

Wandering Eye

by Jennifer Donnell

Summer makes everything better, except my boyfriend's wandering eye. The cafe brews the coffee extra dark and cold, or it just tastes like it is. The beach bubbles up the best waves and exfoliates our feet as we walk through the sand. On weekends, we strip out of work button downs and suits. Xavier isn't afraid to show some chest hair in a v-neck t-shirt or his wavy brown hair, blowing free, without a hat. My own brown hair becomes blond streaked from the sun as I begin wearing baby doll dresses shorter than an arm's reach down. Age appropriate and still not as short as the hip hugging shorts on the girl in front of us at Trader Joes.

But it's Sunday and she's right there.

Sometimes I find prayer long enough to conjure that we aren't face to face with anyone's short shorts. I don't know who I've become.

Sometimes the powers of chance listen. Other times fate has better things to do and, besides, it's California. 'Too short' is pretty much the dress code here.

She's a beauty, of that even I'd agree. At least she's a beauty from the rear angle. Her blonde hair stops at her left butt cheek as she bends over and tilts to one side to pickup some paper towels. Her legs would go on forever, but are held captive in simple brown sandals.

The first thing you learn dating a man like mine is that it's hard to tell age by someone's thighs or the backside curves of their ass.

He usually looks away after a meaty look, to feign respect, but she's especially exquisite and he's upset that he didn't get a work promotion. I usually look away too, but -this time- linger longer as I

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can't tell how old she is. She seems on the cusp of adulthood and I hate him for it. Sometimes we're lucky and a turn reveals that he's zoning out on the body of a late twenty-something, although it is rare. Other times, most of the time, they turn and we are lucky if they're nineteen.

"If they look that good in shorts." I warned him once, in a candid, humorous moment, "Then they're probably too young for you to look at."

She glances over her shoulder, smiles at us, innocent and oblivious to our thoughts, and he finally looks away. For a moment, I hate him. I hate him like you hate men who do that, who hurt you. First, my pain wells up as a feminist- who feels like a failure for putting up with his obsession. Next comes the sting of feeling like rape culture is knocking on my door. Finally, the pain of him withholding love, because you can't love one woman while you're staring eye to eye with the dimples above the ass on a gal with a crop top and low waisted pants.

Our son reaches toward the woman's long hair as she flips it back to neutral, standing straight. He gives it a yank, his toddler fist full of her hair. The poor girl shrieks in surprise and pain and I can't help but think that's what I ought to do.

