

The Stalker

by Jerry Ratch

I found Marty sitting out on a neighbor's front porch across the street from his house, which was next door to mine. He was sort of crouched down, early one morning as I headed off to work at the paint factory down in West Berkeley. I wasn't absolutely sure that was him, so when I saw him there again that evening, I walked across the street.

"Marty? What are you doing?"

"Shh!" he shushed me. "Get down, out of sight."

"What's up?"

"Ginger," he said. And he drew a long face. "Someone is stalking her again. You know how she can be. It's not her fault, but I just got to do something. Get your head down. Shh!"

"You want a beer?" I asked.

"You got any Jack Daniels Black label left?"

We used to hang out at my basement window and sip Jack Daniels all the time, laughing our asses off. That was in the good old days. Not anymore, since men started sniffing after Ginger all the time. Ginger, how should I put it? — exuded some kind of natural, unusual sexuality. I didn't know what it was about her. Something. Men were attracted to it like animals. Well, most men. I have to admit, one time when I saw her out in her garden, with her sleeves rolled way up to her shoulders and these silver bracelets around her brown arms, there was just something about her thin body that exuded ... something. So, I could kind of see it, how it could happen.

I don't know what set Marty off this time though.

"Isn't that a pellet gun, Marty?"

"I just want to scare him off. I don't want to kill him."

"That's going to just piss him off, if you ask me. Why don't you come inside and have a nice stiff drink instead."

"No. this has gone on long enough."

"Does she know the guy?"

"I'm not absolutely certain."

“Did you see him, or anything?”

“Just a flash. Fucker ducked his head and ran off, the coward. He was peeking through the living room window when Ginger was taking off her clothes.”

“What did he look like?”

Marty sized me up. “About your height,” he said. He hefted his pellet rifle, swinging it around. I felt a wave of something bolt through me.

“Didn't really see that much. I'm going get his ass though, for sure, if I have to wait right here for the next thirty years. This has got to stop already. I'm getting pretty sick of it.”

