

Back Door Man

I wandered through the Oberlin College science library, repeating my mystic mantra, “Go to work, Lucas Waters, go to work. Go to work, Lucas Waters, go to work,” making my final approach to my special table where I would study myself into a trance. Straight A+ s would surely follow, and a PhD in physics from MIT, and an elegant solution to the mysteries of the universe, and sole command of a billion galaxies. Somewhere along the line, I might even snag myself a girlfriend. But there was a problem. As I approached the charmed table, somebody was sitting in my chair. Her name was no doubt Goldilocks. I had to persuade her that she could never find true happiness in the chair she currently occupied. But how? After all, I wasn’t exactly the three bears.

Goldilocks was slim and pretty, with silky brown hair, and she was dressed in faded blue jeans, and she reminded me of the *Andy Griffith Show*, maybe it was because she had freckles like Opie, I don’t know. When I eased ever so gently into a subordinate chair, trying not to disturb her inner peace, she gave me a sly look which seemed to say, *I know what’s in your pants better than you do*. She sat there rustling her papers, now looking puzzled, blinking her eyes like

she was one of those southern belles straight out of *Gone with the Wind*. Making contact was an important first step. “Need some help?”

“It’s this.” She leaned forward, exposing bra-less cleavage.

“Let’s have a look,” I said.

Goldilocks told me her name, Rosemary, and I shook her hand and said, “Glad to meet you.” Forgetting my own studies, I helped her with her physiology assignment, although she already seemed to have a handle on the whole human biology thing, and I told her I was from Mississippi, where we slopped pigs on the farm and shot alligators out of the swamps. “How quaint,” she said. “Have you ever read Schopenhauer? What do you think he’d say about the Vietnam War?” “That’s a weird transition.” “I guess I’m pretty weird,” she said.

When it started getting well past 10 PM, she said she could drive me back to my dorm, which was a little strange, because we were only about two blocks away, but, employing my best southern manners, I said, “Sure thing, at your service.” If I’d been wearing a hat, I’d have tipped it.

After she parked on the street, again giving me that *in your pants* look, I leaned over and kissed her, real gentlemanly like, soft and sweet. Right off the bat, she stuck her tongue down my throat and put her fingers up my shirt, but, whenever I tried to touch her in her own special places, forgetting for a millisecond that I was Prince Charming and she was a damsel in distress, she yanked my greedy hands away. Feeling a little frustrated, I had this urge to tell her about how, back in high school Latin class, Rob Brown had said, “Magnus urnum, big jugs,” but it was too risky, you know, sexy humor with a stranger. The next evening, I ran into her in the science library again, and she observed that this randomness was like the Schrodinger uncertainty

principle, and we did a repeat performance in her car. I didn't see her for a few days, and then it was déjà vu all over again.

Finally, I asked, "You aren't ever going to let me touch you?"

There was a long pause within the spooky darkness of the car. She said, "Okay, I've made up my mind, and I know I have a mind, because I think, therefore I am; if you don't believe me, ask Descartes." In a couple of minutes, there we were, making the beast with two backs, just like a couple of teenagers at a drive-in.

After that, she would never make any definite plans. It was almost like she was a ghost, appearing somewhere random at 2 AM, then disappearing for days. Despite our intramural activities, she refused to tell me where she lived or anything else. Still, at times, she seemed stricken with jealousy, that green-eyed monster. When she noticed that I'd been speaking to this shy girl named Sylvia, she asked, "I don't see what you see in Sylvia. She has no ass." Rosemary turned sideways, exposing her backside, and patted a cheek. "Feel this. This is ass."

Rainy spring transmogrified into broiling summer, and I rented a room in this rickety house owned by an English professor, sharing the space with Sylvia, who seemed to have a crush on me, but I could never be sure, even though last Easter, when I'd been running around without my shirt on, she had colored my nipples with Easter egg paint. Once, when Rosemary was paying me a visit, I caught Sylvia peeping around the corner and got a lump in my throat.

I commenced piano lessons with Jack Radunsky, the best piano teacher in the whole darned conservatory, and the Watergate hearings wrapped up, and matters accelerated with Rosemary. When I asked her what she was doing staying here for the summer, she said, "When you say 'here', are you referring to a specific point in the time-space continuum or something more metaphysical?"

“Why do you always answer a question with a question?”

“Because I take after Socrates.”

I started getting this creepy feeling, like she was crazy, or a downright psychopath, or had this hidden past, with real live skeletons in her closet. But that wasn't the real trouble. The real problem was that I was getting addicted to her flesh, and I didn't know what's what about her. The real concern was that she was interfering with my studies. The real distress was that I wanted a bona fide grade A approved real girlfriend, even though I always reminded myself, *Beggars can't be choosers*. One tragic evening, I made this pitiful attempt to break things off, and she said, “Of course, of course, I get that all the time,” and I felt relief but also a stab to my heart.

