



Vanessa Marsden

*Untitled*

There was a time when I would have done anything for you. I remember how, one afternoon when you were gardening, I watered a row of transplanted flowering shrubs for what seemed time out of time itself. I was bored, but you had asked me to, and I wanted to do a good job for you. That's what mattered most to me.

You used to devour books, and maybe that is where my love of them comes from – from watching you. I remember that one day, we spent our time reading in your worn black leather chair – mine now is no compare to it. It is worn and old, but not in the same way. The holes that fleck it have been picked at over time and my chair looks spotted, diseased. But your chair somehow seemed to get more comfortable with age, like all men who age well, and women who don't.

I don't remember how my disenchantment with you began. I never used to listen to her when she would tell me about you from her perspective. You once went to San Francisco together, and I was told about how you argued and argued that you didn't have enough money to buy her a beautiful glass tree, yet the hammock you bought was not an issue. That was out of my experience, though; it was before my time with you, so I made up excuses for you: maybe you were having a terrible day, maybe you were tired. It didn't matter.

I open my eyes and look around at my apartment. Against the wall, by my bright red bicycle lies the memory of us at the park. When I was tired of riding, you took my bike from me and rode it so I could walk leisurely, but somehow, somehow, you ended up behind me on a hill. I didn't even see you coming, but I was running by then. You still overtook me, and somehow, some way, ran right over me.

Above the bikes, where my old licence plates hang on the wall, I am reminded of our long car trips and of how I used to wear sunglasses and pretend to sleep for hours. By then, I didn't even like the sound of your voice. From the nook in the corner springs the memory





of the day you got mad at me – what for I can't recall – but you squeezed my arms and shoved me against a wall, trapping me with the bulk of your body. Why? What for? I was scared, couldn't even look at you. You must have thought I was ashamed.

I look behind me at a little hand-made frame on the bookcase with "You are my sunshine" stitched into it and am brought back to our old street – a quiet little side street – and our big old house with the radio tower you built. I remember that one day you surprised me with a telescope, and that night we climbed up the tower with it and tried to distinguish one star from another from a planet. It was warm that night. My nightdress was just perfect and the breeze I found refreshing for a time...

A small Flintstones photo album lies on the top shelf too. It is covered in dust and the edges are frayed, but I know it still protects all the pictures I have from the day we went mushroom picking in the park. On the shelf above that sits my own little tree. Though not made of glass, looking at it reminds me of the one she bought in San Francisco despite your protests.

I never realized what a strong woman she was. I let my adoration and love of you cloud my mind and shield it from negative judgments of you. Even now, not enough time has passed and thoughts of you permeate my mind, though only on occasion.

I can feel my eyes becoming heavy and sore, so I look out the window, away from my tree. I try to live and let live, but sometimes, all I want is to think about you and to try to figure out why our relationship failed. I don't like to think about how you accuse everyone except yourself, or about how condescending you can be, or about how much you love control. I know you are doing what is best for you, in the best way you know how, so I'll continue to think about kite flying and rock collecting so that, somehow, I can forgive you.

