

“THE FAGGOT POLICE”

ROBERT GUFFEY

SO THESE FOOTBALL PLAYERS DECIDED I WAS A FAG. I don't know why, maybe because most of my friends in high school were bi-sexual psychopaths who looked like Edward Scissorhands (without the scissors). These steroid-infused nyctalopians¹ were the size of four of us stitched together. They towered over my friends like skyscrapers wrapped in flesh. These dudes were seriously disturbed by the idea that some of my friends might have been penetrating each other's posteriors in a manner unsanctioned by Pat Robertson's myopic interpretation of the New Testament. These were Christian athletes with a puritanical world-view and the brawn to enforce it. Two thousand years of paleological fanaticism had led us to this special moment in history. And now the Spanish Inquisition was coming down on my ass in the form of pigskin-worshipping troglodytes with jock straps instead of dicks.²

Only violence could result from this unique frisson. The situation slowly escalated—as situations have a strange tendency to do in my life—to the point where, whenever they'd see any of us walking in the halls—me, any one of my friends, or all of us together at the same time—they would do this weird thing where they'd lift their index fingers in the air and twirl them around, making this high-pitched siren noise: “Woo woo woo woo!”

I believe the gesture was derived from an Eddie Murphy routine about “faggots” in a film called *Raw*, which had just been released at that time.

Ironic Interlude: Only thirty years ago these testosterone-poisoned red-necks wouldn't have let Eddie Murphy piss in the same pot as them, now he was their god damn hero. “Well, gollee, I guess them there niggers are A-okay as long as they're makin' fun of the freakin' queers!”

Ironic Interlude (Part II): In May of 1997 Eddie Murphy was arrested in

West Hollywood for picking up a male prostitute. According to news reports, he has a thing for feet.

At any rate, things were just getting plain ol' batty in the hallowed halls of Torrance High . . . until me and my friend Bill (who's as normal-looking as they come, despite a slight hint of sociopathic behavior swirling just beneath the surface of his otherwise placid personality) wandered into the local 7-11 after school one day to buy a dozen donuts and a peach Slurpee when, all of a sudden, who should appear?—but the Faggot Police riding two phallic reindeer.

There were two of them. They came riding towards the entrance . . . straddling their huge, glistening, beautiful brand-new bikes . . . pumping away on the pedals . . . sweat trickling down their tanned foreheads. My oh my, did they look manly and oh-so-proud to be Amurrricans.

They leaned the bikes up against the window, then came strolling inside as if into a celluloid saloon. ("Bartender, get me a cherry slushy! In a dirty glass!") They made their way toward the video games . . . where Bill and I cringed, shivering in fright, holding our donuts to our chests in a protective manner.

Upon seeing us, Dastardly Dan smiles broke out across their faces. "Well well well," the Leader said, "what do we have here? A couple-a homos!"

"Yeah yeah—homos!" his crony agreed. You know how, in the movies, the football bully always has a little snivelling sidekick with a high-pitched voice? Well, this was him. Direct from Central Casting. "You're right on the money, boss. A couple-a homos. What should we do with 'em, eh? Should I—" (B-player pauses, cracking his knuckles) "—work 'em over?"

"No! *Silence!* I'm . . . thinking . . ."

"Yeah, yeah—thinking!"

The Leader closed his eyes, placed his fingers on his temples, and began pacing the area in front of the frozen food section right next to the Hostess Breakfast Pastry rack. Clearly, he was in deep concentration.

Perhaps because Bill looked relatively "straight," they let us off the hook without physical violence. After a few verbal assaults from the Faggot Police, and a few witty rejoinders from Bill and me, we were able to dislodge ourselves from the situation—as well as the 7-11—with our bodies and donuts intact. We found ourselves outside the entrance to the 7-11 reflecting on the Kafkaesque injustice of the Universe. Our eyes floated downwards toward the gutter—because that's where our spirits were—and happened to

alight upon two pairs of wheels . . . which happened to be connected to two huge, glistening, beautiful brand-new bikes. I looked at Bill. Bill looked at me. He nodded and said, "Why don't you mosey on inside for a minute?"

