

Seduction by Frozen Pizza

By Pamela Slea

I poured his coffee, black, into one of my dad's crystal coffee mugs. The morning sunshine blanketed the dining room, through the coffee and the glass, calling attention to how weakly I'd brewed it. So I didn't have that much experience, ok? I don't drink the stuff. But as I watched him drink it, groggy but sort of *mature*, I made a mental note to start. The translucent brown liquid engaged his full attention, and he lowered his gigantic blonde head to the mug. His eyebrows were long and stringy like an old man's, going every which way, an unfortunate distraction from the rather small but distinctively blue eyes of Stephen. The senior. The football player.

He won't put sugar in his coffee because he doesn't want to betray the sweetness of me. He's crazy about me. Slept over my house last night when my dad went to Toronto for the weekend. My dad's been going away a lot, like pretty much every weekend, and it occurred to me on Friday during U.S. History that I've never taken advantage of my empty house! Hence – breakfast.

So here's Stephen with his coffee, bitter and hot hot hot, I don't know whether he sacrificed his tastebuds to the hot sauce I've watched him slather on his eggs like he forgot the lid wasn't on or if he just can't feel anything inside his mouth naturally (maybe some kind of birth defect), but it was an unGodly hot temperature, that coffee he put in his mouth.

I know because I reached over and tried to sip some. I must've reached a little too fast, or my hand was too shaky because the coffee spilled over onto my hand between my thumb and my first finger and Goddamn! To think that he puts that shit inside his mouth and enjoys it is a little strange if you ask me. Without a noise, (thank God) I held the hand out in front of me and tore over to the sink in the next room and I ran my hand under cold water for like a year until it stopped hurting so much. I tried to yell at him over the sound of the running water not to worry about me, but through the hallway and all the way back to the dining room, you can't really hear too well. My dad thinks having the most possible space in his house is the goal in life. Does it matter that there are only two

people living in it? I mean, at this rate it's really only one, he's gone so much. By the time I got back to the dining room, and the long redwood table, shaking my poor wet hand, he had left.

As I expected. He was so weird, because he couldn't handle it when I was gone, and yet he left me without saying goodbye. I think it's because he can't deal with the stress of the fact that I might not come back.

In fact, when he leaves me, I think he must just turn to stone. A granite statue right there in the middle of the football field with one hand over his longing heart, waiting for me to make him whole again.

Yes. He needs me. Loves me madly. Poor kid.

I got dressed and made a plan of action.

I beelined for the field where he's practicing. It's not a real practice, with the coach or anything, so it was safe for me to approach.

"Hello Stephen."

"Hello Sonia." His eyes were unusually blue as he peeled his spoon-shaped head out of his helmet and shook it. I ignored the scent that whished toward me from his wet hair beneath his helmet and rattled out my news:

"You've left your underwear over my house, but since I was doing my laundry anyway this morning, I've washed them and they are now in my closet. You can pick them up tonight and I will prepare dinner. Anything you want. I'm, um, good –"

I wanted him to see the double meaning there, so I paused for emphasis –

"– at cooking."

I looked down and looked up through my eyelashes like I'd seen from Lorrie Palmer. She says they always fall for that one. That thing about being good at cooking, by the way, was a gross

eggageration if not an outright lie. I've never actually tried cooking anything before, unless you count instant oatmeal as cooking. But my peers tend to want the frozen pizza over any of the other food groups, and I was counting on this to help with the ongoing seduction of Stephen. Not that I needed to do anything; he was wrapped so tightly around my little finger I hadn't had circulation in days and the doctors were saying they'll have to amputate.

Stephen was looking over his shoulder at his football friends. Too bad they can't possibly understand him, I thought. But that's why he has me. So that he can communicate with someone who's not an animal.

He looked back at me. He stood up very straight and closed his eyes with his vagabound eyebrows scrunched together, took a deep breath, and said:

“Sonia, I think we should talk about you coming here. I mean, I mean, you couldn't just wait for me to call or something?” He trailed off. Somewhere in that big, oafish body there are feelings, and one of them is frustration, and he's feeling it now. Why would he be angry? At me? Oh my God, if he was angry at me, for what? For washing his fucking underwear? For feeding him breakfast and letting him sleep with me – maybe even two nights in a row!

I got very close to him so that his neanderthal football buddies, wouldn't hear me, and raising myself up onto tiptoes, I looked into his big face, so close to his body, I could smell his sweat, and I realized that I had to make him want me again. I swallowed my rage, and squinted a little bit. Puckered some.

