

The Pursuit of Solace Beyond Reproach

Curt Eriksen

She pulls out from under me and says she has had enough now. The deed is done, though we haven't finished.

Still I shrug, "Suit yourself."

I stretch out on the warm tossed sheets and watch as she sits in front of the vanity mirror, combing the tangles out of her long black hair. A raven of sorts, I offer her a cigarette from the pack I should never have bought. But she won't be tempted and asks, as she draws her skirt over her hips, if I will be there next Sunday.

"It's Danny's birthday," she reminds me, speaking her husband's name with a casual glance over her pale shoulder that unnerves me.

"I'll try," I say, and I flick the lighter open.

The butane ghosts for a moment in the room, before the tobacco takes and burns.

"Just don't be late."

She picks up her purse and makes for the door and I say, "I wouldn't do anything to hurt my little brother's feelings."

She stops then, and gives me a curious look. Her left hand rests lightly on the latch to my bedroom door. I wish she would walk out of my life just as easily as she has wandered into it. But there is little chance of that.

"This wasn't my idea," she says.

"Sure," I reply, and I take a long thoughtful drag, confident that it wasn't my idea either.

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