

# Cathedral With Tranny

**Michael Botur**

Amberly comes to stay at our place, arriving on a bus, like a poor, disorganised skank, and Sandy goes to pick her up. Sandy's my missus.

Amberly's man left her not long ago and she reckons her life is ruined and she's needing a weekend of cocktails and complaining to cheer her up, right, Amberly being my wife's oldest friend. Now, Amberly's man used to break her fingers every so often, and even worse, his surfcasting rod was only a ten-footer which is pathetic, but he was a b-l-o-k-e BLOKE. Since he's doin a lag, Amb has gone and shacked up with some female impersonator, an amateur tranny by the name of

Azalea who I'm told I'm supposed to be 'nicer than usual' to because "She's still getting used to herself." Paaa-thetic. Sounds to me like her family was right to exile her, I mean him, or whatever. I just so happen to know Azalea is not the transvestite's real name, however. Nothing gets past this guy.

So anyway the ole trouble 'n strife takes two hours to pick Ambs up then grab some boxes of wine on the way home meaning I have to fetch my owns cupsa tea and it's a bit of a fuckin inconvenience seein as it's a holiday weekend and I'm tryna get as many renovations done as possible before I go back to work and I could use a proper man to help me round the place. There's treating the deck for borer, shifting a boulder, digging post holes for me new fence, hosing out Scruffy's kennel, putting new disc rotors in the truck. I hated my old man, but the cunt was right: you should keep up with renos, 'cause your home's not a walled castle – your home's a cathedral, worked on by father and son for generations, a sanctuary, a place you invite people into to witness the magnificence of the 268 tiles you personally stuck onto the bathroom walls. Grouting, too. Cunts'd better appreciate the fuckin tiles or they'll get a tile around the fuckin head.

Anywho, so wifey rocks into the driveway in the Range Rover with Amberly riding shotgun and I can see Ambi's still sporting them incredible lips. She's got two rings in her mouth now instead a the one. Her mouth pretty much calls out 'GETCHA BLOWJOBS HERE.'

I stick me spade into the soil, wipe me brow, whip out a can of deodorant and give the armpits a quick squirt. It's important to smell alright on the off-chance Ambs will go down on me, as payment, y'know, payment for stayin at our safe house.

Anyway, I squirt the hose on me gummies to let the Red Band brand show through. It's important to let folks know you can afford top-quality gummies. I'm opening the boot to

haul their luggage into the house and make the ole latissimus muscles flex on me back when I spy this clump of pink hair in the back seat and I think, Ho-lee smoke – that there's Azalea. As in, Amberly's new love interest. As in an otherwise normal bloke who tapes his willy down. Okay, whatevs, good luck to ya, I mean Dennis Rodman was a top-notch basketballer and also a crossdresser, no hard feelings there, this is the 21st century, but I realise Azalea's sitting in the backseat of the car and I'm like haaang on a minute. A real man would call shotgun and not take the bitch seat. Dressin like a woman is one thing, but being treated like one? Fark orf.

Azalea doesn't get out of the car too quick, meaning I do all the heavy lifting of the bags. I'm happy to flex, but this homo invader wearing the faggy tight t-shirt should at least offer to help. I'm a good host, show some gratitude, y'know?

So Amb gets out of the car and it creaks as it rises, 'cause she's put a bitta weight on what with the depression and all, and I give her a cuddle and enjoy the sensation of those thick bee-stung lips on my cheek, lips with just a bit of crusty skin on them 'cause she's always dehydrated from partying 'cause her baby stresses her out. Bubs is in the backseat, beside Azalea, and Amb fetches her baby boy, and my wife and her gasp and giggle and I can't get a word in edgeways. It's like they haven't even noticed the trim of fresh paint I put on the eaves of the garage roof.

The ladies come into the kitchen for a cuppa and Azalea's lagging behind like a bitch, head down, texting away. One more annoyance and that'll be all my tolerance used up.

