



Three
Men
in
a Boat



(To Say Nothing of the Hot Chick)



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(TO SAY NOTHING OF THE HOT CHICK)

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FOR MY EVERYTHING

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CHAPTER ONE

WE DECIDE TO GET OFF OUR ARSES (FINALLY!)

There were four of us, to begin with, Henry, Larry, Sherry and myself, Harry. Me and the boys were quite sick, you know. Not the kind of sick, you are imagining right now. We were quite mentally sick, or so said our shrinks just to make their pockets jingle. Sherry was however quite alright but the boys never seemed to mind her at all, even though she was one hot girl, the size of her booty itself would make a fine case that something was very wrong with my friends' crotches. I just wonder.

We boys, were out of work, out of luck and out of our brains wondering what to do next as spent day after day, wasting ourselves to hell, drinking brandy and making out with whatever seemed to be like a reasonable excuse for a woman.

We lived quite contemptuous, cockeyed and devastated lives day in and day out, burning through our savings faster than a gay couple pulling off a quickie in a closet but the economic depression had quite made it impossible for average guys like us to get a job again. I, myself, had once been an accountant at a place, I don't remember any longer, Henry had been a reader at a literary agency and while Larry, the most accomplished of us three and the one, most hit by the depression, had once owned a strip joint.

Kindly indulge me as I delve into more of our miserable backstories. Let me begin with myself. I am Harry Nowitz. Yeah yeah, the joke's on me. True to my name, I am quite witless, you'll see soon enough. I was raised in the countryside near Surrey, away from all the delights and devils of city life. My family owned a small factory, manufacturing metal goods. The earnings weren't too bright, like the rest of my family but it kept us afloat. I had three sisters once but the Lord didn't seem to like the oddity and took away one of them to make even. Martha and Mary are the two elder twins and Jennie, the sweet little one. Martha and Mary weren't quite the stereotypes showcased in the Bible. They were quite the opposite. The biblical sisters wept and beat their chests at the death of their brother, Lazarus and my sisters beat their chests and hugged their stomachs in uncontrollable laughter at my expense. They enjoyed watching me cry and beg for mercy as they abused me and torched me in all my funny places, which I later realized were supposed to be kept private. It was kind of fifty shades of grey meets Cinderella's cruel stepsisters and you can probably stop twitching your face at reading this.

Yes, I was sexually abused by my own sisters. Period. You see, we didn't have any dogs, donkeys or any mentally deranged boys near my home for my sisters to experiment with. I was their sole hope, on getting to know the world of sex. So probably, that's the reason I never married, I think it has made me quite gay, if you will. Jennie, was probably the only thing that kept me smiling in spite of all the torture I endured throughout my childhood and early pubescence before my sisters packed off to the city.

Soon, everything got quite abnormal for me which was good because my daily routine before my sisters had left, involved being experimented on my funny places after my parents went to bed. Abnormal was good therefore, abnormal was freedom. I spent most of my teenage years happily and with absolutely no interest in the opposite sex. I lived my life like a child, simple and innocent, since that was something I never experienced during my childhood. I was ten when Jenny was born and I saw her grow from this little cute parasitic creature to a really beautiful young girl with golden locks of hair. I always imagined her growing into this really beautiful woman. I didn't know why but I knew that she was going to grow to be a really hot girl. I enjoyed thoroughly being with her but it seemed that God loved her more and took her away when I was nineteen. I never did see her grow into that kind of a woman, I always had hoped to see.

Realizing that I couldn't stay home anymore, I too left for the city. The really nasty city of London. I was quite lucky with numbers and that my father had some influence, which got me a job almost immediately at a small supermarket, owned by a friend of his. So, I settled down in London and that is

where, I started living a new life, forgetting my terrible childhood of which, I never opened a word to anyone, except to my best friends Henry and Larry and of course, my darling Sherry.

