

ROBOTICA, MINE

by Cody Weathers

Once there was a robot named Robert. He was created by a beautiful princess named Claire. Claire lived in a far-away land over the sea and past the mountains, ringed by ice and clouds where nobody ever visited or sent letters. In this far-away land, Claire lived in a castle with all her friends and their friends, and in the castle they all built shiny robots and less-lustrous shop-vacs and kitchen appliances. One day, Claire built Robert, and he began to live.

Robert had a robot friend named Chuck Delta-Two, and quite often they would go walking through the misty woods to their favorite rocks and discuss the ways of the big world. And it was there, at the rocks, that Robert asked Chuck Delta-Two --who was older and more learned-- about love.

"Chuck Delta-Two," began Robert, "have you ever been in love?"

Chuck Delta-Two said (with practically no hesitation at all), "Sure, lots of times."

"What is it like?"

"Have you ever had an oil bath?"

"Yes."

"Just like love."

And it was then that Robert knew --although he had already suspected it since Tuesday-- that he loved Claire.

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Dave drinks more than I, and I drink a bit. He has a way of whipping my thin hide, so I showed him some pages.

"These are robots?"

"That's right."

"I don't get it."

"It's for kids. It's about robots. Friendly robots."

"Do the robots have lasers?"

"No."

"How will they overthrow the world without lasers?"

"They're friendly. They like the world. They like kids. They're nice robots."

"I don't know, Sean. Robots: pretty lame." Dave was drunk. I'd been watching him drink and now he's drunk. Everybody likes robots. Drunk Dave.

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One night, when the castle was fast asleep, Robert awoke to a noise. A quiet sound. A secret sound. A guilty sound of near-silence and stealth whispered up the grand staircase like a single moth-bleat. He arose at once and dispatched to investigate, as was his program.

There, on the landing, outside the proud oak door to Claire's room, Robert saw a filthy villain. He wore a scary black mask and carried a long sickly dagger. His criminal hand closed precipitously on the polished brass doorknob of the bedchamber.

"Cease and desist!" commanded Robert.

"Stick 'em up, tin can!" The villain spun and darted at Robert, his dagger raised. Robert acted quickly, and his 500-gigawatt bromide lasers incinerated the villain into smoke and dust with bright beams, blue as ice, hot as stars.

As Robert collected the dust for the trial, Claire came out into the hall. Robert's stereoscopic visor documented the gentle curves and thoughtful arcs of her face.

"What's going on out here?"

"I discovered an intruder. I ordered him to cease and desist. However, he did not heed my warning and charged me with this crooked knife." Robert showed the cruel instrument to Claire then put it carefully into an evidence bag from his multi-dispenser.

"Excellent, Robert." Sarah leaned down and kissed Robert lightly on the cheek. "Please search the rest of the castle and re-establish the perimeter."

"Your command is my pleasure."

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"So do you think you'd be able to do the panels for this?" I took part of what I'd been doing to Sarah. She's an illustrator for children's books, and she gave me the idea to write one myself. Sarah is very talented.

"Well, I suppose I could. There's just some details you might think about."

"Like what?" Sarah is so literary. In fact, I met her in a bookstore, with her pretty hair falling down in plumb angles over a browsing book opened to an early and telling page.

"Well, particularly the lasers. That's kind of violent --I thought this was going to be a friendly robot."

"Oh, I'm not married to the lasers." I knew in the bookstore that she was the one. No one else should love that girl, I thought. No one else should be in her locket but me. Only me. One day, my scars in her heart.

"Maybe he could help some kids build something."

"That's so uncanny! I was thinking he could help some kids build a laser."

"Sean...."

"No, but see, it's OK. There are more villains, and the kids need protection. He teaches them to fish, like Jesus. Just with lasers and instead of fish attacking the town, it's villains. A whole bunch of villains."

She sighed. I know she doesn't always like my ideas. I didn't need the lasers. First I thought maybe Dave was right, but I didn't need them. I wasn't married to the lasers. I could make them fish instead if I had to. Sarah kept reading. I love her more when she reads --it makes me feel like she's inside me, reading me. Knowing me. "Uh-oh."

"What is it?"

"There's a typo. Here after the laser part, it says '*Sarah* leaned down and kissed Robert lightly on the cheek.'"

"Oops."

She smiled. "What? Do you have a little crush on me?"

