

More About Nils Whose Real Name is Georges

by Ann Bogle

What I didn't write about Nils in "First Sex," first published on *Ana Verse* on January 23, 2006, and on *Altered Scale's* blog and on Fictionaut in 2012, could fill a book, yet one central fact remains about the story as written and that is that he and I shared one date on December 2, 2005. We met once for nearly twelve hours. We spoke numerous times on the phone, and we emailed. His real name is Georges Cravins, and he is Maroon.

He grew up in rural Louisiana near Lafayette on a farm. He is the kind of person — how many of these have *you* met in your lifetime? — who didn't perceive himself as Black during his childhood. When he started to become rowdy at the age of fourteen, his parents sent him to a military boarding school. He praised both parents for their decision and for his subsequent entry into the military during Vietnam. He became and served as a Marine. His rich and varied life features his crowning achievement as that one.

After college, wherever that was, he went up East to graduate school in Massachusetts. His goal was to become and remain a Massachusetts resident and to build an academic career there. He ran into two things: racism and elitism among Jewish academics in his chosen field of cultural geography.

I cannot overlook some of Georges' attitudes. He never forgave the Jewish academics for driving him away from Massachusetts. He came to a decision that the academics' treatment of him as Black, instead of as Maroon — he is the descendant not of African-American slaves but of French settlers — and his choice of a serious, Jewish girlfriend, led to his ouster from the state. Likely, he was fiery and opinionated then as when I met him. To know Georges even briefly, as I did, is to become steeped in American cultural geography, with an emphasis on history of immigration.

For example, Georges gave his highest praise to Armenian immigrants as being the best in business. He gave scant credit to Chinese people, regardless of location, and Swedes — I am roughly half Swedish by ancestry — he referred to as further northern Germans.

Georges was a practicing Catholic, and that he was practicing appealed to me more than his acknowledging any particular tenet of faith or disagreement with it. I think he viewed Communion as an act of hygiene that allowed him to go on being fiery and self-determined.

He was married for about twenty years to a French-Canadian woman whose purpose it would seem had been to homeschool their two children, older son and younger daughter. About her role in the children's education, Georges had only complaints. She became a nurse and abruptly left him for Massachusetts or Vermont. Georges served as sole breadwinner, working as a tenured Professor at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. They lived on a working farm that had to be split in the divorce, where there was one steer, a German Shepherd, and chickens that needed to be killed bare handedly by any woman Georges enlisted to be the next mother of his children and future children. Georges wanted at least one more. He drove in a blizzard from LaCrosse to the Twin Cities to meet me, he said, because my dating profile indicated that I wanted to have children.

"I do want to have children," I told him after our remarkable sex date, while we drank coffee at Caribou. "It's just that I have manic-depression."

"Niggers!" Georges hurled in the café, but he was not saying it about me or someone sitting near us, when I simultaneously ducked in my chair. He was saying it about familiar people that he is not one of, as a Maroon man from a farm in Louisiana. He was hard to bear and he would have been impossible to bear had we conceived and started to raise a child. It would have had to have been a son that I would have named Abel. The boy's name would have been Abel Cravins, and I would have been a devoted mother. I would have been

a farm and faculty wife to a Professor who mainly favored his gay students — one third of the student body in LaCrosse — for their highly democratic political activism.

I would have started cooking sooner than I actually did. After our interview, I remained a woman who didn't cook more than three times a year, and who cooked well at that. Now I cook daily as a woman without children who is apparently married to herself with a newfound constitutional effrontery for almost all things sexual she could not have mustered on her own when she was still freelancing for dinners and a very occasional night in a hotel, as occurred with Georges.

Our fights would have been spectacular.

After coffee at Caribou in Minnetonka, I led Georges down the sidewalk to the door of the cigar store where my Palestinian tobacconist kept shop. I witnessed Georges turn obediently into a zombie as I introduced him to Ed. Is this something from the Marines?, I wondered silently as I waited for Georges' expression to return to rest. Ed's expression remained constant. I mean, were there other zombie Marines who came in the store to pay a contorted fealty to Ed's Palestinian roots?

Once before or after the only date, I sent Georges my curriculum vitae. I was intent on getting a teaching job, and if that meant that someone on a dating site secured it for me, I was willing. I was more intent on working than I was on throttling chickens barehanded or even becoming the mother of Abel Cravins, though the whiff of all these excitements permeated our hours together.

Georges' reply to receiving my c.v. in email was, "Be a waitress," and I called him "a chauvinist pig!" over the phone. He said, "*No one* calls me that!" and "People teaching in the English Department don't know English!" Since I was willing to befriend the steer rather than to lead it to slaughter, as requested, I doubt I would have countered physical violence from Georges as well. I know I wouldn't have stayed around for it. I would have been gone before it started, but we would have bickered, I feel sure.

Georges said he was conducting an extramarital affair with a dissatisfied Wisconsin farm wife, a mother of five, who until Georges took up with her had never experienced orgasm. And now that she had, would she be willing to switch farms and have a next child with Georges? I didn't even ask, and now I wish that I had.