At some point, Rosemary had gotten herself another car, a black Volkswagen beetle. One summer evening, when I arrived in front of the house I was living in, there was her Volkswagen. I walked all the way around the block, hoping I was having an hallucination, but, when I got back, there it still was. I climbed up the steps and opened my door, feeling this funny craving, wondering if maybe she had a knife with a serrated edge. She was lying on my mattress under a sheet. When I pulled it off, it wasn't just that she was in a state of dishabille. She was stark fucking naked. She said, “Don't I remind you of one of those Botticelli angels?” I wondered how long she'd been waiting. Just when I was getting concerned about how I was going to whisk her the hell on out of there before everything started up again, this awful moaning and screeching emanated from somewhere. When I rushed out into the living room, it was Sylvia.

“What's wrong? You want me to get you to the hospital.”

She was almost incoherent, but it was something about cramps. As Rosemary and I were taking her out to the Volkswagen, holding her under the armpits, I glanced into the bathroom,

and there was upchuck all over the floor, and I got really scared. “Don’t worry, Sylvia, we’ll take good care of you,” She said, “It’s nothing really, Lucas, this happens all the time.”

In the hospital, I waited there with Rosemary, and she started stroking me softly, saying, “Nice pussy, that’s a nice pussycat,” and I wanted to correct her terminology, saying, “Well, it’s not exactly a pussy.” When I tried to grab her in the place she might have been referring to, she pulled my hand away, said, “Take it easy, buddy,” then went back to stroking. When we returned to the house, I sat with Sylvia a little while, patting her wrist, and she said she was feeling much better, and I got this urge to kiss her, but instantly hated myself for betraying Rosemary.

After Rosemary followed me back to my room, she took off my shirt and pulled down my pants. She made me hold my arms over my head, ran her fingers round and round my nipples, touching them softly every now and then, and I would let out a moan. She kind of smiled, with this dreamy look on her face. “Does it really feel that good?” She did some maneuvering, getting this look on her face like she was mom and apple pie. “You know, Lucas, there’s nothing more satisfying than sitting on an erect penis.”

Then, like Merlin the magician, she made all her own clothes disappear and used my own personal magic wand to stimulate her femaleness. I finally got up the nerve to ask what I’d been meaning to for a long time. “I hope this isn’t too personal, but do you by any chance take birth control pills?”

She stopped cold, a frown forming on her lips. “That stuff is really bad for you. It will completely disrupt your hormonal balance.”

“Aren’t you afraid of getting pregnant?”

At this she grew outraged, telling me that she worried a lot more about the dangers of insemination than I did and understood what the responsibilities of having a child were better

than a man ever could, but this didn't make any sense, because while she was giving her tirade, she started up again and even intensified her efforts.

She suddenly released my wand. "By any chance, do you need a job?"

I was a little distracted from all the stimulation. "Not exactly, but maybe, because, well, actually I am unemployed."

She smirked. "How about a blow job?"

After she'd done me up with her mouth, I thought I was all done in, but then she held my legs to get better leverage, bent forward, got it in some weird angle, and did it even more vigorously, and to my astonishment, she achieved success again.

It was now time for some quiz show questions. "Do you like it better the first way or the second?"

"The second."

"Good answer. And here's the prize."

Then she did it to me all over again.

This stuff continued all the rest of the summer, like we were in some kind of time warp where nothing ever changed, and, in between the morbid sexual encounters, while I craved her like cherry pie, she discussed Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, and other Imagist poets. One night, when she had literally caught me with my pants down, she said, "I guess we've done everything else. Would you like to fuck me up the ass?"

I was a little taken aback, thinking about E. coli and considering what other gentlemen callers had paid visits to her derriere on lazy summer afternoons. After a long pause, I blurted out, "No, no, I'm not a backdoor man."

Finally, praise Jesus, fall semester kicked in. I always kept my dorm room door unlocked, it was a bad habit of mine. Sometimes the door would swing open, and it would be Rosemary, laundry basket in hand, and it was strange, because I knew she didn't live in the dormitory, and something funny was up. She would put the basket down, come over to where I was sitting or lying, pull down my pants, and start fondling me. As soon as I started grabbing at her, she would get up and leave. Maybe thirty minutes later, the door would mysteriously open like my room was a haunted house, and the same thing would happen. As soon as I showed interest, she'd abscond with her laundry. Thirty minutes later, she'd be back again. One day she got carried away and broke the rules; when she had my pants down, she put it in her mouth, and, since she'd gotten me so frustrated, I put on quite a show. When it was over, I got my revenge by acting like I'd either passed out or just fallen asleep, and I lay there with my eyes closed, breathing like I'd retreated into dreamland, and eventually she said goodbye to my corpse and left.

After a couple more months of this, I guess, using her female intuition, she got the idea that I was getting sick of this sideshow, where I knew nothing about her, and all I wanted was personal intimacy, and all she wanted was personal space.

Arriving at my dorm room one sad Saturday afternoon, instead of starting in with the sexy stuff, after stroking my hair and gazing deep into my eyes, in the most heartfelt tone imaginable, she said, "Once upon a time, when I was a little girl, I had this blue book of fairy tales, and my mother would read it to me, and whenever I got upset about anything, all I had to do was take out the blue book, and I felt better, because I knew everything was going to be all right." She gripped my hand. "You know, Lucas, you're just like that blue book."

