



*In the midst of a pandemic and political unrest, Derek won't let his diagnosis of pre-leukemia force him to accept his fate any earlier than necessary, but he does grant that perhaps it's time to come up with a "pre-bucket" list.*

## **My Pre-Bucket List**

By Nykee Hider

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# My Pre-Bucket List

Who do *you* want to do before you go?



Johnny Townsend

## My Pre-Bucket List

Sex isn't the way Derek Murdock experienced it when he first came out, when HIV was the most frightening possibility during any encounter. With COVID, even condoms might not protect. Simply being in the same room with another person could transmit the virus. And, given mask-resistant commuters, science-denying shoppers, and lax coworkers, that could even include a guy's own husband, if he's lucky enough to have one!

Which Derek doesn't. So what's an unattached, libidinous man supposed to do?

Especially in a political atmosphere where surviving the volatile election season in one piece isn't guaranteed.

Derek won't let his diagnosis of pre-leukemia force him to accept his fate any earlier than necessary, but he does grant that perhaps it's time to come up at least with a "pre-bucket" list.

And check as many men off it as he safely can.

## Praise for Johnny Townsend

In *Zombies for Jesus*, “Townsend isn’t writing satire, but deeply emotional and revealing portraits of people who are, with a few exceptions, quite lovable.”

Kel Munger, *Sacramento News and Review*

In *Sex among the Saints*, “Townsend writes with a deadpan wit and a supple, realistic prose that’s full of psychological empathy....he takes his protagonists’ moral struggles seriously and invests them with real emotional resonance.”

Kirkus Reviews

*Let the Faggots Burn: The Upstairs Lounge Fire* is “a gripping account of all the horrors that transpired that night, as well as a respectful remembrance of the victims.”

Terry Firma, Patheos

“Johnny Townsend’s ‘Partying with St. Roch’ [in the anthology *Latter-Gay Saints*] tells a beautiful, haunting tale.”

Kent Brintnall, Out in Print: Queer Book Reviews

*Selling the City of Enoch* is “sharply intelligent...pleasingly complex...The stories are full of...doubters, but there’s no vindictiveness in these pages; the characters continuously poke holes in Mormonism’s more extravagant absurdities, but they take very little pleasure in doing so....Many of Townsend’s stories...have a provocative edge to them, but this [book] displays a great deal of insight as well...a playful, biting and surprisingly warm collection.”

Kirkus Reviews

*Gayrabian Nights* is “an allegorical tour de force...a hard-core emotional punch.”

Gay. Guy. Reading and Friends

*The Washing of Brains* has “A lovely writing style, and each story [is] full of unique, engaging characters....immensely entertaining.”

Rainbow Awards

In *Dead Mankind Walking*, “Townsend writes in an energetic prose that balances crankiness and humor....A rambunctious volume of short, well-crafted essays...”

Kirkus Reviews

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## Chapter One: In the Hole of the Beholder

I inserted Alonso's key into the lock and opened the kitchen door. A half-filled bowl of oatmeal lay in the sink, next to a can of green beans with a few dried slivers stuck to the bottom of its lid. Alonso had never been one for rinsing. These days, he wasn't using the recycling bin at all, other than looking for legal ways to compost himself.

"How's my favorite sick person today?" I asked, turning the corner into the living room. The floor was covered with ceramic tiles made to look like stressed oak. A painting above the sofa depicted two figures huddled against a blizzard, and an old copy of *Honcho* on the end table promised happy dreams. Alonso lay on the sofa with a blanket pulled up to his chin. He was looking at the TV screen across from him, though nothing was playing.

Alonso's gaze slowly shifted to me. "Hi, Derek," he said in a muted voice. "Thanks for stopping by." I could hear La Oreja de van Gogh playing quietly in the background.



Alonso's arms had grown thinner lately, but other than that, he was as striking as ever. He could go back to modeling Carhartt apparel any time he wanted. I'd saved several dozen images of him in T-shirts, work pants, jackets, and caps, inserting the photos into plastic page protectors and keeping them all in one binder. I'd planned to transfer the images onto fabric and make a quilt for him but had somehow never gotten around to it. Probably too late to start now.

Alonso's Latin features were pretty white. If he didn't speak, no one would ever know he was the son of itinerant farmworkers. He'd been picking apples when he met a white trucker at the age of twenty and moved to Seattle to become part of the permanently addressed world.

The trucker had moved on, but Alonso stayed.

"Any pain meds today?" I asked. He was trying to limit himself to one a day so that he'd have a few extra to add to his Death with Dignity cocktail when the time came. Alonso was fifty-five, almost twenty years my senior, and still, even at his sickest, a damn hot man. I wished I'd had the nerve when we first met to ask him for a nude photo of himself.

"Had to take two pills." He wiped his eyes and tried to smile.

I didn't wear my mask anymore when I visited, but I did stay at least six feet away from him. He'd been so depressed after one of his exes had committed suicide five months ago that his terminal diagnosis had almost

been a relief. Alonso wouldn't have to kill himself, after all, to join Rayvon. Nature was taking care of everything for him. Too bad anal cancer wasn't a great way to go.

"At least pain meds should make it easier to watch the evening news."

