

Made by God

Oliver

Her carrot coloured hair stood around her head like a flashlight and shone even in the sparsely lighted bar. That's why I saw her right away. It was a Saturday night and still early, elf o'clock, not later, when I entered the disco. There were hardly any people yet. She sat pushed up high on a bar stool, I caught a glimpse of the white triangle between her legs under her miniskirt. From the distance in the dark she seemed to me the perfect street girl, ready to take me in. But when I stood next to her at the bar I had a better look. I saw that the hair was not dyed but real; so were the long dark eyelashes, shyly lowered on her freckled cheeks. She obviously was aware of me. I tapped her elbow and asked, 'You drink something of me?'

'Water,' she said.

'Only that?'

'Yes, please,' her lashes went up and down again, but I couldn't see her eyes. I don't remember precisely how the conversation developed, but it started like one big cliché. She said something like, 'it's cold outside.' I said, 'Yeah, Christmas is around the corner,' and so on. Before long she became more open and started to trust me. Unfortunately for her, I was the wrong guy to trust. She said, 'I have a bet on with my friend Kitty. She challenged me saying, I would never dare to go to a disco all alone to pick up some guy for the night.' I smiled and thought, now she found the right guy. I said to her, 'and so you went, dauntless, dressed up like a pussycat waiting for me to win your bet, sipping from a glass of water.' I was touched by her blushed cheeks, her freckles were changed into big pink dapples. However, rather ad rem she answered, 'if I only had known it was that simple, I would have started much earlier.'

The music was turned on louder, it got crowded around us, people pushed at the bar to order drinks and some girls started to dance. I also asked her to dance, because we had to shout into each others ears and her maddening odour, it wasn't perfume, filled my nose. Instead of more water I'd bought her a glass of wine, which she didn't refuse. We danced and shortly after midnight she'd turned into a loose, supple red-haired cat. She won her bet gloriously. That night I deflowered her and she moved in with me. One week, two weeks, every night I found her between my sheets. I was pleased, I'd never possessed a girlfriend, so sweet, nice and understanding, intelligent and naive.

After a month she told me she was over time, it never occurred to me that could happen, not to me. Every girl I had slept with had used something, but she, this woman didn't? She'd caught me in her claws, her tentacles, and I had to become a father and a husband. This scared me to death and unfortunately for her, she had met the wrong guy, after all.

My parents divorced when I was six. Mum took off with a younger lover and I stayed with dad. Who had not been interested in me one bit. He got rid of me by putting me in an expensive boarding school. I never saw my parents again and lost all confidence in marriage and having children. I told her so, when she was actually pregnant. She said, 'I understand, that. I'll have the kid alone.' I said, 'so you went for the child, never for me.' She said, 'No, I love you, I'll wait for you, you can always come back to me.' Wasn't that sweet? I was touched by her big heart, but didn't believe one word.

I left her somewhere in January 1992. I'd easily got a job abroad as a geologist and worked in Australia for a couple of years, I moved to Indonesia and finally worked in Brazil. I lived as a bachelor; was often drunk; my best friends were whores and I was extremely lonely. But I didn't pity myself, I chose for this life deliberately.

I had no idea how she found me, but each year I received a photo of a boy called

Joey, the picture was made on his birthday in August. The first photo she sent me showed a baby on the arm of a very mature and beautiful looking mother, my orange-haired vamp. The following years she'd left herself out and it was only an orange-haired, freckled boy who laughed at me. The sight of him stung me as the thorn of a rose. A few years more and the photo's were accompanied by extremely complicated drawings of machinery and space monsters, the sort of drawings I made, not yet ten years old. The sting became deeper as if needles and nails drilled my heart. This boy grew up without a father and I grew old without a son.

After fourteen years a paper was sent instead of drawings or a photo. He had to write about his father's profession for an assignment at school. I was touched again, or rather it was as if a tree trunk crashed my life. I sat down on a stone somewhere in the Brazilian jungle and cried. At first soundless with my head in my hands, then louder and louder, till I screamed out of stupid frustration. Thick walls of ferocity, pride and numbness inside me crumbled down and the incredible softness of an egg yolk started to flow. I stood there in the jungle, between massive old trees crying like a baby. I was shaken and didn't know what to do. Of course I knew, but it took me another four years till I dared to go back to Carly and her son, our son.

Carly

I saw him standing there, clipped out from the cold tube light that streamed behind him through the door. He came towards the bar where I sat awkwardly on a high bar stool. As soon as I discerned his face I looked down. He started talking and bought me a glass of water, I didn't dare to ask for wine, although I was dying to try it. I had no money on me and didn't know the rules, yet. I made up a story of a bet I had on with a friend, she would have said I'd never be able to find myself a one-night-stand. He believed me, of course he did. He was looking for one and I was glad, because I had nowhere to go that night. He bought me wine and I drank probably too much, who knows. We danced, for the first time in my life I danced. He sniffed in my hair and I lost myself in his masculine scents.