I met my boys at a café just adjacent to Larry's strip joint. It had been a tiring day at work and I found myself slithering into this café, desperate for a cup of milk or something with enough fire power to keep me going. Then while I was having my cup of milk, that is when Henry fell onto me, quite strongly, spilling my milk all over the place, having received a hell of a right cross from Larry. You ask me why Henry was hit. That's because he had hit Larry first for no reason and I hadn't noticed that, being so deeply involved in drinking my milk. The whole thing made both of them apologize over and over again, while I kept saying that it was alright, looking ridiculous with a milk moustache.

They both were quite unconvinced by my repeated attempts at accepting their apologies. They thought I didn't mean it. They were right. I was just trying to shove them off so that, I could have another cup of milk, this time in peace. They didn't let it go though, they insisted on buying me a drink at the bar across the road to make up for what they had done. I couldn't tell them that I had never tasted alcohol in my life because frankly it was too embarrassing and if they hadn't got the hint from seeing me drink milk, well what can I say? They were authentic dumb arses.

They literally dragged me out of the café and being a thin excuse for a man, I couldn't really resist, as these men grabbed me and hauled me and I was just reminded of my sisters' acts. That was enough to mentally freeze me for a couple of moments before, we landed in the bar across the road.

I never really got a chance to introduce myself, 'coz they were already drunk by the time we had gotten to that point, which was like in two minutes and they had already emptied almost two gallons between them and the worst part was that, they made me drink too. A few sips was all that took me to forget everything around me and pass into a state of blissful ignorance. By the time I woke up next morning, with a numb mind, I found ourselves sleeping outside the strip joint near the café. I looked at my two companions and they were sleeping like dead pigs covered in drool. My head was still feeling funny and quite dizzy. I helped myself to my feet, squinting my eyes, wondering what to do next and that is when I first saw Sherry. The only one woman in the world, who still makes me feel funny in my pants. As she came slowly towards me, my eyes feasted on her. She was tall, had curly blonde hair and a really, really pretty face. She was dressed in a short jean mini skirt and a sleeveless baby pink skin tight top that for some strange reason, didn't seem slutty at all to me. Instead, I found it quite welcoming.

"Hey, you alright?" she asked, upon noticing me noticing her fine features, which by the way, is just me being modest, her features were too fine.

"Ye...Yeah!" I stuttered, unable to take my eyes off her long legs.

"Hallo? My face is over here!" she said, laughing.

I looked up, blushing, my face looking like a bunny's tush. I managed a weak smile at her, feeling embarrassed at myself.

"Are you alright?" she asked.

I nodded yes, while maintaining that really awkward smile of mine.

For a moment, she took her eyes and looked at my friends drooling pathetically on the pavement. Then she looked at me again and asked with a really beautiful smile, “Well, shall we get your friends inside?”

“Where?” I asked, wondering where she was referring to.

“Right here!” she said, pointing towards the strip joint. I looked confused, she immediately came to my rescue and pointing towards Larry, she said, “This joint belongs to your friend right there.”

I looked at Larry for a moment, turned back and asked, “Are you sure that he’s the owner?”

She laughed out loud, holding her hips and then she pulled me, holding me by my shoulders as easily as she were picking an infant. It reminded me to check my weight later.

“Yes, he is. I used to work here sometime before. I wonder, where’s Tom?”

“Who?!” I interjected, unconsciously.

“He’s the security guy. I guess Larry fought with him again. He wouldn’t have let you sleep on the pavement all night.”

“How do you know we were sleeping on the pavement all night?” I asked immediately and I realized almost as immediately as I had said it, that it was an extremely stupid question to ask but thinking a little more, I thought that there was nothing wrong with the question and by the time, I was about to think more, Sherry derailed my train of thoughts.

“Isn’t obvious?” she asked, with a laugh. “Larry’s a bloody drunk and you’re his friend, sure you spent the night on the pavement.”

I laughed pathetically in return.

“By the way, I am Sherry!” she said, extending her hand towards me.

“I know,” I replied.

“WHAT?” Sherry cried in surprise.

That is when I realized what I had said. “I mean you look like a Sherry,” I quickly said, to repair the awkwardness, I had just created with my answer.

She looked strangely at me and then suddenly broke into a quick smile. “That’s alright.”

