

The Assman Chronicles

Inspired by my dystopian novel, "In The Wind"

I've always been a sucker for a plump, rounded tush. Despite her perfect form, Ginny knew of my fetish but stuck by me anyway. I often wondered, 'Was it love, loyalty or my shameful inheritance that kept us joined at the hip?' Whatever it was, we were like two sweet-toothed kids locked away in a candy shop with nothing but time and endless lines of credit and blow. I've always been a sucker for taking life to the edge. Barry, my pilot, martial arts instructor and all around guardian angel often warned me: *"Michael, it's never just one hit that floors you. It's always the old one-two: The combo punch – the sucker shot that slams you in the side of the head while you're twisted around from the first one."*

Shot number one: Ninety miles an hour in my new state-of-the-art Ferrari along New Jersey's Route 3, enroute to an opening at Lincoln Center. At that speed, the town of Secaucus should go by in a flash but not when a fuel line clogs. Who knew I was propping myself up for the down count, snuffing out a joint while cutting into the first driveway there was.

After calling for a tow truck, I got the shot to the noggin I never saw coming. The door to Jersey Jim's Diner closed behind us. Coffee pot in hand, a round bottomed waitress smiled at me dead ahead. She wore a Giants T-shirt, a name tag that read Maya and faraway eyes. Aside from her, we had the greasy spoon experience all to ourselves. Stainless steel can live up to its name if stains are wiped away now and then: But narcissism as the prime force of her universe, Ginny quickly found her reflection through years of grease splatter and dust balls on the blurred wall before us. Quickly, work began on her hair, face and delusions. Though preoccupied as she was in her image

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within the haze, Ginny managed to zero in on my bubble-butt fixation enough to say, "Michael, don't friggin' stare!"

Maybe I was busy scoping out the waitress' tush for about five minutes or so. Maybe Ginny could've been right in assuming I was staring. I was equally right to deflect her accusation by answering, "I've never seen anything like that on a woman before. Maybe if she could've seen herself thirty years ahead, when she decided to have herself branded, she would have chosen something instead of a ... bugle? That is a bugle tattooed on her arm: Isn't it, or wasn't it?"

"Don't take me for an idiot you stoned out jackass. Supposably, you're lookin' at her arm, but I know you're checkin' out another big, rounded butt! Now cut that shit out or my ass is outta here!"

"Seriously, Ginny, you've got to check out that bugle tattoo on her arm."

With her hair having returned to perfect and her mascara flapping dry, Ginny put aside her facial first aid kit long enough to notice Maya's inked bicep. Spitting her coffee back to the cup, she gasped, "Bugle? Looks more like a meltin' paper clip cryin' for help!"

The vision of Ginny shined upon clouded stainless steel like any cover of any magazine featuring any devotee of coke, liposuction and butt busting aerobics. Flowingly, seven million strands of golden mane excellence realigned themselves as she spun on her stool toward Maya, seeking ammo for further disparagement.

"Now who's staring?" I asked her reflection, "Look away. Here she comes."

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Three opaqued glass coffee pots smoldered away on the burners. Reaching for the murkiest of them, Maya asked, "You guys need a warmup?" I glanced into my cup, looked again only to find myself drawn to the turmoil occurring within it.

Spellbound, my reefer driven consciousness became one with the cream curdles ascending and descending like bubbles in my college lava lamp. Maya reiterated, "Warm up?" Really, the only warm up I needed was a blowtorch to loosen my fusion-cuisine cheese fries that had become one with the plate.

As Ginny's endless babble melded into the ongoing buzzing of ancient fluorescent lights, I lowered my cup, raised my head and was drawn deeply into Maya's faraway baby blues. It's been said that a woman's eyes are the window to her soul. Lost in Maya's gaze, my spirit dangled somewhere between her pheromones and my spinning stool. Enthralled, I thought, 'She's gotta be one hell of a lay!' Eye to eye with me, Maya raised the cloudy pot. From my mouth fell, "Not here! I mean, no ... No thanks on the warmup is what I mean ... You want more coffee, Ginny?"

