

DIVERTING DEVOTION

BY Mike O'Malley

Henry and his date Nancy are sitting at a restaurant table holding menus.

HENRY

So... What are you having?

NANCY

Hmmm... Salad, maybe... maybe a sandwich... I don't know. Gazpacho, blech... watercress, eeoou-yuck, doubt it, you ever have watercress?

HENRY

No

NANCY

Fucking Sucks Shit!

HENRY

Ah--really?

NANCY

Oh yes really. Pleeese, is lettuce such a problem? Is regular iceberg lettuce such a fucking problem?

HENRY

I don't feel that...

NANCY

No, it's fucking watercress! Look at this place! (reading the menu) "Grilled pear and brie" as a sandwich... fucking doubt it! Why don't I just puke right here? Ya know, I'm so sick of this shit. I so hate it when some bullshit phony Chef Boyardee wannabe creates bogus crappy sandwiches then charges the fuck out of his customers so he can cover the overhead he brought upon himself by shipping in "vintage Formica" for the bathrooms.

HENRY

Well I don't really...

NANCY

It's like "Fuck you motherfucker, I could give a shit about your watercress-sun dried-tomato-ginger sprinkled seven grain sack-of-shit sandwich for fourteen fifty!"

(A beat or two)

HENRY

So... you wanna maybe go to a different restaurant?

NANCY

No, they let you smoke here. You smoke?

HENRY

No...

NANCY

Well... we might as well lay it on the table, cause if it's an issue—we better cut bait right here.

HENRY

I'm sorry uh, cut bait? What are you talking...

NANCY

I like to smoke. I like the thought of having carcinogens coat my lungs and the rest of my innards with a smoky black substance that may bring about violent pain and misery thirty years from now. So live and let die ya know? It's my vice, I'm allowed one. I eat a low fat diet. I run everyday, and I don't wear makeup except for a little cruelty free eyeliner on Saturday nights. People don't like it, tough shit. The fuck-holes can fuck off!

(Another beat)

HENRY

I admire your candor. So, tell me, how long have you been teaching the third grade?

NANCY

Too long, fuck, is it something that I enjoy, that I leap out of bed to do? Doubt it! Look at me. Twenty-seven and I look like a wrinkled prune around my eyes. Teaching kids? Right... when I'm not "assisting" the nurse.

HENRY

What do you mean "the nurse"?

NANCY

I mean, the nurse, the lady the kids cling to when their health goes haywire, and in a public school that's every second of every day. I do everything from wiping

NANCY (continued)

their noses, to cleaning their heads of lice, to dragging tissue paper across their asses just after the nurse does a pin worm check. Ever try to hold a kid after a pin worm check?

HENRY

No, I haven't had the pleasure

NANCY

Pleasure? It's like grappling with a squealing rat that's just had a bullet sucked out of its ass!

HENRY

Appetizing

(Yet another beat)

NANCY

Fuck teaching. I used to have visions of some disaffected inner city mish-mash posse with me at the helm. I think the moron police should have me committed for ever thinking that was possible. "Making a difference?" Yeah right... doubt it! It ain't reality. I know reality and it's time to move on... Fuck it!!!

HENRY

So you're leaving teaching...

NANCY

Fuckin' A

HENRY

So, what's on the back burner?

NANCY

Who knows? I've been saying I'm gonna leave for the last three years. But hell, I've still got seven months of this sorry ass shit to go. Who knows? I've always wanted to try Massage Therapy.

HENERY

Really?

NANCY

What's that look for?

HENRY
What look?

NANCY
If you think you're getting laid tonight you're dead wrong!

HENRY
I wasn't...

NANCY
Doubt it! I know the look. And you can bag the puppy dog faced reaction too!

HENRY
Yeah. Yeah

(HENRY gets up from his chair)

HENRY -- (continues)
You know, maybe...

NANCY
(Softening) What? Where are you going?

HENRY
I think...

NANCY
Please sit back down... please! I know what you're thinking. "She's swearing and all that, she's a pig blah blah, and I'm outta here." Okay let me... let me explain myself... really.

(He sits, and she becomes increasingly more vulnerable)

NANCY -- (continues)
I'm swearing because I like people to see my worst case scenario right off the bat. Worse case for me is a gutter mouth... so sue me. When ya got three brothers, it gets you that, and I got it, and somewhere down the line in a relationship I'll swear. My last boyfriend left me because he said I became a different person when we moved in together. His laundry list began with vulgarity, but the truth is that he just didn't have the balls to communicate, to be honest, to work through things. He thought the definition of commitment meant "hang out till you get bored, fed up, or find something better." The Fucking Dick... well fuck him!

HENRY
Okay

NANCY
So, here it is, all my sides out in the open. Yeah, I got work to do, we all got work to do, but the point is, I don't have time to get involved in a relationship that is just a disease in it's incubation stage. So here's who I am. If tolerance and acceptance ain't your bag then it's bye-bye, ya know?

HENRY
I know

NANCY
Why waste each other's time?

HENRY
We shouldn't

NANCY
Fact is, most of the time I'm a lot of fun. And Okay, I'll admit it's a weird opening, but it's just, in the beginning I think it's important to show who you really are, ya know?

HENRY
Mn-hmm

NANCY
No surprises later, just start off with your worst trait, steep like a human teabag in your flaw, and try to come out on top. *(Sweetly and sincerely)* But I still, you know, want to meet people and I don't... well, that was the first time I've tried something like that, and I...

HENRY
You were very convincing!

(She laughs)

NANCY
Yeah well... What's your worst flaw?

HENRY
I'm addicted to sex

NANCY
That's a flaw?

HENRY
I guess I should steep in it and see if I come out on top

NANCY
(Deadpan) That's really fucking funny. *(A beat or two)* Gotcha!!!

(They both laugh)

HENRY
Yeah you did... you, you got me! This definitely... I mean, this so goes in the "Bizarre" file

NANCY
You're probably thinking that I'm whacked in the head, don't you?

HENRY
No, I know you're whacked in the head. There's no thinking, thought process, or reflective moment going on that theme. No, you are beyond a shadow whacked in the head. But then again, so am I. I dig honesty, bare bonesin' it. I dig daring, taking chances... you?

(They finally connect)

NANCY
Yeah... I think I might try the watercress after all! You ready to order?

HENRY
Fuck yeah! Where's the fucking waiter!

NANCY
Way the fuck over there!

HENRY
Hey Fuck-face!!!!

End Scene