

# Top of the World

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## TIJUANA SUNSET

The morning after the big blow out bash, the telephone on Dicky's night stand rings. It's not an ordinary ring, but a ring louder than the voice of God calling down to Noah. Unconscious and more than half dead, reeking of cheap vodka and cheap beer, and even cheaper cigars, Dicky drags the telephone receiver across the pillow and presses it against his sweaty ear. As he opens his mouth to grunt, it makes a sticky sound, like pulling your shoe away from a wad of bubble gum in a movie theater.

"Dickster, it's Biff," the voice on the other end says.

"Huh?"

"You know, like your best friend since we were two feet high, like the only guy you'll share your Elvis bong with, like your fucking best man to be who spent his whole quarterly dividend check on booze, pharmaceuticals, and strippers throwing you the best goddamn bachelor party west of the Mississippi. Wake up, dude, the tree's a shakin' and the apples are a droppin.'"

Pulling his head away from the night time drool pool on his favorite pillow, Dicky says, "Biff, is that you?" Confused, Dicky's mind is shattered by the after effects of Hood River vodka, the cheapest vodka on the planet. "Where am I, Biff?"

"Open your eyes, Dickster," Biff says, his voice strong, aggressive. "You're home, in your bed, and alone as usual. Get up, we got things to do. You left your brain somewhere last night and we have to find it. Bloody

Mary's, Dickster, Bloody Elvis Mary's are the only thing that'll help you. Tip top, that's how you'll feel, tip top, two of 'em in your guilliver and you'll be on topa 'da world."

His voice hoarse, Dicky asks, "What time's it?"

On Biff's end of the line, comes the sound of Copenhagen chew spit plopping in the bottom of a half full, white Styrofoam cup. "Time for a dip, dude," Biff says.

Dicky's stomach churns over. The Black Bile begins to work its way up his throat, salivation levels skyrocket. "You bastard, I'm gonna heave," Dicky says, straining to rise up on his elbows.

"Take a bong hit, dude, it'll settle your stomach, calm the nerves. Elvis is on your night stand, stoked and ready to toke. I set him up last night, or this morning actually, just in case your stomach wanted to go for a swim in the porcelain pool."

Through encrusted eyelids, Dicky sees Elvis glaring down at him. A wood match dangles from his snarled upper lip as he waits impatiently to get high. "My guardian angel," Dicky mumbles.

"You're fuckin' right, so don't blame me for what your Cro-Magnon friends from U of O did. I don't align myself with them. I tried to stop them, but there were too many, far too many."

"Did? Did what?" Dicky mumbles.

"You really did just return to the land of the living," Biff says, spits, then continues, "It was the Brit's idea. Check your privates, dude."

Dicky does as told, lifts the sheet and looks down. "My god, I'm prepubescent!"

"I'm coming over. Talk to Elvis, get your act together."

"Coming over?" Dicky says through his internal fog.

“Yeah, I’m picking you up, the Ducks game is on in less than an hour,” Biff says, referring to the University of Oregon football team.

The fog begins to clear. “The game, I totally forgot about the game,” Dicky says. “I’m such a loser.”

“No shit.”

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At the bridal wake, the first gift Prissy unwraps is a matching set of panties and bra in pink. The second gift is the same, but in black. And the third is also the same, but in yellow and the bra is two cups too small and the panties are three sizes too big. Prissy sets these aside. She detests yellow, she thinks it makes her look like she has malaria. They’ll have to be returned. She also doesn’t care much for the friend who gave them to her, Jane, and Jane doesn’t care much for Prissy and is fully aware of her dislike of yellow. That’s why she chose it. That’s why she always chooses it for all of Prissy’s gifts.

Down at the University of Oregon, Jane was Prissy’s big sister in the Alpha Phi sorority, and it wouldn’t look right if she weren’t invited, and what looks right, is right. The charade must continue.

Prissy clears her throat. “I hope you kept the receipt, Jane,” she says, picking up the next package with a lazy, fluid motion.

“Receipt?” Jane says coyly. “I’m sorry, Lil’ Sis, I totally forgot.”

