

# The Usual Story

It is the usual story. A man, a woman, a kitchen, a morphine pill. A brown plastic canister, small, with a white cap. Long brown hair, brown sloe eyes. A house, a visit, a winter's day, a stove. A winter's night, something smooth, actions taken.

A woman's voice that winds about the stem of itself the way a cat's meow winds about the meaning of its meaning. A man who will not speak his heart in any voice, not one old, nor one new, nor one borrowed. Nor one blue. A blue-eyed man desiring desire. A brown-eyed woman who comes to visit, stands at the kitchen stove, talking. She stands at the corner of the stove, the rounded corner of the stove exactly so high. The stove is cold. The man sees what is before him, sees her, what she touches, how she stands. He sees her hair, hanging to her waist. He sees her eyes. He hears her voice, winding around itself. He listens for certain things in her voice, certain certainties to be heard below her words, among her words, behind her words. He is certain he does not hear them.

He sees the afternoon light shining into the kitchen, shining on her back, her side, her face where she stands by the stove, the light shining in. He sees every part of her that he can see. There is nothing to be seen between her words, he looks and looks. He listens and listens. She has come to visit him, alone, in his home. She stands by the stove and talks. He waits, watching, looking, listening, but what he waits for does not arrive.

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The morphine is not for her. It is not for him, either, but he has stolen it. The person it was for has died, has no further need of dreams held under white caps in brown plastic canisters.

He, the one who has stolen the morphine, who rents the house and looks at the world through eyes of blue, listens to her as if she were a kitten purring, as if she were a time bomb ticking. As if the words behind her words would tell him what he wants to be told.

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Night. She is gone. He takes a morphine pill. In a little while, he throws up. In a little later while, he stands in the kitchen, where she stood, by the stove. It is cold. He stands the way she stood.

*She was right here. She stood just like this.*

He closes his eyes, opens his hands. He works, alone, in his kitchen, by the stove, in the dark winter's night, for a long time. It is a journey he is taking. He sees her with him; she is with him. He works for a long time; she stays with him. He works, journeying, working himself to exhaustion, beyond exhaustion. The morphine deadens the pleasure, deadens the pain. She is with him to the end. He almost hears her voice, winding catlike. He almost sees her long brown hair, can almost feel it, can almost see her brown sloe eyes. He has blood on his hands. He strains, lifting himself up on tiptoes. The brown plastic canister clatters to the floor, spilling its few remaining pills. He will wash his hands before picking them up. Later, he will barely be able to walk.