

## Why Grass Is Green

Carolyn walked three paces ahead of Rob, leading him down the corridor of the seventh floor of her apartment building. They didn't talk. She only turned to look at him when she put the key in the door, to her right, over her shoulder, chin down, smiling. Rob blushed a little and nodded once. The door clicked and she pushed it open.

"Welcome," she said, walking in then turning to put her back to the wall with her hand on the doorknob. "Make yourself at home."

"This is great," he said, walking in and shucking off his leather sport coat. "Not what I expected."

She closed the door, locked it at the knob and strung the brass chain across with a quick shruk sound that made Rob smile for now good reason.

"You expected a bigger place?" she asked. "More glamorous. Maybe some modern art? Maybe a particular page from the Ikea catalogue you were expecting?"

## Why Grass is Green

He laughed and shook his head. "Actually, I wasn't expecting you to ask me up. I've never read an Ikea catalogue that wasn't in someone else's bathroom. I like to read when I take a dump."

She smiled and put her hand to her mouth. "I'm sorry. Why wouldn't I ask you up?"

"Who knows?" he said. "Just not what I expected."

"Is she expecting you home?" Carolyn asked.

"I told her I'd be back from Michigan on Monday," he said.

"Come on in, then."

She held an arm out and pointed to the cream coloured couch, one of those huge ones, shaped like an L, taking up two walls. It had a knitted afghan on each section of the L and a collection of pillows, some of them stained with juice and food, some of them really nice looking, and none of them matched.

Rob hung his leather sport coat over the back of one of the dining room chairs and went over to sit in the corner of the L couch, spreading his arms out on either wing and crossing his legs with one knee over the other.

"Doesn't that hurt?" she asked.

“Nah,” he said. “I learned how to do it in high school. When guys do it the other way, they are trying to look cool but what they aren’t telling you is that their legs are falling asleep and they have to stop and put both feet on the floor for a few minutes before walking anywhere. Trust me.”

“Bet your friends thought you were the coolest,” she said. “Want a cup of coffee or anything?”

He raised his eyebrows, a little surprised. “Yes, of course.”

“Don’t think I have coffee?” she asked.

“Nothing like that,” he answered. “I was just thinking about nuns.”

She laughed and went into the kitchenette. It was separated from the dining room and living room area by a short wall with a counter. He saw her brush a lock of her black hair over her ear and thought to himself that he liked it when she smiled.

“No, really. That’s how I learned how to do this. I went to an all-boy’s catholic high school and we had to put on some kind of skit for drama and they needed someone to be a nun. I was the skinny kid with the big glasses and they thought I would be perfect. I chose drama because it was the only arts credit I thought I could get by in. I didn’t chose drama because I liked it. I got singled out anyway and because it was for some kind of final project, I had no choice. I worked at it like a science project, researching

## Why Grass is Green

everything about nuns and what I came to the conclusion of for my nun is that she was extremely prim and proper, because that's the kind of nun I would be if I were to ever become a nun, and a prim and proper nun should really cross her legs like this."

He sat with his back straight, legs crossed over each other at the knee, and both hands, one on top of the other, on his knee. He raised his eyebrows, stretched his neck and looked over at Carolyn. She nearly spilled the coffee.

"Like the Church Lady on Saturday Night Live," she said.

Rob held up a finger. "Dana Carvey stole that from me."

She put the glass pot onto the metal plate of the coffee maker and pressed the red button for the brewing to begin then came around the corner of the kitchenette to stand in front of the hall leading to the three other bedrooms of the apartment. Rob returned to his relaxed position on the couch, arms across the back and legs crossed. He smiled.

"Uh, I'm just going to use the bathroom," she said. "And stuff. Feel free to pour yourself a cup of coffee when it's ready or turn on the television and see if anything is on."

"Can I put on the radio?" he asked, pointing to the radio in the dining area.

“Sure,” she said. “If you can figure it out. I just play whatever station I get when I press the scan button.”

He winked and got up. “I’ll have it figured out by the time you get back.”

She smiled. “I’ll take my time then,” she said and went down to the hall on her tip toes and quietly went into the bathroom. Rob got up and went to the radio, bending at the waist as he walked, trying to take it in and decide if it was as complicated as she said it was.

