectably shabby hipster wear. There are hats and flannel. Cocktail gowns finished with black boots and bleached hair teased and tortured into giving up state secrets. Kilts are worn proudly and unironically. It is aggressively hip. Young, fashionable reporters from fancy websites sit huddled over laptops with their equally young and fashionable Plus Ones. There is free Wi-Fi hosted by Pink Visual, there are QR codes for special deals and after-party invites, tasteful displays of condoms are deployed at strategic locations. Multiple Livestreams exist. Twitter hash tags are being talked about as if they're real things that matter. Everyone has a camera. No one has a yellow legal pad. Fuck.

Thankfully, Fleshlight has agreed to host an open bar so I find a spot where I can almost make out the stage behind the cameras and outstretched iPhones and the 2011 Fleshbot Awards are go.

The event is hosted by Stoya, possibly the only Magician/Porn Star in existence, and Sara Benincasa, who walks on stage in a nun's habit and welcomes us all to this "Combination True Love Waits and Anti-Gay-Marriage bake sale." Big laughs. I look down into the VIP section. Pearls and sequins runneth over. It's like the crowd at a high fashion event, albeit with slightly more skin-tight latex and women called The Baroness. Everything looks expensive and dramatically lit. I'm shocked how normal it all feels. It's really like any awards show, except the Brazilian presenter who looks an awful lot like James Franco is called on stage by mentioning his numerous Hookie Awards and Male Escort Of The Year title, and the award being given out is a fancy silver dildo. You won't see that on Spike TV.

Yet.

The awards are general: Sexiest Music, Sexiest Book, Best Sex Technology (the nerds trapped in the journalist garret perked up for that one), etc. The winners are surprisingly mainstream (Fischerspooner and Kristen Schall), or as mainstream as you'd expect for a crowd with multiple piercings and for whom Buck Angel is a household name. There are even musical numbers, just like any other awards show, a big-band "boylesque" tribute to nerdy guys and something that could only be described as an LED alien sex fantasia set inside the mind of a Heavy Metal addict. There are no runners up and the jokes are actually funny. Everyone thanks their fans. There are breaks for people to move to different tables and make deals and complain about the service.

During one break, I spot a friend down on the floor, another Plus One. She seems to be looking for the bathroom. I wave my hands frantically before remembering I have a phone. I shoot her a text: "UPSTAIRS"

She arrives. "Thank god, there's this guy down there who kept snapping at me. I think he thought I was a waitress." She points at my drink. "This bar open too?"

Thus ends any and all involvement with the awards show going on behind us as she informs me about the life in the VIP circle. Fleshlight had given them all free samples of their world-famous masturbatory aides. "I've got two butt holes!" shouts a man. "Anyone want to trade?" An attempt to fit the Dildo Award into the Fleshlights followed, ending in disappointment. There was brisk discussion in re-purposing some of them as cups or wintertime hand-warmers. "A muff muff!" shouted one lady. "I'd reopen my Etsy for that."

Without warning (or noticing, I was deep in Manhattans), the party ends. The lights switch on and there is a mad race to be the most RT'ed comment. All class divisions are shattered. The wristbanded mingle freely with the unwashed. I nearly step on Alan Cumming's toes. When I first got the idea to cover the Fleshbot Awards, I thought I'd be doing a response to David Foster Wallace's Big Red Son, a look at the contemporary pornography scene and the alternate universe it inhabits. But this was wrong right from the start. Wallace was an outsider reporting on the mainstream porn business at an award show for sales and self-promotion. I'm at a quasiawards gig to answer the question of, who is the coolest part of the alt/art/sex thing that Fleshbot sits in the warm center of? Wallace wrote Big Red Son under a pseudonym, I used my real name to edit a gay porn aggregator. Men dominate Big Red Son; I am surrounded by women.

In short, I was at a party with lots of clever lighting and stylish production values, getting drunk with my friends. A far cry from the Vegas AVN's Wallace went to. Despite my horribly misguided and pretentious goal going in, something even better has happened. If the sex-positive, genderqueer kind of porn can get this much mainstream attention, then maybe we have some hope for the rehabilitation of sexuality in this country. If the future "mainstreaming of pornography" is full of my polymorphic, pansexual pervert friends then things are looking up indeed.

And so the future walks out the door, moving in clumps and whorls to the After Party, where everything always happens, and where I, alas, full of whiskey drinks and candy bars, cannot follow. MFM

A man takes a shot of alcohol from a cocktail waitress at the Testicle Festival at the Rock Creek Lodge in Clinton. MT. The Lodge has hosted the annual **Testicle Festival since** the early 1980s. The four day festival and party revolves around the consumption of so-called Rocky Mountain Oysters, which are deep-fried bull testicles.



## Open Line

By The Grace of God

**I WANT TO** be cool about this. I want to show you people what a worthwhile fucking hipster I am, slot myself into some crisp category of sex-positive, fourth-wave-feminist blah-blah, show you how smart and pretty and fun I am. But it isn't going to work.

I'm really fucked up and desperate and pissed off. My hair is thinning, my chin is covered with zits, and I am living in a shitty little village in a shitty flat, to which I have bailed after being dumped by the man on whom I spent my entire savings, after he claimed he had cancer. I am tired of working at a shitty care home for six pounds an hour.

