

19. A MAN HAS NO PICKLE

“What kind a sandwich do you have there?”
 “I’ve got the ham. You want a bite.”
 “I don’t really eat meat.”
 “Have a bite anyway!”
 “No thanks. I can’t stand the taste of meat anymore.”
 “What do you have there?”
 “I’ve got cheese sandwich. No pickle!”
 “No pickle. I didn’t know the cheese came with a pickle.”
 “The tuna comes with pickles. Maybe it’s the tuna, not the cheese.”
 “No, I’m sure that it’s the cheese. I didn’t want the tuna. It has all that mayonnaise all over it. It gets all runny.”
 “So you ordered the pickle instead.”
 “I got the cheese with no pickle.”
 “You don’t like pickles.”
 “I do. But I just wanted a cheese sandwich.”
 “But the pickle would taste excellent with the cheese.”
 “Or vice versa. Same thing with the ham.”
 “I just don’t like the ham.”
 “So the pickle is a metaphor.”
 “It’s not like the ham is a metaphor.”
 “It could be. But we could say the pickle is a metaphor.”
 “Why?”
 “Because you didn’t get the pickle. It’s a metaphor because it’s something that’s named. But it’s not actually there.”
 “Do you call that a metaphor?”
 “Not exactly. But just that very fact that we’re talking about the pickle means that it describes something real.”
 “Or it’s a real way of describing something that isn’t there.”
 “That sounds pretty deep for a ham sandwich.”
 “It’s not actually a ham sandwich.”
 “But doesn’t the ham sandwich come with a pickle.”
 “Actually, the corn beef on rye comes with the pickle.”
 “But no one ordered the corned beef.”
 “I guess the corned beef is a metaphor.”
 “Actually, it’s the pickle that is the metaphor.”
 “But the pickle is a condiment. It accompanies the corned beef.”
 “More like a complement. You take a bite of one then the other.”
 “But it’s not a pickle sandwich. It’s a corned beef sandwich with a pickle.”
 “On the other hand, if you were a vegetarian, the pickle would be the meal.”
 “There’s no protein in a pickle.”
 “You can only digest so much protein.”

“So you could have a pickle meal.

“I thought that the sandwich came without a pickle.”

“No pickle.”

“A man has no pickle.”

“Do you like what you see?”

“I would like to see more!”

“You can’t see any more unless you had an x-ray machine or something.”

“No, I just mean that I’d like to see more of what you’re showing.”

“I’m trying to give you as much as I have.”

“But you’re not touching yourself.”

“That would be extra!”

“Would be how?”

“You’d have to pay extra for that.”

“But I’ve been nice to you up to this point. Are you telling me that’s not enough?”

“Anyone can be nice. I just need you to do something that make you different.”

“I can do whatever you need me to do?”

“So I need you to give me a little extra. Take out your damn credit card, and add a little extra to your tab.”

We’ve been hanging out and talking. I’ve told you about myself. We’ve got on especially well together. I just thought that you’d be willing to share yourself with me.

“I’m willing to do what I can to help you. I just need one thing from you.”

“And what is that?”

“You know what it is. I need more money from you.”

“Great. First, give me something more for the time that we have spent together.”

“Honey! I’m calling you honey now. Honey, get out your fucking wallet, and add some money to the bill.”

“Honey, I know that you are enjoying yourself as much as I am.”

“I’m not enjoying myself at all. This is all your deal.”

“You’ve been acting like you’ve been having fun. You’ve been sighing. And you’ve been making these cooing noises.”

“It’s all acting.”

“But it’s so believable.”

“That’s why it’s called acting.”

“I really thought that you were getting into it too.”

“I don’t know you from Adam.”

“I could tell you about growing up in Nebraska.”

“I really don’t want to know your story. I just want you to pay me the money.”

“Are you afraid of intimacy?”

“I’m afraid of not being able to pay my rent. That is why I need you to do one simple thing for me.”

“I’ve played fair up to this point. I’ve given you quite a bit of money.”

