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The Divide

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"I really am sorry," Ryan whispers. The bed creaks as he leans toward Melissa. His lips brush above her shoulder blade. Melissa stares at the open closet; the divide where her clothes end and his begin is clearly defined by a yellow blouse. He had promised to be there, promised to see their daughter at her first recital, but work kept him until seven.

Melissa's fingers fumble for the lamp switch. Moving up the porcelain body, they trace the curve of its hip. Ryan reaches over her and switches off the light. When she feels his weight shift behind her and hears the swishing of sheets sliding against one another, Melissa lies down. Even in darkness, she sees the outline of his spine as it curves away from her.

Melissa hugs her arms to her chest, a boney substitute to Ryan's thick embrace. He *had* been apologizing since dinner. Their daughter hadn't even noticed his absence. He promised to be there next month.

She rests a hand around his hip bone and presses a cheek against his back. Ryan's hand falls on top of hers. Melissa rubs her nose into his shoulder, leeching the warmth from his body. There's a strange smell along his neck. It's fruity. She lifts her nose to his hair and breathes in.

Melissa rolls away from him, pulling herself up against the bed's edge. She sees that the yellow blouse, the dividing line, is just as visible in the dark.