

Rolls

by Laurel Landis

Just like everything else, Natalie thought going to the Home of the T-Bone Steak was her idea, because Natalie always thought good ideas were hers. I wondered if she was like that at work, too, though I told myself she was good at her job, because I had to have something I could latch on to as a reason to like my wife.

I have the sinking feeling she steals ideas at work too, the way she steals dinner rolls from restaurants and wraps them in napkins, putting them in her purse and taking them home, where they are not hoarded or saved. Nothing is ever hoarded in our house, everything is eaten. We will return home after two steaks, baked potatoes, salads and one dessert, hers, and she will load those rolls with pats of butter and put them in the microwave saying well, I brought them home, I guess I should eat them, and then she'll complain. Not about being full. Natalie's never full, but about the rolls tasting like store-bought rolls, not even home made, and if we stay up late she'll start in on the leftover bit of steak I brought home for my lunch tomorrow, stealing it quietly while I'm brushing my teeth so by the time I catch her it's too late, she's already started in on it.

Not Kobe beef, she says, certainly not the best she's ever had and what was that bill? I'll tell her sixty-four fifty without cocktails, my little joke, because we never have cocktails. Natalie swears she can get drunk off the scent of alcohol alone, even on someone's breath. It's one of the wonders of her intriguing and unusual bodily system, a system that supports three-hundred pounds of non-Kobe beef and store bought rolls, and a system whose only problem, to hear her tell it, would be that it can't keep her warm. It's like a really big house, she says proudly, you can have a huge furnace, one of those old spider kinds with the arms snaking all around the basement ceiling, but you're still going to need a little something extra for the spare rooms, heat wise.

And, she'll say, sixty-four dollars. It wasn't worth that. Next time, I'll pick the restaurant, she'll say. And then we'll go through the

whole charade again.

