

SISTER ACTS

He was my surfing buddy and varsity room-mate. She was his sister. So why, oh why, did she have to be so smoking hot?

THEY CALLED HER "BEANIE" AND she was strictly off-limits. I don't really remember him ever saying anything specific, but everyone knew that making a move on my varsity room-mate's stunner of a sister was, quite simply, out of the question. It was one of those unspoken rules that make up the male code of honour.

Growing up in small-town Eastern Cape, I either didn't know or didn't care about the rule. I had no choice but to ignore it – hell, for most of the year the only girls we saw were our mates' sisters! But when I reached varsity I discovered that fancying your mate's sister is a pretty serious violation, ranking right up there with snitching or borrowing your mate's cricket ball box. You just don't do it.

If (like me, the number five batsman of the under-14C team) you happened to forget your box at home, you suffered in silence – even if you got hit in the jewels by some phenomenon of a teenage fast bowler. The best-mate's-sister rule was similar: if you had an inkling of a crush on her, you had to hide it and just take the pain.

And anyway, Beanie was untouchable. Out of my league. She was a year or two older than us, with sun-blond hair, blue eyes and a boyfriend – some supple gymnast dude who surfed and worked as a skydiving instructor in his spare time.

The problem was, it was hard not to adore her. Besides being knock-your-stumps-over hot, she was also irritatingly nice. The type of girl who would float across the crowded campus canteen at lunchtime just to come say a quick "hi", or spend an hour discussing something totally random with you while she was in your res room visiting her brother.

As the year wore on, these visits seemed to become more regular. By this time her brother and I had crossed the line from



friendly room-mates to brothers. We regularly skipped class together to go searching for waves and spent our weekends fishing and surfing. Of course, skydiver-gymnast-boyfriend guy was always around. In fact, he and I even got friendly and he started surfing with us (although he turned out to be more talk than Slater).

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Then we heard that they had broken up.

A week later Beanie – now newly single and ready to mingle – was on the town with us for a bit of a party. By the time we reached the second seedy joint in the regular town circuit, we'd lost my room-mate (lured to another club by some "smiling angel"), but Beanie and I rocked on. One drink lead to another and then, well, we kissed.

Or rather, we did what we used to call "scoring" in those days. That first kiss,

as I remember, wasn't romantic and lingering, but it wasn't just a passing peck either. There were sparks for sure. We completed the pub circuit hand in hand, and at times even closer.

The next morning I had a room-mate who wouldn't look at me and who'd only speak in expletives, I'd lost the respect of a skydiving-surfer buddy and I was without a girlfriend because, as my dear roomie put it, "it's never gonna happen".

Eventually he got over it and our surf missions resumed, but her visits became increasingly awkward and infrequent. She got serious with another guy, finished varsity and went overseas. I spent a couple more years in the books before my own travels (some with her brother) and other girlfriends followed.

Five years later we ran into each other in a bar in Cape Town.

That was two years ago. She now wears my ring, and no one could be happier for us than my grumpy old room-mate. Not that he's grumpy any more. As a matter of fact, he's stoked his sister is marrying a guy he knows and trusts, and who he can go surfing with.

At least, that's what he's promised to say in his best-man speech. **MH**