“I am Harry, Harry Nowitz,” I said, to keep the conversation rolling.

“Hello Harry!” she said, cocking her head sideways.

“Hello!” I smiled.

“Shall we?” she asked, motioning her hands towards my friends. I nodded and moved towards Larry, who seemed to be the heavier of the two.

“Wait!” Sherry suddenly interrupted, as I was trying to lift Larry off the ground.

“Together,” Sherry said, smiling. I nodded again and together, we lifted Larry off the ground, who

must have been at least a good hundred and sixty pounds. Slowly, we made it inside, where it was dark and filled with cigarette smoke. I coughed, like an asthmatic and nearly dropped Larry before grabbing him tightly again.

“Are you alright?” Sherry asked.

“I am fine,” I replied, trying my best to stifle my coughs.

“Okay.”

“A teetotaler, I believe?” Sherry asked, a moment later.

“Yes,” I puffed, sniffing as I labored for every breath.

A blondie with brains! It's a medical miracle! I thought to myself.

“Good,” Sherry said. I didn't reply as one big cough was coming up in my throat and I knew that it would get out, if I were to open my mouth.

Soon, we dropped Larry onto a tattered sofa somewhere in the middle of the joint.

I heaved and walked like a sloth behind Sherry and dragged Henry like a rag, inside the place and threw him on an even more pathetically tattered sofa beside Larry's. I stopped and gasped for my breath. It took a full five minutes before I became alright even to look up and I saw Sherry tending to Henry and setting him right on the sofa.

How the hell is she not panting? I wondered.

Then, my over actively pessimistic brain started thinking that something was severely wrong with my kidneys or my pancreas but I didn't know exactly which, since biology had always been like a stepmother to me, cruel in all her ways. After about five minutes of staring blankly at Sherry's butt, it struck me all of a sudden. I just had had an epiphany, staring at a woman's butt, which led to another epiphany, how much good would it do to this world, if men were just to stare at women's butts for five minutes, we could resolve just about anything, that is when, I got a third epiphany, these things just kept coming! (Thus, proving an exponential relationship to the extreme curviness of a woman's butt and the number of epiphanies one gets!) The third epiphany was how we could end terrorism by giving every terrorist, the promise on which they are even willing to take a bullet in the head or rip themselves into a zillion pieces; we give them their seventy two virgins! (Male or female that is theirs to decide!)

Anyways, coming back to the first epiphany I had had, I finally knew what was wrong with me. It was them, balls. I had never paid much attention to sex education but it was common knowledge that they had to be the size of table tennis balls, just about that size but mine were the size of peas.

I was lacking man juice in me. That was the problem. Being a man required man juice. I could tell by looking at Sherry that she was overflowing with woman juice. I immediately took out my phone and typed 'Ball problem' in the memo that already contained a list of my other potential health problems.

“You should take rest yourself,” Sherry said, once she was done settling Larry comfortably onto the

sofa.

“Yes, I should,” I agreed, although I had no idea why I said that, probably because my brain was trying to get lucky with this girl. That crazy brain of mine.

“Good,” Sherry smiled, “I’ll get you something to eat.”

“No, no, I’m alright. Don’t strain yourself,” I said.

“It’s okay,” Sherry said, as she walked towards me and held me by my shoulders, making my face gorge with blood.

“It’s alright...”

“Shh...” Sherry said, then pushed me onto a sofa, placed her fingers on my forehead and pushed my head back onto the headrest, “Rest. I’ll be back soon.”

I found my tongue paralyzed in return, as she smiled beautifully at me, turned back (turning me on in the process) and walked away.

I closed my eyes in peace and drifted away in a land filled with Sherry clones all over the place.

“HARRY!”

I woke up with a start and saw Sherry with a tray full of sweet buns and three coffee cups.

“I am sorry! I didn’t mean to startle you!” Sherry apologized.

“No, no!” I said, “It’s okay.”

“Alright!” Sherry smiled, “Eat up!”

Saying that, Sherry gave me the tray and turned around.

“Hey!” I called.

“Yes!” Sherry replied, just turning her head towards me.

