

The Doctor's Visit

Contribution

I've been left here to undress. I'm now naked from the waist down, except for a white sheet, starched so heavily it feels like cardboard. The room is crisply clean, has the mandatory hygienic scent, certificates on the wall and the customary family photo is on the simple dark wooden desk. It's quiet, warm, pleasant but typically boring. Having been a working girl in Melbourne for going on ten years, makes me feel as familiar with the regular doctor visits as the chronically ill might be. I know when suggesting this, that I should be grateful. It's just an inconvenience for me. What I'm really thinking about today, mid afternoon on an unusually sunny Thursday in September, as I wait for the man to make his way back from wherever the heck he went ten minutes ago, is whether or not I'll make the post office before closing. Oh yeah, and whether or not I should spend \$70 on the killer heels in the shop next door to the doctor's clinic, black 'hooker heels' with a bright red sole, so when you walk, people behind you get this flash of hot red with each step – very sexy. Okay, he's back, brown pants, white shirt, greying beard, Caucasian, perhaps going on fifty. I've long since forgotten what his name is, I wonder if he was a smoker once, during his college years, I bet he was. For a doctor, he's not exactly the picture of good health himself. I'm fully prepared to defend myself from the lecture about why I should quit as soon as possible. I haven't seen him before, he's not one of my clients, as a man, I assume he's someone's client, but I'm glad he's not mine. Twice in the waiting room I had to rerun my morning through my mind to reassure myself I am wearing my "going to the doctor" knickers, the ones that cover everything, and let me convince myself they're demure, whatever that means, and this clinic's only a few blocks from my new house. Why are you here, any particular concerns, blah, blah, blah. I'm a working girl, just my monthly meds and I'll be on my way thanks.

He turns to the desk, his back to me, shuffles papers, and begins to speak, a predictable Australian accent, but a definite hint of something else now, not the judgement that we all too frequently get, this is more like a nervousness, like he's suddenly become frightened of me. He can't even look at me. He presents me with that cold metal thing they use to hold you open while they take swabs, as is pretty normal, I insert it myself and wait, and wait, and wait, he continues to shuffle papers,

and then, like, I truly can't believe this is really happening, he leaves the room.

When he finally returns I'm becoming frustrated, after all, I am butt naked with what feels like, a set of pliers hanging out of my genitals. I'm in a hurry, can't we just get things moving here? But no. More shuffling of papers, still with his back to me. He's half opened a clean swab when I eventually ask if he'd like me to do that. He jumps at the chance, reminds me to "make sure you hit your cervix" and surreally, I'm doing my own swabs. I wonder how a younger girl might cope, would they know if they'd managed to reach their cervix. What exactly do I want him to test me for? He actually asks me this. "Huh, you're the doctor, how should I know? The usual, syphilis, herpes, you know, swabs, bloods, all that stuff."

"It's not like I think I've got anything, I always use a condom, I just want the tests we have to have." And then, now that I'm almost dressed mind you, he suddenly begins to relax. He says, "you do use condoms, well that's very good."

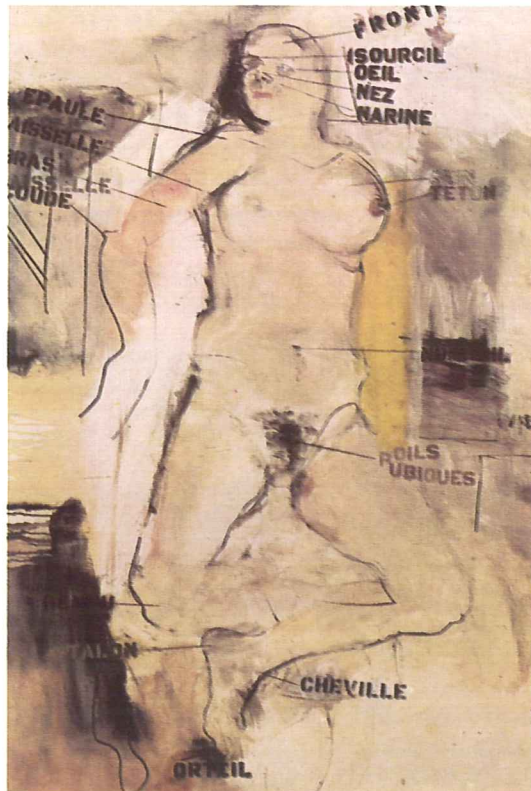
"Huh, what the?" What on Earth is this guy thinking?

Now I begin to laugh, this is beyond bizarre. I've done my own swabs, I've ordered my own tests and I'm sitting beside a doctor that is terrified he might catch something from the prostitute in his office. I actually feel for him; he doesn't mean to be offensive, he's genuinely naïve. I can't help but wonder what sort of woman this man is married too.

I explain to him how under the Prostitution Control Act, this means all workers have to do this, and if he's okay with it, I'd even like to come to his clinic on a regular basis because it is so close to home. Needless to say, I completely forgot my killer heels, but I did make the post office.

Overall it was quite a funny experience, but there is a serious side. What sort of Government, or the people that represent it, makes a law like this and then doesn't bother to educate these doctors?

Many girls at our one little brothel have had experiences like this, doctors refusing to see them, doctors with no idea of what to test for, these are relatively common experiences. It's time, ladies that we demanded better. What would it take to produce a small simple brochure for every Victorian doctor, letting them know what tests we have to have and when? Surely there's already a website doctors use, which this could be added to? Why, when this law has been in force for over a dozen years, hasn't this been done already? We are voters and citizens too.



Pic: Larry Rivers