

What He Did

by MOLLY CARPENTER

“Nothing.” I try to keep the coldness out of my voice but it creeps in anyway.

“Fine, don’t tell me what I did.” He sighs, rolls his eyes a little, probably says “Women,” in his head, and sits back down on the couch next to me. We are watching *The Walking Dead*. After a few minutes he forgets my anger and cuddles up closer to me. I try to move away from him but if I move too far he falls over, comically, and it is a joke.

My face is smooth and fragile, a pane of opaque glass.

I run a script through my head:

Me: You’re such an asshole.

Him: What the hell? What is wrong with you, where do you get off, calling me shit like that? (Stands up from the couch, enraged.)

Me: (Covers, brings her knees up to her chest) I just...I’m sorry. (Cries quietly, pathetically).

No, that’s wrong. Too passive-aggressive. That never works.

Me: It’s just, I was really hurt by what you said earlier. You didn’t have to insult me in front of everyone, or at all, for that matter.

I give myself a mental pat on the back for coming up with such a mature, reasoned response.

Him: Oh, come on, you know I didn’t mean it. You don’t have to be so sensitive. Do you want some popcorn? (Springs up from couch, light-heartedly.)

Me:...Okay. (Wilts.)

That won’t do either. He wraps his arm around my waist.

Me: (Snaps it at the elbow in one swift, fluid movement.)

He lays his head on my shoulder.

Me: (Lurches forward, smashes it into his glass coffee table.)

The glass would shatter like in a movie, and he’d lay collapsed in the middle of it, thick, dark blood oozing at the temple, collecting at his eyebrow. Then he would know. Instead I sit still, tensed.

I am a porcelain doll, with eyes that bob open and closed when you move me.

“Are you still mad at me?” He juts his bottom lip out slightly like a child. The infuriating innocence gleams in his eyes, the antichrist as a 5-year-old. He looks into mine but there is nothing to see.

Me: (Shoves him away, in outrage.) What do you think?

“Asshole.”

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