Alonso waved away the remark like he might an annoying gnat. He hadn't watched any news at all lately and forbid me or his other friends to repeat even one headline. He didn't know about the wildfires raging up and down the West Coast. Our air quality index had been as high as 283 before slowly dropping back to a mere 77. Moderate. But at this point, we'd take it. Especially since more fire weather was predicted for next week.

My boss had insisted the terrible air quality was a punishment from God because everyone had complained so much about COVID restrictions. "I'll give you something to cry about!" Casey said, quoting God.

I'd long since stopped believing in God myself, but maybe he really did exist and was simply a great big jerk.

"Seen any good movies lately?" I prodded. Alonso hated laugh tracks but did still stream films or an occasional drama series.

"Finished the last episodes of *Velvet*," he said. It was a prime-time soap opera featuring a love affair between the rich heir of a department store owner and a poor woman who worked for his father in Franco's Spain.

"What's next?"

Alonso shrugged.

“I just discovered an Australian show on Peacock,” I said. “Five friends get together and buy a house. All sorts of complications ensue.”

Alonso waved away my gnatty comment again and grimaced. He sat up slowly, swinging his legs to the floor. I knew what was coming next.

“Derek, would you mind...?”

“It’ll be my pleasure.” I stood up and offered my hand.

“Well, don’t *lie* about it.”

He moved slowly but didn’t need any actual assistance climbing the stairs to his bedroom. I followed behind, though, just in case, placing both hands on his ass and pushing him up the last couple of steps, even though he hadn’t asked. “Sorry,” I said. “Couldn’t wait to touch it.”

“Such a liar.”

Alonso pulled off his pajama bottoms but left his Carhartt T-shirt on when he lay face down on the bed. He didn’t need an ostomy yet and planned to swallow his cocktail of drugs when the disease progressed to that point. It wasn’t as if life was ever going to get better if he held on a little longer.

I sat on the bed beside him and reached for the lotion, squirting some directly onto his ass. He grunted at its coolness but offered no other protest. After setting the bottle back on the bedstand, I put the tips of two fingers

in the pool of lotion and began spreading it gently up and down his crack.

We'd started a couple of weeks ago with me rubbing his back while he kept his pajama pants on. Then I'd persuaded him to let me massage his ass while he still stayed in his underwear. And finally, he'd resigned himself to me touching his ass itself.

I'd started on PrEP over two years ago to boost my chances of avoiding HIV, though I'd already been infected with HPV ages ago, as most sexually active guys were in the days before a vaccine had been developed. Alonso certainly didn't need me to act scared of him by putting on a glove. Whatever the risks to either of us, the intimacy was more important.

And Alonso didn't need to know I'd just been diagnosed with pre-leukemia, especially since it looked like the condition would only slowly progress to the type of leukemia that would take yet another ten years to turn serious.

On Alonso's left cheek, a dark mark that might have been a bruise, but of course wasn't, emanated away from his asshole. On his right cheek, a bumpy area the size of a Peace dollar spread out from the edge of his sphincter, looking perhaps like a scar from a serious burn.

I carefully rubbed the lotion up and down his crack, over the "bruise" and into the "scar." I toyed with his asshole but didn't try to enter. When the lotion started to dry, I squirted out more and rubbed it over the entirety of both cheeks, concentrating most of my efforts, though, on

the “offensive” parts. The pretense was that I was maintaining the integrity of his skin.

“Kent’s mad at me,” Alonso said, the sound muffled with his face down and away from me. He was talking about one of his former boyfriends. Two other friends had already stopped visiting, explaining that it was “too hard” for them to see Alonso “like this.” Kent almost always visited while I was at work. “He thinks I should fight harder to stay alive. I should be out enjoying life to the fullest while I still can.”

“What did you tell him?” I squirted out some more lotion.

“I told him you came over to massage my tumor every day and there was nothing more rewarding than that.”

I laughed and he did, too. “I thought you were opposed to lying,” I said.

“Wisdom is learning to adjust your goals when you need to.”

It was a trite thing to say, whether or not he’d been serious, yet it still triggered an “aha!” moment.

I stood up, pulled off my clothes, and climbed on top of Alonso, encouraged when he didn’t question my actions. He and I had never dated, had never been Friends with Benefits, had only spent time together in our book club and sometimes for movie nights. I needed to be sure, though, that it was Alonso’s goals we were honoring.

“Are you OK with me massaging some of the tumor inside your rectum?”

Alonso turned over onto his back and looked up at me, his face emotionless, but his voice breaking ever so slightly when he answered. “Really? Are you sure?”

I laughed. “Of course I’m not sure. But that doesn’t matter, does it?” I reached down and traced a line down his thigh.

Alonso closed his eyes tightly. “I don’t want pity sex.”

“So who’s feeling pity?” I asked. “We’ve been friends for ages. The only real question is why we’ve waited so long.”

“I don’t know.” He blinked a shrug. “I thought you were hot when we first met, with that dark shadow even right after you’d shaved. Those green eyes with light brown sparkles. That box a guy could see from a block away...” He looked up into my sparkly hazel eyes.

“And now?”

His forehead creased. “We shifted over to platonic at some point before we got naked. I...I didn’t know we could shift back.”

“Sounds like a plan,” I said.

He frowned.

“Shifting back and forth. You have some lube to help with that?”