"Gotcha," I said.

On the opposite side of the large window, the Leader of the Faggot Police and his crony were hard at work on a couple of video games. Imagine: tanned right fists enthusiastically grasping firm "joysticks." A pair of left hands playing across an array of smooth, full, curved buttons. Two young studs maniacally thrusting their bodies against the cold metal exterior of the machine, screaming, "Come on, come on!" All in all, it would be safe to say they seemed rather excited.

"Excuse me," I said.

"What do you want, faggot? Can't you see we're busy? COME ON! COME ON!" the Leader screamed, leaning his torso backwards while keeping his waist pressed firmly against the lower half of the machine—where you stick the quarters in.

"Yeah, yeah!" his crony echoed, his gaze affixed to the dancing blips on the screen. "Busy, busy!" His body was performing the same acrobatic gyrations as his boss.

"Well," I said, "I just wanted to get this straight. You think I'm homosexual, correct?"

"Yeah, yeah," the Leader said. His tongue slipped out of his mouth and slowly circled his lips as his eyes stared raptly at the screen before him.

"Yeah, yeah," his crony agreed.

"And you think my friend Bill's homosexual?"

"Sure, sure." His teeth sunk into his lower lip as he thrust upward on the joystick.

"Sure, sure," his crony said.

"Well, guys, the truth is you're absolutely correct. We're both flaming homosexuals. I mean, I'm talkin' hardcore. We're talkin' whips 'n chains, shaven hamsters, glory holes, golden showers, jelly babies, amyl nitrite, we're talkin' the whole kit 'n kaboodle—"

"Yeah yeah, we *know* that!"

"—and I just wanted to congratulate you on your powers of observance. Nothing gets by you." Two inches away, on the opposite side of the window, Bill was taking off with the Leader's huge, glistening, beautiful brand-new

bike. “I mean, not just anyone could divine that from simply looking at us. It takes a special sort of man for that.”

“Yes, yes! Why’re you telling us all this shit we already know? We already know I’m a great MAN, and we already know you’re a fuckin’ faggot! So why don’t you just get the hell out of my face and we’ll kill you *tomorrow*! Right now I’m busy playing this ga—COME ON! COME ON!” He went back to screaming at the machine.

Glancing out the window, seeing that the front of the 7-11 was out one less brand-spanking-new bike, I said, “Okay, well, have a nice day.” And exited stage left.

At a Sunday’s stroll pace Bill and I walked the bike about ten blocks, then dumped it in an alley in a large blue dumpster. We laughed a significant amount of the way home. . . .

The next day, on the way to my Math class, I was accosted by the Leader, his crony, the rest of the Faggot Police, as well as all their older brothers. They must’ve seen me as one helluva threat. Jesus, the entire Klan had been called out for this one.

The Leader immediately started screeching, “My bike! My BIKE! Where’s my bike, man! My fuckin’ BIKE! I want my fuckin’ BIKE, man! Where is it? Where is it?!? You stole my BIKE, man! You stole it! Now, where is it? Where’s my fuckin’ BIKE!!!!”

Lil’ ol’ me: “Bike? Why, whatever are you speaking of?”

“YouknowwhatI’mtalkin’aboutmanI’mtalkin’aboutmyfuckin’BIKEandyoufuckin’stoleitmannowyou’regonnafuckin’paymannowyou’regonnefuckin’pay!!!!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. I didn’t steal your bike.”

He calmed down for a moment, nodded his head slowly, crossed his arms over his chest, and said (slyly, ever so slyly), “If you didn’t take it . . . then how did you know it was *stolen*, hm?”

“Huh?”

“You heard me. Caught you, didn’t I?”

“Wait a minute. You just stood there for five minutes yelling into the stratosphere that your bike’s just been stolen. How do you think I know?”

“Shut up! Don’t start tryin’ to confuse me! You’re guilty!”

“Look, what do you think I did? Snuck into your backyard and took off with your bike? I don’t even know where you live.”

