



The Other Half Of Genius

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Today I realized that genius is fifty percent gin and fifty percent Sue. I have no idea who Sue is, but I'd like to wake up next to her. I already wake up every morning with my mouth tasting like half-genius and then adding half-genius to my orange juice to dull the shame and throbbing. If I woke up next to Sue, even if she were still asleep, I could taste pure genius. But how to find Sue?

The white pages seemed a fine place to start. There were two Sues listed: Sue Dontrelle and Sue Dry Cleaners. Though a dry cleaners could be considered a source of genius (how else do you clean clothes without water?), I knew they probably wouldn't be receptive to English during business hours. I called Sue Dontrelle.

A man answered.

"I'd like to speak to Sue."

"S'cuse me?"

"Sue, please."

Steel rebar clanged against concrete in the background. "This is Mr. Sue." A boy named Sue. That Johnny Cash, genius.

I hummed, and a chill ran down my arms. This man, primed by years of name-based abuse, would surely hunt me down for disturbing him at the construction site. I needed to establish a quick rapport unless I wanted to rig up a shotgun to go off when someone opens my apartment door (the trap itself is fun to build, sure, but it tends to piss off the families of maintenance workers).

"Sue," I said, "I admire how you won that fight in the mud and the blood and the beer, but then weren't afraid to show your emotions."

He hung up, as if his relationship with his father was a sensitive topic.

I put the phone book back in the closet next to my broken Fleshlight and deliberated further. Maybe my epiphany was a message from God telling me that Sue was standing outside my apartment building, pounding on my dysfunctional buzzer, desperate for the kind of release only a drunk virgin can provide. I opened the building door and only a cold blast greeted me. Flurries danced around my feet. I checked the courtyard, but there were no female loiterers.

Back in the apartment, I thought that perhaps if I upped my genius level to two-thirds, it might become clearer who Sue is and how she could complete me. I poured one rocks glass of Bombay Sapphire and a second of Beefeater. I had already finished both when I realized that that left me with a search for "ue," which doesn't make

any sense. Or it could be "EU." I can't afford a plane ticket to Europe, so I made myself throw up.

I lay in the bathroom for several minutes staring up at the toilet paper roll when it occurred to me that genius results from childhood trauma. Sue was my second through fourth grade teacher. I attended a small Montessori school where we called teachers by their first names (in kindergarten I was delighted to have a teacher named "Candy"). The school encouraged children to learn independently, using materials from real life. I may have taken that philosophy too far when Sue caught me squatting behind a tree at recess, tutoring some younger students on the excretory system.

But then I remembered my response: the wild, hysterical laughter of a genius, dragged from the spot with red corduroy pants around my ankles. Yes, that was my defining moment. All I need to do is to recreate it. I stood up and stared at my bright, animal eyes in the mirror. I grabbed my emergency martini-thermos out of the toilet tank, broke off eight squares of toilet paper, and walked out the door.