

On the Job Training

"It sucked."

My friend, James, wasted no time in giving me an oral report on his most recent sexual encounter.

"It was, by far, the worst blow job I have ever gotten," James grumbled. "I've had enough of them to know the difference between good and bad. And that one was definitely the worst."

James barely took a breath before diving into his continued tirade.

"I mean there was no tongue action or bobbing up and down. Nothing. He sort of squeezed his lips together but that was it."

When I asked if he'd made any customer service suggestions to his unskilled attendant, James nearly bit my head off.

"Every gay man should know how to give a quality blow job," he barked. "It shouldn't be my responsibility to give him pointers."

James had spoken and there was no debating the issue.

A few days later, I heard a variation on the same theme from Gavin, an acquaintance who is, by his own description, a ball-busting businessman.

Gavin has a hard time keeping staff members because he is such a demanding boss. Finding full-time employees who will stay more than a few days has become impossible, so he's resorted to hiring a series of temps. They arrive and he tells them that he's far too busy to train them or give them thorough instructions, so it's sink or swim.

Most sink and the ones who are able to swim a bit swim in the direction of the door.

Gavin conducts his private life in much the same manner. He stops at a gay bar, on his way home from the office. In a relatively short time, he selects a man and offers to buy him dinner. Gavin is handsome and is always well dressed. One look at him and the catch of the day can feel certain that the dinner invitation means a visit to a very expensive restaurant. And their assumptions are correct.

After dinner, Gavin takes them to his apartment and puts on some music while they both remove their clothes. He leads his guest into the bedroom and offers a three-word directive: "Get me off."

Feeling the pressure, the confidence-challenged gentlemen pepper their host with questions about what ministrations will best yield the desired result.

Gavin, like James, believes that his temporary sex partners should know what they are doing and that having to give directions and suggestions is unacceptable.

"A guy knows what feels good to another guy," Gavin preaches. "But getting most of these guys to do the job with any sense of pride in their work is like pulling teeth. Any job worth doing is a job worth doing right — and that includes a blow job or a hand job."

I wish I could be entirely indignant about James' and Gavin's behavior. Regrettably, I have been similarly harsh, on at least one occasion.

Several years ago, I was taking a stroll around the passages of a sex club. A young man expressed his desire to felate me. He clutched my towel-covered crotch and promised, "I give really good head."

I decided to let him demonstrate his advertised skills. It didn't take long to discover the truth, so I pulled out and told him, "You were mistaken."

Aside from being amused by my pithy quip, all I did was create a situation in which I hurt a man's feelings. And I passed up an opportunity for what could have been a good blow job, with a little clear direction and encouragement.

He was obviously eager to do well, yet, I chose

Naked Curiosity

by Dennis Scott-Bush



Dangerous Liaisons

There was no time to work up a jailhouse fantasy.

My friend Nathan's arrest and all the steps that followed flew by like a fast-forward montage of images and sounds. As he waited in the holding cell, he reflected on how he'd gotten to this place in his life.

"It's not my fault," he explained to me, later. "I was a victim of circumstances that were beyond my control."

That's not entirely true. The way Nathan painted it, he'd been dragged — kicking and screaming — to the park and forced to drop his pants. In reality, too many vodka tonics and a persuasive would-be trick had helped him drop his guard, but he'd dropped his pants of his own free will. There was, indeed, screaming. But only because Nathan tried to zip up his trousers without first tucking away his penis, when confronted by the police officer.

Since I don't drink, I'm not susceptible to the resolve-reducing powers of alcohol. But for nearly a month, one summer in my early twenties, I was prey to something even more insidious: my boyfriend Tyrone's Southern accent.

Born in North Carolina and raised in Houston, words dripped from his tongue in the most luscious lilting tones. No matter what he proposed, I found myself agreeing.

That would have been fine, if Tyrone had been suggesting things like going to a movie or playing racquetball. But Tyrone was much more adventurous. At the end of our first date, as we stood outside my apartment door, Tyrone used his Rhett Butler rhetoric to convince me to give him head in the hallway. It was very late. Most of the other tenants were gay. It didn't seem like too much of a risk and I kept one hand on the knob of my already-unlocked door, just in case I needed to head butt him inside to escape notice.

Our next date doubled the dare. All the residents in Tyrone's apartment building had access to the roof for sunbathing, parties and similar activities. My thrill-seeking beau wanted us to have sex on the roof, in the middle of the day, in full view of everyone who lived on higher floors in the surrounding edifices.

I pondered his pitch, while trying to estimate the number of people who would be able to watch our matinee performance. One intoxicating, "C'mon, baby," and my concerns faded like a pair of old jeans.

Every day, Tyrone wanted to be bolder than the day before. Friday night, in an alley. Saturday afternoon, in the restroom of a popular brunch spot. Sunday night, on the hood of a car in his uncle's salvage lot. Every time he insisted that we up the ante, I'd offer a pale protest. But my fears of being discovered or arrested or worse in a bad neighborhood were no match for the call of his drawl.

When he urged me to join him in trying auto-asphyxia, I knew he'd crossed the line. I enjoyed hanging out with him but I had no intention of hanging myself or helping him do the same — albeit briefly and supposedly under controlled conditions — just to enhance the intensity of our orgasms.

Now, when I contemplate my perilous escapades with Tyrone, my foremost thought is, "What the hell was I thinking?"

I wasn't. That's the point. And, in hindsight, I'm still blaming the mellifluous promptings of a Dixie danger junkie for getting me in those situations. It's no different from Nathan claiming to be a victim of circumstances beyond his control.

My friends Paul and Rich, know better. After having ended a passionless pairing with his partner, Paul has returned to the world of personal ads, chat rooms and bars. Rich is half of a couple with an open relationship so he, too, is looking for action.

Paul and Rich understand that safe sex is about more than just wearing a condom. They know that it's sometimes hard to tell if a guy is nice or if he's a psycho with a freezer full of former tricks.

So, they take precautions. They step back from the big bulge to consider the big picture and assess how much risk is actually involved. They phone each other with information about where and with whom they're going to be and make arrangements for an "I'm ok" call, afterward.

They set an example worth following. Be careful. Be safe.

not to harness that enthusiasm and let him know how to do the job the way I like it done.

We often behave the same way with our elected officials. We take some time to select the ones we think will be able to meet our needs and we show our support by voting for them.

After that, it's sink or swim. We expect them to know exactly what we want done and we have no qualms about bitching to anyone else who'll listen, when they cast a vote or take a position that rubs us the wrong way.

We need to communicate with our elected officials. All of us need to give them clear suggestions and directions about what is important to us and our community.

If we don't, more often than not, they'll just suck.

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