

## Oil Spills

She pricked her finger on the blade's edge, blindly maneuvering her hand until it found the handle. She gripped the knife firmly behind her back, body tense, waiting, as she stared at her husband's back.

He was almost blinding to look at. The white of the boat paired with the white of his shirt created a glare, sunlight harsh in her eyes. The boat rocked them both, and she struggled to maintain her fighter's stance, knees bent, fist clenched around her weapon, as she swayed.

She didn't let herself look at the back of his neck, the skin there sweaty and glistening. She ignored his hair, dark and, she knew, soft, locks that she'd run her hands through countless times, brushed away from his forehead before kissing him. She knew she would fail if she looked at those things. She still loved him.

But even when they'd first met, she had always suspected he was one of Them.

They had arrived on Earth decades ago, when she'd been a little girl. The grainy television screen in her living room had announced their arrival, and the violence that followed. Over time, her race had appeared to succeed in eradicating Them.

But everyone knew that some of Them still lingered, hiding, assimilating, slipping into society. They often went undetected. The only thing that differentiated Them was their blood, said to be an unnatural color.

When she'd met him, she'd ignored the signs. Her sector was "clean," each inhabitant already screened, and she told herself this was why she had been so negligent, so naive.

But it was more than that alone.

He had money. She'd known this before ever speaking to him. It shaped the way he carried himself, confident but never haughty. And after a lifetime spent living like an animal, in a rickety dirt house with a litter of siblings and cousins and aunts and uncles, the money made him magnetic.

A life with him had been built on something shallow: they married quick, said vows in the courthouse. A married life with him built her into something else entirely.

She did yoga each morning in Lulu lemon leggings, the expensive kind that she used to stare at, longingly, in the Sunday advertisements. She stretched her body in a room with a wall of windows, sunlight warming up a red-tiled floor with a heat she could feel pleasantly underneath the soles of her feet. She drank coffee out of a ceramic mug, while curled up, lazily, in an armchair.

She hosted dinners where none of the food served was cooked by her. They were the kinds of events where she would bustle around the house in fancy outfits, her heels clicking as a flurry of decorators and caterers ran after her, fearfully asking for her approval.

She would go shopping, often. Life with him meant buying glittery evening gowns and silk blouses and designer denim. There were knee length black skirts, rounded and prim, the "perfect cut for her shape." Her "shape" suddenly had a use, it seemed. No longer was being rail thin, ribs out, gaunt cheekbones, a sign of gutter trash. Now at those parties guests would tell her "My,

Mrs. Lewis, you look striking. Tell me, how do you keep the weight off?” Sometimes they would call her “Mrs. John Lewis” and she found she liked that best. It hid her name entirely, tucked her identity into his.

Their backyard had a pool, and she spent less time swimming in it than she did simply staring at it. The azure water would remind her of a different backyard, full of dead, yellowed grass and children in ratty clothes, and one stray mutt they could never seem to shake. She’d remember how they would drag a large metal tub into the backyard in the summers. She’d remember the feeling of icy hose water against her skin, and what it felt like to touch rusty metal.

He was funny, and thoughtful. He listened to her complainants, even the stupid ones, and for some reason he thought she was beautiful. They’d been happy enough.

But he never shaved in front of her. He would only chop vegetables when she was in another room, and he thought she couldn’t catch him if he slipped and cut himself. He grew anxious if she mentioned the War, and how deeply she hated Them. She’d watch him squirm when she’d mention how They’d killed an uncle of hers, one of the few good ones she’d had. He would never reveal himself, she knew. But she couldn’t live married to a possible monster forever. So there they were, out in the ocean, isolated, per her plan. She wouldn’t hurt him. Just a slash, somewhere on the body, to prove his innocence.

She adjusted her grip on the knife, and lunged forward, and just as her blade sliced his arm, he turned and stabbed her in the stomach.

The knife dropped from her hand as she stumbled back, gasping. Her back hit the boat’s edge as she pressed both hands to the wound in her stomach, trying to stem the blood flow. She gazed, horrified, at the red fluid dripping from the cut in his arm, staining his shirt.

“You, you’re one of them,” she said. “A Human.”

He was silent, still clutching his own weapon. He looked on as her own blood, black and oily, began to drip down her clothes, forming a small puddle at her feet. It twinkled in the sunlight, rainbows, a kaleidoscope of reds, yellows, and greens, on its surface. She looked at it, disoriented, lost.

And then he moved closer, stepped in the puddle of sludge, gripped her shoulders tightly. “I’m sorry,” he said. She was shoved over the edge of the boat, dropping into the ocean.

She began to sink, her body going under, her blood flowing out of her and away, up to coat the water’s surface, to gleam in the sunlight.