

Fur

Bill was weird because he lined the walls, ceiling and floor of his entire apartment with long haired, synthetic, brown fur. It had to be synthetic because there was no animal with hair that long which was also legal to skin and use to make upholstery. He special-ordered it from a textile factory in Green Bay Wisconsin, insisting it be soft. He didn't want to know the specifics of how they made it and didn't mind paying a hundred thousand dollars to have it produced, shipped and installed. They said he was not only weird, but incredibly stupid. He could have used that money to put a down payment on a house.

“Why? I don't want to get married and raise children. I saved up for fur walls and I'm going to have fur walls,” he said to Harvey and Patricia, his twenty-something next door neighbors. “Needless to say, you two can still hang out, but you have to smoke your cigarettes outside from now on. Fur traps odor worse than sheetrock.”

They didn't have a problem with that. They liked hanging out because he shared his pot and watched the Simpsons every day at five. They loved free pot and the Simpsons and he liked spending time with real human beings. He was a telemarketer and spent most of his time alone in a cubicle.

“Why fur?” Patricia asked.

“It feels good to brush up against it. Besides, check out the atmosphere. When you're in my apartment, you know you're somewhere special. You won't find a room like this anywhere else on Earth. Salvador Dali would be in awe,” he scratched his nuts and handed Patricia his half smoked joint simultaneously. She rolled her eyes and tried not to notice how well defined they were in his silky Bermuda shorts as he was clearly

enjoying the day commando. He was forty-five and balding with gray hair and therefore, gross. He had a habit of scratching his nuts in front of her and she wondered if it was a primal thing and his inner cave man was trying to alert her to his dominance. In modern human terms, Harvey was clearly the alpha, because if they were cavemen, he was the older, more experienced survivor. She loved getting stoned and thinking about this kind of thing. In modern times people who are weak and really shouldn't have survived find ways of making more money than those who are truly strong. It's as if all the human animals have been working this entire time to keep everyone alive even if they didn't deserve it. She cast him another glance when he didn't know she was looking. She checked out his dry patch of grey chest hair, revealed because his plaid snap shirt was always unbuttoned, maybe another sign his caveman was trying to snake her from Harvey. She studied his face as he got pulled into the Simpsons, now oblivious to everything else in the room. Men were weird. Bill always had a lost look in his eyes and smelled like pickles. She looked at his bony body. This man made no attempt whatsoever to improve himself. Her Harvey worked out three days a week. Still, she looked at his spaced-out eyes. If they suddenly became clear he could be just as good looking as any man. The fact that he had the clearest blue eyes she'd ever seen also meant he might be more gorgeous. All men needed was their own strength, but there is no way to explain that to Bill. If a man doesn't have it, he doesn't have it. Now the shape, texture and style of his hanging balls started to form inside her head. She looked away quickly and invested herself in the Simpsons.

Harvey picked up the remote and turned on the T.V., which was a flat screen that now appeared to be emerging from within the fur. The Simpsons began their day on the

couch. He took a hit off the joint and attached it to a roach clip, leaving it to smolder in the ash tray. "I thought we couldn't smoke in here."

"Pot's okay. It doesn't cause the same kind of stink as cigarettes," Bill answered annoyed. There's no talking during the Simpsons.

They sat silently and watched Homer chase Bart around the room, trying to murder his own first-born son. Harvey wondered if Bart would grow up to be a sadomasochist. Not many fathers choke their sons in real life. The Simpsons, as far as he was concerned, was the best bullshit ever written. There's no way social services would allow that kid to stay in a house where his father choked him and set something on fire every week, yet the show was the longest running sit-com in history. He looked over at Patricia while she was looking at Bill's face and chest. From his point of view, because of her puzzled facial expression, she was working through it in her mind and trying to figure out why everything in this apartment was covered in brown fur. He looked down at her breasts, then looked away quickly. He didn't want to get turned on while the Simpsons were on. He was definitely going to fuck her soon. He began to plan it in his head. The second the Simpsons were over they would get up, hand in hand and walk back to their own apartment. When the door was shut behind them he would lock it and pull her clothes off quickly without saying anything, then pull out his dick and stick it in her and fuck her against the door. He changed the subject in his brain again. He felt stupid about constantly fantasizing. Besides, he really loved her. Instead of thinking about sex, what about when he gets home from work and she made cookies? Or when he's watching T.V. and she doesn't like the show so she lays her head on his shoulder and sleeps? Or when she pushes him out of bed on Saturday and says, "go cut the grass," then rolls over and

goes back to sleep? For some reason it's cute when she tells him to do those things. He wasn't into being controlled, but he liked that she did it, otherwise he probably wouldn't cut the grass.

