

"FRANCIS, I FIND MYSELF SLIPPING  
DOWN INTO MY THOUGHTS."

by Francis Baumli

What a wonderful woman Lynn was. At least most of the time. And what a gloriously carnal relationship we had. At least for a while.

Lynn was only 21 years old. I was in my early 30s. Lynn wasn't beautiful. She wasn't even pretty. She had a round face, a pug nose, and a chin that was cleft too deeply in the middle to seem normal. And yet, despite these deficiencies (superficial to be sure), Lynn was thoroughly attractive. She had the bloom of youth upon her. "Comely," as an English friend commented, then added, "Yes indeed. Most comely."

If Lynn seemed comely when clothed, she was almost enchanting when naked. She had a round, firm, plump bottom that Canova would have coveted, wanting to sculpt it into a

Venus. Her thighs, one could tell, would someday be flabby. But that hadn't happened yet. She had a dainty way of walking and gesturing. Most lovely were her breasts. They were small, firm, proud, and of a shape that would have fit perfectly into a pair of wine goblets. (She blushed with pleasure when I told her this.)

Moreover, Lynn was more than sexy. She was truly and thoroughly erotic. I well remember a summer night after a big outdoor party at my place in the country, when we were already in bed for a humid tryst, and we heard a storm blowing in. Many items were still out in the yard, since the weather prediction had been mild. Both of us, completely naked, hurried outside to bring things in. I will never forget Lynn's beautiful white skin as she hurried about the yard, her firm breasts proudly erect, her pretty bare feet moving quickly on the grass. We managed to get things in before the rains came. Then later, inside, to the sound of the rain we snuggled in bed with so much delight morning replaced the night much too soon.

Lynn's erotic bearing could be more than inspiring. It could be humorous. A few weeks later, I took her to a company picnic, and someone set up a volleyball net.

Several of us started playing, including Lynn, but then she rather abruptly left the group and went over and sat on the blanket we had brought. I soon joined her, and asked why she had left. She seemed almost embarrassed as she confessed she had forgotten that beneath her cotton dress she wasn't wearing any panties. She had remembered this when we were playing and didn't want other people to see. All very understandable, but I spent the entire afternoon feeling unbearably aroused just knowing this comely, erotic woman in the light cotton dress was wearing no underwear.

Lynn's eros could also be creative. One cloudy day we drove down to the Missouri River, intending to simply enjoy sitting and watching the water as it flowed by, but a chill wind came up and then a sprinkling that entirely spoiled our mood. I decided to build a fire before the wood in the underbrush got damp, so I pulled some wood together, then breaking kindling into tiny pieces, tried to light a fire. I had only a few matches with me, and the kindling wouldn't quite catch. Lynn, in an inspired moment, pulled down her jeans, then took her panties off and said, "These are cotton. They'll do for kindling." I joked that no they wouldn't because since she was with me they should be

soaked through by now. She smiled, handed them to me, and indeed they were soaked in the middle but the rest was dry. I tucked them carefully around the few dry pieces of small kindling, and possessing only three more matches, struck one, got a fire going, and together we coaxed that small flame into a roaring fire. So that afternoon Lynn helped light a fire by taking her panties off her voluptuous bottom. That night, with her panties still off, Lynn lit another fire. When she left the next morning, I offered to buy her a new pair of panties, but she said no, she would take a pair of mine, which she did. They barely fit around her ample bottom but they sufficed, and I know she wore them later too. (I know because one night when I was impatiently undressing her, there they were.)

I have told other men about Lynn, and they ask the same question I have asked men about women they have praised:

"So why did you let her get away?"

That is always a complicated question. Too often the answer is acrimonious, although I am glad to say nothing acrimonious happened with Lynn. She got away for several reasons. For one thing, I was bedding her best friend at the same time. They both knew this, were fine about it, but

it did, I concede, make for occasional awkwardness. So that caused us to relate somewhat sporadically. There also was a strange sexual problem. For all her sexual eagerness and readiness, Lynn seemed to balk at spontaneity. It was as though she needed a couple of hours to put aside some kind of deep, very entrenched inhibition. Once she had made the choice to be sexual, it was fun and easy. But until then there were delays that weren't dalliances. They were distractions, usually with Lynn talking about something—not a topic she was actually interested in but which was obviously set forth to delay our sexual relating until she had made up her mind to do it. The result was that Lynn and I never, ever made love in the morning on waking.

