

Dragon Breath

We were in trouble so often that year that it is hard to remember which imbecilic prank got us suspended from school for 2 days, leaving us to roam around downtown Utica trying to avoid our parents. But I think it was the flash in the urinal trick that George and I immediately conjured up in our General Science class when we witnessed Sister Mary Anthony throw a pinch of pure magnesium ... a small pinch ... into a beaker of water. The most brilliant, beautiful flash of purple lit up the lab and was all but guaranteed to immediately electrify two thirteen year olds with the promise of mayhem. I remember glancing over at him. His eyes shone a bright and manic comprehension of the possibilities. The look on his face surpassed that of the first time we unfolded a Playmate of the Month. All we needed to do was get some pure magnesium powder ... just a pinch.

A fellow student named Burton was Sister Mary Anthony's pet and the keeper of all the locked-up chemicals in the lab. I can't really tell you how we bribed him into giving us a pinch of the powder because, even years later he would be so embarrassed by the subject of the blackmail that he would probably sue me for writing about his crime of nature.

Suffice it to say that we obtained a rather large pinch and were able to keep it in a stolen test tube overnight. The next day, just before lunch, by which time the boys' bathroom urinals were always dry, we carefully poured the magnesium powder toward the rear inside of one of these ancient porcelain monuments that looked like upended bath tubs, built wide for boys with impaired aiming ability.

"Put more in," said George as he crouched beside me while I carefully tapped a pinch of magnesium on a dry spot at the bottom of the urinal.

"No, that's enough, George. We don't know what more will do and-"

"What a chicken-shit," he said. "Let me have the test tube. I'll show you what a future explosives

engineer can do."

"I thought you wanted to be a car mechanic."

"It's all about noise," he said, "loud noise." He would eventually become a drummer in a rock band. I gave him the test tube and he emptied the entire contents into the urinal.

Hiding ourselves in one of the nearby pooper stalls (as we boys called them,) George and I waited and soon our random victim walked in to use the very urinal we had salted. We couldn't have prayed for a better dupe.

Eddie was a year ahead of us in school and was an excitable kid, being Italian, and rather effeminate to boot. He was what today one might call a drama queen, and his reaction to any upset was always sure to be over the top.

Eddie unzipped and whipped it out. A split second later the boys' bathroom erupted with a clap of thunder and a blinding purple flash. Every foot of water pipe rang throughout the building. Window panes rattled. Eddie staggered backward, fell down and peed up the wall and across the floor, he even managed to piss up his shirt and tie. He jumped up and ran through the purple haze of smoke as if he had just been licked up the front by a fire-breathing dragon. Not pausing to put himself back in nor to zipper up, Eddie bolted out of the bathroom and down the hall about 30 feet before colliding with Sister Mary Anthony, who was approaching the area at high speed for obvious reasons.

"Put that *thing* back in your pants, Mister," shouted the nun. I don't think I have ever heard the word "thing" pronounced with such malevolence.

Laughing uproariously, George and I danced in the pooper stall as the nun came crashing through the bathroom door. Our stall door opened only inward and the two of us were having a problem getting out. As Sister's feet pounded toward us, George pulled down his pants and sat down on the toilet. The stall door crashed open, knocking me backward onto a sitting George who said simply, "He did it, Sister."

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