So I am going to go do phone sex. Six applications are out already. Some of the websites are crisp and professional and ask for proof of your age and residency; some are lurid pink and black with yellow text, like something out of a1993 web design manual. After posting an Ask Metafilter question, I've found some useful forums with advice about safety and ratings of various firms, and I am well on my way.

BT Broadband and a land line will be connected at the end of the month, a headset is in the post and a mildewfilled room has been cleared of its green tinged lawn furniture. It now contains a scratched metal desk, a banged up school chair, and my last working computer. I've done my homework. At root, phone sex is an acting job, and an improv job at that, so by nature I shouldn't be good at it. In school plays, I was the kid painting the set, not the lead actress. But sex is one of the things I am good at, an art and a practice through which I can reach that elusive state of "flow."

I've always enjoyed giving phone, ever since that first time when I was fourteen years old. My girlfriend and I had picked up a boy because we wanted to lose our virginity; he called me and timorously asked if I wanted to hear him jerk off on the phone. Since then I've had a lot of phone sex, just not for money. I love getting a guy hard with my words — spoken or textual — particularly when it may, well, not embarrass him, but make him acutely conscious of the contrast between my dirty words and his innocent office, or kitchen, or car.

I'm an active kinkster and, in the physical world, I'm an experienced submissive. On the phone, though, I find it exciting and fun to get a submissive guy really worked up, taking my time and making him work for it before he can cum.

I'm a good entrepreneur, and I've done my homework for this new job. Fetish calls are difficult and unpopular with some of my colleagues, but I know that they are long and encourage repeat customers. ...he wants me to pretend to be that girl that got away, that taboo friend or relative, to be too old or too young, to be someone that can't exist in reality. And in his want, he is real and naked. I find that beautiful. Even if I am clinical and detached, smoking a cigarette or trolling Reddit while I talk to him, I am that something more. And I always enjoy it, because I know where he is coming from.

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Look at it this way. A gent with a stiffy can easily load up his favourite porn and get his fap on for free. If he calls me, he wants something more. It could be my creative invention, or my personality, or my voice, or an exchange of power with a live human being, not an Eliza bot, not pixels on a screen.

He wants to put on his panties, stockings and make up. He wants to jerk it in an uncomfortable position. He wants to get to the edge, and be told to stop and start again. He wants someone to appreciate his heavy breathing, the groans when he sticks a slightly-too-big plug up his bum. Or he wants me to pretend to be that girl that got away, that taboo friend or relative, to be too old or too young, to be someone that can't exist in reality. And in his want, he is real and naked. I find that beautiful. Even if I am clinical and detached, smoking a cigarette or trolling Reddit while I talk to him, I am that something more. And I always enjoy it, because I know where he is coming from. Will I still enjoy it when it becomes work? That remains to be seen.

As I write this, I am in receipt of an instant message from a friend in his forties who will be playing cross-dressup and sundry sex games with a sixty-eight year old lady. They met on the internet, for free, in a chat room whose basic technology has existed for twenty years.

When people perv everywhere from Facebook to Fetlife to the older commercial sites (such as Adult Friend Finder and its specialised cousins), where is the market for phone sex? Advertisements are still ubiquitous in the older media, newspapers and late night commercials. My clients will probably be very different from me. When I sex them up over the phone, maybe they won't like my weird New York voice or my arch references. Like any job, it will have a learning curve. I'll be connecting with a different kind of person, and the opportunities to fuck up will be everywhere.

I look forward to the chance to reach these people with a message from the Internet, turning them on and being sex positive and accepting and cheerful. To paraphrase Dan Savage, I will treat people's weird sex stuff like a fun opportunity, not like a cancer diagnosis. I look forward to challenging myself, keeping a caller engaged and on the line as long as I can. But I'm afraid of not being creative enough, not being able to listen well enough. I am afraid of my creeping laziness and lack of motivation, and I am afraid for my ethics.

I believe so strongly in supporting people in exploring their sexuality. After years of political work around difference, particularly concerning immigration, I took a break from politics but found myself speaking out online, particularly on MetaFilter, in support of kinky people and doing educational work around these issues.

How will doing phone sex with kinky people, who will often be some of the most closeted and isolated of their kind, intersect with that? How will I deal with someone who brings me an illegal or offensive scenario? On the other hand, what if I want to encourage someone to get out there and make their dreams come true in the real world, but would be losing a source of income?

In any case, the thing to do is to get ready.

I have a notebook full of scrawls: personas, variations on a word or fetish or body part, characters from my life. Some are brought in with a bit of spite, some with admiration and respect. I have my freelance software suite up, ready to treat this like a job, along with my websites and transcription work. Best of all, I have a few friends ready to help me practice. MFM

## The Sex lives of North Texas teens



Raging hormones. Six-hour phone conversations. Blushing, giggling, and awkward body language. As a parent, these signs are unavoidable: your child has suddenly become aware of the opposite sex, and your relationship will never be the same.

As your son or daughter begins the transition into becoming a young adult, there comes a moment that most parents dread: the time to have "The Talk."

