

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/4

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For the First Time

The first time we met was outside the apartment building, and I was trying to lug a TV that was five times my weight into a door that was definitely not propped open enough. I had an actual hand weight placed to keep the door open, but it kept rolling around and being finicky and eventually before I knew it the door closed for the third time and I went back to open it and I looked up and there he was. The guy.

I remember seeing him next to a potted plant by the vending machine on the bottom floor, conveniently next to the pool where I totally did not oogle him at all, as I quickly rushed past him into the pool room, closing the door with such force I scared a seven year old into waving their arms wildly next to the edge, tripping over the back and falling into the pool. Not my best moment.

But now he was here. Staring at me, door ajar, dark hair a little messy, green shirt has a button undone, and he is staring at me with this stupid TV and I am sweaty and my hair is a mess and he looks at me and goes, "Do... Do you need help?"

I have to stop meeting men like this.



The first date consisted of too many drinks at a bar that was unintentionally too close to a Hooters, but in my defense I didn't realize it was a first date until he said, "You know, you're pretty cute."

"Me?" I blushed, setting my drink down with a clink.

He smiled, "Yeah."

I stared at him like he just told me his mother was eaten by aliens, his sister is pregnant with Big Bird's kids, his dog has lice, and that is why he drives a Ford F150.

"... Thank you?"

He stared at me. Took a sip of his drink. Then kept looking.

I held my glass in my hand. If I held it any harder I bet it would shatter everywhere and then this weird first... something would end up at the hospital and then I'm with this very cute guy, who has the most beautiful, bright blue eyes, and he's holding my mangled hand and then the doctor asks how we know each other and saying, "actually, I'm not really sure what we are yet," would be weird and then the doctor would leave and he would look at me and I would look at him and then he would tell me I'm actually not that cute and leave. Or something like that.

He puts his glass down. "I thought you were cute the first time I saw you try to manhandle that TV. Your tenacity to not get help was amusing. In a cute way."

I stared at him.

He replied, "Is that alright to say?"

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And I, being very mature and totally in control, said, "I like your face."

Pause. Silence. I think I blushed so hard tomatoes would pale in comparison.

He then smiled. "I like your face too."



The first time we held hands was after a particularly cold day, where the snow fell just enough to be annoying and add an extra five minutes scraping it off your car to your commute, but not enough to change the rest of the drive or cancel anything.

I suppose it was my fault for walking a bit too fast, trying to beat him to the apartment building. He laughed when I chastised his recent read, then he claimed that his taste is terrible and he knows it, therefore the book is actually kinda good. I laughed and tried to imitate the book, which included a silly gesture, of a man proposing to a woman who is too good for him, when I slipped and almost died in a snow bank. Or... the beginnings of one.

He didn't romantically catch me, and luckily I didn't unromantically facepalm. I caught myself before completely falling and he grabbed my arm and I settled myself.

I stood up and looked at him and blushed. He still held on.

Eventually, he let go, with what I projected was reluctance. He stared at me and then grabbed my hand.

"Just in case."

I'm not entirely sure what that meant, but I held on tight as it started to get windier.

He held my hand through the building to my door as well. I tried to not regret letting go.



The first time I set foot inside his apartment was after my toilet had flooded my bathroom, coincidentally, for the first time. Now, I was not new to flooding, my sink had nearly exploded twice and my shower wouldn't stop dripping, but it's not every morning you open your bathroom door to brush your teeth and the floor is covered in an inch of water that is probably (totally) [definitely] not safe to wade through.

I stared at it, locking eyes at something I was hopelessly not qualified for, before closing the door. I opened it again, just to see if I had hallucinated or it had somehow gone away, but no. Still water. Still flooded. Still expensive.

I closed the door again. And I called him.

I wasn't sure what else to do, who else to talk to. In retrospect, maybe my landlord? But I called him and he picked up after five rings.

"Hey, what's up?" His voice sounded tired, like it often did pre-coffee.

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"My bathroom floor has a layer of water on it that is thicker than my pinky and I have no clue what to do so I called you."

There was a pause, probably a pensive thought, then a click of the tongue. "That's not normal."

"No. No it's not," I sank to the floor next to the door. Then I moved a little to the side to not touch water because what if it leaks out into the kitchen-

"Are you okay?" He asked, his voice now wide awake, like he just took a 5 Hour Energy and was ready to run a half marathon.

I sighed. "No. I'm not."

He told me to come over immediately.

I felt nervous. What were we? What did I want? But regardless, I walked up a flight to his room. 501. I waited a second. Then I knocked.

He opened the door in a robe. Tired eyes. Kind, but tired. "Do you want to come in for a minute while we get this whole thing sorted out?" He paused to sip coffee. "You can have a cup too."

I walked in and stood there awkwardly. He smiled at me and put his cup down. Hugged me. I cried. He told me it would be alright.

We ended up sitting on his couch holding matching mugs, drinking coffee. He spooned 2 sugar and a dash of cream in mine, remembering my order from our previous coffee dates. He gave me a fluffy blanket which I knew probably rivaled the state of my hair.

We sat there until the landlord called me back and told me the problem was fixed. He called it a "loose pipe." Told me to "be more careful." How old this building was. Other things that landlords recite like some sort of passage.

I stood in his doorway, ready to leave. Hair still a mess, breath smelling like sweet coffee. He smiled at me. Told me to keep the blanket and he'd pick it up on our next outing.

"Oh, and by the way, what do you want to do next week?" He was drying our mugs while leaning on the wall, the stick on wallpaper a floral design, in perfect view of me putting my bunny slippers on. Attentive. It still shocked me how much he cared and wanted to know.

And I let out that sigh that I had been holding for longer than just today.



Our first kiss was on a Saturday afternoon in a park next to a lake and I just screamed because I thought I was going to get eaten by an opossum.

The scene was painted romantically: we just finished eating at one of the cutest cafes and were walking back to the car when I saw a back trail leading to a park across the street. Idyllically, I led him through the brush, crystals still twinkling on leaves as it was just cold enough not to thaw, and I thought that life could certainly never get better than this.

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We sat on a too cold bench laughing about how surreal his latest read was, I was staring into the lake and he was looking for my eyes. I turned towards him.

Time slowed. It had been so long since I kissed someone, my stomach did a flip and I tried not to think about whatever a sesame seed bagel tasted like because what if he did-

That thought was interrupted because he started to lean in and I was going to as well when I suddenly got doused in the leftovers of my drink.

I suddenly turned to my side and there I saw it: an opossum trying to slurp the remainder of my coffee. We make eye contact. It screams. I scream. We screamed together.

I stood up, knocking him off the bench and pointed at it. The opossum dashed, looking for an escape. It kicked the leftovers of my cup off the bench and it rolled towards the lake. I hunched down and it moved past me, thinking about what could have happened to have my life be ended by a caffeine addicted marsupial.

And then it was gone.

I knew it was because he was poking me, telling me that it was gone, it was probably as scared of me as I was of it, and if it had rabies I was still safe since I wasn't bitten.

I stopped freaking out to look at him. "This is not helping! I do not want to think of any possibility of disease!"

He smiled at me sweetly, while I continued to say, "You know even though they were able to make that new breakthrough and increase the survival rate to 0.1%-"

And then he kissed me.

My brain stopped. It careened into the end of the track and did a flip. I finally felt at peace for the first time, with my mind empty.

So we kissed, in the aftermath of the opossum, with the cup floating in the lake, in the icy grass, and we kissed and kissed until I couldn't remember that this was only the first time.