

\$2.00

Debaser

b/w

Burger King Is Dead



Two Short Stories

by

Felizon Vidad

Debaser

b/w

Burger King Is Dead

two short stories

by Felizon Yidad

What follows is not a zine so much as a short sampler of quality fiction. Felizon is a writer who has the rare ability to make you think and make you blush at the same time. Both stories are previously unpublished and neither are, as of yet, a part of a larger work, but we're trying to change that. Felizon also wanted me to point out that the cover photograph is not a picture of her ass, but if I said that, I'd be lying. The rest of the photographs are not intended to illustrate the story. They are included solely to add to the ambiance. Plus, everyone likes books with pictures. We at Gorsky Press apologize for the lo-fi printing quality of this book, but what the hell do you expect for the price? For more of these lo-fi books, a hi-fi novel, or a complete catalog of shit we have for sale, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope, or two stamps and no envelope, to:

gorsky press
PO Box 320504
Cocoa Beach, FL 32932

Or check out our website at: www.gorskypress.com

Debaser

(Have Your Cake and Eat It, Too)

College, Senior Year

I'm right in the middle of fucking Hunter when all of a sudden it hits me that my diaphragm is over at Robinson's and is not, as a matter of fact, inside of me.

"Shit," Hunter grunts. "Why are you stopping?"

I'm already climbing off him. "Because I'm done."

"You came already?"

"Yeah," I say, reaching for my clothes. "A big FAT happy one." Which is the furthest from the truth. Not big, not fat, and certainly not happy. I can't even remember the last time, or if it ever was.

"Come on, Missy," Hunter pleads, and rolls over on his side. "At least let me finish. You can blow me."

He says it generously, like he's granting me a favor.

I pretend to think about it while I zip up my jeans. My t-shirt's on, panties are wadded up inside my front jeans pocket. I look around for my keys.

"My balls are starting to hurt," Hunter complains, reaching down and cupping them.

I spot the keys partially sticking out from under the bed, lying among stiff, smelly socks and blue-striped boxers. I have to get down on my knees on the dirty floor and crawl for them, reaching for the rabbit's foot keychain. That's when I notice the itsy-bitsy imitation silk flowered bikinis. They're not mine.

I back out slowly, straighten, stuff the keys in my pocket. This is how it is. It's all about you.

Hunter clears his throat and starts to make wet, slurping sounds. He also makes a big show of stroking his half-erect penis, in case I've forgotten. "Hey, honey," he says, "come on over and give me some of that sweet stuff."

"Jerk off," I tell him over my shoulder.

I leave him there lying in bed like that, his hand wrapped around his cock, his mouth slightly open. It's one-thirty in the morning.



On my way over to Robinson's, I think about what I'm going to tell him.

"Hi Robinson, I know it's late but I just couldn't go to sleep without my diaphragm."

Or I could say:

"Hello, Robinson! Hunter and I just happened to be in the middle of fucking when--gol-darned it!--I just thought it *might* be a good idea to have my diaphragm in."

Robinson lives in University Groves, one of the newer and more expensive apartment complexes in the area around school. He's got his own little parking space with an automatic garage door opener, and a black and white tiled bathroom with a huge walk-in closet and cedar shelves. Compare this to Hunter's place, where there's no garbage disposal in the sink and his trash is always smelling of rot, crawling with maggots from old Chinese take-out that used to be mung beans and rice. The kind of place that used to be cool and contemporary twenty years ago, but just sort of faded over the years. Old and forgotten. Poor, even. Like my mom's place in Rialto Gardens.

It's about a thirty-minute drive back to the Groves, and by the time I get on the freeway, I think, fuck this. I'm not going to stress out trying to come up with something to tell Robinson when I show up at his door at two in the morning demanding my diaphragm. I keep driving. Just driving and

listening to the college station and trying to figure out who the hell is playing. Could be Live, could be Bush, could be Sponge, could be any one of those new groups who've just come out all at once this summer with single hits that all sound the same. That noisy hyper guitar alternative punk whatever you want to call it sound that Alex has just started getting into. That's all she's been playing in our apartment lately, and if it weren't for the fact that she has been one of my best friends since junior high, I would have already lost it and gathered up all her CDs and ground them into useless shiny shards right down the garbage disposal.

