By Misadventure

by XXXX

They met at a coffee shop at 2AM, when he was experiencing a ferocious bout of insomnia, and she realized too late that she did not have enough money for a cab home; and when they spotted each other through the glass, with he inside and she outside, she quickly began licking her fork obscenely, attempting to exhibit her sexual prowess with regard to the dexterity of her tongue and mouth, and he realized this was a good idea to her at the time because, judging from her redness and the general unseemliness of her appearance, she was drunk, perhaps beyond reasonable limits, even with regard to the unreasonable limits of people her age, on the slow climb toward thirty, toward an existential discontent that hounded her with a howling that grew steadier and louder with each passing day, along with the scratching of pens on paper, the swoosh of cars, the clatter of feet upon pavement, the low ambience of the world that never ceased unless she drowned it out with her own noise, produced duly by the spasm and gyrations through time and space she sometimes, with spite, called her life.

She choked, and he jumped to his feet to save her, ran out to the door and gave her the Heimlich, until she heaved, and when he was done, she looked at him, wiped the spit from the vicinity of her mouth, and said: “You like it rough,” and only then began to realize that a crowd had formed around them, by now with faces that betrayed disgust at the impunity with which she treated the fork's attempt at her life, but she was drunk and in front of her was a handsome man, perhaps in his thirties, with gel in his hair, the kind that shone in the lamplight, that kind that made people look much more decent than they actually were, which was precisely his intention, precisely what he required of himself when he woke up in the morning, looked at the mirror, and saw, instead of his body, the Word Made Flesh, the word being “failure,” or “shithead,” or “asswipe.”

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Sitting there on the sidewalk, there was a sense of destiny, as if they had been searching for each other for so long, and he looked into her bloodshot eyes as she coughed from her fork-scratched windpipe and said: “Are you ok?” and she said: “I think I am now.”