



Prematurely Pruned

by Laura Callier

FLYMF November 2006, The Fingers Crossed Issue, Volume 3 Issue 11

I woke up this morning and took a good long look around my apartment. I liked what I saw. A naked twenty-one-year-old curled next to me on the bed, a kitchen counter lined with beer bottles, an ashtray full of cigarette butts, a floor piled with clothes that I am just too cool to fold and put away: Christ man, I'm livin' like a veritable rock star!

I guess a more responsible twenty-seven-year-old would have a "real job" or a "steady, sensible boyfriend" and maybe not "close down the bars every night to avoid facing the fact that she was an aging loser, sealing her fate as one of those old scenesters that the younger, skinnier generations give sneers to at the parties." Oh, no. Not me. I'm one cool bitch.

Careful not to wake up Little-What's-His-Name, I tiptoed out of the bedroom and poured myself a cup of the coffee that had been sitting in the pot for three days. Plopping on the couch, I flipped on the tube and settled in.

About an hour into the movie *Barfly*, I took another good long look around my apartment. Fast food wrappers laid crumpled and forgotten next to the trash can, on the coffee table, and on the window sill. Large, mysterious stains peppered the rug and the couch, and the vinyl flooring in the kitchen was so dirty it had been slowly getting one or two shades darker every couple of months.

A stack of bills sat on top of television, staring at me with a look suggested they didn't think my daily bong hit was so cute. "You're twenty-seven-years-old, babe. You work as a pizza cashier. If you can't afford this electric bill, it's your own fault."

Outside the window, it was a beautiful fall day. The leaves hadn't yet begun to change, but the sky was so clear and blue that it called out to me. Maybe I would just go outside instead of sitting here. Somehow my apartment wasn't feeling like Party Town as much as it was feeling like Losersville today. I should go commune with nature. That would revive my spirits.

I shivered in the refreshing, crisp air as I sipped my sour coffee, which I had heated in the spaghetti-sauce stained microwave for a minute. My neighbor Linda was out walking her dog, and we exchanged a wave and a smile. Linda was sort of hot. She had long, beautiful hair, and these luscious, dewy lips that were hard not to stare at when she spoke. It was obvious though, that she'd lived a hard life. She had that raspy smoker's voice, and her face was prematurely pruned, although she couldn't have been more than thirty-two or so.

A mild panic started to rise in my chest. I wasn't so far off from thirty-two. I didn't want to be a premature prune. What the fuck! I

hated Linda and her stupid prune face and her fast livin' ways! I ran back inside.

Things were going to change around here! It was time to form some healthy habits. Enough with this diet of mine that consisted of beer, coffee, fast food, and cigarettes! I was going to take vitamins! I was going to start eating spinach! Wait, were we still having that countrywide spinach/bacteria recall? Okay, screw the spinach!

I was going to eat broccoli! And orange slices! I would drink V-8! And go jogging! Maybe even take up yoga! That's right, Linda! I wasn't going to have a scary prune face like you at the age of thirty-two! I didn't care how many tubs of actual prunes I had to eat, I was going to do it.

"That's right, do you hear me, Healthy Livin'?? I'm gonna do it!!" I yelled as I swept the beer bottles off the counter with my arm in a dramatic flourish. They shattered and spilled their remnants on the vinyl floor, waking up Little-What's-His-Name.

Did I have to get rid of Little-What's-His-Name as part of my new healthy lifestyle? After a few minutes of awkward conversation with the guy, I realized he spoke very little English. But wasn't America the fattest, most unhealthy country in the world? I think I'd read that somewhere. Maybe I'd keep him around. His exotic, healthy traditions and his taut, supple skin would be an inspiration to me and my newfound lifestyle.

First things first. I twisted open the child-safe cap on the multivitamins and took one, washing it down with a swig of coffee. Wow. I felt better already. Maybe I should start the day off with a smoothie! That's what health nuts like me did, right? I opened the fridge, which contained a jar of mayonnaise, some salad dressing, an empty beer can, a 7-11 receipt, a pot of rice, two limes, and a paper mache radish. Hmm. Well, limes were chock full of vitamin C, rice was a natural grain, and...um...did I even own a blender?

Thinking about it, I put my foot on a shard of glass. I remembered reading in a history book that they used to bleed people for good health, but that was archaic wisdom, right? Anyways, my floor was so dirty, I decided to bandage up my foot.

That's when I began to dry heave. My stomach was not liking the vitamin. Was it because I'd taken the vitamin on an empty stomach? Or was my body rebelling against vitaminery? Now, I couldn't go for a jog with a sliced-up foot. This sucked. I hated healthy living.

What was so wrong with looking like a prune? Weren't there worse things than to have a face that resembled a dried fruit that was highly respected among the elderly community? This life wasn't so bad.

Sitting back down on my couch, I cracked open the warm beer that was on the floor, flipped the TV back on, and watched the end of *Barfly*. The bills on top of the TV glared judgmentally, but they were probably just jealous that they were a stack of asshole bills, and I was having a blast on my mysteriously stained couch. I raised my warm beer and saluted the prune faces of the world; four warm beers later I drifted off into a restful, dreamless sleep, missing my evening shift at the pizza place.