

Jock Itch

MEG CLARK

I HEARD THE PERSISTENCE OF THE CAR HORN from inside my bedroom. I knew if I stayed there long enough she'd quit honking and just come in like she always does. She commenced to yell my name over and over and it got louder as she got closer to my bedroom door.

"Girl, get outta bed! It's noon-thirty and I'm hungry! I'm havin' a Big Mac attack!" Celia hollered at the reflection of herself in my vanity mirror. She spritzed some perfume and it made me sneeze.

I heard the soft popping of lids being put on and pulled off of mascaras and lipsticks. I sneezed again.

"Ok, you're up and in my car in 10 minutes or I'm leavin' without you," she lied. She plopped down on my bed and turned back the covers.

"It's cold! Quit it." I rolled back under the warmth of the electric blanket. "You go. Call Brett, she'll go get a burger with you," I lied. Celia knew just as well as I did that my lazy ass was getting up outta bed and goin' to McDonald's, of all places. My car was dead and Celia knew it, and I'd be trapped in the house all day doing chores for my parents if I didn't get out now. The thought of unloading the dishwasher and being at my mother's beck and call all day did not amuse me. I sat up. I was being pelted with a sweater and some jeans, socks and boots. Followed by a ball cap.

"Now come on. You have no excuse. I've dressed you." She paused to take back the original sweater she'd thrown at me to hand me a different one. "And you look fine. We're only going up to McDonald's. Come oooooooooonnnnn..."

I hated it when Celia whined and she knew it. I jerked on the boots and laced 'em up, and when I sat up, I was kind of dizzy. Yeah, I guess I could get something to eat after all. I gave myself a quick look in the mirror, licked my forefingers, and ran them underneath my eyes, trying to rid the smudge of mascara that was left from the night before. I slid my hair through the hole in the back of the ball cap and followed Celia out the back door to her car that was still running.

We pulled up and parked right outside the door of McDonald's. We had a quiet ride there, Celia listening to a new CD she'd bought and me staring out the window trying to wake up, wondering to myself why the hell Celia doesn't sleep in on Saturdays like the rest of the teenage population. She had already gone to clean out her car, went to Sounds Familiar to get this whatever-it-was CD, and had her oil changed. She told me about all of this as we walked into the doors of the local Mickey D.

"Aaaaaah," she sighed. "Nothing like the smell of grease bombs in the morning." She turned to me and smiled. "Whadd-ya want?"

I stood in the back of the back of the line, not wanting to step up into the actual line because I hadn't quite committed myself to a Number yet. She always got the Number Two. I always had to decide. Celia smiled at some kid that was ogling her and waved like you do at a little kid and smiled real big. All of this was enough to make me sick.

I decided on the Number Three. We stepped up into the real line and waited for our turn. Celia was ordering for the both of us, as she usually did, when I whispered to her, "...and a cherry pie."

We both snatched hot fries and shoved the crisp greasy explosion into our mouths and munched hard as we found a table under the window, close to the front, because Celia liked to watch the kids on the playground. She sat the tray down, and we set our food to the side of it and put the tray on the table next to us.

"Listen, I'm gonna go wash my hands. You didn't even let me take a shower before we left," I complained, feeling grungier by the second.

"No need to explain. I'm coming with you."

I put a few more rogue fries in my mouth that had fallen out the box and proceeded to lead Celia to the bathroom. We washed up. I tried again to get the mascara out from under my eyes, decided it was futile, dried my hands, and followed Celia back out into the dining room.

She was so busy chattering on about who might be at the party later tonight that I saw him before she did. And I couldn't believe what I saw. There he was: middle aged, balding, with a paunch enhanced only by the screaming stretch of his faded red wife beater that had the Nike swoosh on the front. He had on shiny black Umbro soccer shorts that competed with the shiny lines of sweat that trickled down his neck into the faint patch of chest hair that gratefully disappeared under his shirt, only to reappear at his armpits. He had on black and white Adidas sweatbands around his wrists and white Nike swoosh ankle socks that wrinkled out of a pair of vintage black and white Adidas, old skool Run DMC style.

He ran a dirty fingernailed hand over the top of his gleaming dome, smoothing down what hair he had left. Before I went running for the fashion police, I instinctively took a second to check out Celia's expression. It was blank. I stood there watching her watch him eating our fries. She stopped dead in her tracks and wheeled around and had this look of complete astonishment and half embarrassment on her face. "Oh my God!! That Richard-Simmons-very-sweaty-man is eating our fries!"

Her face turned as red as mine did. I couldn't help but to laugh, which provoked a quick slap on my arm by Celia. "I'm serious! What the hell?" I looked over her shoulder and the very-sweaty-man, sure enough, was now opening a ketchup pack and squirting it into a pool on the corner of Celia's now opened cheeseburger wrapper. "Do something!" she half-whispered-squealed-whined.

"What do you want me to do, Ceil?"

*This is so damn embarrassing, I thought. She's the one who wanted to come here in the first place. What the hell am I supposed to do, exactly? Get the manager? I **could** just walk up to this loser; maybe he's got the wrong table or something. It could be an honest mistake.*

Celia stood there looking at me expectantly while I fidgeted with the random thoughts that came flying into my head. "Okay, check this out. Maybe he's just got the wrong table. Let's go talk to him."

"But he's already eaten my first cheeseburger!"

"I know, I see that. Be cool. I'm sure everything will be cool," I told her as much as I was telling myself. I took the deep breath that went along with being cool, readjusted my hat, and walked towards the very-sweaty-man who was

now taking a big swig out of my Dr. Pepper, which was apparently favored over Celia's Coke. He continued to eat our fries as we stood over him.