“Very well,” Prissy says, her mouth pursed. “It’s a good thing you don’t need receipts to return things at Nordstroms, at least some stores are still reasonable.” The other young women present nod their agreement.

“Whoops, I’m sorry, Prissy, I didn’t get them at Nordstroms,” Jane says, smiling impishly. All the young

women turn and gawk at her.

Prissy looks at the yellow bra and matching panties with growing distaste. At the sight of the growing smile on Jane's face, her distaste turns to unease. "Then where did you get them?"

"Mail order," Jane says.

"Oh, Victoria's Secret, they do returns," Prissy says, back on familiar territory.

"Woops again, Lil' Sis," Jane says, her smile turning to a grin. "I got them from Frederick's of Hollywood."

"That's totally gross," Prissy says, her face scrunched up like a dried prune. "They sell sex things."

"Sex?" Jane says, warming up. "Prissy, I didn't know you knew about sex, not being married and all."

Terri, the one whose gift Prissy is poised to open, fidgets uncomfortably in her chair. She doesn't want Prissy and Jane to get into it like they did at her baby shower. "Go ahead, Prissy, open mine," Terri says, trying to keep things on track.

"All right already," Prissy snaps, "don't get your panties in a knot."

Inside is a teddy bear dressed in khaki shorts and a U of O Ducks football helmet, the exact outfit Dicky wears when he watches the Duck games on the boob tube and swills beers with The Biff Monster. "That's to keep you company for when Dicky goes down to Eugene to watch the home games," Terri says, a dense smile on her face.

Prissy sets the teddy bear on top of the yellow panties and bra. "I hate football," she says. There are nods of agreement from all.

"Terri, that's real sweet of you," Jane says. Terri cocks her head sideways and smiles back at Jane. "But," Jane says and clears her throat, "for when Dicky's gone, a vibrator might be more appropriate."

"Jane!" Terri says, always shocked by vulgarity.

“Then again, it’s not a bad idea for even when he is around. You’d think a guy name Dick would know a thing or two about how to use his equipment.”

“Jane!” Terri shrills.

“Shut up, Terri,” Jane says and snatches up the teddy bear. “Don’t you know what this means, what this leads to?”

The others look at the teddy bear, puzzled.

“Well I’ll tell you,” Jane continues. “It means Prissy won’t be satisfied, and out of desperation will seek her satisfaction elsewhere.”

“Satisfaction?” Terri asks.

“Yea, like as in ‘Prissy Can’t Get No’,” Jane says, “like as in promiscuity, as in cheating.”

“Never! Prissy wouldn’t do that,” Terri says.

“What this amounts to is a major threat to the fidelity of our husbands. Parties, backyard Bar-B-Qs, summer camping trips, she’ll always be there to lead our men astray so that she can satisfy her selfish needs.”

Prissy finally opens her mouth, “You can’t be serious.”

Jane pauses, her eyes narrow, closing in for the kill. “Oh I’m very serious, Lil’ Sis. During my first year at U of O, before you enrolled, I had the ‘pleasure’ of getting to ‘know’ your Dicky first hand. And I know he’s a speedy weenie and snooze sort of guy.”

“That’s not true,” Prissy says, looking apprehensively at the others.

“Oh come off it, Lil’ Sis, boiling pasta stays hard longer than he does,” Jane says, taking a small package with a yellow ribbon from her handbag. “But I’ve the solution in hand. Our husbands will be safe,” she says and offers it to Prissy. “Never leave home without it.” A giggle passes through the circle of young women like a case of post burrito flatulence. “But you’ll have to buy

your own batteries. And in your case, Prissy, I suggest you pay a little more and get the rechargeable ones.”

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The wedding ceremony is like most wedding ceremonies, a smoke ‘em if you got ‘em situation. Uneventful, dull, if not down right mind numbing. Just once, when the priest asks if anyone knows of a reason the bride and groom shouldn’t get married, some girl would rush forward, snatch the vale from the bride’s face and shout out that she’s already married to the bride. But this is not the case, aside from a preacher that resembles a scraggly Eastwood just before a gunfight in a spaghetti western, silence prevails as silence always does. Thankfully, the ceremony is the abbreviated version, the abridged edition romance novel. If anything eventful is going to happen, it’ll be at the reception where the social oil is distributed in tall, fluted glasses. So onwards to the cake and champagne.

