

The Coach

by Daniel Harris

We sat in the weight room. The coach walked in with his clipboard and stood until we were quiet.

—Listen up. Friday afternoon we swim the prelims for the state meet. This is the first freshman team I've taken to state. I don't want any of you men to even think about touching your weenie. I don't want your girlfriends touching your weenie. No buggery or pillow humping. Don't even think about it.

There was a nervous laugh among the group.

I want you horny and mean. We're going to do a full weight workout. I want you too tired to even *think* about your pecker.

Men? We were fourteen year olds, but to be called men by a coach who usually called us loser short dicks was new, even complementary in a backhanded way.

The weight workout was a killer. We all left the weight room sore and tired.

The next day's workout in the pool was so easy we thought the coach had lost his marbles. No intervals, no pyramids, just an easy mile swim at 50% effort.

The day before the prelims we practiced starts and did some short interval workouts.

The men's swim team practiced nude. Modesty, as is usual today, was non-existent. Only Larry, our freestyle sprinter had a package that looked like a mature man. He also shaved every day. Rumor had it that he was having sex with both his girlfriends. We had a vague idea of what that meant, sex education being wild stories passed among peers. The female pudendum was *terra incognita*. It wasn't even clear that women wanted sex or knew that your dick had two states, soft and hard. We had no knowledge of female sexual anatomy; female desire, or even that woman wanted anything beyond car rides to free burgers and sodas. Hollywood films were unclear to us on the role women played besides being very

desirable. Not being able to drive, there was no hope of finding out about girls.

After the prelims, only Larry qualified for individual events. Our two relay teams, freestyle and medley, qualified, but only because of Larry's efforts as our anchorman. The finals were Saturday afternoon.

Larry took a first in the 50 freestyle, a second in the 100 freestyle. He didn't have it for the relays. Our relay teams took a fifth in the medley relay and a fourth in the freestyle relay. We had qualified first in both.

After the meet on the bus back to our school the coach berated Larry.

—You know why you didn't have it? he said with his face a millimeter from Larry's.

Larry didn't answer.

—Because you're a jerk-off. You weren't hungry. You lost your manhood. You were a girl. You're not a man; you're a fag, a weenie-whacking fag.

Larry sat and took the coach's rage.

The remainder of the bus ride was like a funeral cortege.

Larry never swam for us again. He changed schools. He won an NCAA championship and an Olympic medal in swimming. He had four children, all elite swimmers.

