

MAUDE MOLD

#32

by Stanley Lieber

IN LIVING COLOR

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He recognized the place. Formerly known as Tight Impressions, the barber shop where Dad and Piro got their hair done. Man, a lot had changed.

"Yeah, let me get an espresso and a cinnamon toast." He wasn't too hungry. Hands on her hips, the waitress rolled her eyes until her hair started moving. Oblivious to the implications, TAB2 reclined in his booth, waiting casually to see what he pulled from the local fanbase. Disappointingly, nobody seemed to recognize him.

"What's with the hot pants?"

Shit Mold, age six.

"Thirty years I was up the mountain. Apparently you keep growing even when you're sitting still."

TAB2, age thirty-eight. Still wearing the same sad clothes from second grade, his arms and legs poking out all over the place in spite of his younger self's attempts at tight rolling. The overall effect was more Duncan in CLASS ACT (1992) than Kid in HOUSE PARTY (1990). It was more like a blown out paper bag than a proper outfit. Somehow, he'd outgrown himself.

Shit cocked his head at an angle, ready to pounce. Then he stopped and sank down into the booth. He was unsure of how to proceed. Exercising his decision power, he reached down and ripped the legs off his pants, followed by the sleeves of his shirt. Smiling, now, he vomited a friendly little rainbow onto the table.

"This will have to do until I can scam some proper baby clothes," he said, and climbed happily out of TAB2's booth, off to notify his friends, all of whom had been standing monitoring from a line of bar stools along the soda counter. They dropped their devices flat on the reflective Formica and cheered when Shit validated TAB2's too-hype, flavor milk gear. Local trolls were dispatched to collect the discarded electronics.

Now, members of the technical staff appeared, clearing the dining room floor of chairs and tables as the establishment's anachronistic infrared probes, otherwise invisible to onlookers, reflected in the tiny pink lenses of their visors. Soon it would be time for a short interstitial, followed by a series of commercial messages, capped off with a closing musical performance slash rousing dance recital. Aspirants poured into the dining room from an heretofore unnoticed side entrance, freshly divested of a generous cover charge.

Paying customers could do what they wanted to do.

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