“Thank you!” I said, plastering my face with the best smile I could come up with.

Sherry just smiled in return.

“OOOOOOOIIIIIIIIII!!!”

“Sweet Mother of Jesus!” I cried, toppling the coffee cups on the tray.

It was Larry, who had woken up with a nasty roar. I placed the tray on the sofa and went near him.

“Hey, you alright?” I asked, bending over.

“Yea! I’m alright mate! Where in the bloody heavens, are we?” Larry asked, with his one eye still closed and one side of his mouth and nose still leaking.

“We’re inside your place, the strip joint,” I said.

“How did we end up in here?” Larry asked, he seemed quite startled but the effect was spoiled by his

facial characteristics. He looked like an ugly pig with a drinking problem. Pigs aren't that good with expressions. Look, it's not that easy to put it into words, so just imagine it for yourself.

I took a moment to gather my thoughts and carefully reconstruct it for him.

"We were passed out in the front of your joint and a kind lady helped me get you inside," I said.

"My joint was open?" Larry asked, then quickly moved on as if he had heard something more interesting, "Did you mention a lady, a sweet lady now?"

"Yes!" I nodded excitedly, "Her name's Sherry, she's right here....."

I turned back to introduce her but she wasn't there any longer. My face shrunk in disappointment and sadness.

"Where's the lady?" asked Larry, still in that drowsy voice of his.

"She was right here, she even bought us breakfast," I whispered.

"Ah! That's a bummer, what did you say her name was?" asked Larry.

"Sherry, she even said she worked for you once here," I replied.

Larry's face again did that really unhandsome expression by which he probably meant he had never heard of her name before, 'Lots of girls have worked for me here, I am better off remembering their sizes than their petty names!' he said and laughed as he had cracked the wittiest joke in the world. I groaned in despair. I was really bothered that Sherry wasn't anywhere to be seen. Where did she go, all of a sudden? With a heavy sigh, I looked at Henry who was still drooling heavily.

An hour later, Henry was up too and I felt my obligation to be there with those potheads was finally over. I rose up to wish them a good day and leave.

"Where do you think you are going?" Larry asked in a dangerous tone.

"I had a nice time, guys...."

"I asked where you were shooting off to?" Larry asked menacingly.

At this time, Henry stepped in to say something completely irrelevant to the subject, mentioning the *Playboy* magazine.

"I don't remember askin' you a goddamn thing!" Larry shouted in a really funny American accent.

Another one of those Pulp Fiction junkies, I thought.

"I'm going home," I said.

The dangerous tone in Larry's voice disappeared. 'Oh!' he said, as if he had expected something else.

Feeling that it was a green signal, I proceeded to shake Henry's hand and then went onto shake Larry's hand.

"When shall we meet again?" Larry asked, his eyes quite glistening by the time I was finished shaking

his hand.

“Again?” I asked, quite unsure of what I had heard.

“Yes,” Larry replied, with an innocent nod.

I was at a complete loss for words and any attempt at even contemplating the question. I never wanted to see these two junkies ever again and here one of them was asking me for the next date. It was pathetic. I just stared at him for a while, when he suddenly tapped me on my shoulders joyously and cried, “Alrighty! You’re the man, Harry!”

I had no heck of a clue as to what was going on. I had no idea why Larry was bouncing around like a ball around the place, shouting as I had just given him a winning lottery ticket, being the sissy that I had always been, I didn’t dare to interrupt his routine. So it began, a friendship that I didn’t want. A friendship that I deeply loathed but they never let me go. They insisted that I join them in everything that they did. I didn’t make any other friends either. All the folks at my workplace were illegal immigrants who began each sentence mentioning some man called Allah. I figured that he must have been their slave master or the guy who got them into this country. Anyways, I didn’t understand a word they spoke. I didn’t understand shit. For God’s sake, they had beards and arm pit hair the length of Volkswagens and they smelled like rotten vegetables sprayed with fertilizers. So I was stuck with these two guys, Henry and Larry.