He pointed to the bedstand, and I pulled out a bottle of Lube Life. The lotion would have worked, too, but sex felt more official with the lube. Alonso turned back onto his stomach, asking me to turn off the light.

“Not a chance.”

“How can you possibly stand something so ugly?”

I kissed his right cheek and then his left. “How many perfect dicks have you seen?”

“I don’t know. Ten? Fifteen?”

“Were they exactly the same?”

Alonso didn’t answer.

“I love *this* ass,” I said, “warts, tumors, and all, because it’s part of *you*, and you’re one of the best friends I’ve ever had.” He’d taught me the difference between Mexican Spanish and that in Spain, had taken me on a day trip to pick apples in eastern Washington. He’d even helped me with my mortgage payment a couple of times when I lost my last job before I found the one on Madison.

“But...”

“Let me love you tonight.”

I rubbed Alonso’s back for several minutes before moving down to his ass, taking care because I wasn’t sure how much the discoloration and tumors hurt. Finally, I dabbed some more lubricant up and down his crack, added a little extra right on his hole, and then aimed and carefully pushed inside.

Alonso moaned, tensing slightly before slowly relaxing. “I thought I’d never...”

I was gentle and slow, so gentle, in fact, that Alonso fell asleep before I finished. When I heard his deep breathing, I pulled out carefully but remained on top. I closed my eyes and dozed off, my cheek against his, while thinking back to my very first time, almost eighteen years earlier, with my best friend from church.

\*\*\*

“I’m worried about my mission physical,” Scott whispered as if divulging a state secret. He was stockier than I was, all muscle, the definition easy to see because his blond hair was sparse enough on his arms as to appear invisible. It simply gave his skin a barely perceptible glow. When we played basketball in the church gym, he always played on the skins team, and his smooth chest looked even more solid than his arms. He’d been my best friend since I’d joined the deacons’ quorum six years earlier, had remained an inch taller than me every year since we’d met.

“What’s to worry about?” I’d had physicals every year as far back as I could remember. Scott almost certainly had, too. Turning eighteen shouldn’t change much. If anything, we no longer had to worry about the doc reporting back to our parents.

Something like “Derek has a bad case of jock itch.”

Obviously, I’d known something was wrong when I was fourteen even before seeing the doctor, but I’d



assumed the problem had been caused by beating off too much, so how could I go to my parents for help? What if the red, puffy itching was something that only happened to gay guys? I'd heard someone at church say that only "queers" masturbated. I wished the doctor had just told me what to buy at the drugstore and let me take care of it myself.

But I survived the humiliation and went on to masturbate again.

"My mission physical will be the first time I ever get a prostate exam." Scott had locked the door to his bedroom when we came in a few minutes earlier, but now he carried his desk chair over and placed it against the door. His mom and younger sister were both at home.

"It's just a digital exam, right?" What was the big deal?

"Derek, what do you think 'digital' means?"

I frowned. "A reading, isn't it? Something electronic."

Scott smiled in a rather irritating way, but at least he looked less nervous now. "It means he sticks a finger up your butt and feels around for your prostate."

My mouth fell open.

Scott smiled again, but only for a moment, and then he turned serious once more. "I'm worried it'll hurt," he went on. "I'm afraid I won't be clean inside." He looked down at the floor, and I turned away. "I bought a couple

of enemas to be prepared,” he said, “but I just don’t know what to expect from the whole experience.”

After a long pause, I felt a hand on my shoulder and turned back to Scott. “I used an enema before I called you over today,” he said, so quietly I almost couldn’t hear. “I thought maybe we could do a trial run so I won’t be so scared.”

“Oh...uh...”

“What I’m most afraid of,” he whispered right into my ear, “is...”

“Yeah?”

“I read that sometimes, a guy will get an erection during a prostate exam.” He turned away again. “I’d just die.”

Scott and I had rarely even talked about masturbating. We’d never looked at porn together or talked much about our “dream dates.” I’d certainly never hinted that I was gay, especially since Scott loved track and field, a love of sports one of the few things we didn’t have in common. He’d turned eighteen a few months ago, and my birthday had been last week. An adult conversation like this still seemed so alien.

Scott stared directly into my eyes, not wavering, and I steeled myself not to look away.

“So,” I said, “you want me to stick my finger up your butt to see if—”

Scott stepped aside, opening a drawer in his dresser. “I’ve already tried sticking my own finger up there,” he said, “but that’s not really the same kind of stimulation.”

Oh my goodness. Did he have to use such a word?

Scott pulled a jar of petroleum jelly and a hand towel from the drawer. “I tried hand lotion,” he said, “and that’s OK. And I tried cooking oil, but that’s messy.”

“How many times have you done this?” I asked.

“I’m really nervous, Derek.” He opened the jar. “I found out that doctors use this. It’s a bit messy, too, but I may as well use the same thing.” He turned away from me and dropped his pants. A moment later, he forced his underwear down to his ankles as well.

“Scott, I...”

He pried his cheeks apart.

“Be a buddy, Derek.”

As missionaries, we’d be with our assigned companions 24/7. My brother and father had both served overseas, Tim in Australia and Dad in Sweden. Other relatives had served in Scotland, Mexico, Peru, Iceland, Germany, and Kansas. They all talked about the incredible bonding experiences they’d had.

