

Stay By Me (And Make the Moment Last)

by JANEY SMITH

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My kitten is furry and has a spot--that looks like a bruise

Frederick gave me for Christmas--just below its eye.

Frederick says something like "blow job," and I just sit there watching TV. He storms out of the room, taking heavy steps.

He disappears into the hallway. When he disappears like this, it makes me shiver, gives me a kind of thrill, and makes me think of Erin, and the furniture in my bedroom, which still smells like her.

I take some of Erin's Zoloft, which she gave me on our first date and two minutes later I am rubbing my pussy in tiny, concentrated circles on my Ikea Bernhard easy chair. I listen to the shower and keep rubbing.

I run into Erin at Ikea in Emeryville and I almost don't know what to say. She looks so different, so small and gray, so frail, weakened by experiences that seem, somehow, to be beyond her control. As if life is now living without her. As if that wonderful moan that once lived inside her has become mute, strangled into an odd submission that only shopping can cure. ?

When she sees me, I say "hello." There seems to be this flickering, stinging fire in her eyes that shoots straight through me and that belies her anorexia, her fragile body's sad deterioration.

We approach the same register, siphoned off into the same line by a reflexive longing undercut by the exhaustion of a massive three day sale. I feel myself go forward, and she seems to get smaller as she approaches the cashier, who swipes her card and then manually punches in the total for the four Stockholm easy chairs. ?

"What do you think?" she asks. ?

"I like your faux furniture," I say casually, trying to avoid looking at her face, which has haunted and diminished me since our break-up. ?

There is a long silence interrupted by a group of children doing things. ?

"Can I get you some food?" She is standing off to the side, listening to my silence, caressing the moan—with her stare—that is inside me, helping it emerge, flighted, ripping.

?

I

unload my new Sony widescreen plasma TV. ?

"Okay." ?

We walk over to a long line of over-sized shopping carts, and say nothing, our silence nearly palpable. ?

For the next few hours, we eat tapioca pudding at the Taco Bell inside the Emeryville Ikea. Some of the pudding gets on my nose and I freeze. Erin smiles, and just ignores it. ? ? ? ?

But I can't ignore it. All this rubbing makes me feel sad, or empty, like I am just all this meat, or a robot. Or maybe, like, I am dead or something. But, that would still mean that I am just all this meat, or a robot. I come to realize that I can't be dead, though, because my pussy's sore.

So, I keep rubbing it. ?

I slap my face for two minutes and think of Frederick dressed in my tight gray slacks looking like a lesbian, like Erin. I imagine going down on him, but instead of his cock (also from Ikea), he spreads his legs to reveal an inverted seashell. I stick my tongue in the inverted seashell and a small bubble splits in two. I don't know what these two smaller bubbles that form in the shell are, but I dream of Erin and me, and these thoughts make me feel calm.

I finger my toes and sniff my finger. It stinks. I try licking the tapioca off my nose, but I can hardly get my tongue out of my mouth.

I imagine Gene Simmons licking a twelve year old girl that looks like Erin dressed in a dog collar and leash. Gene Simmons' freakishly long tongue makes the Erin girl faint. This is the only way Gene Simmons can get Erin to go down on him. It's funny but Erin looks so happy sucking Gene Simmons.

The tapioca stays on my nose.

While Frederick takes a shower, washes his hair, I call Erin. Nobody answers. I try again. Still no answer. My pussy's swollen, hard to open, but inside it's empty. Alone, again, my neediness succumbs to despair. Frederick comes in, takes the remote, and watches TV with it.

I sift through an Ikea catalogue, naked, ignored. I watch Frederick's fingers tap the buttons on the remote, the TV screen blinking open, closed, open, closed. I cross my legs. Frederick puts his cock back into his pants, he wipes some muck off my nose, disappears into the hall. I pick up the phone, and pause.

It's hard trying to give flowers to no one. ?

