

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

A little knowledge ...

BY CONOR POWERS-SMITH

When Allison came in, Jennifer muted the TV, and asked, “Well?” Allison shrugged. Only when she was seated on the sofa, under Jennifer’s smiling scrutiny, did Allison’s determinedly fixed expression give way to a wide grin.

Jennifer’s smile widened in sympathy with her roommate’s. She prompted, “Good?”

“Yeah.”

“What’d you do?”

“A movie. Walked around for a while.” They could’ve been picking up trash by the side of the road for all Allison cared. She heard herself blurt, “I really like him.”

“I seem to get that impression. But this was only date two, right?”

Allison felt like she’d known Kevin for years, her whole life, longer. Still, she had to nod. “But we’re going out again tomorrow.”

“So this is a thing now,” Jennifer said. “Officially.”

“I guess. I hope.”

“So, don’t you think it’s time we checked him out?”

“Jen...”

“He’s got a profile, hasn’t he?”

“Yeah. You pretty much have to now, or you’re some kind of weirdo.”

“So...?”

“I don’t know.”

“Allie, it’s not being nosy. It’s right there for everyone to see. It’s just being responsible. I mean, if this is going to be a thing, you owe it to yourself to go in with your eyes open.”

“I guess. But —”

“And admit it: you’re just the tiniest bit curious.”

Allison could hardly deny that. “Well... all right.”

Jennifer sat in front of the computer, Allison behind her, on the edge of Jennifer’s bed, craning her neck to see the screen. *Geno-Me* was slick and inviting, as befitted one of the world’s most popular social media sites. The stylized double helices bordering each page glowed their soft greens and blues.

“Okay,” Jennifer said. “The physical stuff’s locked out, unless he’s friended you.” She glanced over her shoulder.

Allison shook her head. “We didn’t talk much about it.” In her mind, she was reviewing the few dismissive words they’d spoken on the subject, trying to determine whether they’d established a tacit understanding that neither would look at the other’s profile.

Kevin had called it ‘a marginally more accurate horoscope’ but didn’t people sometimes read horoscopes just for fun?

“The personality stuff’s more fun anyway,” Jennifer said. “Okay, let’s see: H11Bβ, that’s cool. He has a good sense of humour?”

“Definitely.”

“But he has his serious side,”

Jennifer said. Her hand and wrist were busy working the mouse. As the cursor slid across the 23 pairs of rather cartoonish chromosomes on the screen, small sections lit up, boxes of text appeared beside them, and other sections, seemingly unrelated, glowed in sympathy. “And — Uh oh.”

“What?”

“HOPPER9, B2F11, WELLER-WYMAN and no 17J-CROSSHAIRS. That’s got stubbornness written all over it. Have you noticed that?”

“No. I mean, he didn’t want to see the movie I did. But I didn’t care.”

“Well, you better get used to that. He’ll be picking the movies.”

Allison couldn’t imagine a thing like that bothering her. Still, it was disconcerting to find a stain, however small, on her previously spotless conception of Kevin.

“And, look, Allie: NICKEL7. That’d be okay if he had JIB4, or the elongated DONALDSON-HARVEY, but, nope. That means highly confrontational. *Highly.*”

“Huh,” Allison said, remembering the business of Kevin shushing the pair of obnoxious teenagers who’d been talking during the movie. But wasn’t it admirable to stand up for one’s self, when the situation dictated? Then again, the kids hadn’t been *so* loud.

“Oh, Allie: 76UNION-Y-SAIL. Hostility towards authority. Look, that’s linked to oppositional disorder... all kinds of things... *crime.*”

Allison could come up with nothing to corroborate that, which somehow made it worse. She sounded unconvincing even to herself when she said, “But you can’t tell how these things are going to express themselves. Environment’s just as important. Right? Free will? What’s the saying? It’s a list of ingredients, not a recipe.”

“Yeah, but look at the ingredients. You can’t make a cake with... sawdust and broken glass.”



When Allison came in, Jennifer set aside her magazine, and said, “So?”

Allison’s stoical expression faltered before she reached the sofa. By the time she was seated beside Jennifer, her mouth was bent in a steep frown, and her eyes were welling up.

“It’s over.”

“Oh, Allie. You broke it off? It’s probably for the best. Considering.”

“He did.”

“What? Don’t tell me he didn’t like *your* profile. That’s some nerve, with —”

“He never looked at my stupid profile. But he knew I looked at his. He said he could tell right away, I was treating him differently. I could hear myself doing it, too, but I couldn’t stop. It’s like, when you know those things about someone... when you *think* you know...”

“What was it, some kind of trap? Remember, he has VIKING-F11? They list that as strategic thinking, but one of the corollaries is deceit.”

“It’s a trap, but he didn’t set it. The whole thing’s a trap.”

“Was he very... confrontational?”

“Stop it, Jen. It wasn’t even him we were looking at.”

“We got the wrong profile?”

“It was his profile, but not his genome. He posted a different one. One of those historical reconstructions they do.”

“What? Who?”

“Gandhi.”

Jennifer stared. Finally she said, “Well, I’d call that deceitful. I bet he has VIKING, at least.”

Allison stared back for a moment, then stood. “I’m going to bed.” ■

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