Alex has just only recently started calling herself Alex, but for a while she was Alexandra, and Alexandra Jane before that, and then A.J., back in grade school and junior high. She's trying on different personalities, she tells me. In the same breath she turns around and says I've got to stop being two-faced.

"What do you mean, two-faced?" I wanted to know. This was a few nights ago.

"You know what I mean. You and your men."

We were both in the kitchen getting our dinners. I was heating up some soup in the microwave; she was rummaging through the cabinets and trying to decide what she wanted to eat.

"What do you mean, me and my men?"

I leaned up against the microwave, crossed my arms, and waited.

Alex banged the cabinet door shut and turned around to face me. "You know what I mean. The other week it was Frank, and the week before that, it was David. Then there was that guy from your business class, and the guy you met through your cousin Susan, that time you went to visit her in Riverside, and let me see, there's Hunter right now. And oh yeah, of course... there's Robinson."

Of course.

Robinson is my "official" boyfriend. We've been together for about four years now. To say that we've been "dating" or "going out" is ridiculous, because I don't even remember the last time we've gone out on any kind of a date. When you've been with someone for that long, you just end up hanging out together, sitting there in the same room, not talking about anything in particular because you've covered just about everything you could possibly talk about in the past four years. Aside from that... I still have to fuck him.

"The problem with you," Alex began, going back to looking through our freezer, "is..." She paused, stuck her head closer into the freezer for a better look and then stuck it back out. "Goddamnit. Don't I have any food?" She whirled around in disgust, flopped into a chair, picked up my fork, and began twirling it between her palms. "Your problem, my

friend, my pal, is one of greed. You want to have your cake and eat it too."

The timer on the microwave went off. I reached in for my Cup o'Noodles.

"Your problem," I said, setting the styrofoam cup on the table and grabbing the fork away from her, "is a lack of food."

She returned the stare, one eyebrow raised. "I don't know what you're talking about. Of course I don't have any food. That's obvious. I need to go shopping."

I stabbed into the soup and lifted a heap of noodles. I was starving, and that was all I had to eat in the whole apartment. "Exactly. You, my friend, my pal, are looking for it just as much as I am."

Alex has never had a steady boyfriend. I think she's jealous of me, of the fact that I have had more guys this month than she has kissed in a year. That must be her deal.

Alex is not particularly stunning in any way. If I didn't know her and happened to walk past her in the mall or something, I wouldn't stop and admire what she was wearing or take note of her hairstyle or anything like that. I would probably just step around her and not think twice about it, especially if she happened to be having one of her bad hair days--which is usually every day--and wearing her typical get-

up of baggy sweats and oversized flannels that she always gets up and goes in.

Of course, she can't help all of it. Alex and her mom have been on their own since her father took off on them back when we were both in grade school. Alex never talks about it. That must be why she's got such a problem with men, why my knowing so many guys bothers her so much.



Just tonight, for example, she started showing traces of green. I was getting ready to go out, trying on different outfits, when she walked into my room and threw herself on my bed. She'd just gotten off from work at Friday's.

"Somebody sent some flowers to some server at work today," she informed me, kicking off her shoes. "The card was addressed to 'the cute blonde who had me waiting fifteen minutes before I could order but who made up for it by giving me a free cheesecake afterwards.' " She snorted.

I pulled my velvet miniskirt off and hung it up carefully. "Who was it?"

"We don't know. There's like five different blonde servers, none of them cute." She smirked. "Anyway, nobody would confess to it. The managers were all pissed that some server was giving away free cheesecake."

Rolling over to lie flat on her stomach, she smoothed the bedspread against her cheek. I wriggled my way into a short black jersey knit dress. Alex reached for a pillow and hugged it tightly. "Pretty fancy duds you're putting on there."

I shrugged, checking out my reflection sideways. My boobs were still in pretty good shape.

Alex said, "Who's it gonna be tonight?" She set the pillow aside and her voice was quiet.

I shrugged again and reached for a hairpin. I started working my hair into a French twist.

"Just remember," Alex said, "Robinson's a good guy."

I reached for another hairpin.

Abruptly, Alex stood up and clapped her hands against each other briskly, as if she'd just touched something very dirty and was trying to dust it off. I fumbled with the hairpin, trying to get at that one bump of hair that wouldn't lie flat. My back was to Alex the whole time, but I watched her reflection leave in the mirror.