Patricia, quite significantly stoned, reached towards the fur covered coffee table to grab the joint on the ash tray and accidentally tipped over the glass of red drink. Bill never told them what the red drink was, but he always had plenty. Now it was on the new furry table. Bill jumped off the couch, which he also had reupholstered with the same fur, and ran to the closet. He opened the furry door and pulled out a wet/dry vac. "Patricia, what the hell?" He frantically tried to clean it, but the fur had already soaked up the moisture.

"I'm sorry Bill. You really should have spill proof cups in here," she barely apologized, almost catatonic from the smoke.

"Damn it," he turned off the vac, "it's already in it. I'm going to get ants." Harvey picked up the joint and took a hit, laughing inside his head. Bill muted the T.V. much to their chagrin. "I'm sorry guys, but this isn't going to work. My place isn't right for hanging out anymore."

Patricia felt bad and annoyed at the same time. "I thought this was going to be a party house."

"Just spray some Windex on it bro. There's no way you go the whole life of the upholstery without staining anything," Harvey added.

"Yeah, but I just got it and it's still posh," scratching his bald spot.

"Let's finish the show at least," Harvey begged. Bill relented. He wanted them out, but he understood the code of the Simpsons. It was sacred. You watch every episode

all the way through even if you've seen it a hundred times. He forgot about them for a second and went down the vortex. *Were the Simpsons programming us? What sit-com lasts over twenty-five years? They're most definitely anti-establishment. What if they were creating a new establishment? Why can't we stop watching it? I'm forty-five years old and still watching a cartoon. Am I a tele-marketer because it's a good job for a pot smoker? Am I a pot smoker because the Simpsons told me it's the right thing to do? Why am I hanging out with these kids? Why am I not married? Oh my God. I lined my apartment with fur. I'm not an artist. I'm a loser who wastes his money. I'm a useless, crazy burn out.* Bill began to weep.

Patricia felt the pain crawl into her heart. It didn't take over, but lay there gently. She got up and stood next to him, scanning to see if a hug was needed. Harvey reflexively looked at her butt, then back to the Simpsons. "Bill, it's only Kool-Aid."

"It's not Kool-Aid and that's not why I'm crying," he stormed into his bedroom and slammed the door. It didn't make a sound because of all the fur.

She sat back down. Code of the Simpsons. Harvey caressed her leg. She took his hand and squeezed. "We can't hang out here anymore."

"Cool," but he wasn't leaving yet. Code of the Simpsons. Bill's problems were his own. It wasn't that Harvey didn't care, but...oh wait, he didn't care. He wasn't compassionless. Bill was a grown man and the way he looked at it if he could take care of his own emotions, Bill could take care of his.

Bill fell onto his furry full-size bed. He had them make a blanket and pillow cases out of the material. He looked up at himself in the mirror on the ceiling. His eyes were blurry from the tears so he looked like a bear's taint. He didn't want to see that so he

closed his eyes and let his mind run. *What the hell am I doing? I spent all my money on fur. I could have gone on a killer vacation. What's the point of a vacation? If women don't want me here, they're not going to want me on a tropical island? What do I want? I want to party and get laid, but I can't afford the mess they'll make. It's too easy to ruin the upholstery. What the hell do I care? I'm a telemarketer who sells shoes over the phone. Oh my God, I'm a shoe salesman. I wanted to be an artist. I learned to paint in college but quit. Now I can't because I don't want to get paint on my walls. I have no friends. Those two aren't my friends. They come over here for my cable and pot. Why am I still smoking pot? I'm a grown man. I should figure out if the Simpsons really did lead me to this. I should write a book about it so other people can avoid the trap. I should quit all substance. I should find a place to sell my fur. I might get half the money back. No. Screw that. I'm standing my ground. I think it's interesting and fun, and if I think that so will somebody else because I'm human and they're human.*

The phone rang. Bill knew who it was before he answered it. Glenn from work was calling him in tomorrow. He didn't fight back. He composed himself and answered the phone. Glenn would have no idea he was talking to a man who was crying amidst a pile of fur. He would think Bill was a good soldier for always saying yes. Bill thought himself weak for never saying no. He hung up and drifted off to sleep.

Harvey and Patricia watched the rest of the show, then never came back. They invested in the Simpson's box set, then began watching four episodes a day from the beginning of season one. Their relationship didn't make it through season twenty.

None of them noticed the kitchen fur was burning. Patricia and Harvey left after the show without saying goodbye, but Bill...he lost some of the fur in the kitchen

because it didn't really burn, but only singed. That was one of the nice things about a fur lined apartment. It was more or less fireproof. It would burn in a few inches then go out. becoming plastic. Bill woke up feeling sober with dry nap mouth. He cooked himself a cheese omelet, watched an episode of Star Trek TNG, went to bed without showering, then got up in the morning, went to work and watched the Simpsons alone at five.