Henry was the older of us, the handsomest and also the tallest. He had long smooth grey hair and a face that could be handsome as well as ugly as he could contort it. Larry looked exactly like a junkie on drugs. He had this perpetual facial expression that gave everybody the wrong idea that he was high on something. I don’t even have to get started with as to how I look. I was the shortest and the most stupid looking of the three and also, innocent if I might add.

Larry was the most boisterous of us three, while I was relatively quiet and Henry was such a drunk and a miserable womanizer. Such was his state that we had to hire prostitutes just so that he would feel better. Later, he would come to us and boast to us how easily he had made the woman fall for his charms and soon he came up with a way to calculate how powerful his charms were over women. He said his charms were inversely proportional to the time taken for a woman to reach into his pants. Gross. At least that’s what I think. Oh poor Henry! I have no idea how he would feel when he comes to know that every single woman that he had ‘womanized’ were actually paid by his friends to reach into his pants.

Every day after work, we three used to meet up at Larry’s strip joint from where we used to go to the bar across the road and drink ourselves to hell. That was our daily routine but soon enough, I started falling in place with that and soon started loving it. I loved my friends, I loved the booze and the thrill that I got every time, we got up someplace far away from the bar with no recollection whatsoever how we had gotten to that place in the first place. I also met Sherry a lot at the bar and we used to talk loads until I used to lose my consciousness. It was a good life. We were unmarried, relatively okay with money and we had the greatest times every night. I was happy and satisfied and ready to die any moment without any regrets, till the bad times began. It first started with Henry being indefinitely laid off. Then it was me, apparently the supermarket where I worked had just been a hideout for militants and was owned by a militant. I wondered if my father knew ,that he had been friends with a militant

all that time but he would deny it completely and say all's fair in love and war and I would have completely no idea what he's actually referring to. To my greater misfortune, the economy also started sloughing off, about the time, the supermarket was closed by the MI6 and I couldn't find a job anywhere else.

Then it was Larry's turn. A brand new strip joint with eighteen-year old Latinas opened up in the next street. Larry's business bombed the day the new joint opened. No one had any more interest in Larry's women anymore. According to many of Larry's ex-customers, the new joint had something that Larry's had always lacked. Variety. The new joint had something for everybody. Amateurs to gay to professionals to MILFS expanding to exotic women from all over the world, the new joint had it all. Larry was done for in the business. This all happened in the matter of two weeks. It looked as if God were punishing us for all that we had done but it didn't seem to work. We only drank more and banged more hookers. We were depressed and we were men. We didn't know how else to cope up with this and so it went on for months till one day we were totally out of money, we didn't even have the money to buy a drop of booze anymore and at that time, we were at Larry's place, that he had christened 'The Shithole', penniless and going mindless without our quota of booze for the day when suddenly Henry suggested something. Something quite out of the ordinary.

"Why don't we get out of this place?" Henry said, suddenly out of the blue.

"What?" I asked.

"Why don't we get out of this place for a change? Get a chance to rejuvenate ourselves!" Henry said.

"Get out of this place?" I repeated stupidly.

"Yes, get off our arses for once and get out into the world," Henry said.

"Are you out of your effing mind?" Larry asked, in a very angry tone. He had been very frustrated and aggressive since he had been forced to close his joint. Even the hookers complained about that. They told me to tell him to take it slow or to get him a sex doll instead. I got what they were saying but I didn't tell him because I knew that it would only make him more aggressive.

"Listen," Henry said. "Sitting here wouldn't us do any good, we've got to get back in the world and that is why I'm suggesting a trip to forget it all and begin anew."

I liked what Henry was saying. It would do us a world of good to get away from London for a while, till we pulled ourselves together. We only had two problems, we didn't have any money in the first place and Larry was in a really bad mood. We can't go anywhere without him. He had to agree too.

Henry and I looked at Larry, who was staring at the floor with bulging eyes.

"Well," I said cautiously.

There was silence for what seemed to be a very long time after which Larry grunted "Let's go!"

Henry and I erupted in joy and hugged Larry, pushing him onto the floor and rolled with him. We didn't have any booze to celebrate when it suddenly hit me.

