

To Go

Shoving aside a woman's purse and sunglasses, I sit in Jerry's Deli, on the bench in front of the "to go" counter. The owner of these belongings gives me a disapproving look, as if touching her property has insulted her somehow. I have not asked if I could sit there. If she has been saving this bench for a friend, she is out of luck. I'm here now, and I smile at her and nod instead of apologizing.

"Doing alright today?" I ask almost smugly, hoping that a polite façade will compound my display of indifference. Instead of answering, she turns and looks away, probably rolling her eyes.

Daniel, the manager, has a nice smile and an even nicer ass. Short and tan with dark hair, he's very well proportioned, filling out a pair of Docker khaki pants like a fashion designer's dream. He paces in front of me, handing orders to the delivery guys as they rush in and out. My head turns back and forth like a spectator at a tennis match, shamelessly fixated on the hypnotic motion of his backside. I haven't been here in several months, and today I notice he's wearing a wedding ring. This punctuates his unavailability, and I find myself less interested in staring. It suddenly seems as if he's gained some weight. He'll be fat soon. Married life does that to guys.

I've stumbled in here during the lunch rush, and in addition to the delivery orders, there is a line of people waiting to pick up food to-go. I resent having to wait for my lunch, wasting time I could spend reading homework assignments, or highlighting text for my gender-studies research.

Daniel calls out a name, "Allyson." The woman in the bench next to me picks up her purse and sunglasses, and although I'm barely looking in her direction, I sense she's beaming arrogantly at me. She collects the bag of food, and in her skirt and high heels, takes short delicate steps toward the door. Daniel gets there first, in time to hold it open for her, glancing up her legs for an eyeful of ass as she walks away. I quickly look down before he sees that I was watching him. Catching a short accidental moment like this brings him back into my realm of interest. A lustful glance expresses a thought; it is a window to something private. Even though I'm just a voyeur, I feel an accomplishment of intimacy just the same. Daniel goes back to work behind the counter taking phone orders, and a gaggle of co-workers obscures him from my view.

Within seconds my eyes spot a new target – a very built young man in a baseball jersey. While marriage tarnishes a man's appeal, fatherhood intensifies it. Immensely. I find an immediate interest in an attractive man who has not only successfully procreated, but also demonstrates a nurturing affection for his offspring. In each hand, this sharply groomed blond man leads two toddlers toward the exit door. Twins, I notice. He's good. Behind this ambling trio follows the mother with a baby in her arms. She's not blond. She looks nearly a decade older than her husband. Funny how couples are usually asymmetrically attractive that way: a pretty girl with an ugly guy, or in this case a very attractive, fit young man coupled to a sour-looking harpy with bad hair and obnoxiously large, bronze earrings.

Getting the five of them out the door is a feat, slow and tedious, but gratifying in the way it keeps Baseball Jersey only a few feet from me, allowing a pleasurable study of his well-toned anatomy. They had parked just off the sidewalk, so through the store window I watch as he lifts the twins into the huge black Tahoe, taking care to buckle each one in. Earrings carries the baby around to the other side of the car, securing the little one in a car seat.

"Jason," Daniel reads out my name, holding up my order of taco salad in a large brown bag. I accept my food and thank him. I know I won't receive the same secret glance he gave the woman in heels. It gets old reminding myself that "I'm not his type" about the straight men I find so attractive. The door to the deli closes behind me and I approach my car.

Setting the bag of food in the passenger's seat, I pull my door closed and put my seatbelt on. Baseball Jersey and his wife have still only finished securing their children in the back seat of their very masculine S.U.V. Checking him out one last time, I am crestfallen to see them walk around to opposite sides of the car: she climbs into the driver's side, and he sits in the passenger seat like a woman.