

## My Rump Hurts Disorder

By Heath Corlew

I knew Sarah intimately, intricately. I mean: I knew what every gesture, facial expression, vocal tone – all of it, drunk or sober, stoned or coked up, on ecstasy, all sorts of pills, on ether and even VCR head-cleaner, psychedelics, Adderall, birth control and on God. I knew these in all there various forms, combinations and deviations.

And so I could see Sarah as she spoke to me on the phone, 500 miles away. She was rolling her eyes at me, occasionally employing her annoyed hand puppet Heath, working his mouth up and down with a blah, blah, blah... for her study partners that I was so rudely interrupting. They nodding in dismay – her boyfriend, again.

Sarah called me at work, finally free to talk. She cursed me for being so selfish of her time. She knew that at work I would have to take it – red-faced, employing my grown up business voice, too embarrassed my coworkers would suspect something. She was asking for space in our relationship. It seemed quite an odd request, given that she was in West Virginia, and I in North Carolina. I dug for purchase and refused.

“You’ll just have to dump me and know there is no going back,” I say.

I refused to do the – if we break up, can we still be friends? – masochistic, suicidal tango. I’m far too fragile for that, my knees would buckle in no time.

She avoided talking to me for another week, too busy studying. But I knew what all this really meant was she wanted my permission to try out some new fellow but no need to rush into dumping Heath now. She didn’t want to feel guilty if this new guy she was already fucking didn’t work out.

It was driving me mad. But here it was a Friday and I was home from work. I made a drink and tried not to think of my inevitable dumping. I needed a fucking hobby fast. I scanned the yellow pages and called this indoor soccer facility. They asked me my credentials and placed me on a team.

“Don’t they need to give me a trial or something?” I ask.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be their best player,” Shane, the manager says.

This didn’t exactly excite me about my new team. I had been placed on some sort of adult league feeder club. I made another drink and envisioned rising through the ranks, quickly achieving adult league stardom, feeling guilty of how much a loser that obviously makes me.

The phone rang and I answered with a strong sense of doom but prayed despite being an atheist –

that she wanted me to come there immediately, hoping to punk God just one last time. Make me a believer, Man.

Her voice is serious, assertive, matter of fact, condescending, motherly. I'm fucked. I take the phone outside on the deck.

In a corner, up above my sliding glass door is a mounted, illuminated halogen light. It is dark and there are these black nocturnal hornets that swarm about the light. Their attraction to it – this light – drunkenly impairs them and they almost seem to stagger, bumping against the glass, losing their wings briefly before flying right back and smacking into it, and rebounding in a downward spiral. It made them practically harmless.

Sometimes when I needed to do some venting, I would go out and pick them off at close range. I even had a preferred weapon. I had a giant pencil that I'd put this little zombie finger puppet chick on. I knew it was her because she had little zombie boobs or rather lumps under her bloodied, torn black V-neck. I liked her hair. It was so dark and shiny. She carried a brain in her right hand. She looked a lot like my girlfriend, same haircut and all.

As my girlfriend is dumping me, I stay at the hornets. Thumping them into the darkness.

"Sometimes you have to let the ones you love go, and if they come back then it's meant to be," she says.

"Don't you mean yours to keep."

"What?"

"You're comparing me to a dog."

She says, "Don't you know anything about fate?"

"Just what type of pet am I to you?"

Sarah sighs and asks, "Can't you ever be serious? What is wrong with you?"

I take a deep breathe, feeling my throat closing, shortness of breath.

I say, "So you don't love me anymore. You don't want to have red-headed babies with me anymore?"

"No," she says, in a deliberate, far too believable way.

I'm speechless, I feel as if there is a knot at the very top of my larynx. I remove my tie and unbutton my shirt. She sighs and I begin to feel that old familiar smothering, hopeless sensation. The tears already welled, dropping. No one is there, but I'm foolishly afraid that I'll be seen weeping.

She says, "Heath, I do not love you."

I swallow my own spit. What is wrong with me? I can't even fucking speak.

She says, “I never really –”

I hang up. My must escape this suffering impulse full blown, not wanting her to hear the tremble in my voice. Agoraphobia, maybe. Definite signs of autonomic nervous system hyperactivity. There is a lot wrong with me right now.

I scurry upstairs to my bedroom, the loft – away from that bastard phone. I click on the hall light that leads to my room. I strip down naked, go into the bathroom and stare down into the toilet bowl. I take in its odor and heave, the vomit masking my reflection. It pleases me in some very queer way. I rinse out my mouth and laugh out loud. I retrieve this pig mask that I wore the previous Halloween. I put it on and go back to peer into the bathroom mirror. It is a horrid looking thing. The mask is half pig, half man. It has a cigar stub protruding from its lips and its pigment blends perfectly with my own pale, pinkish skin. I am naked, yet not vulnerable because this isn't me at all.

I hear the buzzing of a hornet. One has gotten in and swarms around my hall light. I grab a ☐Mountain Express☐ and roll it up. I smack the hornet and it sails, marvelously, down into the blackness that is the living room. I really crush it, finding the sweet spot on my first swing. Fantastic, I think. I feel subhuman, a dangerous beast, incapable of emotion, no thought at all, just pure basic instinct. Eat, fuck, sniff, grunt – a real man's man. I go back to the bathroom mirror and growl. I skip down the stairs to make another drink.

Downstairs, I pour a scotch and sit down on the couch. I pull the glass coffee table to me, in order to further study myself. The scotch blends grotesquely with the cigar stub. Pathetic. I appear a pink, lecherous old man. I have to hold the mouth open to effectively drink. The reflection of this basic, drinking action is far too human. It may be that I'm suffering from borderline personality disorder.

I needed release from all this madness. I leaned back hard into the couch, rubbing my pig ears in despair. Then – a magnificent pain shot through my whole being. I leapt up and slapped at my left buttock. The hornet had got me right in the sweet spot – the tenderloin. I took my Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Smacked the hornet nest down. And I felt just lovely. More Balanced.

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