

That Lie That Stood Still Stands!

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On the work-truck stereo: An alluring rendition of Korn's "A.D.I.D.A.S."—acronym crucial—as covered by Erasure Huddle, drove Jef Royce to sing the chorus aloud: "All Day I Dream About Sex, all day I dream about fucking!"

He was in the utility import he'd inherited from his parents, beside a woman who'd been lately hired to clean up around the roofers at construction sites they visited. It made the company look progressive, is what his boss had said. The janitor's name was Sandra and she was about as chaste as anything, Jef figured, judging by her chubby appearance and prudish demeanor. She was a Christian.

"All... Day I... Dream A... bout Sex!" he persisted, blowing off steam from yet another day in the sun. Once, Royce did dream about sex all day long. Before adulthood/the real world, and its complications, overrode the natural instinct to procreate plus practice a lot for procreation. He resisted the override.

They were listening to Kid Keen's podcast, since they were too far from campus to listen to the live local radio show done in-studio. He judged the situation again. He propositioned her, to play the field. Sandra accepted. Jef pulled onto a quiet rural road and they enjoined. It was awkward, without beer, because Sandra was actually quite tight. She was tight enough to cause discomfort on his condom-encased shaft, the slot-like bulge of her tube squeezing him uncomfortably on either side; not the top or bottom, but on the sides.

"How was it for you?" she asked, innocently.

He had faked his orgasm despite her small fatty boobs encased in a sportsbra. "A cunt is a cunt is a cunt," he replied.

"Just take me back to my parents' house."

He did as instructed.

"My mother thanks you," she said as she exited the work-truck.

Royce had no parent to cling onto. He lived with his in-laws without his lover and decried a relationship other than convenience. Yet his first name his parents had chosen after an alterna-grunge song; now, at age 26, he was glad to have the "one-F" Pixies-song distinction several years after their deaths. They had taught him nothing about the real world... except that fucking made the world better. He "always fucked," on a whim, maybe due to them. He'd fucked his almost-fiancee Jenn that way, at first. Now, this one.

Losing Jenn was the best thing that had ever happened to him; his new parents were his exes' parents, plus his Belling U teachers, then his supervisors at work. He'd dabbled in Christianity for a while, before regaining his libido; the crucified Christ figure prevalent in all churches quashed his sex drive (as it was meant to). His emerging libido sprung from an earlier age.

Both he and Jenn had "peaked" in grade 9, managing to maintain their respective popularity until graduation despite most of the homecoming-court peers growing taller, bigger, stronger, faster. For a while it bothered Jef, mostly because of the. For a while it bothered Jef, mostly because of the singing hot-air from gossipers. After a while, nobody seemed to mind his physical ineptness at 16, 17. After college and early-career jobs, it all mattered less than the size of his cock, which was substantial. A glorious tool. Which he used, repeatedly, to get ahead. This was maybe to make up for whatever had happened with Jenn at Belling.

Six year ago in their just-off-campus apartment, delicate Jenn-the-almost-fiancee had told him that she was pregnant, morosely. This was roughly two weeks after Jef had "accidentally" had sex with a teen living by herself in a unit of their off-campus housing. (Pay it no mind, now that it was over? was her standing line of questioning.) He chose not to think about any of it. Instead: What would the prevailing society do about this new godly intervention of a child? Jenn would drop out of Belling's academic program to nurture the baby, surely. Would he be forced to take a job to support the dizzying obligations of creating offspring? As sophomores the waifish couple knew only that they would not marry and continue to rent the apartment under her name, because aside from their cars, student loan debt from a private college would be their biggest burden as a young couple with child(ren).

Abortion was out of the question, according to Jenn, who insisted that the all too common procedure would be too similar to "eating fetus" and she wanted no part of cannibalism. Jef did try to understand why she thought this—for one, sometimes mommy doggies suckled on the encasements of fresh pups before devouring each of them in a methodical way, disposing of unwanted birth-residue along with the pup-births, in one of the goriest solutions available to any new mother who wishes to remain childless.

Why Jenn had turned almost overnight from a pro-choice liberal into a conservative pro-lifer had less to do with rights of their unborn than with the gift and promise of starting a family, for her, figured Jef. He was excited too. It would be fun to see his genes with Jenn's genes, amalgamated into a composite of the two of them—or perhaps into somebody unlike either of them. This was a ready way to play god and goddess.

How many women would refuse a child if gifted with one? Jef could not guess. Maybe scads of females were committing abortion on airs with dogs devouring their own pups, on trend and in tune with the new ideology of these fast food times: A fetus is only human if it's breathing and bloody in the maternity ward. Were these baby-killers chillingly dismissive, or simply unaware, of the gestation period of human life? He knew that a fetus can mentally process any Mozart (or alt-grunge tune) it hears in the womb. Schooling a child without the knowledge was inhumane, according to his wife's advisors.

