

A REAL DREAM
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During the fall semester of my sophomore year, my friend, Rick repeatedly urged me to rejoin him at the social lounge of the College Community Center Plan, where we had often gone in freshman year hoping to meet girls. I, in turn, repeatedly demurred, joking that it was a Commie organization, given its initials CCCP, the same as for the old Soviet Union. But I did join his House, #24M (for Men) and came to a few of its parties on Friday evenings.

At last, though, Rick did succeed in getting me to return to the social lounge. I remember it well. We were taking a roundabout route between classes strolling along the path between two long closely spaced parallel lines of crabapple trees known on campus as Crabapple Row. I loved that spot on campus. As I crunched the fallen crabapples Rick turned to me, and said, “Stop being an anchorite! You might actually meet a girl, like the new beauty who’s a regular.”

I gave a loser’s response that made Rick roll his eyes. “I don’t have any more time to waste with those sterile, liberal artsy, pseudo intellectual prudes.”

“But you haven’t seen that new girl. Just come once, during lunch.”

The lounge was next to the grill. So I gave in, possibly more for the hamburgers.

And, yes, indeed, a new girl was holding court, and was she stunning! Little wonder that the crowd was much larger than I had remembered.

I’m not good at flowery descriptions, but when I saw that girl this is what I saw. She had coal black straight hair pulled in a pony tail that almost reached her waist. Her black eyes shone large and clear and were spaced as wide as a doll’s. The striking contrast with her fine, white skin magnified her allure. And her body was that of a goddess. Her breasts were molded, her stomach flat, hips narrow, legs and ass tight and perfect. Her voice, soft and seductive finished the picture. But despite these remarkable physical attributes I could not detect in her a trace of sensuality. I assessed her as one more teasing prude and though she probably was not athletic, nicknamed her Atalanta because I felt she was to die for.

Despite my better self, I was so infatuated with her I became a lunch hour regular at the lounge. I couldn't take my eyes off her, especially those breasts. Oh woe, my Atalanta didn't deign to notice me. She didn't deign to notice any of the other guys, so I shouldn't have taken it too hard.

Rick, seeing that I was infatuated, urged me to ask her out. I refused point blank, stressing her obvious indifference. To my humiliation, he argued his case in front of the brothers at House #24M. Rick waxed sarcastic, inviting them to come and see how I, a little lap dog, salivated at the knees of his beauty queen.

Rick was able to convince several of the guys to come and watch the show. On the day they congregated at the lounge the theme was one of the current literary absurdities. How can we distinguish illusion from reality? Hunter, the quietest member of House #24M, and a civil engineering major who was practicality incarnate, couldn't believe his ears. The nonsense talk provoked him to a unique outburst.

"How can you all waste your time with such claptrap? I design and build bridges. They either fall or stand. If they fall you die; if they stand, you live. If you live, you eat, piss and...." He managed to stop his words.

Atalanta, seated on her throne, responded to this crass outburst with royal indignity. Staring Hunter down with haughty eyes, she parroted one of the standard but even more nonsensical corollaries of the day's theme, "You don't even know if this is real and not just a dream!"

Then Hunter did something that shocked the hell out of all of us. He got up leisurely as if to leave, and walked slowly around Atalanta. When he stood directly behind her, he said, "This *must be* a dream," and reaching over her, lovingly fondled her breasts. The contact was not hurried but was brief; it lasted no more than 2 seconds. After Hunter released Atalanta, he departed the lounge looking happy and victorious; he had proven his point in a most compelling manner.

Atalanta's swift reaction betrayed a sequence of emotions starting with shock. Ultimately, her face took on a complex look of protest, anger, and embarrassment. But for the briefest instant following the initial shock, I saw erupting in her eyes a volcano of awakened passion, long dormant or repressed, which she quickly snuffed through some combination of fear, confusion, and anger.

Following Hunter's exit, the scene unwound with great rapidity. The awkward participants and observers fled, scurrying to their next classes. There were no protests or expressions of outrage and no cries of abuse. Times were different then.

I departed the scene feeling jealous of Hunter and not for the reason you might expect. I wished that I had had the guts, the freedom, and the creativity that comes with freedom to do what he did. Why had I been such a wimp, listening ad nauseam to Atalanta's and so many other group members' existential claptrap? I'll tell you why. I had rendered myself a prisoner for fear of losing a girl I never had.

Word of Hunter's exploit reached the House Brothers before the Friday evening party. Prior to that, the guys had admired Hunter in a vague sort of way for his quiet, steady, practical nature. Now he attained near legendary status. Of course, some of the guys kidded him, asking such questions as whether Atalanta's breasts met his approval. Hunter took it all in stride with good natured silence for the most part, acknowledging only that he felt like Genghis Khan.

Believe it or not, Hunter's brash act and Atalanta's fearful reaction to her own passion instantly cured me of my infatuation. I felt like a free man. I lost all desire to return to the lounge and never did again, though when I stopped at the Grill for a burger and noted that the existential talk group had disbanded I felt vindicated, though for what I didn't quite know.

I did real well in all my courses that fall semester, but perhaps more important, actually met a charming girl at one of House #24M's Friday evening parties. And, as winter blossomed into spring we came to be lovers. All was just peaches.

On one glorious day that spring, feeling like a beneficent god, I chose to stride the petal-strewn path of Crabapple Row between classes to see and smell the trees in full bloom. So what if I got to my philosophy of religion class a few minutes late? God was in those crabapple trees. When I entered the secluded path I thought I was alone but, approaching the midpoint, noticed a couple standing almost camouflaged beneath the canopy of one of the trees. The guy had his arms around the girl's waist, and if she had pressed any closer to him the two would have been one. It was a delicious scene, pledging all of spring's promises. I passed them silently, glad they didn't notice me, but couldn't resist glancing back. And lo, the guy was Hunter, and the breathless girl, with the most smitten look on her flushed face, was Atalanta.