I dipped a finger tentatively in the half empty jar and then, taking a deep breath, dabbed some of the translucent stuff directly onto Scott’s asshole. He twitched, and I found myself growing hard. Hopefully, he’d be too worried about his own possible erection, keep facing

away from me, and not notice the growing bulge in my jeans.

“Coat your fingers really good,” he said. “I’m worried.”

His use of the plural threw me. I thought I’d only be using one “digit.” Two seemed to make the procedure even more serious. I coated another finger and then put the tips of both right against his asshole. I pushed gently, and his hole remained firmly shut.

“I don’t know, Scott.”

“Just do it, Derek. But stop once you get past the sphincter. It’ll take me a minute to adjust.”

How strange to be so experienced about a thing like this. I’d fantasized a good bit about putting my dick inside something inviting but much less about inviting something inside me. I’d known that I’d finally “be a man” once I went through the temple for the first time right before my mission. It looked like I might end up a full-fledged adult several months early. Of course, I’d imagined that adult accomplishments might be more fulfilling than sticking my finger into assholes, but I did feel older now, more mature.

I pushed my fingers an inch into Scott and stopped, my dick straining against my clothing. But after pausing for only a few seconds, I was surprised when Scott reached behind him and pulled my fingers deeper inside.

“Can you feel my prostate?” he asked.

I moved my fingers slightly. “I don’t know.”

“Keep moving them around,” he said. “Pull them in and out a little and tell me what you feel.”

What I felt was a warm, wet, slippery softness.

“I can’t tell.” I continued moving my fingers about, pressing against the walls of his rectum. “Isn’t the important thing that you know what *you’ll* feel when the doctor does this?”

“I suppose.”

OK. We were mature adults now. Matter-of-fact. Not childishly embarrassed over bodily functions. Done. “Should I pull out then?”

Scott didn’t answer right away, and I found I wasn’t especially anxious to exit any sooner than I needed to. If he didn’t ask, then I’d stay a bit longer. I *did* feel very adult inside him.

I glanced over at the chair in front of the door.

“Damn,” Scott said. I’d never heard him curse before.

“What?” I froze, afraid I’d hurt him.

He turned slightly and pointed in front of him. His dick was as hard as mine.

“Oh, I’m sorry!” I started to pull out, but Scott held my hand in place.

“I see this is having the same effect on you.” He nodded toward my bulge. “Do you think the doctor gets hard every time he does a prostate exam?”

I didn’t know how to answer that.

“My cousin said when he was on his mission in Paraguay, two guys he and his companion were teaching raped them.”

“Oh my heck.”

“Missionaries have to face all kinds of danger.”

I’d be sending off my own papers in just a few months, I remembered. Maybe...

“I’ll keep worrying about how I’ll handle that, too,” Scott said. “Maybe you ought to slide your cock inside me for a minute so I can be prepared for what that feels like, too.”

And instantly, finally, I understood. I also understood that if I went along, I could pretend we were taking a Mission Prep class the way he was.

“Well, fair is fair, Scott,” I said. “If I help you get prepared for some of these scary things, you’ll need to help me get ready, too.”

Scott’s sphincter tightened around my fingers and he smiled. “We need to learn how to be ‘in the world but not of the world.’”

“Some punks might force us to suck their dicks,” I said. “Or who all knows what.”

“We’ve got a couple of weeks before we head back to school,” Scott said. “We can try to brace ourselves for other problems we might have to face as missionaries.”

“Something different each time?”

Scott nodded. “We’ll need to be able to cope with whatever comes along in the Last Days. Could be quite a lot.”

“We can face *anything* if we’re prepared.”

“Anything,” Scott repeated, his eyes closing while he braced himself.

I unzipped and pulled out my dick, wiping some of the petroleum jelly over it. After I finished helping him, he helped me. Then we discussed some of the many other dangers we might encounter out in the mission field. We kept the door locked and before very long were up to helping each other a second time before I headed home.

Two first times. An auspicious start, but my two second times would have to wait almost three more days, an eternity at that age.

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What with COVID and the climate crisis and a political atmosphere growing more intense every day, I wondered how many more special moments I might have in my life, pre-leukemia or no pre-leukemia.

It might not be time to come up with a bucket list, I reasoned, but perhaps jotting down some ideas for a “pre-bucket” list might still be helpful.

I had no money for travel, even if international flights started up again soon. There was no money for another college degree, for kayaking, to open an art gallery, to donate anything substantial to good causes.

Whatever I included on my pre-bucket list would have to be available locally. I could easily catch a bus out to see Snoqualmie Falls or hike Mt. Sy, and I scribbled those ideas down. Maybe grab my sleeping bag and go camping in the rainforest on the peninsula. I loved seeing the rich, green moss on the rocks and trees.

But I knew the easiest thing—and superficial as I was, probably the most rewarding thing—was going to be deciding just who, among the many men here in Seattle, whether friends, former friends, or complete strangers, I wanted to check off my personal “to do” list. At thirty-six, I was already technically “middle-aged,” and with some far-right extremists calling for the imprisonment and even killing of LGBTQ folks, each sexual encounter felt validating on more than one level.

I wished Scott were here to face the challenge with me, but we’d fell out of contact halfway through his mission when he was sent home early with a “medical condition.” No one would ever say what the issue was, and by the time I returned from Italy, no one at church would even say his name. Had he died? Had he killed himself? Had he gone insane? There was no way to ask his parents without causing them more pain.