"We had The Talk maybe a couple of years ago," says Mary Helms, 47, of Plano, whose son, Seth, is 13. "I have been very open with him concerning all bodily changes since he was a small child. They teach Sex Ed in sixth grade now," she adds. Shannon*, a mother of two from Dallas, also had "The Talk" with her kids early on. "I wanted them to hear it [sex] first from us," she says. "And it was important to me to establish as open a communication as possible with them."

Helms' son is a typical North Texas teen: He talks about girls "every day," laughs Helms, adding: "Girls actually started calling him back in fifth or sixth grade. At this point, he's not really serious about any one girl. I hear a new name every month or so." Shannon's son, on the other hand, has remained aloof with girls, sharing "friendships" with them, but not relationships, focusing on academics instead of anatomy. Her daughter, too, seems to have a more reserved attitude toward the opposite sex.

While Helms has discussed sex and relationships with her son, she's still not quite ready for him to date yet: "When he's 16, I think," she says. "It really depends on the kids' maturity level." But Shannon's daughter is 18. "She's never really even asked to go on a 'date," Shannon says. "She does tell me about her crushes, but seems content to just go out in groups." But are these parents' expectations unrealistic?

According to the Child Trends DataBank, teens in the eighth and tenth grades are less likely now to date regularly than they were in 1991. In fact, high school seniors who did not date at all rose to 28% in 2008. But why? A 2006 study conducted on teen issues and sex trends by the Annie E. Casey Foundation cites these factors:

- Greater emphasis on teens delaying sexual activity (both by parents and in education)
- A shift amongst teens towards more responsible attitudes towards casual sex, loving relationships and teen pregnancy
- Fear of sexually transmitted diseases, especially AIDS
- Growing popularity of longlasting birth control options, with more consistent and correct use of contraception methods in general

### Teens and sex: The myths vs. the facts

**Myth:** Sex education and access to contraception tend to increase sexual activity.

**Fact:** In programs that provide information about both contraception and abstinence, evaluators have found no increase in sexual activity. Indeed, some programs that include information on contraception were found to delay initiation of sexual activity. A review of 47 diverse programs found that sex education not only tended to delay the onset of sexual activity, but it also appeared to reduce the number of sexual partners, the number of unplanned pregnancies, and the rates of sexually transmitted diseases.

Myth: Teenagers don't care about what parents think or say. Fact: Young people rank parents as the *preferred* source of information about sex and health. They also rank parents as the most trusted source, and 1 out of 2 teenagers say they trust their parents most for reliable and complete information about birth control. Only 12% said that they'd trust a friend most. When asked about the reasons why teenage girls have babies, about 3 out of 4 teenagers cited a lack of communication between a girl and her parents.

**Myth:** The high incidence of teen births is a relatively recent development in America.

**Fact:** The rate of teen births in the United States has been high for a long time and is, in fact, currently in decline. In the 1950s, the rate was as high as 90 births per 1,000 young women ages 15 to 19; in 2006, that number was still high (72 per 1,000), but in 2009, that number had dropped down to just 39 births per 1,000 — a 37% decline since 1991, according to the CDC. What has significantly changed is the proportion of *unmarried* teens. In 1975, 52% of unmarried mothers in the U.S. were teenagers, but in 2008, this figure had declined to just 22%.

**Myth:** The recent decline in teen birth rates is due to an increase in the number of abortions.

**Fact:** Along with pregnancy and birth rates, abortion rates also have declined. The teen abortion rate (number of abortions per 1,000 females ages 15 to 19) fell from 37 in 1991 to 19 in 2006.

**Myth:** Most Americans don't believe that teens should have access to birth control measures.

**Fact:** An overwhelming majority of Americans — 78% — agree that if teens are sexually active, then they should have access to contraceptives, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Among adult Americans, however, 94% say that it is important for teens to receive a strong message from society that they should abstain from sex at least until they are out of high school, and 91% of teens agree.

**Myth:** Teen pregnancy is only a problem amongst minority populations.

**Fact:** Every year, 750,000 females aged 15-19 in the United States get pregnant. In 2006, 59% of those pregnancies resulted in births, while 27% resulted in abortions. Consequently, the United States has the highest teen pregnancy, teen birth, and teen abortion rates of any industrialized nation. In 2006, about 39% of mothers aged 15 to 19 were white, 24% were black, 34% were Hispanic, and 3% were from other racial or ethnic groups. Teen birth rates in 2009 for the United States fell to the lowest ever recorded, according to the CDC.

Indeed, Peggy Giordano, professor of sociology at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, conducted a 2001 study on 1,316 teenagers from the seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades that bears out an attitude shift in young people in general towards sex and relationships that hasn't been seen since the early sixties. Teens - both girls and boys — are scoring higher on the love scale and are embracing dating and monogamy over casual sex. Indeed, on the love scale, boys and girls scored equally. One boy's response: "You think of it as this way: [Would] you give up your whole life, you know... to save Jenny's life?" when asked to explain his feelings about his girlfriend. But such findings seem to run counter to the images parents and teens are saturated with in the media: the "hook-up" phenomenon, "friends with benefits," and horror stories on the local news reports about the meteoric rise of oral sex amongst teens.

