

GLORY DAYS

With tragedy behind him, Matthew Broderick

has emerged, in the words of Sidney Lumet, as

“one of the two best young actors in the U.S.”

Matthew Broderick and I are playing racquetball at an athletic club in Greenwich Village. At 27, he has thickened up from his teen-angel Ferris Bueller days, and he is a definite presence on the court. He moves somewhat heavily after several knee op-

erations, but he is graceful and athletic and he runs flat-out for everything. A lefty, he smacks the ball with a strong, compact stroke. And he's got perfect court manners. While I feel obliged to make some noise after I muff a shot, he never complains if he misses. I soon

realize Broderick doesn't play to win; he plays to play.

The racquetball was my idea. When I'd met him a few days before at a laid-back SoHo restaurant called the Cupping Room, I didn't feel I was seeing the real Matthew Broderick. He was wearing Joe Prep tortoiseshell glasses and a way-too-cool black Italian shirt. (When I asked him about the black, he deadpanned, “I like having death about me,” then explained that the shirt was left over from a movie.) We faced each other down across the lunch table to talk about his

By John Sedgwick



current three-in-a-row movie spree—which paired him with the megastars he now calls Marlon and Sean and Dustin—and, when I finally screwed up my courage, about the car accident in Northern Ireland. But the conversation never quite got going. By temperament, Broderick resists explanation, as though words aren't to be trusted and the truest feelings are best conveyed by a glance or a nod. Silence is his favorite medium. He has a feel for just how long to stretch a pause before speaking, to give a line its greatest snap. It's a trick he learned from watching Jack Benny on television, he says, and it usually draws a laugh. But the result is that in conversation nearly everything he says has an ironic warp. Even his straightest lines—"I am just a guy"—come out a little skewed, so you never know how to take them. He seems deeper and more sincere playing a role on the stage or screen. But then, he is an actor.

The basic problem is that Matthew Broderick isn't much good at sitting still. He's fidgety. He needs to *move*, to feel the wind against his body. He used to roller-skate to the theater when he was doing *Torch Song Trilogy* Off-Broadway, until the supposedly hip producer found out and got hysterical at the prospect of her budding young star's breaking his arm, or his head. "So I took my skates off outside the door," Broderick says. "That was my concession." He still likes to go skating with his girlfriend, the actress Helen Hunt, when they're in L.A., and they bicycle together in New York. And he plays just about every sport known to man or boy: baseball, soccer, paddleball, pinball (it's a sport the way he plays it) and racquetball. He told me that when filming *Biloxi Blues* he warmed up his fellow actors—who might otherwise have been put off by a Big Star who was just their age—by playing racquetball with them. So racquetball was it. I even bought some special racquetball shoes for the occasion. He wore Nikes, a gift from the company.

On the court, I'm unsure of the etiquette in playing with movie stars (do you let them win or try to put them in their place?), but Broderick shows no concern. He simply plays and notes the score after each point. He wins the first game easily, but I pick up in the second. Then, with the score even, he takes my shot off the back wall. As I turn to watch, I see that he doesn't slap the ball off the back wall as he's always done before. Instead, he wheels and smashes a backhand toward the front wall. But the ball comes off his racquet at a weird angle and hums straight for my face. Paralyzed, I watch as the ball

looms up and smacks me in the mouth.

Broderick looks stricken and his arms go limp, as though *he's* the one who's been hurt. He rushes up to me, apologizes profusely, asks over and over if I'm all right.

My upper lip is starting to puff, but my teeth are intact and there's only a speck of blood. I tell him I'm fine. In a few moments we start playing again, but the thought of what he's done must be weighing on his mind because I win that game. The score's tied at a game apiece, but he says it's time to quit. That's fine with me. I've seen the real Matthew Broderick. He's been perfectly charming, and he's caused an accident.

