

Big Dipper

by Matt Potter

“How do you expect to find a husband, Leona, if you have such high standards?”

“I know, Mum,” I said. “And normally I adore Americans.”

My counsellor insists I call her *Mum*. At first I thought it was strange, but I see her point: she's the right age, my own mother is extremely deficient in the role and we don't look unlike. Especially after she bleached her hair, lost weight and started dressing like me.

I pushed my sunglasses on top of my head — she says wearing sunglasses inside makes me look like I'm hiding something, though with my pink eyes, usually it's just to keep the harsh light out — and examined the cuticles the Vietnamese nail girl had just finished.

“You're not in Saigon anymore, Mai Bi'ch,” I said, craning to read her name badge. “They'll need to be much better than that if you want to stay in this country.”

Mai Bi'ch looked at me, looked at the nails, and pushed my fingers back into the bowl of nail softener.

“I said, *I love chips with tomato sauce*, and he said, *You mean French fries with ketchup?* Now, where do you go from there?”

Mai Bi'ch readjusted the facemask over her nose and mouth, pulled my hand from the goo and attacked my cuticles with an orange stick.

“Ow!” I said, though it didn't really hurt. And turning to Mum I added, “*And he double-dipped his chips in the sauce.*”

“Oh,” said Mum. “I see what you mean.”

