The Texan Chain Reaction Massacre

by medusa20

Summary

Sheldon decides it's time to take the next big step with Penny.
Chapter 1

On Sundays, Penny picks the movie and I get chocolate pudding- the best pudding ever-as a consolation prize. It's a very satisfactory arrangement especially since I was expecting Jello Cook-n-Serve. However, as with all things Penny, my expectations were far surpassed. The pudding I get is made from scratch using a Hershey's cookbook recipe circa 1933. In my life, I have never experienced such chocolate intensity; it's practically sinful. The first time I ate it, I told Penny I loved her. She really has a way of making me behave contrary to my usual paradigm.

This Sunday, we watched the BBC version of Pride and Prejudice due to Penny's insistence that I, in some ways, remind her of Mr. Darcy.

"Seeing as I am not British, do not own a palatial country manor, nor will I ever ride a horse, your comparison is without grounds." I informed her. Her response was to snort at me. Endless hours later, Mr. Darcy makes his proposal to Elizabeth Bennet. Penny chuckled into my shoulder.

"Why are you laughing?" I asked twining my fingers into the blond curls at her neck.

"Because that is exactly how you would propose." Penny giggled. "You'd point out all the flaws and detriments and then be baffled by the rejection."

"Assuming I were to propose at all." I said tartly. Penny pushed herself up to look me in the eye.

"You don't want to get married?" Her tone implied I had just rejected my quest for the Nobel Prize.

"I never thought much about it." I replied honestly. Penny seemed to shrink into herself then picked up the empty pudding cups and hustled to the sink. Penny cleaning is never a good sign.

"Have I said something wrong?" I was disappointed that I had to trot out this inquiry once more; I had been on such a successful streak- one whole month without a verbal gaffe.

When Penny and I began our romantic endeavor, I must have asked that question or some variation thereof endlessly. Luckily, I am a fast learner and quickly picked up on her body language that indicated when I crossed the line. I also learned(painfully) that comments about her weight, hair or menstrual cycle are never welcome. Now, I am once again inquiring about my shortcomings.

Penny finally answered me. "No." she said stiffly.

"Are you upset because we have not engaged in any amorous physical contact this evening?"(coitus is a strained topic with us). Her response was to slam a pan in the sink. That, I know, isn't good. I rose from the couch but stood out of her arm's reach.

"Penny, we agreed in our contract that you would always verbalize any real or imagined slight I may have produced. How else am I to understand?" She faced me, her green eyes seemed overly bright, cheeks flushed.

"I'm just surprised you don't want to get married."

"That's not what I said." I clarified. "I said I never thought much about it."

"Same thing." she muttered.

"It most certainly is not. That's like saying the spin of entangled particles and non-entangled particles
will be the same simply because they are particles when Bell's inequality experiments prove otherwise."

She pulled a face, "Just forget it, Sheldon."

"I can't. I have an eidetic memory."

Penny groaned and flung herself back in front of Mr. Darcy. I stood behind her couch trying to figure out a way to ease the tension between us. Our relationship is and always will be contentious to some degree but we try to keep the peace on Sundays.

"Penny, are you harboring doubts that I love you?"

'No, Sheldon." She sighed. "You tell me everyday at 10A.M." I sat next to her,

"Then I am at a loss." She wove her hand into mine.

"Don't worry about it, Moonpie. Sometimes, I act like a girl." I pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

"I love you, Penny."

"Why, Dr. Cooper, you're twelve hours early." she snuggled closer into me.

"What's life without whimsy." I replied.

SHELDON'S JOURNAL- ENTRY 1

Stardate:312486.37623668194

"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of good fortune must be in want of a wife." Jane Austen Pride and Prejudice

These words have woken me out of a very satisfactory REM cycle. I'm certain their appearance in my subconscious is due to the movie and conversation I had with Penny. It is true I never considered marriage but, then, I never considered a girlfriend, not eating pizza on Thursdays or boxer shorts either.

But marriage?

I'm not opposed to the institution though my parents were a poor example of wedded bliss. Meemaw, on the other hand, always spoke highly of Pawpaw(who died when I was an infant). Meemaw stressed the importance of a good life partner. That one person who was meant share your secrets, embrace your faults and compel you to become a better person. Upon reflection, Penny has been that for me since the day we met.

I don't want to imagine my life without her. She fills a void that my relentless pursuit of science never could. Even my research has shown tremendous growth since our relationship began because my medial insula and anterior cinguate now have Penny's smile to occupy them.

Clearly, the disruption in my sleep indicates that marrying Penny was in my subconscious and not as farfetched as I indicated to her this evening. She is my Bohr magneton, the yin to my yang. Penny is the answer. Always.

The next morning, I review my journal entry. I have experienced no change during the night nor do I have a desire to retract any of my statements. I reach into my sock drawer to pull out my most intricate Japanese puzzle box to date. Sadly, I have it opened in twenty seconds. What a
disappointment.

Meemaw's engagement ring drops into my palm. Once arthritis began to twist her fingers, she gave it to me claiming my brother would only hock it and Missy would probably pierce her tongue with it. It is the only item of value my family has(aside from my mind, of course). Mom's engagement ring had been pawned long ago to buy us shoes and keep our roof over our head during one of my father's prolonged absences.

