

Hating Peter

I want to start off by telling you I am not crazy. Yes, I understand that one of the first things a crazy person will tell you is that they are not crazy. But, really I'm not. And I don't need my Clozapine anymore. I guess I'll start my story where stories should start- at the beginning.

Three months ago I was standing by myself taking in the controlled chaos of a car accident my fire department was responding to. I saw what I at first thought was a small dust or lint ball coming towards me down the hill. It followed the warm wisps of summer air in my direction. Every time I looked directly at it, it would stop moving. As I looked away it would continue on in my direction. It came closer and I realized it was a spider walking towards me. I made it into a game where I purposely tried to look at it causing it to stop, then turned away only to sneak a peak out of the corner of my eye as it ventured closer and closer.

It got to the point where I became alarmed it may climb onto my shoe if I wasn't careful. I was about to bring the game to a sudden violent close when I heard a high-pitched faint voice say, "Ummm, excuse me."

I looked around and there was nobody near enough to even consider having spoken to me. "Down here," the voice continued.

I looked down. It was the spider. I glanced around again to make sure nobody was watching, then bent down towards the pungent asphalt to pretend I was tying my shoe. I didn't think it necessary to make it obvious I was engaged in a conversation with a spider.

“Can I help you?” I asked. I hadn’t known spiders could talk but didn’t want to show my ignorance.

“Ummm, hi! I’m Peter,” the little spider answered, now suddenly shy with my attention.

“Trevor. Pleased to meet you.” I didn’t know what else to say.

“I’m a general,” Peter told me. I wasn’t sure if this had anything to do with anything but attempted to look impressed.

“I work in retail,” I thought it better sounding than saying I worked at Woolco.

“Oh, cool. I think I’ve been there. And you’re a fireman.”

We talked for about five minutes, and I was running out of excuses to stay kneeled on the ground. I had him crawl onto my wrist and was finally able to stand up. I pretended to be texting, which allowed me to look at him while we spoke. It was a trick I would use quite frequently as we got to know each other and went out in public.

We talked for another twenty minutes and hit it off quite well. The tow truck then landed, and we were clearing the scene.

“I’m gonna have to let you go. It was great chatting.” I put him down.

“Yeah, for sure. Maybe we can hang out some time.”

“Umm, oh, yeah,” I answered. “That would be great, Peter.”

“Where do you live?”

I told him it was 70 Goldcrest Avenue, the other side of town. That maybe it was easier for me to come to him.

"I think I can manage. Bye, Trevor!" and he was off across the asphalt and into the grass before I thought to say bye to him.

Two days later I was napping on the couch when my doorbell rang. I was the only one home at the time. I went to the door and opened it to find nobody there. I looked down, expecting to find a courier parcel, and instead saw Peter. He looked a little shy.

"Hi! I was, ummm, around, and thought I would see if you were home."

I hadn't been expecting or even wanting company, but this time I was happy for the intrusion. "Hey, buddy! Come on in."

"So, you are inviting me into your house?" he clarified.

"Yeah, for sure, man. That is, if you want to. I can come out if you rather."

"No, that's great." And he scooted in.

That is how I met and got to know Peter Jickle, the general of an army of one and a self purported vampire (which I'm sure he wasn't). He liked to embellish his life a bit, but don't we all? He was a nice guy and quite smart. And he was the only talking spider I had ever heard of. How could I turn that down?

He was over more often than not. He didn't talk much about where he lived but I gathered he had a lot of dysfunction in his life. My parents both worked periods away from home and my girlfriend Laura at the time worked a lot of nights, so he was over a

lot and we became quite close. He would very often just sit on my couch and watch old episodes of “Swiss Family Robinson” while getting high if I had to work myself. We talked extensively, usually under the influence of marijuana, about arachnophobia and how the two of us could bridge the divide in human-spider relations.

I had even coached Peter on how to ask another spider out. According to Peter, Suzy was by far the best looking of her 600 sisters, and he couldn't let her get away. At my suggestion, he gave Suzy a little purple hair band I “borrowed” off of Laura. He then asked her out on a date to watch some David Hasselhoff movie (the name which I now forget) with him. Laura was a huge Hoff fan. They came to my place, and neither girl knew they weren't the only couple watching the movie. At one point when Peter was getting popcorn from his corner of the living room, he quickly ran up the side of the couch and we fist pumped each other.