### Media hype, misconceptions and reality

"The media portrays a lot of stereotypes, but some are *true*: Oral sex is increasing amongst teens, but they don't perceive it as 'doing something wrong' — they only consider pregnancy to be the real consequence to be

concerned about," confirms Marcy Floyd, Parenting Prep and Volunteer Coordinator at Hope Cottage in Dallas, TX. "Teen relationships are very typecast in the media. Girls are, as much as they can understand it, in real relationships, from their perspective," says Floyd. But what a teen perceives as a loving relationship is very different compared to what parents, as adults, have experienced. In regards to the Giordano study, Floyd had this to say: "Personally, I can see the value in the study; but having a committed, loving relationship to teens isn't the same thing as it is to adults. They are not monogamous; they break up and make up over and over again. The real difference is in perception."

So how can concerned parents, like Helms, keep their teen on the right path? The difference between teenagers who are trending towards more loving, traditional relationships and those who exhibit what the media portrays as "typical teen behavior" may hinge on the parent-child relationship and open communication before such behaviors begin, rather than after the fact, when consequences of that behavior come into play.

"Our society doesn't place a lot of value on the prevention of and education about sexual relationships beforehand; some of that is due to the educational system, government funding, that sort of thing," says Floyd. "Behavior can't be changed after the fact; education *before* the behavior and its subsequent consequences is what's most important."

### How parents are handling it

In the Helms household, this level of education has already been addressed: Their son has, in addition to speaking openly and honestly with his mother, looked to his older sister for advice and information on all the touchy subjects. Says Helms: "He has a 26-year-old sister who's very open to such subjects. She has an 18-month-old daughter, so he understands pregnancy (all phases), birth control (the pill), tying her tubes, miscarriages and STDs. He is more

### lips for concerned parent

"Talk to your kids. If you're not sure how or what to bring up, educate yourself before you educate them," says Floyd. "What you knew as accurate when you were a teenager or before you had children yourself might not be accurate now." She cites Planned Parenthood as one of the best resources for educational materials.

"Start early. Girls are easy," says Helms. "I understood all my daughter's emotions and physical changes. She discussed everything with me; boys are another matter. What I have learned from my son is, never start a conversation asking what you really want to know. Talk about music or styles of clothing or the latest video game and lead into the topic you really want to talk about."

"If you don't know how to begin a dialogue with your child, start with the things that bother you in everyday life," advises Bisch. "For example, the tabloids at the checkout counter. Issues of Cosmopolitan that shout, 'Five ways to please him!' on the cover are great springboards for conversations with your daughter. Begin by telling her your personal stance on such things as sexual behavior on trashy TV shows, and then move on to what you want for your child... she can't help hearing and being influenced by the media, so use it to begin your discussions." comfortable coming to me with questions than her; however, she is not shy about her body!" While Helms, as a mother, found such discussions stressful at times, she is more concerned about the imagery her son is exposed to on TV: "The openness of some commercials does not set well with me or my husband," says Helms. "Frederick's of Hollywood is one of my son's favorites."

Shannon agrees with Helms: "With so much [sexual content] in the media, I really don't like to leave anything to chance where my kids are concerned. No matter how difficult the topic, we've really tried to introduce a 'nothing is off limits for discussion' sort of attitude in our house. They know I'm going to be nosy, and I make it a bit of joke to ease the tension, but they know there is an air of seriousness about every question asked."

But did having those discussions with her son and

daughter made Shannon uncomfortable? "I want them to know I don't approve [of casual sex], but I'm not going to take chances that my kids aren't making informed decisions, either," she emphasizes. "I don't want to be that parent who says, 'My son or daughter has AIDS because we didn't talk about consequences and prevention.' So, they know everything I know. You don't have to condone to inform."

### How sexually active are teens these days, anyway?

Despite the images of scantily-clad women on the Victoria's Secret runway specials, the sexualization of commercials for everything from fast food to football, and the occasional flash of flesh during primetime TV, teens are becoming more responsible and less sexually active - both in North Texas and across the U.S. According to a study by Kathleen Ford, Woosung Sohn and James Lepkowski for Family Planning Perspectives which surveyed 8,000 teens aged 11-17, only 11% of respondents aged 14 or younger reported having experienced a sexual relationship (compared to 36% of respondents aged 15-16 and 54% of respondents aged 17 or older). The older teens reported having relationships of a longer duration (more than six months), responsible use of birth control methods (such as condoms) and also considered their relationships to be "romantic and monogamous" (81%).

And what about teen pregnancy rates? According to The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Texas (which has one of the highest teen birth rates in the nation) saw a decline of 23% from 1991 to 2009, while the U.S. overall saw a decline of 37% during the same time period. Traditional dating, rather than casual sex, has psychological benefits, according to the Child Trends DataBank: Teens who frequently date report slight increases in self-esteem and are more likely than their peers to report feelings of popularity than those who don't date at all. If your child doesn't date at all, though, have no fear concerned parents. The same study shows that teens who do not pursue romantic relationships in favor of academic study, sports, or other activities report less conflict with their parents and fewer incidents of depression.

### Other factors for parents to consider

Phyllis Bisch, a licensed professional counselor and founder of "The Girls Group" (which supports girls between the ages of 12 and 17), extrapolates the argument even further than Floyd: "It's not just education, but a number of factors: Level of activity in the community, getting positive support from three or more adults who are non-family members, taking part in creative activities outside of school, that sort of thing," she emphasizes. Bisch identified the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets," which are the building blocks of healthy development for young people. Amongst those points are: Living in a community where the youth are valued by adults and are given useful roles; spending three hours or more per week practicing the creative arts or in youth programs, such as music, theater, dance, sports, clubs or academic organizations; being surrounded by positive adult role models; and having parents who are actively involved in their children's schooling and their private time at home.