Swinging for the fences, I moved and kissed her.

Her pretty artist's hands with flecks of paint and India Ink oily stains etched in the rivulets of her fingernails. Lip-to-lip, her pretty artist's hands on my chest. Pushing like you'd push a door to swing.

"Jesus, Sean."

"What?"

"What?' What do you think, Sean? I don't think of you like that."

"But you could."

"Just stop. Don't make me be a bitch about it."

"You could, Sarah. Kiss me. Kiss me back, Sarah."

"Just stop, Sean."

"I wrote this for you."

"Stop it. It's not even finished."

"It's not a typo. I was thinking about you when I wrote it. You *are* Claire. You're a princess --you're so beautiful, and I know I could love you and protect you."

She snorted, "What, with your 500-gigawatt laser? I thought you were just happy to see me."

"Don't be like that. You know I'm not married to the lasers."

"I'm sorry. But come on. Just stop. I'm flattered, but I just don't.... you know, I just don't think of you like that. Don't make me be a bitch."

"Kiss me."

"Cut it out, Sean."

"Sarah, I love you. I've loved you since that day in the bookstore."

"You don't love me. You just think you do."

"Don't tell me how I feel. I know my own feelings."

"Well, so do I, Sean, and I've told you where they stop."

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Chuck-Delta-Two was wrong: Love was nothing like an oil bath.

After Robert told Claire how he felt about her, she told him that she was sorry, but she couldn't love a robot. It seems there were some things that a princess needed that a robot could never provide, no matter how extensive his arsenal of attachments might be. Claire thought it might be best if they spent some time apart. She thought Robert just needed time to think it through and regain perspective. So she sent him to a village in the woods to help some children.

But the children were mean to Robert. They didn't see why they needed to build a laser. "We've always gotten by just fine without a laser, here by ourselves in the woods, thank you very much," they said. "Your 500 gigawatt laser looks like a penis," they mocked. Robert warned them about the danger, but it wasn't until wild fish ate one child by the river that they finally saw that Robert was right. But even then, it was if they somehow blamed Robert for not being able to save that child, so Robert found it to be a very hollow victory.

One day, while the children enjoyed a gruel break from their toil on the laser, Robert went into the woods. He hoped to find a clearing with some rocks --one that might remind him of home and Chuck-Delta-Two, whom he missed (even though he had been wrong about love). But the woods were wild in that part of the realm, and Robert had to travel further into the tangled, twisted trees than he had originally anticipated. After quite some time, Robert did find a clearing with some rocks, just like he wanted, but there was already someone there --a man with a dark wool robe and a white staff of carved ash. It was difficult to tell if the man was a villain, so Robert approached with caution.

"Hello Robert," said the man.

The man was not in Robert's files, so Robert did a virus check to make sure he had not been corrupted by the prankster children. The check was negative.

"Man with a staff, who are you? How do you know my name?"

"I'm The Magician, Robert. I know a few things, it's true. Please. Come over here beside me."

Robert was curious, as robots often are, so he did as The Magician asked.

The Magician took out a deck of cards. "Choose a card, Robert. Don't show it to me, and don't tell me which one it is. Then put it back in the deck -- still without letting me see which one it is."

Robert did as he was asked. He'd seen this trick before. His card was the Queen of Hearts.

"The Queen of Hearts, Robert?"

"Yes."

"Are you broken-hearted, out here in the woods, Robert?" This was not normally part of the trick.

"I do not know. I've been told that love is like an oil bath, but I have found out that the data is incorrect."

"You love Claire."

"Yes, I do."

"But she says she cannot love a robot."

"That is what she says. Are you a spy?"

"No, Robert. Do you think Claire would love you if you were not a robot? If you were a man instead?"

"Yes. I am a good robot. I am kind and I love Claire very much, and these are good things. But she cannot love a robot. Therefore, I hypothesize she would love me if the variable of my robotica were altered. However, I have been unable to formulate an appropriate experiment to support this theory."

"All you have to do is tell me that you want to be a man, and I will make you a man."

"I want to be a man."

And so The Magician turned Robert into a handsome knight in shining armor named Bob. Bob turned to thank The Magician, but he had disappeared. So Bob started walking back to the castle to test his theory. He walked out of the clearing and he walked through the woods, and past the sweating children, straining to lift the pieces of the great fish-killing laser into place. The children didn't even recognize Bob --they asked him very politely to help them with the heavy laser, but Bob knew that it was better if they built it themselves.

