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Writers' Forum

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THE FAIR HAIRED BOY

by Robert J. O'Connell

Both sisters were always competitive with each other. What ever one accomplished the other wanted to better. Both married and had a much loved daughter. But shortly the younger had a son, Mary wanted one too. It took a number of years, and a lot of pressure on Old Bill, her husband, but she finally managed to get enough of his attention to birth a son. When this happened the happy little girl she had first, seemed to disappear and only the son mattered anymore. Albert was a fairly standard issue boy, but each of his accomplishments, such as they were, were received with great wonder and a sense of triumph by his mother. Al quickly came to understand this behavior, and as is normal, played it for all it was worth. It was not necessary to work very hard anymore when each

obstacle he met could be easily overcome with a little dose of charm deposited on his mother. And it must be said that charm was one of his long suits.

Shortly after graduating from High School Al met and fell in love with Lyn. A slightly older woman he met in John's Place, his favorite bar. Outwardly, Lyn was a small, attractive woman who seemed to be much in love with Al and perhaps was capable of making a man of him. They married quickly, rented a small apartment and Al got a construction job, sufficient to support them both. Things went smoothly for several months until the Friday afternoon when Al returned from work to find that Lyn had moved out, taking all of their possessions with her. Her note apologized, but stated that she had fallen in love with another. Al was devastated. He moved home and Mary tried to console him with many small gifts. For several years it was a mystery where Lyn had gone. Al's natural proclivity for bars became his new pastime. His school yard friend John's father owned a local bar and pool hall. He gave both of the boys the contract to remodel it. Thus was born a new business. This necessitated being familiar with most of the bars in town where Al could recount the tragedy of Lyn to the bartender, drink and drum up new business. In one of these, he was chatting up the bartender when he noticed that he was wearing a letter sweater from Al's High School identical to one that had gone missing with Lyn. He also noticed the class ring which matched his. It shortly became clear that the bartender had received these items as

gifts from his new fiancée, Janet. When pictures were proffered, Janet just happened to bear a striking resemblance to Lyn. When the parties came together to straighten out this knot it was discovered by all that Lyn was an incurable addict, hooked on romance and weddings. She fell in love and married easily. However, divorce took too much time and had never been bothered with. It turned out that when she married Al she was already married, under various aliases to three other men, and was at the moment in the process of marrying a new one. The curious thing was that Al didn't really seem that upset with Lyn as she was still cute and he had already fathered several children with Honey, a neighbor girl..

As Mary pointed out, this rampant bigamy was an advantage as he could easily obtain an annulment and go on with his life and marry Honey. It is fair to say that this early episode with Lyn altered Al's view of the female of the species. Perhaps, this was the excuse he needed to continue his philandering ways, almost always with women he met in various bars. Occasionally this exploration for dates in bars proved dangerous. One of his favorite bars was the Elite Bar and Grill, partly because of its great need for remodeling, but primarily because of its enormous population of drinking women. It bothered him not at all that the Elite was the favorite hang out for the local Lesbian population. His belief, often expressed, was that one night with a good man, him, was enough to convert any Lesbian. Of course, this line had little effect on most of the ladies in the

room. But remember that intermittent schedules of reinforcement are always the most powerful. Late one evening, his charm did persuade a



young lady to agree to a dance. After a few turns around the dance floor and lots of hostile stares from the crowd, a rumpus began near the ladies room. The young lady quickly explained that the shouts were from her very large jealous girl friend who had been in the facility. Al fearing for his life ran for the nearest hiding place, the telephone booth. A call was placed to his mother amid much thumping and shouting as the irate lady tried to pry him out. Luckily, the bartender had the sense to call the constabulary who escorted Al to safety. He did learn from this episode to shift his attention from bars to the ladies softball league where he became a favorite coach of the local team, but that is another lady and another story.

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