

Always Too Late

by Lou Godbold

He was angry. I felt about fifteen again.

“Why now? Now that I'm married?”

I thought we needed to speak truth for once. “Can this be a vacuum, where we have this conversation and then we can go back to...?”

To his unhappy marriage with a non-simpatico wife and me with possibly one egg left to fertilize before menopause. It must be that, some trick of biology that makes me want him to weigh each breast in his hand like a raw steak.

“It's not that I'm not attracted to you, or that I don't love you. It's about the promises we make to people.”

But you promised me first! Always. You promised always. I see always in your eyes. Always is reading every word I write. Or is that just a handy signature line, like ‘best wishes’ or ‘have a nice life.’

“She was there. You weren't. It's as simple as that.”

So she gets points for snagging a lawyer who puts her kids through school but doesn't know his most intimate thoughts. I could have done that. Swapped a washer/dryer for honesty, traded matching bedding sets for intimacy. So it took me fifteen years to realize I loved you. I have issues. But I'm brave enough to speak the truth... Finally.

I launch myself alongside him in the chair, bury my face in his neck. “I love you.”

“I love you too. I always thought you were meant for me. But I can't be some specter from the past unable to let go. I have to move on.”

Is that your goal? To move on? Mine is to be loved and love in return. It's the return part that's difficult and now that I've finally managed it, you walk away, down the hill and into your compromise of a marriage.

Well, I got the truth. I am a specter. A ghost of love past. Always and eternally condemned to being too late.

