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THE WASHING BIN

DJ REINHARDT

Water hit the bottom of the empty bin, echoing off the hardwood floors in the house they shared. Anna was sitting on white tile in the bathroom with her arms draped over the side of the tub, head resting on the edge. The water rose and reached her fingertips. She turned it off. On every side of her - boxes. All shapes, sizes. Some opened, spilling white powder – blue specks scattered across the tile, gathered in heaps. Spray bottles, various sorts and strengths lay half used. Most broken – thrown.

Anna began to lift the heap of fabric from the washing basin. She held it gently, squeezing and rotating. With her eyes closed it sounded like rain. But again, when she opened them, the water was still tainted red.

Without looking, she reached behind her. Using a damp hand Anna grabbed a pile of powder. It leaked through her fingers as she shook the white and blue specs over the sheet. She pushed hard into the water and turned and turned and turned the fabric over until foam bled out and the tide she created settled.

She drained the water.

Anna ran new frigid water into the bin while the lifeless pile remained - seeping. She pushed the mound beneath the stream. It was a rhythmic motion – the rinsing. Water ran continuously as she lifted a piece of the cloth, and came down hard, pushing all the soap that was left out. Then turn. Again, lifting the heavy cloth. Pushing the suds out. Turn. Lift. Push. A sigh escaped from her mouth and before it could sound accomplished, she clogged the drain and let the cold water run into the basin. It filled and suspended the fabric. She grabbed and squeezed.

Again – the water was tainted red.

She drained the water.

“Annaaaaaa!” Her husband yelled from down the hall. “Get ready. We need to be going soon.”

She turned the water on hot this time and steam filled the room. Anna spread the fabric out across the glass surface. James opened the bathroom door.

“I don’t want to go James. Can’t we go another time?”

“Why don’t you want to go now?”

“I’m tired. It’s been a long day.” She turned the water off.

“It’s only noon.”

She began to lift and twirl the fabric. Thick droplets fell into the tub.

“I have so many things to do today.”

“...and you’re always tired.” More tenderly he added, “Darling, leave this alone. Get up. Have a shower. We need to leave at half past”. Anna reached behind her grabbing a bottle this time. She drizzled blue over the fabric.

“We can go next week, can’t we?”

“Anna.” James crouched down, close to the edge of the tub. “It’s stained.” He placed his hand on her shoulder. “We can just buy a new one.”

She dug into the ball of wet fabric and, again, began rotating it rhythmically. Push, lift, turn. “I could make us some lunch...” Push, lift, turn... “We could stay in and watch a film.” Push, lift, turn. “That would be better for us...” Push, lift, turn. “Wouldn’t it?” Push. As she thrustured down foam seeped. She turned the water on and let it run cold.

He turned it off.

“Anna, we’re going. It’s paid for.”

“You can drag me by the heels then.”

“Now, what’s this about? You’re anxious about what they’ll say, aren’t you?”

“No.”

“Do you hate the facility?”

“No.”

“They only want to help, dear.”

She reached for the water faucet. He grabbed her hand.

“After I’m finished with the washing,” She said quietly and pulled her hand away from him.

“Then we can go.”

“The washing never ends.”

“You try then.” She held the heavy drenched fabric out.

“I don’t want to try. Damnit, Anna! I want to go to this appointment. I want to buy a new sheet.”

“What if I don’t want to see what’s wrong?”

“Why wouldn’t you?”

“And I don’t want to buy a new sheet.”

“Well we certainly can’t use this one.”

“We’ve tried and tried and tired...” Anna calmly turned the water on and began rinsing again.

“And they can fix it,” James cut her off.

“I’m afraid it isn’t so simple.” She began to push and turn the fabric faster under the rushing water.

“Of course they can. They’ll just take a look -”

“What if there is no problem,” Anna said, pausing. The suds dissipated. She turned the water off and let the pile sit. She looked at him.

“Of course there’s a problem. Don’t kid yourself, Anna.”

“There doesn’t have to be. Nothing’s worked. And now, I figure if it’s supposed to happen...”

“So that’s it then?” James rose to his feet. “After all this, you’re leaving it up to chance?”

“Not up to chance darling, up to fate.” She clogged the drain turned the water on again, filling the tub.

“You’re just going to give this all up?”

“James, I can’t give up something we never had.” She turned the faucet off and clutched the sheet. Dangling it above the basin, she squeezed and closed her eyes. With the sound of rain, red spread like dye.