"What about money?" I asked, lying on the floor next to Larry.

“We’ll sell my joint,” Larry said.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

“Yes,” Larry replied, “You two guys are all that’s left to me in this big cruel world. I will do anything for you, guys.”

I should say I was quite touched by Larry’s little speech and I buried my face on his shoulder and cried like a baby, till I realized he hadn’t actually bathed in thirty-three days and the only moisture he ever got on his body was his own sweat and that of a hundred hookers.

CHAPTER TWO

I GET AN EPIPHANY ABOUT BOOZE AND WOMEN!

The very next day, Larry put his old joint up for sale on the newspapers. Fortunately, there were still a lot of miserable rich wannabes left in the city who wanted to make more money than they could count. We, three were there at the joint at eight in the morning itself, when a bald Chinese male about fifty years of age, holding a copy of *The Times*, walked into the joint. Larry had put on all the lights in the joints, including the Christmas lights around the poles (The ones the strippers used) for good impression. Larry shook the Chinese’s hand and brought him in, where Henry and I were on our best behavior. The little Chinese man stood silent for a couple of minutes, looking around the place with a scrutinizing look and from time to time, he gave an annoyed look, though I had no idea why he did so. Larry running out of his patience interjected and asked the Indian, “So what do you think, sir?”

The Chinese man cast a dirty look at Larry and started walking around the joint, as if he didn’t want anyone to disturb him any further during his evaluation of the place.

“Motherf-” Larry swore, when I interrupted him just in time, before the Chinese man noticed.

“Customer is king,” I whispered in Larry’s ear.

“He’s not an effing customer, I tell you that!” Larry fumed.

“Can’t we get a couple of strippers to do some routines around those poles of yours while these customers are here just so you know, to increase our chances of selling better,” Henry said, between a huge yawn.

For a moment, Larry and I just stared at Henry as our brains were busy working out the logic and the effectiveness behind the brilliant idea that Henry had just given.

“Men have two heads,” I said, as a huge grin spread across my face.

“And God has given enough blood to only run one at a time,” Larry completed, looking completely euphoric.

“HENRY! YOU ARE A BLOODY GENIUS!” I cried, giving a huge wet kiss on Henry’s wet nose.

“Will this really work?” Larry asked, his initial euphoria wearing off.

“Oh Yeah!” I said confidently, “Let’s go, get some of your strippers!”

Larry smiled a pleased smile. “Henry, throw the Indian out!”

“Wait! Don’t you think he’s a potential customer?” Henry asked.

“You think?” Larry asked, with a cocked eyebrow.

Henry chewed on that question for a moment.

“Nope!” Henry replied.

“Good! C’mon Harry! We got to fish mermaids!” Larry said, as he reached out to get his coat.

“See you in a while, Henry!” I said and went out the door with Larry.

Just outside the joint, we ran onto a man the size of a minivan covered in overflowing robes, hair and a stench that was stronger than cheese left rotting for a century.

“Ah! Mr. Sheikh!” Larry exclaimed, “How are you doing?”

“I am well, Mr. Longbottom, by the graces showered by your ladies,” the big man said and then I heard a loud fart.

“What was that?” I whispered to Larry.

“That’s the old man laughing,” Larry said, as we continued to hear the farts.

“What do you mean?” I asked, thoroughly confused looking at the big man indulging in something that physically resembled laughing.

“His laughs sound as if he’s farting!” Larry hissed.

“What kind of-” I said, when Larry stepped on my foot painfully.

The farting sounds suddenly stopped and the big man looked at us. Larry then let out a nervous laugh as well, as if he didn't want to disappoint Mr. Sheikh by not sharing a laugh.

"Tell me how are your seven wives?" asked Larry.

"SEVEN?!" I gasped, beside Larry.

"One for every day of the week," Larry whispered, leaning close to me.

"Oh! Don't remind me, Mr. Longbottom, if my wives had had those fine arses your girls have, I wouldn't have become your most loyal customer in the first place," said Mr. Sheikh and laughed out loud again.

The guy had a point, though, I thought.