When she got to the door, she hesitated, put her hand up gently against the doorjamb. "I'm going to get something to eat. You want me to bring you back something?"

I'd finally managed to get the French twist to stay in place. Spritzing hairspray to hold the sides and back solid, I shook my head. "No, thanks. I think I'll be getting enough tonight."

Remembering this, I snort out loud. There's nobody else on the freeway at this time of the night except for me and a couple of big-rig semis, and I can laugh and sneeze and fart out loud in my car and make funny faces and I don't care because there's nobody around to see. It seems like I have been listening to the same song on the radio since I left Hunter's, but it can't be because it's been at least fifteen minutes now and I'm halfway to Robinson's. I snort again and pop a tape into the cassette deck.

Ben Weasel's whiny voice singing about his bad luck with women fills the inside of my car and I grin, relax. Forget Alex and her little pro-Robinson campaign. "Robinson's a good guy." Who is she to make those kind of judgments about the guy when she hardly knows him? I'm his girlfriend--I should know him better than anybody else. Besides, whenever Robinson has come over to the apartment, Alex never talks to him anyway. She says hello and then goes into her room to watch tv and read a book and play that godawful generic crappy rock.

One time, though--I think it was maybe two weeks ago--Robinson caught her by the arm just as she was trying to get away.

"Stick around a while, A.J. Me and Missy are renting a movie. Want to come and help pick one out?"

Alex muttered, "No, thanks," shook herself away, went into her room, and immediately began blaring the Gin Blossoms.

A couple of things hit me now, as I drive and listen to Screeching Weasel and think about Alex and the Gin Blossoms and the huge discrepancy in our taste in music. First off, that was really nice of Robinson to try to include her that night. Even though he did change his mind and go home alone later on because he didn't like my suggestion of going to Nameless, a small video and music store in the shopping center across from Rialto Gardens, instead of Cinema Videos at the mall. It was still pretty nice of him. I guess even Alex thought so. She let him get away with calling her a name she had discarded back in high school and was forgetting, now that she was trying on different personalities.

Robinson's real name is John Wallace Robinson the Fourth, and his parents and my father go to the same country club. So even though we never went to the same schools, we saw a lot of each other on the weekends when it was his time

to spend with his parents and my time to suffer with my father and his girlfriend of the month. Dr. Robinson and my father grew up together, went to the same schools all the way through college, and ended up establishing their careers in the same office building. So maybe it was inevitable that Robinson and I wound up together now. I don't know. But as far as I can remember, even though the Robinsons are filthy rich and their family's cook probably has way more money than my mother and I will ever see, Robinson has never been mean or unfriendly or a total asshole. Like with Alex. He was all cool with her, and then she had to go and blow him off like that. But anyway. That's Alex's problem.

She just needs a good fuck, only she's got nobody to give it to her. That's it. She's all frustrated and tensed up inside with no way to release it. And then she looks at me and can't avoid being reminded that she's miserably celibate. Then again, she's always the one who's wanting to know things I've done with guys, "to store away for future reference."

Like: "What do you do when he's down there... you know, doing stuff..."

"You mean eating you out? Carpet munching?" I love giving her shit like that. She always gets all red and embarrassed.

"Yeah, yeah, that. What are you supposed to do with yourself? Like, what about your hands and stuff? What are you supposed to do then?"

"You *knit*, dummy, what else?"

True Acts Of Love. That's what Alex and I used to call them, back in high school, when we were looking for signs that would let us know a guy liked us, REALLY liked us.

Alex would say, for example, "Missy. True Act Of Love? In the cafeteria today, he stacked his tray on top of mine after we finished eating and carried them *both* to the dishwasher belt."

Or:

"Ohmygod, check this out! First period, he sat down next to me. Right in front, you know right in the *front row* where everybody could see, *right next to me* when he could have sat in the back with all the other football guys! Aaaugh! What do you think that means? Is *that* a True Act of Love, or what!"

If I were still playing that silly game right now, what would Robinson's True Acts Of Love be?

This is hard to say. When was the last time he did something sweet and romantic, like buying flowers or fixing me breakfast and washing the dishes? I hear stories from other

girls all the time about the dumb little nice things their boyfriends do for them. And then there's me and Robinson. Lately, whenever we're together, especially when we're at his place, it seems that all we do is either watch a movie and have sex, or watch tv and have sex, or have sex.