The third strike comes straight away: Azalea's shoulders are wider than mine, like as if Azalea might actually have some decent strength if he/she stood like a man. The man's got some height on him, I mean her, and I'm thinkin, okay, if the actual Dennis Rodman came here, I'd crack him open a

bourbon, but this thing here? Utter waste of a good basketball body.

Staring at these 2.5 women cooing over the baby, I stick the jug under the tap and decide then and there to call Azalea not He, not She – I'll call it It. It's probably got mixed gonads under that miniskirt, anyway. Half dick, half dyke.

I give everyone the tour of the tiles and the Venetian blinds I put up, then I leave Amb to sit at the kitchen table and sob over her heartbreak while she smashes back our Chinese leftovers, the noodles leaving streaks of oil on her chin. She's always failing her drug tests at work, getting kicked out of flats, going to the A&E with her baby, getting her dole payments suspended, that woman. If she didn't have them blowie lips, she'd have nothing going for her.

After the tour of the goldfish pond that I put in myself, I stand in front of my guests and size up Its body.

'So Damian, you handy with a spade?'

Azalea opens Its mouth to me for the first time, and a whispery British poofy kinda accent comes outta Its mouth. 'It's Azalea. Damian is history.'

'But Damian's your real name,' I go, and raise my heels a little bit, stepping up on the balls of my feet. Took some serious detective work finding out the Damian thing. It was hard to guess Sandy's Facebook password, but Yours Truly pulled off some Mission: Impossible stuff right there.

'You said something about a spade?'

'Got some post holes need digging.'

While I uncover the truth, Sandy digs our nicest bong out and opens the doors to the patio and pours the teas and takes some board games to put on the outside table.

'You gonna help me in the yard or not? Can't have three against one.'

'Against one what?'

'One normal person.'

Azalea doesn't know what to do except laugh, look away and stroke Its fingers. 'I've forgotten my hardhat, ha ha, but I guess if you want someone to help... I haven't used a spade in a long time.' It goes towards the front doorstep and takes a gander at my perfectly mown back yard with the 18mm Bermuda grass. 'Looks like the girls are setting up Cluedo. Can we do it after? Or tomorrow?'

'Cluedo's too hard and the girls is useless, you don't wanna be like that,' I go, 'S'just you and me.' I press a hoe into Azalea's hand. 'C'mon, then. You'd be used to hoeing, am I right?' I punch it in the shoulder and it rocks in its heels.

I have it fill a wheelbarrow with gravel from tray of the ute and spread it across the driveway. It keeps wasting time smoothing down its skirt every time it bends over. I have it use a line trimmer on that big weedy patch by the letterbox and it wobbles in its platform shoes. It chips a fingernail after I tell it to shift a big river stone outta the way of my \$400 chainsaw blade as I'm chopping this two metre pine stump out. It holds the jagged fingertip up to the sun and stares at it sadly before slumping its head down.

'Might wanna tie ya hair up, precious,' I tell it, 'Wouldn't want it getting caught in the blade.'

'Oh I'm sure you wouldn't mind if everyone sliced their hair off and became skinheads,' Azalea goes, still using that posh accent.

I watch its foundation makeup dribble and run, revealing little patches of the man behind the poof. I watch it wipe its lipstick on the back of its hand. I make it crawl up the rickety ladder while I hold the base of the ladder on the paving stones I've carefully laid against the garage just in time for the girls arriving. You build a cathedral for cunts, cunts oughta respect it.

As it climbs the ladder, I stare up inside its skirt. Azalea's got on black knickers with a bit of lace on the frills. It looks tight in there, and warm. 'Oi.'

Azalea looks down. I waggle a can of this real noxious paint stripper. There's some wrong-tinted paint I want to get off the garage roof 'cause it's too close to the new coat I done on the eaves. I don't wanna do the job meself. The stripper smells bad, like bleach or something. 'Reckon you can scrape some paint off for me?'