“Why aren’t you playing the game. You pay me the money, and I’ll do pretty well anything that you want me to do.”

"I need you to touch yourself."

"I'll do that."

"OK, go ahead."

"You need to go first."

"I could touch myself."

"I assume that you're doing that already. I really don't want to know about that. That is your business. The only thing that I really want from you is money."

"What kind of person does that make you?"

"Someone who is willing to do business with you. Would you want it any other way?"

"For the time being, you just have to let her go. Stay away! Give it some time. Then it will all work out."

"She is going to come back to me."

"She might not."

"So why do I have to go through all this effort if she's not going to come back in the end."

"It's part of the deal."

"What deal?"

"Life."

"That really sucks."

"I guess that it does."

"What happens if I call her?"

"You can't call her. You're a danger to her now."

"It's not as if I want to hurt her."

"I know that! But you can't try make contact. You just have to let her be. At least for the time being."

"I could call her up. Invite her over for dinner. She loves my cooking."

"You can't do that. You're like poison now."

"But I need to talk to her. I need to tell her how I feel."

"It's not going to work like that. For the time being, you just have to let her be. You knows everything that she knows. Let her make the decision."

"There's things that she doesn't know. I can change for her."

"Come out with me. You'll have some drinks. You'll get tempted. And it'll take away some of the sting."

"I don't want to take away the sting."

"This is making me feel like shit."

"You have to let time do its job."

"How does that work?"

"You have to do nothing. Just wait. It will all happen in good time."

"So it will happen."

"I can't say that for sure. If it's meant to happen."

"What does that mean: *if it's meant to happen?*"

"It means that there are some things that you just can't control."

"Down deep there is a pattern."

“Sure there’s a pattern. It’s just that you’re not really part of that pattern.”

“How do I find out about the pattern?”

“I don’t know. Become a scientologist.”

“Scientology will tell me how to get back.”

“There is no answer how to get her back. You just have to let matters be.”

“I’m going to call her.”

“She’s going to be out. And that’s going to get you pissed off.”

“She’s out how?”

“I don’t know. I’m not a mind reader.”

“She’s out with some guy.”

“So do you get this kind of work a lot?”

“Not as much as I used to. With computers, everyone can do their own essays.”

“But you still get work.”

“Yeah. Some people panic. They have an assignment due. And they have all these notes.

But no real plan.”

“You help them with their essays.”

“I just type. But I can organize their notes. Give them a shape.”

“That’s helping with their essays.”

“I really don’t do the work for them. I don’t do research.”

“You don’t do research?”

“I have been a research assistant. But that is a different thing. That is like a professional service. I charge a lot more for that.”

“You are qualified as a research assistant.”

“I’ve done it, and I’ve got paid for it.”

“So you offer other services other than typing.”

“Like what?”

“I’m a pretty good editor.”

“Is that all?”

“I thought that you wanted me to type something for you.”

“I just wanted to see what else was available. For example, you don’t babysit.”

“Not really. I occasionally watch the kids while my clients are out.”

“So you do babysit?”

“In so many words, maybe I end up doing that. But only for a half hour or so. I’ll be typing a paper, and my client will tell me that she’ll give me a little extra if I keep an eye on the kids when I she goes out. But I’m not going to show up just to babysit. Why? Do you have kids?”

“No, I was just wondering. What about plants? Do you water plants?”

“I can do that too. Again, it’s not really my job. Sometimes a client will have me stop by at the house to pick up some papers. And they’ll ask me to water while I’m there. All these extra services are paid for in the final tally.”

“Is that all?”

“I guess that I could ghost write a book if that’s what a client needed. But that would cost a lot more money.”

"But you could do that!"

"I guess!"

"Anything else?"

"What did you have mind?"

"Something more personal."

"I'm not going to do your dishes. Or walk your dog. There are limits. So where is this stuff that you want me to type."

"Don't worry. I'm going to pay you well."

"I have another job that I have to do. So I need to get started."

"I just want to see what skills you have. Have you ever done movie scripts?"

