Anniversary

Hannah West

I take a breath and step into our kitchen. The walls had once been a pale yellow, but years of neglect and apathy had dulled them to a grey. My steps are quiet and unsure, as they have been for the past ten years, but now. *Especially right now*.

“Good morning honey. I thought I should make a surprise breakfast today,” she says without turning her face to me. I feel my stomach churning, had she heard me come in this morning? Surely she hadn’t heard me from *her* room; she shuts the door to me every night now.

“How thoughtful, dear,” the words were so foreign on my tongue, not my voice but a shadow of a younger man.

She keeps faced away from me as she steps to the fridge to get the eggs, they sit by their lonesome on the top shelf.

“I’m assuming one isn’t enough for you,” she says in a brisk tone, little beads of sweat pool on my forehead as she cracks two eggs and begins to fry them over the stove’s fiery hot oblivion. The eggs sizzle, warming the room.

My eyes are arrested by the black and white picture on the fridge door, of a nine week old peanut: a failed attempt to save our marriage three years ago…

I’m brought back as she pours my coffee, my eyes bulge on the one kt diamond sliding on her finger. *When was the last time she wore that ring?* The rise in my throat allows a small feeble laugh to escape, my hand runs through my salt and pepper hair.

“Nice ring.”

She pauses and says in a snowy voice, “Yes, I found it next to the bottle of Jack in the back of the cabinet last night...funny how these things turn out, huh?”

I feel my lungs contract, my throat runs dry, and my blood is ice. She must have heard, seen, or somehow found out. I see a decade of forced smiles, feigned innocence, and violent rounds of drinking go all to hell for a vivid lustful night. She must have realized it as well.

“How much sugar do you want in your coffee, I know you have a lack of restraint for it.” She underhandedly accuses me, pouring half a bowl of sugar in my cup.

“When will there be enough for you?!” She laughs, but it sounds all too high pitched.

“Now! Now, stop please!” I stammer. She whips around and once again her back is to me.

I can feel the bite in my throat rise, the obvious elephant in the room churning my stomach, my appetite turning to nausea. She places two fried eggs on my plate.

“I made biscuits, I meant to get our usual strawberry jam, but I got grape instead because I am sure you are open to trying new things.”

I’m sure if I open my mouth, I will vomit, so I nod and stare at the kitchen table.

“Cat got your tongue?” She sets the plate in front of me.

“Don’t worry, there’s sausage.” She walks over to the chopping board and brings it to me. She produces a cleaver from its wooden scabbard and right before my eyes, chops a single sausage link clean in half with the *meat cleaver.*

“You know why I’ve made breakfast for you…” Her eyes bore into mine.

“I-I do,” before I can stop myself, I choke out, “I’m having an affair, Liz.”

She says at the same time, “Happy anniversary.”