

not emotionally involved with either one of them, seriously. (Now, as she pours herself some wine, she has his attention, the phone in his hand but lowered.) Though I liked them both. A lot. Which in a way made the whole thing even more confusing on a personal level, and you know, in terms of trying to figure out the morality of the whole thing, so I finally had this abortion completely on my own without telling anybody, not even my girlfriends. I kept thinking in my mind that it wasn't a complete baby, which it wasn't, not a fully developed person, but a fetus which it was, and then I would have what I would term a real child later, but nevertheless, I felt I had no one to blame but myself, and I went sort of out of my mind for a while, so my parents sent me to Puerto Rico for a vacation, and I got myself back together there enough to come home with my head on my shoulders at least semi-straight. I was functional, anyway. Semi-functional, anyway. But then I told everybody what had happened. I went from telling nobody to everybody.

EDDIE. This was ...

DARLENE. What?

EDDIE. When?

DARLENE. Seven and a half years ago.

EDDIE. That's what I mean, though; those feelings.

DARLENE. I know. I understood, see, that was what you meant, which was my reason for trying to make the effort to bring it up, because I don't talk about it all that much anymore, but I wanted you to know that when you said that about your daughter, I, in fact in a visceral sense, knew what you you were talking about.

EDDIE. (Leaving the phone on the coffee table, he moves to her, he embraces her.) I mean, everybody has this baggage, and you can't ignore it or what are you doing?

DARLENE. You're just ignoring it.

EDDIE. You're just ignoring the person. It really messed you up, though, huh?

DARLENE. For a while. But I learned certain things from it, too, you know.

EDDIE. (still holding her) Sure.

DARLENE. It was painful, you know, but I learned these things that have been a help ever since, so something came out of it good.

Begin

EDDIE. So these two guys.... Where are they?

DARLENE. Oh, I have no idea. This was in Cincinnati.

EDDIE. Did ... they know each other?

DARLENE. The two guys?

EDDIE. Yeah.

DARLENE. No. I mean, not that I know of. Why?

EDDIE. Just wondering.

DARLENE. What?

EDDIE. Nothing. Just ... you know.

DARLENE. You must have been wondering something.

People don't just wonder nothing.

EDDIE. No, no. I was just wondering, you know, was it a pattern? That's all.

DARLENE. No.

EDDIE. I mean, don't get irritated. You asked me.

DARLENE. (She breaks the embrace, grabs her glass of wine.) I mean, I was trying to tell you something else entirely.

EDDIE. I know that.

DARLENE. So what's the point?

EDDIE. I'm aware absolutely of what you were trying to tell me. And I heard it. But am I just supposed to totally narrow down my whole set of perceptions, just filter out everything, just censor everything that doesn't support your intention? I made an association. And it was not an unreasonable association.

DARLENE. (*crossing away to the couch*) It was totally off the wall, and hostile.

EDDIE. Hostile?

DARLENE. And you know it.

EDDIE. Give me a break! What? I'm supposed to sit still for the most arcane association I ever heard in my life, that levitation leads to dogs? But should I come up with an equally—I mean, equally, shit—when I come up with a hundred percent more logical association, I'm supposed to accept your opinion that it isn't?

DARLENE. No, no, no.

EDDIE. (*He is moving to her now.*) Well, that's all it was. An association. That's all it was.

DARLENE. Okay.

EDDIE. (*settling onto the couch beside her*) I mean, for everybody's good, it appeared to me a thought worth some exploration, and if I was wrong, and I misjudged ... (*embracing her*) ... then I'm sorry.

DARLENE. It's just something I'm very, sometimes, sensitive about.

EDDIE. Sure. What? The abortion?

DARLENE. (*irritated*) Yeah.

EDDIE. (*settling back into the embrace*) Sure. Okay, though? You okay now? You feel okay?

DARLENE. (*standing up, she bolts for the kitchen*) I'm hungry. You hungry?

EDDIE. I mean, if we don't talk these things out, we'll just end up with all this, you know, unspoken shit, following us around. (*following her*) You wanna go out and eat? Let's go out. What are you hungry for? How about Chinese?

DARLENE. Sure. (*In the kitchen, she is rummaging for something to nibble on.*)

EDDIE. (*heading back to the phone which is on the coffee table*) We could go to Mr. Chou's. Treat ourselves right.

DARLENE. That's great. I love the seaweed. (*digging open a bag of pretzels*)

EDDIE. I mean, you want Chinese?

DARLENE. I love Mr. Chou's.

EDDIE. We could go some other place. How about Ma Maison?

DARLENE. Sure.

EDDIE. (*running to the rolodex on the counter*) You like that better than Mr. Chou's?

DARLENE. (*increasingly irritated*) It doesn't matter to me.

EDDIE. Which one should I call?

DARLENE. Surprise me.

EDDIE. I don't want to surprise you. I want to, you know, do whatever you really want.

DARLENE. Then just pick one. Call one. Either.

EDDIE. I mean, why should I have to guess? I don't want to guess. Just tell me. I mean, what if I pick the wrong one? (*heading back to the coffee table and phone*)

DARLENE. You can't pick the wrong one. Honestly, Eddie, I like them both the same. I like them both exactly the same.

EDDIE. (*freezing*) Exactly?

DARLENE. Yes. I like them both.

EDDIE. I mean, how can you possibly think you like them both the same? One is French and one is Chinese. They're different. They're as different as—(*crossing back to her*) I mean, what is the world, one big blur to you out there in which everything that bears some resemblance to something else is just automatically put at the same level in your hierarchy, for chrissake, Darlene, the only thing they have in common is that THEY'RE BOTH RESTAURANTS!

