

Can't You Tell When I Get Lonely?

by Lara Hassan

"Can't you tell when I get lonely?", she asks.
"No", I say.

It gets awkward because she wants me to know when she gets lonely. I don't give her the attention she wants without realizing it. She moves away and stares at me for almost a minute while I sit motionless and look right back at her. The silence is embarrassing. She storms out.

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Ella.

Even without her in the room I can't say the words. They're in my mouth, ready. But I can't.

Do I go after her? I can't face another uncomfortable moment. I should go after her.

Oh my God. She's just outside the door. Could she have heard my thoughts? No. She's sleeping. How long did it take me to realize that I had to go after her?

I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Ella.

Now. Out loud.

"I'm sorry, Ella!," but I say it too loudly. It wakes her and she panics. Shit.

"Did you hear something?", she asks.
"No," I say. But she falls back asleep.

I take her head in my hands, carefully now, and put it on my thighs. I try not to wake her. Now I cross my legs.

She looks small in my lap. She smells of lotion mixed with my cigarette smoke. I stroke her hair and now notice the loneliness in her sleeping face. I bend my head forward and struggle to kiss her undeveloped widow's beak.

What was Abel thinking, dying on me like that? I don't know how to love her alone.

I'm sorry.