Ginny smirked. Cocking her head, she gave a fleeting glance at her still full cup. Gradually, her smirk evolved to the sincerity of a passport photo. As she meticulously set her hair behind her ears, she said to Maya, "None for me. Just bring us the check. By the way Waitress, you don't mind if we hang here 'til the tow truck comes, do you?"

Maya winked while saying through a facetious grin, "When the tour buses for the Henry Krajewski Memorial Swamp get here, I might have to ask you folks to ante up and make some room. Til then, make yourself comfy."

Ginny asked, "Who's Henry Krajewski?"

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"I can tell you two didn't save your '50s and '60s copies of The Jersey Journal. Henry Krajewski ran for president way back then. They called him the Pig Farmer From Secaucus. He put this place on the map. Before Secaucus gave America its favorite son, this town was only swamp grass and quicksand between the Jersey Turnpike and its exit ramps."

"Oh wow, Maya! I can see why they'd build a memorial. If he won, they'd put a presidential library right here. Imagine, a president of these United States coming from right here in lil ol' New Jersey."

"Let's not forget Grover Cleveland." Having said that, Maya quickly left us to pull a tray of glasses from the dishwasher.

Ginny cupped her mouth whispering to me; "Now you know why she's just a waitress at an all-night greasy spoon. Grover Cleveland from New Jersey? Yeah right! Any fool knows he's from Ohio."

Eyes glued to Maya's wagging buttocks as she struggled with the tray of glasses, I replied, "Yeah you're right, Ginny. Any fool knows that. Picture this: After Mayor Giuliani shuts down all of the 42nd Street porn shops, they'll donate every confiscated video and magazine to The Bill Clinton Presidential Library."

That said, Maya's eye caught mine resting at her panty line. We exchanged brief peeks and smiles. Turning her attention to the task at hand, her body either gyrated in response to my obsession or to the dishwasher's sudden release of the tray. Visions of Maya's jiggling thunder-buns were joined by the sound of Ginny's few living brain cells jiggling away while she struggled along in her attempt to connect the dots of history.

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Maya strolled to us from her dish washing and began wiping our end of the counter.

Reaching for a napkin to blot her lipstick, Ginny giggled, "Now President Clinton I heard of. I'll bet them buses goin' to check out his library will always be full. Hmm... by the way, ain't his name Dick Clinton?"

I could never decide which I liked more, screwing Ginny or just screwing with her head. So, I answered, "No Ginny, he's Bill. That other name was his sword of state."

The ancient floorboards creaked beneath the weight of Maya's tattered Reeboks. Politely, she contained her laughter or response and waddled toward the register. Maybe my head did lean across the counter a bit too far. Honestly, for once, I wasn't gaping at her jumbo jelly buckets. They just served as a focal point while I got lost in my fantasies.

"I'm disgusted with you, Michael! you're like an old hound dog in heat."

"Baby doll, I wasn't thinking anything like that. I was just wondering."

"Wondering what, you stoned out horndog? Maybe how I'd look a few thousand Boston cream pies into the future?"

Could it be that it wasn't only the big round butt which piqued my curiosity? Perhaps my curiosity kindled a burning revelation, thus allowing me to see beyond the ass when I blurted, "Follow me on this, Ginny. When she had those tattoos inked on her, she had to look one hell of a lot different. No shit, you gotta see her like I see her in my head: She's this hippie chick back in the '70s. She's forty pounds lighter: She's in San Francisco, holding a peace sign. Yeah, and she's clenching a

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flower between her teeth; a rose with its petals flying in the wind."

"Whattya mean those tattoos? There's only one from where I'm sittin'."

Maya scratched out the check and began to shuffle toward us. I whispered to Ginny, "Think about it: Every chick back then had either a rose, a butterfly or a peace sign tattooed on her tush. It was the thing to do. Common knowledge there, baby doll."