Are there any true accidents? You knock over a glass, splashing wine on a companion. Can you say for sure that you didn't mean to? Could Broderick say for sure that he had not somehow *meant* to hit me in the mouth with a ball? To strike at the source of all the damnable questions? And even if he hadn't intended any harm, does that deprive the act of all significance? Was it, as we say, "just" an accident? These questions are not academic, for, to his despair, Broderick's life and identity have been reshaped by an accident. No longer is he simply Matthew Broderick, the budding movie star; now he is Matthew Broderick, the movie star who killed two people in a terrible automobile accident in Northern Ireland.

For more than two years now, he has been trying to forget the car crash, to put the past behind him. But death is a heavy load for time to haul away. He still bears an inch-long scar on the point of his chin, he has a pin in his leg, and he labors under the strain of public scrutiny. "Matthew is under an enormous amount of pressure from the entire universe," his friend Kenny Lonergan says. Broderick has been in psy-

chotherapy, and has found some comfort in remembering happy times from his childhood. But lately he has been away too much to see his therapist regularly. "Some people do it on the phone when they're traveling," he says, returning to his normal, jokey self. "But I like to make sure my doctor's listening. I have the feeling he'd put the phone down and go make a sandwich." And work is therapy, too; he can lose himself in a role. "One of the nicest things about acting," he says, "is that it offers you a break from whatever troubles you have. Usually."

This is quite a break, this current whirlwind of work with some of the biggest stars in the business. First in this latest spate of hyperactivity came the recently released

HE'S NOT JUST A
BUDDING STAR.
HE'S A BUDDING
STAR WHO
ACCIDENTALLY
KILLED TWO
PEOPLE.

The actor as Colonel Robert Gould Shaw in *Glory*. The role marks a departure from the teenagers that he's been playing.

Family Business, directed by Sidney Lumet, in which Broderick costars with Dustin Hoffman and Sean Connery as the youngest member of a three-generation gang of thieves. Lumet admits that he found Broderick to be “fragmented” and “scattered” when socializing; Lumet often had to say things to him twice, because the young actor wasn’t paying attention the first time. But on the set, Lumet could see that Broderick was something else again, something astonishing. “There’s just this profundity to his work that you rarely, if ever, see in actors that young,” says the director of thirty-five films. “He’s totally involved. And he’s incapable of being a cliché. He hasn’t learned from watching other actors in the movies or on TV. He’s learned by observing life, not observing a picture of life. Matthew doesn’t imitate life, he *creates* life.” For this reason, Lumet calls Broderick “one of the two best young actors in the United States,” tactfully adding, “and I won’t name the other, so everyone will think it’s them.”

Then came *Glory*, a \$20 million Civil War drama released over the holidays and directed by *thirtysomething*’s Ed Zwick—raising the joke that this was *1860something*—about a young Boston Brahmin named Robert Gould Shaw who led a black regiment against the South. As it happens, Shaw was my great-granduncle, a fact that interests Broderick only a little. The actor anguished for some time before taking that part, since it was so different from everything he’d done before. Indeed, the role was the first one that called for him to play someone his own age. In the end he did it precisely *because* it was different—it was a conscious attempt to broaden his image. He’s gotten more than a little tired of what he terms “the Matthew Broderick thing”—the supposition that he is doomed to playing teenagers for eternity.

And then he worked on *The Freshman*, a comedy (scheduled to be out late this spring) about a young film student who gets tangled up with an aging mobster played by Marlon Brando. When we lunch in the Cupping Room, Broderick is just back from meeting Brando for rehearsals in Toronto. “It was thrilling,” he says excitedly. “In my eyes, Brando is the biggest movie star ever. He is the daddy of us all.”

Brando astonished Broderick by greeting him with a great bear hug. Broderick nervously patted him on the back, not saying a word. For all Brando’s enthusiasm, however, he sometimes seemed to slip into a time warp.

“He kept calling me ‘that Broderick Crawford kid,’” Matthew says, referring to the film star from the 1950s. For his part, Broderick was too petrified to call Brando anything. Privately, though, Matthew refers to Brando as “the big man.”

