

LADY WOOD

by Melissa Ann Chadburn

We stepped into the big elevator. It was full of adult women and teenage girls. There was one guy in the back left corner. The girl standing next to us was carrying a bag from the store that sold plaid lingerie.

My girlfriend and I were wedged in the front corner by the buttons. I asked in a moderate voice, "Honey, do you get lady wood when you go to that plaid lingerie store?"

Then the elevator opened and it was our stop. I busted out dancing wiggling my behind and laughing. I knew it embarrassed her. LADY WOOD! I thought it was soo funny. It might have been funnier when Dana Owens/Queen Latifah said it in the movie.

Then I thought about Queen Latifah and why she won't come out. It bums me out a little. She met my sister at a club once, Peanuts on Santa Monica Blvd., and invited her to an after party. My sister didn't go. She's smart. She was not about to crawl into a stretch escalade with Owens and her bodyguards, while she was alone. "Just give me the address and I'll meet you there." my sister said. They didn't want to do that. Also my sister wouldn't leave me.

One night Bernard was hiding in some bushes outside of a party. When we were walking by he grabbed my arm and said I was going with him. My sister said, "No. She's not." Bernard said, "What the fuck do you care?" and she said "She doesn't want to."

Bernard got in her face and yelled, "Because you're a DYKE!" and my sister cried and then he cried and I cried watching. Then we hugged. I think we were all crying because it was true and maybe we were a little bit tipsy too. We left and all went to the same house together. Home was a modest home in the Pacific Palisades. It looked ordinary on the outside, except perhaps too many cars in the culdesac and a bad buff job on some graffiti on the neighboring fence.

I remember the morning after that graffiti happened. I was sleeping in a pile of teenage bodies soft limb spread over soft thin

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limb. Peach fuzz just barely sprouting the boys keeping their three thin hairs for confidence. The girls' shyness increased. We were in what we called "the den" although it was just another bedroom with two queen sized beds squished together. It was a teenage den perhaps. A den where we studied dance moves from rap videos, smoked pot and cigarettes, drank 40 oz. bottles of beer, wrote on each other, had sex. A place where we spent hours doing nothing and let time pass. It was the first morning I met my friend's dad, the friend I call my sister. When he crossed the threshold hallway that separated children from adults, threw open the door to the den and screamed, "Get out!" We were all terrified we jumped up and left. For a moment we caught eyes and his eyes glistened with fascination and disappointment than turned back to rage.

As I was dancing in the parking lot I thought:
Don't get too carried away she might get mad
wondered if I should have skipped the popcorn
why does that crappy butter stuff smell so good
am I officially an over-eater?
Will I know if I'm officially an over-eater?
what if she is mad and we go home and sleep in the same bed
staring at the ceiling
can I then go to my room
will I have the courage
my hands fall asleep in her bed
I hope the dog did not pee in the house
I hope the cat did not mess up the couch

then very fast I envisioned
my girlfriend and I sleeping in two separate beds
then coming home to a house with a dead cat
then her holding me

Maybe I confuse pity with love.

I gyrated in the parking lot humping the car chirping "Lady wood."
and thankfully she laughed.