"Michael, bein' all stoned out ain't no excuse. And stop fratronizin' me! Just shut the hell up before you give me the roll call of every fat-assed hippie chick you ever screwed."

"Stop what?"

"Cut it out, Michael. Whenever you talk about politics or business stuff, you get this air of condensation about you. Anyway, you're the one who always says, '*A stiff one has no conscience, and a zipper never keeps a mouth shut.*' Go ahead, brag on, frat boy!"

"For your information, I was quoting the Greek philosopher, Herbicide. Really, Auntie Ruth never allowed me to be around counterculture people. Even though I never knew my dad, she in no way let me forget that he was a diehard Republican. So out of respect for his memory, and my inheritance, I sat on the elephant's trunk and helped New Jersey trample the jackass. Baby doll, during those days, I only stuck it to red state interns and campaign workers. Anyway, even if I wanted to mess with the other side, they all blended into the woodwork and ranks of the chronically employed by the time I started screwing around. For the record, no; I've never made it a hippie."

"Answer your cell, creep!"

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"Oh hell, Ginny! I didn't even hear it ring." Ginny began her happy clap upon hearing that our salvation from the land of flickering fluorescents and under the counter gum traps was approaching. Maya smiled, reached toward me and placed the guest check on the counter.

"Michael, did you see that?"

"See what, Ginny? I'm not supposed to be looking at her, remember?"

"Not her ass, schmuck! The knuckles on her left hand. She's got L-O-V-E tattooed on 'em."

"What about her right hand?" I answered,? "Go ahead, check out her right hand. By the way, talk about staring, at least she can't see me staring at what I like to stare at."

"Alls there is on her right knuckles are, like, four bleach spots."

"Oh well, unlike the blubber, she managed to erase hatred from her life."

"Give me a break, Michael. You'd better try keepin' your eyes off her ass. Next time they go there, I won't give a shit. I'm gonna say somethin'!"

Flashes of yellow strobe lights danced across the flame-red hood of my crippled Ferrari. Foreseeing limited time to primp, floss and comb; in a flash, Ginny zoomed off to the lady's room. Envisioning a never serviced porta john with an attached Rottweiler, somewhere at the rear of Toby The Towtrucks's garage, I decided to flash off too.

Needing to balance out my caffeine to coke to cannabis ratio, I decided to get amply revved up before doing the same to the Ferrari. Life being an eternal candy store, I broke out a vial of the nose variety and jumpstarted my awareness. Since

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bathrooms serve other purposes, I saw the chance to rid myself of some of Jersey Jim's brew.

'Only in New Jersey,' I thought, reading the placards on the tiles over the urinals. Above a piss-pot mounted two and a half feet above the floor, it read, "*Men.*" Next to it, barely a foot from the floor, was the other urinal. The sign above it read, "*Boys-Midgets-And Men With Real Long Ones*". Quicker of wit and faster in my pace, I breathed in every last snowy fragment from my nose hairs. Humbly, I declared, "Neither boy, midget nor remarkably blessed!" while carefully unzipping. Feverishly shaking out the last drops, visions of bubble butts danced through my mind. Beckoned by glorious glutes and faraway eyes, my frenzied movements caused me to become more hardened in my venture. I thought, 'I'm here, right? Why the hell not?' Situation in hand, I expedited my salutation to my imagination's splendiferous apparition.

The bathroom door slammed behind me. As if a stage had been struck between acts of a deadly play, the set at Jersey Jim's had another character added as well as a look of dread on Maya's face. She sat in a booth with an enormous snaggle-toothed man. Piercingly, he stared directly at me. In response, my eyes looked downward tracking a paper coffee container as it rolled from their table.

Snaggletooth's salt and pepper beard mixed with his shoulder length hair, beneath a sun bleached cap. His tattered jeans cast a stench borne of many days on the road. Maya wore a scowl borne of tears as she blotted half a container of light and sweet from her face and shirt. Ginny ran ahead of me as we raced for the door. Credit card in hand, I ran in the wake of her fresh cologne and hairspray vapors. Seeing a vacant stool at the

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register station, I shouted, "Maya, can I pay you directly? No time to wait for the cashier to return."

