

Stalking Mr. Right

You meet him in a nightclub or maybe in a bar or perhaps at your best friend's boyfriend's party. Even though it is dark, the first things you notice are his teeth: big and white. Chances are his teeth are not naturally that pristine. He's a bleacher.

He asks over the noise: "What's your name?"

You consider lying but tell him the truth: "Helen."

He holds out his hand and you tentatively shake it: "Mike." He asks you: "What do you do, Helen?"

You consider lying, but sarcasm sounds just as good: "Mostly men but sometimes horses if I'm feeling wild."

He laughs and you decide you like his laugh enough to sleep with him. He says he works in construction or maybe in pharmaceuticals. You don't really remember what he said because you were staring at his teeth.

You talk with him for an hour, mostly bullshit. He brings you drinks and tucks your hair behind your ear. You like the way his fingers feel against your skin, so you ask him if he wants to come over to your apartment for a cup of coffee.

The car ride to your place is awkward and silent, and you spend it looking at the leather seats and expensive stereo. Construction or pharmaceutical business must be booming.

As soon as your apartment door closes he is kissing your neck and running his fingers through your hair. You have sex on both the living room floor and the kitchen table before making it into your bed.

The following morning he brings you coffee in bed.

He doesn't wait three days to call; instead, he phones the following evening. He asks you over for dinner. He's even better in the kitchen than he is in the bedroom. All

throughout the meal he tells you stories about growing up on a farm and working for an advertising agency. (His father works in construction and his brother is a pharmacist.) You tell him stories about how the students in your kindergarten class call you “Ms. Hellion” instead of “Ms. Helen” and about the time you “accidentally” walked out of a department store wearing new black leather boots.

On your third date you go bowling, and he winds up with a score over 200. He says: “I was on the bowling team in high school.”

You score 78 and say: “I once had sex in a bowling alley.”

That night after sex you talk about former relationships. He is divorced and his ex-wife took the dog. Your last boyfriend was a firefighter who forgot to feed your goldfish.

You tell your friends about him: “It’s the best sex of my life.”

You tell your mom about him: “I hear wedding bells.”

You tell your hairdresser about him: “He’s the one.”

One night after you think he has fallen asleep you whisper, “I love you.” He whispers back, “I love you, too.”

After dating for three months, you take him to your cousin’s wedding. He tells you that you are the most beautiful woman to wear peach chiffon and that you really don’t look like “a bloated hooker.” While he waltzes with your grandmother, your mother whispers in your ear, “Better catch that damn bouquet.”

After he drops you off at home that night, he says that he is too tired to come in and spoon. He promises to call tomorrow.

The phone doesn’t ring for four days. “I’ve been busy with work,” he says once you finally call him.

You don’t see him until the following week. He hardly returns your calls. He agrees to meet you at a little Italian restaurant where he tells you it’s not working anymore. He

swears he's not seeing anyone else, but he can't devote energy to the relationship anymore because he's swamped with work. When you ask, "Is it me?" he shakes his head no.

His eyes fill with tears as he says, "Just work, sweetheart. Look, Helen, I'm sorry. I can't be the man you deserve. I have to go." He leaves you with the bill and you cry into your baked ziti.

You stay home sick from work for a week, alternately sobbing in your bed, asking yourself where it went wrong, and sitting on the couch eating pints of ice cream and drinking his leftover beer while staring at the blank TV screen.

Despite the ice cream and beer you lost five pounds.

You stop showering.

You find a shirt and a pair of boxers of his in your hamper and you wear them around the house because they make you feel close to him. You buy the expensive cologne he wears so you can still smell him on your sheets. You begin to smell like sour milk.

You drive by his house twice a day to check for his car and for any strange cars in his driveway. If his car is still there, that's a good sign. It means he isn't screwing anyone else yet. At night you drive by slow enough to see the living room window light up blue from the TV. You consider crawling through the bushes and peeking into his windows but are too chicken to leave the confines of your car.

You call him from different pay phones around town. When he answers, you hang up. You call when he's not home so you can listen to his answering machine because you miss his voice. After the thirty-seventh call he answers, "Helen, I know it's you. Stop calling." You quickly hang up.

You continue to call.

He changes his number.

You stop eating altogether.

You fill the pages of your diary with hateful things to tell him when you see him next, and then you rip them up.

You tell your friends: "He's an asshole."

You tell your mom: "Don't worry, it wasn't that serious."

You tell your hairdresser: "I think he's gay."

Your friends beg you to go out and start dating again. It takes all of your energy to put on clean clothes and lipstick, but you go out, so they stop bugging you. You swear you're over him, so they leave you alone. Secretly you hope to run into him in a restaurant or bar so he will see how glamorous you look with your protruding hipbones and beg you to take him back.

You never run into him again. Weeks or maybe months later a mutual friend mentions that he got a promotion and moved to New York.

One day you stop thinking about him and almost forget his name.

You meet him in a nightclub or maybe in a bar or perhaps at your best friend's boyfriend's party. You can tell by his suspenders that he must be a lawyer or a banker.

Over the noise he asks you: "What's your name?"

You consider lying but tell the truth: "Helen."

He holds out his hand and you tentatively shake it: "Roger."