There were other reasons: Our age difference, and also where we were in our lives, both counted. I was divorced, raising my little daughter by myself, and Lynn wasn't interested in playing the role of stepmother even for an hour. What she did want, however, was to one day get married and have four kids of her own. Four. She was sure of this, and I was quite sure this was exactly what I didn't want. So almost from the beginning we both knew our romantic relationship would come to an end.

There also was the unfortunate fact that Lynn just wasn't very bright. I don't think we ever, even once, managed to have a serious conversation about anything. Her mind could not explore, delve, much less imagine or create. Simple fun things we could do together, but question and examine an idea together, much less get excited about it? Never. She couldn't even talk about herself, other people, or the world at a deep emotional level. The only time she tried, or so it seemed, happened when we were driving to the country and Lynn, sitting beside me as I drove, seemed unusually quiet. I held my tongue, wondering what this portended, and after a couple of minutes Lynn moved close to me and, in a dreamy but insistent voice, said, "Francis, I find myself slipping down into my thoughts."

I asked her what she meant. She didn't know. I asked her if this was her way of telling me she was upset. She didn't think so. I asked if there was a serious matter we needed to discuss. Not that she knew of. Did she mean she was feeling depressed? No, because she never really felt depressed—at least she didn't think she did. Was she feeling sad? No, she thought she was feeling happy.

What was I to think of all this? Lynn had been wanting attention. Attention for something by saying that. But attention for what? How could I know if she didn't know? So how was I supposed to care? I was not inclined toward becoming impossibly confused by Lynn's inability to "know thyself."

So I let it go. As did she. But this interaction, somehow, was very defining for me. It told me that despite all of her fun qualities, and despite that gloriously erotic body of hers, Lynn was not and likely never would be a woman I could have a cogent conversation with, much less a deeply emotional relationship with. In short, she was embarrassingly shallow. A man is supposed to love a woman for her mind, not for her body. Which was the prevailing philosophy during that time, and I tried to practice it. So this meant that there couldn't be much about Lynn to love. I would either have to focus my love on her body, or entirely abandon the option of loving her. In fact, during this time, I was talking by phone to a friend who lived several states away, and I was extolling the merits of Lynn's carnal inclinations while commenting on the fact that I knew this romantic relationship would never work. He

replied rather sternly, "You're supposed to love her for her mind, you know."

I replied, "I wish I could love her for her mind. And I would, if only I could find it."

He had rebuked me. I rebuked him (and in doing so I also insulted Lynn), and we both wisely moved our conversation to another topic.

Lynn drifted away. Or I did. I suppose it all just sort of vaguely and aimlessly happened. She started dating a fellow who was doing his residency in neurology. I met him once, and we had a conversation about neurology. He had some refreshing insights but didn't seem to very well know the basics. I, who at this point had studied much neurology, seemed to be embarrassing him. So, being a considerate man, I was glad I never met him again.

Several years later I learned that the two of them had married, were "doing well" (as the plebes so eloquently put it), and I was even shown a picture. Her husband had gained a great deal of weight. There were four small children in the picture, although I was told that one of them was a friend of one of Lynn's children. (I therefore presumed that Lynn was still planning on having another.) Lynn had

gained considerable weight too. Way too much. She was wearing shorts, and her thighs which before had seemed to be destined for incipient flab now were definitely flabby. I inferred that her breasts by now had lost their grim battle with gravity and would no longer fit into wine goblets.

So now as I look back on that brief saga with Lynn I can sum it up by observing that we enjoyed each other for a while, we parted amicably, and I remember her not with yearning or regret but with simple appreciation.