It had a display screen eight lines high and twenty across, big enough to list the name of a song, it’s album title and the artist. He figured it was the kind that could store MP3s if it were hooked up to a computer. He wondered if it could rip songs from a CD and save them onto an internal hard drive. He looked at the front for a manufacturer’s name, because he had never seen anything like it before and wondered if he could look up the name on the internet and buy one for himself. It would be perfect for his dining room.

A locked clicked, a door opened, Rob turned around and saw the dark hall cut by a shaft of yellow light. He stood up and smiled, straightening his shirt and checking his zipper. A boy wearing a two piece

## Why Grass is Green

pajama outfit walked out of the bedroom at the end of the hall. He stood at the end of the hall before it opened up to the living area. Rob breathed deep and kept smiling.

“Hi,” Rob said. “My name is Rob. And who might you be.”

“Seth,” he said. “Are you a friend of Mom’s?”

Rob nodded. “She invited me over for coffee. We went out for dinner.”

Seth nodded and walked into the living area for the couch, rubbing his eyes. He sat down.

“Are you staying the night?”

Rob walked around the couch to sit in the corner. He leaned forward, elbows on his knees. “Well, that’s up to your mom. We were out pretty late.”

“She’s been out later. Where did you go?”

“Dinner. A nice restaurant not far from here. But too far for me to go home right away. I wanted to let my dinner settle a bit.”

“Mom says it’s not good to rest after a meal. Me and her get up and clear the table and do the dishes then maybe go for a walk. But not if it’s raining or anything. Then we stay in and maybe play some games before I go to bed.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be in bed right now?”

“It’s Friday night,” Seth said. He fiddled with the flap of the pajama bottoms, then wrung his hands a little. “I don’t have to go to bed early on Friday nights, I told Mom. We usually stay up a little later. Sometimes we rent a movie on the teevee.”

“What movies do you watch?”

“Whatever I want,” Seth said. “Were you trying to figure out the radio? Pretty cool, hunh?”

Rob nodded. “Really cool. Where did she get it?”

“Dad built it,” Seth said. “With directions he got from the internet. Do you have the internet?”

“Yup. Use it all the time. Do you know how to use it?”

Seth brightened. He stopped fiddling and opened his eyes wide. “I use it all the time. Mom has a laptop that she lets me use. I’m supposed to use it. My teacher tells me that they are really important tools. Mom thinks so too. But I can’t have one in my bedroom. I have to use it at the kitchen table. Do you have any kids?”

Rob gave his head a quick couple of shakes. “Sorry. You ask a lot of questions, don’t you?”

“Yeah. But I’m supposed to. I’m a kid. Do you have any kids?”

## Why Grass is Green

“Why do you want to know that?”

“Because I want to know if they have a computer in their room. I could tell Mom that everyone has a computer in their bedroom. Then she’ll have to let me take the laptop into my bedroom. Where’s Mom now?”

Rob pointed to the hall. “She’s in the bathroom. Will she want you awake when she gets out of there?”

Seth shrugged. “It’s Friday night. Have you figured out the radio yet?”

Rob nodded. “I think I’ve got it. I’ll need to put in a ceedee to be sure. I think it records them.”

Seth nodded and got up to go to the radio. “We have a bunch of them under here. You can try one if you want.”

Rob went to be with Seth and put in a ceedee he thought was good for the night.

The screen read:

Artist:Eric Benet

Album:True to Myself

Song:True to Myself

Overwrite? Play=Y, Stop=N

Seth giggled. Rob looked at him and smiled.

“You were fooling me, weren’t you? Are all of them recorded on here?”

Seth nodded. “Mom told me not to touch it because I might break it. She works until late and I come home before her and so long as I didn’t break it I figured I could play with it. I recorded all of her songs. I wanted to surprise her.”

“And you figured that all out by yourself? Did your Dad teach you how to use it?”

Seth shook his head and went back to the couch.

“You’re a pretty smart kid,” Rob said, resuming his position in the corner. He sat back, arms across the back of it.

“I ask a lot of questions. I ask them to myself sometimes to. So I just asked myself questions about the radio and answered them by trying it out.”

“Experimenting.”

“Kinda. I like asking questions.”

“What kinds of questions do you like asking?”

## Why Grass is Green

“Whatever comes to mind,” Seth said, going back to playing with the flap on his pajamas. He looked over his shoulder to the bathroom. Water started to run. He looked over his other shoulder to get a look at the kitchen. Rob watched him.

“Coffee’s ready. Do you want me to make you a cup?”

