

At Risk

by S.H. Gall

During the first few months, I think we were both pretty afraid of being so in love. It's hard to invest oneself so fully in another.

Our fights weren't exactly epic, but the rage they embodied was massive, to the point of being inhuman. We were the last two woolly mammoths, locking tusks and writhing. It was stressful — our rage would last for days — and then the resolution was that much more satisfying. I wonder if this is how my parents viewed their marriage.

I remember two distinct scenes from my parents' marriage. One: Papa throwing a bottle of his favorite dressing, Thousand Island, at my mother in the kitchen. It shattered, and a silence lasting what seemed like about 17 years followed.

The other is of Papa in footie pajamas, crouched over in a chair. This is kind of odd, because I was the one wearing the footie pajamas, looking through the crack in the door — I don't know what he was wearing in his anguished crouch, sobbing as if helpless in the face of catastrophe. They were Smurf footie pajamas.

I don't know anything about the formalist aspect of psychology, or to be specific, why I remembered my father transfigured in my age-of-six footie pajamas.

Lately, we have been coming to terms with the reality that people who are in love have fights. It is not the end of the world, or even a big deal. "Hon," I said, "We should stop going to bed angry." I winced at my stupid cliché.

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