

Lonely Hearts

by Jake Barnes

He didn't hide it. He told her he was a mortician when he called. He had responded to her ad in the Lonely Hearts section of the newspaper.

Their first date she dressed in black. They laughed about that.

He ordered the rib eye, she the fish. She was not bad looking, he thought. A tad overweight. Just more to love, he thought, chuckling to himself.

He asked her about her job. She was a third grade school teacher. "Kids that age are sweet," she said. He nodded. He thought about his own schooldays. He didn't enjoy third grade. Not one bit.

He told her about his teacher who divided up the class into three groups: the bluebirds, the robins, and the crows. The bluebirds were the best students, he said. They got to sit up front.

His lady friend frowned. "Poor crows," she said.

Outside the restaurant after dinner he told her that he enjoyed her company. He asked her if he could call her again sometime. "Please do," she said. She smiled, stood on her tip-toes, and gave him a peck on the cheek.

That night he lay on his back in his bed and closed his eyes. He wondered what she looked like with her clothes off. He had seen plenty of naked women, of course, but most of them had been on a slab at the mortuary.

