

The Fall

by Daniel Harris

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Tuesday is trash day. Monday evening I was outside setting out the trash and the recyclables. I always did it around seven at night. The woman across the street put out her trash about that time also. She was tall, blond and had all the good features. We usually chatted for a few minutes.

When I was finished, I swept my driveway and went inside. I found my wife lying on the floor. Blood was running from her eyebrow and from the corner of her eye. She couldn't get up. It was all I could do to help her up. My right arm had been in a sling for three months and had no strength. It was a miracle that I got her to her feet.

—Jesus, what happened? I asked.

—I fell.

—How?

—I was picking up some dead petals from the flowers on the coffee table and just fell over. I don't know. Maybe I passed out.

I could see blood running from her eye socket.

—Can you see?

—I think my left eye is blind.

—I have to get you to a hospital. I hope some eye specialist is there.

—No, I think I will be okay.

—Cover your right eye. How many fingers am I holding up?

—Is this some trick?

—No. How many fingers am I holding up? I asked again.

—I don't see any fingers.

—Come on, look again. Can you see my hand?

—Yes, but you have no fingers.

—I have to take you to the hospital.

—No, I don't want to go there.

—You have to go. You could lose the sight in your eye.

I took her to the hospital emergency room. They saw her immediately.

I sat in the waiting room. I was there fifteen minutes when a police officer entered the room and called my name.

—Yes sir.

—Please come with me.

I followed him to his prowl car. He put me in the back seat with cuffs on my hands. He read me my rights and told me he was recording everything we said.

—Did you hit your wife?

—No, I was taking out the trash.

—Why did you hit your wife? Because she was asking you to take out the trash?

—No. No one has to ask me to take out the trash. I do everything around the house. My wife has bad arthritis and is grateful that I do the chores.

—So, why did you hit her in the eye? Was she badgering you about taking out the garbage? Did she accuse you of something?

—No! I take out the trash and the recyclables on Monday night. No one has to ask.

—She says you hit her.

—That's a fucking lie and she knows it.

—I am recording everything you say, so watch your language. Did you hit her?

—No!

—She says you did. Does she have a life insurance policy?

—No.

The officer typed something into his computer. I could see text scrolling up the screen.

—You were arrested for assault with a firearm in 1976. You have a history of violence. What was that about?

—I fired a pistol at a club owner who refused to pay my band. He had pulled a gun on me. I had no choice. He wasn't hurt. I was absolved of all charges.

—It's on your record.

—The judge said it wouldn't be.

—I have it right here. So when did you hit your wife?

—I love my wife. I would never hit her. I told you. I came into my living room and found my wife lying on the floor bleeding from her eyebrow and the corner of her eye.

—You mean where you hit her.

—No, where she fell hitting her head. Listen. Do you think if I hit her I would take her to a hospital?

—She says you hit her. Hit her hard with your left fist. She says you're a hothead.

I ended up spending six months in jail. I was released on the condition that I attend anger management classes. My wife hired a bulldog divorce lawyer. The judge gave her the house and all our savings. I was broke and homeless.

I couldn't find work. I played my sax on street corners for change. The police hounded me, but I didn't have enough money to get out of town. Two thugs stole my sax. I'd lived my three score and ten. At the beach I waded into the Gulf and started swimming to Mexico.

