

Kirby Wright  
WHITE FISH

WENDY ADAMS was prone to crushes because she was lonely, a loneliness veering toward desperation during the holidays. Two years had passed since she'd had a fling with a Bellagio acrobat in Vegas. Her secret desire was to make-out with John Elway. She imagined him nibbling her breasts with his full lips and wolfish teeth.

I usually cross paths with Wendy at department Christmas parties. 2022 is no exception. I spot her sashaying in a little black dress. There's a pewter chain around her neck and she has a model's strut. She turns a cheek to me, inviting a peck. I peck. My salami lips leave a grease spot on her foundation. I ramble on about literature, favorite authors and applying for a guest lecture spot at Trinity College Dublin. Her vivacious green eyes turn dull, making her look old.

"What's the last book you read?" she quizzes.

*"Black Like Me."*

"Read that during Woodstock," she smirks.

Wendy brags about being photographed as "the Colorado blonde" in Osaka while posing with local doctors at a seafood restaurant. She was in Japan attending her husband's lectures on cutting edge treatments for third-degree burns.

"They served white fish," she tells me, "which I flat out refused."

"They serve you the whole fish?" I asked.

"Head to tail. Even my man passed," she said, "and he was a fanatic for Asian cuisine."

Wendy's forehead, brow, and eyes have zero wrinkles. Botox? She keeps her white-blond hair shoulder length. Her perfume smells flowery, yellow roses I think. I suppose she's attracted but I remind myself I'm taken after swallowing a cream cheese hors d'oeuvre. Wendy's man committed suicide after failing to deliver the required research for a federal grant; he spent the entire million on solo global travel, luxury hotels and sportscars while Wendy slaved in CSU's nursing department. Her loss blew holes through heart and pocketbook. The feds attached the Del Mar mansion but she paid off the debt within seven years. She has LA Chargers season tickets, a game she got hooked on with her husband. She cheers and shouts with the usual gang of beer-drunk men, her soprano voice rising above their deep chorus into the lights.