

OPEN SEASON

Anna Robertson

It turns out that my favorite position in an orgy situation is fetal. Tucked under one of my Grandmama's quilts, wearing nothing but noise-cancelling headphones, zipped up in a tent where no one can find me. I did not come by this information at birth. Nope. Not even in my college years, not even in my twenties when I was so single, I regularly made the prayer list at multiple churches. At the beginning of my 49th year on this earth, that's when I gained this knowledge, a little older, I suppose, than Eve was before her troubles began.

You can blame my husband. I do. He said that we could either go kayaking or to the swinger resort for my birthday. I chose the swinger thing because I was worried that I would get sunburned kayaking, and I have to be in a wedding at the end of the summer. So, I pulled out my lipstick and hair dryer and tried my best to not look like I'd been folding clothes all day. My husband got the childcare worked out, delivered the kids to their respective sleepovers with plans to pick each one up after they get back from church the next day. I dug out some lacy panties I got on sale at a Victoria's Secret at the Memphis airport seven years ago, smeared on some more rouge and off we went.

It really all began a few months earlier on Mother's Day. My husband, the one with the creative birthday ideas, informed me that his band had booked an eight-hour session at a recording studio in Athens. He was leaving me to take care of our two kids. He used to play guitar for me on Sunday afternoons. Sing songs about honeybees under an amber light we had picked up at the flea market. Now he's all headphones and computers at the dining room table until well after midnight.

Well, I said, "to hell with all that" and drove to Athens my damn self and deposited those kids at the very studio door where the pre sober Jason Isbell laid down the song "Outfit". I had an appointment with this Ayurveda Indian doctor in town who claimed she could help me with my problems related to the change. I sprung for the deluxe session out of spite. Three and a half hours later I had a whole regimen of exercises, oils, herbs, and enough ashwagandha to jump start a horse. It didn't even matter if it worked, but I

did everything she told me because after all it was \$350 out of our grocery budget. Well, come to find out, the combination of menopause and ashwagandha means it now takes a village.

Those first few weeks I stalked around the house like a dog in heat. My husband told me to stop that nonsense idea I had of trying to seduce our handyman. He said I should avoid sleeping with anyone where money was exchanged. Something about power differential and not wanting to be MeTooed in the contractor community.

“It’s hard enough to find workers as it is,” he said.

So, the weekend that he went to NASCAR, I went online.

I made a profile with no picture and in the about me section wrote simply, “I’ve never done this before. Please don’t murder me.” For my username, I thought back to that summer I spent with the Methodists in Brazil. I had blue eyes and blond hair and was twenty years old. Every time I walked into a room the men stopped whatever they were doing to stare. You see, blue eyes and blond hair are not a common combination in South America. The Brazilians gave me the nickname “Bread with Tomato,” because of my white skin and red flush from my Scottish ancestry. So that became my username. Well, would you believe it? On a dating website, “Bread with Tomato” also means “pussy.” Within the hour, I was wading through a cesspool of offers to squirt mayonnaise on my tomato and even worse.

The thing about online dating is you have to show the goods upfront. Before long I realized the no picture thing wasn’t going to cut it. But here I was with this new lust in an old, ungroomed body with C-section scars, fat rolls and a very analog vocabulary for dirty talk. So, I figured I might as well take my naked pictures down at the creek in front of the blooming mountain laurel, and of course in doing so, almost dropped my phone in the creek twice. Once I accidentally called my mom. She was busy baking a casserole for her acupuncturist, whose husband had just killed himself, so she didn’t seem bothered by what I may or may not be doing, thank the Lord.

It was slow at first. One guy claimed to be a sapio-sexual, that’s someone who is sexually attracted to highly intelligent people, such as myself. But he proved to be heavy on the sapio and light on the sexual, so that didn’t go anywhere. One guy sent me a two-minute video of himself in his bathroom

touching himself, but all I could focus on was the child-sized turd curled up in the bottom of the toilet in the background. Then there was the guy who boasted of having “bio-hacked” his penis, such that the extra blood flow provided extra pleasure for the ladies. Once I figured out that his penis was not a robot out to hijack my digital footprint upon entering me, he had already left town to go back to California.

A decent candidate eventually emerged, and by decent, I mean one that I could not immediately predict his mode and means of murdering me should we ever meet in person. The message simply said, “The only thing I’ve ever murdered is a tomato sandwich.” Well, a shared love of tomato sandwiches seemed harmless, so we began to chat on a Friday and by Sunday he had me on Snapchat. If you are wondering what Snapchat is, let me tell you, it’s a very unsatisfactory way to have orgasms with strangers.

