

The Truth

by John Wentworth Chapin

“You'd want *me* to tell *you*, right?”

I pause. “Of course.” This is a polite lie; I haven't made up my mind.

“Good friends have to be brutally honest, because no one else will. Tell me.”

I ponder the differences between our families; we were kids together and know each other well. I grew up with perhaps a little too much honesty. We are loud: we yell, we cry, we slam our flatware and storm out of the room. It is tiresome. I dream of a Thanksgiving without tears. His people eat soggy casseroles and smile with tight lips. It would be unthinkable to say something honest and personal between them.

So of course he needs me to be honest. But he doesn't know how fucking mean I am; I am wise enough to keep it under wraps. He doesn't know how deeply I judge, that I roll my eyes, that I pretend his new bathroom paint looks good, how I hated the sundried tomatoes in that omelet.

He forces a jovial grunt and pushes my shoulder. “Come on, for fuck's sake! Tell me what you really think. That's what friends are for.”

I consider this, fully. “I think you two are bad for each other,” I say.

He stares back at me, catching a short breath.

“You *asked*,” I remind him.

I watch a film descend over his eyes. He retreats, he gets polite.

“I guess you're still on edge about your last break-up,” he says.

I fucking *knew* this would happen.