So Scott disappeared, but I still thought of him for years, late at night, fantasizing about his miraculous recovery and picking up our friendship right where we’d left off.



## Chapter Two: A Breath of Fresh Cum

“All sex is pretty gross when you think about it.” I leaned down and licked Alonso’s freshly deposited cum off his stomach. We’d only fucked the one time. On subsequent visits, he just wanted me to watch him beat off. When I’d asked the first time he jacked off for me if I could help him clean up afterwards, I knew he was expecting me to grab a hand towel, but I’d chosen to use my tongue instead. He seemed to welcome it now.

“I sometimes do things that other gay guys think is beyond the pale,” I continued, “but even routine sex would be repulsive if we didn’t have hormones distorting our perception.” I licked up the last of Alonso’s cum, stuck my tongue out so he could see a pool of it there, and swallowed.

My mom had given me the “facts of life” lecture when I was nine or ten. After she’d finished describing heterosexual intercourse, I couldn’t help but ask the obvious. “Isn’t that disgusting?”

“Yes,” she’d replied in all seriousness.

“So were you grossed out fucking me last week?” Alonso asked, a slight frown on his lips.

I shrugged. “Boiled peanuts can be gross the first time you try them,” I said. “Or cotton candy. Or chicken gizzards—”

“Oh my god.”

“Or most beers, for that matter.”

“And fucking an ass covered with tumors?”

“A lot prettier than some of the asses I’ve seen.” One man had a zombie face tattooed on his ass so that I felt I was getting a blow job from a dead man. A single quickie with that guy had been plenty, but it was difficult sometimes to say no once you were back at your place and unclothed with a stranger. An awful lot of sexual encounters had a “Let’s just get this over with” feel to them. It wasn’t always easy to muster Andy Hardy’s “I know! Let’s put on a show!” enthusiasm.

“Is there any kind of sex you find gross now?” Alonso pulled his blanket up over himself again. I sat a few feet away from the sofa, admiring his still beautiful face. Weeks, perhaps days, away from death, and he was still drop dead gorgeous.

Oh.

“Not much,” I had to admit. “I mean, putting your dick into a hole you know is designed to excrete waste is distasteful, even if it’s temporarily clean in there. That’s mainstream gay sex, but it’s icky if you think about it very long.”

“By long, you mean about half a second, don’t you?”

I laughed. "I expect it's one of the reasons some straight folks have a hard time with gays in the first place." And maybe the fact that lots of gay guys had sex in bathrooms and behind bushes and in the back rooms of bars.

"I was never into bondage," Alonso reflected. "Or asphyxiation." He shook his head. "And definitely not tantric sex."

I thought of Brian, a guy I used to make out with in Slam Dunk. We never went home to have sex but did like kissing for ten or fifteen minutes in front of the other bar patrons. I'd been unnerved several months into our make out sessions when he confessed that he drank his own urine every morning.

"And you French kiss with that tongue!" I'd exclaimed.

"Yes. Like this." And he'd slid it back inside my mouth.

"Some other primate species have a good deal of sex," I told Alonso, remembering a show I'd seen on BBC America. "You can see them masturbating all the time or having intercourse with each other. But I don't know if anyone's ever seen them having oral sex."

Alonso grimaced again. "Why are you even thinking about monkey blow jobs?"

"Another man shooting a load of semen into your mouth is a run-of-the-mill gay activity, but an awful lot of gay men, and plenty of straight women, are too repulsed

by the idea even to try it.” I thought about my friend Luana, who’d told me the first time she saw a guy ejaculate, she thought it looked like snot, and letting a guy cum in her mouth had taken months of porn research before she was willing to give it a go herself. I also knew straight men who couldn’t bring themselves to go down on their wives.

Other people went out of their way instead to do things “regular” folks found off-putting, like guys who wanted to have sex when their partners were menstruating, or men who asked their wives not to shave their armpits. There’d been a sister missionary in Italy who never shaved her legs, one of the few women I ever felt slightly attracted to.

Alonso peeked under his blanket at his stomach. “What the hell is your point with all this?”

I laughed. “I don’t even know.” Just conversation, I supposed. We didn’t have many awkward silences, but that was always a danger when a silence could be filled with thoughts of impending death. I kneeled beside the sofa and tugged up Alonso’s blanket to uncover a foot. “I guess since guys are reluctant to hook up during the pandemic, I spend more time thinking about sex than usual.” Though, to be fair, even the usual amount had been fairly substantial.

“And talking about it,” he said. “And talking and talking...”

I lifted his foot to my face, licked the tip of each toe, and popped his big toe into my mouth. “Mmmphhgrphh,” I said. “Mmmphhhnnmmphh.”

“I didn’t quite catch that.”

I pulled his toe out for a moment. “I can only stop talking about it if I put something in my mouth.”

Alonso lifted his foot back to my lips.

As I resumed licking and sucking, Alonso looked on. “That is so gross,” he said. But his feet were clean, and he knew it. “Here. Do this one next.”