Not that I'm complaining about the sex. Don't get me wrong--I love to fuck. There's something about having slept with a new guy that makes me feel like I've just finished reading another novel and can add it to the bookcase of knowledge I've already got. And the collection is diverse. There's your standard pop fiction, a couple of old classics, cheap romance novels, a little bit of pornography, some boring science textbooks. And then there's a few I don't even know where to classify. Like, what about that one guy a few months ago who, right after he came, jumped out of bed, did a little victory dance around the room, and threw down an imaginary football at an imaginary end zone underneath the window? What was he? Sports Illustrated?

No, actually, that one was Christopher's cousin. And Christopher was the one who was always trying, every time I ended up on top of him, to push my head down towards his nipples, his belly button, trying to get me to go down lower and lower. Like I didn't know what that was all about. Who was I? Some old divorced guy's trampy girlfriend of the month?

That's not the way I work. I'm the one who gets serviced. And lots of times in the past, driving back to the apartment at maybe four in the morning, I'd thought about going in and running into Alex's room, panting, breathless, shaking her awake-- "Guess what? I went *knitting* tonight!"

Now when I think about it, it occurs to me that, of all the guys I have been with, Robinson is the only one who does unconditionally what other guys recoil from doing at certain times of the month. I can't remember a time when he didn't. I can think of more times when I ended up grabbing my underwear and keys and stalking out of some guy's place because he would stop and go, "Oh, ho, okay, wait a minute now..." But Robinson? He's a good sport. A true champ, in fact. It takes balls--it takes a real man to put his face between some girl's legs when he knows he's about to go diving into the Red Sea. That has got to be, by far, the truest act of love ever displayed to me by any guy. It tops everything Alex and I ever came up with in high school. What was it that she had said about him before?

Yeah, Robinson's a good guy.

The sign to my left flashes by, telling me I've got another mile and a half before I hit the University exit. I think about life right now, the whole picture. How even though

she's got bad fashion sense and even worse taste in music, Alex is a good kid. Pretty damn insightful. Maybe, as a favor to her, I could hook her up with one of the guys I know. Mike from Claremont, maybe. Or that cute guy I met in the supermarket in San Dimas. So what if he was kind of buck-toothed. He had a pretty good body. Alex would appreciate that.

But I don't spend a lot of time worrying about it. There are other, more important things to think about. Like sex and Robinson and Hunter and a few other guys in the past few weeks. But always back to Robinson, always back to true acts of love. I'm playing stop, rewind, play, pause, rewind, play, pause, rewind, all over again and again in my mind.

The tape switches into Auto Reverse and pretty soon the Pixies come on. It's one of their old albums, *Doolittle*. The beat is hard and stomping off my windshield, the windows, the roof. It fills the car, engulfing me, until I'm swimming in it, full, overflowing.

Black Francis and I are singing together, singing loud, screaming about wanting to be debasers, spitting the words out strong and forceful, shrieking. I've never felt so, I don't know, happy, just big grin goofy happy all over the place, remembering Robinson, certain times of the month, thinking about how much he really loves me.

He must really love me.

I reach over to adjust the EQ and my car swerves into the next lane. Behind me, a car horn honks, but I don't care. I turn up the volume even more, until Black Francis and I are competing, my voice drowning out his, his riding out over mine, until it's hard to tell which one of us is actually the recorded voice blasting out of the speakers, screaming about wanting to grow up to be, be a debaser.

I'm still screaming and laughing, singing along and smacking my palms against the steering wheel as I pull off University and coast into Robinson's neighborhood.

I would think that a place that charges as much as it does for rent would have built a bigger parking lot, but as it is, the Groves is too exclusive to provide parking for visitors. After driving twice around the block, I finally park the car out on the curb five doors down from Robinson's, in front of a fire hydrant, the only available space left. It looks like everyone and their brother is out tonight visiting at the Groves. It could even be a party.

Any other time, I probably would have tried to look for that party and forgotten about the reason I came over in the first place until it was time to pull out the diaphragm again. But not this time. Imagine Robinson's surprise when I ring his doorbell and he finds me right on his doorstep ready to throw myself into his waiting arms! And my diaphragm will already

be there, ready to go. I'm even thinking about maybe reciprocating some of his service tonight. What a surprise! I'm all giddy just thinking about it.



