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**M**y wife and I no longer speak. Our life is a silent film where casual movements connote conversation. *Pouring a glass of orange juice equals Good morning, I feel overwhelmed by life today. A flick of the newspaper equals I'm sorry to hear that, I love you anyway. Taking a coat from her outstretched hands equals please try to stay alive.*

I sit behind my desk, or at conference tables, arguing the point of clauses and the strength of here fore versus consequently and wonder what she's doing. Is today her weekly trip to the drug store to plead with the counter girl to sell her a pack of pink and yellow three-blade razors with a moisture strip? Yvonne, a newbie, will drink in my wife's voluptuousness encased in long pants and a cardigan and wonder why she's been warned not to sell this woman anything more threatening than a stick of chewing gum. Her curly hair is a bit wild; her eyes sad, but kind. There seems nothing dangerous about this woman.

Only Rosalee, the store manager, knows that hidden beneath the embroidered cuffs of the cardigan are scabbed over chunnels dividing my wife's wrists in halves. East and West. North and South. She'll place a gentle hand on my wife's back and lead her toward the door. "We're all out today, Claire. Maybe you can try again next week." Thank god for Rosalee's ability to lie.

**I** have failed my husband. At night I pray that I will wake the next morning feeling vibrant. I will run to him, arms wide, shouting, "Touch me! Cure me!" Instead I wake and feel the nothingness draw me in deeper. When I look in the mirror I no longer see the bohemian wild child who kissed an unknown man in a bar on a dare; who later married that man. The only reflection I see is the plumpness of eight months love and nutrition. But when I feel for the bump that accompanied me to bed every night I can only feel the scar that divides my body, grimacing in remembrance of its construction. My life is composed of scarred lines now: ones that I won't cross and ones that cross me.

I rarely leave the house now. The world is too real. The only places I can bear to go

are the drug store, where Rosalee won't sell me the razors that I don't know if I want, and Doctor Ungudaya's office. Her chairs are oversized and comforting. Her office overlooks a parking lot always filled with cars. She closes the blinds for me. I made my husband sell his car after the accident. After he paid seven thousand four hundred twenty-two dollars and ninety-five cents to fix it. Sitting in the passenger's seat made me vomit.

I know my husband thought that I'd be fine after the car was gone. After he stripped the nursery of all traces of her. That one day I would get up, take a shower, put on clothes that did not contain sparrow-sized holes in them, and go back to work. I would surround myself with ten-by-ten foot prints of photographs. Moments in time forever captured on glossy vellum. Black and white, color, sepia; the images would bombard me back into the throws of every day existence. At the MOMA there's an installation that I adore. A young artist believed he could crack open the seams melding our sense of time together, by setting up cameras to capture the erection of a new building.

The cameras stood as eyes, watching with rapt attention for three years, without blinking. There are ghosts in the pictures of things too ephemeral to reside on paper. I wonder what an installation of the last year of my life would look like. Would I be able to catch the happy ghost of myself who couldn't stay to be seen?

Sometimes I pretend I'm getting better. I smile and make coffee. I put on lipstick; Desert Rose. I putter around our apartment moving things from one side of the room to the other, as though the shifting of matter to a different physical space will belie my own immobility. My husband thinks that I'm trying. What he doesn't know is that after he leaves for work, the past floods through me, a cacophony of feeling. Car wheels squealing. The acrid smell of gasoline. The searing pain of being sliced open. I should feel lucky. I wasn't killed that night. But I have been dying every day since.

**M***y name is Henry and my wife is depressed.* These are the words I utter at the beginning of each meeting. I think this phrase is bullshit. The reality is that my wife is weak and needy and selfish. This is what I want to shout; to stand on my wobbly folding chair with hands balled into fists of utter exasperation. But the sallow faced, mentally exhausted husbands that surround me in the church basement need to believe that there's a light at the end of the tunnel. They need to remain childlike, clapping to prove their belief in fairies. I cannot be the cynic to pull the veil from their eyes, showing them that it's only dancing light on the wall born of a glinting watch face.

My wife blames me for everything that has and hasn't happened to us. No matter how many times people remind me "It's not your fault. It was an accident. These things happen." My wife never says these things. She sips slowly from her glass of wine and stares off into space as though she can't hear any of these untrue words. These words will not penetrate her skin because she doesn't want to believe that her greatest desire was stripped from her by a force beyond her control. Instead she sleeps next to me at night and wakes to go to the drug store where she will try to buy razors that may end her life. She will go every week without fail, as though one day Rosalee will smile brightly and lead her to the locked case in the back of the store, where my wife will have her choice of any sharp slicing razor that will cut to her empty core.

She blames me because I found a way to move through the pain. I rode my lone

canoe over the waves of grief until I reached the other side. This is unforgivable. It doesn't matter that I was forced to be the strong one, to continue the charade that we haven't fallen apart. Being a mother gives her the right to wallow in despair like a bubble bath. Strangers will look at her and cluck their tongues with knowing approval—she's a mother who has lost her child. I'm only the man who once said, "I don't know if I can be a father." I'm only the one who was driving.

In the morning my wife and I sit across from one another, a grand chasm apart. There are moments when I see her hand twitch on the solid wood tabletop as though she were thinking about reaching out to me. So I stay. An extra minute, an extra hour. A lifetime. In the hopes that one day her twitch will be a grasp of my hand. She'll intertwine her fingers with mine and I will know the secret of the sphinx.

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