“You didn’t take it from my backyard. You took it from 7-11!”

“7-11?” I said. I paused for a moment, as if contemplating the existence of 7-11. 7-11. 7-11? Hm, 7-11 . . . ?

“Stop acting stupid!”

“Yeah, stop acting stupid!” his crony said.

I simply shrugged and walked past them, hearing these ominous words echoing behind me:

YOU CAN RUN
BUT YOU CAN’T HIDE!!!!
HIDE!!!
HIDE!!
HIDE!

Well, now I was in a dilemma.

For once, I decided, I would use the school system for my own purposes.

After school, I paid a little visit to my good friend, the Dean of Torrance High, Ms. Nowatka.³

We had a pleasant conversation, I explained the situation, how I knew nothing whatsoever about any sort of bike, and Ms. Nowatka assured me she’d take care of everything. Oh my.

Afterward, she escorted me outside her office and confided in me that she had a dilemma of her own on her hands. She led me to a squadron of trash cans painted up in bright colors, and told me she had to choose one of the trash cans to represent the spirit of the school.

“You’re kidding,” I said.

“Oh no, of course not. Each school club painted their own trash can. Well dear me,” she said, smiling proudly, “you can tell they all put a lot of effort into it. It’s hard to pick just one. Say, I know. I’ll let *you* decide!”

“Me?”

“Certainly. Go ahead.”

Hm. I rubbed my chin thoughtfully. There were so many, all done so intricately, so . . . so *proudly*!

Except.

Except one. One of them (I forget which club submitted the piece, it doesn’t matter, really) was so God awful it was beyond belief. It was as if each member of the club had simply taken turns defecating on the thing, and then said, “Okay, let’s turn it in like that!”

It was wonderful.

“That one!” I said.

“Really? That one?”

“Oh yes. Definitely. It’s extremely provocative. It highlights the democratic and yet *controlled* atmosphere of the school very well. A veritable zenith of postmodern art!”

“Mm. You know, I was thinking the same thing,” she said. “I’ll think about it overnight.”

“Okey-dokey,” I said. “See you later!” I placed my hand on her plump shoulder and whispered solemnly, glancing at the trash can, “But do the right thing.”

So I left

The next day, the Leader of the Faggot Police and I were called out of Math class and told to report to the Dean’s office, where Ms. Nowatka informed my nyctalopian nemesis that if any form of violence (physical or verbal) was committed against me or any of my friends, he and *his* friends would be thrown off the football team.

His face turned sheet white. His testicles shrivelled up. “O-okay,” he said.

From that point on, he was nothing but a pure gentleman to my friends and me.

Oh my.

After the meeting, at “snack time,” Ms. Nowatka presented the school with their new trash can mascot. . . .

And meanwhile, somewhere, some lucky trash collector’s son was cruisin’ around the city on a few hundred dollars worth of bicycle. Or perhaps it was a wino, or a baglady.

Either way, someone much more deserving.

NOTES

1. Guffey Factoid #1: The exact definition of nyctalopian is “one who suffers from night blindness,” which is completely meaningless in this context. The word sounded particularly insulting, so I decided to use it for that reason alone. I apologize for any confusion this willful mistake may have caused the reader. I assure you it won’t happen again.
2. Guffey Factoid #2: On October 4th, 1997, Bill McCartney, a former football coach and founder of the Promise Keepers (a right-wing Christian organization intended only for men) organized a march on Washington D.C. During the march, he delivered a speech in which he quoted Leviti-

cus from the Old Testament to prove that homosexuality is an abomination, ignoring the fact that the same chapter says it's an abomination to touch pig flesh.

3. Guffey Factoid #3: Actually, Ms. Nowatka's usual response to my immediate presence was to sigh deeply and roll her eyes. I'd been sent to her office far more times than I could count. The most embarrassing incident was when an English teacher wrote a letter to the Dean accusing me of being "anti-semantic" because of an essay I'd written about Jewish cuisine. Despite the teacher's suspicions, I assured the Dean that I respected all words equally.