"I have."

"So you can format them in the right way."

"There are computer programs that do that. I don't have any of them. But I can do all that on my own. Just set the tabs on my computer. It's pretty easy. In fact, I've saved the macros from a previous job. Do you want me to do a script?"

"You've never acted."

"Not really. I took some classes. That's how I got started typing. I took some acting classes. And I wanted to get into the business. I just needed the time. So typing made it easy. I could make my own hours. I was good at my job. I could get it done very easily. And I had time to go on auditions."

"You stopped acting."

"I wasn't that good."

"You're very attractive. Did you photograph well?"

"I was never happy with my photos."

"You're very stunning!"

"You're not coming on to me. I'm with someone."

"So you're comfortable."

"Huh!"

"Financially."

"Yeah. Why?"

"You said that you weren't making as much money."

"Not by strictly typing. It's the other things that put me over the hump."

"The other things."

"Yeah."

"The acting."

"I don't act anymore."

"You get by on the typing alone. I'm confused."

"There are the other things. The other services."

"You do those for money."

"Yeah."

"You do those for money."

"Sometimes a lot of money."

"But you are with a guy."

“What are you asking?”
 “I assume that he makes money too.”
 “Oh, yeah. Why all the questions.”
 “I just feel that you’re trying to tell me something.”
 “I am.”
 “And you do scripts?”
 “I do.”
 “Can you read?”
 “A live reading?”
 “Something like that.”
 “Is that the job that you brought me here for?”
 “Sort of.”
 “I don’t really do anything too weird.”
 “Weird?”
 “Nothing kinky or that.”
 “This is all straight stuff. A good read.”
 “That’s good.”
 “Do you get into the act? Or is a basic reading?”
 “I can act it out. But that is extra. We’re talking about more than a simple edit.”
 “You will do a little extra.”
 “For money. You have to pay me money.”
 “Not up front.”
 “After I do the job. I want you to be satisfied.”
 “If I’m not satisfied, I don’t have to pay.”
 “You have to pay me for my time no matter what. As for that little extra, I’ll waive that extra amount if I don’t satisfy you.”
 “But you aim to please.”
 “Let me see what you’re talking about, and I can give you a clearer idea.”
 “We are talking about the same thing.”
 “I assume that we are. I just need something in my hand. Something that I can look at. You have that, don’t you?”
 “I’ve got all the materials that you are going to need.”
 “I just need to touch it.”
 “Can I record this?”
 “On tape?”
 “No, on camera.”
 “That is going to be extra.”
 “But you will do it?”
 “Yes, but you have to pay me. This is going to get expensive. And you have to give me the video after you’re finished.”
 “What are you going to do then? Try to steal my script?”
 “What?”
 “I was kidding. So you’re going to perform all this for the camera.”

“I will. I agreed to.”
 “And I’m going to pay you a lot of money.”
 “You are.”
 “And you are going to be convincing.”
 “I’ll give you whatever you need from me.”
 “I want reality!”
 “I’m not sure if another person can give you reality. But I can make it appear real.”
 “But you are with this guy. You can make it real for him.”
 “That’s not the same thing.”
 “What if the script was really good, could you make it even more real?”
 “I have to see this script of yours.”
 “Can you do improv?”
 “I could. But that would really cost a lot. I would have to get credit for my work.”
 “Credit how?”
 “Legally.”
 “So this is all legal.”
 “We could make it that way.”
 “And I’d still pay you the money!”
 “You better!”
 “You sound so serious.”
 “This is my job. I’ve already been here longer than I planned.”
 “You are going to be well paid.”
 “Are you lonely? Are you looking for a friend?”
 “What?”
 “Are you looking for a friend?”
 “What kind of question is that. Is that part of the deal.”
 “The typing, the acting, the extra.”
 “I pay you, and you’ll be my friend.”
 “That came out wrong.”
 “So this is a service that you offer.”
 “It just seems that you are asking me here for more than typing.”
 “Yeah, the script, the acting.”
 “But I haven’t seen the script. You have it?”
 “I have to know that you are the right person for the job. I have to know that you have
 it!”
 “I’ve got everything that you need.”
 “I can’t tell by looking.”
 “But you said that I was attractive.”
 “I did. I just don’t know how that applies.”
 “By the way that you’ve been talking, you’ve made it seem that this is a trust issue. Can’t
 you tell by looking?”
 “It is a trust issue.”
 “And I said that you wouldn’t have to pay me if I didn’t satisfy you.”