Having wiped the remaining coffee from her face, Maya jutted her chin in the direction of the register. Approvingly, Snaggletooth nodded his head. Maya pushed away from the booth moaning, "Yeah-yeah! I'm waitress, cook, cashier and you name it around here!" and began strolling toward the register. As she waddled past me, I glanced at the coffee stains on her butt cheek. Maybe in balancing my latest fantasy with real time reality, I was overstaying the look because Snaggletooth asked, "Are ya seein' somethin' ya want, Bud?"

Before I could smile and look away, Ginny turned and shouted, "Okay Michael, that's it! Since you can't keep your eyes off her ass, then it's all yours. As for mine, it's friggin' outta here! I'm catchin' me a cab to the city. Don't try to wake me tomorrow!"

I'll never be sure if it was the click of the .45's hammer or Snaggletooth's command: "Everyone stay right the hell where you are!" that I heard first. I do know, the last thing I heard in my 'up until that night' carefree life was the talking end of his gun resting hard on my nose bone.

"Listen up! There may not be a tomorrow for some of us, Bud. Ya spoiled rich-ass bastard, no one disrespects a member of the GODS by scannin' her ass like she's a cheap whore in a peep show! I strongly suggest you straighten out the girls in your own house before you come knockin' at my door. Ya got that, Bud?"

Ginny and Maya shared a moment of mutual concern and confusion. The moment passed. Maya walked toward the gun holder while saying, "And I strongly suggest you put that thing

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away and get the hell out of here, Gabriel! Let me go back to my life, and you ... just go! For the record, I'm not one of your GODS anymore and I was never one of your dumbass groupie girls."

"Did I say, girl? Sorry. Should I say... woman? Whatever! I'm not going without you, Maya. This is it! Finally, it's all lining up. We gotta get to the, you know ... place!" he slapped at a duffle bag shouting, "Everything we need is in here! The Gig is ours for the doing. I need you there when we turn the launch keys. It takes two, remember? Maya, this is all that we worked for. It's here, it's now!"

Maya replied, "First of all, you never did and probably still don't have the balls to do anything but run away from everything you left behind. Furthermore, I'm through being sucked into your end of the world fantasies."

Snaggletooth's volume lowered to barely discernible as he moaned, "You'll see ..." after which, silence. Then he roared, "And so will this fucked up world!"

At that moment there were two things I could wish for: One, he would turn around and pay more attention to the gun barrel that was bouncing off the bridge of my nose with every word he spoke. Two, since I wished I had some idea what in hell they were talking about, he would be more clear.

The tow truck driver approached the diner's door. Gabriel lowered the gun to his hip while pointing it at Ginny. He commanded, "Get the hell over here, Maybelline!"

After asserting, "My proper name happens to be Ginny!" she obeyed.

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He stuck the gun in her ribs and said to me, "Hey GQ, you with the out of control eyeballs. Go tell that driver, you ain't gonna need him."

My arms must have looked like the wings of a snow goose about to touch down on hot asphalt as I shuffled to the door. Not wanting Snaggleteeth to think I might have a weapon in my pocket, I kept my hands away from my hips. Not wanting the tow truck driver to think I had a gun pointing at me, I made a point of not raising my arms.

From behind me, I heard Snaggleteeth telling Ginny, "Ya see, Maybelline? He's doin' what he's told so you won't get hurt. I'd bet if I kept the gun on him and told you to go outside, we'd be watchin' your ass becoming a Barbie Doll on the far horizon. But hey, ya sure do smell nice!"

That horizon soon consumed the ever dimming flickers of the tow truck's yellow lights. I stood in the diner's entryway and heard Maya snap the lock shut behind me. She lowered her voice saying, "Listen Gabriel, if throwing coffee in my face didn't change my mind about you, bogarting me around with that gun won't do it either. Okay tough guy, you're holding all the cards. What do we do now?" He lowered the gun and any hope for freedom I had when he said, "Maya, we got us two hostages. Too bad that overpriced capitalist pigpen outside is stuck or we'd be outrunnin' every cop car in Jersey, right into the cargo container."

