

It's not heavenly light, b!*&#.

by Joey Delgado

He stopped believing in God when he learned how balls worked.

Spermatocytes turned into spermatids and spermatids turned into spermatozoa, the transition taking place in tiny loop de loops called the seminiferous tubules which contain at least three different cells needed for the process. Even in the most simplified explanation, to him, the testicle's physiology was too layered, too elegant to be the product of an intelligent designer shooting magical, life-creating plasma blasts out his fingers. Things living and dying over millennia, perfecting the recipe, that's what got us where we are now. He assumed most everyone else in his class felt the same.

She sat in front of him. Her name was Esther and sometimes her hair brushed across his desk. On more than one occasion he leaned forward and breathed deep the Pantene. She was the kind of woman who inspired a car ride full of rehearsed hellos. "Hey, Esther." "Esther, hey!" "How's it going, Esther?" "Esther. There she is." "How do you like the weather, Esther? Weather, Esther. Hey, it rhymes...No?"

He took her to bar a in town, the kind where chubby guys in tight t-shirts spoke in a mashup of quotes from cult television shows and social media shorthand. At one point, Esther shushed him so she could eavesdrop on a heated conversation between a couple of neckbeards. They compared what "fucking tweeny motherfuckers" were doing to EDM with what the Baby Boomers did to Facebook. She looked at him and smiled. "What the fuck are they talking about," she said. He shrugged and fell in love.

"Why nursing?," she asked. He told her he was fascinated by the sciences, by the application of care backed by theory and facts. It's kindness with purpose, he said.

"And you?"

"The sciences, everything in the body, it's all connected."

"Exactly."

"After learning all this stuff..." she trailed off, looked into her martini.

"Yeah?" He was encouraged.

"I was raised Catholic, but until now I was never so sure of God's...God's what? I guess His hand in everything. In all this." She waved her arm, a smooth, sweeping motion signifying the whole world.

"Yeah," he said. "Sure, yeah. No. Yes, yes. I get that. No, I do very much."

"It's silly."

"Yes, no, no, no." He smiled at her. Lie your ass off, he thought. Lie, get the check, and take her home.

For months he put up with her finding God in everything. When someone died, when her friend found a stray cat in the street, when a traffic jam made them late for a movie and they watched a different movie that reminded her of a deceased aunt, all of it was attributed to God's master plan. The rays of light poking through heavy cloud cover? "That's heavenly light," she'd say. "God's love shining down."

He told her about the balls, about his recent epiphany. He couldn't keep quiet any longer.

They fought after he told her. They fought every day. He called her basic and naive. She called him soulless and closed-minded.

Things turned from bad to irreparable on a day they were carpooling to school. She was telling him about a medical miracle she read in the news, asking him how, how, how could he not believe God was involved. Then she saw sunshine coming through the clouds and immediately stopped talking. She pointed, opened her mouth, and said, "See—

"It's not heavenly light. It's sunlight. It's just sunlight *shining* through breaks in the clouds. That's it. Jesus. It is not heavenly light, bitch." He knew he shouldn't have said it, knew she didn't deserve it, and he was sick about how good it felt.

A minute passed before she said anything.

“You're *so* enlightened. Uh-uh, you're a sexist asshole. That's why your newfound ideas about life came from balls. You're a sexist, misogynist asshole.”

They walked to class in silence, and when her hair brushed his desk he moved to the other side of the room.

