

Where is Home?

by Lupin Pooter

Seth comes by eventually, after calling several times from various locations on the streets nearby. “Did you say Lloyd?” he asks. *Morris Avenue*, I repeat for the fifth or sixth time. How does this guy function, I am beginning to wonder. How does he get anywhere?

He arrives looking more appealing than I remembered. His hair plugs are less noticeable, his hair having been tossed by the wind, and his grin of dentures actually triggers my own smile in return. “Well hello,” I say. “I was beginning to wonder if you'd make it.”

“I was on my way the whole time,” he says.

We are both 53 and this is the first time I've gotten past a third date with anyone from Match. Seth is different. I'm not sure why. My therapist said, “Well, maybe you'll be good for each other. You both have to accept that you are recovering, or in recovery. His is different from yours, but still.”

She had diagnosed me with PTSD but kept going back to her concern about my prior diagnosis of pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder, and whether I shouldn't have a consultation with an OB/GYN along with seeing her, to see if hormone treatment might help. I explained to her that I had been on the pill, a bunch of different versions of it, and they just made me worse, but she kept insisting that medicine might be more advanced now, that there might be more options.

On our first date, I asked Seth whether he would be able to resist, if there was a big pile of cocaine on the table in front of us. “Are you kidding?” he said. “Absolutely not.”

I wasn't surprised by his answer, but I was surprised by what he did next. He leaned forward and touched the creased corners of my

eyes, almost like he was fitting me for glasses. "I could get those taken care of," he said. "See? I had mine done."

I studied the corners of his eyes and noticed they had an odd puffiness to them, but no creases or wrinkles whatsoever. "Just so I understand, are you offering to pay for me to have plastic surgery on our first date?" I asked.

"Just a little nip and tuck," he said. "This guy is fantastic, I'm telling you." He laughed then and added, "That's my middle-aged Jewish guy impression. You're welcome."

Tonight I decide it is time for Seth to see that I am also real. His recent jokes have been focused on how I am some kind of "Save the Whales" type. That is as far as he could get with understanding my description of being a development consultant.

"I have PTSD," I say, with odd clarity, after he makes me pasta marinara with seafood.

He raises his eyebrows, his rust hair shifting slightly on his forehead. "Really? What, were you like driving a tank in Iraq or something?"

"Yeah, that's right. I drove a tank," I say.

After dinner we go to Marcelle's, a new rooftop place on the East Side. After his third gin and tonic, Seth puts his face down on the granite bar. "Is it time to go home yet?" he says. "And by the way, where is home?"

He stays with me in my studio apartment tonight, and when I get up to have a cigarette on the porch, he calls out that he misses me. When I come back in, he pulls me on top of him and says something

about wanting a girlfriend, not an automaton. "My wife was very stepford wives-ish," he says. "You're not like that. You're real."

