

light reading series

featherproof 



Jeb Gleason-Allured

SHOOTING MUSIC

Annie Oakley said she didn't like romantic comedies starring sitcom stars, so we went to the remake of the cop show featuring movie stars. She didn't like that one either. She sat through the whole thing, arms folded, chewing the inside of her cheek. I thought: Annie Oakley is not going to sleep with me.

After the movie we went to dinner at a restaurant designed to look like a deciduous forest. We ate fifteen-dollar hamburgers while mechanical frogs croaked at us. Annie Oakley stared down an animatronic beat lurking near the table and said, "When I was fifteen, I was so good at hunting I paid off my family's mortgage."

"Oh," I said.

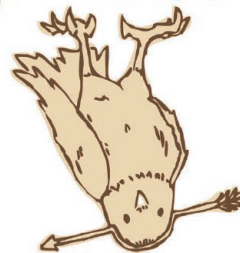
"I was so good at head-shots you'd never find a pellet in the meat."

"I'm glad you're my date," I said.

To digest, we went for a walk around the mall. We held hands. Annie Oakley slung her rifle over her other shoulder, her wide-brimmed cowboy hat cocked far back on her piled hair. She was prettier in profile.

As we passed other couples, Annie Oakley said, "I could blast the chandelier earrings off that woman without scratching her."

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barely five-five—bottom-heavy, with large tear-drop shrugging out of her pleated dress. She was short, “A great Indian chief adopted me,” Annie said, unceremoniously while I sat on the couch.

We went back to my place. She undressed “I want to take you home,” I said.

that.
“He missed once. We got married right after
“I’m having a nice time,” I said.

five.”
“But I beat him, twenty-five shots out of twenty-

her foamy chocolate mustache.
“I like you,” I said.

Did I feel jealous? I felt a little jealous. Annie licked woman.

“He laughed when he saw his opponent was a jacket. “He laughing went worried the fringe on her suede said Annie. “That’s how we met.” A gentle breeze “I beat my husband in a shooting competition,” that tasted like chocolate cake.

We stopped at a coffee stall and ordered drinks “Uh-huh,” I said.

without him even feeling it.”
“I could put a hole in that fella’s pompadour

“OK,” I said, believing her.

buttocks and small, high breasts. She laughed. “He called me Little Sure Shot.”

“That’s a nice name,” I said.

She curled up next to me, unbuttoning my shirt with one hand. She smelled like leather and gunpowder.

“You’re beautiful,” I said.

“I could shoot that smile right off your face,” she said. “Blindfolded.”

Annie Oakley kept her hat on while we fucked. Later, we lay on the rug. She slung a thick leg across my hips. I could feel her pressed against my thigh, warm and sodden.

“That was great,” I said.

“You like dogs?” she said.

“Cats better,” I said.

“I had a dog named Dave. He would sit up on this stool on stage and let me shoot apples off his head to the tune of the William Tell Overture.”

“I like Rossini,” I said.

“That was a good dog,” she said, cupping my face. She squinted at me, one eye shut, like she was taking aim.

In minutes, I was perched on my little kitchen ladder in the middle of the living room. I’d tuned the

She snorted: “I’ll call you when I miss a shot.”

“You might,” I said.

“I’m not going to call you,” she said.

Annie Oakley my number.

a cigarette while she dressed. On her way out, I gave I sat naked on the arm of the couch and smoked

“That’s something,” I said.

“I died within eighteen days of my husband.”

mirror.

fell everywhere. Annie Oakley smiled at me in the in the corner behind me exploded. Styrofoam snow

The report rang through the small room. The lamp “I think you’re a great lady,” I said.

by my anxiety. “I’m going to fire now,” she said.

“Stop shaking,” she said. Maybe she was insulted

radio to the classical station, but all we were getting was some of Liszt’s Trancendental Etudes. Not exactly shooting music.

“I had a great time tonight,” I said.

“Stop shaking,” she said.

Annie Oakley stood ten feet away with her bare back turned, and examined me over her shoulder with a small hand mirror. With her other hand she clasped the worn stock of her Kentucky rifle, thumb on the trigger. The barrel was balanced across the freckled meat of her shoulder, pointed right at the empty Styrofoam coffee cup tottering on my bald skull. Her eyes were bland in the mirror.

“The funny thing is, Dave spent his whole doggy life getting shot at, but in the end he was run over by a car.”

“Irony,” I said.

“No,” she said, “just funny is all.”

“Tonight meant a lot to me,” I said.

“Chin down.”

I couldn’t decide whether to close my eyes or leave them open. I’d never been shot at before. Annie Oakley seemed to deliberate for a while. It felt like I was having my portrait taken. I examined her knuckled spine, the milky veins on the backs of her knees.