

The Year, In Review

by Jennifer Donnell

I never made a Clementine Cake and I left you. I'm sorry about the first. The second? What's geography compared to the days you barely spoke, worked half the night, or rarely smiled back. So much weight is dependent upon the corners of mouths. In retrospect, you now know your sobbing, when I told you it was over, was temporary. How the dizzying pain gave away to a dull ache, all typical. Howling like werewolves were real, was the stuff of passing fantasy. Humans need lovers and you're no exception. I find two brand new condoms on our old bedroom floor and wonder if I should warn you that they aren't a good brand. I don't. You're dating a woman not much older than the age when we met. How fast decades pass and pass again. How slow the endless days in between can go. The children learn some of your bad habits, how you don't answer unless you want to. When they talk too much or argue, you blame it on me. Who has more to forgive?

And him, now there's a him. I'd like if he were perfect, but perfect things never are. My daughter says it best, when she contrasts the two of you, "Daddy worked to forget about his problems. When he works, it makes him feel like there is a problem."

Who do we credit for the children being philosophers- the divorce or the marriage?

My diamond rings, both, go missing. Maybe it's your girlfriend or the handyman, who I left alone in the house.

"He probably looked through your underwear drawer too!" my boyfriend says, suspicious of the culprit. My female friends think otherwise.

"Jen would never take your rings." you say, when I ask.

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It's funny that she has the same name, my name.

“Yeah, she probably has really small fingers.” I concede, having seen her at a distance once, and the way our daughter said she isn't much bigger than her. If I'm tall and fair, she's the opposite.

Next year I'll make strawberry shortbread and probably realize that everything turned out okay.