And Broderick seems the little boy. As an actor, his almost preternaturally youthful appearance has long been his defining characteristic, allowing him—if not positively forcing him—to play younger roles. He was 21 when he played his breakthrough part as 15-year-old Eugene Morris Jerome on Broadway in Neil Simon’s autobiographical *Brighton Beach Memoirs*, and 24 when he played 17-year-old Ferris Bueller. He has looked young for his age for as long as he can remember. “I was just a late developer,” he says.

Even though his looks are finally catching up to his age, and his accomplishments have gone way beyond it, one can still easily discern the 17-year-old tucked away inside him. Broderick cocks his head in an endearing way before answering a difficult question, says “gee” occasionally, projects a lot of boyish enthusiasm and, when he takes off his glasses, still has those soft, little-kid eyes.

One of his favorite pastimes is playing Pinbot, a pinball machine with a deep robotic voice and flashing eyes that fellow devotee Kenny Lonergan confidently asserts is “the best pinball game in the world.” Broderick has a Pinbot machine in his apartment. Lonergan says that one of Matthew’s peak life experiences was “turning the machine” by scoring 10 million points in a single game, an extraordinary feat. Lonergan and Helen Hunt were there at the time, and all three hopped up and down with excitement.

Again we’re at the Cupping Room, where Broderick is something of a regular. He is just finishing up brunch with Hunt, a cheerful blonde actress from Los Angeles. They call each other “honey” and hold hands a lot. They met during the filming of *Project X*. It wasn’t the first time he found a girlfriend on a movie set. “But that’s where I work,” he says. “Most people go out with people they meet at work, don’t they?” Hunt says she was drawn to him because he made her laugh, and, even better, she made *him* laugh. They laugh a lot now, and, as they sit together at the counter finishing their muffins and orange juice, he does a whiny-voiced Brando imitation and



she bursts into giggles. Broderick is always doing imitations that are uncannily on-target. On the set of *Project X*, Broderick talked so frequently in Al Pacino's Cuban accent from *Scarface* that everybody else in the movie started doing it too. On the set of *Family Business*, he quickly drew a bead on all his fellow actors, including Hoffman and Connery. "No one was safe," Lumet says. "He really captured Dustin and Sean. I mean, he *had* them. When I heard them I said, 'You gotta do me. C'mon!'" So Broderick did Lumet. "It wasn't that great, actually," Lumet says, then he gives a laugh that makes it clear that Broderick had him dead too.

Brunch over, Helen wants to show Matthew her new subplot, a couple of blocks away, and she doesn't mind if I tag along. Broderick, by contrast, has let me know I'm not to visit his apartment and has begged me not to write anything about it. "I've got a thing about my privacy," he says. As it is, Broderick often finds a fan or two camped out by the front door waiting for him.

Hunt's place is a huge and airy loft that was once a walk-up theater. It has high ceilings and white columns that Broderick immediately appraises as "the good kind." Then he wanders through the vast rooms, dazed at all the space, while Helen dances around asking, "Isn't this neat?" Broderick is stupefied. He looks for something to dislike but can't find anything. Finally, he seizes on the iron shutters to the enormous bedroom that was once the theater's stage. "Oh, I *hate* iron shutters," he says. Then he collapses on the bed. "God, this place is great," he sighs. "I've got to go shopping for a loft tomorrow."

Hunt comes over and presses down on the mattress. "This bed is much better than yours," she teases.

"What's this, a queen?" Broderick asks.

"Yeah," Hunt says. "Yours is a double."

Broderick seems dismayed.

She winks at him. "And my mattress is firmer, too."

Broderick bounds onto the floor and mimes a skater, gliding across the polished hardwood. "Yeah," he says. "And when we wake up in the morning we can go roller-skating."

