

MIRROR

John Studholme

This is John's story. He was so distressed by his uncharacteristic behaviour that he sought my counsel although he was painfully embarrassed.

He is 60 and single. He is a private tutor and a very good one although his subject, the sciences, do not appeal to me.

He teaches on a one to one basis but always has a parent of the child, or another adult present, albeit it often in another room with the doors open. He is very wise to do this.

On one occasion, 10 July 2009, he had consecutive private lessons with two students. It was a lesson from a text book about prisms, reflectors and mirrors and the lesson finished with the identification of rocks by touch and not by sight. I cannot understand why it was important for the students to be blindfolded and handle such items to identify them. It had something to do with texture, hardness and softness of the rocks. But this procedure was in the official text book as approved by the Government's National Curriculum.

John showed Jessie's mother the lesson and explained what was being done. When Jessie left after her lesson and Sally came for hers, John explained the procedures to her mother as well and also obtained her approval.

Jessie was almost eleven years of age. It was a hot day and she came in a miniskirt and cast her legs over the short stone wall as John went out to meet her. In the process of this manoeuvre she showed her white knickers with their various coloured diagonal stripes.

John was embarrassed. Jessie never wore skirts and, in fact, strongly objected to them so why today was she dressed like this?

The lesson proceeded in the laboratory while Jessie's mother sat in the adjacent room reading a book with the connecting door wide open..

The time came for the identification of the various rocks which were laid out on table. As stated in the text book he blindfolded her and as she was tall she did not stand on the six inch mini platform but stood with a leg each side of it. She felt the rocks and was taking time to identify the first one.

Suddenly one of the mirrors from the previous experiment slipped and fell on the mini platform between Jessie's legs. It fell on its back and John bent down to pick it up. In doing so he saw in the mirror up Jessie's skirt. Her pants did not fit under her and she was not completely covered. He pulled the mirror away and the lesson proceeded.

John felt dreadful.

Jessie left and Sally came. She was thirteen.

She was like Jessie. She never wore a skirt. She belonged to a school where most girls wore their gray school trousers all the year round and were identified by their mauve school blazer. But on this day Sally wore a short gray school skirt. It was a very hot day. John was surprised. For the first time in his life he was intrigued. In all the years he had known Sally she had never worn a skirt. For his part, he had never taken any interest in sex. He was both a confirmed bachelor and a virgin. Sex did not have any room in his busy life. I should add that he was not gay, either.

The lesson with Sally proceeded and it came time for the blindfold experiment. She also stood each side of the mini platform. The game commenced. Without thinking, John picked up the hand mirror and placed it between

Sally's legs shaking nervously. He looked into the mirror and saw all up her white legs and those tight very dark navy blue knickers. He was excited. He kept putting the mirror back for further views. Then he hid the mirror, completed the experiment, removed the blindfold and returned Sally to her mother in the next room. The door between the rooms was open all the time.

Sally sat next to her mother and crossed her legs. She was not embarrassed by the length of her skirt and the lesson for the next week was briefly discussed.

When they left John collapsed into a chair absolutely disgusted with himself. He hated himself for what he had done. He had never done anything like this before and so why now? He was certainly not a pervert or a dirty old man. He spoke openly to me about this and he was clearly deeply ashamed. He said that it would not have happened had the mirror fallen down. That is true but what he did to Sally was not an accident.

There are many questions:

If Jessie wore a short skirt and displayed her knickers by coming over the wall to John is that her fault or John's?

If Jessie were to realise what she had done and that John has seen her 'vaulting' the wall should she feel embarrassed or hurt, or what?

If she was made aware that the mirror fell and that it was not John's fault and that he had seen her, how you think she should feel?

If this accident with Jessie had not happened would John have even thought about the events with Sally?

What John did to Sally was clearly wrong. The fact that he regretted this out of character action and was deeply ashamed does this permit him to be forgiven?

What, if any, responsibility can be put on the girls for the way they dressed? In circumstances which were not contrived or deliberate they risked their modesty and probably did reveal their underwear because of the shortness of their skirts. Had John seen them showing their underwear while they were sitting down in a classroom in the normal course of his duties, wouldn't that have had the same effect as what he saw by his doing wrong?

It is a crime to do what John did and he could be labelled a pervert. If it went to Court he could be put on the sex offenders register and never work with children again and this because of a few moments of madness which he regrets. What punishment should he receive?

John is truly repentant, so much so that he wants to own up and apologise both to Sally and her mother. Should he do this?

What would the parents of the two girls do if they knew about this?

What should they do?

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