He walked over the road and through the fields. He walked through the day and a night and another day until it was dinner time at the castle. As he strode into the great hall, all of the ladies-in-waiting blushed and cooed, but he was only interested in Claire. He strode up to her throne and bowed in a courtly fashion. "Princess Claire of Remotia, I am Bob --a handsome knight. I have traveled here to your castle to announce my intention to serve you and love you for the rest of my mortal life."

And at these words of love, Princess Claire had to blush, for she was a lady-in-waiting at heart, and Bob was a truly handsome knight. But she did not coo, nor did she let her heart --though it fluttered like a flat, fuzzy flake of Autumn snow riding a plume of leaf smoke-- guide her tongue, for she was a princess, and had to always think of her subjects before herself. "Sir Bob, you are indeed a handsome knight, but you shall have to prove yourself worthy of me."

"And indeed, you are a wise princess and mistress. Naturally, I intend to court you and demonstrate my kindness and might." But Bob knew that he had won her. He could see the oil bath in her eyes.

And so Bob spent the next few months as Claire's personal bodyguard, and he slew many sneaky villains, and allowed her to confide all of the heaviness of her regal heart unto him, and Claire found him to be as kind and useful as her favorite robot, Robert, who mysteriously disappeared and was presumed to be the unfortunate victim of a wild fish attack. And Bob led the children of the village to a high hill, where they turned the laser on the river and killed the wild fish. And there was a great feast of wild fish, where Bob -- in front of the entire realm-- asked Princess Claire to marry him, which made her so happy, for it was what she hoped for every night when she drifted to sleep. And when the Spring came, they were married, which made the entire realm very happy, for they found Bob to be a really nice guy as well.

Together, they ruled Remotia for many years and had many healthy-toothed babies who loved to build robots. And many years later, when Princess Claire had lived a long happy life and was lying contently on her deathbed, Bob held her beautiful mechanic's hand and whispered gently in her ear, "Darling, it is I --all this time-- Robert the robot."

And she smiled and whispered back, "Of course it is. Did you think I would not recognize you?" Then she smiled and with her eyes locked into his real tears, died.

And Robert knew that love was warm and wonderful, just like an oil bath.

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I drank again with Dave because the drinking was good for me. He could drink and I needed to be beaten.

"I don't get it."

"He's a robot."

"Yeah, I get that. He's got a wicked laser."

"Well, he falls in love."

"Robots don't fall in love, man: they take over the world with lasers."

"Not this robot."

"Fine. It's stupid, but OK, let's roll with that and forget the lasers and the mutant fish."

"They're not mutant fish. They're like the fish in the Bible --with Jesus."

"What, like on people's cars?"

"Right, the one that eats Darwin."

"OK, that makes more sense, then. So why does she love him if she knows he's the robot? I thought she wouldn't love the robot. That's what I don't get."

"Well, it's just a physical thing. He's the one for her. He was made for her --she made him. But she can't love him because of how he looks. He's got to shed his robotica. Then she loves him."

"Why?"

"What do you mean, 'why?'"

"Why would she love him then?"

"Because now he's perfect. He's handsome, and he's got the soul of a robot. He's perfect. Her robot. The kind, good, caring robot who loves her and protects her. The robot she built to be there for her. The robot she wished for."

"Chicks don't dig robots, man."

"This is for kids, you know. It's about robots and princesses, and how kids have to learn to do stuff for themselves and not trust strangers or get too close to the water. You know, it's for kids: it's got to have a message."

"So the message is what? 'Nobody will love you if you're ugly?'"

"No man. It's about how you have to look inside to see true love."

"Sean, that's not what you're saying. If that was the message, then you should've had her change her mind about the robot. You should've had her go look for the robot because she missed him or something. You know? You should've shown how he was wrong: she *did* love the robot for all those things. I mean, the way it's written now, it's basically that women are shallow and they only like handsome knights. And they don't like robots, no matter how nice they are. Which is partially true because, like I said, chicks don't generally go for robots."

"Dave, man, you're cool and all --and don't take this the wrong way but.... you really don't understand children's literature."

"Whatever, man, but you know, I don't think you've got the message straight. I don't think that's how it happened."