"You'll know who to give it to when the time is right, Shelly." Meemaw slipped the ring off her finger.

Whom, I corrected silently never daring to do it publicly.

"I know she'll be as special as you and you'll make her as happy as Pawpaw made me. You are so like him."

If I believed in such nonsense, I would swear Meemaw possessed the gift of foresight.

The ring instantly catches the light coming through my window. The center stone is round and a carat and a quarter; it is flanked by two marquise shaped baguettes set in white gold. What makes it truly unique is the center stone was cut using a "miner's cut" which is no longer employed. I picture Penny's hand. I shall have to get it sized since Meemaw's hands were bigger.

"Sheldon!" Leonard called from the living room, "Get a move on or we're going to be late."

I pocket the ring, grab my messenger bag and head off to solve the mysteries of the universe which include how to propose to Penny and how to tell Leonard.
Sheldon's Log

Star Date : -312483.68807077623

The Internet is a mass of useless information. I spent my lunch hour executing endless searches for proposal ideas. Most were nauseating at best while the rest were so saccharine that Penny would be laughing in my face before I even reached the phase of being on bended knee. In my opinion, the bulk of the ideas offered seemed like exercises in frustration designed to annoy one's beloved rather than make her swoon with delight. For instance, how is having a skywriter write 'Will you marry me?' supposed to be romantic? What if the weather conditions won't suit? What if Penny refuses to look up? Am I supposed to say "Look! Up in the sky!" Then she would really think my comic book fantasies had spun out of control. Another site suggested I set up a treasure hunt. Ridiculous. Penny's threshold for such activities is shockingly low. I could hide the ring in her apartment but then we'd probably be dead before she ever tidied up enough to locate it. I immediately ruled out any idea that involved food, fearing a choking hazard. As for enlisting the help of one's friends? Somehow, having Raj, Wolowitz, Leonard and I each hold a sign bearing a part of the phrase "Will you marry me?" seems over-complicated and also like we are from Utah.

Fortunately, Penny and I are not sappy nor do we partake of displays of public affection. Imagine my relief when that was determined, as I have a hard enough time with private ones. I was concerned that she would miss the more "traditional" indications of affection (flowers, chocolates, poetry, handholding). When I asked her, she wrinkled her nose in distaste.

"Those things are nice," she told me." and I wouldn't reject them but.." Penny stood on tiptoe to press a kiss on my neck just below my jaw and smiled when I shivered. "It's more important to me that you always get me an extra dumpling and.." a longer kiss placed on the same spot; my hands clenched. "You keep me in adhesive ducks and have my coffee ready for me and.." Her arms encircled my waist and she placed those delicious strawberry scented lips over mine, "You never stop letting me do this."

I honestly don't remember what happened next. Well, I do but it wouldn't be gentlemanly repeat it here.

On Tuesday morning, I told Leonard. I knew it wouldn't be easy but he had to drive me to the jeweler's. He wandered into the kitchen just as I had finished preparing both his and Penny's coffees.

"Good morning, old chum." I greeted pleasantly. "Butterscotch scone?" Warily, he took one and his mug of coffee. I miss the easy give and take of our relationship prior to my involvement with Penny. It is as if we have switched roles. He upholds the roommate agreement but he is aloof and doesn't spend as much time at home like before. Penny has told me to give it time but I am about to deal our tenuous relationship a formidable blow.

"Leonard, I need to discuss something with you," I began without preamble. He raised his eyebrows, sipped his coffee and waited.

"It is about my relationship with Penny."

"Sheldon, we agreed not to talk about that." Leonard took a bite of scone.

"It is a matter of great importance to my future happiness." I stressed. Leonard sat quietly then...
jumped up yelling,
"I am not discussing sex with you."

"For heaven's sake," I chided. "Not everything is about coitus?"

"Because I am not homo novus." he taunted.

Keeping a lid on my annoyance with him, I took the ring box out of my robe pocket and placed it on the island between us. I observed Loeanrd's reaction carefully. He stared wide-eyed at the little box.

"Why, Sheldon," Leonard batted his eyes, "I'm flattered."

"It's for Penny." I informed him, baffled by his confusion.

"I know that!" He barked then tentatively, "Is it what I think it is?"

I nodded. Leonard picked up the blonde wooden box but didn't open it. He placed it down rather forcefully then vomited into the sink. I was stunned- I had just disinfected that sink yesterday. I certainly hope Penny doesn't have a similar reaction!

Leonard remained with his back to me, shoulders tense.

"Don't you think this is sudden?" his voice was gravelly with vomit and misery.

"I've known Penny for three years."

"You've only been dating for six months." he pointed out.

I crossed my arms, "I see no difference other than our being more overt in our physical expressions..."'

"Stop! Stop!" Leonard waved his hands in the air. "Have you decided how you're going to do it?"

Apparently, we were trying a different tactic.

I beamed. "Yes. Thursday is Anything Can Happen Thursday and I am taking her to Celestino on Lake Avenue."

Leonard peered at me over his glasses and waited. "That's it? A fancy dinner and then you'll propose."

"What more do I need to do?" I was perplexed.