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My second semester of college, I’d reluctantly returned to my dorm after a glorious winter break with Scott. He’d needed continual reassurance that he’d be able to get through his upcoming prostate exam, and I’d been only too happy to give it. But now I was studying Western Civ and trigonometry and Intro to Psychology. No more Mission Prep. I’d be receiving my call in a few months, but for the time being, I had to get some college credits so that “the best two years of my life” wouldn’t put me too far behind my cohorts. That meant taking six courses, all general and so not too difficult, but still time consuming.

One morning, I’d gone to the communal bathroom on the north end of my floor, and when I entered one of the stalls, I’d stared in surprise at the load of fresh cum on the seat. I’d been repulsed at first but realized a few moments

later I wasn't going to be able to take my morning piss. My dick had suddenly grown hard.

If I sat down, though, I could try to force it between my legs and into the bowl. I looked a moment longer at the white splotch on the seat, considered wiping it off with some toilet paper, and then sat directly down on it instead.

The cum was cold and sticky, hardly erotic, and yet I found myself wriggling on the toilet seat to feel it more thoroughly. I finally managed to piss and then stood up and masturbated. Rather than deposit my own load onto the seat, I spread it over my ass cheek where the other guy's cum was drying. I didn't quite know what to do at that point but just pulled my underwear and pants back up and returned to my room. I skipped my morning shower that day so I could think about the stranger's cum on my backside while I studied.

I worried this might lead to the self-loathing my church leaders promised was a "natural consequence of sin," but my guilt both over Scott and now this experience existed more out of a sense of obligation. I understood that I *should* feel bad about what I was doing. Since I didn't *really* feel all that bad, however, there was no point in repenting yet.

In fact, maybe I needed to do just a little more to trigger the real thing.

A few mornings later, I entered the same stall and found another deposit of cum on the toilet seat. One day, I found a load there just after lunch, and another time

right before bedtime. Mostly, though, I found fresh semen on the toilet seat in the mornings. Always slightly different times, but consistently the same stall.

Then one morning, I walked softly into the bathroom around 4:30. I could see feet underneath my favorite stall door. And I could hear someone beating off, the soft swish-swish-swish growing faster and faster. When the door opened a moment later, a guy I'd seen many times and never suspected looked out at me.

He was pretty average looking, perhaps a couple of pounds overweight, with thinning brown hair and the promising start of a double chin even in his youth. He wasn't one of the guys on the floor I'd fantasized about. And he didn't look the slightest bit gay, though other than Scott, I didn't actually know anyone who was gay, so I really had little idea how to tell.

Maybe the guy wasn't gay at all. He might have simply wanted to gross out the other dorm residents who had to use the stall after him.

I probably shouldn't say anything.

The guy's eyes tracked up and down my pajamas. "You the one who sits on it every day?" he whispered.

I nodded.

"Can I watch you do it now?"

He squeezed out of the stall and I went on in, dropping my pajama bottoms and underwear to sit on the wad of spoooge splattered onto the toilet seat.

“Maybe next time,” I said softly, “we can skip the middleman.” I pointed to the seat below me.

He stood there silently for the next minute or so while I beat off into my hand. I wasn’t quite sure what to do with it after that, but the other student turned around, dropped his pants again, and pushed his ass toward me, slapping his left cheek. I almost wiped my hand where he’d indicated, but instead I wiped it right against his asshole.

“Oh my god!” he whispered loudly. “You can’t put it there!”

Without thinking, I grabbed his hips and pulled him closer, burying my face into his crack and licking my own cum back out of it.

When I finished, he pulled up his pants and ran off without even glancing over his shoulder at me.

I was afraid that would be the end of things, but the following morning, the guy was waiting for me in the stall. We were both too scared to really come out, but almost every morning for the remainder of the semester, the guy shot directly into my ass crack. He never let me cum on him again, but he smiled every time I pulled my underwear back up without wiping off his cum first, and I liked that my mind felt especially alert for the rest of the morning, as if the secret knowledge of what was drying on my asshole opened my consciousness to accept even more knowledge.

Better than BYU’s motto.



I made straight A's in all my early classes, though I did make a B in one of my afternoon courses.

If only I could have found some afternoon inspiration. But, even at that young age, I understood one couldn't have everything.

\*\*\*

"Kent, why do you keep pestering Alonso?" I'd called Alonso's former partner the moment I got home.

"What are you talking about? I bring him a brownie every day."

"And you keep telling him he's not dying the way you think he should."

"Well, he isn't."

"Kent," I said, "instead of helping him get whatever pleasure he can out of his last days, you're making sure he feels more miserable than he needs to."

"But if he'd just—"

"Listen, if Alonso tells me one more time that you want him to become Auntie Mame, I'll knock your block off."

"Why are you being so mean?"

"Tell him some fun memories. Tell him some fun things you're doing now. But let him make up his own mind what he wants to do for whatever time he's got left."

“He was *my* husband, Derek. I think you should mind your own business.”

I hung up, letting Kent think he’d “won.” But earlier that afternoon, I’d brought Alonso a cattle prod. Only \$70 for a decent device on Amazon. And delivered right to my door that morning. I’d been weeding my yard and did a little dance when I saw the driver walking up my front path with the long, distinctive box.

“Blow up doll?” the Amazon driver asked, wiggling his eyebrows. He had medium dark skin and was probably six feet tall, carrying an extra twenty-five pounds around his stomach.

“Cattle prod,” I replied.