Broderick's parents were both in the theater. Patricia Broderick wrote plays before switching to painting. James Broderick played Jack Nicholson's older brother in *Five Easy Pieces* and Kristy McNichol's father on televi-

sion's *Family*, among many other stage and screen roles. The *Family* money paid for Matthew to go to the Walden School, known for its theater program, on Manhattan's Upper West Side. Still, it took a year before he could summon the courage to audition for even a tiny role, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "It was like I wanted it too much," he says. As for the inevitable comparison of Matthew's talent to his father's, Sidney Lumet, who has directed both, says, "Jimmy Broderick was a good actor with flashes of brilliance. Matthew starts at brilliance, and he goes from there."

Matthew went on to do ten plays over the next three years, nearly flunking out in the process. Bruce Cornwell, then the school's drama coach, was about the only teacher to have a high opinion of him. "It was pretty clear to me that he had it," Cornwell recalls. "Matthew had an incredible ability to be natural, to be warm. He had this magnetism. Other actors at that age are always trying to be someone else onstage. Matthew understood that he had to do something much harder. He had to be himself."

When Broderick graduated, he gave himself a year to make it as an actor. If he failed, he'd go to college. When he quickly landed a part in a movie called *No Small Affair* with Sally Field, to be directed by Martin Ritt, Broderick was ecstatic: "My Oscar speech was ready, the whole thing." But rehearsals went badly, and then Ritt turned "slightly nasty." Two weeks into the movie, neither the director nor the costars showed up on the set. A week after that, the movie was canceled. Broderick played paddleball with a girlfriend for the rest of the summer.

The following fall, he auditioned for everything but landed only a commercial for an anti-itch cream. "At first, I always got close," he says, "and then I stopped getting close. I think the movie's falling apart put a bad odor on me."

Behind every success stands a lucky break—an accident, you might even say—and Broderick's occurred when he decided, against much reasonable advice, to accept a part in Harvey Fierstein's controversial play *Torch Song Trilogy*. It was a small role, an uncertain show, a grimy, out-of-the-way theater, and there was the fear that, if he succeeded with it, he'd be typecast as a gay actor for the rest of his life. But Broderick couldn't afford to be choosy.

The play might have died a silent, unmourned death if



not for *New York Times* theater critic Mel Gussow, who saw it at the eleventh hour, three weeks into its planned eight-week run, and gave it a rave review. He singled out Broderick for his “naturalness and spontaneity.” The next night, the hall was packed. The play soon moved to a bigger theater downtown and Broderick’s phone started ringing off the hook. One of the calls offered him a tryout for Neil Simon’s *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. At the audition, Simon and director Herbert Ross asked him to read from Simon’s script for the movie *Max Dugan Returns*, which Ross was directing. Broderick walked away calmly with starring roles in both productions. He didn’t get excited until he told his father, who hit the ceiling. “He went crazy,” Matthew recalls. “He went nuts. That got me out of my spell. That’s when I started to think, Well, maybe this is thrilling.”

His seemingly sudden success didn’t come without some desperate moments. Matthew still remembers the phone call he made to his mother after he’d been rejected from yet another play—this one *The House of Blue Leaves*—and he’d reached the end of his rope. The phone booth was near the pinball arcade at the corner of Broadway and 52nd Street. “I was totally miserable,” he says. “I was crying. I really had had it.” His mother told him to wait right there. Together, they went into the arcade and played pinball for two hours.

It might have been a scene written by Neil Simon, for almost exactly a year later, Matthew Broderick’s name was on the marquee of the theater across the street—the Neil Simon Theatre, no less—and he was a movie star, too. “I was in *Brighton Beach Memoirs*,” he explains. “*WarGames* had come out, and my father was dead. That was a major year.”

James Broderick died of cancer on November 1, 1982, the first day of rehearsals for *Brighton Beach Memoirs*. Matthew was devastated, but it never occurred to him to pull out of the Broadway production. “That would have been a terrible thing,” he says. “I would have been sued, and I would have hated it. I had to decide if I wanted to be in this play, or if I wanted to just be upset. I decided to be upset and be in this play, too.”