"Sheldon, asking the woman you..." he paused here swallowing noticeably. Bile, perhaps? "...love to marry you is supposed to be special. She needs to have a good story to tell her friends and family. It has to be memorable."

"It will be because I am asking her."

Leonard sighed, "You don't get it, do you? Going to dinner is standard. There's nothing unique about it."

I finished my All-Bran. "So you're saying that Penny will reject my proposal because it doesn't involve skywriting or singing telegrams?" No wonder their relationship didn't work. Leonard lived
by romantic cliché; he had no sense of who Penny was.

"All I'm saying, "Leonard began, "is that getting engaged is one of those watershed moments women look forward to. It should have some significance to it."

Now I was angry. I flipped the ring box open and presented it to him. The smug expression on his face vanished.

"I never thought I would love anyone more than Meemaw. " I told him my voice stiff with indignation. "This is her ring. Penny will recognize the significance."

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Thursday night came. I donned the suit Penny had selected for the Chancellor's award.

"Leonard, you have to help me with my tie." I wandered into the living room. "My hands won't stop shaking."

Leonard put down his comic book and stood on the coffee table.

"Little nervous, Shelly?" He flipped and knotted the silk at my throat.

I nodded. I was suddenly very thirsty.

"Are you sure you don't want me to drive the two of you?" Leonard offered but I knew his heart wasn't in it.

"Raj has kindly offered his chauffering services." I squeaked- that knot seemed unnecessarily tight. I had toyed with the idea of getting a limousine but felt it would have tipped my hand. Penny was excited enough about my "spontaneity". I checked the inside pocket of my suit jacket once more. The ring was nestled safely inside.

"Leonard?" The panic in my voice was real. "Am I sweating?"

He peered at me then mopped my brow with Kleenex. "Relax, Sheldon. You'll give yourself a nosebleed."

He was right. I had to calm down ; otherwise I'd start twitching like a frog on an electric fence.

"Yer right. I'm jumpier 'n a long tailed cat in a room fulla rockin' chairs." I clapped my hand over my mouth. Now was not the time to lapse into Texan.

Leonard placed his hand on my shoulder as Penny knocked on the door.

"Get a grip, Foghorn." he hissed. "This is a simple plan. What could go wrong?"

What, indeed.

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Sheldon's Log

Star Date: -312477.2747970574

The following entry is comprised of my recollection of the events of Thursday with input from Penny which I will indicate with an asterisk.(*)
Leonard opened the door to reveal Penny, resplendent in the scarlet strapless dress she'd worn so long ago, which prompted me to give her my Superman pen. I lifted my head from between my knees, determined that was the wrong course of action and dropped it down again. Penny came to my side.

"Sheldon, are you okay? You look a little green."

I nodded still staring at the floor.

"I think the knot in his tie is too tight." Leonard offered helpfully. Slowly, I moved my hands to loosen the tie a bit - it didn't help.

"If you're sick, we should stay home." Penny's voice was full of concern.

"No!" I cried lifting my head so suddenly I nearly collided with her which would have resulted in a nasty contusion to her lower lip. This was ludicrous. Sheldon Lee Cooper does not back down from a challenge. I stood and offered my arm to Penny.

"You look beautiful, Penny," Leonard said giving me an odd look.

"Thanks, Sweetie." Penny linked her arm with mine.

As we walked down to meet Raj and my favorite honeysuckle perfume floated around her, my stomach finally vacated my throat. Just before I placed her in the car, I realized something.

"Penny," I blurted.

She turned and, for as long as I live, I will always remember she looked. Her hair fell in gold waves around her shoulders, the red of the dress heightening the color of her cheeks, her eyes rimmed in soft black and filled with happiness because of me. Me.

I could have, should have proposed to her then - with the moonlight and the soft breeze the only enhancements. But, no. I had to follow The Plan.

"You're breath-taking," I managed. She squeezed my hand.

"I love you, Sheldon." She whispered. At the front of the car, Raj sniffled.

I made it through dinner. The plan was to present her with the ring after dessert. They had a fantastic chocolate lava cake and I didn't want either of us to miss it.

"This is the best Anything Can Happen Thursday ever," Penny enthused, sipping her champagne.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it." I tried to blink away the dots appearing in front of my eyes.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, I got that gum commercial." The waiter placed our dessert in front of us. I gave her a tight-lipped smile because I was sure the room had just lurched forward then backward.

"How's your dark matter research progressing?" Penny inquired though her brows had drawn together.

I had to get some air. I stood. Air. Otherwise, I was going to...

*According to Penny, I stood up knocking lava cake right into her lap. She yelped from the hot chocolate burning her thigh. I swayed "like one of those giant redwoods" into a faint which wouldn't have been a problem except, on the way down, my forehead hit the table resulting in a three inch
gash there. Penny screamed for help; the wait staff sprung into action and our next ride was in an ambulance.

When I came to, Leonard was sitting next to my bed.

"Penny?" my mouth felt filled with hay.

"She's finishing up your admittance papers."

My hand snaked to my suit pocket but found a hospital gown instead. Leonard put up a reassuring hand.

"I have it, Sheldon. She still doesn't know." I closed my eyes in humiliation. That caused the bed to tilt alarmingly.