In front of Robinson's door, I check my watch. Two o'clock, right on the dot. Should I knock or ring the doorbell?

It doesn't matter. I know where Robinson keeps the spare key. I stretch up to reach the little ledge above the front door, feeling with my fingers, sliding them along until they bump over the key, placed off center a little to the right.

I'm tiptoeing into the living room, trying to pick my way through the dark, when I hear noises that shouldn't be. After all, it's two in the morning, Robinson has no life, he should be home in bed, asleep. I freeze. Beyond, in the next room, there's the low sound of people talking in the dark, a male voice and a female one, intertwined. Soft low talking, talking, and now a little comfortable laugh coming from the female, and the male responding with a deeper, heartier

chuckle. My heart throbs, twists, does a little dance in my chest, beating to be let out.

My next thought comes out of my mouth, loud: "What the FUCK is going on?" And I'm fumbling for a lamp, a light switch, anything, trying to turn on a goddamn light, hearing the voices stop suddenly, the sound of shuffling, fumbling, someone trying to find the light switch and swearing. Then I'm standing under a little circle of light coming from a bulb somewhere overhead, and the next thing I know the little circle has spread into a wide pool of clarity. I am no longer in the dark, but suddenly looking through a doorway that has somehow materialized and is now framing my best friend Alexandra Jane.

It takes me about five seconds to take it all in: Alex's bare legs, Robinson's flannel bathrobe hanging past her knees, the flannel bathrobe that I gave him for Christmas. Robinson coming in from behind, from the bedroom, rubbing his eyes, going, "Who is it, A.J.?"

This cannot be this cannot be this cannot be this cannot be racing through my head as I look first at Alex and then Robinson and then back at Alex again. Her expression is hard to read, but that is Alex for you. She was going to get something to eat, she told me; Robinson is a good guy, she told me.

And now my own stomach seems full, ready to explode, the bile rising up my throat to choke me. Robinson and Alex's faces are blurs looming within my line of vision, and I am going to spill over. My head, my heart, my guts. Bursting. I'm not going to cry, I tell myself, and I don't. I turn my head and force myself to swallow, fighting the urge to empty myself of everything I have ever eaten.

Dr. King's Death

The Birth of a Love Story

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King



The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

The Love Story of Dr. King

Burger King Is Dead:

The Birth Of A Love Story

Life After College, The First Year

My cunt is raw and my uterus aches from having fucked so much this weekend. The only way I can forget about it, aside from soaking in the tub and taking long hot showers, is to exercise. Pump up and down the Stairmaster, arms swinging vigorously at my sides, my knees marching up and down, higher and higher, climbing eight hundred flights of stairs and not getting anywhere.

Price has been phoning and leaving messages, and I have been keeping the answering machine's volume on the lowest it will go, erasing the messages without listening to a single word. I don't know how I managed before, without Caller ID.

Alex has called too, twice. The first time she hung up; the second time she left a message: "Call me. I want to know what's going on with you. Are you still fucking around with that Price guy? What is up with you and men with last names for first names?"

If Alex is making a reference to Robinson, she better check her facts again. Robinson's first name is not Robinson;

it's John. And she doesn't need to be bringing him up. I am through with him, I am all over that, fuck Robinson!

I repeat this over and over as I high-step my way up and down on the Stairmaster: fuck Robinson fuck Robinson fuck Robinson!

And sometimes, when it is Price on top of me, or under me, and we are madly pumping up and down in the bedroom, on the kitchen floor, in the bathtub, this is what cycles through my head. Fuck Robinson fuck Robinson fuck Robinson. Fuck him, just the way he fucked me. Him and his dirty whore. "Caroline is the only girl I will ever want to spend my whole life with." Fuck Robinson fuck Robinson fuck Robinson. Over and over, the beat matching my rhythm with Price perfectly.

I'm not sure what to do about Price. He's a good screw, and he's always home when I start feeling like I need to get out of my apartment and be with somebody. But he's also starting to get That Look when I catch his eyes on me, the times he thinks I'm not paying attention. I know he's taking a bad turn. Three phone calls within ninety minutes in one day is a bit much.

The Stairmaster beep-beeps in that quick, annoying manner to indicate I'm done. I read the screen and see that I've burned two hundred and forty calories in half an hour. I reach for my towel and wipe off my forehead. I'm hungry.

