

Our Sister's Boyfriend

by Steven Miller

-for Franz, the least understood comedian of all

We all knew that Marissa's college boyfriend was ugly — there was the way she answered our mother's pestering "Is he cute?" with a stalling "Um, well..." and then there was the fact that she hadn't posted any photos of the two of them on Facebook — but we weren't nearly prepared to meet him. Especially not for Thanksgiving dinner. You know, because we were so eager to eat a massive meal. He was a giant *cockroach*. Did I not mention that yet? That's my key point.

"He's a genuinely interesting person. He's not like every other guy, a cookie-cutter clone," Marissa whined.

"He's a cockroach, Sugar," our mother replied.

We all poked our heads into the den where he was struggling to wear an argyle sweater. His extra arms he folded, twitching, at his side, and his top arms poked in and out of the sweater's arm holes.

"Why is he wearing that so weirdly?" we asked.

"He bought it special for today, to fit in with all of you," Marissa said, utterly exhausted.

"Does he eat turkey?" our mother asked.

"No."

"What then?"

"He can just have something from the trashcan; he's a garbagetarian," Marissa said. Our mother looked from one of us to the other. "He only eats *garbage*," she further explained.

The first thing he actually said (after introductions) came during the cutting of the turkey.

"How vulgar is it that we're a society that ritually murders one people in order to feed another people."

"He's not even a person!" our mother moaned later, after Marissa and her cockroach were long gone.

"So what's your major, son?" our father asked.

"French Colonialism in the Middle East."

"That's your interest?"

"No. It's a new major." Then to turkey he added, "I bet you felt like Monsieur Meursault. 'Why are they killing me?' I don't know!"

"He's really a good person," Marissa reiterated when he went out back to smoke and screech at the other insects.

"He's really not," we replied.

Come Christmas time she brought a new beau home, a goat who smelled of patchouli and feet, and talked incessantly about carbon emissions.

Perhaps it was the constant *encouragement* of our mother, or the fact that our optometrist finally figured out her correct prescription, but by Junior year she was dating real people again.