"Maybe this is a sign you should wait." Leonard was trying to be helpful but even I knew that was not the socially acceptable sentiment right now. Cautiously, I opened one eye to glare at him.

"Leonard, I am as certain about this as I am that light moves at 299,792,0458 meters per second and is always in motion."

He looked down at his clasped hands, "I guess the best man did win. Your commitment to her is admirable."

I gave a slight nod, "That reminds me. Will you be my best man?"

"You haven't even asked her yet and you're already asking for a best man. How do you know she'll say yes?"

I closed my eyes again and sighed. "Leonard, I wouldn't ask her if I didn't already know what the answer would be."

He ran a hand through his hair. "I have to think about it. It just might be too hard."

"Of course." I tried to keep the disappointment out of my voice.

Penny entered the room followed by a doctor who looked like he should be in middle school and not medical school.

"How you doing, Moonpie?"

"I've been better." I reached for her hand. "I apologize for ruining our evening but at least I got to have a CAT scan."

Penny shook her head smiling. "Only you would see that as a positive."

"Dr Cooper, I'm Dr. Levinson." The "doctor" introduced himself. "I'll be stitching up your forehead."

I looked at him fully. He probably didn't even shave yet. Stitch me up? Not if I had anything to say about it.
Sheldon's Log

Star Date-312479.90664637246

Regarding coitus, Penny and I have reached an understanding. I understand she wants it regardless of the status of our relationship and she understands that I am...more reserved. Actually, she called me "an endearingly antiquated whack-a-doodle". A plus of our romantic relationship is that Penny's vocabulary has grown in leaps and bounds. My logic is quite solid. Most females achieve greater sexual satisfaction from pre-coital stimulation -i.e. foreplay- rather than from the act itself. Also, I had promised Meemaw that I would not engage in fornication.

"Shelly, you are too special for base behavior and hellfire so promise me you'll wait for the woman you are going to marry." Meemaw's blue eyes were stern behind her glasses.

"Of course, Meemaw" my ten year old self promised,. "Now can I have a cookie?"

I have maintained that verbal contract for 19 years. Well, there was that one experience in Germany... but it was in the name of science(so she told me), she was the host family's college-aged daughter and I was at the mercy of adolescent hormonal fluctuations. Besides, one has to learn somewhere.

But, I digress. While Penny and I have restrained from engaging in coitus(by which I have actually restrained her from having her way with me), we do, frequently, have many amorous moments. Since the dinner proposal was a complete and utter failure, I have decide to make a proposal after one of those.

The evening's events went completely awry. Penny and I were "making out" (to use a colloquialism) on her bed. Once I grew accustomed to engaging in such activities in a prone position, I staunchly refused to remain on her couch. My six foot two frame reclined on her significantly smaller couch is just ridiculous as I pointed out to her by reciting The Tall Man from Cornwall the one time I slept over when Leonard was in Las Vegas.

The ring was in my pocket. Penny was beneath me and I was much occupied with my favorite spot just below her ear. My ministrations were eliciting a favorable response from her.

"God, Sheldon." she gasped. "I need you to touch me."

Alrighty. Never ignore the pleas of a damsel in distress.

It is times like this when being gangly is a help not a hindrance. I was able to keep one hand woven in Penny's hair (another favorite of mine) while sliding the other hand past the waistband of her shorts. As expected, she brought her hand to mine to give direction. I must admit each time I am able to experience my effect on Penny's state of arousal, I curse that promise to Meemaw.

My frustration voiced itself in a moan which Penny matched - although I am certain hers was not in frustration since two of my fingers were curled forward just the way she likes. I decided once she was sated, I would "pop the question" as the oxytocin in her brain would ensure a positive response. Penny's hands ran down my back to the front of my plaid pants. I shifted.

"Sheldon, come on." She took my lower lip between her teeth.

Penny's hand had unfastened the button and slid to pull down the zipper when her fingers brushed the ring box which had migrated from the outer portion of the pocket to the inner corner.

"What's that?" Her writhing stopped eyes filled with concern.

"Penny, "I wiggled my index finger to distract her. "You're a big ol' five. You know what that is."

She shoved my hand away, "Not that, Sheldon! You have a lump there."

"It's nothing." I tried to kiss her.

"Sheldon, don't play games. You would never ignore a lump like that. For cryin' out loud, you go to the doctor if you get a paper cut."

"The skin is the body's first line of defense and must be protected at all costs." I snapped at her.

Suddenly, her hands flew to either side of her face, "Don't tell me. Oh, honey, is it testicular."

"Penny, Penny, Penny." I held up the hand that had been in her hair, "My testicles are fine." That's when she burst into tears. This was all topsy-turvy. Women usually cry after the proposal not before.

"You're dying, aren't you." she sobbed.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Why would you make such a ridiculous assumption?" The thing about Penny and me is that we can experience an amazingly quick turnover in emotions going from lust to horror to anger in mere seconds. One moment Penny is weeping uncontrollably she is terribly unattractive when she cries over my impending demise then her eyes snap green fire and she hisses.

"So now I'm ridiculous because I care about your health? Am I too stupid to understand the diagnosis?"

I despise when she plays the "stupid" card and told her so. Not once, in three years have I ever used that word to describe her. In many ways, she is the smartest person I know. I stood up adjusting myself and the ring as discreetly as possible.