'Ummm.... Maybe? That stuff blinds you if you get it in your eyes. Get it on your fingers, you'll never have to worry about fingerprints again so... yeah. Nah. Sorry.'

'God you're a lazy waste of a fuckin man. I's hoping we could move that big-arse basalt boulder a few metres into the rock garden. Can't do it meself.' Azalea doesn't say nothing back for some reason. After ages of awkward silence, I shout up, 'No one ever helps me in the yard, y'know.'

'Can't imagine why that could possibly be,' Azalea goes.

When the sun's got low and clouds've gone dark and It comes down with the bucket of Rust-b-Gone and the bad nails it's pulled out of the garage roof, it stands in the shade under the garage awning, tipping its head back into the cool darkness, hands over its face, making small noises, cream-coloured droplets running off its chin and peppering the pavers with little black circles. It punches its right fist into its left a couple times and its fist makes a helluva twack.

I toe the bottom rung of the ladder, watching Azalea's shoulders hunch up and scrape its ears as it shudders. 'Er, listen, you don't have to cry, that's about enough work for today so it's beer o'clock for me and... You a beer man? Shit, I mean, not man, I mean - '

**I AM NOT CRYING. I HAVE SINUSITIS. IT'S AGGRAVATED BY POLLEN WHEN LAWNS ARE**

OVERRUN BY DAISIES. And roof gutters, if they're not cleaned out.'

'Pol – overrun? Listen, mate, this here's a perfect lawn, and before you –'

“Mate”, am I?’ It blinks and wipes its cheeks, leaving streaks in the dust on its face. Its makeup is all gone 'cause I made it sweat so hard with work. ‘From what I understand about how you treat your guests, you’ve very few mates.’

The sun's almost down and I can smell boiling water. The Perla potatoes'll be done in a mo. I hope Sandy's done the bacon right. ‘I got shitloads a friends and I don't need another,’ I tell it.

‘Then stop calling me MATE, mate.’

I flex my shoulders a couple times, in case I hafta knock some respect into this he-she. ‘You're a waste, y'know that? An actual waste. You coulda been epic at basketball, body like that.’

‘Oh, fuck basketball.’ Azalea spits on my paving stone. I stare at the hoik, analysing the snot content of the spit bubble, working out how offended to be and wondering if I should uppercut it or give it a Glasgow kiss. ‘And how DARE you say I'm a waste. You don't know me, motherfucker.’

I go and get the garden hose and squirt the snot off my Tuscan Terracotta 45mm paver then wash up and take my gummies off.

‘Amberly said something about you, as a matter of fact,’ it goes, following me. ‘I know you're interested in how she looks at you.’

‘Well fuckin tell me.’

‘She said you've scared off every single one of her previous boyfriends. You're even nastier than that nasty boy in jail for beating her.’

I stand there staring, mouth open like a goldfish for a good 10 seconds, then I mumble, 'Supper time' and mosey over to join everyone on the deck.

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We eat bacon and taters under the five metre sail I installed meself. Almost as soon as I start eating, I realise I've forgotten to piss. I go and take one of those hot, thick, painful yellow pisses you do when you haven't pissed in four hours. I come back to the deck tightening my belt in front of everyone, pointing my crotch at Ambs mostly, 'cept she pretends not to notice 'cause she's jiggling her baby on her knees.

'Y'know what's the best sensation in the world, part from some bee-stung lips on your cock?' I go, directing my words at Azalea. 'The best sensation in the world's pissing standing up. You're missing out, my friend.'

'Thanks for the update, *friend*,' Azalea goes, gobbling some of the bacon I've paid for with me own sweat and hard labour. 'Actually I do pee standing up.'

'Why on earth would ya do that? Sandy: eat ya potatoes.'

