

Jeneane sighed and exclaimed “He just seems so distant now,” her head resting against the single arm of the red chaise lounge upon which she reclined. “He was so charming when we were younger,” she continued, “He would always tell me about how he loved the way my raven hair curled down to my shoulders, and almost every day he would compliment some tiny detail about the shape of my face or how I had done my makeup that day.” She paused for a moment and stared blankly at the ceiling for a few moments before adding “He’s never mentioned how pretty my hair is since it started turning gray. And I’m not sure he’s even noticed my crows feet taking shape, or the wrinkles starting to replace the dimples he would so often point out.”

“About how long ago do you think he started distancing himself?” asked the therapist, seated in an armchair a few feet from Jeneane, looking intently with his notebook in hand. “It’s hard to say,” she replied, “I suppose when he got that promotion five years ago. I think that’s about the time he started coming home lethargic, with that empty look in his eyes.” She turned to face the backrest of her chair and began to mumble inaudibly. “What was that?” she sighed again “Oh, nothing.” Jeneane said slowly, in a heavier tone this time.

“Don’t feel obligated to continue if you’re uncomfortable,” he explained “we’ll make more progress the more open you are with me, but we can talk about something else if you’d like.” She hesitated for a few moments before turning to face him. “I don’t really know what else to talk about. I haven’t had to work since we got married, he makes enough money that it doesn’t really matter, and I don’t have many friends that I keep in touch with.” The therapist probed “what about Children? You haven’t mentioned whether or not you had any.” Jeneane looked down toward her feet before admitting “We never had any. We often talked about it, but neither

of us ever had more than a half-hearted desire to raise them.” The therapist leaned forward very slightly and asked with a subtle shift to a calmer tone “And how does all of this make you feel?”

Jeneane looked back up at him and squinted her eyes. “Isolated,” she said before looking away at some indiscriminate detail of the room, her face frozen as she processed her response. “It’s so lonely in that house all day, and he’s so exhausted by the time he gets home that he hardly talks to me. So even when I’m not the only person in the house it still feels like I’m home alone.” The therapist leaned back in his chair and asked “Now why do you think you let yourself settle into that feeling of isolation?”

Jeneane immediately sat up, stared her therapist in the eyes with her head tilted gently to the side, and asked with a distinctly aggressive tone “are you suggesting I did this to myself? Have you even been listening? Why the hell would I choose to put myself into this situation?” He grinned smugly and replied “That’s what I’m asking *you*.” She stared through him, not sure what to make of his last question. Then, suddenly, she threw herself back against the chair and buried her face in her palms. She leaned forward again, her face still smothered by her hands, and began to sob. The therapist waited patiently for her to finish and look back up at him, her face just noticeably red. He said, smiling, with a tranquil, comforting voice “I think that’s enough for today, we’ve made quite a bit of progress. Will you be back next week?”