"You're over-reacting." I said with not a little anger in my voice. Why is it when one tells a woman she is overreacting, her response is to exhibit full blown hysteria?

"Overreacting!" Penny yelled whipping a Care Bear at me. "You have some kind of malignancy metastasizing in your groin and I'm overreacting?" I stood there dumbfounded as a rabbit pelted me in the chest. Her command of language is really quite impressive.

"Penny," I tried again despite the onslaught of cotton-filled woodland creatures.

"Just get out Sheldon." she hurled a turtle my way before shoving me towards the door. "Just get you, your insensitivity and your...your secret crotch lump out!"

So I found myself in the hall facing my door, ring in my pocket and my intended in high dungeon over a fictional fatal tumor. It occurs to me that Mr. Darcy actually had an easier time of it.

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Sheldon's Log
I heard my doorknob turn.

"Danger! Danger!" I shouted looking around frantically in the dark.

"Sheldon! Quiet! It's me." Penny's voice drifted through the darkness.

"You aren't here to throw more stuffed animals at me, are you?" I positioned my pillow in front of me like a shield.

"No. I came to apologize. I haven't slept in a few days and you know what that does to me." I did indeed. Penny's insomnia was a delightful discovery (sarcasm); one Leonard never noticed because, frankly, he could sleep through a wrecking ball demolishing the apartment. She goes through weeks of sleeplessness and claims that being with me helps her sleep. It does nothing for my REM cycle but I have had years of undisturbed slumber so I can sacrifice a few. The one rule I have is that she must leave before Leonard is up.

"Seriously?" She was stunned when I told her my stipulation about leaving in the morning.

"You have no idea how it made me feel seeing you those mornings after you'd spent the night with Leonard." We were in the dark, her head tucked under my chin. I was grateful she couldn't see my face when I said that. "I wish to spare Leonard the same angst."

It was the one time she didn't argue with me.

I moved over so she could curl herself around me as I remained parallel to the mattress. She settled in enveloping me in a warm vanilla smell.

"You exfoliated." I commented.

"Vanilla sugar scrub. I'm slowly making my way through your bath baskets." her hand slid down to my hip; my stomach clenched. Penny's head popped up, "Where's the lump?" I traced a finger down her face, "I was trying to tell you it was nothing but you launched a barrage of plush toys at me."

"So, what was it?"

"Just a piece of my helix model." my eyes were closed so she didn't see the twitch and also because her hand had slipped between me and my pajamas. Her fingers brushed and my hips gave a jerk.

"Seems you are very much awake, Dr. Cooper." Penny murmured into my neck causing my nervous system to tingle alarmingly.

"I thought you were here to try to sleep." How I managed a complete sentence with what Penny's hands were doing is a credit to that brain of mine.

"In a minute." she whispered sliding downwards. I gripped her head to stop her.

"Penny." I warned.

Her eyes narrowed. "Why not?"

This is such an area of difficulty for us. Penny's past and life choices (I know them all) have caused her to equate physical intimacy with love. In her mind, if I reject her advances, I am rejecting her despite my numerous claims to the contrary.
I, of course, have the opposite mindset. My parents vicious battles paled in comparison to their physical hunger for each other. From what I could see, their intimate moments did nothing to solidify their emotional bond. If anything, they were toxic to it. I decided in order to expedite the return to sleep, I would have to use terms she would understand.

"Leonard is in the next room. Seeing as I have never engaged in that activity before, I am uncertain as to my vocal and physiological response." Oh, this was mortifying.

Penny drew a counterclockwise circle on my chest. "So you're saying that your reluctance to have me perform fellatio is in direct correlation to your roommate's aural proximity rather than an innate revulsion to the act itself."

That was unfair. She knew I found her use of polysyllabic words very, ahem, stimulating.

"Exactly." I pulled her up to kiss her passionately.

When we had quieted down, Penny said, "Sheldon, tell me a story."

I knew which story she wanted- her favorite- the one where we fell in love. Sometimes I tell her stories about Texas and what it was like growing up as me; sometimes Penny is the storyteller when she feels the need to have a good cry.

"Once upon a time, there was a Queen who slipped in the shower because her army of adhesive ducks had become mercenaries who worked for Winkle the Wicked Witch." Penny giggled.

"So, Queen Penelope called out to Sheldor the Conqueror who lived across the moat. He came at a run despite the fact that he was engaged in a mighty battle with Siam Palace." Her breathing was slow and relaxed.

I find it funny that Penny just assumes this is when we both fell in love. My version is different.

"It was a warm summer evening in ancient Greece. Queen Penelope defended the royal throne of Sheldor the Conqueror from Bernadette the Alchemist. Queen Penelope spoke the magic incantation about cross breezes and radiator warmth summoning the powers of angles and inclusive conversation to strengthen the spell. Her words warded off the alchemist and finally broke the ice over Sheldor's heart."

Perhaps some night I will share it with her.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Sheldon's Log

Star Date-312447.07727676315

I awoke to an empty bed and, for the first time, felt bereft. Usually Penny wakes me with a soft kiss before she leaves. As our months together continue, I find myself missing her presence with increased frequency. My spot feels off kilter on the nights she does not occupy the cushion on my right but this is the first time I have missed her in my bed.

