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God I should have left him so long ago. Why didn't I? It was too hard. Bank accounts, mortgages, divorce and lawyers and bills and—Jesus—I just froze. *Why is my life worth less than my mortgage? Get out, get out, get out Angela!*

I used to think I deserved it, that's how bad it was, that's how normal it was. I deserved whatever bullshit mini rage he cooked up.

Well I don't deserve it.

I didn't deserve it when he threw a jug of milk at my head. I almost called the cops on him but what, get him arrested for milk? It was a gallon of milk though. I had a bruise on my cheek and a neck I couldn't turn for a month. I'd called the cops before. Didn't help.

But still. I didn't deserve it when he threw me against the wall of our living room after the Super Bowl. I didn't deserve it when he smacked the veggie lasagna out of my goddamned hands.

I don't even deserve the look he gets in his eye when I can tell he's trying to decide whether I deserve it or not. That look. Wild. Lids flung open. Pupils wide like a coin. Jaw tense like it's cracking a nut, breathing through his nose like a bull.

Start: I'm living with a wild animal and that animal is a man.

He pointed a gun at me once.

He pointed a gun at himself once.

Yesterday.

He makes me sad and scared and I think he might be dangerous.

So tonight I leave.

My mother would be thrilled.

Liberating anger and defiance as she practices what she'll say to him. It's like she is saying it to him.

"HEY.

I'm leaving you.

Right now.

Because I can't do this anymore.

But more importantly... *you cannot do this to me anymore.*

You're angry, you snap, you yell and *you hurt me.*

For years, you did this and half the time you seemed to really enjoy it. Well. *You do not get that pleasure any more.*

I'm leaving you and I *cannot wait.*

You make me so sick. I'm sick thinking of how long I lived with this. How many times I went to bed with a bruise; how many times you broke my things; how many times I ducked and flinched and thought, 'I wonder if he'll kill me.'

Did you ever think that? No. You have no idea what that thought is like. You lived next to a flower, I lived next to a bomb.

So. Do not call me, do not email, do not force me to look at you ever again so I can start to forget *the decades of my life I wasted on you.*"

The wind really picks up now.

I said that to him. About an hour ago. Every bit of it.

He got pretty mad.

A different kind of mad than I'd ever seen before. This frozen kind of mad, like someone paused him. Like a calm before a... yeah.

The air felt instantly noxious. I just started to back away from him. "Get your keys, purse, charger—"

Then he said, "No. I go first." And he stormed out. And I thought, "Oh. Is that it? Maybe that's it. Maybe I'll leave my husband and go get Chick-fil-A for dinner."

Then the storm started. Because No. No, that's not *it*. Of course it's not.

I have lived with him for long enough to know...

That this was coming. What kind of complicity, what kind of brain-wash is that, holding that knowledge and doing nothing?

If he is who I am fast realizing he is... then who does that make me? Someone who lies to the whole world to make it all easier.

A loud jolt from upstairs, something banged, something heavy dropped.

I heard him let loose a yell from the other room. A yell like a shot moose, like a bear with a broken leg, like a creature dying. A raging moan, a train, a horn, a howl.

That's when I came down here.

My gun's down here.

He doesn't know I have a gun, I bought it a month ago.

End