

If I got paid by the word for stories about assholes fucking with me, I'd be writing this one from the 3rd floor of my Hollywood Hills condo, overlooking the entire hazy human petting zoo that is the city of Los Angeles.

I'm in Long Beach. I don't really blend here, per se', but I feel I do my best. I walk around and keep to myself, eat at many of the same places on a weekly basis, drink these froofy blended coffee drinks with funny names like "*Freddo*", and yet, in my sincere desire to fly under the radar, things often go awry.

Partially my fault in this particular situation, I admit; I visit a fairly upscale gym here in Long Beach once or twice a week. It's walking distance from my house, and slightly more expensive than 24-Hour Fitness or something, but I'd spend the difference in fuel and frustration if I had to drive.

I walk over, row in place for 20 or 30 minutes with headphones on, converse briefly with the few people there that don't think they're better than me and everyone else walking the earth, and occasionally sit in the hot tub.

*Two factors played more than a small part in the unfolding of this story:*

1. Gay marriage has been a big issue this year; If that is news to you, you should be somewhere besides here catching up on national news.
2. I usually don't go in the hot tub when there are a bunch of idiots hanging around it, but I was banged up, and decided to go against my better judgment in the interest of feeling less so.

At the risk of getting too racy, I will simply say that bathing suits are optional in this particular gym hot tub situation; A lot can be learned very quickly about someone by how they handle this. For example: If you are squatting around the edge sans bathing suit while there are other people in the hot tub, you are inconsiderate, confusing, and disgusting.

Today there were a handful of guys in the hot tub that seemed to be friends; They all come to the gym together and then jump in the tub after their lat pull-downs and wax political. Lucky me.

I was definitely looking forward to my time in there, as it is one of a very few things that helps me feel like I am not riddled with arthritis and about to enter a state of atrophy.

*Today's bathing topic:* Gays in the military, gay marriage, gays, gays, gays. In retrospect, I imagine the fervor in which the leader of the goof troop was conveying his warped position was in fact a very clear insight into the true feelings he harbored towards his little buddies. I should have mentioned that to him.

*"Gay marriage is just ridiculous. How can you expect to live normally just because you're married? Not to mention, it's like, where will it end? Can you marry your cousin next?"*

*"People just choose to be gay so they can have a cause to rally for. I know SOOO many people that say they're gay now, but I'm sure when they were younger they were as straight as you and I."*

(At this point, unintentionally, I began looking suspiciously at the talker, since he obviously had some serious issues to handle... )

*"I just don't get it... you're not BORN gay... there's no way! It's like saying that everything else is right, but trying to convince everyone that you just somehow like people of the same sex? There no way God would make people gay, since he says it's wrong in the bible."*

*"I mean, gays in the military are just kind of looking for trouble. I guess if they're there, and they keep to themselves, it's OK, but the military is no place for people that think like that..."*

(At THIS point I may or may not have snickered and shaken my head, which, in his animated state may have not been amusing to Jock Gestapo- I'm pretty sure that was his name... )

OK, I DEFINITELY snickered and UNINTENTIONALLY shook my head, and J.G. noticed. He nudged one of his friends, laughed, and then said to me, brilliantly, *"You got a problem?"* I offered a sardonic smile, and shook my head no.

He paused, began to look very pleased with himself, and said *"Hey guys, I think we've got a FAG in the POOL!"*

He chuckled, his friends looked a bit uneasy, I took a moment to reflect, and then as I slowly stood up and grabbed my towel, said *"I'm much less confused about THAT than I am about how four PUSSIES found their way into the MENS locker room!"*

Oooohh, I called them PUSSIES... oooooohh, aaaaaahhhh, sssssshhhhh...

The already-uncomfortable cohorts tittered nervously, and of course J.G. had to defend his non-gay, 100% American stud-muffin image by throwing something back: *"You faggot, you calling me a pussy? Do you have any IDEA...?"* Argh, that was just about enough of that. I went into emergency overdrive, realizing that I had just insulted four grown men, by myself, naked, in a hot tub.

He was still talking shit, his friends were obviously nervous, and I stood at the side of the tub in a towel and calmly told them that I would smash at least two of their heads in before the other two got at me, and that if they had any desire of ever playing 18 holes of golf again, they should fuck off and leave me be...

The non-enthusiastic associates looked guilty and embarrassed, and J.G looked like he was going to give it one more shot when one of his bros told him to leave it alone. I'm about 5'11, medium build, and have the word *"vengeance"* tattooed vertically down my sternum from my neck to my belly.

I had never thought of that being an asset of any kind, but I would imagine in this unique and bizarre situation, me, standing wet in a towel, threatening these Monday-morning-quarterback assholes with physical violence, it may have added an element of authenticity.

The curtain call to this unpleasant little display was uneventful. I watched them over my shoulder as I hurried up and got the fuck out of there; They stayed in place, looking stunned and humiliated. And god damn well they should be.

*I look at it like this:* If you are going to say absurd, inflammatory things in the vein of what J.G. was spitting out, you need to AT LEAST expect to get looked at sideways. I didn't say anything, I didn't splash him...

He over-reacted, and hopefully at the end of the day at least went home feeling stupid for running his mouth and then acting like a dick when someone within earshot wasn't 100% on board.

Fuck it. The end. I saw one of the guys the next week and he was overwhelmingly friendly, and went out of his way to be so. I was, of course, friendly in return.

Imagine the story if I would have gotten my ass kicked by four guys, by myself, naked, in a hot tub.

I'll have to try harder next time.