I have been remiss in constructing my marriage proposal. The colossal failure of my first two attempts with my healing forehead as a souvenir has shaken my confidence.

As I write, I have just had an epiphany. My problem has stemmed from trying to accomplish a task in a manner foreign to me. For the sake of tradition, I abandoned my usual tools of whiteboards and PowerPoint. When I needed to establish a pseudo-friendship with Kripke, I created a friendship algorithm to guide me through the process. There is no reason why I can't do the same in order to ask Penny to marry me.

Once again, science produced a solution; it has never failed me.

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I stepped away from the whiteboard just as Leonard and company returned from Soup Plantation.

"Sheldon, dinner's here." Leonard announced unnecessarily. I put down my marker and went to wash my hands.

"Dude, are you trying to be friends with Kripke again?" Raj asked.

"Don't be silly, "I replied, drying my hands. "You know I find maintaining more than four friends to be taxing." Howard was peering at the board intensely.

"Sheldon, " he glanced over his shoulder at me. "Is this an algorithm to ask Penny to marry you?"

I sipped my soup and made a face. Definitely no one hundred and eighty degrees! Why Leonard refuses to check the temperature with the instant read thermometer I gave him for such runs, I'll never know.

"Yes." I put the soup in the microwave.

"You can't do that!" Howard's voice was filled with incredulity. "It's a ridiculous idea."

"Of course I can. It's right there on the board."

"He doesn't want to understand that the reason he is having such a hard time is because he is rushing into this and his superego is holding him back." Leonard interjected as if I weren't there.

"We've been through this," I faced Leonard. "I'm not rushing anything and the concept of a superego is psychobabble."
"Not according to my mother." Leonard retorted.

"Hold on." Howard began. "Let's clarify a few things here. Sheldon, does Penny want to get married?"

I tasted my soup. Drat! Burned my tongue.

"Yes." I lisped.

"And she wants to marry you?" The disbelief on his face was clear even to me.

"I don't know Howard. I haven't asked her yet." This is what happens when one only has a Master's-conversational roadblocks.

"What about children?" Raj asked.

"What about children?" I asked back.

"No, Sheldon. What. About. Children." Raj punctuated each word as if that made the question any clearer.

"He's asking if you and Penny have decided whether or not to have children." Leonard slammed his soup down on the coffee table.

"Oh.," I sat back in my spot. "I'm not opposed to children with Penny. She'd like three; I'm indifferent as to the quantity."

"Where will you live?" Raj continued.

"We could stay here but, ultimately, we'd want a house."

"Amazing," Howard said under his breath. "They actually have meaningful conversations about relevant topics."

"Well, of course Penny and I converse!" Annoyance filled my every word. "What do you think we're doing when we spend time alone?"

"Dude, we figured you drugged her, tied her to a chair and then you sat playing video games until you felt an appropriate amount of time had passed." Raj explained.

I was truly shocked. My own friends found it incomprehensible that I, Sheldon Cooper PhD, could actually participate and maintain a healthy relationship.

"I see." I said quietly. I rose from my spot and headed towards my room.

"Perhaps," I offered facing the three of them. "If all of you concentrated on the conversation instead of the coitus, you'd be having dinner with your own girlfriends instead of with an emotional cripple like me."

XXXX

Sheldon's Log

Star Date :-312433.3212519025

This week has gone from bad to worse. The only positive is the scar on my forehead is barely
perceived by the human eye due to my diligence in applying Mederma twice daily.

Upon review- I am loathe to admit- Wolowitz's assessment of the proposal algorithm is correct. Seating Penny in front of a board and walking her through the diagram is a bit sterile for such a momentous occasion even for me. Much like with scrambled eggs, I have reached the proverbial dead end.

Compounding my misery is the fact that Penny and I had a ferocious argument over grocery shopping. Perhaps my irritation was misdirected, for she had been busy with her commercial shoot, but I fail to see that as an adequate excuse for poor planning.

I was watching the Discovery channel when she entered the apartment, shopping bag in hand.

"Hi Sheldon," she greeted.

"You're home early." I observed while noting she was opening our cabinets.

"Yeah, well, there's only so long you can chew gum, ya know?"

"Indeed," I said as Penny picked up a few cans and dropped them into her bag, "May I ask what it is you're doing?"

"Just a little shopping." she chirped pouring milk into a jar.

"They have stores for that you know."

"Ooh, sarcasm! Good job, Moonpie."

I turned off the TV. "That wasn't sarcasm; it was a statement of fact." Penny put down an orange she had been examining.

"Give me a break, Sheldon. I haven't had a chance to go shopping."

"For three years?"

Penny looked at me. She still had all her makeup on from the shoot. She didn't even look like herself which probably helped to exacerbate the argument.

"So, what are you saying? You won't share a few groceries with your girlfriend?"

"This is not an issue of sharing," I clasped my hands behind my back. "It simply points to the fact that you refuse to behave like an adult."

"Says the man whose entire apartment is lined with action figures and comic books." Penny flung her arms wide.

"Irrelevant. We are discussing you, not me." Penny's mouth dropped open.

"Anything else you'd like to point out, Sheldon?"

