

Fagot!

by Stephen DeVoy

The school bell rang. It was the end of the day and Andres was looking forward to going home. When the school door opened, he joined the flow of students exiting the Junior High School. He carried a large stack of books in his arms. The wind was chilly and the frozen grass crunched beneath his boots.

Andres was a day-dreamer and today was just like any other day. His mind was on something, out there, beyond this world while he crossed the school yard. Suddenly, out of no where, he felt a heavy blow to the back of his head. His vision was temporarily replaced with a splash of white sparkles and then darkness. He fell to the cold ground and lay motionless for a few seconds, unconscious. As he came back to consciousness, a loud ringing filled his ears and the pain in the back of his head was intolerable. He was confused and disoriented, not sure where he was for a few seconds, when he heard the voice of one of the school's bullies taunt, "Fagot!"

He rolled onto his back and as he started to get up, a foot kicked him in the face. Blood ran out of his nose. His hand went to cover his nose when another kick connected with his throat. For what seemed like a whole minute he was unable to breath. The kick caused his throat to swell instantly and air could not enter. He knelt there, holding his neck, blood dripping from his nose, gasping for air.

Another boy saw what was happening. He was a loner. He wasn't small. He rushed the attacker, pushing him away and helped Andres back onto his feet. For the first time Andres got a look at today's attacker. He was Eddy, the son of a local police officer. Eddy laughed as he left and called, "You fucking fagot, just wait until you are alone again."

These attacks happened nearly every day. Andres was a sweet boy. He was gentel. He didn't like sports. He didn't like to fight. These daily attacks were robbing him of his self-esteem. He went home, opened his closet and made a noose out of some rope. He climbed up on a box in the closet, slipped his neck into the noose and just before he kicked the box out from beneath himself, he thought of his cat and how lonely she'd be without him. After a few minutes, standing there on the box with his head in the noose, he took the noose off, walked over to his bed and wailed, drenching his pillow with tears. He kept his mouth to the pillow as he cried because he did not want anyone to hear him cry.

Life went on like this for Andres for several years. Andres was not gay. He didn't like sports. He didn't like violence. He was just a sweet person and sweetness is not accepted in boys. Andres finally graduated from his public school system. Away from his hometown, his life improved. He had several girlfriends over the years, graduated from college and got married.

Andres never forgot what he went through as a child. He never forgot what it was like for bullies to think he was gay. It gave him an insight into the suffering of homosexuals and this made him sympathetic to their predicament, living in a society bigoted against homosexuals.

One day, as a young adult, Andres was on the red line in a subway car beneath the streets of Cambridge. The passengers were lined up, sitting on straight benches on either side of the car. Andres was reading a philosophy book when he overheard the man next to him ask a couple whether they were in love. The man sitting next to Andres was a preacher. He had a black shirt and a white preacher's collar. In his hand was a Bible. Andres looked across the car to see to whom the preacher was talking. There, sitting across from the preacher, were two women holding hands. They looked very happy.

One woman had short dark hair and the other had long blond hair. They were both very pretty. The woman with long blond hair leaned towards the other woman. As her head leaned towards the head of her lover, she smiled and then she nodded "Yes." Her eyes were bright and Andres thought the two made a nice couple. Everyone in the car thought this would be the end of the exchange, but that was not to be.

The preacher became animated. He stood up, Bible in one hand and a pointed finger in the other. He pointed at the two and yelled in a loud voice, the kind of voice you might expect from a preacher, "You are sinners and you will burn in hell!"

Andres was shocked by this outburst and turned to look into the face of the preacher. The preachers eyes were red with anger, his hand trembled with emotion and a shadow of ill will engulfed his face. He looked like the devil himself, if there is such a thing.

The preacher continued, "Homosexuality is a sin. God will punish you..."

Andres looked over at the couple and saw that the blond woman was now crying uncontrollably, her head nestled in the breast of her girlfriend. Her girlfriend cradled her head and glared angrily at the preacher. Everyone in the train was looking at them. The blond woman tried to hide her face in embarrassment.

The preacher continued scolding the two. The women were merely passengers on a train, going about their lives.

Andres had had enough. He did not think, he acted. He had seen enough of this cruelty in his own life. His sense of justice commanded him to his feet. He stood in front of the preacher, eye to eye, and told him, "Sit down, now!"

The preacher yelled, "And you will go to hell with them!"

"There is no hell, you twisted and hateful man," said Andres. "The only hell is the one created by the likes of you. Now sit down and get off at the next stop!"

"You can't make me get off at the next stop," whined the preacher. "I have a right to be on this train and I have a right to say what I wish to say. Get out of my face or I'll call the police."

As the train pulled into Central Square, Andres did not budge. The train door opened. Andres grabbed the preacher by the shirt just below the collar, dragged him to the train door and threw him onto the train station platform. The door shut. The train pulled out. Andres sat down.

The blond woman continued to cry and her girlfriend continued to comfort her. As the train pulled into the next station, the blond woman got up and ran to the door. Her girlfriend followed her. The door shut, once again, and the train resumed.

It was quiet on the train. There was a look of shock on everyone's face. Andres pulled out his book and began to read again. A woman sitting near Andres turned towards him and said, "What you did was very good. Thank you."

As Andres lifted his head from his book, he could see his hand was still shaking from the incident. Suddenly, the car burst out in applause. Andres smiled. The train pulled into the next station. He got off the train, thought about what had happened and felt good.

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