

Betrayal

by Jerry Ratch

My brother Herb married his high school sweetheart right after completing college. This was a girl named Beryl, whom he'd met originally in Mr. Reinert's marching band at York High School in Elmhurst. I remember one day in particular in the middle of the summer — I was pretty young still, this had to have been just before I contracted polio when I could still normally do everything like the rest of the kids in the neighborhood. I came running home from playing baseball across the street in Andy's back yard, and unexpectedly found my brother in bed with Beryl. When I came into his bedroom, he grabbed hold of me by the arms and backed me right out of the bedroom while his erect penis, covered by a clear-colored see-through condom, waved before him. He backed me into the bathroom and warned me — If I ever said anything to mom or dad, he would kill me.

Beryl went on to become his first wife after he had finished school at Northwestern and took a job as a chemical engineer with Texaco out in a nearby town called Lockport. I think that was it. They rented a house out there, and immediately Beryl became pregnant and produced a daughter they named Terri.

On my second trip home from the University of Illinois down state in Urbana, it was during our break between semesters, I remember it was a particularly freezing cold and miserable January. I had a date with Lisa. We both wanted to have sex, and both of us knew it. We'd been sending steamy letters back and forth between Lombard and Urbana. She had the exact day planned that we were going to do it. I could barely keep my mind on my final exams, and totally blew my grade in German altogether, ending up with a "D." I called my brother from school and made an arrangement to use his house in Lockport, so that nothing would interfere with this rendezvous with Lisa.

"You sly dog," I remember my brother saying. He was very encouraging. During his fraternity days with A.T.O. at Northwestern,

he'd been a hell of a swinger, often driving all the way down to the whorehouses in Indiana in the '55 Oldsmobile my dad had given him, a car they came to label the "Barfmobile," because of all the whoring and boozing and resultant sickness that car took from his frat-rat brothers.

It was bitter cold out that night when I picked up Lisa from her grandparents' house in Lombard. "Don't be out too late," her grandmother said at the door. She seemed very warm and inviting to me. She looked like everybody's grandmother, with her hair curled up in a white perm. She had an endearing heavy Swedish accent when she spoke.

A howling wind was tearing through the bleak landscape out of the north, sweeping down along Lake Michigan. No one in his right mind dared to go out on nights like this in the Midwest. It was a landscape unfit for normal human habitation under those circumstances. Nevertheless, there we were plowing our way out to Lockport on a narrow, windswept road, Lisa glued to my side, the heater and defroster going full blast in my '55 Chevy, trying desperately to keep up with the ice forming on the windshield. You could feel the static electricity in the frozen wasteland air. It hurt up inside your nostrils when you took a breath, it was so cold.

In bad weather like this, my right hand would get especially cold because of the lack of muscles, and I had to watch out for it. But tonight I was paying my hand no mind whatsoever. To me, I was like anybody else. Here was a normal eighteen year old on his way to getting laid for the first time. (This was normal, at eighteen, you ask? Don't be so jaded. Possibly this was considered normal.) As I drove out to my brother's house, my mind was racing in pure oxygen ahead of me. I had planned out everything in advance. My saintly brother had helped set me up with the perfect place to achieve the deflowering of this girl. I use the word "deflowering," for Lisa had insisted she was a virgin. That's what she'd said — a virgin — insisting on it over and over the first night I'd been out with her.

I was skeptical, of course. But I didn't care, I thought, whether she was or wasn't. What did it matter? I'd become amazingly goal-oriented. I was determined to lose my virginity, and not even a blizzard, if it came down to that, was going to put a stop to it. Herb's little brother was going to get deflowered that very night. My brother seemed to be especially proud of me, almost like a father.

When we got there, we started by making out on my brother's living room couch. The lights had been dimmed. My brother and his wife left wine out for us, and some beer. We drank everything in sight, and I had Lisa's clothes off before I knew it. This time she did not resist. I peeled off my own clothes and lifted her up, believe it or not. I don't even know how I did this, except she hung onto my neck for support. She was small and thin and very light. I carried her into my brother's bedroom and loaded her onto the bed. We never even stripped away the bedspread. I'd taken a condom along with me and ripped open the foil package with my teeth and rolled the condom down along the stiffness of my erection.

I nearly fell on top of the girl. It didn't take long. I got up on my elbows, and somehow between the two of us we maneuvered my penis inside her, and I remember thinking — Now what? I didn't know what you were supposed to do. Then I felt Lisa beginning to move underneath me, and I felt my penis slipping inside her a little further. I pulled back a little, then let myself slide forward, and that was how it began.

I remember little else, except that after some time I felt the pressure suddenly rushing forward inside of me, and it made me hesitate a little, but her insides seemed to grab hold of me, and I felt the sudden extreme thrill of the sensation of coming inside someone. Pools of sweat had built up between our bodies, and we were both laughing from all the sucking and squishing noises being made between us. And I felt tremendous, just tremendous. I felt like a man for a change. That was how I felt. I understood how it felt to be a man.