There's a Burger King a few blocks down the street from the gym, I remember. I haven't been in that area of town in a while, but I could walk down and burn some more calories before I order a diet Coke and a chicken sandwich. Anyone knows chicken is less fattening than beef, and anyway, by then I would have burned three hundred calories. It all evens out.

As usual, at least one idiot driver has to honk his horn and hoot at me walking down the street. I give him the finger and keep walking. Fucking moron pig. Just like all the guys I have ever met. Just like all the men I have ever known in my life, starting with my father. Even Price is a moron pig; he's sealing his fate with his phone calls.

It takes me fifteen minutes to reach Sun Plaza, the shopping center right across Burger King. Or at least where Burger King is supposed to be. I look again. Nothing but a pile of rubble. I can't believe it. On the far corner of the lot, right next to a port-a-john, is a sign: Coming Soon--Burger King, New and Improved.

Coming soon! That doesn't do me any good. It needs to be here right now!

I'm still staring at the sign, irritated and cursing Burger King when someone behind me says, "Burger King is dead."

I turn around. The voice belongs to a tall skinny kid holding a skateboard and wearing a Screeching Weasel t-shirt,

gray denim shorts that stop right below his knees, and faded black Chucks. Then I look at his face and I can see that he's not a kid, but somewhere around my age.

"What do you mean, dead? Who the fuck killed him?"

Screeching Weasel shrugs. "Don't get all over my case. I didn't do it. He's been dead for a while now. You might as well get over it. Anyway, the corporate bastards are bringing him back. Resurrecting him, you might say."

Corporate bastards? I level with him. "My dad's a corporate bastard."

"Oh. I'm sorry."

"That's okay. You didn't know."

"That he's a corporate bastard, I mean."

"I know. I'm sorry about it, too." I turn my attention back to the pile of construction waste that was once a restaurant. It reminds me of my hunger and why I am even standing here talking to this guy in the first place. "No, he's the sorry one. Sorry-ass bastard must be worth at least half a million dollars, and my mom and I don't even get so much as a how-do-you-do at Christmas time."

He doesn't say anything. Just keeps looking at me expectantly, kind of like he already knows what I'm going to tell him but he's going to listen anyway. I'm not used to this kind of attention.

My stomach growls, insisting that I can't stand around bullshitting with some strange guy like this for the rest of the day. My mouth doesn't seem to get it, though, because the next thing I know, I'm opening it and hearing more words come out. "So... um, you live around here?"

"About five minutes away."

I push my sunglasses back on my head. "You know where I can get something to eat?"

For the first time, he smiles, and I notice the way this makes his green eyes crinkle at the corners. His front teeth are slightly crooked, but he's got a nice smile. "Depends on what you want. Fast food on a tray, like Burger King? Or fast food where you sit down and get served, like Chili's or Friday's or Olive Garden?"

"You know any nearby?"

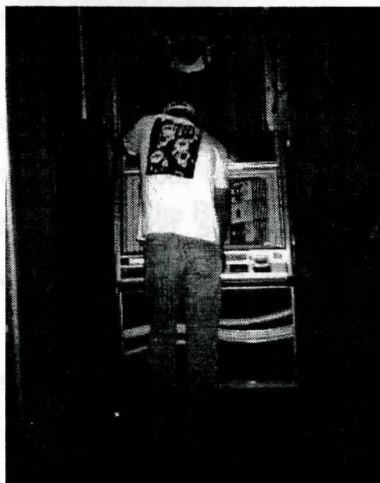
"A couple of streets over." He drops the skateboard, puts one foot on it, and looks ready to push off. "Personally, I stay away from chain restaurants. I was just going for a sandwich at The Bagel Shop right over there." He motions his head towards the little shopping center.

"Oh, yeah? What's it called?" I'm getting tired of standing out here in the hot sun and my stomach is really starting to make noises. I don't want him thinking those are farting sounds.

"The Bagel Shop. That's its name." He jumps on the skateboard and rolls off across the parking lot, calling back without turning around, "Take it easy."

I was wrong. He couldn't have been around my age. Any normal red-blooded male over twenty-one would have indicated some interest or attraction towards me. Maybe he was gay. But he could have at least said something simple like, "You want to come, too?"

