

Let's Do It In the Mud

by Jerry Ratch

Then I got another letter, but this time it was from my friend Andy, warning me that he'd seen Miller riding around with Lynda, driving her grandparent's Dodge with Lynda sitting right up against his side, and his arm was around her.

I saw red. I went out and got Newton again, and we went back to the beer bar, but this time I got drunk with a purpose. This time we didn't go throwing ourselves into bushes. I got so drunk that Newton had to haul me back to my room with my toes dragging on the ground. I felt like the whole world had fallen out from under me. For the first time in my life, I felt betrayed, and the love that was inside of me turned into a rock that weighed me down.

"How could he?" I kept asking. Newton didn't have a clue what I was mumbling about, or whom.

"How could who?" he asked. "C'mon, Jerry, stand up. Get a hold of yourself."

I fell down in the street whenever Newton let go of me.

"How could Miller do this?" I asked. "How could he?"

"I thought you were in love with a girl named Lynda," said Newton. "Who in the hell is this Miller?"

"He's screwing her," I said.

"Oh," Newton said. "Oh, shit!" Newton let go of me now. I turned and slammed my hand into a red stop sign.

"Sonofabitch!" I yelled. "*Bastard!*" I screamed at the top of my lungs. I looked at Newton, who drew back a ways from me. "I'll get that fucker someday," I promised. "He'll get his. I'll get back at him."

"What are you talking about? You're not going to get back at anybody."

"That sonofabitch! He'll get his one day — that's all I know."

Before the end of the semester down at Urbana, I met this stunning red-haired girl named Judy (JAM), with the most creamy white skin I had ever seen, in one of my math classes, and to celebrate our mutual A's in math, we spent a long sex-filled night in a motel room before I left campus to come back up to Villa Park for summer break. The next thing I knew Judy showed up at my door in Villa Park, saying she was staying with a relative for the summer and working in an Old Town Art Fair in Chicago, and she wanted to see more of me.

One night I was parked with her in the back seat of her car out in front of my house. The windows were all steamed up, when suddenly Andy appeared, knocking desperately on the side window.

"Jerry, Jerry, you've got to get out of here! I just got this call from Lynda and she was raging mad. She knows everything."

"How did Lynda find out about Judy?"

"Well, Laura S might have mentioned it. Lynda's pretty good at wheedling stuff out of Laura. They've become real thick since you've been away at school. Or it could've been Miller. I wouldn't put it past him."

"Miller!" I said. "That little prick!"

"She said she's coming over here in five minutes and she's going to mess this girl up real bad. She was serious!"

"Who's this Lynda girl?" asked Judy.

"Oh, just some local girl I used to see."

"Uh-huh. You're quite the stud, aren't you, big boy? Come here, lover. Shut the window. I'm not ready to leave just yet."

"Jerry!" Andy pleaded. "Lynda asked me who you were with. She's furious. She said she's going to come over and cut this girl up real bad. You've got to get out of here right now. And she said she's still pregnant."

"Pregnant?" Judy sputtered. "You mean you got this local girl pregnant?"

Suddenly Judy was putting her top back on, and she threw me out of her car. She started up the motor, put it in gear, and off

she sped. I watched the red taillights of her 1958 Chevie disappearing down the darkened street, just as Lynda's grandparent's Dodge came careening around the other corner.

"She can't be still pregnant," I told Andy as we were standing there at the curb. "I haven't been with her since spring break. She told me she'd taken some pills that Miller got for her and she aborted. What the hell is going on?"

"She told Laura she's pregnant," Andy shrugged. "That's all I know."

Lynda pulled up to us at the curb. She hopped out and ran around the front of the car into the headlights. "Who was that you were with, in that car?"

I didn't say anything. Lynda pulled me toward her. She looked up into my face, because she was so short, sticking her breasts underneath my ribcage.

"You better tell me who you were with. I'm going to kill her."

There was a wild terrifying look in her eyes.

"I was just waiting here for you," I said.

"Yeah, right." Lynda cupped her hands behind my back, rubbing her breasts up and down my belly. "Because you're mine and you'd better know it," she said. "I don't share my men with nobody. C'mon, you're coming with me."

She opened the passenger door and pushed me in, then ran around to the driver's side. I looked out at Andy. We both shrugged. And Lynda took off down the street with a squeal of rubber. She drove out to a field nearby her grandparent's house in Lombard where there was a black pond of water. It was a small man-made lake near a construction site where they were building some expensive new homes, and there was a little island in the middle of it. It was pitch black out, only some stars in the sky, and it was quite hot out.

"Want to go swimming in the lake?" she asked. It was a dare, the way she said it. It wasn't like asking at all. This was a definite challenge.

"Sure," I said. "Okay." We both stripped off our clothes. When Lynda took off her top and let those big breasts out into the night air, you took notice. These were not something anyone could ignore.

Halfway to the island, in the middle of the black water of the tiny lake they'd dug, I began to feel warm jets of water. We swam toward the shore of the tiny dirt island in the middle of the man-made lake, and you could smell the tall ragweed that stood leaning over the water. Lynda was looking at me, I could feel her watching me with her weird, slightly slanting Swedish eyes that were almost oriental. Water streaked down and held the hair close to her head. Her flaxen hair shone in whatever light there was falling out of the hot summer night. Not a cloud now, though there had been heat lightning earlier, off on the horizon in some big piled-up clouds. Both of us naked, and not caring. I thought I understood then how she was.

I felt smug about being able to get laid any time I wanted now. I was growing blatant about it, cock-sure, and I couldn't wait to brag about this to the guys in our crowd. Especially to Miller! I was going to rub his nose in it.

The water so black it was like ink. The summer air was stultifying and astonishingly quiet in this brand new suburb-in-the-making, because a hot summer night around the city of Chicago normally meant sweat and lots of it, so much oppressive heat that your skin started to feel like you were reptiles in the sticky air. Everything would come and stick to you, small things like insects, bits of grass and small twigs. But in this new, man-made lake in the middle of nowhere, in black, churned-up soil twenty miles from the heart of Chicago, it was sultry and still and the black water felt cool against the naked body. So it was, with Lynda and me. It went better than I ever thought possible that summer. I thought I could trust her. I thought she was mine.

By the time we had gotten halfway to the island in the middle of the tiny lake, we were already warming up and the water was soothing to the skin, like a bath. And it was a thrill, as we neared the bank of the island in water that was still neck-high, to

feel the mud from the bottom between my toes. Lynda was only five foot two, and I was a full head above her.

We could feel the warm jets of the shallower waters beside the island as it lapped our bodies. Lynda turning toward me in the water, with her flaxen hair swept back away from her face. "Do you feel that?" she breathed.

"Do I feel what?"

"Let's do it in the mud," she said.

We slithered up onto the bank with the mud making a sucking, squishing noise, and lay there panting and alive like two muscles in the primal touch of night air, with the odor of the organic world around us.

I would remember this night. I was ecstatic. This I would remember, no matter what.