Everything a pregnant woman engages is engaging with the fetus, rearranging its neurology, according to authorities on the subject. From arguments and make-up sex, to the naptimes, to errands in the station wagon or S.U.V., to soccer-mom stuff to library runs to tailors to shoe repairers, to a nostalgic live band, to a get-together that brealt resembled the one from everyone's college days, to the party nobody knew happened during to college, to the narthex at church, to the continuing ed class at the community college, to the fudge cake conglomeration that might've made a mil, to and of course daily meals, daily frottage, daily slumbers... the fetus is definitely learning. Even tricky intellectual pursuits of the mother cause growth in the unborn, mapping its brainwaves for life. (Scientologists, he'd learned, require absolute silence around any pregnant woman, lest the child be unduly scarred.) (Serious doubts over the mental health of society began to rattle him, when he confronted the murderous aspect of sucking out "tissue" to rid the mother of a biological destiny, with the father having nothing to say in this matter, apparently.) Jef for the first time felt strongly on an issue—he felt political about abortion now—he was insanely glad, in a way, that Jenn was keeping their child despite them being 20, unprepared for life, dependent on student loans. It could work out in their favor! Besides, he was getting bogged down in his studies and thought maybe one class a term would be more his style than full-time student. He could and would get rehired as a roofer, to start with; being slight of build and light on his feet had more advantages than looking good in all garments off store racks. Most of his wardrobe consisted of grunge attire: that perfect blend of gothic chinos (with wallet chain), thick socks, safety-toe work boots, and tee-shirts overlaid with plaid shirts and canvas jackets. He'd been preparing for most of his teen years to become a warehouse worker, maybe. College education being secondary, even tertiary.

Yet Jenn became weirder as the pregnancy progressed, especially after the baby was born. She became her name, for whatever reason; (they'd decided against naming the child Adidas, and chosen a generic moniker, spelled correctly;) she was a robust number of pounds, at least eight, at birth. Which made her an immediate talking point of her parents—the two of them being slim and unaccustomed to the heavy things that accompany a bigger body; she also had _____ eyes.

Jef Royce was the more maternal, as it turned out. He quickly dropped three classes, keeping only his quantum mechanics course, to care for the colicky infant. In addition to big-bones, the baby also cried continuously. Doing a jig worked as well as coddling, to subdue the child, which meant that Jef could design his own program to be a dad. He loved this aspect—now was his chance to rethink those underage years of choosing a school and its debt, in favor of a minimum of classes while keeping his day job to pay for rent and utilities and food and parties and yes, now, a little girl. She grew faster than either he or his wife could ever expect... she was an Amazonian warrior woman already, with two parents who resembled (in their own words): a size-2 Jennifer Anniston and a boy-sized (14x?) Christian Bale.

Before long, just after his little began to speak in monosyllables, Jenn got pregnant again. By then the three of them were still living in the off-campus apartment near campus despite both of them reducing their course-loads to one class. They were championing a modest move to the heart of Capitol City, into one of its exquisite lofts replete with amenities (—due to cashing their student loan checks, they could afford

a middle-class lifestyle—), when the second child was born. The move never happened. Instead, Jef moved in with his in-laws because Jenn one day packed up her things and deserted him and the toddler and the baby.

As the girls grew, Jef told them only this: “Your mother is off visiting the rainbow people.”

In his mind, the girls knew their mother was safe, adventurous, intelligent. In his mind, Jenn was overwrought and unattainable. He in truth had no idea where she’d gone, dropping everything connected to Belling and instructing her parents to ignore any contact attempts by Jef, the aggrieved spouse-to-be. He could never be bogged down by harboring notions of a mother’s disgrace. He shied away from decrying her, destroying her, in men-only groups for single fathers. His memory of the rainbow-haired woman included silhouettes of her poring over texts while she lounged casually and strangely while fully dressed on their shared bed, juxtaposed with a few glimmering moments in which she played the vixen. Her dyed hair remained with him despite meeting her months before she made a rainbow of her hair.

“She’s off visiting the rainbow people,” Jef would say, whenever his girls inquired about their mother. It was a lie and it stood, remained standing. He did have no clue as to where Jenniffer went. Yet this too was part of life; no guarantees, no formulas. Jef’s in-law-parents were fine babysitters and teachers if asked. As the years rolled by, he began to rely more and more on his exes’ mom and dad.