Since his father’s death, Matthew has found himself drawn to older men, especially ones who knew his father. Costar Jason Robards was wonderful to him during the filming of *Max Dugan*. “He took me to lunch and made me laugh,” Matthew says. He calls Mike Nichols, his director for *Biloxi Blues*, “my current father figure.” Broderick often visits Nichols’s family in Connecticut.

“I seem to very much need having an older man around,” he says.

Of his three current movies, Broderick calls *Glory* the most challenging. In it, Broderick is not only adult but heroic, a new phase for an actor whose roles have so far been limited largely to innocents. “It is a coming-of-age movie,” says director Ed Zwick. He means a coming of age both for the movie’s hero, the aristocratic Robert Gould Shaw, and for its star.

Shaw was selected by the governor of Massachusetts to lead the North’s first troop of black soldiers, the Fifty-Fourth Massachusetts Regiment, against the South. He was killed by a bullet through the heart as he led his men against Fort Wagner, outside Charleston, South Carolina.

Zwick calls Shaw “a reluctant hero,” just as Broderick, with his boyish ways and quiet-spoken manner, might be called a reluctant star.

I take my middle name from Shaw, and a photograph of him—handsomely droopy-eyed, with a wispy goatee—always hung in my bedroom when I was a child. I have spent much of our interview sizing Broderick up, trying to see the Shaw in him. Zwick tells me that when Broderick was outfitted with a goatee, the physical resemblance to Shaw was “really eerie.” Shaw was called the Little Colonel because of his small, slight stature. And Broderick also shares with Shaw a certain delicacy in his features. Psychologically, however, the match is harder to discern. Both faced death, but only Broderick survived it.

In the film, Broderick plays a hero by not seeming to be one. To him, Shaw was “just a guy.” I’d always been impressed by the way Shaw knew his duty, but Broderick believes it just appears that way to us. “We can see what his duty was because we

can see the whole story,” he says. “To Shaw, I bet his duty looked just as confusing as it would to us.”

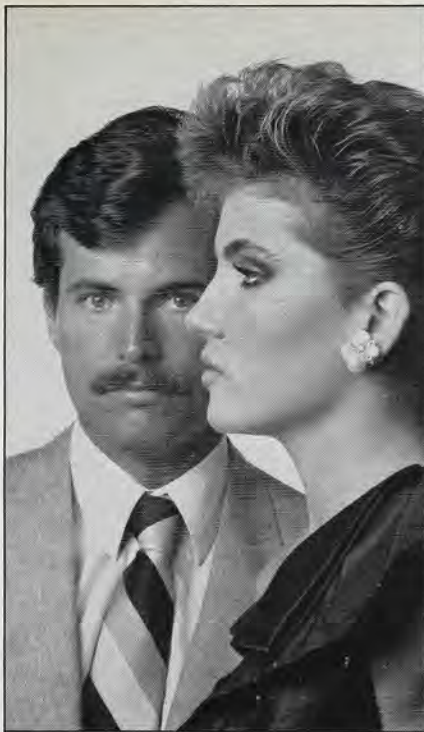
To play the final scene, in which Shaw gets killed, Broderick was careful to avoid any heroic poses. “I played it not aware I was going to die. I was just trying to advance up the side of the hill.” But he does get shot, and his body is thrown into a pit with the corpses of his black soldiers. “All I thought about was not breathing,” he says. “I was holding my breath and keeping my eyes closed. There is something eerie about being dead, you know. But nothing that I have any insight into.”

Our lunch in the Cupping Room is nearly over, but one large, daunting question remains: When Broderick drove the car that killed

(continued on page 178)

BRODERICK'S
SEEMINGLY
SUDDEN SUCCESS
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WITHOUT SOME
DESPERATE
MOMENTS.

Helen Hunt was drawn to Broderick because he made her laugh, and, even more important, she made him laugh.



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MATTHEW BRODERICK

(continued from page 149) two Irishwomen on a slender country road in the tiny town of Enniskillen, eighty miles southwest of Belfast, on August 5, 1987, the only blot on an otherwise sterling public career, was it truly an accident?

