

Naked Curiosity: Confessions of a Dirty Whore

“I feel like a dirty whore,” my friend Richard confessed.

He may have had passing periods of promiscuity, but Richard was never what you’d call a whore. And, certainly, not a dirty one.

“I’m usually so careful. But he really wanted me to top him and, before I could do anything about it, he just took charge and I let him,” Richard explained. “He was a very persuasive – and very aggressive – bottom.”

Sundry other salacious details were offered but none of them justified his initial, sordid self-description. Then, with a clap of clarity, Richard came clean about why he felt dirty.

A few days after he’d briefly discharged his better judgment, he discovered a discharge in his briefs.

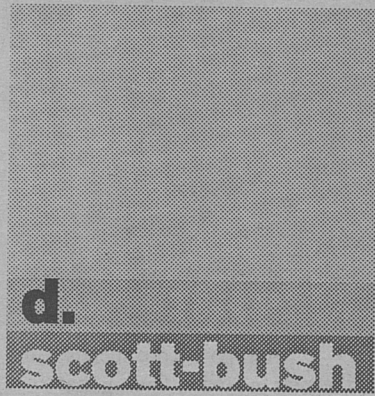
Sometimes, our playing requires paying the piper. In

We get bogged down by thoughts that merely being gay or having a sexually transmitted disease means that we’re bad, sleazy people.

Richard’s case, the penalty was penile – where his recent party started.

For nearly a week, he ignored the symptoms, hoping that they would go away without medical intervention. Gonorrhea had come knocking and Richard was pretending he wasn’t home. By the time the discharge had turned a toxic shade of green, he was freaked out enough to do something about it.

“It was all an exercise in humiliation,” he recounted. “The waiting room was crowded, and the



receptionist was bent on announcing to everyone in earshot why I was there for the appointment. Then, the nurse gave me a look that was the non-verbal equivalent of ‘shame on you,’ while she took my temperature and blood pressure. And, to bring the whole experience to a truly memorable culmination, the doctor stuck a long Q-tip into my penis and swirled it around.”

Richard had worked himself into a foul froth. Penile discharge and a heavy dose of shame can have that effect.

During an evening in Huron, South Dakota’s Sun & Suds, Richard and his quagmire of blame and shame came surprisingly to mind. Martin and I had arrived in Huron early enough in the evening to do laundry. Traveling by motorcycle, space constraints limited the amount of clothing we could pack for the trip. Doing laundry every five or six days was part of the bargain. Sun & Suds was a

combination tanning salon/laundromat and was connected to a convenience store and gas station. In addition, there was a small casino managed by the Sun & Suds staff.

In South Dakota, state laws about smoking and gambling have resulted in the creation of countless little casinos in bars, restaurants and businesses like the Sun & Suds. One can’t smoke or gamble in a place without a liquor license, so folks with those vices are corralled into revenue-generating mini-dens of iniquity.

As I was chatting with

Melissa and Colette, the delightful Sun & Suds employees, I noticed that a woman coming for a tanning appointment signed the registry with only her first initial. Melissa anticipated my question and explained, “A lot of people don’t want anyone to know that they come to a tanning place. They’re embarrassed. There’s a lot of shame attached to it. So, to keep other people from seeing their name on the sign-in sheet, they use an initial or a fake name.”

A few moments, later, a seemingly disembodied hand emerged from the small opening between the casino and the Sun & Suds counter. Melissa cashed out a winning ticket for the person connected to the hand.

“There’s a lot of shame associated with gambling,” Melissa voiced, before I could inquire. “A lot of the people don’t want to be seen in the casino, so they stay out of view, in case somebody they know is here doing laundry or comes in to tan.”

I couldn’t resist asking my new best friend, Melissa, about how gay folks are perceived in her community.

“There’s extra shame associated with that.”

Shame is relative. And, usually, self-inflicted.

From time to time, I’ve felt like a dirty whore. I expect that, in varying degrees, we have all experienced those feelings. In some cases, we may not have behaved as we wish we had. In other situations, we get bogged down by thoughts that merely being gay or having a sexually transmitted disease means that we’re bad, sleazy people.

We must rise up out of that mucked up swamp. Whether we’re gamblers, artificially bronzed housewives, people with STDs or folks who march to the beat of a different drummer, shame shouldn’t be the name of our game.

We need to nudge ourselves more to judge ourselves less. ▼

D. Scott-Bush’s work appears throughout the country. E-mail may be directed to NakedCuriosity@aol.com.

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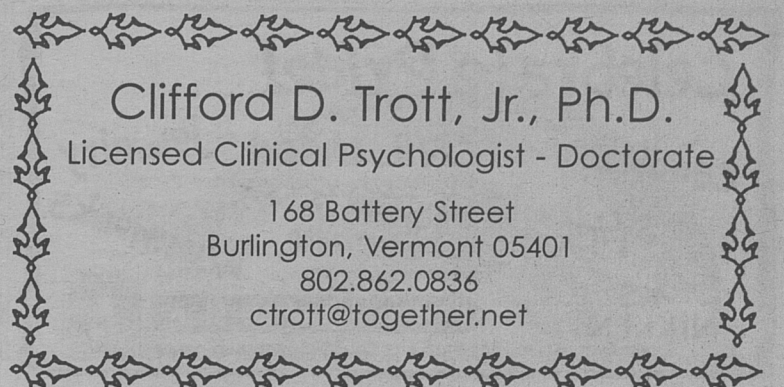
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