

ARHUS AIN'T FOR LOVERS

PEACE WAS ONLY IN DENMARK. A year before moving to San Diego, I traveled to Odense, Denmark, for five months of study. Already emotionally separated from Rocio but lacking the courage to end the relationship, I was curious, unknown and alone. I fell in like with the surroundings, so different from those I knew at home. Cars were replaced with public transport and bikes, pop with wine and beer, xenophobic peers with worldly associates, oversized jeans with fitted slacks and monotony with the unexpected. It was an opportunity for calm progress during an uncomplicated time when intended throat babies became flaky stains and then a national uproar. It was a time before Haniyah and her lingering taste.

Now I'm returning to Denmark, the first stop on my short European vacation. Since I have not visited the region in six years, I decide to try to meet natives via MySpace. Browsing through profiles looking for the right combination of English language ability, social diversity and femininity, I spot a young Danish woman with an eye-catching screen name: "Miss Booty Mama." Although her nickname is likely self-selected, not bestowed by a resident derriere expert like me, she sounds interesting. Yes, she is Danish, a group not known for its contributions to *Black Tail Magazine*, but her name signifies something unique, as if she is the Hottentot of that tiny Scandinavian country.

Her top friends list includes more black men than a Nation of Islam Savior's Day celebration. She is unabashedly down with jungle fever. I send her a message describing my past studies in Europe and how I plan to return. One message leads to another, which leads to instant messaging, which leads to phone calls, which lead to twenty-eight visual-Viagra JPEGs over the course of two months, which lead to plans to meet in person.

After a five-hour flight to Chicago and a short layover, I'm officially leaving the country. I board the direct flight to Denmark with a host of tall, much-too-fashionable-for-a-long-plane-ride Europeans. Seated next to me are a bilingual Danish boy of about ten and his stringy-haired mother, whose beauty appears to have been drained by this poster child for Ritalin and corporal punishment.

The young boy is a bothersome ball of energy and won't stop flapping his arms and kicking toward my seat. I glance over to give him a dirty look, but find myself staring at him as if I'm doing some sort of mental-health assessment. Okay, good, he passes. He doesn't have Down syndrome or autism; he's just in need of one of those reportable-to-children's-services ass whoopings that would put him on his best behavior for a couple months. The kind of beating where your dad hits you with the one of the 2x4s used to hold up your bunk bed and then puts you in the full nelson after you try to run away.

The boy argues with his mother as she tries to settle him. She gives a few I'm-too-esteemed-to-yell commands in Danish, but he does not relent. He responds in English with a hilarious and dismissive "For Pete's sake, Mom," a phrase he continually repeats. His mother looks at me with embarrassment and I smile back, pretending as if this future prison inmate is not getting on my nerves. I manage to ignore him for the next hour

or so, until he hikes up his leg and farts right toward me and laughs. I look over at him and he holds my stare, like I've done something wrong.

He soon falls asleep with half his body on my lap. Considering I don't moonwalk or hand out Jesus Juice, I start to feel extremely uncomfortable. Eventually, I give him a firm but tolerable knee to the ribs and he moves over to rest on his mother.

After hours of flying, daydreaming and watching *Alfie* for playa inspiration, I will soon arrive in Denmark. The closer I get, the more I wonder if I've made a wise decision. Despite the fact that we've chatted online for hours on end and held fairly long phone conversations, I have no idea what Booty Mama is really like. What if she is actually a he and attempts to take my anal virginity? What if it's a setup and she wants to take my valuable African American ligaments for transplant into Eastern European athletes of lesser ability? I'm not crazy—that shit could happen. Damn, I'm getting bubbly-stomach nervous. Ever since I burst the tire of my old 1987 Plymouth Horizon driving to the hood to visit an obese and lonely single mother when I was eighteen, I've had bad luck traveling with lust in mind. And here I am, heading to Europe for ass and adventure. Niggas ...

Landing in Denmark, I instantly get reacquainted with the luxuriousness of its capital city's airport. With its contemporary design and architecture, the terminal in Copenhagen resembles the W Hotel or any other high-fashion stay that allows white males wearing flip-flops and baggy cargo shorts into its bar while turning away black men sporting Timberlands. The ceilings are heaven high with white arched awnings that serve no purpose other than to please chic travelers. I stop in the bathroom and fall in love with the privacy offered by stalls

with partitions that start at the floor, making it impossible for others to see even your feet. It's as if each stall is a luxury porta-potty complete with turbo-flush toilets. However, I don't get too comfortable. Copenhagen is not my final destination.

I board my last flight and after forty-five edgy minutes I arrive in the smaller city of Aarhus. In contrast to the sophistication of Copenhagen's airport, Aarhus' is working-class Denmark. No glitz here—just rugged travelers not looking forward to going to work in the morning. As I walk to the baggage claim, I softly pat my hair and rub my eyes, hoping to regain some of the luster lost during my long day of travel. At any second I will meet *Booty Mama* and I am, without question, unprepared. My usual understated smell of Hugo Boss cologne has been replaced with the tartness of a marathon runner's blocked armpit follicle. The jeans and sweater that fit perfectly when I boarded the plane now feel stretched and flabby. My usually bright eyes are dull. What will she think when the tall, caramel-colored, soft-featured, curly-haired guy she saw in numerous pictures appears as a tired sack of bones with a worried smile?

Shit. I think that's her behind the security glass. Yep, no doubt—she's smiling right at me. My luggage is here; time to meet her. Alright, *Dewan*, pull yourself together. She said she loves my smile, so I guess I should give her the ear-to-ear grin. Oops, I'm already smiling; actually, I'm smiling hard as hell. If my grin stretches any further I'm going to split my chapped bottom lip. Ah man! I hope my lip isn't too rough. What if she comes in for a kiss and my soupcoolers feel like Velcro? Okay, okay, okay. I look too excited. I need to act like I'm on a European back-to-my-future trip, not an international chick-banging mission. Fuck it, too late. I'm five feet away from her. Ms. *Booty Mama* is here in the flesh.