

Birth of the Bruise

I returned to Missoula, the college town I had left three years before. After rounds of drinks with friends in one of the dodgiest bars in town, I spied across the room the young man who had been my dorm roommate for our very first term at university. Basil was tall, blond, Pennsylvanian, everything I wasn't. I hadn't seen him since he dropped out after that first term.

It turned out he had spent four years in San Francisco. As we talked and drank tequila, it became increasingly apparent that we had traveled the same road subsequent to our parting: He had his hand on my thigh; I had mine down the front of his pants.

Several drinks later (this was Montana, after all), and after we each revealed that we had known the other was gay from the very beginning, we adjourned in my car to his house, for what promised to be a long-postponed romantic interlude.

He lived in a tacky house far out in the suburbs. We arrived, and after the clamor of making coffee, mixing drinks (I don't remember which it was), we were sitting in the living room, about to tackle the matter at hand. Out of a bedroom lunged a muscular young man, clad in briefs, glaring at me. "D'ya want to fight?" he growled, clenching his hands. He advanced upon me, blindly menacing me with his fists. I, out of surprise as much as cowardice, shrank back in alarm, but not so much alarm that I didn't notice Basil gliding out the door. The Rambo figure swooped down on me, swinging and yelling, breaking my glasses, bloodying my nose, punching me to the floor. After a few kicks, he strode back into his room, leaving me completely dazed and confused. And alone. Basil had disappeared.

Without glasses, I was completely helpless to drive. I let myself out the door, my clothes bloody and torn. I pulled myself together, and began the long walk home.

Was I victim of a drunken, perhaps jealous assault? Was my assailant a somnambulant pugilist? Or was I victim of an evil but effective bait-and-switch maneuver? I never knew.

Monday always follows Sunday

A late summer sexy Sunday afternoon, and I'm sitting with a pitcher of beer trading comments on the passing scene with my longtime drinking buddy. The slanted sunlight from the window illuminates the hanging smoke, giving the seedy bar an ecclesiastic appearance.

I'm wearing my Gloria Vanderbilt polo shirt. I always feel sexy and upbeat in that shirt. I bought it at the gay thrift store in San Francisco last Gay Pride Week, so it has a certain aura for me.

About halfway through the pitcher, I notice this lemon yellow shirt off to my right. The lemon yellow shirt is the only color in the gloom. My eyes periodically seek out the brightness.

The man wearing the lemon yellow shirt quickly becomes aware of the attention he's attracting. Before long he walks by, his eyes flashing. I smile and nod.

Sometime later, the lemon yellow shirt passed directly in front of me as its wearer and his companion walked toward the exit. I made some comment about his departure to my drinking buddy. Before I was able to explain to him what I was talking about, the man in the lemon yellow shirt was at my elbow.

"What's your telephone number?" he demanded, as he slapped a trick pad and pen on the table before me. I wrote a number and name.

His abrupt reappearance had surprised me. I was, as they say, "nonplussed." I didn't have a chance to say a word before he was gone, flinging, "I'll call you tomorrow," over his shoulder.

It was a heady encounter. Just the thing for a late summer sexy Sunday afternoon. No fuss and no mess to clean up after, either.

He called the next evening. It was a disaster. I had to ask him to repeat his name several times; he was being so sexy that I couldn't understand what he was saying. We had nothing in common to talk about. Not even his weird name lit a spark.

As the conversation flagged, my attention drifted to the television screen flickering at me. I quickly lost interest in the man on the phone. He said he had to go check on something in the kitchen.

"That's that," I thought as I hung up the phone. "The cold reality of Monday night is far from late summer sexy Sunday."

There was a date, by the way. Several months later, in sweater and coat weather, he called again. It was obvious that he couldn't remember to whom the name and number belonged. I let him talk me into a date for the following evening.

We met at the same bar. We went to his place. It was a disaster.

And the dorks make three

His name was Lance Blue. Honest. My father back home had hand-annointed Lance Blue, a young investment banker, as the chosen for me, his bachelorette daughter. That was fine and well as long as Lance Blue remained in Missouri and I remained in Portland. My father is welcome to his delusions, at that distance.

