

Mating for Life

by Katie Moore

Mari sits at the window seat, back-lit and glittering around the edges. Her face falls into shadow. Jason can't see her expression, but he can tell by the tight curl of the toes on her good foot that she's tense. Mari is in pain, her left ankle fractured in the accident. It's been reset, cast in fiberglass and booted. They've been assured and reassured that the bones will mend, skin will knit and scar, she'll walk without pain.

Mari thinks that's all fine and fucking dandy.

Jason's back has that same old cramp again, the paralyzing one. Right side, down low, hot. His face stings. He sits on the couch, curled head over knees, and regards himself in the partial mirror of their lacquered coffee table. Jason thinks he most closely resembles a waffle. Something in his neck feels wrong, but the pain there hasn't grown into its full potential yet.

He can't wait.

They are taking turns grumbling about the stupid-bitch-nurses at the E.R., the ineffectiveness of over the counter pain medications, and the rotten-junkie-pill-seekers ruining it for everybody else. They are also taking turns feeling sorry for themselves, and feeling sorry for each other.

Mari says, "If I had a Lortab, I'd give it to you."

Jason is looking at her with a scowl on his waffle face. He wants to be mad just because everything sucks today. He says, "You mean, if you had two you'd give me one."

"No, babe," Mari says, "even if I just had the one."

“Yeah?”

Mari says, “Yup.”

“Well...” Jason says, “That's love.”