DARLENE. Are you aware that you're yelling?

EDDIE. (*crossing back to the phone*) My voice is raised for emphasis, which is a perfectly legitimate use of volume. Particularly when, in addition, I evidently have to break through this goddamn cloud in which you are obviously enveloped in which everything is just this blur totally devoid of the most rudimentary sort of distinction. (*He is rooting through the rolodex as she rushes over.*)

DARLENE. (*Grabbing the phone, she sticks it into his hand.*) Just call the restaurant, why don't you?

EDDIE. Why are you doing this?

DARLENE. I'm hungry. I'm just trying to get something to eat before I faint.

EDDIE. The fuck you are. You're up to something.

DARLENE. What do you mean, what am I up to? You're telling me I don't know if I'm hungry or not? I'm hungry!

EDDIE. Bullshit!

DARLENE. "Up to?" Paranoia, Eddie. Para-fuckin-noia. Be alert. Your tendencies are coming out all over the place.

EDDIE. I'm fine.

DARLENE. I mean, to stand there screeching at me about what-am-I-up-to is paranoid.

EDDIE. Not, if you're up to something, it's not.

DARLENE. (*storming away toward the counter, the pretzels, the wine*)! I'm not. Take my word for it, you're acting a little nuts.

EDDIE. (Oh, I'm supposed to trust your judgment of my mental stability? (*He is advancing on her as she pours her wine.*) I'm supposed to trust your evaluation of the nuances of my sanity? You can't even tell the difference between a French and a Chinese restaurant!

DARLENE. I like them both. (*With her wine and pretzels she heads for the couch, flopping down on the S.L. end.*)

EDDIE. But they're different! One is French, and the other is Chinese. THEY'RE TOTALLY FUCKING DIFFRENT!

DARLENE. NOT IN MY INNER EMOTIONAL SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF THEM! }

EDDIE. (*He moves behind the couch, talking into the back of her head, then around to face her from the S.R. side.*) The tastes, the decors, the waiters, the accents. The ~~fuck~~ accents. The little phrases the waiters say. And ~~they~~ yell at each other in these whole totally different languages, does none of this make an impression on you?!

DARLENE. It impresses me that I like them both.

EDDIE. (Your total inner emotional subjective experience must be THIS EPIC FUCKING FOG!/I mean, what are you on, some sort of dualistic trip and everything is in two's and you just can't tell which is which so you're just pulled taut between them on this goddamn high wire

between people who might like to have some kind of definitive reaction from you in order to know!

DARLENE. Fuck you!

EDDIE. What's wrong with that?

DARLENE. (*leaping up, she turns to leave*) Those two guys. I happened to mention two guys! (*He grabs her, makes her face him.*)

EDDIE. I just want to know if this is a pattern. Chinese restaurants and you can't tell the difference between people! (*They stand, staring at each other.*)

DARLENE. Oh, Eddie. Oh, Eddie, Eddie.

EDDIE. What?

DARLENE. Oh, Eddie, Eddie. (*Moving to the armchair, she slumps down, her back to him.*)

EDDIE. What?

DARLENE. I just really feel awful. This is really depressing. I really like you. I really do.

EDDIE. I mean ...

DARLENE. What?

EDDIE. Well, don't feel too bad, okay?

DARLENE. I do, I feel bad. I feel bad.

EDDIE. (*Now, he sits on the edge of the couch, and leans toward her.*) But, I mean, just—we have to talk about these things, right? That's all. This is okay.

DARLENE. No, no.

~~EDDIE. Just don't—you know, on the basis of—
make any sort of grand, kind of overwhelming
comprehensive, kind of, you know, totally conclusive
assessment here. That would be absurd, you know. I mean
this is an isolated, individual thing here, and—~~

~~DARLENE. No.~~

END

~~EDDIE. (*Moving to the chair, he tries to get close to her, settles on his knees on the floor.*) Sure. I mean, sometimes what is it? It's stuff, other stuff; stuff under stuff, you're doing one thing you think it's something else. I mean, it's always there, the family thing, the childhood thing, it's—sometimes it comes up. I go off. (*And he really has gone off. He is a man coming back.*) I'm not even where I seem anymore. I'm not there.~~

~~DARLENE. Eddie, I think I should go.~~

~~EDDIE. I'm trying to explain.~~

~~DARLENE. (*Sliding away from him, she moves to the couch and her purse on the coffee table.*) I know all about it.~~

~~EDDIE. Whata you know all about?~~

~~DARLENE. Your fucking childhood, Eddie. You tol' me.~~

~~EDDIE. Whata you know?~~

~~DARLENE. (*She rummages through her purse, looking for something.*) I know all I—what is this, a test? I mean, I know: Your parents were these religious lunatics, these religious frauds, who periodically beat the shit out of you.~~

~~EDDIE. They weren't just religious, and they didn't just—~~

~~DARLENE. If your father was a minister, I know.~~

~~EDDIE. What denomination?~~

~~DARLENE. Fuck you. (*She bolts away to the armchair where her jacket hangs on the back.*)~~

~~EDDIE. You said you knew.~~

~~DARLENE. I don't think there's a lot more we ought to, with any, you know, honesty, allow ourselves in the way of bullshit about our backgrounds to exonerate what is our just plain mean behavior to one another.~~

~~EDDIE. That's not what I'm doing.~~

~~END~~