

Friends Love

by Ivan Reyes

Two men approach a restaurant sitting on a busy corner. It was a well sunlit day, no clouds, all blue, cinematic -- a celluloid projection. They sit down. Reg sits down first, then Norm sits down in his seat. Reg shifts in his seat. "Something's wrong with this chair," said Reg. He wiggles in it violently, once, or twice more. "This chair sucks," said Reg. He wiggles again. "Goddamnit," said Reg.

Norm asks what's wrong with the chair as he rises from his seat and turns around and from the table behind him acquires another chair and swiftly pushes it across the floor to Reg and Reg lumbers up moving the chair from under him and discards it to the table that is set behind him and then takes the chair that Norm got for him and sits on it and it is a good chair. A waitress saw all this happen. From a corner in the shadows she sees these men fumble with chairs. She looks left and notices the table is now missing a chair, then her eyes dart to the right and notices that *that* table is veritably exploding with chairness.

Reg lifts a menu. Norm examines his. Reg's mouth begins to water. "What looks good to you?" asks Norm.

"The bacon cheeseburger," says Reg.

"What do they have for beer?"

"I think the waitress has a beer menu. When I came with Squiggy the staff gave us a beer menu, I remember. I remember them having a wide selection," Reg said with a watery hungering mouth.

"Excuse me, miss," Norm calls out politely.

"Miss," Reg supportively echoed.

"Ma'am."

"Excuse me, miss," said Reg. The waitress looks at them, from the dark her brown eyes shimmer mercurially reflecting light.

"Excuse me, miss," Norm cheerfully stated.

She darted out of her shadow, deftly she maneuvers through the tables and chairs and their eyes follow her. She walks up to them.

She says, "How can I help you boys?"

"Can we get a beer menu?"

"Correct," said Norm pointing at Reg. "We want beer."

"Was something wrong with the chair?" the waitress asked, and Reg and Norm both coincidentally noticed, simultaneously, her name tag which read Meg.

Reg said, "I didn't like it."

"Why?" asked Meg.

"I can't remember."

"You can't remember?" asked Meg.

"Bring it back."

Meg walks around them and looks at the menagerie of chairs, she deduces the chair in question and brings it back to the boys' table and slides it so that Reg can sit on it. Reg sits in it.

For a moment Reg is encompassed in deep silence. Then he said, "it's wobbly."

"It's wobbly," said Meg.

"Yes," said Reg. "It's wobbly and it's fucking wet."

"Shit," said Norm.

"The paint's chipping," said Reg.

"It squeaks," said Meg.

"It does," said Reg.

"It's so fucking noisy!" said Norm.

"Overall I just don't like this chair," said Reg.

"So you moved it," questioned Meg.

"Yes."

"We grabbed that one," said Norm pointing to the better chair.

"He grabbed it for me," said Reg, pointing to Norm.

"I saw," said Meg.

"Do you have a boyfriend," asked Norm.

"So, that table is short one chair, now," pointed out Meg.

"It is," said Reg.

"I see," said Norm.

"And... *that* table, has one too many chairs," added Meg.

"Fuck," yelled Reg.

"We're fucked," whimpered Norm.

"I don't have a boyfriend," said Meg.

"Can we have a bacon cheeseburger," wondered Reg.

"Yes, two bacon cheeseburgers," said Norm.

"I said, I don't have a boyfriend."

"And we'll have two of your most medium priced beers," said Reg.

They kept coming back to that restaurant, week after week. Eventually Meg dated Norm. She enjoyed the luxury of a man of means. He liked her hair and her face. He also liked her voice and her choice of words. He loved buxom, vixen type women, so he was always a little wanting in the department of her shape. Otherwise, he also liked how she was intellectually inclined, it matched him, and they could read books together and have deep conversations about transient but meaningful subjects. He fell deeply in love with her. She grew deeply comfortable with his presence and would weep if she could imagine life without him. So, she never thought of it.

They moved to Syracuse and bought a house. The falls there were lovely. Then they got married. Then one day Mitch phoned them to tell them that Reg was dead.

"What, how?"

Meg saw her husband disintegrate and fall to a chair with the phone pressed to his ear.

Reg had become a very prominent nature photographer and was tracking a migrating moose. He stumbled onto eagle territory and they ripped him to shreds.

The funeral was beautiful, Roman, Mitch, Ben, Squiggy, and Norm shared their beloved memories of their departed muchacho.

The sun set and Reg's dead body decayed slowly over the passage of time. Eventually he was forgotten completely. Not a second of memory of him existed. Eventually the same happened to all his friends and all his family. But he, before he died, through some mysterious encounter with something he might deem to be pure love, some say he was secretly homosexual and had some secret and deeply definitive encounter, nevertheless he knew the ephemerality of love and life and he lived by that magnetic force and though he died in pain solace also permeated him and this tale was among his thousand final thoughts that rushed by in one half of a minute till he saw darkness then -- the end!

