

Tremor

by Dan Tricarico

The coyotes behind my house yammer like gossiping schoolgirls. Sparrows zip from tree to tree, sixteenth notes on a staff. Our neighbor's cat stalks unseen prey in the great green expanse of their lawn. Even our own dogs race through the house, sniffing and searching, as if sensing buried treasure.

"What's up with the dogs?" I say to my wife, trying to sound casual.

"Don't know," she says, rifling through her briefcase. "They've been going nuts all day."

"Earthquake?"

I ask because she's the animal person, not me. She understands animal behavior.

"Hope not," she says, uncapping a pen. "Last one scared me to death."

That was six months ago. We both ended up in the same doorjamb. It was the last time I touched her.

"Can we get this over with?" she says, handing me the pen. "I have to pick up Bree and be at the orthodontist at four."

"Sure." I try to be agreeable, though it's hard.

"Cable people come tomorrow," I tell her, stalling. "Phone'll be in on Friday." My new place is small, but not awful.

She gives me a look, so I sign and it's done. Fifteen years erased in a pen stroke.

Without warning, my mind ignites with images of everything that man must have done to my wife in the past few months.

A coyote howls in the distance and I wonder when the world will both start, and stop, shaking.

