

A Turkey, A Flea, A Milkshake Fiend

by Charles Huschle

A turkey, a flea and a milkshake fiend walk into a bar. Now bear with me, he says, giggling, grabbing my arm.

My mind is drifting. How have I managed to get myself into one more godforsaken bleak date with one more godforsaken supposedly divorced man on a Saturday afternoon? It was the rain, I thought. I had nothing else to do. I'd been drowning in my pillowcase three hours ago and why didn't I just stay there? The online "wink", the phone call, the text message. I crumbled.

His tone was gentle, at least, so I listened. The punch line made no sense; I laughed anyway. I told him my joke. Horse walks into a bar. Bartender says, why the long face?

Outside it's still raining. We've gone through three cans of Guinness each. I'm waiting for drunkenness to germinate so that I can take him home and fondle what I imagine will be a very slim dick. A Slim Jim. When I chuckle to myself, he thinks I'm still laughing at his joke.

Glad you're humored, he says. When you got all quiet on me, it made me uncomfortable. You're pretty quiet, you know — and the wounded timbre of his voice makes me grimace. How the fuck did I get into this? What lonely insanity? I put a hand on his arm. I think I'm getting a cold, I say, am I not talking enough? It makes me uncomfortable, he says, you're clearly not interested in me. No, I am, I say; but it's overdone, too much emphasis on the "am." He looks up and away at the big screen where the Jets have a first down.

Some cubes of jello with whipped cream would be perfect right about now. That's my favorite dessert from school with the nuns. How does anyone pretend to "navigate" the waters of life after a divorce? I wander, wander, wander and hope to get lost.

