

King Victoria

"Fuck the Casbah," we sang raucously. Club E's was sure packed tonight. Can't believe this place actually played the Clash — of course we requested it several times. The d.j.s must be doing some heavy kind of drugs tonight; they rarely acquiesce to playing something other than disco shit. The d.j.s always do coke behind the neon sign, though, I know that. At any rate, we're contented this Friday night. Everybody in the Third World Gang is here — Corey, Del, Justin, Louie, Toyboy, and a few others. The Third World Gang is what we're called by the white people who run this bar, out of their ignorance. See, we dress sort of wild compared to most of the working class folks in this place. They're very straight looking, and we have fun hairstyles and wear big black boots. But not everyone in the Gang is a person of color, which was why we scoffed at how ignorant they were to call us that. They called us Third World not knowing what it meant, just thinking it meant different from them. Like, they said we seem like we were from outer space. And so we adopted the name.

We got a big round table and we're drinking gallons of beer. Little Kings on tap, two bucks a pitcher; what a bargain. I'm feeling on the edge, though, 'cause I saw Vicki — she's King — just last night and she said she might come downtown, here, tonight. Vicki's my king. I know kings are supposed to be men, but I figure she can't be a queen, 'cause queens are gay guys in drag, and that she's not. So since Vicki rules, I call her King. King Victoria.

Last night, it was Thursday, I ran into her at the mall where she works. I hate malls, 'cause I never have money and people stare at me for my clothes — all black and vintage, much different from the average blue collar worker's — and my hair which sticks straight up in a long flattop. But I knew Vicki would be there. So I breezed through, pretending to browse. Then I feigned surprise to see her. She appeared upset about something, so I asked if I could buy her a beer after work.

Vicki was trying to decide whether to move to Cincinnati or not. Her parents didn't like the idea. But hell, like I told her, she's

twenty-six and lived on her own before, out in L.A. yet; she can move to Cincinnati, Ohio, if that's what she wants. It's what she wants, she told me.

We drank beer and she told me stuff about her family; heavy things. After a few hours we trudged out the door into an ice storm and said goodbye. I'm in love with her, no doubt. Could barely believe I was sitting alone with her, talking to her. Blew my mind wide open. She's handsome and slick — chiseled features in an olive-skinned face. Wears an old thick leather jacket, too.

So now I'm watching the door this Friday night, thinking about Vicki's hands, looking for her to walk in. Like she really will.

And who walks in but my first lover, Krissy, without her husband. No way, haven't seen her in months. We say hello; she tells me I'm looking good and buys me a drink. Krissy darts around the bar, talking to people, flirting with men. At a gay bar, yet. Makes me ill to see her submitting to men, blatantly denying her love for women. I'm over her anyway, I tell myself; I met a real Lesbian — Vicki — and I won't be getting tangled up with women attached to the sides of men like shadows. It's the damnest tragedy; Krissy's a gymnast, fixes cars, and cute as hell. Lost to men, I sadly think, she's lost.

So many people at the Club tonight. I walk around and cruise, attempting to find excitement. My friends begin to bore me — I can never sit in one place for very long anyway. It's winter, and I'm wearing my pale orange '50's pants and a black and grey argyle sweater. With my Hanover boots; they look like combat boots but they're easier to dance in. These boots are original work boots that people used to wear in the factories, circa the '40's, so my dad told me and he would know. He's worked in factories forever. I bought all this wear from Goodwill in Mazletin; can usually find good stuff there. Since it's the end of the week, I'm sporting my favorite togs. And cruising around, like I started to say.

And who walks through the door next but the King herself, Vicki. I suddenly have the sensation of a small bird walking inside my stomach as she hugs me and thanks me for helping her out last night. What do you mean, I ask, quite honored. And Vicki says that I helped her decide, she's leaving tomorrow for Cincinnati. Oh, I try to answer with glee for her, but really I'm devastated. Now she won't be around here. She tells me she's got a present for me, and asks, Trista, you have a straight edge? A straight edge, like a razor,

I don't have a razor, I reply, confused. No, Vicki laughs, like a driver's license or i.d. card, something like that. Let me buy you a beer, Trista, Little Kings okay?

But of course, I say, and then we talk awhile. I tell her Krissy's here. They were in high school together ten years ago. Weird to me, a decade they've both been out of high school, and I only got out a few years ago. I bring Krissy over to Vicki and they slap hands and rap that it's good to see each other and stuff. I admire Vicki from my chair.

Then Vicki sits back down and asks me if I ever did coke before, and I say, no, never. I never did it 'cause it scared me and I think I'd flip out, I meekly explain. She says she wants to share some with me 'cause I helped her out last night. And I think, why don't we roll around and rub each other sweating instead, why don't we just fuck, I'd like that better, but I don't bring those thoughts outside my head.

We go out to her car and she chops the coke up fine like sand and I do a little but, frightened, I mainly fake it. Vicki tells me she'll be there for me if I freak out, and that the coke will just make me feel awake. Which it does.

Vicki and I slamdance for a bit, talk to some people and each other, and then say good-bye. She leaves.

I feel empty, despairing, wound up; can't believe she left. I don't want to talk to my friends, they just don't compare and besides, they wouldn't understand this huge loss. The Gang invites me to afterhours adventure but I can't tolerate doing anything, being anywhere, being with anyone 'cept Vicki and now she's gone. I want to die, my head hurts and my mind is racing.

I go to my apartment alone, put on music, sit in my living room in a tunnel of anguish. She's gone. I have only a few memories now, and her image, now in fragments, imprinted on my brain. Fucked up and hurting, I bang my head against the wall to stop the pain. I can only cry a little. King Victoria is gone. Leaving tomorrow. No more Friday night slamdancing with her. She's gone away and I feel dead like a void, and restless, agitated as hell.

I finally fall asleep — I don't know how. It becomes light outside and I feel grey enough, too sore to move. My body numb, I leave my clothes on and sleep.