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Fish Eyes

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Fish Eyes

Jalyn Gilmore

I imagined jamming her into a roaring fireplace. She doesn't die though; otherwise, she'd leave me alone with our ugly ass daughter. I say 'imagined' like I've only done it once, like I don't picture it three or four time a day. Especially on days like today. She's out here hollering at me with that big sea bass mouth and those cut up horse teeth yet still managing to look like an ostrich that bit a moldy lemon and the juice squirted back into her glaring eyes. I swear that's all I hear, day in and day out, *SQWAK*, *SQWAK*, *SQWAK*!

She's at it right now, in my right ear as usual. She likes to wait until I'm driving because I can't walk away. I grip the steering wheel until my knuckles pucker and little beads of sweat swell up to the surface. The little sweat beads stink like old bitter melon and horseradish. But I think I'm the only one that smells them. I count the little beads; there's gotta be at least sixteen between both hands. Well, more like twenty-one? Or thirty? Am I counting the same ones over again?

"Watch out dumbass!" my lady screeches. And yes, dumbass is me. It's always me. But this time she's right.

I slam on the brakes and swerve in time to just miss a couple crossing the street; my baby in the back starts wailing like we really did crash. They're cursing and throwing hands up. The young fresh dude has his arms around his girl. Like he doesn't want her to die. His eyes dart from her to the car's hood up to me. He looks nothing like me, but then again he kinda does. Is that how I looked back before I met *her*? Back before I got dragged to that basement party I never wanted to go to? Back before our eyes met over red Solo cups in that grimy, smoke-filled

basement? Back before the condom broke? Back before? I dunno anymore.

The couple storms off like they're not grateful to still have legs, and I hit the gas. We're coming up on the railroad tracks we need to cross to get back to my place. I love that rundown piece of shit apartment. The train passes by so close it drowns her out for a couple minutes every night. But not now, not in this minute. The baby still crying, she still cussing me out.

“You stupid ass! You really trying to get us killed. You lucky I said something. Your dumbass really out here driving like your *daughter* isn't the car. It's always the same bullshit with you every time—”

I can't really hear the rest. Because here comes the train. I can't see it yet. The safety bar begins its slow descent, soon to be parallel with the tracks. The warning red lights flash like raving strobe lights in my eyes. My fingers grip the wheel. A single bead of sweat runs down the nape of my neck to the crack of my ass. My girl is screaming something—sounds like 'slow down' and 'what the hell are you doing' or something like that. The train's headlights come bearing around the corner and the low tenor horn blares its single sultry note. I hit the gas. The engine sputters then rips forward. The train's headlights wash over me, cleansing me anew. Cutting through screams and wails and epileptic-seizing heartbeats. Maybe finally I'll get some goddam peace and quiet.