Rob raised his eyebrows. “I’ll take it with one cream and one sugar.”

“Regular. I’ll make it for you and Mom. I know how she takes her coffee.”

Seth went to the kitchen and took out the stepstool from beside the refrigerator and set it up so he could reach the counter. Rob couldn’t see much of him but he could hear the sound of metal utensils on ceramic mugs.

“Don’t stop asking questions. Maybe one day you’ll answer a question that no one has ever answered before.”

“I can just go on the computer and type in the question. All the good one have already been asked.”

“Really? Have they been answered?”

“Yeah,” Seth said turning his head. “I’m a kid but I’m not dumb.”

Rob held up his hands. "I never said you were dumb. I just said that not everyone has all of the answers."

"Oh yeah? Why is grass green?"

"No one knows for sure."

"Ha, you're wrong," Seth said, dropping the spoon in one of the mugs. "It's because of photosynthesis. Chlorophyll is the chemical used by plants to take energy from the sun for plants to grow. And chlorophyll is green."

"Oh, yeah?" Rob countered. "And why is chlorophyll green?"

Seth grabbed the coffee cups and came into the living area, walking by the hall to look at the bathroom door. The water was still running and he sat down with a smile.

"Because it is, that's why."

"Well, then, there is a question that no one has an answer for."

"It's green because it's green. I don't see the big deal. Are you going to start the music?"

## Why Grass is Green

“I’ll wait for your mom. Thanks for the coffee.” Rob took a tentative sip. Then a larger one. “Nice. Anyway, it doesn’t mean you’re dumb it just means the people that tell you that chlorophyll is green aren’t as smart as they think they are. I’ve got an idea, though, but I’m not sure it’s an answer.”

Seth sat and waited. Rob took another gulp of coffee.

“It has to do with eyes, I think.”

“That doesn’t make sense. Even if we saw it as purple, it would still do the same thing.”

“You are smart, but that’s not what I’m talking about. Give me a minute, okay? Plants get their energy from the sun, right? And the sun gives out yellow light. That’s where all of the energy is, in the colour yellow. But if plants get their energy from the sun, why is grass green? Doesn’t it make sense that grass should be yellow? That way it would not have any problem growing ever.”

“Okay.”

“Now, let’s pretend that a long time ago, all the animals in the world ate plants. They would need them to survive. They would eat all of the plants they saw and eventually, there would be no plants left. So, then maybe these animals had trouble seeing colours like green. So, then, the animals would eat all of the plants of all of the other colours except for the plants that were green. And that went on for so long

that grass decided to become green so it wasn't all eaten. Then maybe, smaller animals came around that would eat grass, just not as much, and they could see it, and then they would eat it, just not all of it, but the grass stayed green anyway."

"Really?" Seth said. "Is that true?"

Rob sat back. "I really have no idea. I just asked myself that question a while ago and found out that no one really had a good answer that I liked. So I read. Not just the internet, but books from the library and stuff, and thought that it might be right. At least, people can test it out to see if it's true."

"Are you going to test it out?"

Rob laughed. "No, I'll leave that to smart boys like you to test it out. Maybe when you grow up and maybe when you are in school you can see if I'm right, or if I'm wrong, or if you can come up with your own answer."

"I have a science project coming up. Can I use it for my science project? Chad is making a volcano. He said his dad knows exactly how to make the best one."

"You can make a volcano if you want to."

Seth shook his head. The water stopped running and he stood up. "Are you going to stay over?"

## Why Grass is Green

"I might. Depends on your mom."

He started to tip toe to his bedroom. "I can make breakfast, if Mom lets me. Bacon and eggs if you want."

"If I stay over, I'll come into your bedroom and give you my order."

Seth beamed and went to his bedroom. Rob didn't hear the door shut or the lock click. Rob got up and went over the radio and chose Eric Benet and put it on 'repeat'. He turned the volume dial down from twenty to ten and went back to the couch. Carolyn came out of the bathroom and he stopped drinking his coffee mid sip.

"Uh."

"You like? Sorry I took so long."

"Uh hunh," he said. "Not what I expected. I made you coffee. I hope I guessed right."

She walked over and sat on the couch. She kept her legs together when she sat and held her coffee mug with both hands when she brought it to her red painted lips. Rob watched her the whole time. She nodded approval.

"Perfect."

They didn't finish the coffee.

END