Acting Sheepish

Kim Paul

*Iowa State University

Copyright ©2011 by the authors. Sketch is produced by The Berkeley Electronic Press (bepress). http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/sketch
that we didn’t mean it. As long as we could be together we would be happy. For a while.

But as the years would press on and our family would grow, our contentment would waver. We would drop any hope of going back to school or getting a better job and accept our positions as permanent. Our faces would struggle to hide what we would both know is true. But we would never say it out loud, never intentionally think it even. And we would continue our daily endeavors like nothing was wrong.

Only when Sara is acting out and we’re struggling to raise Damien and Erin; only when our bills are stacking up and we don’t money to pay them off; only have when each day seems longer than the last and things are getting totally out of hand would I let the thought ease in: What the hell happened?

I would come home everyday to find you waiting in the entry way to give orders, perpetually tapping your foot. You would never stop with that foot—each step pounding another nail in my coffin. You’d stand there with your shoulders slouch in, back bent as if the weight of the entire world was brought down upon you. Well, Atlas, I’d have news for you – You stay home while I do the real work. Why don’t you straighten up like you have an ounce of dignity?—that’s what I’d want to say. Except I would never bring myself to do it. I’d stay quiet, because the kids wouldn’t want to hear another fight. I’d kiss you like I might read a paper and smile as if for a camera. For the kids.

One day I would hear you crying in our room and enter. The question would freeze air. Do you love me?

Yes, I’d say but my hesitation would say more. We would both know now, no hiding it, no pretending. Not even for the kids.

We would die lonelier than we ever could have been on our own.

Our eyes meet as I approach Journey’s. With a pleasant smile and nod, I deny myself your perfect body. I return home alone and eat dinner with myself and the candelabrum for two. It’s best for everyone this way.

---

Taylor Sklenar is a freshman studying English and Chemistry. In his free time he enjoys acting, writing, spelunking, fighting dinosaurs, and making up creative past times. He looks for inspiration in everything around him, including nature, society, and his girlfriend, who is often his muse.

Acting Sheepish
Kim Paul