

STRIPE SURF SHORTS

BY MARTIN FRANK

STRIPE SURF SHORTS

B. Roomy, relaxed shorts for fun in the sun and surf. The light-weight 70% cotton/30% nylon is brushed for softness and dries quickly. There's room for all your gear in the mesh-lined on-seam pockets and big cargo pockets. Nylon mesh liner. Elastic waist with external drawcord. Inseam 9". Imported. Machine wash and dry. ► Colors: Dark Olive. Taupe. Navy. ■ Waist sizes: S 28-30, M 32-34, L 36-38, XL 40-42.

AU36654 \$30

Available only in U.S. and Canada.
Prices are in U.S. dollars.



In a catalog
let's say L.L.Bean
this guy
let's call him Rich
saw a guy
— a young man —
of about twenty-three.

(It happens to all of us all the time:

We see a picture, a body, a smile,
and we order the shorts, the briefs, or the book,
though we wanted to touch, and kiss, and fuck.

But we forget.)

Rich didn't forget,
he scanned the guy,
enlarged him,
got him painted in oil,
and framed,
and still
Rich's heart said...

HE AND NO OTHER!

Rich was rich,
why order the shorts, if you can afford the smile?

Rich's heart said...

ORDER THE SMILE!

Rich called his lawyer,
who called an intern,
let's call him Ron,
"he'll fax the page,
it must be some model,
get him his guy!"

Ron thought to phone a friend
in a casting agency in L.A.,
"do me a favor,
contact the L.L.Bean catalog team,
say short-notice screen-test,
unique opportunity for a starved hopeful..."

Ron felt he could handle the case,
because
by a one in a million chance
he roomed with a model,
not a famous one,
a stuttering farm boy
with a charming grin,
built like a young bull,
hair tussled like hay,
lips the color of a red barn,
eyes the hue of the Montana sky.

But shy, stunned by and lost in
Manhattan, N.Y.,
more a model of a young man
than a young man.

Let's call him Mick.

From Mick, Ron knew models' precarious balance
between pride and prostitution,
between underwear,
outerwear,
sportswear,
designer clothes,
car ads,
beer ads,
and Miami Vice.

Their "it's a job" cool
and "human being" loneliness,
their search for love,
and a higher sticker price.

But when Rich's fax came in,
it was much easier than Ron expected,
and much harder,
because the boy,
if fax don't lie,
was Mick.

(What's the problem?)

LOVE.

Ron is the nominal tenant,
of the loft they share,
Mick the rent defaulter,

the stuttering stupid
not too stupid,
to get sucked
in stead
of paying rent.

The problem is Ron loves Mick,
Mick's locker room nakedness,
near the fridge, or after a shower,
give and take a few kisses
in front of the TV, and on Ron's futon,
the morning and evening lust.

Ron's a guy
who has this thing for guys;
money and dicks
turn Ron on.

But Rich is rich,
and Ron owes Ron
to move into six figures soon.

In the subway,
huddled into his cashmere coat,
Ron felt confident,
tonight he'll brief Mick
not to disclose
that they're roommates,
tomorrow he'll call his boss,
"I've located the guy!"

But entering his loft
Ron smelled sweat...

MICK!

Putting the dirty plates into the dishwasher...

MICK!

Picking up Mick's socks in the bathroom...

MICK!

Mick's underwear on the carpet in front of the TV...

MICK!

When Ron heard
Mick fumbling with the keys
outside the door,
a joy he had never felt before
hit Ron...

A pain he had never felt before
stabbed Ron's heart...

MICK!

(How can I tell you
what Ron told Mick?)

Glad to bring him good news,
and afraid to lose him soon,
the agony of Mick's grin
so

COOL

worried only whether
Ron will talk for him to Rich,
afraid only that his stutter
will ruin his chance
to become rich Rich's paid friend.

(A few days later)

What days for Ron!

Kissing (in his mind)
every square inch
of Mick's body
a last time!

What nights for Mick!

Ron's tongue licking
like a heifer's,
Ron's mouth sucking
with more vacuum
than a Dairymaster!

What days and nights for Rich!

Counting
the hours in front of Mick's picture,

trying
to decipher
the character
of a young man
from his grin.

But when the hour came...

The principal
(who doesn't need to know how well Ron knows Mick)
arranged to receive Rich,
in one conference room,
while in another room
Ron should prepare Mick
to meet Rich.

But when the hour came...

Ron told Mick, "the rich guy didn't show up,"
and his boss, "the cheap trick didn't show up."

Rich left
and...

(You have to be in love
to call your lawyer
and make a fool
of yourself.)

...in a corner coffee shop
sat down
to drown his tears
in a cup of cappuccino.

Mick left
and...

(seven dollars in his pocket)

...sat down
in the same corner coffee shop
to bury his dream of living rich
in a cup of cappuccino.

(In Manhattan,
lovers happen
to sit down at
the same table

in the same bar
more often than
on a one bar
Long Island
island.)

Seeing Rich cry,
Mick sat down next to him
and said,
"fellows don't cry!"

Rich looked up,
looked twice,
looked once more,
"are you?"

Mick grinned.

"Are you a model, I mean,
have you modeled before, I mean,
for L.L.Bean?"

Mick grinned and nodded.

Art directors don't cry,
photographers don't dress this good
Mick liked Rich's hands
trained, bronzed.

"Why don't you want to be my friend?"

