

Horny

by Mary Alston Capps

Cornelia stared in the mirror wishing them away. She'd locked herself in the bathroom for several hours now, but no one had even noticed. Her surprise at cutting her hand while washing her hair was nothing compared to horror she felt when she realized exactly what she'd cut her hand on.

Horns. Two small, sharp horns just about two inches above each ear, a soft bone-white, barely visible through her mass of dark brown hair.

She felt sick. She felt angry. She felt confused. But mostly angry. She had complained to her mother about brutal headaches, but all Lilith would do was smile and nod. And Dad was even worse, walking around the house whistling "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon". Cornelia hated Neil Diamond. All she wanted was a little respect and consideration - after all, she was thirteen.

"Mother!," her panicky voice echoed from the bathroom and down the hall as she opened the door.

"Yes, dear?"

She followed the sound of her mother's voice to the sitting room where she was working on her latest piece of cross-stitching. Cornelia sputtered and stammered and finally pulled her hair back, exposing her horns as though they were twin pimples erupted on Class Picture Day.

"Well, you're a girl, so they won't get as big as your father's."

The sound of Lilith's needle punching the linen, dragging the red silk thread through screamed in her ears like a jet passing overhead.

"Dad has horns?"

"Well, you certainly didn't get them from *my* side of the family!"

"Don't you think this is something you could have mentioned to me at least once over the last thirteen years?"

"Well, my angel, we discussed it and since we weren't sure if you'd even inherited your father's love nubs, so we decided we'd wait and see."

"LOVE NUBS?!?" Cornelia felt dizzy and sat down next to her mother. All she could imagine now was that, lurking under her father's preternaturally abundant hair, were love nubs. And it would seem that she had a pair of her own.

"Dearest, please don't fret. We suspected you were sprouting when you complained of headaches, but it will get better. They'll become a little less sharp in time and the headaches will diminish. Your father can explain his rather complicated family history when he gets home tonight. And, as I understand it from your aunts, the implications are different for females than for males, but let me reassure you that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. Especially when you get older."

With the idea of having "love nubs" burning an unwanted hole in her brain, Cornelia excused herself and wandered back to her room. She was expecting a classmate over to study and realized she'd better get dressed and try to do something a little more creative with her hair, in case her horns were more noticeable than she realized.

She had just gathered her books when the doorbell rang. Cornelia did not think she could have felt any more awkward than she already had today, but she was studying with Adam. They'd known

each other since elementary school, but he'd only ever thought of her as his very smart friend. She, however, had recently begun looking at him a little differently. But when he talked to her about asking Evie Mandel to the dance, she realized she'd have to be happy with just his friendship.

She let him in and they settled into the den with their books, laptops, and soft drinks. As Cornelia began reciting significant dates in American history, Adam found himself staring at her, as though he'd never seen her before. He thought "She's beautiful," but realized it was more than that. Cornelia looked up and saw his helpless gaze.

"I'm irresistible," she thought. She smiled at him. Adam blushed.

And her horns tingled.

