

Upstairs on Montague Street

by Doug Shiloh

Benton showed her his old room, a shrine of old posters and records. But it had been cleaned out, made to look like a guest room.

“Kiss me,” Benton said. “April.”

“That was just a name, so don't get any ideas.”

“April.”

“Don't call me that,” she said.

April. He had found a button, one that could invade or irritate — it touched a nerve; what he was wanting was to touch that nerve and show her he knew she had sensitivity; that no matter what a person did for a living, or no matter what happened to a person, they were still a person underneath the open wounds, scars and scabs. Calling her April meant Benton understood this lonely coil and she didn't need to be alone.

“April,” he whispered. He had found her own Rosetta Stone. He had found that the Wizard was just a sideshow man from Kansas.

She threw the punch, but he ducked back, and her fist merely clipped him on the shoulder. He smiled; he wasn't slow, as his high school track coach insisted — Benton was deliberate. Her other hand knocked him on the jaw.

“You asked for that. What did I say?”

He touched his stinging jaw. “Jeesh.”

“I'll go home now, alone, if you call me that name again. It's not my name. It's just a name.”

“All right, all right,” he mumbled. What did she expect, using a name — that name, a name out of a calendar, a yearbook? She was ready to punch him again. OK. He would think of her as April, if he could not say it. But he also liked her professional name. But was April her real name? A middle name? Did it matter? He decided not. “I won't, and I'm sorry.”

“OK.”

“But at least kiss me.”

She was annoyed. It was Christmas, her body language said. It was supposed to be turkey, pie, carols, visiting his parents in Springfield, a bottle of perfume, a sweater, maybe earrings — not sex. She thought Benton was, after all, like every other man.

“Please, Honeydew.”

She sighed, closed her eyes, cleared her mind, and April had left her body: she punched the clock. When Benton called her Honeydew, he evoked the pro in her. So she didn't just kiss Benton — with the flip of that internal switch she changed and gave him what seemed was going to be the \$100 ride. Her tongue searched his lonely soul while her hands touched his shoulders, but quickly moved to his belly and rubbed the front of his fly. For the price of admission, she threw in a few whispered, desperate moans. “Oh, baby. Y-es. So big and so str-ong. Those muscles. Mmm. Yes. Ben, I want you so bad. Yes.”

“Everything's all packed downstairs,” Irma, his mother, said, standing in the door way.

Benton stood with his eyes closed, locked in full thrill, his mind humming like the last note of an electric guitar solo. April stepped away, with head down touching the corners of her mouth. She straightened her skirt and blouse.

“What, Mom?”

“Ben, I said everything's downstairs, if you want to look at it. In the basement.”

“What is?” Benton asked, his head swimming.

Irma said, “Why don't you go downstairs and visit with your father, dear. You did come to visit us, right?”

“Yes. ”

“We'll be down in a minute,” Irma said.

THE END

