



THE VANISHING HANDJOB

MOURNING THE DEATH OF
“HEAVY PETTING”

If the boy has a car, they usually go for a ride and park in one of the half-dozen popular petting spots—the Buggy Wash, the Three Pines, near the Boy Scout Camp, in the park, near the graveyard. Heavy petting followed by sexual relations often occurs in the parked car, except in the very coldest weather.

—*Marriage and the American Ideal*, by Floyd M. Martinson, 1960

Petting...is now not only permissible but an almost universal practice to a greater or less degree....[T]he desire thus aroused can carry over when they sit down together on the sofa or out in the car parked in the shadows outside. This is the danger in petting....Everybody is as full of unexpected characteristics, good and bad, as a plum pudding is of nuts and candies. Youth is a time for learning in many ways. Boys and girls need to talk and talk, about anything from outer space to inner beliefs. They should play games, from tennis to crossword puzzles.... They should...eat with the crowd at Pete's Pizza Heaven, alone on sandwiches they brought in their pockets on a hike, or with each other's families in their own homes.

—*Sex and the Adolescent*, by Maxine Davis, 1960

A long, long time ago, teen pregnancy was a matter of deep shame rather than an easy way to get out of high school and onto *Maury*. These days, your typical monogrelized TV-addled hamsterfucker knows what a “DP” and a “Dirty Sanchez” are by age six, and chances are they’ve tried one or both.

But back in the 1950s and early 1960s, open talk about sex was still taboo, which made it more exciting in the same way that severe hunger makes a hamburger taste better. The female orgasm was still only hinted at, like the Lost Continent of Atlantis. Males and only males were thought to have uncontrollable sex drives, and the only way to give them “relief” while still retaining one’s hymen and reputation was through the act of “heavy petting”—what today is crassly referred to as a “handjob.” Petting was sometimes mutual, and the

occasional female received a sloppy finger-banging, but its chief purpose was to contain the Male Genital Tyrannosaurus until which time it could be used for the pro-social purpose of marital intercourse and its implicit baby-making.

The euphemism “petting” dates back at least to the flapper era of the 1920s, when renegade youth would throw “petting parties,” but it didn’t fully blossom until the post-nuclear, whole-milk Eisenhower days of the 1950s. “Petting” was distinguished from “necking” in that it covered all areas below the neck, with “heavy” entering the fray once one wandered south of the beltline. On the “baseball” continuum of sexual slang, it hovered around third without heading for home.

But that was ages ago, before everyone and their aunt was doing anal, and today a handjob seems quaintly unnecessary unless you’re jacking yourself. Heavy petting has gone the way of the hickey and the non-penetrative first date. One must not forget its functional impracticality: A chick’s hand on your cock is always more inept than your own, and I would assume the same applies for finger-banging her. They’ll jack and knead and tug and yank, but it’s all cow-milking ineptitude, an impediment to copping one’s sacred nut.

Properly speaking, I’ve only heavily pet with one girl. She was an Italian maiden with a faint mustache, hair around her nipples, and a monster muff surrounding her implausibly stanky snatch. This was back in the 1970s, and her technique was straight up-and-down with no hint of flashier methods such as The Double Whammy, The Anvil Stroke, The Shuttle Cock, The Bookends, The Flame, The Base Clutch, The Love Tug, The Two-Timer, or the Thigh-Swatter. Sitting in her parents’ living room listening to an Electric Light Orchestra album, we fumbled under a quilted comforter, poking and grasping for hours without ever approaching orgasm.

These days, though, I think it would make me cum, because we’ve reached a point where even felching is no longer dirty, so reaching third base and getting a hickey suddenly are.

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