In hindsight, I should have recognized that question as being rhetorical.

"As a matter of fact, yes. Your bathroom is beginning to resemble a Petri dish. The clothes in your apartment appear to be running away since they seem to flee the bureau at an alarming rate and you've changed your marinara sauce because I have been in Jewish hell since Tuesday."
Penny gathered up her groceries. "Yeah, well, I've been in Nerd hell since the day we met! If I want my apartment to become the next Love Canal, that's my business. If you don't like my cooking, let Leonard cook for you."

"Leonard never cooks for me," I reminded her.

"Now, neither do I." She slammed the door behind her.

If Meemaw had heard that argument, she would have shaken her head at me and said, "Shelly, a cat can have kittens in the oven but that don't make 'em biscuits." I am angry at myself and my failure to follow through with my intentions not Penny's pilfering of perishables. Nevertheless, that bathroom is a biohazard.

XXX

I had just finished wiping down Penny's counters when she entered the apartment laden with grocery bags. I quickly relieved her of two of them.

"Hi," she said.

"Hello," I returned.

"The apartment looks good. Thank you."

Every surface gleamed and sparkled. If this had been a Disney movie, bluebirds would be flitting about with flowers. We fell to the task of putting away the groceries with the ease of old friends who don't need to talk.

"Penny, " I began as I finished alphabetizing the canned goods. "Have you really been in Nerd hell since the day we met?"

She nodded, handing me cereal boxes. "Pretty much." My stomach plunged. Obviously, Wolowitz is more astute than I thought.

"Then I suppose my colleagues across the hall are correct in their evaluation of our relationship." I scanned the fiber content of the boxes and switched two of them on the shelf.

"How so?"

"They believe we are an anomaly." .

"Do you know what I believe, Sheldon?" I looked into her eyes - a green I could get lost in for hours and still never be able to describe. Penny kissed my cheek.

"I believe my life would suck without you."*

Chapter End Notes

* A wink to all those in the fandom who consider this to be S&P's song
Sheldon's Log

Star Date-312436.0285071029

I have resorted to carrying the ring around with me whenever I am home with Penny or out with her. It is my hope that "the moment" will present itself and, as Edna Mode from The Incredibles succinctly put it, "Luck favors the prepared."

I almost achieved my goal while at the Glendale Galleria with Penny on Thursday. We were in the shoe department of Macy's. A sale was in progress and I was crushed on all sides by women in a frenzy to procure discounted footwear. I have hypothesized that there is some chemical employed in the manufacture of shoes which is noticeable only to females and is devastatingly attractive to them. Perhaps I could get funding for a study? Penny was trying on her tenth pair of black, strappy sandals.

"What do you think, Sheldon?" she asked.

I think they all look the same. I think she doesn't need another pair of shoes. I think we've been here longer than we've ever been at the comic book store. I think all these thoughts but I do not voice them because I love her.

She looked so happy twisting her ankles this way and that to admire the shoes that I thought, why not here? Penny loves shoes, me, and getting a bargain. Why not permanently make the association in her hippocampus thereby ensuring the act of purchasing shoes will forever be a source of serotonin for her. I dropped to the floor on one knee in front of her and, by the look on her face, immediately realized this was not the time.

"Sheldon, what the hell are you doing?"

"Just checking the fit." I blurted making a show of observing her foot's alignment with the shoe.

"Get up! People are staring. You look like you're about to propose." Penny brushed my hands away but there was a smile dancing about her lips.

I stood up. "It's important that footwear conforms properly to the shape of the foot. You decrease the risk of blisters, corns, over and under pronation. As someone who is on her feet for work, I would think these would be areas of importance." Even I realized I was babbling.

Penny picked up her sandals, frowned at the price tag and headed for the checkout tugging me along behind her.

XXXX

During Friday night's Chinese dinner, Wolowitz began the conversation with, "So, Penny, ma cheri, anything new in your life?"

Raj, Leonard, and I all stopped eating.

Penny pursed her lips. "I shot a gum commercial and next week I have an audition for the role of 'girl number five in elevator'."
Howard ingested more sweet and sour pork. "That's great," he nodded enthusiastically. "But what about in your personal life?" Even Leonard had the decency to give Wolowitz a look of disgust; Raj appeared to be hyperventilating.

"I bought new shoes," Penny finally said, delicately picking a snow pea out of my container. Howard grimaced. "I was thinking more life-changing."

"Hey, don't underestimate the power of shoes." Penny warned.

"Howard," I interjected. "Why don't you, I don't know, shut up?"

"Sheldon, I'm just trying to help." he murmured. Raj groaned.

"Help what?" Penny picked up a dumpling, tossed it in the air and caught it in her mouth. I gripped my tangerine chicken. I loathe when she does that.

"I'm trying to help Sheldon…"

Leonard cut off Howard by saying, "Understand the nuances of small talk. We have a department mixer next week." Leonard shrugged helplessly.

"Penny, how would you feel if one of your friends got engaged?" Howard asked, leaning towards her. Raj jumped up from the couch and fled to the bathroom.

Penny shrank back into me; I was trying to formulate how to execute the perfect murder.

"Happy," she gave him a wary look. "Why?"

