

Coffee Spoons

by david schleich

Our lark with that Llama Clive happened ten years ago. We were four "Johns" (never mind that 'John' was only my middle name -- one never lets such details interfere with the congruity of the secret societies of young boys) and Johnny-Four constituted the Bwana Boys, scourge of Edmison Heights Sub-Division, agents-provocateurs, adventurers. I believe it was Johnny A.'s idea to ride the Llama at the filtration plant park zoo. To which suggestion the warm, open-ended freedom of a Friday night in mid-summer with its attendant boredom and paucity of projects were subliminally added. We were off.

Johnny W. arrived at the enclosure first. He was long-legged and skinny. But even that tall he came up only to the Llama's snout (or so we discerned at a distance knowing full well the glob of smelly spit that pestered Llamas willingly and accurately hurtle at intruders). Johnny A. (our resident dare-devil) elected to climb the wire fence and take up a position on the large branch of a tree overhanging the fence. By swinging down suddenly on Clive Johnny A. intended to mount the startled Llama and to ride her like a bronco.

--Do South Americans ride Llamas? I asked.

--Like horses, meathead, Johnny N. replied.

--Look Schleich, you chickening out? thundered Johnny A.

--No, not at all. I'm just figuring your chances and getting ready to rescue you. She looks mean.

The Bwana Boys had a remarkable facility for sheer chaos and panic under stress. Should Clive bolt or should a commissionaire appear I was certain that Johnny A. would be in big trouble. I expected Johnny A. to fall on his head while trying to ride the obdurate Llama. We called her Clive linking her haughty snout to some sort of English proclivity.

--Is it male or female? I asked.

--Must be a broad Llama, Johnny W. answered.

--So goddam arrogant. Look' at those eyes and that big, damn proud snout! Johnny N. chimed.

We watched the unflattering, big, brown, glaring eyes of our Llama Clive. Her eyes showed no signs of fear. Rather, her glare was powerful and regal. She dared us to try anything irregular. Clive shuffled up to her fence.

--Watch it, I cautioned. She's gonna spit!

Clive issued a glob suddenly. We had seen it happen before. To an inveterate bermuda-short tourist. A quick fwiiiiiit and the yellow-brown mucuous-laden chewing tobacco stuff-mush would zing through the air like buckshot. The sticky mess caught me on the forehead. I closed my eyes and blared.

--Shit!

Johnny N. and Johnny W. laughed heartily, of course. Johnny A. chuckled lightly as he clambered over the fence and up into the tree. Clive jumped back at this confusion of sounds and movements. She knew Johnny A. was somewhere above her in the tree.

--All right, you clowns; whose got a handkerchief? I spluttered and gaged because of the stench from the sleezy dribbling mess perambulating about my nose.

While I wiped and wheezed Johnny A. balanced himself precariously on the large tree branch. He manoeuvred to a position just above our Clive. She glanced up suspiciously. Her long neck wrenched from side to side carrying her big brown eyes first in our direction and then in Johnny A.'s. She would keep her assailants under surveillance and up a tree.

Johnny always displayed a rather gratuitous alacrity for being our resident dare-devil. Sometimes we envied the din and dash of his daring. But not enough to join him in the tree. We moved back.

Suddenly Clive spat in our direction. A missile of guk slammed against the fence sending me tumbling backwards and smeared with

those horrid South American gastric juices.

--Bitch! I blared.

Johnny A. roared from his tree perch. He laughed so hard the branch shook. Clive spat again. Johnny A. swung to the left and the missile scattered harmlessly into branches and leaves. I watched as Clive's thick-lipped snout rippled and chortled a new wad into existence, getting ready for a new launch.

--Ha! missed! Johnny A. bleated.

Again Clive spat. This bullet smacked our treebound Johnny A. right in the mouth. He lost his balance immediately. A perfunctory squeal issued from the tangle of falling legs and arms and bucking Llama hide. Our Johnny A. had tumbled from the tree dislodged by the antipodean Clive's latest shot. He had landed belly down on Clive's neck and hung on for his very precariously-ordered life. Immediately Johnnies W. and N. jumped up and down, cheering Johnny A. on.