"Ah! Mr. Sheikh, I have some news for you," Larry said, looking a little hesitant.

"Please, tell me that you've finally got those smokin' Latinas, I've been asking you about!" Mr. Sheikh said, grabbing Larry's hands and shaking them vigorously.

"No!" Larry exploded, "No, Mr. Sheikh, I am gonna sell this place."

"WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, DID YOU JUST SAY?" Mr. Sheikh shouted, he certainly didn't look very pleased.

"I am going to sell this place," Larry said calmly.

Mr. Sheikh looked as if he had been kicked in his balls. "No, you can't do that!" Mr. Sheikh finally said, "You just can't do that!"

"Sir, you don't understand, I have to, I am sorry, ever since the all new Latina strip joint opened up in the next street, my business has bombed," Larry said.

"But-but, I have always been your most loyal customer, Mr. Longbottom, you can't abandon me just like that," Mr. Sheikh pleaded.

"I am truly sorry, Mr. Sheikh, I truly am, all I can say is that you can visit that Latina joint from now on. They have those Latina girls, you always wanted me to get," said Larry, looking apologetic.

"No, Mr. Longbottom, this is a matter of loyalty as much as it is about my wives' flabby arses, I can't let you sell this place," Mr. Sheikh said.

"No, Mr. Sheikh, I really need the money, I'm almost bankrupt," Larry said and I could tell by his tone that he was beginning to lose his cool.

"In that case, I'll buy it," Mr. Sheikh said without a moment of hesitation.

"Whaddya say?" I spluttered.

"I'll buy it, name the price!" Mr. Sheikh said.

"Mr. Sheikh, are you sure about that?" Larry asked, looking absolutely delighted and doubtful at the same time.

“Yes, Mr. Longbottom!” Mr. Sheikh beamed.

Larry looked at me with funny lines written all over his face.

He was getting old, I thought, when he interrupted my thoughts by shaking me and opening his mouth in a curvaceous grin. I returned the favor with a dubious smile. Then he turned back to Mr. Sheikh and said, “What about 90,000 pounds?”

“225,000 pounds and that’s settled,” Mr. Sheikh said, grinning showcasing four golden incisors.

Larry collapsed onto me like he had just ingested a barrel of beer. My lanky frame wasn’t enough to hold his weight when the kind Sheikh came to my rescue and helped me steady him.

“I can’t believe it,” Larry said, “I am seeing stars and clouds now.”

Mr. Sheikh again let out one of his blasts of laughter-farts that went on a while, before he stopped.

“Come with me, Mr. Longbottom, let’s do this right away and finish all that legal stuff, for tonight, we’ll have a grand re-opening night!”

“But, Mr. Sheikh, I got to warn you that this place might not do business at all!” Larry said.

“Who said about business?” Mr. Sheikh said, and then leaning closer to us, he whispered, “It’s gonna be my private strip joint, hee hee!”

Both Larry and I were quite jealous at this point, I guess, after all how many men can afford their own private strip joints. It was the height of evil luxury.

“Now, if you two gentlemen would kindly stop drooling, I believe we have some business to attend to,” Mr. Sheikh, suddenly looking very professional.

“Alright,” Larry and I said together, wiping our mouths and were surprised to know that they were indeed leaking.

After Larry departed with the Sheikh, I returned to the joint to find Henry reading *The Times* lying on the sofa. He didn’t seem to care about the business on which we had embarked earlier. He was too engrossed with the paper and at that moment, my mind was occupied with something else.

“Where is the old Chinese guy?” I asked him.

“Last time I checked, he was smelling out some panties lying by the poles.

“Oh gross! Couldn’t you just get rid of him?” I asked, revolted.

“He’s an old man, let him enjoy what he can, pal,” Henry said, his eyes steady on the paper.

“I guess so,” I agreed but however I went to search for him and get him out.

The joint was still lit up bright and it bore the image of a grand place in ruins. The tables and sofas were old and scarred and torn. The poles looked worn out and the whole place stunk of alcohol and some strange womanly smell. Years ago, this place must have looked awesome but now even with all the lights on, it was a shame.

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