He glanced back and forth from my Ferrari to Ginny and then back to me. Finally, he spit on the window between us and the car and shouted, "Motherfuckin' world! Fuckin' people in it! What the hell did we do it all for anyway? Thirty years later, it

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all goes back to being worse than it was before we thought we changed it!"

Maya responded, "If you don't like the way things worked out, then go back to prison, live with your grand delusions and ..." She glanced at me, sneered at him and quipped, "... write your manifesto, like the rest of the closet demigods from back in the day did. Either way, you might finally finish a sentence."

As if her reply had rendered her invisible, he seemed to look through her and at the Ferrari. After a deep breath, he shouted, "Goddamn people drivin' around in cars with price tags bigger than the economies of some countries." Looking straight at Ginny and me, he added, "Fuckin' people walkin' around with more money hangin' on their necks and backs than most others can earn in a year!"

Pressing his fingertip to Ginny's mouth, he smeared her lipstick across her cheek, shook his head and said, "From war paint to whore paint! Ain't they never gonna learn? All those years of protests, people dyin' for openin' their mouths and tellin' it like it was, and where did it all get us? All it got us is people gluin' their mouths shut with corporate grease paint and spreadin' their chops for the highest bidder. Right, Maybelline?" Ginny shuddered as he stared deeply into her eyes. He sniffed her lipstick on his finger, moved closer and asked, "Cat's got yer tongue?"

Seeing Ginny speechless, my initial reaction was one of marvel until I felt a tug at my hair. Taking his case to me he asked, "You too, Bud?"

Closing my eyes, I tried to escape the question and then it found me. He tugged even harder at my hair. Finally, I felt him

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snap my cummerbund as he growled, "Ain't that right, GQ? Hey Bud, answer me!"

Meekly, I opened my eyes and nodded yes.

Reminiscently, he rambled, "No shit GQ, I went to my senior prom dressed in clam diggers held up with a clothesline rope. I had a date with me too, her name was Starshine. She came dressed up as Clarabelle the Clown. Dig it GQ, kinda like your painted bitch with the shut trap," glancing toward Maya, he added, "I always dug a chick with real balls, even if she thought I had none. You'll never guess what Starshine did: Back home, the prom had this thing called the Class Cake. It had effigies of the captain of the football team and the homecoming queen. To us, it signified everyone's upcomin' marriage to imposed values, conventional wisdom and worst of all, blind fuckin' obedience! And yeah, the rest of the Barbie & Ken worshipin' assholes came there to dance at their weddin'.

"Well, when ol' Starshine saw that cake sitting on the table, she straddled the damn thing and peed all over it! After that, all I remember is: Everyone was bein' drafted to fight in Vietnam, The Movement began and the world started to stick it up The Establishment's ass. I thought there was hope back then. People seemed like they finally had it with all the hand me down bullshit. Goes to show you what you can do with a four lettered word like hope. Bunch of cowards and phonies: They were only watchin' for the latest dance step or waitin' for the next big ol' shiny thing to come along."

Shaking his head, he grinned while staring at the mirrored pie case. Turning to look at Ginny and me, he said, "Guess the chickens came home to roost." having said that, Gabriel went silent. Slowly, he raised the gun to our eye's level. As he did, it

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was as though our fine designer shoes had begun to sink into the icing of the cake beneath us.

Though it's an experience to be missed, one will never truly understand the herding power of a gun until one stares into the deep darkness of its barrel. I don't recall breathing, but I do recall thinking, 'Amazing, how a person with my social status can go through life controlling everyone he knows with a simple word or gesture. More amazing than that is, how a stranger renders me speechless with only the potential of a deep, dark void with a kick-ass reputation for fulfillment.'