I stood up and applauded. "I think I'm going to nominate you for an Academy Award."

After this anticlimax, her visits grew few and far between, and I longed for her, remembering that time we listened together to the Bach Goldberg Variations playing on some classical music station and the feel of her hands. One night, getting agitated about a physical chemistry exam, because I just had to get 100, even a 97 wouldn't be good enough for the likes of me, I couldn't sleep, and in the morning, on a whim, I looked up her name in the Oberlin white pages, not expecting to find anything, because maybe she'd even been lying about her last name, but there it was for all the world to see. Feeling groggy, I took the marathon walk to her address, and it appeared like she owned a house, and it looked like a picture you'd find in *Good Housekeeping*. I left an anonymous note on the windshield of her car parked in the garage which said, **See you soon.**

I didn't see Rosemary for days, and, since my exam had gone well, when I woke up one morning, I decided to take a second midnight trek, right during broad daylight. When I got on over there, I got up all my nerve and rapped on the door, thinking about that ghostly knocker in *A Christmas Carol*. Rosemary opened it, smiling, not looking the least bit surprised. "Oh, it's you. I got your note. Long time, no see." She led me through the living room. "I want you to meet my son Theodore. He's two and a half."

It was shocking to find out that she had a child, because who was taking care of him while she pranced around Oberlin like a show pony, and she didn't exactly seem like the domestic type. I did my usual kid routine, making bubbly sounds, smiling, barking, meowing, quacking, and doing a dance. At first, Theodore only stared. Rosemary said, "He's a little immature." Finally, I got him laughing by jiggling my key chain. "You like my keys?" "Like my keys," he said.

For the first time, I noticed a diamond ring on Rosemary's finger, which was large, but not quite as big as the Ritz. "By the way, are you married or something?"

"Didn't you know?"

"Well, you didn't exactly tell me. Where is he, if I might be so bold as to ask?"

"Don't worry about it. He's at work. He's an engineer. He won't be home for hours. But I think it's time he learned something."

My heart thumped. "What you mean by that?"

"I didn't mean anything. What do you think I meant?"

"How old are you anyway, do you at least want to tell me that?"

"I already told you, twenty-six, a long time ago, in the science library, but I guess you were paying attention to something else."

She made me a turkey sandwich with mustard and handed it to me with an ice-cold 7-Up and some potato chips. "I'm going to have to change Theodore's diapers." She stood him up on a changing table and pulled everything off. While he stood there, she kissed his cheek. "My oh my, what a handsome face you have." She stroked his arms. "What a handsome body you have." She reached between his legs. "What a handsome penis you have." When she was done, I thought about the exchange Little Red Riding Hood had had with the Big Bad Wolf, and then, for the first time, it popped into my head that maybe there really was something wrong with her.

After she powdered him and put on fresh diapers, we all went into the bedroom and watched the Flintstones on color TV, and then Rosemary tried to pull down my pants. After a brief struggle, I pried her hands off my zipper. "Just what do you think you're doing? I'm not going perform some unnatural act right in front of him."

She smiled knowingly. “Theodore has to learn that Mommy has many friends.” After a while, she got me between the legs through my trousers and started stroking me, and Theodore stared, and I yanked her hand off, and for a second she wouldn’t let go.

Just when I was thinking about telling her I was late for a dental appointment, not knowing exactly what she had in mind, whether it would be ultra-modern oral sex or good old-fashioned intercourse, or maybe she might want me to give her spanking, which might really confuse her son Theodore, I heard a sound coming from outside the window. “What’s that?”

“Oh, it’s probably just the wind.”

I ran to the window and pulled aside the shade. A car was pulling up in the driveway. “I thought you said your husband wouldn’t be back for hours.”

She had a strange smile on her face. “Oh, don’t worry about it.”

Luckily, I still had my trousers on. I grabbed my running shoes and socks and ran through the living room and out the front door and down the steps. It was like I was in a grade B movie. For some reason, I was feeling this horrible betrayal and tears were leaking out of my eyes. This was crazy, I mean, hadn’t we already sort of broken up? I wasn’t sure. Sylvia came to mind. She was a nice girl with nice red hair. Maybe she could’ve even liked me, who knows. Well, that door had closed. How was I going to deal without my weekly – or perhaps fortnightly – fix of that sugary drug named Rosemary? I was one lonesome dude, let me tell you, and, at least when I was with her, that physical contact made my darkness go away. No, no more, I’d made up my mind. As I hurried barefoot down the sidewalk clutching my running shoes and socks, that old Doors’ song floated into my head.

When everybody's tryin' to sleep

I'm somewhere making my midnight creep

Yes in the morning when the rooster crow

Something tell me I got to go

They take me to the doctor shot full o' holes

Nurse cried, please save the soul.

I am a back door man

I am a back door man

Yes, I know, I know, I slipped out the front door, not the back one, whatever, a mere technicality, because in nature there is no 'back' or 'front', as Rosemary might have told you as she stripped you, paraphrasing Kant or Hegel or somebody.

The End