

Interior: Classroom

by Stacie Adams

There's a girl in the back. She draws in the middle of her civics text book. Under it she writes "You're totally reading this right now."

A new kid comes in. He's all hopped up on his sister's Adderall. You can tell because he's fidgety. She likes him, though. He looks like he should be staring at you from a movie poster.

"Hi, I'm Steven", he says. "I like cars. Can I sit down now?" The teacher nods. Steven takes a seat between the girl and a fat kid. Just before he can introduce himself formally, the fat kid interjects.

"You some kind of homo?" he asks Steven. Steven turns to him.

"Sorry?"

"You queer?"

"I don't follow. I'm trying to talk to this girl now. Can you leave me alone?"

This made the fat kid feel bad. No one likes to be rejected. "I'll fucking shit in your soul," he says. Steven turns to him.

"I don't think that's possible."

"The fuck it's not."

"Listen, I appreciate the intensity, but not now, Okay?"

Steven asks the girl's name. She asks why. "Not important, I guess," he answers, shrugging. The fat kid nudges him.

"She's a fucking dyke."

"Hey fuck you, Earl," the girl says to the fat kid.

"Fuck you, you fucking carpet licker," the fat kid whispers back to her.

"I really don't appreciate your tone, Earl," Steven says.

"Why not?"

"Because, you're going around saying 'gay' like its a bad thing. On top of that, this girl's not gay. I just ask her out on a date and she accepted. Why would she do that if she was gay?"

Earl shrugs. "I don't know. Maybe she's confused." Steven looks at the girl.

"Are you confused?" She shrugs.

"No. Not really."

"I guess that's settled. Hey Earl, go fuck yourself."

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When she meets up with Steven later a good portion of his face is bruised. Earl wasn't much of a fighter, but he was strong. This kid just didn't care. He smiles when he sees her.

"I meant what I said," Steven tells her. She didn't follow.

"What did you say?"

"I want to go out on a date with you. Nothing fancy. Just drinks, and then we can degrade each other mindlessly."

"I'm too young for drinks."

"Where there's a will there's a way. Is there a will?" She shrugs.
"I love your enthusiasm. I can get us booze."

"And then what?"

"Then we can see where adolescence takes us."

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Later they sit alone in her room drinking from a bottle he'd stolen from his parents house. His father was in the Army. He said he'd catch hell if found out.

"I like it," he tells her as he passes the bottle back.

"You like what?"

"Being hit and stuff. Would you hit me?"

"No. I never hit anybody. Except Russ, because he's an ass."

"Who's Russ?"

"My brother."

"How hard did you hit him?"

"Not hard. Just a little one, like *thwack* on the back of the head. I'm not very strong, Steven."

"I don't care. Just hit me."

“Where?”

“In my face. On the side. Not dead on. I'm worried about my nose.”

He sticks his face out and she hit it as hard as she could. It wasn't hard enough. “No girl hits hard enough,” he tells her.

“Sorry. I just have these weak hands.” She holds them up so he can see.

“Do it harder. As hard as you can.”

She does. It wasn't hard enough. “No girl hits hard enough,” he says again.