"Look, teaching abstinence is required by the state as far as sex education goes," says Bisch. "But sexualization begins in middle school these days. Junior high is simply too late to begin addressing behaviors and self-esteem issues with a child." In Bisch's experience, having sex too early and "hooking up" with multiple partners leads to low self-esteem, depression, and lack of intimacy in adult relationships later in life. "Encourage your kid to have a passion for something: And I'm not advocating that kid going to 25 different sports or having a crammed schedule, either, because you can't develop a passion that way," emphasizes Bisch."Foster that child's passion for the arts or academic achievement, even take him or her out and do some community service together. There are so many things you can do as a parent to encourage and reinforce positive behavior and self-esteem early on, before they get distracted by the opposite sex."

### Sexually active teens seek validation and attention

Bisch warns that girls, especially, will seek validation and attention in the wrong way from the opposite sex if they don't have a positive relationship with their fathers or a father figure. "When a young girl comes to me and says, 'Oh, I hooked up with so-and-so at a party, and then this guy and this guy...' I come back to her and ask, 'Mollie, when you get married and go on a business trip and there's a cute co-worker with you, and you're away and nobody will ever know... will you hook up with him? Or be faithful to your husband?' Because when you learn instant gratification as a young adult as a way to fulfill your emotional needs, you aren't going to be able to control yourself or have loving, monogamous relationships as an adult."

So, parents, what can you take away from all of this? "Engage your child in honest discussions — positive reinforcement is key in this regard, because it'll help your child stay focused — and encourage positive, rewarding behaviors that inspire a lifelong passion that will lead to high self-esteem, because in the end, a little restraint and self-respect will help a child foster loving relationships as an adult," says Bisch. It just might make the difference between being a young, depressed divorcee or a healthy, productive member of his or her community in the future. MFM

*Name has been changed to protect the family's privacy.



This story contains rape triggers. —ed.

1. "Hey," I say, going up to a man in a suit. "Can I have some cash?"

He barely glances at me, so I up the ante. "I can make it worth your while."That makes him look, and he studies me for a moment and then nods. I know what I look like, know what he assumes - and he's not wrong. I follow him across the road to his car and climb in, only a little bit nervous, waiting to see what'll happen this time.

It's midwinter. The man in question is, I assume, a local politician - we're by the local government complex, and he's dressed too nicely to be a flunky. I am the teenage prostitute he's just picked up for the evening.

He is, as it goes, not bad. He buys me supper — hot, salty fries and burgers from a fast food joint that I can never afford — and we eat it as he drives us back to his house. He lives about twenty minutes from where he picked me up, far enough to make me nervous. I don't know the area and don't have much cash, and if he stiffs me or turns out to be an asshole, I don't have a way to get home. He bought me supper, though, which is usually a good sign. Maybe getting home won't be an issue this time.

I blow him, and he holds my hair in his fists, controlling my movements. He calls me Karen, which isn't my name, nor is it the name that I gave him when he picked me up. He comes, and offers me a beer, and we sit in his bedroom and watch the local news. Then he fucks me, almost tenderly, stroking my face and petting my breasts, strumming my clit and trying to make it good for me. When he's done, he asks if I came, and I lie. I tell him it was amazing. Looking relieved, he thanks me, and then, somewhat awkwardly, offers me a ride home.

All things considered, it went pretty well.

2. It's shortly before Christmas, and I'm panhandling. I've barely been making ends meet, and that was before I lost my crappy temp job in a call center. Now I've got nothing — no way of making January rent, no Christmas





dinner, no friends, no safety net — and no one's hiring at this time of year. A man walks past, and I match my stride to his.

"Got a dollar?"

He glances at me and shakes his head, his eyes landing on my breasts. It's cold out, but I don't have a jacket, and my nipples are so hard against my shirt that it hurts. I know what he's looking at.

"I could ... do something for you," I say, making the words sound as loaded as I can. I don't know what makes me say it, except, I suppose, that it's almost Christmas and I'm feeling sorry for myself. The idea of having an extra hundred bucks — hell, at this point, an extra ten bucks is a powerful lure.

He looks at my breasts again, then reaches out and tweaks my nipple. I force myself not to recoil, and he nods approvingly.

It isn't something I've ever done before, but he seems to know what he's doing, so I follow him. He lives in a fancy apartment, or at least one that's fancy compared to where I live. Which isn't hard, really; my apartment has two broken windows, a heater that doesn't work, and a stove that leaks gas. The man in the next apartment deals crack in the hallway and sometimes leaves me canned goods outside my door, especially when his customers have woken me up by beating on my door thinking my apartment was his. Comparatively, this apartment is palatial, with high ceilings and new, unstained carpet.

He shoots me a glare when I comment on it. "Don't get any ideas," he says harshly. "Come on, the bedroom's this way."

This is a huge mistake, I think, but I follow him anyhow, biting my lip until it bleeds. I don't want to say the wrong thing again. I want to do this right. I want him to fall in love with me. I want him to at least give me enough money that I can buy some potatoes and bacon and tea.