But tomato sandwich turned out to be a soulful good ole boy from just across the state line, where the mountains are a little taller and the air a little cooler. He smoked his own trout, butchered his own hogs, and canned his own vegetables. We first talked while I was lying on my porch swing, all sweaty and taking a break from mowing the grass. He told me that a woman who mows the grass is sexy. He was tending a burn pile in his yard and drinking a Budweiser. I asked him if his shirt was on or off and he said off. I side-eyed my own derelict pile of limbs that had been sitting in the yard for months, fueled by the summer sun, waiting to be ignited.

Before long we were running those forest service roads in his jeep, lying naked on the creek bank, and sharing post coital cigarettes like something out of “Splendor in the Grass.” We regularly found things to argue about just so we could have make-up sex. The kind where my body would have its own little chemical reaction of heat and sweat and cool all in the span of about 4 seconds. He just loved that about me. And we had plenty of material for that routine. I’m a liberal. We were just far enough apart that we didn’t know any of the same people but just close enough for the night rain to hit his mountain and mine at the same time.

In the meantime, my husband, the one most excited about this new arrangement, was having a time finding himself a girl. I assumed he would have had a stable of women’s names on the ready. After all, he spent most of my nursing years chasing tail down in Atlanta when he thought I didn’t know. Back when having my way with him meant having to put the baby

down, and we all know how that would have ended. But they say it's different for men in this situation. So, I let him percolate in his own poetic justice for a few weeks while he had to watch the glow of that good ole boy spread across my body like the ripening of a piece of fruit.

And that's what got us here, slap dab in the middle of the Georgia wilderness at an RV Campground and Resort "committed to providing discreet and adult-oriented fun for couples," among a bunch of people who resemble fans at a Southeastern Conference football game minus the clothes. A buffet of crockpots line the pool area filled with pulled pork BBQ, macaroni and cheese, baked beans, and a tray of devilled eggs. Not exactly the food you want to ingest before engaging in the sins of the flesh but that didn't stop me from eating like I was at a Baptist funeral. I even got the recipe for the banana pudding made by a nurse from Hickory, North Carolina.

The only one worth fooling with, in my opinion, was the DJ. He sauntered around the pool in nothing but a cowboy hat and boots, all chiseled abs and V-shaped torso, looking like he had a lot to offer if you know what I mean. But sadly, he had to work. Apparently, the job of DJ at the swinger party is *very* important. I mean, it's not like there's a button you can push to put that shit on auto-play for say thirty to thirty-five minutes. Well, I just took my naked self to the dance floor and moved with the music, occasionally making eyes at him like "see what you are missing." In the meantime, my husband found himself surrounded by three of the sweetest women you've ever met who took him over behind the hot tub, and from the sounds of it, did everything but fry him a plate of chicken.

Once the shots at the bar dwindled down to nothing but spiked pickle juice, I figured it was time to turn in. The few men left at the party watched as I sauntered down the road to the tent, each one hanging a little further back at a distance like a string of stray dogs hoping to be fed. I collapsed on the air mattress that was starting to deflate.

As I lay here waiting for those Delta-8 edibles from the dispensary to kick in, rain is starting to spatter on the nylon roof. I hear a woman's moans coming from the swing bed just up the hill. She is the third one to use that spot. It's then that I remember the headphones. If only they connected to my phone, then I could listen to Tyler Childers. That's what the good ole boy used to play for us.

Once he started sending me pictures of his garden, it got personal. I'm a person who tends to my tomatoes better than I do my children. Blooming elderberries and pictures of pole beans climbing up bamboo teepees woke me each morning with sweet messages about what the weather was supposed to do that day. He would remind me to go to bed each night because he knew I never got enough sleep. He sent a picture of a butterfly bush that he said sprang out of the wood ash from his consummated burn pile. That's when we started looking each other in the eye while doing it. That's also when his leaving became more abrupt. He had to get back to that wife of his. The one he always had to pick up dinner for on the way home. The one who had left the bed so cold that he had to come find me on some website.

It was around the time the jewelweed started blooming that he told me that she had started coming to him again. He said that they were "working things out," and all of that between us would have to end. He said that I had softened him up, made him better, and she had taken notice. I bet her body doesn't have its own chemical reaction to his touch. I bet he never told her about me, but she suspected. And now they're all tucked together, silently forgiving each other for things they can't even put to words. Well, good for them.

I wonder what's taking my husband so long. He never takes that long with me. Maybe those sirens knocked him unconscious, and they are all piled up in some naked, twisted hill of flesh and breath. The rain is coming down harder on the tent. The drops are getting louder and starting to spit through the material creating a misty halo above me. I shift on this artificial bed that continues to lose oxygen, sinking a little lower into the sticky plastic that's starting to cling to me on each side. By the morning, I will be deep in between the folds, trying to claw my way out.

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The art that appears alongside this piece is by GRANT RAUN.



[last](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[next](#)