--He's on her! He's on her! they roared.

--Yes, so I see. The question is, for how long? I smiled skeptically, wiping the last dribble of Llama spit from my cheek.

Clive had been considerably shocked by this Bwana Boy bundle on her South American backbone and for a moment stood stiff and unbelieving. A moment later her insistent intractability expressed itself with violent buckings. Johnny A. hung on. His eyes were tightly closed and brown, slimy globs hung down from his chin. I started to chuckle. However, my consistently skeptical brain was already assembling rescue and escape tactics.

That's when Clive decided to run. I suppose that's all a South American mountain Llama can do when a North American suburban teenage male is thrust on her back. Her most effective weapon had been rendered useless by this unexpected manoeuver. So Clive ran! and ran! In circles, all around the enclosure at an ever-increasing rate of speed. And slowly a raucous whine started from her throat. Round and round Clive went, carrying Johnny A. with her. Our contumelious Clive was scared shitless.

Johnny W. and Johnny N. looked to me for a plan of action. The imperative was to rescue Johnny A. from the Llama merry-go-round.

In a moment the three Bwana Boys not on Clive's bucking back were hammering away at the Yale lock holding Clive's pen gate closed. It gave finally and we ran in. Clive came straight for us, Johnny A. and all. We turned about immediately and fled. Johnny W. was first out of the enclosure and he took advantage of the nearest tree ignoring torn skin and gashed arms as he scrambled for safety. Johnny N. had the misfortune of tumbling against a parking ramp and consequently vaulted head over heels into the gravel. I stopped dead just at the fence opening and jumped behind the open gate. Clive stopped dead at that point too. But Johnny A. did not. He continued to move up, up and over Clive's stiff-necked, furious head. His trajectory was spectacular from my vantage point. His arms were tucked neatly against his knees. His knees were bunched up foetus-like into his chest. His head was up. His eyes, unbelieving, could only watch the approaching trees and bushes. A squealing, helpless shriek trailed my sailing buddy as his parabolic flight ended in a large bush.

My laughter must have attracted Clive again. I should have expected that my position was highly tenuous, quite exposed and dangerous. Clive snapped her head forward slightly and the well-chewed, well-lubricated blob of guk she had been chortling during her mad dashes came at my open-mouthed expectancy. Before it hit I saw Clive shivering angrily, a rolling ripple of disgust distended through her whole body. She turned around and retreated to the darkest corner of her pen.

ESO pops Benny.

Prepare for imprinting. The following message will gradually sink into the depths of your unconscious, languish sumptuously, and perhaps get in a little frolicking with its fellow denizens till needed.

Jack Benny is coming to play with the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra on Sunday, April 23. He, along with the ESO members, will donate his services for a benefit performance in an effort to raise \$100,000, the sum necessary to assure a future for the orchestra.

During the past five years, along with prodigious growth, the illustrious organization also accumulated a deficit of that amount.

The Edmonton Symphony earns less than 50 percent of the money required to operate each season, and even if every concert were sold out, box office receipts would not cover operating expenses.

(Are you absorbing?)

Benny's response to Edmonton's plea for help is indicative of the recognized status of the Symphony in relation to other major orchestras in North America.

Its survival is vital to the continuation of a cultural and educational environment in northern Alberta.

"Married Couple": showing the need

A Married Couple
directed by Alan King
produced by Aquarius Films

Far out.

I could explain and elaborate upon this theme for two pages, or two thousand, but let it suffice to say that if you have ever been erotically involved with any member of the opposite sex, this film, presently showing at TL-11 will make you cross your legs in embarrassment, laugh with delight, and cling to your seat in tension. It will cause your ire to flutter, and your warmest sympathies to bloom like springtime flowers. There is no plotline and only a touch of almost accidental symbolism, yet the message of the film is clear: a man is a man is a man, a woman is a woman is a woman; WE NEED.

Far out.

by The Village Idiot

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