Any car crash is a monstrous case of bad timing, but Broderick's timing was worse still, for he had only recently come into true stardom with the release of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. That and his work in the movie version of Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues* would solidify his credentials as one of the best actors of his generation. It would push him beyond his father, beyond his friends, beyond the comfortable life of a perpetual teenager, beyond the cozy Washington Square of his childhood. I had to ask: Was the accident, then, in some dark sense, intentional?

He gives a despairing kind of shrug. "It's too complicated for me to understand that kind of thing," he says.

The truth is, he doesn't know what happened, much less why. No one does. It was an accident, but it is more than that. Like so much about Broderick—his talent, his eternally boyish looks, his innermost self—it is a mystery.

Broderick had been vacationing for a few weeks with his then-girlfriend, the actress Jennifer Grey (of *Dirty Dancing* fame), at his parents' house in county Donegal in northwestern Ireland (he is Irish-Catholic on his father's side, Jewish on his mother's). They were driving in a rented red BMW along back roads to the Dublin airport to drop off Grey and pick up Broderick's mother for a visit. Suddenly, for reasons no one has been able to explain, he crossed over to the wrong side of the road and smashed into an oncoming Volvo, killing 28-year-old Anna Gallagher and her 63-year-old mother, Margaret Doherty. The BMW was crumpled like a beer can. Broderick suffered a collapsed lung, a concussion, a shattered leg and several broken ribs, and he sliced his chin open where it struck the steering wheel. "I was nearly a goner," he says. "I hurt like hell for weeks." He spent nearly a month recovering in an Irish hospital. Remarkably, Grey was only slightly hurt.

Knocked unconscious by the collision, Broderick has been unable to remember anything that happened that entire day, except for a vague recollection of making the bed that morning. Grey was fiddling with the tape deck at the time of the crash

and can offer no explanation as to why Broderick might have been on the wrong side of the road. She has said only that he was driving in control and under the speed limit, an impression confirmed by a policeman who had observed them a few miles back. And a gas-station attendant said he'd seen the BMW leave his station on the correct side of the road—the left, according to the British system—some distance before that. A recent thundershower had left the road wet, but visibility was good and the road was straight at the spot of the crash. There was no indication of drugs or alcohol.

A Belfast court looked into the case and deployed a team of forensic specialists to examine the evidence from the crash. Broderick's family hired investigators, as well. "We just had to know," his mother explains. "Even if they found out that Matthew was at fault, we just had to know. Because it would be worse if we didn't know. We didn't think we could live with that, not knowing. We just had to find out: *What in God's name happened?*" Their specialists turned up no answers. At first, the court charged Broderick with causing death by reckless driving—a charge that might have led to a five-year prison sentence. Ultimately, the court let Broderick off with a \$175 fine for careless driving, saying that it was simply unable to determine what had happened.

When I raise the subject of the crash, Broderick's voice, normally soft and fluid as a saxophone, tightens up in anger and frustration. "Everybody knows what happened," he snaps. "I was in a car accident. I hit my head, I don't remember it. Two people were killed. It was a very terrible thing."

Then I ask the question he has been asked a hundred times and has doubtless asked himself thousands of times more. *Why was he on the wrong side of the road?* "I don't remember," he says quickly. Then the words come out like furious racquetball action—*whap, whap, whap*. "I hit my head. I don't remember. I hit my head. I don't remember." He looks terribly pained. "It seems I have to repeat that over and over. I don't know if it's that people don't believe me or that they forget or what. I *really, really* don't remember. I just don't. That's the only thing I have to say about it."

But gradually he relaxes again and he does say more. He calls it an "odd thing" that he should have been on the wrong side of the road, since he'd been seen on the correct side of the road just a few miles before. Besides, he'd driven in Ireland for years and was used to driving on the left. Then why was he on the right? "There's a lot of reasons why you could end up there. Avoiding something. Avoiding them.