By the time we reach his bedroom, he's half hard. "Strip," he says, pulling a condom from his nightstand. He drops his pants and jerks himself for a minute, watching me take off my clothes. Then he rolls on the condom, taking my hand and using it to smooth out the latex.

He fucks me on the bed, tugging on my nipples until I think they'll come off. I'm not aroused, and the pain in my nipples is excruciating, but I fake it as best I can.

He tells me to shut up, and I do, worrying at my lip again.

It's remarkably passive. I stay where I am and try not to move or make noise, and he pounds into me and kneads and tugs at my chest. The ceiling is textured, semicircles of raised plaster fitting together like fish scales, and I try to find the patterns in them like it's a maze. Neither of us says anything, though his panting is loud in the silent house.

His hips stutter to a halt, and he freezes for a moment, grunting, and I'm uncomfortably aware, all of a sudden, that I never explicitly said I wanted money. He pulls out and ties off the condom, then yanks up his trousers, and I panic, not sure what to do. My confusion must be obvious, because he looks at me almost kindly.

"Get dressed," he says. "My wife'll be home soon, and you need to be gone." He leaves the room, and moments later I hear the television come on.

You will not cry, not here, I tell myself as I get dressed. Later. You can cry later.

I creep into the living room, and he doesn't even look at me. "Let yourself out," he says. "There's money on the table by the door."

Suddenly this feels all wrong. I freeze for a moment. "Get out, kid."

I get out, grabbing the money off the table as I go. It's not until I'm several blocks away that I let myself look at it, still half-terrified that he's going to storm up and demand it back, or the cops are going to come, or...

Eighty bucks, and now I do cry, but in relief. Then I run, fast as I can.

3. He stops the car on a deserted street that's lined with businesses, not houses, and my heart starts pounding. Blood rushes in my ears. There's an alley just in front of the car,

### Even now, ten years later, that was

and I fumble with the door handle, trying to get out, my stomach twisting up tight.

The door's locked, and he's just watching me. Like he's waiting. I close my eyes and count, trying to calm myself down.

"I wanted to ask you something," he says, like he hadn't been watching me twist like a fish on a hook for the last thirty seconds. I nod anyway, hoping that asking me something is really the extent of it, watching him closely. This time he's the one who looks away, his hands tightening on the steering wheel.

"I want you to piss on me," he mutters, still looking away.

I blink."What?"

His eyes meet mine square on. "You heard me," he says, no longer muttering or unclear. "I want you to piss on me."

That was not at all what I expected, and a relieved giggle bubbles out before I can stop it. He scowls, but somehow doesn't seem as intimidating anymore, and I nod, trying to look contrite.

The scowl doesn't disappear. "If you're not going to do it, I don't want you. I won't pay you." He sounds petulant.

"OK," I say. "I'll piss on you. That's fine. It's extra, though." I'm not even sure where the last bit came from — beggars can't be choosers, and I'm not in a position to say no to easy money, which pissing on someone has to be. If anything, he should probably get a discount.

He nods like he expected that. The remaining two blocks to his house are driven in silence. When we get inside, I finally break the silence.

"How do you want to do this?" I ask. I've never pissed on someone before, never even really heard of it except in the context of things that horrible perverts do, and I'm not sure of the protocol. Surely not in his bed, right? Maybe on a tarp? He's got his shirt off before he even answers me, and his cock is visibly straining at his pants.

"Bathtub," he says. "I'll leave money on the table. You can go when you're done."

I'm not sure what "done" means in this context. Done peeing? I don't know if he expects me to fuck him afterward or not. Ignoring my uncertainty, I follow him into the bathroom. On the way, he drops his pants, cock bobbing awkwardly in front of him. He's in the bathtub and masturbating before my pants are even unbuttoned, and he looks at me hungrily.

"Do it. Piss on me."

I carefully don't wince when he says it. Propping one foot awkwardly on the far lip of the bathtub, I try to figure out how to make this work. He's got his eyes closed, his hand working his cock frantically, and it seems rude to interrupt, but eventually I do anyhow. "Where?" I ask.

He grunts and shrugs, as much as you can shrug while lying in a bathtub. "Anywhere," he says, "on my cock or my face or whatever. Shower me in your piss."

So I do. It takes a minute, performance anxiety freezing me up, but then it's all right. As I piss on his face, his shoulders, his torso, his eyes fly open and he moans. One hand is still working his cock, and the other one is catching my pee, splashing it onto himself, rubbing it into his skin. He comes explosively, his face contorted in pleasure. I watch uncomfortably, unable to shake the feeling that I'm seeing something I shouldn't be seeing.

Slumping against the bathtub, he closes his eyes again. I hop off the tub, grab my pants, and head for the door, awkwardly stepping into them as I walk.

The money was on the door by the table, and he must have taken the bit about piss being extra seriously, because when I'm far enough away that I stop to count it, he's left me \$200 in twenties.

Even now, ten years later, that was the easiest money I ever made.

4. We're going to have sex in an alley. He picked me up in a park and didn't want to take me back to his house, which wasn't terribly unusual — a lot of guys had wives or girlfriends or kids, or they just didn't want me knowing there they lived. I was OK with that; used to it, even. So we're going to have sex in an alley, which is worse than in his car or his office, but better than just having it in the park or him wanting to go back to my place.