So, it's a free world. I can do whatever I want. I certainly don't need to wait for an invitation to go eat where I want. I take another look at the rubble that used to be Burger King, turn around, and start heading for The Bagel Shop.



Screeching Weasel has his skateboard propped in the seat across from him. I hesitate about a second before I figure that talking to him while I eat would be a lot more fun than just sitting by myself.

"Hey, again. You mind if I join you?"

He looks up, genuinely surprised. And then he shrugs like it doesn't matter to him one way or another. "If you want to."

I wait for him to reach across and move his skateboard for me, but he doesn't. So I set my tray down and move the board myself. It's old and beat up, and the wheels and the rails on its underside are scuffed and worn, but I find myself handling it gently, making sure that I don't scratch it against the table or bang it down on the floor.

He notices how careful I'm being and laughs. Again, his green eyes crinkle, and I'm suddenly surprised by this weird, electric tingle that comes over me. I don't know if I actually, physically tremble. If he noticed, he doesn't show it. He says, "It's okay. You don't need to treat the board like glass. It's my cousin's."

I sit down in the skateboard's place. I am just about to ask him doesn't he think he's a little too old to be skateboarding, when something inside me comes out of nowhere and says, Stop. Have some tact. Think about how that would make him feel.

In some strange way, he already knows what I was going to ask. "You think I'm too old to be skateboarding, huh?"

I start unwrapping my pastrami on rye. The meat is still hot and the bread is starting to get soggy from the steam.

The man behind the counter had piled on the pastrami and put on lots of spicy mustard. I don't answer.

"That's all right," Screeching Weasel says. "I was hanging out with my thirteen-year-old cousin and his friends. They got to skateboarding and all of a sudden I felt like getting on one again. You know, for old time's sake."

"Trying to recapture your youth, huh?"

He gets a funny look on his face. "No, nothing like that. I'm not trying to recapture my youth at all. I just wanted to get up on a board again, do a few tricks, see if I could still ollie, do a 360, stuff like that."

Oh. I feel stupid for misunderstanding him. I also find myself hoping he doesn't think I'm stupid, which is stupid. Why should I care?

I try again. "I thought you looked like a skateboarder mall rat at first. You know, with the skateboard and all that."

"Yeah? Huh. Well, I was pretty surprised to see you looking for the Burger King. I would have taken you for some high-maintenance, non-fat-eating, aerobics-junkie kind of girl."

"Just because I'm all looking like a work-out addict."

He takes a bite out of his pastrami on rye, chews thoughtfully, and swallows. "I guess I shouldn't have judged you by the way you looked."

I'm not sure what to say. "I guess I did the same thing, pretty much."

We're both quiet for a while, chewing. Up this close, I can see the little flecks of gold and light in his green eyes. Clear and honest. Eyes I think I might trust.

"Doesn't it bother you, though, sometimes, when people look at the way you're dressed, and they take you for someone younger?"

He shrugs and shakes his head. "No. I don't let it. Why the fuck should I care what some fuck thinks about me?"

"I don't know." I don't know why I even brought that up, either.

"You shouldn't let what other people think bother you."

"I don't."

"So what if I told you that I thought you looked like a bitch who wouldn't give me the time of day when I first saw you?"

Now it's my turn to shrug. I don't have an answer.

"You know, I didn't expect you to come here to eat," he continues. "I thought for sure you were a chain-restaurant kind of girl."

"Just because of the way I was dressed?"

He crumples the waxed paper from his sandwich. "It wasn't just that. The way you were standing, it was like... I don't know, like you were putting out these vibes that said, Touch me, I'll rip your balls out."

I laugh. "Really? Nobody ever told me that."

"They were all probably scared of you."

"I would have come here to eat if I knew about it."

"I would have asked you to join me if I knew you would."

I can feel my cheeks getting hot, and I know now I'm blushing. I don't know what to say. Here I am, Miss Experience of the World, and this guy has me tongue-tied like a little virgin schoolgirl.

When I do find something to say, it's to change the subject. "You know what, I don't even know your name. I've been thinking of you as Screeching Weasel this whole time."

"It's Jack." He stretches his arm across the table, offering his hand to shake.

"That's a nice name--Jack. My friend Alex always gives me a hard time about the guys I date. That I've got this thing for men who have last names for first names."

Now why did I have to go and disclose that information? He certainly didn't need to know it.

