

Memo

To: All Employees
From: Spencer Dew
Date: 6/16/2009
Re: Customer Service

Customer Service to the Pain and Sleep Department, p. 1 of 2

I was just there for pregnancy tests, cotton balls, but I'm a fiend for cheese-flavored snack crackers, which naturally pair best with Grape Nehi, so my cart was loaded when I ran into Gage again.

She'd scabbed over some, was wispy but hard-edged, like a beautiful girl who'd been Xeroxed a few too many times.

We'd met at that exact same spot, the CVS checkout line, years previous, me with mousetraps and beer, her with granola-lidded yogurt cups, traces of clay under her fingernails, robins egg blue. She'd been an artist back then. Her medium was stop-motion time.

"It's been years," she said.

Her breath still smelled like bubblegum, but now she had markedly fewer teeth.

We ended up back on my fire escape, sucking candy, smoking recessed filter mentholated cigarettes.

She made a comball joke about her sweet tooth, her lack of other ones, then she went through this elaborate ritual of burning symmetrical holes around the cellophane wrapper of her cigarette pack, saying, "This is what smokers of yore did to catch ducks."

She put her lips to the pack, then lowered it.

"Here duck, duck, duck," she called.

Gage had a way of being around you that helped you forget whatever you needed to forget. There was her nonchalance in undressing, a comball humor in how she talked. In sleep she clutched her pillow, hard, purring. When she was in a chair she liked to turn at the waist and pop her back, in both directions, and she had this kind of contortionism, too, where with a series of quick chest motions she'd nurse out a burp. She liked the same things I liked: role play rape, gem donuts, methamphetamine.

Memo

To: All Readers
From: Spencer Dew
Date: 6/24/2009
Re: Customer Service

Customer Service to the Pain and Sleep Department, p. 2 of 2

And there was the way she said my name, especially in company of the phrase “falling for you again.”

The other girl just got forgotten, which was her whole history with the world, anyway.

She called, left messages. Gage and I made fun of them.

My impending fatherhood went away, a tourniquet untied.

The seventeen-year locusts came out, rattling in the trees around the Metra tracks.

My brother's death was broadcast again when they repeated that episode of Frontline, all about the war, one Sunday afternoon, for the pledge drive.

Gage and I fucked a lot, with violence and tenderness.

We spooned honey straight from the jar after we ran out of fruit chews, chocolate hearts, Swedish fish, breath mints.

Gage stayed two weeks, stole everything worth selling when she left, which was totally worth it, a fair trade, not that anyone asked me.

The stripped down apartment was like a gift, crackling with fresh and unbounded possibilities.

I'd sprawl out in her aftermath, alone on the futon mattress, the window open where the air conditioner had been, the locusts making their metallic buzzing. I remembered everything good, nothing bad, everything sweet, nothing rotten.

