

# At the Balcony

*by* XXXX

I was setting up a mattress and a lamp in the balcony of my house because a boy, G., told me he was coming to fuck me. There are probably queers who take these things in stride. They wash up or something, and then they wait for the boy to arrive so they can do their business. That's not me. These things need to be memorable, experiences. When you are about to fall apart in a nursing home, you need to have memories to pass the time.

I am, in any case, a romantic, and making love beneath the stars, I'm pretty sure, is romantic. I was going to buy roses so I can have petals strewn across the mattress, but I cannot even FATHOM the cleanup involved if I do that. And what if it gets in someone's mouth? We'll probably get sticky. It's a hot Manila evening. We'll look like dalmatians. We are unattractive enough as it is. That won't benefit anyone.

There are sexual practices that look nice on TV or films but don't translate to the mechanics of real life. For example, kisses are usually ruined by noses, and Filipinos usually have large, bulbous noses, completely unlike the aquiline noses of Westerners. Because the Spanish have interbred with us when they were our colonial masters, there are some who do have this trait. We call them mestizos, and we say their nose is "matangos." As a child, my mother would pinch my nose for extended periods of time so that my nose would be matangos, like a Westerner. It didn't work. Kisses have become a choreographed tango of noses. You have to be at a certain angle. It's not an intuitive thing at all. I remember getting the air sucked out of my lungs during my first kiss. You must remember to breathe through your nose.

Another is screwing in the shower. Never fuck after you shampoo. There is nothing sexy about slipping in the shower, and when you try to ask your partner to continue it becomes a pity party. There is nothing sexy about a pity fuck, either. Not after you've slipped anyway. Again, like anything in life, it requires technique and

practice if you want to get the most out of it. You can be lame, too, of course. Why even have sex in the shower if you're just going to be vanilla about it. You also better make sure you live in a country where drinking tap water is safe because you will be drinking at least some while kissing. Personally, I like to take baths alone. It is where I like to think. Having someone there is just like taking a poop with someone. It's unnatural, an abomination of the natural order of things. Sometimes that's what sexy about it, I guess. After a few times, it's just like washing a tall dog.

"What are you doing?"

I turned from my preparing the sheets and O. was standing in the room.

"Oh my god," I said. "Leave."

"Are you sleeping here or something?"

"How did you even get in?" I said.

"Your door wasn't locked," he said. "And I know your family is out of town. Is H. coming?"

"No," I said. "It's not H. Get out. Is that my burger?"

"I got it from your dining room. There were two, so I got one."

"Those were ours, you stupid fuck," I said.

"Well, geez. How was I supposed to know?" he said. "I don't live here."

I ignored him. There was work to be done.

"You know what you're missing?" he said. He was still chewing.

"Rose petals."

"It's a hot evening," I said. "We'll sweat and—you know what, just leave. Take the burger and leave. We'll just share one burger and that will be romantic."

"You should've bought steak."

I thought: FUCK HE'S RIGHT.

"Whatever, you don't know what you're talking about," I said.

"You think too much about these things," he said.

"Leave," I said.

He finally did. I saw him leave from the balcony. He looked at me and gave me a salute. I gave him the finger.

When everything was done, I sat there and waited. I was happy. My life isn't usually filled with this kind of action. There is a lot of pressure to enjoy these kinds of things. There seemed to be more stars this evening than usual. A few days later I would find out this is because there was a fire that afternoon that destroyed some houses and a large part of the city was without electricity. It was almost like a sign. I laid down on my sheets, turned on my lamp, and began to get excited. Not even sexually aroused, just excited. Happy, maybe. I just felt ok.

I woke that morning on the balcony. He didn't come. Not as in he arrived but didn't ejaculate. He didn't arrive at all. I was tucked in the sheets and everything. I fell asleep waiting. I somehow thought he'd just wake me up and that would be pretty cute. I could hear the neighbor cutting grass. Was she wondering why black sheets were covering the balcony?

We met at a dinner a few days later, and he apologized he wasn't able to come. "I totally forgot about it," he said. I laughed and said, "Oh, me too. I just remembered now, actually." O. was across the table, and when he left, O. smiled at me and held my hand for a while.