Things could happen." Then his face falls as he contemplates the most likely explanation. "But it very well might have been me thinking I was in America."

What about the timing, that it should happen just as he emerges as a star? "I don't think about it," he says. "I've had bad things in my life and good things. I don't think about their relationship, really."

He wrote condolence letters to the dead women's families, but he didn't speak to them. He looks at me, and a look of infinite sadness flits across his face. "What would I say?"

Accidents happen. From birth to death, we careen from one fluke to the next. But Broderick leaves his battles the way Robert Gould Shaw went into his—riding somehow above the fray, with ramrod-straight posture, pressed on by some strange indomitable will. When I mention this, Broderick idly supplies the line from "For the

Union Dead," Robert Lowell's famous poem about Shaw: "He cannot bend his back." But he offers no comment.

When Broderick was at the Walden School, he and Kenny Lonergan had a favorite game. It was called Assassination, and they played it with two other friends. Each of the four was, in turn, assassinated by the other three. The three would lure their assigned target to some out-of-the-way spot, ambush him, then make *eh-eh-eh* noises with imaginary machine guns and shoot their buddy dead. Lonergan says that, as the game progressed through the foursome, it got a lot harder to catch the target unawares. Broderick was the last to be terminated, and his friends never did get him. I ask Lonergan if that was planned on Matthew's part. "Oh, no," he says. "Nothing like that." Some lives are charmed. ■

John Sedgwick writes frequently for GQ and other national magazines.

TERMINAL ATTRACTION

(continued from page 121) Naughty.

Oh, yeah. Well, just, you know...

I thought we had a relationship here.

We do, we do.

I thought you weren't seeing anybody else.

I'm not. I'm not.

You were. You were interfacing with Naughty.

I was just...

You were signed on with her for twenty minutes.

Big deal. I was helping her with her homework...

Did you have a good time? Did she go down on you? Are you proud of yourself?

She was lonely.

You son of a bitch. You creep. I should have known not to trust you. Well, I got news for you, pal. I was cruising tonight, too.

Really?

That's right. I was hooked up with "Sailor." And you know what else? I went down on him. And that's not all. Sailor wasn't just one sailor: It was the entire crew of a Liberian tanker docked in Bayonne, New Jersey, who'd signed on to the party line. You get the picture, big boy? Now, how about a kiss, hot stuff?

I'm returning to the main menu.

Yes, you meet some weird ones out there. One night I was making love to what I thought was a 22-year-old singer from Thailand when a message read:

Ha, ha. I'm really an 83-year-old dental assistant screwing around in my boss's office. And guess what else? I'm a guy!

Oh, Jesus! Hoodwinked into an unnatural sexual act that is both heinous and

abominable in the eyes of God by an 83-year-old male dental assistant! Thank goodness there's no such thing as on-line AIDS. And to think I was paying 20 cents a minute for this.

All this stuff has caused me to have a change of heart. The more I think about it, the more I wonder if there aren't places the human mind and finger were never meant to go. Sometimes when I sit here at night banging "Ram Power," a 25-year-old woman who describes herself as a 38-22-35 computer programmer with legs that just won't stop, I wonder if I'm not actually giving love bytes to a sexually adventurous 9-year-old hacker whose password should be "Jailbait." God, what would Tipper Gore say? Other times I'm convinced that my blind date is ugly as sin.

But the worst situations arise when your partner is in control and withholds the sexual favors you crave until you've complied with her lurid fantasies. That's what happened recently when I signed on with Slurpy—the blonde bomber in the pink camisole who went down on me while I went out for fried chicken:

You got that pink thing on tonight?

Not so fast, buddy boy. Tonight is lady's night. So before we get to the leg show, I want you to peel down for me so I can take a gander at you in the buff.

Well...er...okay. Where do you want me to start?

The belt buckle.

I'm undoing it.

Good. Now get the pants off.

They're off.

Now the underpants.

I'm not wearing any.

Great. Turn around.

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