

Bougainvillea

by S.H. Gall

The first time my ex and I vacationed in Palm Springs, we stayed at a place owned by an old friend of his, a bear named Kirk. It was called the Inn of Nine Palms. Nine rooms and the requisite swimming pool, a grapefruit tree, plenty of gay porn in the front office. With us at the inn were two women.

Blaze Diamond caught our attention first. Tanning by the pool in pasties and a thong, her DDD breasts famously on display, Blaze was a redhead with a history. She'd been a stripper for three decades, had married a congressman and several financiers, now was living off residuals from soft-core porn. Kirk called her a landmark. We found her a riot, although she rarely uttered a word; the gesticulations that accompanied her light reading were a tutorial in dramatic flair.

Then there was Daphne, a mystery the first two days... she emerged from her room at noon, Bud Light in hand, and lay poolside in a bikini, sucking down can after can. Kirk finally informed us that Daphne, a lead engineer for a Houston-based chain of oil refineries, had contracted terminal cancer two years prior. Now retired, she drank a case of beer a day whilst waiting to die. My boyfriend Harry thought this was tragic. I thought it rather sensible, appropriate for an engineer, although I speculated that it must have been a huge hassle needing to pee all the time.

The Inn of Nine Palms had a large facilities shed which Kirk had converted into living quarters for an old friend. Irv was an ex-priest, flamboyantly in possession of a wonderful pit bull named Marcel Proust. Marcel Proust ran about the grounds chasing an itinerant tennis ball and kissing the guests, his huge testicles sweeping the lawn.

These were heady days, filled with the kind of joyousness and pride I had believed just a few months prior to be non-existent in

worlds like my own. The fence surrounding the inn's property was lush with bougainvillea, cascading in elaborate twists and spangles, as pink as the desert sun was bright.

Remembering this era now I feel sadness, regret, an ache cemented - and gratitude, for having surpassed the wealth of those times. For the emergence of a life much brighter than any flowering vine.

Seth Gall has had work published in China, Canada, and the U.S. His work has appeared in Word Riot, SmokeLong Quarterly, Nanoism, and A-Minor Magazine. He is S.H. Gall in decomp Magazine, Nanoism, issues one and 27 of SmokeLong Quarterly, Five Star Literary Stories, and Fictionaut.