When the bride and groom arrive, the guests are looking hard at the rows of full champagne glasses, their contents growing warmer as the photo session drags on. When it’s finally over, Biff seizes the initiative, takes the first glass and gets up on a chair to deliver the first toast, a little something he came up with this morning while perusing the sports page on his porcelain throne.

Clinking his fraternity president’s ring against the side of his champagne glass, Biff begins, “Your attention everyone, your attention please.” He waits for the din of lip flapping chit chat to stop droning in the rented room, then continues. “I’d like to propose a toast to the bride and groom, Prissy and Dickster.” When the rush to the glasses is over and everybody has one, some two, Biff begins to spill his words of wisdom. “I’m no expert on

marriage, not being a married man yet, but I am an expert on football, by the way, how about them Ducks?" A few hoots among the guests.

"And football being the national pastime, I'm sure it has a ton in common with marriage. A team's got to work together to make it to the finals, and you don't really get to know your team mates until you've sweat it out together on the Astroturf. Sounds like marriage to me?" A few chuckles amongst the males. "And then there's the coach. The coach is to the team what God was to Adam and Eve. Every team needs a coach, every marriage needs a coach." Biff pauses, a perplexed expression on his face. Naturally, the coach to any couple would be their parents, but in Prissy's case it's not such a good idea since hers are divorced, have been for many years, don't really like each other and sometimes wonder if they ever did. Biff realizes he's about to screw the pooch with his coach metaphor, but being the kind of cat that always lands on his feet, even if it means breaking all of his legs, Biff decides to make a substitution. "So with me knowing so much about football and which way the Astroturf breaks, who could be better prepared to help you, Dickster, and you, Prissy, have a winning season and cream the Oregon State Beavers in the civil war game, than yours truly, The Biff Man."

The room is silent. Biff's grin fades. He attempts a recovery. "If there's anything you ever need, a ride to the vet for the dog you'll get, heavy duty sleeping pills to overcome one another's snoring, a receptive ear for your troubles, a shoulder to cry on, pharmaceuticals for your honeymoon, anything, just ask and you shall receive." His toast concluded, he raises his glass and drains it, then glances around the room for a fireplace. Finding none, he throws his glass against the nearest wall. Hopping off the chair, he disappears in the direction of the bar for a real

drink, then to the bathroom to reload his nose chamber with some high caliber white bullets of cocaine.

The toasts continue. Dicky's dad toasts something that sounds meaningful but is pure meaningless drivel. The mothers wipe their eyes. The band starts up with Sinatra's 'That's Life'. Prissy's step-father rushes forward to claim the first dance with the bride, but is cut off by her real father. Always diplomatic, Prissy says, "I'll dance with both of you, but real daddy is first, Step-daddy." Halfway through the dance, Step-daddy cuts in, followed moments later by Prissy's transsexual aunt, Josephine, or Joey, also sporting a tuxedo and shiny plastic shoes like the other men in the wedding party.

Eventually, Dicky gets his turn, though for the rest of the dance he's in dire fear that one of aunt Joey's male friends might cut in, not to dance with Prissy, but with him.

When the song ends, he ditches Prissy, figuring he'll see plenty of her soon enough, and heads to the bar where he finds Biff chatting up a pair of underage high school girls. Both of which Biff has given a very powerful cocktail, tasting like Cool Aid, but with a maraschino cherry that hides a little yellow pill of his own manufacture.

Dicky pulls Biff aside. "A little young, don't you think?"

"Young? Nonsense. Next you're going to say I'm too old for 'em," Biff says, leering over his glass of scotch at the two girls. "Don't let this marriage crap go to your head, and I don't mean the one craning around on your neck. Believe me, you'll be out on the prowl with me in no time. Here, take your vitamins," he says, giving Dicky a handful of yellow pills.

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