"What do you mean 'that's how it happened?' It's children's fiction. I made it up."

"No you didn't. Claire is Sarah, and you're the robot, and that's not how it happened at all."

"You know, I don't necessarily write about myself. I do have an imagination."

"Imagination, shmimagination. This is about you and Sarah. What'd you do? Pull a little move on her? I mean, come on, man. You're only writing this book to dip your brush in the palette. So what? Did she turn you down? I notice the story's gotten a lot bitchier since the last time we spoke."

"Look, it's just a coincidence, OK. I knew that Claire would have to send the robot away from the start, OK? I am a bona fide children's author...."

"Sean, the last thing you wrote for children was your nephew's birthday card. You're a dough-slinger at Ric's."

"Look, I don't want to be making pies for the rest of my life. I've always wanted to write, and for your information, I think I'm pretty good at it."

"Fine. But she did turn you down."

"Yeah, so?"

"So, you think she'd love you if you looked different. You think she could love you if you explained it right. Tell me I'm wrong, Sean."

"Look, if you put it like that it's stupid, but I've really been there for her, you know? She was with Tom --this total sleaze-- and I was.... I was *there* for her, you know? 24-7. Calling me at two in the morning. There for her. She loves me, she just isn't thinking straight right now."

"So what are you saying? You think there's no difference between love and friendship?"

"Deep down, love is just friendship plus a little spark of physical attraction. You know, when the passion fades, that's what endures: friendship. I mean, it's got to be close, though. Close like me and Sarah."

"So you think she'll love you --she'll see it like that. You'll just argue and then she'll see it your way and POP! In love with Sean. That about the shape of it?"

"Haven't you ever grown to be attracted to someone?"

"As a matter of fact, I have."

"Well, that's what's going to happen. She's going to wake up to how much I mean to her, and then she's just going to become attracted to me. I mean, it's going to be hard, but if I wait, it'll be like Evolution, you know? I'm the best choice, so she'll have to want me. She has to want the best choice --it's a scientific fact."

"I see."

"What?"

"Well, it's just that, you know.... you and I are pretty close."

"You're my best friend."

"Well Sean, I've got to tell you something. See, I've got this little thing for you."

"Oh, shut up."

"Lower your voice, man. I'm telling you: I'm bi. And it totally fits with what you're saying. I mean, who says that the best choice for me is necessarily a woman? Might be. Might not be. You've got to keep an open mind. And I choose you."

"Cut it out, Dave. You're drunk."

"I'm not drunk, just drinking. Listen. I'm telling you: if you really believe this crap you're saying.... Well, you have to find out. We could be made for each other."

"Just stop it."

"I'll bet she said that same thing to you. Don't be like this. I'm 100% serious. Let's get out of here. Let's go somewhere."

"We are somewhere."

"Let's go to my apartment. Let's go or you are going to lose me, and also you're a liar. Let's go. This could be it. Look past the robot, man. The message is, you've got to look inside to find true love."

When I woke up, Dave was still sleeping. There was a light on in the kitchen, though. Dave lives alone, and I thought we must've left it on. I felt weird and had that flu ache in my back, that strange dull tension and the feeling that you're holding your body all wrong. I slipped out of bed and went out to the light.

The Magician was sipping tea. "I'm sorry, Sean; did I wake you?"

"No, the light. What are you doing here?"

He pulled out a fresh deck, flush and square, wrapped in cellophane. "I thought you might like to pick a card."

"Yes, I would."

He fanned them out casually. "Any card." I'd seen this trick before.

Jack of Hearts.

"Queen of Hearts?"

"Jack of Hearts."

"Sorry."

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Once there was a robot named Sean. He was created by a beautiful princess named Sarah. Sarah lived in a far-away land over the sea and past the mountains, ringed by ice and clouds where nobody ever visited or sent letters. In this far-away land, Sarah lived in a castle with all her friends and their friends, and in the castle they all built shiny robots and less-lustrous shop-vacs and kitchen appliances. One day, Sarah made Sean, and he began to live.