I never told him anything about my past. He never knew I was dressed like a penguin till that day I met him in the disco. My parents had died in a car accident when I was ten and a nasty, religious aunt brought me to the convent to turn me in a maid of God. It took me twenty-four years to deliberate myself from this crazy idea I was God's lover. I didn't believe in Him anymore and I realised I never had believed in Him.

That afternoon I'd escaped the convent. I'd stolen a miniskirt, a sexy jumper and a pair of pumps, it had been easy to grab and hide them under my solemn garment. I'd changed behind a wall and left my nun suit in a garbage bin. I entered that disco because it was warm inside and the best place to pick up someone to spend the night with. I was then still thinking to buttonhole some girl. I don't know where I got the guts from, but when he started talking to me, it became all so easy.

That it turned out to be so good with him was just plain luck. I couldn't have had a better guy to deflower me. I laughed inwardly and said to myself that I'd finally found the real God, and of course I fell in love with him. Within a month I was pregnant. He'd blamed me for not having used anything. I had turned him in? In what? I had no clue of life. I was stupid and naive and definitely not dyed in wool, as he thought I was.

He said, 'I can't stay, I don't want that kid, any kid.' After he'd told me about his terrible youth, I understood why. He was neglected and he didn't want to make the same mistake. It was exactly that what he did: making the same mistake, but I understood. I knew he loved me without knowing it himself and I knew he would come back to me, one day. I even said it to him, 'You can come back to me always, any time.'

Oliver left me when I was two months pregnant. I stayed behind in his flat. Again I loved someone who wasn't there to hold, touch or kiss. But Joey was born and I had a new

reason to exist. I desperately tried not to break the thin thread that tied me to his father and started to send photo's I made on each of his birthday's. I hoped this prove of Joey's existence must mean something to him, although it took me a lot of effort to trace him each year again.

We celebrated Joey's eighteenth birthday this year in August on the beach. He'd invited some of his friends and his first girlfriend, a sweet girl of fourteen. I was sad, realising I have to let him go. I'm 52, the orange of my hair is laced with grey threads, but my freckled skin is still silky and young. The few wrinkles around my eyes and lips are hardly visible and my body is just as lissome as than. I don't feel old or discarded, but I do want to start a new life, if I only knew with what or whom?

Joey

I have the best mum in the world. That dad was not around didn't mind me so much, she played them both, father, mother and even sometimes my grandparents. When I asked her once, 'who and what is he?' She answered, 'think of a God and you know a lot more.' Of course, that was her fantasy, but it helped me going through my adolescence. I was pestered a lot at school, because of my orange hair, the lack of a father in our house and my determined mum. I started to see myself as a new Messiah and felt infallible, it helped a lot. She always knew I would leave home when turning eighteen. I'd signed in for an art study, but my heart broke as I thought of her staying behind, alone. My birthday party was also a farewell feast, that she organised on the beach. She speched and said something like, 'live your own life, go your own way, be yourself and take your own decisions. I'm behind you, always, as a mother and a friend.' We cried, laughed and danced around a huge bonfire and it was a memorable birthday.

Coming home, early in the morning I saw him first. The roughly bearded homeless, twitching a walking stick nervously between his knees, who sat on our doorstep. 'Go away, you filthy beggar,' I shouted. But mum pushed me aside, went to him. I heard her talking, she even laughed at the man and then turned to me, saying, 'Joey, look who's here.' I had no clue and shrugged, went past them inside. She helped him on his legs and supported him up the stairs into our flat. She made tea, chatted and laughed and looked so beautiful. His red and sore eyes followed her everywhere, tears glistening in the corners. When I'd recovered somewhat from this strange encounter, mum said. 'Joey, do you remember what I once said? Like when you think of your father, think of a God. Well here he is.' I couldn't believe what she said, this lousy old man God? My father?

'Mum, you smoked to much pot last night.' I said.

'It's true, boy. And the funny thing is, that I knew it. I felt the thread that tied us together over all those years, although it had become thin as cobweb, pulling on me. I felt he was near.' Then I heard his voice cracking, 'Carly, I never understood that spiritual part of yours, but if I had listened to it then, I would have stayed.' I went to bed, so mixed up. I turned eighteen and met my father. Not a God, but a pitiful, pathetic pauper.

The next morning he was shaven and washed. He looked clean but was terribly feeble and weak. He stayed, apparently we had been living in his house, all those years. Mum was cheery, she made him laugh. I heard them play in the bedroom. After a month he felt much better, I got to know him and we started to have long conversations. One day he said to me, 'Joey, I almost died of a broken heart without knowing it. But it is mended now, mended by God. You know, not I was your God, it was she who was our God. She made you and healed me.'

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