

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

Empty Chamber

by Mari Syrad

I saw a possible option in the supermarket. He was reaching for the milk at the back of the crate which was sensible and so I imagined him to be a suitable candidate. But then he didn't move out of somebody's way near the checkouts, which unfortunately meant he had to join the mounting pile of rejections.

There was another in the park. He had a dog whose fur he affectionately roughed up around the muzzle and then threw a stick for, further than the eye could see. But then he winked at a woman near the playground so I had no choice but to take him out of the running.

There is always something wrong with them, it seems. Crude clones of the original, the master template whose charisma tricked me for longer than it should. Maybe I'm too fussy, but I've made a promise I'll never fall for it again.

Three came close. They made me feel cared for, perhaps loved...maybe it could've been something. But how do you go from teacher, boss, therapist, to:

"Hey, wanna be my dad? I'll be me and you can be you but you have to love me unconditionally and promise never to leave. Got it?"

I never asked of course. The inevitable ensuing "No" would undoubtedly cause internal rupture and blood would pour from my apologetic mouth as I tried to reassure them I was ok.

When all hope was lost, I leaned into the powerful matriarch hoping she would be enough. And she was, more than enough to overflow the maternal chamber, but the other chamber remained empty, cobwebbed, and sad.

So when I saw an advert flag up one day just as I'd decided it was about time to step off a cliff, that family members were now available in my area and only for a reasonable monthly fee, my eyes went blind with hopeful tears.

I quickly went about creating a profile, sure to emphasise my twenty-five years of exemplary daughtership, and submitted it with optimism that after years of searching, I might finally find the father of my dreams.

Turns out, sugardaddies.com is *not* what it says on the tin, and is in fact a catalogue of wealthy old men who have to pay you to like them because no one else does.

So I'm back out in the world again, trying my luck in the library this time. I hover near the classic literature section waiting for him. Fifty-five to seventy-five, must be greying, funny to a flaw, and willing to hold on to me, hold on, please hold on and never let me go.