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After a week or so, Sarah called Dave to see if he had seen Sean. She presumed that he was still hurt by the confrontation in the apartment. Whatever. But it *is* a jungle. Just make sure he's OK. Call Dave. He drinks with Dave, they drink a bit; in a week, Dave should know. Whatever. Make sure he's OK, then give him his space. Men. Can they ever just like a girl? You confide in them, you tell them your secrets and they betray you. Every single time. You start to feel safe, you let your guard down and then blink your eyes and "Hello tonsils!" Men. Make sure he's OK, then be firm. Just friends. Just friends. I mean, can't a girl have friends? Does everybody have to be always sneaking around? I trusted him, and probably the whole time he wanted to kiss me. Forget kissing, he wanted to sleep with me. I can't believe it. All that sympathy. Fake. He faked it. He faked it with me. Make

sure he's OK, then zip. He's got to learn. There are some boundaries you just don't cross. When you're friends, you don't grab the sugar bowl. It's just impolite. It's just not done. Call Dave.

"Hi, Dave? This is Sarah."

"Hi. What's on your mind?"

"Look, I don't want to put you in a weird position, but I'm sure Sean told you about how he made a pass at me."

"I pried it out of him, yeah."

"OK. Well, anyway, he hasn't called me, and I don't want to stalk him or anything --I assume he's hurt and doesn't want to talk to me-- but, you know, we're pretty close, and I.... I'm sure I'm just paranoid. I just wanted to make sure he was OK. You know, lives and breathes."

Pause. "Hm."

"What?"

"Look, it's kind of complicated, but.... Sean and I kind of hooked up about a week ago, and I haven't seen him since."

"What? You what?"

"I just figured he got weirded out --it was his first time with a man. I don't know. I thought he just needed to cool down or something. I mean he left this solitaire game out in my kitchen like he's all *conflicted* and thinking about it and stuff. I don't know, I probably shouldn't have come on to him, but I'd been drinking a little."

"Are you gay?"

"Hey, this is attorney-client privilege."

"So maybe he's just mad or confused or something. He could just be avoiding us both."

"Maybe."

Pause. "Dave, I'm going to pick you up in half an hour. We might as well just swing by his place and make sure. We could send a pizza guy up or something to check."

"I'll be out on the street when you get here."

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After Sean told Sarah how he felt about her, she told him that she was sorry, but she couldn't love a robot. It seems there were some things that a princess needed that a robot could never provide, no matter how extensive his arsenal of attachments might be. Sarah thought it might be best if they spent some time apart. She thought Sean just needed time to think it through and regain perspective. So she sent him to a village in the woods to help some children.

But the children were cruel to Sean. Instead of building a laser like they were supposed to, they disconnected the battery to his own laser, lashed him to a tree and threw rocks at him. From sunup to sundown, they would come in shifts, throwing rocks at poor Sean until his shiny metal skin was dented and dirty.

But robots never grow weary of physical abuse, and every day, Sean wore away at the thick manila ropes that the mean torturer children used to bind him until finally he was free. He reconnected his laser and considered



incinerating the children, but he knew that somehow their failure to build a fish-killing laser would probably get them in the end, so he was merciful. "Better to let those children live a little longer in rock-throwing, unsupervised bliss," he thought.

Nonetheless, he was tired of the children, and he wanted to think, so he escaped into the woods. After much walking, he came upon a clearing, where a man with a white staff of carved ash sat on some rocks. Rocks that reminded him of home. Rocks that reminded him of Sarah and Dave-Delta-Two. "May I sit here?" Sean asked the man.

"Certainly, Sean."

"How did you know my name?" Sean worried that perhaps all those rocks to the head had damaged his CPU.

"I am The Magician," said the man, "and there are some things I know. Here, pick a card." Sean had seen this trick before, but he did as he was asked.

His card was the Queen of Clubs. He put it back in the deck.

"The Queen of Hearts?"

"No, the Queen of Clubs."

"Are you heartbroken out here in the woods, Sean?"

"Yes I am."

"You love Sarah."

"Yes I do."

"But she doesn't love you."

"She says she can't love a robot, no matter how fully-loaded his attachments are."

"But you think she could love you if you were a man."

"Yes I do. I am a good robot. A kind robot who cares about Sarah."

"Sean, I can make you a man, and you can find out if she loves you. All you must do is tell me that you want to be a man."

"I want to be a man."

And so the Magician turned Sean into a handsome knight in shining armor named Tom. Tom began walking back to the castle. He walked out of the clearing and through the great woods past the village, where the children were throwing their feces at each other instead of building the great laser that could save them. They didn't even recognize Tom --they continued to throw feces and laugh and sing their festive feces songs. Tom walked the rest of the day and a night and another day until it was dinner time at the castle.