That was back around summer of 1981, if memory serves, and I still smile when I think of how Lynn lowered her jeans, then pulled her panties down around her round bottom and handed them to me so I could use them to start a fire. Years later, in 2012, I read a brilliant novel called Winter's Bone by Daniel Woodrell. In that novel, the main character, a female (presumably comely) used her panties to light a fire. She was alone, wet, cold, trying to make her way home, and had taken refuge in a cave. There was more than a hint of eros in that scene. I am glad Daniel Woodrell could prosaically recount the very same motif I remember so well in a very personal way. Did he invent it?

Did he learn it amidst an erotic encounter with a fetching young female? Or did he have the good fortune to encounter Lynn in circumstances similar to my encounter with her when her panties lit our fire? No matter. The novel, published in 2006, was very tardy about catching up with the reality Lynn had so generously bestowed upon me.

Lynn may not have been a highly intelligent woman. She may not have been capable of verbally expressing an iota of imaginative creativity. But when she slipped those panties down around that ample bottom of hers, there was something both ingenious and imaginative going on. Maybe that's what a woman's beautiful bottom is best suited for.

I remember how the roaring fire we kept in a blaze for probably two hours that afternoon kept both of us warm and dry. I also remember how the glowing fire we kept at a steady burn later that night kept both of us warm and moist for at least two hours.

That all happened more than a third of a century ago. I suspect that by now Lynn is very fat, very flabby, and quite boring. Older than her, I am trim, strong, and not at all boring, but at the age of 69 I certainly am losing my vigor. Also I am gray of beard, I weary too easily, and I

am reluctantly moving in the direction of inevitable mortality.

It was a brief while, our romance, but even though it was not a splendid or lasting conjoining, it was fun and friendly and for me that makes for a reverential memory. Which counts for a lot.

Dear Lynn, in our honor I would raise a goblet of wine and drink to what we were. But whisky is my spirit of choice. Wine I almost never drink. Besides, to produce a wine goblet might make you blush with embarrassment. Some things, when lost, are best savored as a brief memory and then forgotten.

So thank you Lynn. You didn't invent fire. You didn't even discover it. That happened thousands of years ago. But you knew how to help light a fire by sliding a pair of white panties down around your gorgeous white bottom. Even if in that act there was neither invention nor discovery, there was a miraculous conjoining of what is practical with what is beautiful. That miracle you worked has stayed with me a very long time. I am grateful.



POSTSCRIPT

I must note that I changed the name of my central character in this little bit of biography and autobiography. "Lynn" might still be alive. I would not want to embarrass her or her grandchildren—the get of her four children. They all have a right to some degree of privacy.

Only after writing about this woman who wasn't actually named Lynn did I remember that, back then, I actually did know a woman named Lynn. This other Lynn (her real name) was in my life but briefly. Our romance was tentative, awkward, and it was over almost before it began. If memory serves, our carnal conjoining took place only two times.

She, upon leaving me, also began dating a medical student. I do not remember his field, but it was not neurology. I have no idea if they stayed together. She would soon move away, but before she moved she phoned and asked me to do her the favor of taking her cat. I did, but the cat kept getting lost in the woods and thick brush of my farm, and I would have to go searching for it. Tracking

a cat in the woods is not easy. In about three months it disappeared.

As with the first Lynn who is not a Lynn, I have fond memories of this Lynn who is a Lynn. (But I have fewer memories of this second Lynn.) She was such a gentle soul. Thoughtful, very social, and pretty as a dove. As for her body, that now is only a wisp of a memory—all but forgotten.

So why did I let this second Lynn get away? The real question is: Why did she let me get away? I can not answer this, but I do know that somehow I completely unsettled her. I think she had something inside she needed to keep hidden, and knew that if she got close to me, I would soon discover it. This is my nature. I can not but discern another person's interior. She sensed this, kept a distance, and disappeared like the other Lynn did. She probably did us both a favor by doing so.

It is odd how wistful I feel at not being able to remember her better. A lost memory, for me, is always a small grief.

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