

JAYCUP SINCLARE

“I’m going down to the corner to get a pizza. What would you like?”

“Anything.” Mom said. “Why don’t you go down Antonio’s they make the best pizza.”

“I know Mom. That’s where I was going to go. When I get back maybe we can watch a movie together”

I slipped on my plaid orange and brown blazer. I stepped out the door. I am a student. I work at the video store. This is the first night off in the last two weeks. My mom and I live together. I’m all she has.

The air is warm. I question the blazer, but momma thinks it makes me look nice. It’s early fall. The leaves are turning. Some are falling but not many. Someone yells at me from behind. I turn. It’s Eddie Rollings. Eddie has Tootie under his arm and is dragging her along like a little girl drags a Raggedy Ann doll.

Eddie’s claimed he bagged every girl in our high school senior class. I doubt it. Because if he was such a lover why would he hang out with Tootie Moore.

They are followed by Lucy and Ben. These two walk hand in hand. Lucy is a tall girl with exaggerated proportions. When she was in the ninth grade something happened between her and a senior. It was big gossip. Everyone started to call her Loosey. I still call her Pat.

Ben, that’s not his real name either. It’s Ken. He looks like Ben Garzaria on the old TV shows. Just like him.

They over take me.

“Where you going Chunk?”

“I’m going down to Antonio’s. I’m getting a pizza for me and mom.”

“Why don’t you go with us?” Lucy asked. “We’re going to the Bounced Check, have a few brews. Maybe a couple laughs. Come on, it will be fun.”

“Just a minute. I’d better tell my mom. See if it’s OK.”

“Well, OK” Eddie said with a mocking laugh. “but don’t expect us to wait very long.” Tootie poked Eddie just like a married couple. I ran back to the house and told mom.

“Go out with your friends.” My mom said. “Have some fun. All you do is work. Meet a girl. Make me a grandma.” I blushed. I was glad my friends were not near to hear what my mother had said. I hooked my blazer near the door.

“It’s too warm out Mom.” I said as I hurried out the door. Eddie and the others were a half block away and walking. I ran to catch up.

Tootie was a little girl. Not over five foot tall and thin as Christmas tree tinsel. She looked headless with Eddie’s grip on her neck. Lucy wore short shorts. They were so short I had to look twice to see if anything was exposed. Well, may be three or four times.

I walked behind the two couples. I felt like part of the group. They talked back and forth between each other as a paced behind.

JAYCUP SINCLARE

There was a lot of people at the The Bounced Check. We found a table for four. I stood for a few minutes until I could find a chair. I squeezed it in between Lucy and Tootie. I bought the first round. And the second. I still had a half a glass when they ordered the third. I declined.

I don't usually drink much beer and my bladder felt it. I was on my way back to my friends when I noticed a girl sitting alone at a corner table. She really didn't look up much. She placed her full red lips around a straw and sipped a pink drink. I know that feeling. All alone in a crowded room. I walked over and said "Hi, Come here much?"

Dorky line. I know that now. I knew it the moment it came out. She glanced up and looked back at her drink. When she saw me looking at her I had to turn away, quickly.

"No, Do you?"

"No, First time." I confessed.

"First time for me too." She looked up again.

"I think my friends brought me here to buy them drinks."

"Did you?"

"Yes, They hooked me for drinks three times."

"That's a shame. Tell you what. Let me buy you a drink. What will you have?"

"If you are trying to get me drunk so you can take advantage of me, I have to warn you. I don't drink much, so it wouldn't take very much." I can't believe I just said that.

She laughed. Not just a little but almost a roar. When she regained herself she shifted in her seat. She uncrossed her legs and recrossed them the other way. I couldn't actually see the legs under the table, but I knew.

"Nothing like that is going to happen tonight. I assure you." She laughed a little more. "Maybe an other time." She smiled and laughed again.

She put her purse on the table and withdrew a smaller money purse. She snapped it open. She had small delicate hands with long painted nails.

"Don't just stand there. Sit down." She said. She pulled out a ten and placed it on the table.

"When this is gone, you're gone, too. OK." I nodded.

I talked about myself. I had little anecdotes, funny little stories things that happen at work. Then I moved on to school. When that ran out I started in on my high school days. Golly after a few beers my tongue surely opened up.

"I remember Mr. Wilson. He had that big bald spot on the back of his head." She pulled her hand over her head and drew a big circle. "It looked like a question mark. It was funny. You remember? I laugh every time I think about it."

I looked at her. Mr. Wilson taught at our school for only a year or two. I hadn't looked at her much before. I didn't look at her long. I guess it's a shy thing. I never looked people in the face, couldn't. Time had passed and the ten was nearly gone.

JAYCUP SINCLARE

“I’m sorry. I think we went to school together, but, but I ... Don’t remember you. What did you say your name was again?” She shifted in her chair. I think she uncrossed and recrossed her legs again. She looked out across the bar.

“You know how it is when you are a wall flower. No one notices you.”

“They call me Chunk.”