The delivery man shook his head. “COVID’s screwing with people’s minds an awful lot these days.”

“Speaking of screwing,” I said, “since I’m trying to keep my sex life functional while not actually touching other people, I’m asking a few guys if they don’t mind stepping around to the back of my house and jacking off into a cotton face mask.”

“What the—”

“Like the one I’m wearing now,” I said, tapping it. “I had a UPS driver shoot into this one yesterday evening. Now it’s dry but I can still smell him.”

“I’m married, dude.”

I held up a hand. “I don’t want to have sex with you. I don’t even have to watch. But I’ve got another mask I’d

like to use as a backup, if you have a few minutes.” I nodded to the side of the house.

The health insurance I received through work covered three—count ’em, three—therapy sessions a year. I’d gone through those by the end of February, before the pandemic even got started around here. We all had *some* issues we needed to work through. People routinely self-medicated with alcohol and drugs, didn’t they? So I created my own group therapy sessions and addressed personal issues as best I could.

Still, sometimes I felt like a vulnerable embankment being eroded away by a steady stream.

Or the owner of a portrait in the attic I dared not let anyone see.

Mostly, though, I knew I was *supposed* to feel bad about my “slutty” behavior. But since I didn’t, I kept slutting.

Perhaps there was a deathbed repentance somewhere in my future. For today, I wanted more pre-bucket *life*.

The delivery driver glanced about nervously, and when he didn’t see any neighbors nearby who might have overheard the invitation, he followed me to the back door. I darted inside and grabbed another mask, setting it down on the edge of a cement planter hosting some orange crocosmia several feet from the steps. Then I went back inside.

From the window, I could see the man looking around again to make sure no one could see into the back

yard from neighboring properties or the street out front. He still seemed hesitant until he saw my face at the window, and then he grew determined and actually did it, whipped out his dick and shot into my cotton COVID mask. As soon as he set it back down on the edge of the planter, I opened the back door and stuck out my still-masked head.

“Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it.” He started back toward the front of the house but turned around. “I mean it. Please. No comment when Amazon asks how the delivery went.”

“Not even ‘Delivered with Care’ or ‘Above and Beyond’?”

After assuring him I’d leave no comment at all, I stepped over to the planter, lifted the mask toward my face, and inhaled. “Like a breath of fresh cum,” I said. The driver ducked his head as if trying to avoid a sudden rain as he returned to his truck.

After 200,000 years of evolution, there wasn’t much new in the world of human sex, but it was possible COVID would help us develop one or two new fetishes. And it might just take a fetish—or two, or three—to survive.

After I hung up on Kent, I called Alonso. “If he pesters you again,” I said, “say that zapping him every time you see him is on your bucket list.”

“You know,” Alonso said slowly, “it really wasn’t, but I’m starting to get hard now thinking about it. I may need your tongue again after he stops by tomorrow.”

\*\*\*

The ride home after work added another layer of weariness to the day. When I tried to transfer from the 8 to the 106 at Mt. Baker, the first bus passed me with a “Bus Full” sign. Several drivers let too many people board during the pandemic, so while I was annoyed, I was also grateful. It meant, though, I had to take whatever came next, just to get a little closer to home. So when the 7 pulled up, always a little dicey, I jumped on.

It was an articulated bus, and I sat in the second car just behind the rear door. A Black man across the aisle from me was muttering scripture verses. I almost joined in, remembering my days in early morning Seminary. A drunk and/or mentally ill Asian man halfway up the first car kept yelling in his direction. The Asian man, not wearing a mask, kept making punching motions into the air, even kicking toward us, startling the passengers nearest him. Even they tried to ignore him as much as possible, though. No one wanted him to shift his attention to them.

A petite, African immigrant wearing a colorful scarf over her hijab kept reading her book as if nothing were amiss, even as the man’s shoe came close to knocking the book out of her hands.

Finally, after more yelling and scripture quoting and kicking, the driver stopped nowhere near an official stop

and opened the rear door. “Out!” was all he said. The guy quoting scriptures left first, followed by the mentally ill Asian man, still making threats. Then a third man joined them, someone who’d been sitting behind me and was apparently part of the conflict, too. He stumbled out after them, holding his pants up with one hand while clinging desperately to a hypodermic with the other.

\*\*\*

“We’re representatives of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” The young man with trim blond hair displayed crinkles around his eyes, indicating he was smiling beneath his mask. The young, dark-haired man beside him, however, was crinkleless.

“What the hell are you guys doing? Going door to door during a pandemic!” I stared at them through the narrow crack I’d allowed when opening my front door. Elders Hunt and Curtis, according to their black nametags.

“We can teach you here on your front porch,” the young man said, “or in your back yard, if you prefer.”

I couldn’t believe their stupidity, felt enraged by the stupidity of their mission president, felt disgust that I’d wasted two years of my life doing the same stupid stuff.

“Look, I know you guys get pressured every week on your stats—”

“No, no! This is all about serving whoever we can!”

“Yeah, I did my two years in Italy.”

“Oh.” Elder Hunt’s crinkles disappeared. But he still had adorable ears, sticking out at just the right angle to make great handles.

I flashed back to a fantasy regarding the MTC showers I used to have every night in Provo before falling asleep. “And I left the Church a year after I came home.”

