

Sheets Toes Beer

by Angela Kubinec

The name Tula means strength. Tula was a girl I knew during my freshman year of high school. She was plain, and boyish, and heavily round. She was famous in and out of school for her hatred of attending, as was I. From time to time, we would ditch school together, although I would not describe us as friends. She was from a Greek neighborhood, and I was from a trailer park. Enough said.

Tula was also known for her access to drugs. She actually had a physician who prescribed amphetamines for her weight problem, and tranquilizers for her nerves. Tula insisted that anyone could do it; all you had to do was cry and look nervous to get the tranquilizers. She had no tips about how my 105 pound ass was supposed to score amphetamines.

One morning, free again from the desire to learn, we left our respective groups on the sidewalk and headed toward her boyfriend's empty apartment. She had her own key, and insisted he would be at work all day, and would not mind us being there when he was away. We bought cigarettes and beer at the Quick Stop, which in 1972 was not all that difficult for a fourteen- and a sixteen-year-old to do.

We went up a rickety set of wooden stairs and opened the door to a room that was dim from the blankets over the windows, and had a large fuel oil heater in the middle of the floor. It was off, we were cold, but we sat on the sofa and smoked, drank our beer, and stole a little dope from her boyfriend. We listened to his stereo. Without a television and knowing little about one another, we got bored.

We were fairly high, and listening to Elton John's *Mellow*. It's a song about sheets, toes, beer, and slow smooth rocking. Tula asked me if I wanted to go into her boyfriend's bedroom and do something that I did not understand how two girls could accomplish. So I asked. Tula might have had a strong personality, but she had the right amount of inhibition to be frustrated with me and unable to

Available online at [«http://fictionaut.com/stories/angela-kubinec/sheets-toes-beer»](http://fictionaut.com/stories/angela-kubinec/sheets-toes-beer)

Copyright © 2010 Angela Kubinec. All rights reserved.

clarify her request as well. I will never forget her standing next to the cold heater, shadowing the bedroom doorway, with one hand on her hip, scowling at me as if I were the stupidest girl in the world.

Indeed I was stupid, because I knew what Elton was singing about, and I understood the word she was saying, but in my stupor I could not put the whole thing together. As my years in school went on, there were similar situations, but it took a friendship with a gay man before I could grasp what was going on with me and these strange women. I had never been put off by their advances, but I could never quite figure out what they wanted, or why they wanted it from me.

So I have some odd regret about Tula, who tried so hard in her blunt way. She didn't get into me as she had hoped, but she did push a song into my head that has never completely left. I keep *Mellow* close at hand most of the time, and when I hear it, I am carried back to a cheap apartment full of adolescent misunderstanding and misdirection. I don't listen to it often, because I don't really have to, but when I do, I sing along loudly and laugh, knowing I will be actively haunted for days to come.