Gabriel's eyes bulged as if he had been jolted from a stupor. He began to scan the three of us. The maestro of all who stood before him waved his .45 caliber baton at Maya shouting, "We need a car, now! We need to get to ... you know ..."

The bugle on Maya's arm sounded the charge. Layers of arm chub recoiled from her fists pounding on the counter as she screamed, "What part of I'm done with you don't you get? Gabriel, get it through your thick as shit head; there is no 'you know' place for me to go anymore, especially with the likes of you. Go back to the penitentiary you split from, and leave me be!"

As if a fog rolled in from the Jersey swamp and a fedora found Gabriel's head, Bogartly he proclaimed, "Sweetheart, they'll never take me alive! Goddamn Feds ain't never gonna stick me back in the joint. Besides, where's your balls, woman? Don't you remember that we have a mission? Maya, you always drove a van. Where the hell is it?"

"Why would you need a van? Maybe to drive to your next u-turn?"

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The instant Maya said u-turn, Gabriel's Adams apple reversed course. I thought I noticed him shudder as, haltingly, he looked away from Maya. Gleefully, Maya folded her arms and smirked. A look of resolve returned to his face as he stared at his gun. I felt Ginny's trembling hands grabbing at my arm. Her head pressed itself on my shoulder. A knot tied itself in my gut. I pulled away asking her, "Would you have run?"

"What, Michael?"

"You heard me! Like he asked, would you have bolted to save your ass?" Maybe all of the drugs running through me caused me to be a little louder than normal. The instant I asked that stupid question of Ginny, I saw the corner of Gabriel's mouth turn upward as his upended mouth became a snaggle-toothy grin.

He pointed the gun away and threw the diner door keys to Ginny. Cynically, he said, "Go ahead, Maybelline, prove yourself. Maybe I won't shoot if you go now. The choice is in your hand. Run and there'll be another tragic victim of the heart left at the door. Stay, and maybe there's a love story here. Either way, your next move will bring me a moment of truth to treasure. So, you go for it, girl!"

I don't recall if I felt Ginny lurching for the door, or did I feel her squeeze my arm even harder? My eyes would have had to be open see whether or not she ever took her eyes from the gun. I opened them upon hearing the keys flying back to Gabriel. With her eyes glued to Gabriel, Ginny placed herself closer to me.

Waving the gun randomly, he jibed, "Now, ain't this quite the moment of truth: It's what country songs are made of." In the next instant his mood switched to rage. He yelled, "What are

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you starin' at, you fuckin' rich-ass bitch?" then he paused aiming the gun toward Ginny.

She replied, "Nothin'! What do you expect? There's a big gun wavin' at me, and I'm scared shitless. Sorry it upsets you, but I gotta be lookin' somewheres."

Gabriel grabbed a Danish from the pie-case; bit off a chunk and said, "Yeah. All you're worried about is the muzzle blast messin' up your overpriced hairdo!"

He turned from us and ripped Maya's purse from her hand. I used that moment as a chance to ask Ginny, "What were you staring at?" Her answer was stone cold silence as she looked away.

Dangling a Ford key fob in Maya's face, Gabriel shouted, "Bingo! "We have ourselves a van. Hey, don't come a'knockin' when the van's a'rockin'!"

"Maya said, "By the way, minivans are the last things you'll find a'rockin'!"

And ..." She paused, took my hand and smiled at Gabriel while asking, "Truce?"

"Huh? Yeah Maya, sure I guess ...What do you have in mind?"

"Hey Gabe, back in our partying days, we used to play that little game of 'switch the bitch', remember?"

"How can I forget, that's how we met, ya goddamn bitch!"

"Tell you what, Gabe: All night I've been checking out GQ here checking out my fanny while Maybelline was digging yours."

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As Ginny’s hand reached for his, Gabriel said, “Actually, back in the joint I was due for a conjugal visit ...Okay Maya, but in a fuckin’ minivan?”

“Kids: That’s how Grandpa met Grandma”

“Dad!!!”



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