He looked up. I held his stare. "Hello, sir," I began. "My name is Billie, and this is my friend Celia. I think you might be at the wrong table or something, because you're, uh, eating our food." I felt my face go horribly red. He just looked at me. And then he looked at Celia. And then he looked at the cheese-burger wrapper. He ran his finger along where it was printed *McDonald's*.

"McDonald's," he said with a gushing mouth full of food.

He sounded like an idiot. "Yeah, McDonald's," I said. "So what?" He looked at me and Celia and back to me. And ate another fry. "Listen, you're at the wrong table, man. This is our food. This is clearly some kind of mistake. Maybe if we could..."

"If you could what?" came booming out of his fry-infested sweaty-man mouth. I was shocked.

"I'm sorry?" I was stunned into stupidity.

"If you could what? Maybe if you could go and get me some more ketchup? That would be great."

Celia and I couldn't believe what we were hearing. He shook a massive amount of pepper into his ketchup, and it made me sneeze again.

"Listen, if you girls are just gonna stand there sprayin' germs all over my food I need ya to move on, okay? I don't like people standin' around watchin' me eat."

I had to say something. I had to save our food. "Sir, I'm sorry, but it's *you* who has the wrong table. This is our food. We paid for it."

Celia whispered, "I paid for it."

"I mean *she* paid for it, and it's ours!"

"Well, if it was yours it would have your name on it, and your names ain't on it. It says McDonald's. Either you girls named McDonald's?" He looked dead in my eyes and he took a big huge juicy bite out of my Big Mac. And smiled.

"That's it!" I yelled. Celia was three steps ahead of me, already talking the manager's ear off and telling him what was going on. I got over there and put my two cents in. That guy was mackin' on my Mac! And I wanted him to pay for my lunch and I wanted a refund and free lunch and, man, I went *off*!

I was so goin' to town on this manager, I barely heard the familiar wailing of Celia's car horn over my own ravings. I looked out the front door and saw Celia looking white as a ghost. She was frantically waving me over to the car to "*Come on! Come ON!*"

I left the manager standing there and ran out the front door to the driver's side window. "What are you doing in the car? You just want to leave after all this guy...?"

"Girl, get in the car," she said. "I stole that man's Adidas bag!"

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I ran round the car and jumped in and she took off down the road. I looked at her all hot and bothered sittin' there drivin' hard. I looked in the floorboard behind her and sure enough, there was a big blue bag with the signature white stripes and a big Adidas logo on the side. She read my mind. I didn't even have to ask. She could barely stop to breathe she was so hopped up. "...And you were going off on that manager and you were being so rude to him so I walked away because I didn't want anyone to think I was with you, and then I saw that man get up to get more ketchup and I ran over and grabbed the bag he had on the seat beside him and I just ran! All I could think was him telling you, *Your name ain't McDonald's*, and man, that burned me up, so I just went over there and grabbed his bag, because by God his name sure as hell wasn't Adidas! So I took it!"

"You did *not*!" I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I bet that man was looking all over for his bag. Now that was some funny shit. I kept playing his reaction over and over in my head and Celia and I both had our sides and cheeks hurtin' from laughing so hard. "You are crazy!"

Celia popped in the new CD she bought much earlier that day and blasted it loud. We rolled down the street laughin' and singin' and went through the BK drive-thru where I always got a Big Fish and she always had to decide.

We were waiting for our food at the second window when Celia said, "Hey, turn around and look and see what's in that bag."

I was just as anxious as she was to see what the very-sweaty-man had in his Adidas bag. I don't know why, really. Maybe it was to see if it held some kind of answer as to why this guy had been such a jerk. Maybe it was to see if he had something worth anything in there. But neither was the case. As I unzipped the bag, I dumped it upside down on the floorboard, and the foulest of odors came

rushing out and filled the car with nauseating nastiness. It was a pile of clothes, black with mold and mildew. Socks that were crusty and yellow stained t-shirts. The windows couldn't come down fast enough. It was truly disgusting. We both hollered and cursed and made faces as we frantically tried to rid the car of this wretched discovery. I opened my door and pushed them out with my foot. They scattered all over the BK drive-thru in a big nasty mess. Celia was steady spraying Ozium all in the car. I gagged. I threw the Adidas bag out of the car with the clothes. But as I made the back swing on the Adidas bag, the last of the contents came flying out and wrapped itself around Celia's rearview mirror. A jockstrap. The very-sweaty-man's jockstrap. We both yelled. "Get that thing out of my car!" Celia yelled.

"I am so not touching that thing!"

"Well, I'm not either! Damn! Just get it out!" Celia was starting to get mad. About that time the lady came out of the drive-thru window, trying to hand us our food, and saw the commotion. And smiled at us. Celia looked at her desperately and the lady calmly handed her a straw. Celia gladly accepted it, gingerly wrapped a band of the jockstrap around it, and like she was playing Operation, slowly lifted it, holding her breath (as we had been anyway) and tossed it out of the window. The drive-thru lady continued to try and give us our food. She was beginning to get annoyed. The foul smell of that bag and its contents were lingering and we had both lost our appetites. Celia took the food from the lady anyway. I held our drinks and Celia checked the bag to make sure our order was right.

"Ya'll aren't gonna just leave that mess for me to clean up, are you?" the drive-thru attendant said, referring to the pile of clothes and Adidas bag that were left in the drive-thru lane.

I guess Celia decided she'd had enough because she didn't say a word and just drove off. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught the sight of the drive-thru lady's head poke out of the window. I turned back and witnessed the scene of the crime: the BK drive-thru littered with nasty-man clothes and that wretched jockstrap lying there. The drive-thru lady's face went severely red and she screamed after us, "Next time you girls just go to McDonald's!"