

# My Neighborhood is F\*cked Up

*by* Jasmine Neosh

There is a couple across the street who fight constantly. I feel bad watching them fight but they haven't had curtains since I moved into my new place and no one in this neighborhood can afford cable. I know that everybody fights, but there are a lot of things about these two that bother me. Like, for one thing, I don't know why they're fighting. They always have the windows open, and damned if I haven't tried really hard to hear what all the fuss is about, but they're very polite even in the middle of what is at times an hours-long emotional armageddon. At this point, for all I know, maybe they're not even fighting-- maybe they're yelling "I LOVE YOU!" in some language I don't understand and they have found so many ways to say it they never need to repeat themselves. I mean, it sure looks like when he pulls his hair that way, he is asking why she's such a bitch, and then when she balls up her fists and her face turns red, I could swear that she's just calling him a fat asshole, but what do I know? KOCHAM CIE! TAIM I' NGRA LEAT! I'm no lip-reader.

The woman is kind of pretty but not really pretty. She looks like the kind of woman who wouldn't care about popular obsessions like body mass and hair trends, but I have seen her checking her ass in the mirror and tugging at strands of her thick black mane, frowning at everything her fingers pinch. She tried jogging, and that was fun for one of us. She wore this really unfortunate body suit as she ran, and God, I wish I could tell this woman how fat she isn't, how almost every woman is supposed to look awful in certain kinds of sweatsuits and she should stop obsessing, and maybe I would if I thought she would listen to me. After a week, she threw her stupid-looking suit into the fake fireplace in her living room and tried to set it on fire. Once the neighbors returned her frightened cats and the smoke cleared, the self-pity began. She sat there for an hour in front

of the mirror with a pint of some unconventional ice cream and probably would've stayed there for the rest of her life had her boyfriend not come along. He has some way with her, for all of their fighting. He held her in his arms and stroked her strange hair, pinched the places of her she would pinch obsessively, but this time in a loving way. After a while he had her laughing and rolling around on the floor, tickling her and kissing her cellulite. Which isn't to say that she gave up on slimming down, but she at least feels better about it.

The man is not pretty. I don't know anything about him and can't read anything by his clothing except that he probably doesn't have money, which is pretty typical of this neighborhood. I think he might be a little crazy, also pretty typical, but he cares about her. I know this much because he always gets more upset than the woman does, and maybe she cries a bit when they fight, maybe she throws things but she doesn't do the things he does when he goes into the bedroom by himself. I mean, it isn't anything too bad, no cutting, but sometimes, I wish she would follow him when he walks away from her. Maybe she could stop him. He's probably no angel, but that man, that crazy, ugly man, loves her and I wonder if any of their problems would be resolved if they'd show it instead of just yelling, whatever they're yelling.

The thing about these two is that I don't think they are married. I know that she is seeing someone else, and my guess is that the ugly man is the someone else. When the fight's over, there is always a lull. They talk, hold hands. They tell each other things. He gets his coat and he puts his hands on her shoulders, wiping the tears from her face. She shakes her head and tries to embrace him. He shakes his head. He goes to the door and she follows. He kisses her on the forehead and then is gone. Some times he goes to the train station or the supermarket, but, more often than not, he goes to the bar around the corner.

The second guy who comes home, probably her husband, sometimes hits her. Not hard, I think, but hard enough. I don't really like to watch this part, because she will talk back but she won't yell

or cry and this time, I am sure they are not yelling I LOVE YOU in any language at all. It ends quickly. When it does, she will go to her bedroom the way the first man does but she will not hit anyone. She will look out the window, not at me, but at the street and she will say, I love you, in English. She will turn out the light and she will go to sleep with the man who just yelled at her, the man who she refuses to yell back at.

All is quiet for a time. The lights turn out. After a while, the first man, still ugly, and uglier now because his face is puffy, he will pass underneath her windows on the way to somewhere else. He will not stop at the door, will not come in. He will not say anything up to the window. He will just stop, look up at it, and breathe her words in. He will blow her window a kiss and then continue on down the street, not yelling, and not crying, and not hitting himself. He will smile to himself, his lonely self, until he disappears from the block and the whole thing starts over again in the morning.

