

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Al Simon, Jr.
Refrigerator

It was always hard for me to date. I wasn't black enough for most of my contemporaries and too black for some white girls. On top of all that I was prone to being poor. Girls will say at first that a man doesn't need a big wallet. However, if you're one paycheck away from being homeless they're not lining up to see you.

So, boys and girls there used to be a time before the internet where people like me used classified ads for dating. Now that I think about it, I had more dates using the classifieds as opposed to online dating.

But I digress.

I wasn't bad looking. I was 6 feet (I'm 67 at the time of writing thus the past tense), teaching a martial art that kept me in relatively good shape and was known to be a nice dresser. Although I abhorred the reference at the time I was described as cute.

I'd often get quizzical looks from women when I told them I wasn't seeing anyone. Often, I'd hear "Why aren't you dating? I'm surprised no one has snatched you up."

Granted, these comments usually come from women who already know me. That being said I'd often think in reply, "Why won't you take one for the team?"

Once I began my foray into the classified ads a few drawbacks became apparent. First being no picture. Oh, there were some codewords that gave you an idea of what you were getting. BBW. Full figured. Losing.

As I grew older, I can appreciate a woman with curves and more accepting of woman carrying extra weight. However, obesity does not add up to buxom in my mind. I wasn't quite 40 so I could be a bit more particular then.

Nine times out of ten I rarely saw whom I was dating until the actual date. We'd exchanged a few conversations and if they sounded interesting, I'd arrange a meet.

I won't say I was horrified by the prospects I had in Des Moines. I will say I was disappointed.

I decided to cast my net out wider.

I began to talk to women outside of the city. One in Iowa City and one in Iowa Falls. By this time, we all knew our respective races and had had several conversations. I did get a picture of the one in Iowa City and although she wasn't unattractive, she didn't appeal to me. So, to use the term the kids use today I ended up ghosting her.

And so, I ended up setting my sites on Pam in Iowa Falls.

I prided myself on cooking and said I'd bring and prepare dinner. I like Asian cuisine, so I prepared some stuffed chicken wings, some fried rice and a cucumber salad.

I had to rent a car since I didn't have one at the time.

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I also bought a new outfit.

We settled on a date and one Friday evening I made the hour and a half drive north.

I'm afraid the historic area where she lived was the best part of the trip. It seemed like a place out of colonial times. Red brick streets. A lot of homes had Ionic columns on the porch.

I was able to park in the front. I carried my bag of goodies which included lunch and some flowers and chocolates. I rang the doorbell and within a few seconds Pam came to the door.

She wasn't unattractive. Her face was oval. Brown hair framed it and seemed to be cut in layers.

However she was shaped like a football. Way beyond pear shaped. I daresay she was about five three and 160 to 170 pounds.

I sat down my bag and gave her a hug. However, mentally I was thinking 30 for the lunch and flowers, 75 for the car rental, new clothes, gas...

I made the drive, I had food prepared, flowers and candy so I decided to make the most of it. We had small talk while I prepared dinner. She was appreciative of the chicken wings although she only ate the filling and snacked on a few spring rolls.

I didn't bring any alcohol and could have used a joint. We adjourned to the front room. On the way she made a grab for my arm, and I flinched.

We sat on the couch in awkward silence. By then we knew there was no chemistry on my part. I wanted to leave but it was getting dark and beginning to snow.

"Tell me one of those jokes you hear at work."

I worked at a medical records department at Iowa Methodist and heard a plethora of sex jokes. I mulled my repertoire until I could find the cleanest one to tell her.

"A guy comes home early from work. Once he gets up to his third floor apartment, he sees a man's clothes scattered about the place and his wife in bed covering up her nudity.

"When he asks, 'Where is the sonofabitch?' she's not forthcoming. He tears through the apartment looking for him. He's in the kitchen and he sees a man running from the building pulling on a trench coat. Figuring this is his intended in a fit of rage he lifts the refrigerator and hurls it out the window. In so doing he has a heart attack and dies.

"The husband finds himself at the front of the line in front of St. Christopher with the man in a trench coat behind him and a nude man behind him. St. Christopher is documenting entry on a ledger and asks the husband why he is here today.

"Well, St. Christopher—I got off early from work and found my wife cheating on me. I see this sonofabitch running from my building, so I pick up my refrigerator, throw it at him and die in the process.

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"St. Christopher mumbles as he writes, 'kills sonofabitch with refrigerator...heart attack and dies. You may enter heaven my son.'

"St. Christopher addresses the man in the trench coat. 'Why are you here, my son?'

"The man says 'St. Christopher, I was running late for work and I get killed by a refrigerator sailing out of the apartment building where I live.'

"St. Christopher mumbles as he writes 'late for work...killed by a refrigerator. You may enter heaven, my son.'

"Lastly, St. Christopher turns to the nude man. 'And why are you here, my son?'

"The nude man says, 'Well, St. Christopher—I was sitting in this refrigerator—minding my own business...'

Pam laughs appreciatively.

An awkward pause envelops us. She catches me looking out the window.

Dreading what might come next, I take a breath and begin. "I guess I'll be heading on. I don't think nothing's gonna happen between us."

"I figured as much." she said. She also looked outside. "It's getting late and it's snowing. You can stay here--" When it looked like I was going to protest she added, "You can sleep on the couch. I won't bother you."

Just when I let out of sigh of relief she added, "I never mentioned this to you when we were talking. It's kinda hard to bring this up in a conversation. Plus, I didn't want to scare you off--"

Okay, now I'm getting scared.

"What are you inferring?"

"My house is haunted."

"Bullshit."

"Seriously. A couple was murdered upstairs. I have a ghost that runs up and down the stairs every now and then."

"Get out."

We sat there staring at each other.

"I think it's a he and he shouldn't bother you."

"What does he do?"

"If he's mad, he sometimes buzzes around your face. All you have to do is tell him to leave you alone."

"I see," I said.

Well boys and girls it's probably not a big surprise to you but I went ahead and headed back to Des Moines.