

Moral Patients

Darlene could've rubbed the lotion in herself but the feeling of sexiness that flowed over her stomach and thighs made her hold the Jergen's bottle out to Vincent.

"Will you rub me down?" she asked. She tried to seem seductive, spreading her legs some and tugging at the elastic of her purple polka-dotted panties.

"Did you know there are horse hooves in lotion?" Vincent grabbed the bottle from her and began reading the label.

An unintelligible noise, like the sound a cat makes when you step on its paw, came from Darlene's mouth. Her legs prickled into goose bumps.

"Well, it wouldn't be the first time we've used a product with nasty stuff in it," she said. Darlene tried to keep the edge out of her voice. She didn't want to make an argument out of the stupid lotion. Arguments with Vincent always exhausted her before they even began.

"Precisely my point, Dar. We can't proceed with this immoral behavior. I read a piece by Peter Singer tonight, in which he discussed intolerance of animal cruelty. He proved, rather irrefutably, that no animal cruelty is acceptable or necessary."

Vincent turned the bottle in his hands as he searched for the ingredients.

A scratchy futility rose in her throat. "Could you just rub it in for me, please," she cooed, searching his face for signs of softening. There were none.

He paced the room, moving his hands in circles as words like "cogent" and "moral patients" spewed from his lips. She lay on the bedspread in her underwear, watching his left eye, which twitched when he got really excited about something.

"Why? Why can't you just do this for me?" she begged, feeling like one of those humiliatingly brainless girlfriends in teen movies about getting laid.

She'd always told him how much she loved the way he thought so deeply about things, examining them from every angle before he made a decision. But, as the left eye began to twitch and his voice took on the tone of a cross-examining lawyer, she thought she might have to run to the bathroom to throw up.

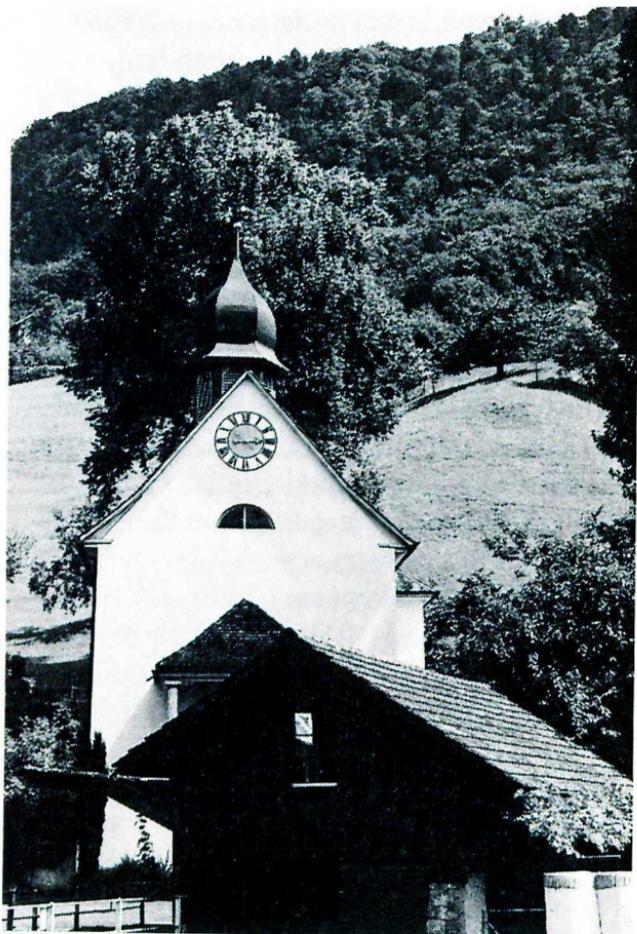
"Oh man," Vincent said, his eye twitching furiously, "This has really got me thinking. I've got to go type this up. Be back in a few, Dar." He jogged out of the room, tossing the bottle on the unmade bed.

Darlene closed her eyes and chewed on her lower lip.

"Self-centered bastard," she said aloud to the empty bedroom. Then, tears came, adding more polka dots to her panties. "But someday, he'll see me."

Sucking in a sob, she picked up the bottle, squirted a dime-sized drop of lotion into her palm, and began rubbing it into her now-freezing legs.

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