“Sonia,” he looked alarmed.

“We can make...” I looked down at the grass, smiled just the right shy smugness, and then looked back up at him. “Pizza.” I turned around.

“Sonia, wait, we should talk, right?” I half smiled at him over my shoulder and put an exaggerated sway into my hips. Tenth grade and loss of virginity to a senior means you get to sway your hips like a woman. And boy, I did.

And I could've lost it a long time ago, but I didn't.

There's this big carnival for the city every year in the fall, right after school starts, and basically every kid in junior high and high school gets dropped off there and we all get to run around and do whatever, because there's no adults or anyone. We had just started eighth grade. So it was a Saturday and it started getting dark by like seven o'clock, but it was still warm, and Lorrie Palmer and I went into one of the huge tents that gives out free candy if you take their pamphlet on their church or refinancing your home or whatever bullshit, and there was this one place that was giving out free balloons.

Helium balloons.

So we took a bunch of them and went to the clearing of yellow grass behind the tent and found out that if you inhale the helium upsidedown with your head between your legs and then spin around really fast, you pass out. It was the funniest thing I had ever done. The best was if you tried to talk, too, while you were spinning and your voice sounds really funny as you wake up looking at the orange and gold, darkening sky, head so heavy it pressed against the itchy grass with most of the world still spinning. My thighs were facing me in the way too short cutoffs.

I got up with wobbly legs and giggled. The street lights were turning on, which meant this was a good time to start going on the rides.

“Maybe we can meet some hot guys.” Lorrie said. She never looked at you when she was talking to you. She didn't smoke back then, but she still looked like she did. Perpetually looking over her shoulder and inhaling away from who she was talking to. She looked older than she was, maybe because you couldn't really see her, and she never had much of an expression. She seemed somewhere between bored and angry every time I saw her, pushing her bleached blonde bangs out of her face with resignation.

But the thing about hanging out with Lorie Palmer is that she knew all the older boys. I found out a while later that they were over her house all the time because her mom was the one that sold them all their drugs, but back then I didn't know anything. I was thirteen.

So we wandered over to the bleachers because somebody saw Lorrie and invited her over. I stood around, watched the lights of the ferris wheel going around and around and wished I had somebody to ride with. You know, a boyfriend.

So Lorrie came back to me after talking to these two older boys, and put something in my hand. They had wine coolers and she was drinking one. She insisted she never got drunk, but she gets in a good mood.

It was a square of plastic with something circular and a little slimy inside. It was too dark to read anything on it.

“What the fuck is this?”

“That guy Greg wanted to give it to you. The one with the black hair. He wants to fuck you.” She smiled her squinty smile and stood next to me so that we could look at him together.

He wants to fuck me? Me? The option had not entered into my thirteen year old head yet. I had gotten a few pecks from truth or dare, but the issue of sex had not entered into my life as of yet.

“Does he know how old I am?”

We went to the bottom of the bleachers and I took a look at him. He was tall and skinny, obviously from Lorrie's neighborhood based on his faded concert tee shirt and crooked teeth.

“He has a car.” Lorrie whispered.

He ended up asking me to the junior prom, and I would've been the only eighth grader to go, but my Goddamn mom wouldn't let me. Oh my God, I screamed and threw a fit over that one, she was always trying to control me, but whatever. When she told me I couldn't hang out with Lorrie, who is really my only friend, I just freaked out and called Dad. He found us an apartment together, and look, we just lived happily ever after, didn't we? He spends all week at the office and the weekends on “business trips” and I have this huge, cold, fucking shiny new house all to myself. Freezer stocked to the brim with frozen pizzas.

And Greg moved to Buffalo. So I ended up waiting two years before I finally lost my virginity.

So yesterday I got to Lorrie's house and the party had already started (whatever that means.) Before I was allowed to go, I always imagined that high school parties would be really loud - laughing, dancing, music – pure teenage fun! But the reality of them is just a lot of drinking, a little laughing, some drugs, and the same lame people that you hang out with every day.

But this time, the football team was there. Not the whole thing, I guess, but some of it, and I saw the back of his head floating above the crowd of red-eyed, smoking, big shouldered monster men that Stephen considered friends, and I decided to go for it. I stuck my lips out like Angelina Jolie and glared at him. If you glare at anyone for long enough, they turn around.