If only Ron would be here,
to talk for me!

Mick's silent smile encouraged and confused Rich,
"I'm Rich Clay. Did a Mr. Wizer talk to you?"

Mick nodded and took Rich's right hand,
with a small town
"punch his face who thinks I'm queer"
assurance,
turned and opened Rich's fingers
looked at Rich's palm with a grin:

Baby butt skin!

Mick's smile
is wide and
his eyes are blue.

Rich saw no clouds in them.

(By another chance
of the kind which happen
in Manhattan
love stories)

Ron left his office to clear his head
— law school doesn't defend the heart —
over a cup of cappuccino
in the corner coffee shop,
and ran into Rich and Mick.

Ron tried to explain
— Rich is a client —
the misunderstanding,
his sudden weakness,
the giving in to his heart,
an apparent lack of professionalism
jeopardizing his career,
and to make amends,
proposed dinner for three.

(But before we see them dine together,
before we watch Mick trying not to splutter
his best shirt with balsamico dripping from rucicola,
I want you to take stock)

(On Ron's sofa, legs on the armrest, right hand inside his underwear)

Mick is afraid of what he understands
will be the kind of dinner in the kind of restaurant
he'd like to get used to.

Mick knows he'll feel stupid among
the smart waiters, in front of
the huge menu,
the stemmed glasses,
but he'll enjoy
to get up
and walk to the toilet
six feet plus tall and fit,
to feel his body move
in a designer place.

Rich for Mick,
is like Ron,
is like the knot
in your balls,
in the lift,
on the way up
before you fuck.

Getting sucked by Ron
reminds Mick of the hot hay dust smell
of the barn
where he got sucked first time,
the old Massey Ferguson
he looked at
before he had to close his eyes.

Life is a summer road,
dinner a diner
next to a grain elevator,
Ron and Rich are the farmers,
who own what you see,
whom is he going to work for?

Fed and fucked,
life in New York is
like life on TV,
like pissing into the sink
instead
of pissing into a field.

One word only
keeps Mick from taking a bus back to
Montana.

One word
spit at him
from a pickup window
(in the service station on Churchill Road
where he worked)
in Manhattan, MT,
in wide sky country:

FAGGOT!

(Meanwhile in an apartment overlooking Central Park)

Rich looks forward to what he understands
will be an attempt to get to know Mick better.

Rich Dutch auctions off his love,
 if not my lover, then my friend,
 if not my friend, live in my house,
 (in Hanover Country, VA)
 if not, lets travel together, or at least
 let's meet again,
 bargaining himself
 out of the bargain.

(Meanwhile in an office overlooking Wall Street)

On the phone, frantically networking in case,
 Ron feels gay, and Jewish, and oedipal,
 and humiliated that he has neither a "his" shrink to call,
 nor a "his" broker, banker, lawyer,

Looking down in to the street while he talks,
 he sees hundreds of miserable law-school fucks
 like himself,
 afraid to become
 like the fathers they hate,
 eager to become
 like the fathers they hate
 to impress the mothers they hate,
 the mothers they love,
 the fathers they love.

Ron hates that his father and mother and sister and brothers and cousins
 love him
 though he is gay.
 The "though" is what Ron hates,
 who tries to learn to love himself
 though he is gay.

Ron loves Mick for not hating him,
 and hates himself for loving Mick.

Ron tosses around various scenarios,
 killing Rich, killing Mick, killing himself,
 legal proceedings,
 a stint at Esalen,
 joining the Peace Corps,
 learning to surf,
 marrying a rabbi's daughter,
 becoming Rich's friend...

Wouldn't they make a perfect couple?

But the memory of
 Mick's thighs, of
 Mick's naked body, of
 Mick's grin, of
 Mick's early morning hard-on,
 is screwing Ron.

I'M IN LOVE!

Oh! The pain of being in love!
 The joy! The madness devastating his drab
 legal life! The ecstasy that this should happen
 to him! Nobody would believe, that he,
 too clever to be liked Ron,
 son of Avram A. Wizer,
 owner of a block of flats in a location
 New Yorkers work hard
 to delete from their address books,
 that to him,

RON A. WIZER, LL.M.,

love should happen!

"Look," he was going to say to Rich,
 "I'm in love with Mick,"
 or rather,
 "we are lovers,"
 but what if Mick should shake his head?
 "I love him,"
 which is the truth...

I LOVE HIM!

Staring out into the
 gray evening drizzle,
 Ron talked to himself,
 "Mick's not even my type of guy!"
 told Rich,
 "Mick's not for sale!"
 and Mick,
 "I love you, Mick!"

The dinner went like meetings go
 when you thought it would go well,
 and it doesn't.

When you get it wrong,
then make it worse,
and finally to save your ass,
eat shit.

First time in his adult life,
Ron cried in public.
Rich comforted him verbally,
"don't take it personally!"
Mick comforted him physically,
massaging Ron's neck fraternally,
like Ron is a colt,
Mick hates to watch
walk into the butcher's van.

Ron cried,
Rich was desperate,
Mick was grinning,
drawing with his fork
in the balsamico left in his
large
square
black plate a figure,
half a star of David,
more like a Masonic triangle,
or the narrow front and wide back of a Massey Ferguson tractor,
and with a blue eyed wide skied smile,
Mick stuttered
what Ron and Rich couldn't see...

IF WE,
IF WE THREE...

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