

DENISE

## WHAT SHE'S UP TO

—Hey, he says, in the darkness, and she jumps.

—What are you still doing up? she asks. The clock reads 2:45.

—I was waiting for you.

—You scared me.

—Where were you?

—I was out with some people from work, she says. —Having a beer.

—You don't even like those people.

—Some of them are OK.

—They're fake.

—How do you know? You don't even know them.

—I've been in the store. I've seen them.

She puts her bag down, squints at the shape on the couch that is him. Her fingers find the light switch but she does not flip it. —What's with you tonight, anyway?

—I just wanted to see you, he says.

—You could have waited in the bed, she says. —It freaks me out, you waiting up for me like this.

—Why?

—What *why*?

—Just *why* is all.

—It's like you're my *dad* or something. I don't need another dad.

—Don't you?

—No.

—Little lost girl.

—Don't start with that.

—Poor little girl all alone.

—Don't, she says. —I mean it. I'm sick of that.

—Come here, he says.

—Are you fucked up? she asks.

—Nah, he says. —I had a couple of beers. That's all. Come here.

—I don't think so. You're acting really weird. I don't like it.

—I just missed you.

She doesn't say anything.

—Did you have a good time? he says.

—Sure, she says.

—You don't normally stay out so late, he says.

—I just—. She takes her hand off the light switch and turns around, heads into the kitchen, looking for water. The apartment is hot. She opens the refrigerator and peers inside. —I got caught up in talking to someone, she calls.

—Who?

She twists the top off of a plastic bottle and drinks. —Nobody, she says.

—Nobody.

—Just—just this guy. I met him before, in the fall. He's doing this interview project. Interviewing people about their jobs and stuff. He interviewed me once

before and I thought of some more stuff I wanted to say. That's all. She takes another swig from the bottle.

—You could have called me, he says.

—What? she says.

—From the bar. You could have called me. I would have come out.

—But, she says. —I was just going to go for like one drink.

—You're ashamed of me, he says.

—What? No.

—You are, he says. —You never invite me out when you do stuff with your work friends.

—That's— she says, —that's because—

She sighs and heads back into the living room. She crouches down in front of the couch, knocking over beer bottles with her knees. They roll off towards the wall. She takes his hands in hers. He doesn't look at her. He keeps his head turned away.

—Listen, she says. —Those people aren't my friends. That's why I don't invite you. It's boring. We just talk about work. You wouldn't be interested.

—I'm interested in you, he says. His voice is practically a whimper. —I just want to know what you're up to.

—I'm not up to anything, she says.

—You are, he says.

—I'm not, she says.

—When you're not here, he says, —when you're not here it's like I'm nothing.

—You're not nothing, she says.

He looks at her and his body begins to jerk.

—You're not, she says. —You're not. She holds him to her.

His mouth is next to her ear. —I love you, he whispers. —I love you so much.

—I love you too, she says.