When the eldest was five, and the younger four, Jef decided to begin dating again. His job as foreman for the roofing crew paid handsomely enough, yet it was the cruel absence of a family feeling that sent him running. Despite all, Jef was lonely. And he needed his daughters to have a loving home-life; daycare would not do; the girls needed better. It would never work out to allow strangers to raise his kids. The girls, for their part, did invest their faith in Jenn’s parents, as well as in their doting father, who was doing everything he could to keep them happily ensconced in contemporary society.

One day at home Jef watched his eldest daughter draw a stick mommy, using a _____ crayon. She put a cornflower blue dress over the figure, then added a rainbow of squiggles for the mommy’s hair. When she drew her daddy she used tan because his skin was bronzed from working construction in the sun. His curly hair came up in little tufts like flames from his ears and forehead. Since his coveralls always look dirty when he got home she gave her daddy brown clothes, “to hide the dirt”. Then she colored some emerald zigzags for a lawn, drew some burnt sienna birds in the shape of a V, and used silver to create puffy clouds. The girl scribbled her little sister into the scene, and again picked up the _____ crayon to put herself in the picture, wearing the magenta halter top and white shorts Jef found so frequently in the laundry bin. She colored four sets of royal _____ eyes at the same time, then four sets of _____ noses, then four sets of orange-red lips. Then she made a triangle on her head with the black crayon, since it was almost Halloween.

“Look what I made,” She said, craning her neck upward from her chair. (Standing, Jef was only a bit taller than she.) “I’m a witch ’cause I’m casting a spell to bring mommy home.”

“Is that our family?” her father asked, innocently and nicely, he thought.

She clutched the drawing close to her chest. “I messed up,” she murmured while crinkling its edges. “I tried to make it perfect!”

Jef parted the girl’s blond curtain of hair, and lifted her head toward her with a thin set of fingers. She started quaking despite her resolve to remain still, and swallowing several times, possibly to refrain from crying.

“I miss Miss Shagryne,” the girl wailed.

“Your librarian at school?”

Jef’s daughter nodded, her curls bouncing in the fray.

“Are you sad, because she fell into a coma?”

“Daddy! How could she fall into one of those?”

Jef fell into a reverie of quasi-anonymous faces and insinuations. “Why are you still single?” they’d repeatedly asked. “You’re a good-looking guy, hey, you’re not one of those confirmed-bachelor types, are you?” they’d rudely insinuated. Yet dating again would be difficult. How could he ever replace Jenn?

His older daughter slid off his lap, wiped her nose with a forefinger, then pranced off out of the room with:

“One bubble crashes into another bubble while bubbles appear all over... Some connect like the dots but most do not, you bubble-head.”

A *Playboy* subscription went to Jef Royce no matter what; he’d kept one since embarking on the Bell U scheme to enjoy his erudition, while still in high school, underage. He flipped through an older one (January/February 2015) that talked about “Low T” and the raging testosterone/steroid epidemic, alongside full-frontal blow-ups of a sexbot female and extra pages of her nude posse. It also contained an interview with Dan Savage, the famous “Dear Abby”-type blogger /satirist/ columnist. Jef dazed off, reading this passage: “Basically, kids, there’s a switch in your brain that you can consciously flip, and it makes you gay. It’s a choice you make. So let’s have them make the choice and prove it. The fly in the ointment is that some of them are closet cases, so they could probably do it and claim they won the argument. But at least we have videotape of them sucking people off.” *Closet cases? Who?* “Look at Marcus Bachmann, Michelle Bachmann’s husband. Anybody who has gaydar—anybody who has *eyes*—looks at him and sees a tormented closet case who has externalized his internal...”

A moment later Jef’s youngest child charged into the kitchen. She grabbed for his tie, stubby arms flattening the discarded *Playboy* onto the table in front of them, because she had a riddle to share.

“What is the riddle?” Jef asked.

“Daddy, you’ll never guess this one, not ever,” his littlest child said.

“Try me,” said Jef.

“What’s the only, only, only time a liar never lies?”

Jef put on a cheerful face of inquisitiveness. “I can’t guess,” he said. “When is the only time a liar never lies?”

Giggling, this the second child burst, “When they call themselves a liar!”

Reminded again that pure love between parent and child does exist, Jef sighed deeply and, feeling his system generate some of that love, pulled his daughter onto his lap. He stroked her pudgy jaw, gazed into her trusting eyes.

Her wavy locks the father then crushed into his fists—though he’d twisted the kid’s hair into braids the night before, they’d come undone by this morning—until the child began to whimper.

Expelling air, the man loosened his grip and smoothed the scrunched strands back into place. He decided never to tell her she stood less right than wrong of conscience; he decided to let her be, inside that precious bubble.