

First Husband

by Tiff Holland

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My mother, wearing bright colors, as always, and with something snappy blaring on the stereo swings open the door. Mike is five four although he claims five six, and he's holding a small bouquet of grocery store flowers. I've warned him about my mother.

"My, aren't you queery looking? She says.

"These are for you." He thrusts the wilted flowers into her hand and stride down the hall, his footsteps clacking because he wears those short boots he likes. My second husband will call them "Beatle Boots." My first husband just calls them Florsheims. I call them dorky, but in any case, he isn't fazed.

I am standing at the end of the hall underneath a sort of mini-chandelier which is missing two of its dangling prisms. It is the chandelier my best friend Tracy once swung from giving my mother fits, and I believe this incident has made it the most powerful spot in the house.

"Ready?" He asks.

My mother is coming after him, but I am already ready. I have been ready all my life. She says something as we pass, but I can't hear her. I told her we're going to a haunted house, but really, we're going shooting. That would really drive her nuts. I can't believe my eyes when we get to the lake and he pops the trunk to guns, guns, a variety: pistols and rifles and a shotgun. I will wonder what I am doing. I met Mike working at a pizza parlor. He hasn't yet joined the Army. I have never been this close to any form of weaponry. Even the knives in our house are dull.

When I come home, the flowers will be in a vase in my bedroom, a plain glass vase with a chip on the top. My mother will have put them there to make a point, but I won't care. I will have shot pine cones and empty RC cola cans (the preferred beverage at the Brown household) to pieces. I will have shredded lily pads with buckshot and amazed my future husband. I will have discovered a talent I didn't know I had. I am a hell of a shot. Already it will have occurred to me, I could always shoot her.