When I went into the bathroom, I pulled off the condom, stuck it under the tap, and filled it with water to be sure it wasn't leaking. Then Lisa said: "You'd better come back in here."

She had the ceiling light turned on and was standing completely naked next to the bed with her ample breasts hanging down, proudly pointing at a red spot in the center of the bedspread. "Your brother is going to kill us," she said. "I told you I was a virgin." Her breasts wobbled when she moved.

I couldn't believe what I was seeing at first.

"See?" she repeated, and she came up to me and stuck her breasts right under my ribcage, hooking her arms around my back. "I told you," she said. She looked up into my face with those weird half-oriental eyes, her lips parted for effect. "See? Now I'm not a virgin anymore, Jerry."

"We'd better leave a note for my brother," I laughed.

"I've got to use the bathroom," she said. "You find a piece of paper and tell them how sorry I was to get blood on their bedspread. I couldn't help it. We can buy them a new one." And she let out that breathy laughter of hers. With that laugh she could challenge the wind. She had the guts to do nearly anything.

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The following December when I returned for Christmas break from a semester out at UCLA, it was while I sat listening to Lisa in my car as she was breaking it off with me, that she explained how she had fooled me into believing that her menstrual blood was what I took for the blood of virginity, and that was why she had it planned for that night specifically, so that she could fool me into believing she was a virgin. "I can talk men into anything," she said. "I go into bars and twist any man I want around my finger. I put on my makeup and get dressed up, and I never get carded. I don't even carry an ID." She was seventeen years old, but she looked like she could easily pass for twenty-two or twenty-three.

In reality, she explained, she was anything but a virgin, from the age of thirteen on. She'd been gang-banged one time when she was fourteen in a field in Wheaton by, first her boyfriend, then he traded her to his buddies for a six-pack of beer. There'd been eight of them just on that night alone. They really tore her up inside, she said: You know? She looked at me while she said this, but it wasn't said in bitterness. She wasn't being mean. She went on through life as if to torture herself, as if it had been her fault somehow. Or it was her way imitating what her mother was, in order to be just like her.

She'd gone on to be almost a whore, not quite, but almost, like her mother. Currently, she told me as I stared out the window at the remnants of a cattail sticking out of a frozen pond of roadside ditch water, currently there was a farmer with a twelve inch dick she was seeing every weekend. She would meet him at a bar somewhere out in Western Illinois, near the campus of some small college near the Mississippi River. "The Peppermint Lounge," I remember her saying. "Boy, they sure know me out there." She laughed that throaty laugh of hers that I had honestly come to care for, and to love. "I can barely get all of it into me," she said, "he's so big." I felt the bitterness of my own bile rising up in my throat when she put it that way. I wanted to gag.

I felt numbed and couldn't say anything. I think I managed to say something like, "Please, Lisa, Please. Can we just do it one more time?" I was groveling. I hadn't had sex in the entire four long months I'd been out in California. I'd been staying true to my real love, my Lisa.

She refused and got out of the car. That was the last time I saw her until once when she was married and had two small kids, and I saw that glowing blond hair of hers flash by in a new red Corvette. But right now I sat in my silverpine green hopped-up '55 Chevy, staring for a long while at that cattail in the ditch. Finally I started up my car and slowly drove home in a daze.

Automatically I went across the street and got my old best friend Andy out of his house. He'd been asleep already. I waited for

him to put his clothes on and dragged him back to my house, into the kitchen. I don't know what hour it was, probably midnight. Under the bright kitchen light we finished off nearly a whole bottle of my father's chilled dark red Mogen David wine. My dad used to love to have a glass of that wine I remember, with a raw egg broken into it, so that you could see the yolk of the egg sliding down the inside of the glass of wine like the enormous yellow eyeball of some kind of slimy animal.

Andy and I were completely blitzed on that sweet dark wine, when my mother staggered into the kitchen in her sleeping gown, blinking under the bright overhead light.

"Jerry!" she scolded. "What are you two doing up at this hour? Get to bed, the both of you!"

"Go back to bed, Mom," I warned. "We're going to get drunk, right here." I stared up at her. "Otherwise we'll have to go out somewhere and get drunk. *Now go on back to bed!*" I was feeling a little on the mean side. I didn't care what I said, or to whom. She saw the resolve on my face.

"Jerry! What's wrong with you?"

"It's Lisa, Mom."

"Lisa?"

"Yeah," I said. "Lisa." That was all I said. There was something in the tone of my voice that made her turn around and go back to their bedroom.

"Oh," I heard her say. "Oh, dear." Then I heard her saying something to my father. "It's that Lisa girl."

"Lisa?" my father said. "Who's that?"

"Some girl!"

