

Clipboard Cutie

by Sean Brown

On the Hunt for a cheap plaid suit in downtown Portland this afternoon, near 4th and Morrison, looking to jump on the eastbound train when I saw her. One of those damn downtown clipboard girls. If you've ever wandered around downtown Portland, or probably any major city, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

She'll be young and cute, probably artistic in appearance. She'll walk right up to you and say Hello. Hi, How's it going, how are you today? You might be startled if you weren't paying attention, you might be surprised if you were. Who is this young cute girl saying hello to you on a busy corner in downtown Portland? You might be suspicious, will she offer you guns or drugs or perhaps a *good time*? With these thoughts you might perk up a bit, because after all, she is young and cute, and this is Portland. You'll make small talk and listen for clues or code. When it appears nothing illicit is on the table, you might begin to wonder...what exactly is going on here?

You'll stare at her beautiful brown eyes, or maybe they're blue this time, and try hard to ignore the distinct possibility that she is only sixteen. No, instead you'll think about the trips to the coast, and camping, maybe getting a dog and a little house further out of downtown. With a yard and a garden. You'll think about spending the rest of your life with this beautiful brown (blue?) eyed creature, and as you listen to her and get a little more lost in her eyes, you'll start to think that maybe you finally understand just what it was your buddy was talking about when he got drunk on Sambucca that one night and talked about **LOVE**. You'll think that maybe spending the rest of your life with one person might not be such a terrible thing after all...

And then you'll see her Clipboard.

And for a half second you'll hold out hope that not only is she beautiful and sweet, but perhaps she's also a do-gooder. One of those socially conscious, change-the-world type girls complete with a never ending supply of life's own contagious enthusiasm. And

then she'll ask if you're aware of what's happening in Africa. You'll smile, and hold out another half-second of hope that she's just collecting signatures or email addresses. You'll mumble something about Darfur or conflict diamonds or the whole continent being a fucked up mess. And then she'll ask if you've ever heard of her organization. You'll smile and shake your head no, or maybe you'll lie and yes. Why yes miss, I actually just got back from a mission trip to Africa with your organization last month, would you like to grab a bee...errr, coffee? How old are you anyway? She'll go on to explain what great things her organization is doing in Africa, about how US pennies can feed whole villages for a month, and mosquito nets, and books, condoms, and classrooms, and on and on. You'll smile and shake your head, or maybe cut to the chase and ask how much? How much to get you to love me!?

And she'll go further into details, and you'll realize you've been had. You'll make up an excuse, but she'll be ready for you. She is much better prepared than you could ever hope to be. The truth is she stands on that corner all day talking poor guys just like you into sending their beer money to Africa. And she gets paid for it. And she's cute. You didn't stand a chance. Can't commit? A one time donation can go a long way...

Today I saw her from a distance. I was on a mission for a plaid suit, and in no mood to be seduced out of my beer money. I attempted to cross the street. Some people cross the street to get away from the thugs or the gutter punks; I cross the street to avoid the cute artistic girls with clipboards. But she saw me!

"Hey you! Come talk to me!" she shouts across Morrison. "I don't want to talk to you!" I shout back. I'd seen her clipboard. "Aww, Come on, I'm cool, you're cool, come talk to me!" Persist little cutie.

The light changes and I have no choice but to cross to her side of the street. So I do. Slowly. Hey, How are you? She starts in as I give her the up and down once over. Beautiful. She knows what she's doing. I pause as Red Line pulls in next to me. Fine, thanks,

how are you? She says something else, but I'm not listening, I'm running towards the Red Line while screaming over my shoulder, I love you, I just can't talk to you right now!

