

# Couple Busting

*by* Meg Tuite

They were the kind of couple you met and then wished to hell you could get a reimbursement for, or at least a rebate on, after you got to know them. You could have kept your oversized mouth shut when you spied them sandwiched together on the curb. They were a volcanic abyss of unrestrained love with their hands every which way and you had to actually cross a damn street, vacate your brain, and say, "you two hellions are going to combust from all this torrid public defilement." Then you all laughed, of course, and you had to ask for their names, which even rankled of notoriety. Shale and Arist-e (short for Aristotle.) You have got to be kidding? You should have run at that point, but no, instead you talked up and down and all around until you were the life of their party and they just couldn't live without you.

So, next thing you know you were all having dinners and going out to clubs together, and you and your boyfriend, Bob, were now a real foursome with Shale and Arist-e. What the hell were you thinking? It's not like you and Bob weren't having a good enough time on your own, going to movies and having sporadic sex, but all that had freakishly changed. Whatever you had in your so-called relationship could never hold a fucking lit match to this sultry twosome. They called each other baby and pumpkin and were always holding hands and the heat that smoked out of them was dousing whatever fire you thought you once knew. You knew nothing, apparently.

Now, you and Bob were this frumpy, panicked couple that sat with plastered, sickened smiles on your faces across from these lavish lovers slathering each other with compliments and stories about all of the exotic places they've been and laughing a little too long at each other's jokes, when you and Bob could barely look at them, finding yourselves staring at spots above their exuberant hair and platinum smiles because you secretly despised their feverish

overdose. You wanted them to wrinkle and lose a few teeth right before your eyes. You called them hedonistic vermin and imagined their love blasting up into an inferno of hate. Maybe Shale found out that Arist-e was gay or he was having an affair with Shale's mother, because you were sure her mother was hot too. You'd have to comfort the two of them through their separation and the inevitable break-up without any possibility of a hideous, libidinous make-up.

And just when you thought it was time to move to another city, you and Bob discovered that your steaming, monstrous thoughts toward this radiant couple were exploding simultaneously. You and Bob, overnight, became a sublime couple that had a raging secret, smacking each other under the table while listening to the bubbling couple bubble. After dinner with the soul mates you and Bob were racing home, slamming each other against the walls, making raucous love like you hadn't done in years. It was a lust-filled period for the two of you as you rolled around and basked in the underhanded refuge of your coupled adrenaline rush.

Unfortunately, though, fortune based on another couple's atrocious fortune didn't last. Soon enough, Shale and Arist-e figured out that they were the brunt of your happiness, which immediately dampened theirs, and so they assuredly moved on to another unhappy couple that didn't know they were unhappy, until they met Shale and Arist-e.

You and Bob went back to movie nights and popcorn and the sex became less brutish, more sparse and more routine.

Until that one glorious day when you spotted another couple stargazing into each other's eyes and kissing from across the street.

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