

Improbable Bodies

by Dave Clapper

She lifts a worn paperback off the microwave. The book has known many women's hands, something erotic and frequently checked out from our local library. Its cover depicts a man and a woman, both with improbable if not impossible bodies. I believe the term is bodice-ripper.

She gives me a quick peck on the forehead. "I'm going to take a bath," she says. I nod. I know it's not an invitation.

I continue flipping through channels. Nothing grabs my attention. I cycle through the spectrum of channels twice, three times. The water in the bathroom has stopped running. I rise and walk to the door and listen.

There is the gentle sound of water lapping against the tub, but nothing else. I'm holding my breath and imagine that she is doing the same, listening for me. The smell of her bath salts sneaks under the door. Jasmine, I think.

Finally, I hear a page turn. I release my breath.

I want to stand there longer, to hear her breathe more deeply, to hear the water in the tub splashing more, and for a moment longer I stand outside the door, my cock hardening inside my jeans. But this is where she goes. It's the only place she can get that release. It wasn't always like this. The first few times we made love, she faked her orgasms and I could tell she was acting for my benefit, but I didn't mind. In between the too-loud cries, I occasionally heard genuinely caught breaths. I listened intently for those clues and filed them away until I knew her special triggers. It wasn't long before her cries were real. She came fiercely and often, but something in me longed for those times when she worried more about my ego and didn't give in to her own pleasures.

I'd always taken pride in my ability to find my lovers' sweet spots, but no one before her came back to earth with such wide and darting eyes. Her arms and legs would scrabble crab-like underneath me for a split-second until she remembered where she

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was, who I was. Her fear was the price we both paid for her pleasure.

Outside the door, I sigh and head to the shoe rack inside the front door. I slip on my loafers. "Hon," I call, "I'm going out for a beer. Back in an hour." She doesn't answer, but I know she's heard me. This is part of the routine. She pleasures herself in the bathtub and I have a beer. When we've both finished, we act as if everything is OK and head to the bedroom together. She, now in control of her body, pretends to have an orgasm and I pretend to believe her.

