

Threesome

by Jennifer Howard

1. Twenty Questions

Did you take out the trash? Did you water the ficus? Did you cancel the cable? Did you take my black sweater? Did you tell the neighbors? Will you get the friends? What about the cat? Will you send me a Christmas card? Will I tear it up? Did you know that I suspected? Did you know it was obvious? Did you want it to be? Should I have confronted you? Would you have stayed? Did you think you could do better? Were you right? If I killed myself, would you come to my funeral? Did you tell her I'm crazy? Did she believe you? Is that why?

2. It's Me

Six kinds of crazy, he said. That told me everything. It told me enough. You should have been more careful. You should have tried harder. You should have dressed better. (Honestly—that sweater? What were you thinking?) You had your chance, or maybe you didn't have a chance. I didn't steal anything you hadn't already lost. Would it help you to know how I met him? Maybe it was at the gym, maybe it was at a bar. Maybe he stopped me on the street and asked for my phone number. Maybe we work together. Maybe I'm his accountant, his hairdresser, his shrink. Maybe I'm your best friend, or used to be. I can't see that it matters. Don't torture yourself. What's done is done. You're done, honey. You'll get used to it.

3. It's You

It's not me, it's you. Forever you, irredeemably you, unforgivably you. I could live with the cat, the ficus, the sweater. I just couldn't live with you. The neighbors knew it before we did—they way they looked at us on the stairs, the way we couldn't look at each other. Anybody with eyes could see it. She was anybody but you. I admit that was part of the appeal. You were a bridge to nowhere, a dead

end, a no-outlet sign. She was the new thing, the fresh start, the one last chance we're all supposed to get. She opened the door. I just walked through it. Anybody would have done the same. Anybody but you.