If hearing me tell him about my boyfriends and the implication that he may become one of them has any effect on Jack, he doesn't show it. He says, "Yeah? What are their names?"

When I look at him to see if maybe he is being facetious, I can see that he's not. He is seriously interested in the conversation. "I don't know... Like Robinson. Or Pierce."

"That's only two. Hardly enough for your friend Alex to say you have 'a thing.' You can tell your friend Alex he's wrong."

"No, Alex isn't a guy. She's a girl. My best friend, actually. Ever since the sixth grade. She's really named Alexandra Jane."

"What about you? You still haven't told me your name."

"Oh. I forgot. It's Missy."

He runs a hand through his hair to clear it off his face, but the bangs flop back over his right eyebrow the same as before. "Missy. That's a nice name."

"Thank you."

There's another silence.

"So you listen to Screeching Weasel, huh?" I ask at the same time he says, "You know about Screeching Weasel, then?"

This is kind of too weird.

"I've got all their albums," I tell him.

"I would never in a million years guess that about you."

"There's a lot about me that people would never guess in a million years."

"I know. Everyone's like that."

I don't know why, but when the conversation seems to end there, I feel compelled to tell him more. "There's a small music and video store down by where my mom lives. You know Rialto Gardens, the apartment complex? It sounds fancier than it really is. That's where I grew up. Anyway, across the street in this one shopping center, there's a video and music store that carries some cool stuff. That's where I first found out about Weasel. I remember I went in one day, just walking around and checking out stuff because I was mad at my mom, and the apartment was just too small for both of us and I didn't have anywhere else to go. It turned out to be a really cool place."



"Oh, yeah? What's it called?"

"It's Nameless."

"It doesn't have a name?"

"That's its name. Nameless Records."

We both go back to our sandwiches. Jack finishes first. I suck at my diet Coke, but there's no soda left, only ice. My straw makes the loud sucking noise of nothing but air being drawn up. Across me, Jack cleans up his part of the table, picking up stray bits of pastrami, wiping up drops of mustard.

He stands to leave. "I should get going. My cousin's probably wondering where I took off with his skateboard. It was nice meeting you." He picks up his tray and reaches for the skateboard.

"Nice meeting you," I say automatically. I watch him leave, the door slowly swinging shut behind him, the cow bell tinkling annoyingly against the glass. In the silence that follows, I remember Pierce, the unanswered messages. Outside, Jack has set the skateboard down and is pushing off, heading into the sunlight.

I'm not sure how long we were talking. I can't remember the last time that I ever actually sat down and talked to anybody, that I really talked to somebody. It seems now that it was such a long time ago when I was climbing imaginary flights of stairs on the Stairmaster, surrounded by others on

treadmills, all of us gaining miles and miles and staying in the same place.

I can't let him go, I realize. Not Jack. There are people like Pierce in this world, people like Robinson, people like Adam, Frank, David, and all the ones before, the ones whose names I can't even remember now, names I never bothered to learn. They were just bodies. And now here's Jack, a person, and I know with a suddenness that strangely doesn't surprise me--I know that if I let him go off now, he will be lost in a mass of people that I will be sifting through again, picking and using and throwing away.



Sun Plaza is not a very big shopping center. It takes me less than a minute to run across the parking lot, to reach the corner of Sixth and Orange, to get to the tall kid with long floppy bangs and a skateboard in his hand.

He's got his back to the shopping center, looking across the street, focusing intently on the razed building, or maybe reading the words on the sign: Coming Soon--Burger King, New and Improved. I can't see his face, but there are no vibes about him, nothing warning me to keep away, nothing to stop me from saying hello.

"Hey! Don't you know? Burger King is dead!"

He turns around and his expression, everything about his stance, is expectant. He's waiting for me.

I keep advancing. "Can I come where you're going?"

He grins. Slowly, like ice cream melting on hot apple pie, spreading across his face. "Sure. If you don't mind hanging out with a bunch of little kids."

"I want to," I say. "I feel like being a kid again."

He offers me his arm. I take it and hop on the skateboard. Together, we go down the sidewalk like that, me rolling on the board, Jack walking alongside, steering, helping me keep my balance.



another lo-fi product from



gorsky press

PO Box 320504

Cocoa Beach, FL

32932

www.gorskypress.com