

Only losers reminisce about their show & tell days

by Ryder Collins

Worse than a magician who won't leave you alone at a bad Mexican restaurant; I'm trying to ask him what he's been up to, what he does for a living, married?, kids?, all that crap that adults talk about when they haven't seen each other in a while and don't really care and all he keeps saying is, Remember Harvey. Remember Harvey?

Harvey was his rabbit who bit a girl and made her bleed and then pissed on one of his enemies (and he had many), and Mr. S&T, thinks it was so high-larious. Still.

We were in first grade, for god's sake.

I've been calling him Mr. Show & Tell in my head. S&T for short. I am not trying to protect the innocent. Except maybe myself. I don't know how I got here. What sympathetic nerve S&T hit.

He is a small man with a large gut and some day soon will have long hairs coming out of his nose. He has possible halitosis and actual dandruff and is just what you'd expect. When he was a kid even girls bullied him and would steal his money. Somehow I always had to sit behind him. I remember because he had a constellation of skin tags on his neck. I thought about drawing stars on him; I thought about creating a new galaxy I would rule. I should have been learning math instead. I still can't balance a check book. I'm pretty goddamned broke, in fact.

Thanks, Tommy. That was his name in grade school. Now he's Tom with an "h." Thom. Now he works for some chemical company and makes a lot of money destroying the environment and keeping housewives busy.

I know all this because of the Internet.

He found me through the Internet; he's in town on business.

Tommy, Thom, S&T's still going on about Harvey. The look on Charles' face when the hot piss went down his chest. He still remembers the guy's name, for christ's sake.

He says, I shouldn't be telling you this.

Uh-oh. I grab my wine glass and empty it.

He says, Charles and I used to...He looks around, then hunches down over his bread plate. Classic secret sharing stance.

If this were a comic Hollywood movie, the entire white-tableclothed restaurant would fall quiet as Tommy revealed his dirty secret. Tommy's so obvious. He's always been obvious; it's one of the reasons other kids never liked him. We knew if we teased him he would cry; we knew he was so proud of his mean rabbit and his crappy stamp collection and the baseball his father got signed by Hank Aaron. My god, he'd bring the same crap in every year. I've got it all memorized, just like the skin tags. The Geek Bible according to Thom.

Now, Tommy's got some secret he wants to share and of course, it's sexual. It has to be. I grab the wine bottle and pour myself another.

He says, We used to...

Get on with it, I want to say. You used to what? Circle jerk and think of me? But doesn't there need to be at least three for a circle jerk?

Then I think, Oh my god, what if Tommy thinks this is a date? I slug back the rest of the wine. I mean, I ain't paying but still.

He says, Janice? Are you even listening?

Shit, he must have spilled the beans and I didn't even catch it. I say, No. I say it like I mean it. I say it like I'd say dork in third through eighth grade after I got partnered with him for square dancing. The do-si-do, badminton, ballroom dancing, situps, etc. I hated gym class.

He goes all turtle on me, just like in grade school. His big head slumps down on his neck, his wee chin hits his chest. He

radiates defeat. I always hated when that happened in class; it wiped out my galaxy.

He says, I thought things would be, well..., I thought, we're both adults...

I look at him, sitting there crestfallen. When he picked me up this evening, wearing a smart black turtleneck, which didn't slim his gut but was so much better than the fake Izods his mom bought him in high school, and real designer jeans, he'd seemed almost content with himself. Now he looks like he's going to cry. And it's my fault and on top of it all I need more wine.

I say, Just kidding, Thom. Just kidding. Let's get another bottle of wine and you can tell me everything.

I kick my heels off under the table. I've got a feeling we're gonna be here a while.

