Sheila

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Sheila

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Sheila sat in a dim corner of her favorite summertime coffeehouse and sipped the cup of herbal tea she had poured from the chipped china teapot cooling on the table in front of her. Her knees were tucked under her while she leaned against one of the large pillows thrown on the lumpy sofa. She watched all the customers walking through the heavy wooden door without being seen. The slender, longhaired brunette took particular notice of one short, redheaded, athletic-looking woman when she ordered a vanilla cappuccino, glanced Sheila's way and smiled. Oh my, she's going to come over here."

Cover Page Footnote

This prose is available in The Angle: https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1998/iss4/3
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Sheila sat in a dim corner of her favorite summertime coffeehouse and sipped the cup of herbal tea she had poured from the chipped china teapot cooling on the table in front of her. Her knees were tucked under her while she leaned against one of the large pillows thrown on the lumpy sofa. She watched all the customers walking through the heavy wooden door without being seen. The slender, longhaired brunette took particular notice of one short, redheaded, athletic-looking woman when she ordered a vanilla cappuccino, glanced Sheila’s way and smiled. *Oh my, she’s going to come over here.*

She’ll want to share couch space and we’ll start talking and discover we adore The Indigo Girls and Alison Bechdel. We’ll have the same favorite teams and she’ll say she plays tennis too. I’ll mention my favorite musical and she’ll tell me how she’s been working on a play for years and years. I’ll offer to write her some music and we’ll sit on the couch until they kick us out because we won’t know how much time has passed.

Liz. Her name will be Liz. And we’ll have the same middle name.

We’ll exchange phone numbers and call each other the next day and spend hours on the phone talking about our lives. We’ll walk in the park while holding hands and order hot dogs from the man with the blue and orange umbrella who’ll be surprised. We’ll go to the outdoor amphitheater where there are trees and sit on a soft lavender blanket, eat our hot dogs, drink our lemonade and feel the cool shade on our sun-warmed skin. The robin in the tree above us with the young birds in her nest will poop on the blanket. We’ll be surprised and laugh and wipe the poop away.
We'll start spending nights at each other's apartments and leave spare clothing in each other's closets. She'll be a terrific chef and cook the grandest banquets with rich, creamy sauces and fresh baked rolls and pies. I'll feed her chicken noodle soup when she's sick. We'll share toothbrushes and tampons. Our parents will tell us how cute we are and we'll move in together and get a joint checking account.

In the winter, we'll babysit for her sister's kids and they'll call me "Aunt She She." All four of us will get to the park where we ate our hot dogs in the summer and build snowmen. We'll have snowball fights and her niece and I will win while her nephew starts pouting. Then we'll dot the landscape with dozens of snow angels and go back home to enjoy steaming mugs of hot cocoa topped with whipped cream. That night, I'll rub her sore muscles with Ben-Gay while she says she's too old to play with kids.

Then, one day, she'll be PMS-ing and complain about the way I put the toilet paper on the roll so that the paper goes under instead of over or how I never wash the dishes right after I'm done eating or how I leave the cap off the toothpaste. Another day, I'll get angry about the way she leaves her dirty clothes in heaps on the floor and how she smokes too much. I'll tell her she's a slob and not mean it, but feel inside that I do. We'll order Chinese take-out from the restaurant on the corner of our block. She'll get food poisoning and blame me.

She'll want to spend more time alone or with her friends and I'll make spaghetti with tofu balls because she's allergic to soy products. I'll drink the last of the soda and because I didn't go out immediately to the store to buy more, she'll "accidentally" drop my toothbrush into the cat's litter box. We'll have stopped sharing them by now. She'll stay out all night and come home in the morning smelling of beer and stale cigarettes and have lipstick on her collar. I'll throw her picture at the wall and watch the glass frame it's in shatter into a million dazzling flashes of light and be happy. She'll move out and take the cat, who loved me more, with her.

Oh no, thought Sheila. Here she comes. I better let
her down easy.

“Hey, Baby!” exclaimed the red-haired athlete.

“Hello yourself, gorgeous!” replied the young, clean-shaven man in the chair next to Sheila’s couch. “How was work?”

Sheila stood up, tipped her favorite hostess with a sheet of paper and her phone number and walked out of the coffeehouse into the breezy summer evening. “It wouldn’t have worked anyway,” she told herself as she fumbled with the combination lock on her bike and began pedaling home.

--Sabrina K. Beach