

Ethics

by Jodi Barnes

Here's where you're wrong, she says but I hear hesitancy. A half-hearted conviction always makes me want to run. She's the most everything I've ever had in a woman, but if I told her she'd label me a misogynist or play coy as a teenager. You don't *have* me, she'd say while offering a *you-silly-boy* smirk or she'd ask with lowered lashes, What do you mean, *everything*?

If I wanted cautious I wouldn't be in her bed. She would only sleep with her husband. Adultery is not for pussies. So I dive back into the conversation which has made my dick limp and ask where I'm wrong in our post-coital chatter and she says it doesn't matter anymore, that she doesn't want to argue.

I feel a burn, definitely irritation, maybe some betrayal. This brilliant, upper-east side brick shit house of a lover can't discern between discussion and argument? No really, I say, I want to know where you think I'm wrong. And I lean in, kiss her cheekbone, place the hollow of my cheek against hers, breathe in her hair.

She rolls off my shoulder and away to the edge of the bed like a tightly rolled tapestry, leaving tiny threads of me on the bedspread. She hums some ridiculously tired pop tune and smiles at the afternoon light that leaks through a window. She is haloed; woven around her shoulders, breasts, waist and knees a soft gold. As she glides into the bathroom to start the shower, I can't get dressed quickly enough.