“I know.”

“What did they call you?”

“They called me a lot of different things.”

“What do they call you now? What is your name?” I was looking at her. Right in the face.

“My name is Clare, Clare Jaycupson.” She seemed quite nervous. For some reason, I could hear Mrs. Dobbs calling roll call. Pope, Darline. Rollings, Edward. Sinclare, Jaycup. My heart stopped in mid stride. I let the air out of my lungs but forgot to draw more back in. I remembered her/him now. She reached out to touch my hand. I drew it back.

“Please don’t. I’m not contagious. I just went to see my parents. Dad got dramatic and mom was weepy. I expected one of those prodigal son things.” I let her touch my hand. She squeezed it. I squeezed back.

“Going through this thing is hard enough as it is. I’m almost there. Just the final snip. I’ve lived like this ever sense we graduated and I left town. Jay is gone. He really is. It’s Clare now.”

Even with the help of the tongue loosener, I couldn’t say anything.

“Hey, the ten is gone.” I guess I could talk.

“It was good to see you and I had a great time.” She let go of my hand.

“You know I did too. Wall flower.” I started to get up.

“Don’t run right over there and tell them. Please. Some people don’t understand.”

“I don’t understand but I can do that. I’ll be glad to.”

“Will I see you again?”

“No. Not if I see you first. Hey, it’s a joke.” I tried to laugh it off. “I had a good time. Really, I just don’t come in here much.”

“Like I said, neither do I.”

I went back and sat with my friends. I looked over toward her table. She was looking down and sipping her drink.

“What’s the matter buddy, strike out?” Eddie said.

“No” I said casually. “She just isn’t my type.”

“She’s not your type? Are you blind? ZA ZA ZING!” He said as he slid his chair back from the table. “Let a pro show you how it’s done. If a girl will talk to you for five minutes, imagine what she’ll do with me.”

“Listen Eddie. Don’t go over there.” I put my hands out, palms up in a push motion. I begged. “She’s really not your type either.”

JAYCUP SINCLARE

“What are you talking about. She’s gorgeous. I tell you anything that wears a skirt like that, is my type.” He stood. Tootie grabbed for his arm.

“If you so much as go over there you aren’t fucking me tonight.”

“So, I may never want to fuck you again.” He strutted toward the table in the corner like a rooster that just climbed off the back of a hen.

“There he goes.” Lucy said. “Poor girl doesn’t know what he lacks at one end he tries to make up with his ego.”

“I hear he will pester a girl until she gives in just so he’ll go away.” Ben said. “I even heard he chased Carla Smite until she gave in. She was a virgin.” I said nothing. I looked over to the table in the corner. I was beginning to feel sick to my stomach. It wasn’t the beer. Eddie was swinging his arms as he spoke.

“I know exactly what he is going to say. He says it to me at least once a week. Wanna sin, Lucy?”

“I though he liked me.” Tootie said sadly. I got up to leave. Lucy put her hand on my arm and pulled me back.

“Who is she?” Lucy asked.

“A new girl in town.” I said. Sorta the truth.

“What’s her name.” Tootie said. She wiped a tear from her eye.

“I ... I ... I’ve got to go home.” I said.

“Au, Come on Chunk. You don’t have to be that way.” Lucy was kinda attractive, anyway, I thought so. When she tried the girl charm thing, I guess.

“Her name is Clare.”

“Do you want to sin, Clare?” Ben said mockingly. I twisted quickly and looked at the table in the corner. I took a deep breath. Lucy looked over at the table where Eddie was still talking with his hands. Lucy leaned a little bit to see around Eddie. She put her hand over her mouth. She looked at me. She looked at Tootie. She looked at Ben.

“Say that again.”

“What?” Ben asked.

“Do you want to blah blah blah,”

“OK” Ben said. “Do you want to sin, Clare?” Lucy let out all her air. She took a deep breath.

“I knew it.” Lucy slipped over one seat. She leaned over to where Tootie sat and whispered.

“OH, NO.” She sat back in her chair. “No no no.”

“Yes Yes Yes. Look at her. How about it Chunk. Who is she? Is she who I think she is?”

“I’ve got to go home now.” The beer was going to come up now for sure. I put my hand over my stomach.

“You know don’t you? I’m right ain’t I?”

“I’ve got to go home now. Look I ... I promised.”

“What is going on?” Ben demanded.

JAYCUP SINCLARE

“Look at that girl. Don’t you recognize her?” Lucy leaned over and whispered into Ben’s ear. Tootie stared as Eddie pulled out all the stops. She was snuffing and gasping air. Ben started to laugh.

“Some body has got to stop him.”

“Not me. This is too good.” Ben was laughing out of his chair.

“I tried to stop him. He didn’t listen to me. You all saw that. I promised.” I walked out the door.

Eddie left town. We never saw him again.

Tootie found a new boyfriend. Good for her.

Ken married Pat. I got an invitation.

I go back to the Bounced Check every weekend.

That upset stomach doesn’t go away.

The End