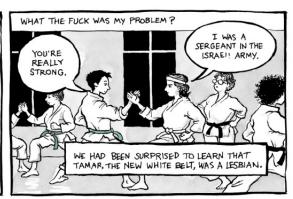


I ONCE HAD A LOVELY AFFAIR WITH SOMEONE WHO WAS KIND, BEAUTIFUL, SMART, INTERESTING, SANE, AND AVAILABLE.

BROKE IT OFF AFTER A FEW WEEKS.



EVEN THE STRAIGHT WOMEN AT OUR KARATE SCHOOL CULTIVATED AN UNADORNED, UTILITARIAN LOOK.



I WAS ALSO SURPRISED BY TAMAR'S FRANK EXPRESSION OF INTEREST. WE SHOULD DO SOMETIME.



HER VOICE WAS SONOROUS, HER ACCENT CHARMING. SHE HAD GROWN UP ON A KIBBUTZ.



MY GIRLFRIEND WAS OFF IN NICARAGUA HELPING THE SANDINISTAS BRING IN THE COFFEE HARVEST. WE HAP AGREED IT WAS O.K. TO SEE OTHER PEOPLE.



FINALLY, AT THE END OF MARCH, RECEIVED A SIGN FROM ABOVE.



TAMAR CAME OVER TO SEE HOW I WAS.



IN THIS WAY, ONE COLLISION SEEMED TO LEAD TO ANOTHER.



I DON'T DENY THAT PERSONAL VOLITION WAS INVOLVED, BUT SO WAS A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MOMENTUM.



WE BEGAN GOING OUT A COUPLE OF TIMES A WEEK. IT WAS ODD TO DO THIS WITHOUT THE COVER OF ROMANCE.



SOMETIMES I WOULD GO OFF AND MEDITATE BY MYSELF, AND I WOULD SEE IMAGES OF CHIQUITA...

... ONCE I ACTUALLY SAW HER GROWING OLD AND HER HAIR TURNING GRAY IN FRONT OF MY EYES...

ONE NIGHT TAMAR FELT HOMESICK AND WANTED ME TO WALK WITH HER BY THE RIVER. I REFUSED.



I KNEW I WAS BEING A CAD. SHE SENSED MY RELUCTANCE. WHY WASN'T I FALLING FOR HER? SHE-WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.



SHE ASKED THIS IN AN ENTIRELY UNASSUMING, UNAFFECTED WAY.



(I ATTRIBUTED TAMAR'S APPARENTLY COMPLETE LACK OF NEUROSIS TO HER COMMUNAL UPBRINGING.)

BUT OF COURSE I WAS UNCOMFORTABLE WITH HER BEAUTY, HER FLAWLESS SKIN, ALONG WITH HER CALM GOOD HUMOR, LEFT ME NOTHING TO LATCH ON TO.



AS SOON AS MY WAYWARD, INACCESSIBLE GIRLFRIEND BREEZED BACK INTO TOWN, I GRACELESSLY ENDED THINGS WITH TAMAR.



THIRTY YEARS LATER, I FIND HER IMMEDI-ATELY. SHE'S IN ISRAEL, TEACHING MEDITATION AND PRACTICING "ENGAGED BUDDHISM" AGAINST THE OCCUPATION.



I CLICK ON THE TIMY PHOTO AND MY SCREEN FILLS WITH TAMAR IN HIGH RESOLUTION. I REMEMBER HOW HER SKIN FELT. HER HAIR IS GRAY.



I CLICK AGAIN AND THE IMAGE ZOOMS. HER MAGNIFICENT HANDS, WHICH I'D FORGOTTEN, ARE NEARLY LIFE-SIZE.



I STILL HAVE THE BOOK SHE GAVE ME AS A PARTING GIFT. I FLINCH A BIT AT THE INSCRIPTION. NOT "TO US" BUT...



THE END