The two missionaries glanced at each other briefly, and Elder Hunt’s crinkles returned. “The Lord has sent us here to welcome you back into the fold!”

“Mannaggia,” I muttered. “Come around to the back. I have some lawn chairs out there.” Maybe I could keep them from being reckless for an hour.

As if that would make the slightest difference in flattening the curve.

I closed the door and walked to the rear of the house, where I found them waiting eagerly in the back yard.

“I don’t want to hear about Joseph Smith,” I said. “Teach me the Plan of Salvation.”

“What’s wrong with Joseph Smith?” asked Elder Curtis. I could tell he was scowling underneath his mask. Mormon scowls carried a specific vocal tone.

Smith was a sexual predator who’d founded a sex cult, I could have told him. He had sex with his children’s babysitter in the barn. He entrapped women who already had husbands. He encouraged, probably coerced, some of his secret wives to have abortions to keep their relationship hidden. But there was no point telling these young men any of that. They wouldn’t be able to hear it.

And Mormons thought gays were degenerate.

“I’ll listen to an entire lesson on one condition.”

The two young missionaries glanced at each other again. “Is there sin involved?” Elder Hunt demanded. “‘One condition’ is always about sin.”

“Have you been given conditions before?” I asked.

Elder Hunt didn’t respond. I noticed a muscle in his lower forearm twitch. I wondered if he lifted hand weights. Both arms looked nicely toned.

“OK,” I said. “One of you has to go inside to the bathroom, take off your garment bottoms, and beat off onto it.”

“What!?” The elders took a step back, Curtis bumping into a lawn chair.

“You leave your garment bottoms there and after you return, the other elder goes in and beats off on the garments, too.”

“You are out of your mind,” Elder Hunt said, trying to regain his composure. “And completely out of morality.”

“Let’s call him to repentance,” his companion suggested.

“Don’t you guys masturbate pretty often anyway?” I asked.

“Of course not.”



I smiled, though they couldn't see my condescension beneath my own mask, which still smelled strongly of Amazonian cum. "How am I supposed to believe you represent the 'true' Church if you lie right to my face?" Or at least to my mask.

"We're not lying," Elder Curtis said, his chin tilting upward slightly. His prominent Adam's apple meant he'd probably never do drag.

"If you want to count this visit as a lesson on your weekly stat sheet," I said, "you're going to need to be honest."

"You don't want the truth. You want to sin."

"They're not mutually exclusive."

The two young missionaries glanced at each other again.

"Look, I know you beat off at least *once* in a while. Doing it again today, alone in my bathroom, is no additional loss to your virtue."

No crinkles, but some definite brow furrowing.

"We all get what we want today," I said, "and we all stay safe one hour longer."

"But..." Elder Hunt rubbed his chin below his mask. "...if I leave my garment bottoms behind, my own bottom won't be protected once I leave."

I nodded. Magic undies and all that.

“Your garments don’t cover your mouth and nose,” I pointed out, “so you’re still out in the world with a spiritually and temporally vulnerable respiratory system.” I almost offered to spread consecrated oil over his ass to keep him safe until he could return to his apartment and throw on another pair of garment bottoms—I knew they both carried olive oil in vials on their key chains for priesthood emergencies—but I’d pushed them too far already.

The two young men looked steadily at me but did not glance at one another again.

““Before we were born...”” I began, remembering the Plan of Salvation lesson perfectly even all these years later and translating it back into English. I stopped and motioned to the back door.

After a long moment, Elder Hunt started toward the steps. As a rule, Mormon missionaries didn’t look especially good in their cheap suits, but this guy had bought a pair of pants that fit him quite well.

A metrosexual? Did anyone still use that term? I’d heard spornosexual used once but wasn’t quite sure what it meant. In Italian, an -s before a word usually reversed its meaning. Anti-pornosexual?

I’d planned to use that grammatical knowledge in worthiness interviews after I returned to America. “Yes, Bishop, I’m scelibate.”

An hour later, when the Plan of Salvation had been fully explained in my back yard and the two young men

rose from their lawn chairs, Elder Hunt glanced nervously again at the back door. "I...I need to pee before we leave," he mumbled.

A few minutes later, the young men offered me their hands, but I held out my elbow toward them instead. "If I can give you guys one tiny piece of unsolicited advice," I said, "it's to go to the drugstore and get an HPV vaccine."

They nodded, we bumped elbows, and they walked off. I was pleased to discover that three separate pools of spunk had been deposited onto Elder Hunt's garment bottoms. But the missionaries hadn't offered to return another day to teach an additional lesson, so three missionary loads was all I was going to get. I lifted the white fabric to my freshly unmasked face and inhaled.

Then I put my other mask adorned by the Amazon driver's cum back on and relaxed on the front porch for a while, waving at an old man in a motorized chair slowly walking his dog.

Was it going to be possible to become sexually "normal" again, or at least what constituted normal for me, after all this was over?

I pulled out my cell and punched Alonso's number.

"Hey, Derek."

"You up for watching a Pedro Almodóvar movie tonight?"

*"Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown?"*

He knew me so well.



*In the midst of a pandemic and political unrest, Derek won't let his diagnosis of pre-leukemia force him to accept his fate any earlier than necessary, but he does grant that perhaps it's time to come up with a "pre-bucket" list.*

## **My Pre-Bucket List**

By Nykee Hider

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