"Well, " -The man was relentless!- "You're approaching that age where your friends will start to 'take the plunge' one after the other. You don't want to be the last one on the shelf." Poison! I concluded would be my method for disposing of my no longer treasured acquaintance. There are hundreds of undetectable poisons.

"What the hell does that mean?" Penny challenged. My stomach was churning. Tangerine chicken is not as delightful in reverse.

"Howard." My jaw was clenched.

"I'm just saying we don't want our Penny to always be the bridesmaid, never the bride."

In a motion so synchronized, it can only be described as pure poetry, Penny and I raised our fingers up to our respective temples and tried to blow Wolowitz up with our minds.

XXXX

Later…in 4B

I gasped. She ignored me. Her mouth moved slowly, delicately.

"Relax," she whispered into my pelvis. I reached up an arm and gripped the headboard behind me.

"Can't. Too much stimuli." I breathed harshly. She gave a throaty laugh and then her tongue, oh my, her tongue…

I slit my eyes watching the way her blond hair slithered along my thigh. Her hand squeezed and I
whimpered in spite of myself. It was beyond my realm of conscious thought that her lips, tongue and-"Sweet, sufferin' Jesus!"- teeth would produce such sensations. My fingers twined themselves into her hair. She groaned and I had a sudden realization.

"Penny."

"I'm not done, Sheldon." She flicked her tongue with each syllable causing me to twitch in time.

"But, Penny…" This was not going to end well. Elements. Think of elements, Shelly. Titanium. Vanadium. Chromium. Penny's mouth enveloped me fully. Osmium. Oh! Oh!

"Danger! Danger!" I shouted desperately and she jerked away leaving only her hand.

My chest heaved as I tried to regain my breath. Penny snuggled into me inquiring if I had enjoyed that. I panted, nodding in reply. If I don't propose soon, that promise I made will be the death of me.

XXXX

Sheldon's Log

Star Date:-312428.92719431757

On Saturday, Penny went to the beach with her girlfriends from work.

"You'll be home in time for laundry, won't you?" I asked when she came to say goodbye.

"I'll try but I can't promise. I haven't had a Saturday off in months."

"Make sure you reapply your sunscreen every ninety minutes. Watch out for riptides- swim parallel to the shore. Don't go in murky water especially if there are seals present and…"

She put a finger to my lips. "I'll miss you, too, Moonpie."

As it turned out, Penny was not home in time for laundry. I carried the prevening's efforts down to the basement. The room was cold, dark and damp. To think it was once my refuge. Doing laundry on Saturday was my way of sorting through the week, organizing and classifying my memories and experiences. I hadn't done laundry alone in six (now seven) months and it had been at least a year since Penny began joining me. I dug into my pocket for quarters, placing the ring box on the folding table.

Penny and I had had quite a few pivotal moments in this unseemly room. It was here that I discovered she considered us friends. Our neighbor war had escalated to the boiling point here when Penny had occupied each and every machine, effectively disrupting my routine. Interestingly, she has wreaked havoc on my well-ordered life even more now that we are a couple - and I don't seem to mind.

I snickered, recalling my PowerPoint presentation to Penny illustrating why I should go see the Hadron collide, not her. She has never forgiven me for that picture of her brushing her teeth with her finger. I hugged her for the second time on that day; by that point I was well aware of the shift in my feelings towards her. Neither of us has gone with Leonard- we spent our first Valentine's Day together - bickering, eating soup, sniffing and singing 'Soft Kitty'. We never told Leonard that we'd fallen asleep twined like puppies on the couch nor did we ever reveal that we'd gone out for breakfast the next morning. Penny split a cinnamon roll with me and all I wanted to do was kiss the piece of icing that decorated the corner of her mouth.
"What's this?"

I looked up from folding The Flash. Penny was standing next to me, sun-kissed, and platinum-streaked from the beach. She had showered, clothing herself in one of my cast-off Superman shirts which reflected turquoise in her eyes. The ring box was in her palm.

"It's...it's..." I stammered. I took a deep breath and collected my thoughts.

"I have been trying to give that to you for a month!" I cried all my frustration finally voiced. "Each time some unmitigated disaster occurs. I faint, require stitches, you think I have a tumor. I keep waiting for a plague of locusts to descend to complete the cycle!" Penny blinked at me uncomprehendingly.

"Then," I continued. "Leonard informs me that it has to be this big 'moment'," I placed finger quotes in the air, "so you'll have a good story. This whole endeavor has been completely exhausting."

"I don't understand," she whispered.

That's when I realized the moment had arrived in the most unlikely of places- yet it was the perfect place for us. I lifted the box from her palm, looked down at the floor and tried not to imagine the layers of bacteria on it. Slowly, I lowered myself on one knee.

"Penny, " I lifted up the lid of the box. "Will you marry me?"

Her eyes widened. Her hand trembled as she lifted the ring from the box. I took it and slid it onto her finger marveling at the sparkle. She didn't say a word. She just stood there smiling from ear to ear. Our eyes met, held, then Penny took my face in her hands and kissed me like she never had before.

Sheldon's Log

StarDate:312428.92719431757

Addendum

Regarding coitus, I have conceded defeat.

Penny did eventually say "yes." Three times to be precise.

Sheldon Cooper- for the win.

THE END

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