'Hwy? Because I'm a man. You've been saying as much all afternoon.' Its fork is shaking in its hand. Sandy gets up and takes everyone's plates and starts loading the cutlery in the dishwasher that I paid for with 20 hours of time-and-a-half.

'You're a man, now? News to me, mate. Well why you dressin like a woman?'

'I identify as both male and female. Any other questions, mein führer?'

I look to Sandy. 'Translate.'

'I'm not getting involved,' Sandy goes, taking the baby and tickling its chubby throat.

'Sorry you got your skirt dirty on the garage roof,' I tell it, rolling a smoke.



Azalea hands me a lighter while I'm still fishing in my pocket.

'Did I complain?' it goes, 'I derive a lot of satisfaction from helping the underprivileged.'

I don't understand what it's digging at so I knock back a couple shots of bourb then watch a whole Miami-Chicago game in the Mancave. I can hear Sandy and Amberly bitching about this and that but I've got no one to banter with. A man needs company. I reckon Azalea's probly in my undie drawer masturbating, so I search the bedrooms until the only place left to look is the front yard. Azalea's out there in a fuckin singlet lugging the boulder by Itself, pushing it over and over, thudding as it rolls.

'Whoa whoa whoa!' I go, bursting out into the yard, 'Who said you could do that?'

Now that it's wearing a singlet, I see that it's got some ink on its arms. Pretty interesting tats, to be honest. Sorta sailor-styles on one arm, and tribal tats on the other. SS lightning bolts, too, which I thought you were only sposda get if you've been a boot boy.

Azalea's arms are thick, thicker than mine. The sonofabitch points to a few smaller rocks and I move them before it has a chance to ask me to. I brought 'em home a year ago and dumped 'em a few metres from the rock garden 'cause I didn't have the strength to move them meself. Plus no one would help me.

I stop to check my hands. Fuckin hard work, shunting rocks. 'You shoulda come got me, y'know. How'd you move the big one? D'you get a digger in or what?'

Azalea shakes sweat off its head like drool off a dog's tongue. It picks up the last rock. 'Catch.' It hefts the rock, I grab it, take the whole 20 kilos, fall to one knee, lose the rock into the grass.

'Christ, that's... You got some hidden talents.'

‘Is that a double-entendre?’

‘I don’t know what that is but... Look, mate, with the basketball thing I said before, callin you a waste, look, no one helps me with my cathedral so I just get a bit cranky... I dunno.’

Azalea crosses its legs like a woman and takes a comfortable position on a perfectly-positioned rock. ‘I’m listening. Come. Sit.’

I sit, but not in that fruity style.

‘Personally, I always thought basketball was for faggots,’ it says, giving away just an inch of a smile. ‘Boxing was my thing.’

‘No shit?’

Azalea nods. ‘Golden Gloves, cruiser, 2009. Got me out of the gangs. Then I used these things for evil.’ It kisses its knuckles and laughs. Then it opens its hand. Azalea’s holding the can of paint stripper. ‘Y’know I used to monster people to show how much of a man I was? Throw stuff like this in people’s eyes, squirt ‘em with lighter fluid, nasty stuff like that. Know what I mean?’ It puts down the can of blinding paint stripper. ‘All part of the reason I don’t want to be a man anymore.’ It turns the can and rolls it towards me. ‘I’m bored of me. Tell me about your chapel, honey.’

‘Cathedral, not chapel. Look, I’s just spilling me guts. Hated me old man but he was right when he said your home’s ya cathedral.’

Azalea nods. ‘I understand entirely.’

‘Pfft. You can’t understand till you own a pad.’

Azalea leans in, and I lean in too, and I think we’re about to swap secrets, then I feel a flick on my forehead, and I reel back, rubbing it. Bastard’s got away with hurting me!

‘My point is *I* hated *my* old man too,’ she goes.

I shift my legs so I'm sitting in that girly posture. Who knows, can't knock it till you try it, and I'd better get comfy since we could be out here bitching for ages.