The secretive double dating continued for months to the point that Peter and I would meet at pre decided times in the kitchen during commercials and lie to each other about how far we were getting with our respective girls.

Suzy quickly came to stay the entire evening more often than not with Peter. I honestly didn't know much about spider's sexual maturity levels but felt it better to leave the situation in Peter's multiple hands.

Things were good. So good that we were thinking of introducing the girls. Then it all changed.

I was jumping out of the shower one morning when I suddenly noticed Peter on the floor waiting for me.

“Jesus!” I instinctively covered up my midsection. “Knock, maybe....”

“Have you seen Suzy?” Peter ignored my irritation. He was frantic.

“No. You sure she’s not here?”

“Pretty sure. She never leaves like this. I’ll keep looking.”

“It’s a big house. I’m sure she’s here somewhere,” I tried to reassure him. “In the meantime, Laura will be getting back soon so try to keep a low profile.”

“Yep.” His snarky tone reminded me of how he hated feeling talked down to.

I went to work and when I came home there was no sign of Laura, Suzy, or Peter.

I woke up the next morning to find Peter dangling from the ceiling eight inches from my face.

“Are you trying to give me a heart attack?” I was losing patience with his surprise visits.

“When was the last time you saw Suzy?” he demanded in a slow deliberate tone. He had a rage in his voice that lurked just below the surface.

“What? I don’t know. Days, maybe? Why?” I found his demeanor a little unnerving.

“Oh, I don’t know. Maybe because she freaking DEAD Trevor.” I had never heard Peter cuss before. Spiders are generally Roman Catholic he had told me, and cussing

was strictly forbidden. (Yet of course forgiven with confession a promise to repent, and a small donation.)

“What?!” I was wide awake now.

“I searched high and low for her. Until I found her. As I’m sure you would for yours. And speaking of which, where would LAURA be skulking about? I do think its time I had a word with her.”

I didn’t really like his tone, but given the circumstances let it slide.

“Work. Where did you find Suzy?”

“The trashcan. Crushed inside a paper towel. I was in the kitchen and thought I could hear whimpering. I went in and she was there. She died in my arms.”

“Hey man, I doubt Laura would-“ but Peter cut me off.

“Well, we don’t have a lot of options as to who could have done this, do we? I mean, do you have a secret room mate I have never met? Perhaps a giant fly? You say it wasn’t you. I know it sure as heck wasn’t me. That leaves Laura.

“Man, I don’t know what to say. If Laura would have known-“ and Peter cut me off again.

“My girl is dead, Trevor. Your girl killed her. This isn’t over.” Peter stared at me as he retracted back up to the ceiling.

“Dude, I’m sorry,” I started.

Peter was gone.

I went to work and once home, searched for Peter and any sign of his beloved. There was no one to be found.

I waited for Laura to get home and met her outside. "Let's go out to supper," I suggested. "I need a break from here."

Over supper I brought the conversation to the general house cleaning and as nonchalantly as possible I was able to confirm Laura had indeed recently killed a spider. With a strange tiny purple piece of cloth on it. As we headed home I looked at Laura. Beautiful in the periodic glow of headlights, she had no idea that she was absolutely despised at the moment by my best friend that she didn't even know existed. I questioned what a tiny spider with no venom could do to a human twenty thousand times its size and decided not much. Right?

The rest of the evening was quiet and we went to bed still without sign of Peter. I slept a fitful sleep, fighting with my conscience about how much I could have done to have prevented this. I did finally fall into a sound rest, only to be woken up at five am by Laura. "Jesus Trevor. Come here!" she .frantically said from the bathroom.

I went into the bathroom squinting in the new unaccustomed light.

Laura resembled someone that had the chicken pox. Only instead of pox, she had hundreds if not thousands of bites on her that had inflamed.

"Look at me! Oh my god I think these are bug bites. Bed bugs maybe. Jesus I'm going to throw up."

She pushed me out while she got sick. I noticed on the way out of the bathroom the word “Bitch” sloppily scrawled in little letters in lipstick on the mirror.

I looked around the bedroom. Still no sign of Peter. I helped Laura pack some stuff, and drove her to the hospital where due to her bites they treated her with an iv. I got her back to her own place afterwards and right now she’s watching yet another Hoff film.

I here now talking to you, because we have been through a lot together. And right now I need help killing a goddamned spider.