“But that I’d owe you for your time. Is all this included in the price?”
 “We could include it depending on what you ask me to do afterwards.”
 “You’d have to show me a little more if I was going to trust you.”
 “I could show you more.”
 “But that would be for a charge..”
 “Right. I don’t want you to feel bad about any of this. We just have to be up front.”
 “I’m ready to pay. I just need you to do the job.”
 “And I was quite clear. I told you that there were some things that I just wouldn’t do.”
 “I’m trying to propose all of this in good taste.”
 “Great!”
 “Great!”
 “So there is a fee up front.”
 “I thought that I’d pay after you did the job. After I was satisfied.”
 “I’m going to be giving you my time. So I do need money up front. I can’t take all my
 time to do the job, and then have you tell me that you’re not going to pay.”
 “I thought that the payment was based on my satisfaction.”
 “It is. When you pay for that little extra! But there is a flat fee.”
 “I just need you to show me something more. Some kind of evidence of your work.”
 “What the hell are you watching?”
 “Just a movie?”
 “What is that shit?”
 “It’s something that I got at the video store?”
 “That is fucking perverse.”
 “I sort of like it.”
 “Have you ever thought of talking to someone?”
 “Like whom?”
 “A doctor!”
 “I don’t really have a problem. It’s just something that I got at the store. And I want to
 get my money’s worth.”
 “Don’t you ever read?”
 “I don’t like to look at words. I just like to speak them.”
 “The body is like a book. You just have to know how to read it!”
 “You keep staring like that, and no one is going to talk to you.”
 “Does this mean that we’re going together?”
 “You’re going to have to give me your credit card number.”
 “I thought that you really cared for me.”
 “I do. But everything has a price.”
 “But now the price has price.”
 “That’s part of the new economy.”
 “So everything seems to be worth a lot less.”
 “Or to put it in another way, it’s worth more than ever!”
 “So how do you manage that?”
 “Take it out of the market for a while.”

“What is the source of value, the source of desire, what is it?”

“A curl of skin that is sensitive to touch.”

“That is only the site of stimulation, not the it. What is it?”

“A twist of touch that is provoked by the flexibility of the mind.”

“So you are turned on by something more elemental.”

“I am no longer turned on by anything. Physical stimulation has lost all effect. Even attractive imagery. It is as if I have lost my nerve. I am a man without a pickle.”

The more intense stimulation is meant to resuscitate the body. To bring alive those parts of the body that have been rendered numb by a surplus of activity. The resting state is essential.

“It’s not going to work. His heart is no longer in it.”

“It’s never been an affair of the heart. It’s all about the mind. The core of the provocation.”

“It still requires some kind of stimulation. Almost direct. Like an electrode in the brain.”

“You are proposing something that primitive. We can make this happen with mind control.”

“The story is progressing in reverse. What we have to do is something that we have already done.”

“This sounds like one of those mind puzzles.”

“It’s more of a problem of geometry. Anything about the anatomy is really a problem of geometry. The twists and turns of the body.”

“What are we talking about?”

“A fundamental theorem of the universe. Like a black hole. This region that seems to draw in all the energy.”

“The universe is being turned inside out.”

“And the process begins again. It just has nothing to do with people.”

“That’s not how I understand. It occurs in entirely the opposite manner.”

“Evidently, the body is the source of all this power. It is a portal to the rest of the universe. Pleasure often causes the self to turn inwards. But this is a way to project the self way beyond the self. It is as if the self is finally able to return to its origins.”

“Space travel?”