The guy's been unfailingly polite, calling me "Miss," asking politely about specific things I will and won't do. He offers to buy me a soda as we walk, looking for a relatively isolated place. I pass, but am relieved — this looks like it's going to be an easy night. Maybe not amazingly lucrative, but easy.

I could do with one of those right about now. About a week ago, a guy refused to pay me, physically jumping on me to keep me from leaving with "his" money. Then I got the flu, and no one wants to go home with a vomiting whore. I'm still sick but done throwing up, and rent's due soon, so I dressed up and went out.

In the alley, he unbuttons his fly. "On your knees, bitch," he says, all traces of the polite guy from before gone. It's not new — a lot of guys seem to get off on ordering me around in the crudest terms possible.

"Money up front," I respond, toying with my hair and trying to seem coy.

He snarls at me. "I said, get on your fucking knees, you fucking whore."

### the easiest money I ever made.

My hands start to shake, and I start backing towards the street, out of the alley. Someone shoves me from behind, and I realize what I should've registered before: this is a setup.

"Hey," I say quickly, trying to make it ok. "I was just kidding! I'm not charging—"

The kick lands square in the middle of my back, catching me off guard, knocking me to my hands and knees.

"You're goddamn right you're not charging," the first guy says, and I slowly connect the dots that this isn't a bust.

He grabs my hair and drags me, still on my knees, further into the alley, behind a Dumpster, the second guy following behind us. Slamming my head against the cold metal of the Dumpster, he stuffs his cock into my mouth.

"Suck it, you fucking whore, you little slut, you goddamn bitch." The abuse pours out of his mouth like a prayer, and I do exactly what he says, sucking his cock desperately, hoping that this is all he wants.

It's not. He gets bored before long, and the other guy steps up, kicking me in the ribs before I have a chance to stand up.

"Take off your underwear, slut," he says, and I do, terrified, carefully working them off without standing up. I'm oddly relieved that I didn't take the soda that was offered earlier, sure that if I had, I'd have pissed myself by now. He nods, almost approvingly, and I breathe a sigh of relief.

"Move," he says, and I hesitate a minute, then start to stand. He shoves me down again, laughing. "Bitches crawl, stupid bitch." Obediently, I crawl forward a few feet, and then he's on me, shoving up my skirt and thrusting his cock into me.

I panic, flailing under the weight of him, scrabbling against the asphalt, and the first guy comes over and kicks at my wrist, knocking my hand out from under me. I collapse face-first on the pavement, and the man raping me laughs appreciatively. Swinging my arms, trying to connect with something, anything, I manage to grab the ankle of the man standing up, and I clench it, digging my nails into his skin. I can't move, though, and it's not hard for him to shake me off. He repays me for the gouges in his ankle by kicking me in the side, his foot connecting with my midsection as I squirm and struggle. Finally, I take the hint and stop moving. He rewards me by grinding his shoe onto my face, and I gasp, tears streaming down my cheeks.

In fairy tales, the archetype of the woman-child lured into stillness, which is then used against her, is everywhere. Sleeping Beauty fell into her long sleep only to be raped by a passing woodsman, waking when her child born of the rape suckled a bit of flax from her finger. Snow White, barely pubescent and felled by an apple, was to be carted off by a prince who was enamored of her small, still form. I, for the first time in my life, am a fairy-tale princess. My immobility frees them up to finish raping me, systematically going through everything I'd told him I wouldn't do. I don't move, don't fight, grateful that they've stopped kicking me.

They make up for it when they're done, taking turns beating me while the other one holds me up or down, as the situation called for. Eventually I pass out, and as my vision goes spotty, I feel not fear, but relief.

I wake up alone in the alley, bloody and half naked. Rent is late that month.

5. It's not something that I think about often. It was just a job, and some jobs are worse than others. It wasn't even a bad job, most of the time. Sometimes it was wonderful and easy — enjoyable, even.

I kept at it after the night in the alley, and in the end, it wasn't the hooking that did me in. Winter became spring, and the warmer weather brought more competition. I got mugged — not doing sex work, but walking through the city one night. My rent went up. And I was lonely — prostitution isn't the sort of job where you chat with people around the water cooler, and I was in a city where I knew no one. When a friend halfway across the country offered me somewhere to live, I accepted her offer, throwing my meager possessions into my trunk and driving across the Great Plains to her house.

She didn't know what I'd been doing, and I didn't tell her. Most people don't know, which I suppose is for the best. I know what they'd think of me if they knew, because I know what they think of other women. So when my mother says someone looks like a whore, I don't wince. When someone comments on a rape saying that she deserved what she got, I don't flinch. When Grand Theft Auto comes up and the conversation turns to killing hookers, I look away or leave the room. When the news reports on yet another murdered prostitute, I close my eyes and try not to think that it could have been me. I bite my tongue a lot.

Despite that, sometimes, even now, I sit in my office, staring at my computer screen, and fantasize about going back to it. No spreadsheets or complicated procedures, no politics, no subterfuge. A simple transaction — the oldest transaction in history, maybe. I traded my body for cash, and the men traded cash for simple physical relief, or the illusion that someone cared about them, or for whatever closure they could get from a woman they called by someone else's name.