However, as luck would have it, Lance Blue invented a business trip to the Northwest. Before I knew it, my father had him bunked at my apartment and was, for all I knew, readying my trousseau. In a panic, I arranged a "date" with Bob. Bob, a nerd of moderate proportions, had been clumsily attempting to ask me out for years. Bob was the consummate urban snob/wimp, and his interest in me can only be understood as an indulgence in cultural miscegenation. Bob would be a perfect foil for the bumptious Mr. Blue: a Rick Moranis to the other's Rambo. I trusted Bob to help me present a unified front in the face of certain romantic aggression from my Missouri visitor.

Lance Blue breezed in. He was not bad looking, in a Middle American way, but possessed a mind unclouded by serious thought. The kind of cultural troglodyte that one becomes accustomed to humoring in Missouri. On his own, we would have been fine. But with Lance Blue was a friend who worked (of all places) at Hanford Nuclear Reservation, and his sullen, sulky wife. Bob is a member of Sierra Club. Reads *The New Republic*. Knee jerk liberal personified. We went to Chin Yen. Within minutes, Bob and the Hanford employee were at each others' throats about the comparative evils of nuclear weapons and the defense department. Lance Blue squirmed, his Missouri good-old-boy demeanor not accustomed to being sullied with Issues. The mad scientist's wife pursed her lips, and pursued her egg roll around her plate. I had another Tsing Tao.

I invited everyone back home for a night cap. There the discussion erupted into hostilities with Bob and the Hanford apologist taking on the entire national agenda in shrieks. The sullen wife never said a word. Lance Blue sank back in his chair, his small unexercised mind baffled that politics was interfering with his courtship. Bob stormed out finally, angry that his date had turned out so badly, and no doubt equated me with the level of my guests. Then Lance Blue and his friends stood up and announced that they were driving to Seattle. At 11:00 at night?

I didn't argue. They gathered their things and swept out the door. I never saw Lance Blue again, and Bob thereafter found my politics suspect. At professional functions, we are coldly courteous.

Thanks to my father's matchmaking, I killed two nerds with one date.

Red hot chili poppers

It was cheap beer night at the Embers; 40¢ a glass for some rot-gut. Still, the price was right and the place was packed, mostly with bubbleheads dancing to bubblegum — nothing new. I was trying to be inconspicuous while I waited for a couple of friends to find me. Honest!

Before long a tall, dark and, yes, handsome guy came my way. We cruised briefly, chatted briefly and split hastily. I ran into one of my friends on the way out and explained my situation. He approved of my choice and wished me luck.

The guy was, by every definition, an erotic dud. I have, of course, repressed most memories of that night except for two things — chili and poppers. These words are forever etched on the walls of my libido. Even now the mere mention of either word causes my penis to go into near remission.

Allow me to elaborate. We got back to his place and immediately went at it. He was cute, had a nice body; in fact everything was fine as long as he didn't talk. Soon he started going for this bottle of poppers. At first I thought little of this because (how can I put this delicately?), anatomically, I was some distance from his nose.

Well, we finished our sex by 2:30, and chatted mindlessly until 3:15 (I was acutely aware of every minute I was spending with this joker). Just as I was dozing off into what I hoped would be a psychically healing slumber, my date got up, went to the kitchen, and returned to bed with a bowl of cold chili. I was, unfortunately, regaining consciousness as he nudged me and asked if I wanted a bowl. I grunted "no." I had received enough oral gratification; hadn't he?

8:30 a.m. came quickly, almost as quickly as my date's chili-induced flatulence. I awoke to an odor much worse than any bottle of poppers. In fact, compared to what I was smelling, poppers were as refreshing as Glade. I knew I had to get up and out of this apartment but, after only five hours of mediocre rest it took a lot of effort to simply open my eyelids. It appeared highly unlikely that I could move any other body part. I was resigned to stay in bed, at least until I regained partial use of my limbs. That came soon enough, when, at 9:15, my date awoke and farted his way to the bathroom. Several minutes later he returned and offered me his toothbrush.

I refused it (he probably brushed with poppers) and quickly put on the previous night's bar-smoked clothes. After declining to join him for breakfast (I was afraid to see what else came from his refrigerator), I awkwardly, yet graciously, thanked him for a nice time and gave him a fake phone number. With that I left, a self-proclaimed adult survivor of a bad date.

After thoughtful consideration, I decided to eat breakfast at the only place I felt could truly complement all I'd been through the night before: Newberry's.