“Psychic space! The self is able to occupy the psychic space for which it was destined. At first, we experience those things that are in our proximity. But the geometry of the senses open up a multitude of feelings within our surroundings. We project our inner states on the outside world. And vice versa. The next step is even more remarkable. We discover the realm of pleasure. This builds upon pre-existing enjoyable experiences. But the end result is more ecstatic and engages the full being. This is the launching pad for a total projection into the universe.”

“This sounds very male. A male anthropology.”

“It is just the opposite. Male pleasure tends to be focused in a literal fashion. Female enjoyment also radiates out from a localized region, but the waves are wider and more all encompassing. We have concentric circles that radiate out from a single zone.”

“And this power is available to all.”

“I am not sure if that is how it works. It may take special sorts of beings who can accept

the immense burden that comes with such a power.”

“How can we know?”

“I guess that we can ask. But asking such question could get you a slap in the face. You have to be sensitive when you investigate this matter.”

“I guess that you do!”

“Let me get this right. You are telling me that the female orgasm is somehow in touch with the fundamental vibrations of the universe.”

“Not all woman. But some can feel this calling. First as a vague sensation. Then as a deeper appreciation of her place in the universe.”

“You’ve got to be kidding. This is ridiculous. A mix of science fiction and new age religion.”

“I’m serious.”

“This is the stuff of trashy porn. It gives an excuse for this vague nymphomania. The body is simply trying to return to its rightful home.”

“It might not be far from the truth.”

“If porn wasn’t the home of such fucked up people.”

“You simply assume that all the girls are on drugs or have fucked up childhoods. They could just like sex.”

“Girls. I didn’t know that this was an argument about pornos. I thought that you were making a deeper argument about sexuality.”

“I was. But it all applies.”

“This argument about sex for sex sake is so weak. It’s all about people who can’t communicate with other to care about them in a deep manner. So they substitute this really intense experience to explain it all.”

“You can’t say that. Just because you can’t feel yourself, you object to such a feeling existing.”

“That’s like saying just my disbelief in the existence of ghosts is due to some ghost-envy with people who really can observe such beings.”

“Not at all. If you don’t believe, that is your problem.”

“So you are spending your time trying to find one of these ghost lovers.”

“Haven’t you had enough with castrating women? Now you’re looking for the super-female.”

“I didn’t say that I was looking. I was just describing something.”

“But if something so all-encompassing exists, wouldn’t your mission in life be to discover such a presence.”

“I’m not sure. As you say, it could be the very thing that is trying to destroy me.”

“But you believe in this power.”

“It’s mystical. We all have glimpses of it. This is what allows us to project an image of the outside world. And our pleasure is an effort to sustain this power in a more extensive way. It’s just that we ground the belief in the flesh. We get lost with the other person, the lover, in everyday matters. Our gesture towards the heaven becomes worn down.”

“If it’s mystical, why do you need all this mumbo jumbo about a sexual focus.”

“That is how the feeling is given to us in our natural state.”

“But it’s no different than what happens in meditation or in taking drugs.”

“Such a model seems more liberating. It dispenses with the limitations of the physical body. But the body is how we project ourselves in the world. “

”So what?”

“It retains all the geometric markings of the universe. So it is a projectable map.”

“Wow! You really have thought this through. It still has a ring of science fiction.”

“Yeah, it’s incredible.”

“It sounds pretty silly.”

There is nothing that he can do. This is not his story. It is hers. And she is willing to make the most of it.

“I don’t need you for this.”

“But I can bear witness.”

“You have up to this point. I love fucking you! But I want more.”

“You are seeing it so mechanically.”

“No, that is your problem. That’s why I can’t do this with you. You don’t understand.”

“You are so beautiful. Even like this.”

“All that you see is what enhances your phallic vision. I need to break that grip. You are holding me back. I need to liberate the body, to liberate the soul.”

“If the experiment works, she disappears from the earth.”

“No, it doesn’t happen like that!”

“But it is a story of loss.”

“Yes, it is!”