I hope they found what they were looking for. MFM

### **Тhe Second Battered Woman I've Клоим** *Бу Меатьов*

**SHE PHONED ME** the night it happened, but I didn't realise it at the time, and I had already resolved to be rid of her. There was no way at all I was interested in pursuing some more serious relationship with her, and I was uncomfortable being her ongoing client. She phoned and asked, "Do you miss me?" and I answered, "No."

After a long pause, she said, "I'm going back to Karakol."

Ah, trying to tug my heartstrings, make me worried I'll never see you again, eh? I'm just some guy who bought you off the street. This is ridiculous. "Good, this job isn't right for you. You should go back home."

Another long pause, then from her, "Bye."

I thought that was the end of her, and I was proud of my resolve and glad she was behind me now. What she failed to tell me during that call was that the night before a john had taken her home, and that when she wouldn't give him a blow job he started punching her in the face. She guarded herself with her hands, and got a couple of deep gouges on the base of her right thumb from his rings. He managed to land at least a couple of good ones — she got a very black left eye, probably a light concussion. She couldn't go to the doctor because she had no money, she couldn't go to the police because she was a hooker, she couldn't work anymore both for physical and psychological reasons.

But for whatever reasons, she chose to keep that to herself then. But she phoned again yesterday evening, to my work. When I heard her on the phone I started to get cold and hard. "Please, I need money."

Her pleas make me colder, harder. After a long pause, "That's not fair," I answer.

"I can't work again, I need to get home, I've been badly beaten."

The cold melts immediately, and I feel very wrong and very small. "Where are you now?"

"At home, at the hotel."

"Do you remember where I work?"

"Yes."

"Come here, right now."

"ОК."

Her bruises were purple and yellow by this time, but her head still hurt and she carried a handkerchief in front of her eye, to try to hide the marks. She was still pretty, but the scene was so sad. She still had all of her teeth. My father-in-law was much more thorough with my mother-in-law, those years ago; she had needed major reconstructive dental work.

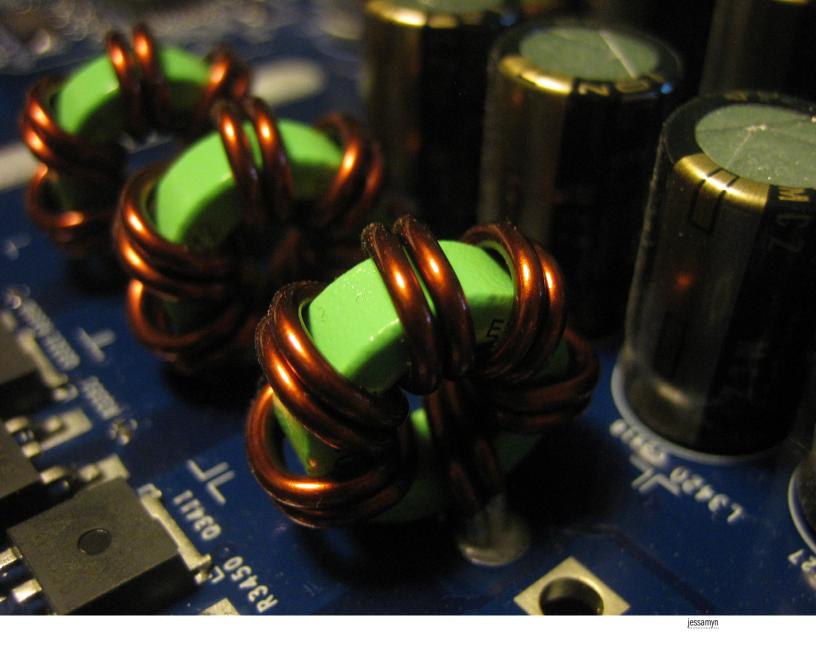
What could I do? I took her home, gave her tea and aspirin, gentle hugs and kisses. I washed her feet, and then massaged olive oil into them, spent a long time doing that, while she watched TV. My positive energy could flow into her feet, and drive the negative out the top of the skull. Not all men are bad, the universe again in balance and harmony.

Then I gave her about \$150. I made her promise I'd never see her working the streets again. "If I find you here, in Bishkek, I won't DO anything, but I'll be so sad and disappointed for you. Please, go home. Don't phone me anymore, I was your client. You don't need any connections at all from this life. Start again, you are young and pretty and it needn't be like it is now."

She gave me her word. I asked her if she wanted to stay the night, or go back home. She wanted to get home, to leave first thing in the morning, and that was fine with me.

If I still remember it right, the story didn't end there. She came back from Karakol a month or so later, came to my place. How sad — she cared for me about as much as I cared for her, but my place had a TV and didn't have constant john traffic wandering through. She let me fuck her, and didn't ask me for any money. It took a very direct talk then, and another couple phone calls, to get her out of my life. But I don't think she went back to streetwalking, bless her soul. Good luck to you. I can't even remember your name now, but good luck to you. Stay away from the bad people if you can.

And one other thing: the larger my sample size grows the more it is seeming that almost every woman in Kyrgyzstan has been beaten at one time or another. MFM



**SERVICE** Putting in an airport extreme card took 11 minutes. And only that long because I had to find a screwdriver.

