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He's Not Easy To Describe

by Sue Hitchcock

He's not easy to describe. When we were first introduced, I felt very awkward, but he, on the other hand, was the epitome of courtesy, though he seemed to have some difficulty understanding what I said. Still we seemed a good match and in due course I signed the contract.

I can't complain. He was very responsive when I learned his ways, and we settled into a comfortable relationship with a cosy routine. It was unfortunate that he couldn't initiate any changes, but I liked being in charge, though I might have enjoyed some alien input. After all, one's own experience is limited and goes round in circles sometimes.

Over time we all age and it was no different for him. He became slow and a bit unresponsive. It was when he began confusing "plates" with "plants" and "shops" with "shoes", I realised he might need some attention.

I telephoned for an appointment.

"What's his number?" the technician asked.

"Number? Does he have a number?"

"He has to have a number, or we can't help."

“Where can I find it?”

“Look in the paperwork. You’ve got your contract, or didn’t you register it legally? Call back when you’ve found it.”

I searched and found the flimsy document, folded in four in an envelope with my birth certificate. It had faded a bit and some of the details were unreadable but I could see no number. I called the repair surgery again.

“O.K. you can’t find a number. Just tell me what he looks like.”

Suddenly I realised his appearance wasn’t something that had ever mattered, all that I cared about was that he was mine.

“Well, you know how it is. They all look the same.”

“Not exactly the same, just think!”

“Aren’t all the parts made in the same factory?”

“Yes, but the design changes. Maybe you’ve got a date?”

“It was forty years ago.”

“Hmm, I doubt if we can do anything now. I can give you a number for the spare parts depot, but you’ll have to remember something distinctive, or they won’t be able to match him.”

So I stood him in front of me, he giggling at the unusual scrutiny, and checked him all over. There were distinctive marks – a dent in his foot, where we dropped the washing machine on it, when we were installing it and a smudge of nail varnish on one arm, where I had kicked out, when he tickled me while varnishing my toenails. He was pretty much like all the rest, but there was something in his eyes, an expression, which was just for me.