He turned in mid-smile and looked down at my lips. For a moment we were very serious, just looking at each other, and just when I was ready for him to embrace me, he said,

“Hi, I'm Stephen McArthur. Are you one of Lorrie's friends?” And he's smiling real big, like he just has no idea that I don't want to talk, I want to fuck.

“Yes,” I said, “we've been friends since fourth grade.”

So then we flopped down on the couch together and I start playing with his ear, and talk talk talk, Jesus Christ this guy can talk! I'm sitting there, pouting my lips, licking them, smiling just barely at whatever he's saying, until finally I'm sick to death of it (it must've been at least half an hour) so I climbed up onto his chest, and got right to the point:

“Look, Stephen, I don't really know you or anything, but my dad's gone for the weekend, so I have the whole house to myself. You wanna walk me home?”

It didn't take much convincing after that, although he told me all this bullshit about what his sister got for her birthday, what math teacher I should watch out for, and his family heritage on the way there.

So we got home, one thing led to another, and yeah, I mean, it hurt, but it's supposed to get better once you really get into it. That's why it's important to start early.

In the afternoon, after I'd washed my clothes and Stephen's underwear (together), I flopped myself down on the couch. The white leather stuck to the backs of my thighs and cooled me off. I knew he was going to call. I flipped on the television and tried not to think about the telephone. As soon as I stopped obsessing about it, I convinced myself, practice would be over and he would call. I knew he would.

So when the phone rang, I jumped out of my seat. I screamed, took a few deep breaths while I waited for the phone to ring a casual two more times, and then answered it like I was very distracted with something else.

"Hello?" I tried a very breathy distraction, like he had woken me up from masturbating or something.

"Honey? Sonny sweetheart, did I wake you up?" It was my dad. Ew. My Goddamned dad is calling me to check up. Nobody else calls me that.

"No."

"How are you?"

"Fine." Everything I say to him sounds like a swear when it comes out of my mouth.

"Well, had a good weekend?"

"Dad, everything's fine, I just said that. Jesus Christ." He was trying to get things out of me, but I'm not telling anything. I don't owe him anything. We stayed silent for another minute.

"Sonny, there's no reason for you to talk to your father like that." When he has something that he thinks will hurt my feelings he waits.

"Ok. Fine."

"Have you talked to your mother?"

"Have you?" He's such a hypocrite.

"Sonny, I'm sure she misses you, that's all. You don't need to hold a grudge against her."

“Who's holding a grudge? I just hate her. There's nothing to talk about. She expects me to be this cute, good little goody girl, so fine, if she can't accept me for who I am, fuck her. I don't need her.”

“Watch your mouth, Sonny. She's your mother.”

“She's your wife. What's the point.”

“We're getting a divorce, honey. You know that.”

Like I didn't know that. She lives across town and they hadn't talked in the nine months since Dad and I moved in. I didn't say anything because he gets so uncomfortable when we're silent on the phone. I love to torture him. What would he do if he found out what I did last night? Probably nothing. I hate that fucker.

Tonight Stephen will come over and we'll do it on Dad's bed.

“Sonia, I'm sorry I'm late, we ended up watching the football game, and they went into overtime.” It was almost midnight. He stuck his massive head in the doorway. “I tried to call, but no one answered, so I decided to come over instead-“

“*Get the fuck out of my house you fucking prick.*” The voice seemed to float over my head as I watched the lamp hit the wall and shatter across the living room floor with a rush of satisfaction and sound. The soft lighting of the living room yellowed the off-white walls and reflected off the shards of porcelain and glass all over the shiny wood floor.

“*Why are you here? Huh? You think you can just come over here and expect sex like I'm just another one of your cheerleader whores? I don't have to wait for you, I don't have to wait for anybody!*” I was holding a crystal vase in my left hand.

“Sonia, God.” He was coming at me with his hands up, like he was a cop about to apprehend a mass murderer. “You invited me over, dude.”

“I’ll smash your fucking face if you get any closer I swear to fucking God.” I held up the vase with quivering hands. It was heavy.

“If you don’t leave right now, I’ll kill you.”

“I haven’t even done anything! You’re just acting like you’re crazy, dude. Calm down.” He walked over and took the vase out of my hand. I watched the vase leave my hands and go back to the marble countertop.

“Alright, fine. Watch you step on the way out. I’ll mail your underwear.” I slammed the door and watched him look at the door through the eyehole, leave, turn around, almost knock again, and then get into his Neon and speed off. No way was I going to clean that shit up. Dad can clean it.

Really it’s too bad I had to break his heart like that.