

The Meeting

by James Lynn Smith

He seated himself and saw the waiter coming toward him. “I’ll order later,” he said. “I’m waiting for someone right now.” The waiter nodded and turned back.

Jake dreamed she would come. His dreams had turned out to be prophetic time after time, but never about something so important. This time the being of his fondest desire would walk through that door and come to his table. He was certain of this, having seen her photo in the “Match a Partner for Life” ad. Obviously she was a woman of sensitivity and class. The way the ringlets of her hair toppled artistically down the side of her face, and the trace of a mysterious smile on her lips told him this. Her figure revealed good breeding and healthful care despite the expensive fabric that draped over part of it.

She had texted that she would meet him for a drink and some conversation at Breezy’s Deli at 8 o’clock. It was that time now. He was a discriminating man and deserved a woman of class to match both his conventional and esoteric tastes in art and fine food. Wearing casual clothing for this first meeting, he owned a high quality selection of suits for the subsequent dates he knew would come.

Jake’s reverie abated when he saw a woman come in the front door and look around as if searching. He started to wave, but saw her coming toward him on her own. Her seductive walk convinced him that his assessment had not been wrong. As she approached his table, he stood and extended his hand.

“Sally?” he asked.

“Right, and you must be—”

“Jake. I got your text message. I’m glad you could come. Please have a

seat.”

“Don’t mind if I do. My dogs have been walked too much today anyhow.”

“You walk dogs?” he queried.

“No. Jeez, where you come from? I mean the dogs on the bottom of my legs—my feet.”

Then he caught the expression, a bit embarrassed for this minor faux pas.

“Well Sally, do you know this place? Do you live nearby?”

“Uh, you know...I always need to get something out of the way first. Are you rich?”

The abrupt question took him aback, realizing his modest wealth may not equal her requirements. Yet he had nothing to be ashamed of on that score and finally answered. “I am stably employed and have sufficient means.” Jake thought about his other attributes. He had lovers before and never heard any complaints. Money wasn’t the only important thing, and he was proud about the other thing.

“Oh, that’s okay,” she said. “Just wanted to know. I don’t have to be so hoity-toity now. Mind if I take my shoes off?...I’m doin’ it anyway. Whew, okay guys, air out some.”

Unable to find suitable response to her unexpected behavior, he forced a weak smile.

“About not being rich,” she added, “there was this dude I went with for a while. He wasn’t rich neither, but he really knew how to please a woman, if you get my drift. What a *hunk*.”

Jake felt himself shrink as his mind made personal comparisons and noted her apparent focal point. Mumbling to himself quietly he beseeched the powers that be to come to his rescue; his conversational imagination had hit a blank wall.

“What did you say? I didn’t get that,” she asked.

“I, I was just, uh, saying a thing...”

“You’re a bit of a nerd—that right? Yeah, a regular *geek*.”

Jake snapped out of his doldrums and answered “I really don’t know what you mean. I never thought of myself that way.”

“Well it don’t matter, buddy. I didn’t have nothing better to do anyway. How about gettin’ me a drink?”

Glad for any diversion, Jake waved for the waiter. “I’ll have a glass of Merlot. What would you like?”

“Gimme a Bud.”

Jake made the order and then a question came to his mind. “The picture of you in that ad was great. You were elegantly dressed and I wonder—”

“That? It was all a joke. Just a costume we put on me for the pic. The hair was a wig.”

“I...see.”

“Hey, lighten up. You always look like Dracula? Do you ever have any fun, or do you just write your little nerdy thoughts down on a memo pad? By the way...I don’t do computers: You good at that sort of stuff?”

By now Jake didn’t want to be there anymore. He felt embarrassed at not being able to join in the banter, and was wondering how he could escape. Only pride kept him from heading for the door. Jake finally ventured another question: “So what are your interests Sally? What things do you do?”

“Oh, me and my pals ride hogs down the street and turn over garbage cans. I *love* the sound of a cycle when we make a quick getaway. Then at night me and my redneck buddies look for some creep to beat up before morning.”

Jake’s mood sank through the floor as his jaw went slack and his eyes darted from her face to nothing in particular.

Her visage broke into a broad grin. “You—you should see your face.” She laughed and then with a more sincere look, added “Actually I like art, museums,

parks and the movies.”

Confusion registered on his face as his brows knitted.

“Jake, I’ve been pulling your leg ever since I came in here. I just wanted to lighten the tension because I really find the dating scene uncomfortable. I’m sorry I acted like such a devolved subspecies.”

With this Jake looked back at her and realization slowly dawned. He started to speak but began laughing instead. The guffaws of relief came in bursts as his shoulders shook and the tautness in his muscles relaxed.

Soon they became earnestly involved in real communication, and Jake found he had been denying himself the humor and peace he needed with his rigid expectations. He also knew the personality with him now was *more* than his dreams of the perfect woman ever promised.

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