As he strode into the great hall, all of the ladies-in-waiting blushed and cooed, but he was only interested in Sarah. He strode up to her throne and bowed in a courtly fashion. "Princess Sarah of Remotia, I am Tom --a handsome knight. I have traveled here to your castle to announce my intention to serve you and love you for the rest of my mortal life."

And at these words of love, Sarah sighed. "Tom, though you are indeed a handsome knight, you do not simply walk into the royal banquet, twitterpate the ladies-in-waiting, and make a pass at the Princess of the Realm. You don't even know me. How can you be so sure of yourself? What if we go out for a little while and I'm not such a good girlfriend? Don't you think you're maybe projecting onto me because I am a beautiful and powerful princess in a rich robot-producing country?"

"But, your highness, I love you. And you're wrong: I do know you."

"No you don't. You just think you do."

"Highness, do not presume to tell me my own feelings. I know my own feelings."

"Very well. We shall see. Perhaps it is just because I am recently informed that my favorite robot, Sean, has disappeared. Come sit next to me."

And so Tom spent the next few months as Sarah's personal bodyguard, but though he slew many sneaky villains, she remained distant, and never did confide all of the heaviness of her regal heart unto him. And one day, another knight named Phiskie or Gaspar, or something stupid like that came to court, and Sarah made much noise and her scented bosom did heave at every single goddamn quip he uttered, even though many of them made no sense whatsoever. And though this new knight did not seem to be particularly respectful or even interested in her --she was still a princess, I may remind you-- she nonetheless fawned and danced and blushed like a ripe rose, while Tom grasped the thorns.

And Sarah continued to make Tom take the feces-throwing children out in groups of five to search for Sean, her lost robot.

After many years, finally, Tom had had just about enough of this nonsense. He entered her bedchamber unannounced and found her under the most intimate attack of this "Sir" Phiskie. Always guarding Sarah's body, without hesitation, Tom drew his sword and cleaved Phiskie's disrespectful skull in two.

Princess Sarah was less grateful than Tom might have liked.

She drew, quite unexpectedly, a crooked dagger from behind her royal pillow and thrust it into Tom's heart.

"But Sarah," cried Tom, "it is I, Sean --all this time. You were to love me. We were to rule together and make happy, healthy-toothed babies. Surely you recognize me!"

"You are not Sean," she hissed as she rocked the cruel dagger tick-tock back-forth in his fainting heart, "Sean was a good robot to me. Sean was my friend. You have been nothing. You're not even good help."

And he slept, not knowing what love was like.

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Sarah browsed in a midtown book-nook full of plastic bags with handles and shiny boring books clamoring "Pick me!" like telemarketer puppies from deep-stained shelves too tall for pygmies. Her choice, opened early on for proof-of-concept, was old and misplaced. Forgotten, with cracked cloth covers. A story about love. True love and magic and the secret magnets of the human soul. She smiled and turned to the front to look for the publisher --maybe she could adapt this for children, get out of the paints and crayons game and take a stab at the next good thing. But there was nothing. Sigh. Just research, but buy the book for clues. She turned back to the story. A princess from far away. A handsome knight. Her hair fell down about her cheeks. Sigh. Two weeks since the last big fight with Tom. Two weeks and no talking. Some knight in shining armor. Two weeks and no touching. She considered the possibilities of the familiar call. A night, a little passion --he was good at some things-- tongue like a slide-whistle. Then the same reasons. The smell of other girls, the lack of concern, the empty conversations about sex, about the bump, about space and proximity. Screw Tom. "I need to meet a nice guy," she said aloud for emphasis. Boy, I need to lose ten pounds, she thought, brushing back her hair. And do something with my hair.

Tapping on her shoulder. A man in an inverness. An honest-to-goodness Sherlock Holmes inverness. He's got this deck of cards like a New York card master-deductor freakshow. "Pick a card." She'd seen this trick before. The pick, the look, the putting it back.

"King of Hearts?"

"Jack of Spades."

"I can do that."

With that, Sherlock Freak went a-freakin' in self-help. Freak. Weirdo. City of freaks.

Tapping on her shoulder. "Hi, my name's Sean, and I wondered what that book you're reading is."