

Fast Food Fiend – By Lydia Pejovic

“I’ll come out and say it with my chest – fast food isn’t appealing to me anymore.”

“Nahhhh, man, you’re lyin’.”

“No, dude, I’m serious!”

She tapped on the brakes, chuckling softly as the streetlight ahead turned yellow.

“I don’t believe you, Amanda.” He said from the passenger seat, smirking. “You’re the junkfood junkie. The grandmaster of the Gordita. You can’t give up your throne now!”

“You’ll just have to see it to believe it. I’m past those days. All this delivery stuff I’ve been doing has me burnt out. I just want a nice home-cooked meal.” Amanda said, craning her neck back to check on the goods.

The family feast of Chinese food was stretched across the backseat, unbuckled like an unruly child. Whoever Melissa F. was, she had ordered six containers of everything: white rice, chow mein, orange chicken, kung pao chicken... The whole nine yards. Amanda had enlisted Matt, her friend from college, to be her ride-along buddy for delivery this week. She usually got behemoth orders like Melissa’s, and she could always use help bringing them to various suburban front doors. Amanda had offered to give Matt a small portion of the tip money for his efforts, but he declined. Matt had been up for helping her for the past three days without receiving anything in return. Amanda was secretly happy he didn’t want to divvy up the tips; large deliveries always brought home the bacon, and she needed all the cash she could get. Maybe he knew that. Either way, it was nice to have company when the weather was so gray and depressing.

“Man, I’m bummed you’re done with fast food.” Matt said, the half-smile still resting on his face.

“Yeah, why?” Amanda replied, easing on the gas as the light turned green.

“I wanted to take you out for some greasy dinner tonight.”

Amanda’s grip tightened on the steering wheel. So much for no payment.

“Matt, you’ve already been going on my route with me for free and — I just think you don’t...” She began.

“I want to pay for it. You never let me do anything for you!” He argued.

“You’re coming along with me for free! Of course you’re doing something!”

“Amanda I – I just want to take you out.” He admitted.

The two sat wordlessly. The engine hummed underneath them.

“Uh... Maybe.” Amanda said awkwardly.

Matt shrugged and pulled out his phone and pouted. Amanda glanced over and saw him stacking bricks on a Tetris knock-off app. She stayed silent and focused on the GPS, which told her to take the next right into a guard-gated neighborhood. It was named “Eagle Residences” and had gaudy silver gates adorned with lion heads and intricate ironwork. There were cornucopias hung underneath the lions, and long banners with hanging orange, red, and yellow fall-themed leaves. There were even small paper turkeys taped on the door of the guard hut. A stern man in a black bomber jacket walked out of the hut and motioned her forward with a gloved hand, gesturing for her to roll down the window. As the window lowered, she felt a cool November breeze smack her cheeks.

“Who are you here to see?” The guard asked, analyzing Amanda’s beaten up purple Saturn. She felt severely out of place.

“Uh... Food delivery for Melissa F. at 7652 Happy Glen.” Amanda replied, clearly reading off her phone.

“What does the F stand for?”

“I don’t know.”

“How do you not know? You’re here for her.”

“Dude, I’m just the delivery driver.”

“Tell Melissa to call the front gate. I can’t just let anyone in.”

“I can try but—”

“And who’s this guy with you?”

“He’s just helping me deliver.”

Matt waved glumly at the security guard.

“Just call Melissa.”

Amanda sighed and pulled up the contact feature, knowing that Melissa probably wouldn’t answer. These people never did. People like her just sat in some obscure spot in their McMansion, somewhere useless and bougie like a parlor or a playroom, and waited for the fast food fairy to appear. If it wasn’t the food showing up at her door, it would be a house cleaner, or a gardener, or the pool cleaner. It didn’t make a difference who came in and out as long as they were completing their allotted task. Melissa would probably see the missed call from Amanda

three hours later and add a dollar to the tip with a comment that said “For the gate troubles : - ) LOL.” The guard went back inside his little hut and sat disdainfully on his wheely chair. The phone rang hopelessly, leading straight to voicemail.

*Hi, you’ve reached Melissa Farner. I can’t get to—*

“Her last name is Farner!” Amanda cried. “Totally slipped my mind. Sorry.”

The guard stared at her blankly for a moment. He grabbed a paper list from his desk inside the hut and searched for the name.

“Fine. Go ahead.” He said, clearly defeated as he scribbled something on his list. Probably Amanda’s license plate.

The gates of Heaven opened up, gracing Amanda and Matt with a brief entrance into the pinnacle of domestic luxury. She drove down the unnecessarily wide streets and parked in front of Melissa’s house. She had a yard sign that said “Gobble Gobble!” and a life-size blow-up of a pilgrim sitting at a table with fork and knife in hand. Alright.

“Matt, let’s take this to the front door.” Amanda said, putting the car in park and unbuckling her seatbelt.

“Nah, I’m good.” He replied, crossing his arms defiantly.

Amanda sighed, slumping over the steering wheel.

“What is your deal, dude?” She demanded.

“All I asked was to take you out to dinner.”

“Matt, please! It’s not like I said no!”

“It’s not like you said yes, either.”

“I’ll say yes if you help me deliver this.”

“Really?”

“Yes, Matt, and it’s freezing, so I wanna get it done fast.”

The two locked eyes, daring each other to make the first move. Matt gave in with a sly grin and unbuckled. He started unloading the Chinese takeout, stacking it haphazardly on Melissa’s doorstep. The two made multiple trips, racing against one another to see who could get out of the cold first. Amanda jogged back to the car as Matt placed the last of the takeout. He rang the doorbell and pulled his coat tighter. Amanda hopped in the Saturn and locked the doors,

snickering to herself. Matt strolled back, unaware of his fate, and jiggled on the handle as she fired up the engine.

“What the hell, dude?” He shouted, pounding his fist on the glass.

“Have your greasy dinner with Melissa!” Amanda yelled back.

“I left my Hydroflask in the cupholder, man! Let me in!” He screamed.

Amanda peeled out of the neighborhood, leaving a dumbfounded Matt standing in front of Melissa’s house. In the rearview mirror, she could see Melissa, donning a velour tracksuit, standing in the doorway with wide eyes. Matt turned around and gave Melissa a small, sheepish wave, then started sprinting after the car. The pilgrim still sat motionless in the front yard, fork and knife in hand. At least someone was enjoying a nice home-cooked meal.