

Or Do You Love It?

by Meg Pokrass

She may have been jealous of me because I had a man. I never talked about him or about anything that had changed for the better. I didn't tell her that my bed had become a home again. A place to live.

On the walking path, people smiled at me, not her. Her jacket was playful and spotted. She was overweight, but in a nice way. She spoke often of her double chin. I didn't give a crap, we were friends. We always walked around the lake, every day toward evening we did, rain or shine.

The darkness was in early now, and she said she looked like a Holstein with her black and white jacket. I could smell Kahlua in the air, maybe just the holidays nearing.

A scribble of rain came down and pimped the lake — the mile loop around would soon be slick with silvery leaves from the trees.

“Are you afraid of lightening? Or do you love it?” she asked.

My boyfriend didn't trust her, he thought she said insane things.

“No, you don't know her,” I told him. I should not tell him anything about her, but I was starting to tell him everything about everything.

On our walk, she stopped right at the place where a tree had fallen in the Spring windstorm. There was nothing there now. The bare, exposed tree-roots, she said, smelled just exactly like her husband. She said “I smelled him, just before they hauled it away.”

Her husband died in a car, and after that she had gotten heavy. But she was not insane. Yes, she could be strangely honest. She was a woman who had become a ruined creature. I thought about men, how many there were and how none of them would likely thrive with her, or keep her upright.

Night herons hunched like old men around the shallows. Usually I didn't say anything, but I hoped to live in the water happy just like them, a driven love-hunting fool, gleaming in the wet.

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