

Ritsard—A Scene

We meticulously did what he called "fishing" quite often, and I had to amuse myself convincingly enough while he caught fish and threw them back in the water.

Ritsard was a sensitive man; he did not kill things. He ate his steak well done, so that he could feel better when he drove by the cow fields the next morning on his way to work.

Ritsard did not work; not in the nine to five way. He just liked to get dressed in the morning and drive to town. He would do the grocery shopping of the day and be back by 9:30 a.m. If I was at home, we'd make love, and then he'd go to his room and turn out those poignant little doodles he did for a living. After tea, he'd get dressed and drive into town again. If he had any personal errands, he'd do those; if not, he'd just drive around the business district for a while. Ritsard loved to pretend he had a nine to five job. He'd do all those things people do after work; be it drinking at a bar, or merely loosening his tie, and fighting traffic. He worked in an office once. He wanted to be a nudist then. Ritsard always wanted to be "naked." Once he drove 100 miles without a stitch on. He did not like it; but not knowing that before hand, he had not brought any clothes with him. The ride back was unpleasant. Now, Ritsard would undress when he came home. Unless he had to cook.

Ritsard never cooked. He fried things. He fried apples, breakfast cereal; one day I caught him frying store-bought doughnuts. It had something to do with powdered sugar becoming caramel. He never told me what came of it.

Tonight, he had only fried the shrimp and the zucchini, and while pouring the wine, he decided not to make loukoumathes for dessert. I'll never forgive my mother for teaching him how to prepare that dessert. For days I could not take the smell of burned oil out of my hair. Instead, he fried some peapods and served with with applesauce. He got

"naked" after he cooked them. I decided to join him, as I did not have any work for the next day. He flung a peapod in my bowl and passed the applesauce. "Maybe if you'd let me lick the applesauce off your back . . ." he said jumping up and down like a five-year-old, "... maybe we could both transform into—quote unquote—suburbans." He mimed what he considered a proper way to mime a suburban. He went on: "The milk lady across the street," Ritsard loved to chat over coffee with the neighborhood housewives, "she said you have to do that sort of thing for variety. She got pregnant that way." He paused for a moment and then went on: "Do you want to get pregnant?"

I made a seesaw with a peapod and two blobs of applesauce without looking up. "Do you, Ritsard?"

"One of my doodles is studying to be a shrink. I think I'll make her pregnant," Ritsard said recovering from my offer.

"Now, Ritsard, can we do something about that new fishing thing you bought?"

"You mean like sex something?" Ritsard liked to pretend he did not understand.

"You're getting boring, Ritsard." I mimed a yawn. "How about we let the T.V. out of the cupboard?"

Ritsard drew his long legs up to his stomach, and cradled his knees. "Boring, ha? How about some hot chocolate?" and in the same breath: "I could strip . . . oops, no clothes! We'll fix that!" He picked up two peapods and held them up as pasties. His strong slender legs teasingly moved him about the living room. He looked like a gazelle. Being fond of dramatic exits, he climbed the stairs dancing to a ludicrous version of "A Pretty Girl." He wiggled his back at me and disappeared into his room. The light went on, and I heard him sharpening pencils. He stopped, turned off the light, but did not come out.

"Good peapods, Ritsard!" I yelled at the top of my lungs.

"Thanks!" he yelled back. Silence.

"You know I'm dying up here." Ritsard was so meticulous!

Sucking on the last peapod, I got up and pulled the T.V. out of its exile.

