

Reconciliation

I stand in the galley kitchen of my vacation condominium where dishes lay stacked in the sink from an earlier breakfast. A petite curly-haired woman sits at the bar-high countertop. We have been friends for more than twenty years, have conversed through phone or email, but I have not seen her in at least a decade.

I stare wide-eyed, shake my head, blink, and rub my eyes to clear the fog from my mind. How is this possible? “I need wine.” I pull a chilled bottle from the refrigerator.

“You always needed alcohol when thing didn’t go your way.” Her voice seems agitated. “You drink too much.”

I felt slighted and glare at her. “Shut up.” I pour more than I intended into a tumbler and raise it. “Cheers.” I walk out onto the shaded veranda and stretch out on a plush blue and white checkered lounge chair. The crash of ocean waves releases its pungent tangy smell. I take a deep breath of sea air.

My friend slips down on the chair next to me and looks to the sky. “The clouds,” she points, “they come together to form an angelic shape like a Seraphim. Can you see its feathery wings extend against the sky? It hovers as if waiting for someone.”

“Are you trying to tell me something?”

“Just an observation.”

“I enjoy it here. I came early this year to reflect.”

“About what?”

“You—mostly.”

She explodes in laughter. “You are such a hypocrite. You’ve never given another thought

to anyone in your life.”

“At least I didn’t need anti-depressants to keep my balance.”

“You always were good at twisting the knife.”

I take a large sip, swallow, and then with a smirk say, “Maybe if you had stayed in touch more frequently my critical disapproval would have averted your consequence.”

“So you could play the hero?”

“I guess we’ll never know.”

She bows her head. “I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

“For not being a stronger person.”

“We were all aware of the situation. It didn’t take a genius to see the end game.”

“Do you hate me?”

“No—just—”

“What?”

“Disappointed.”

She rises and moves to the edge of the veranda. “I suspect everyone was disappointed.”

“Do you blame them?”

“It was my own doing. Not influenced by another’s point of view.”

“Any regrets?”

“What can yesterday do for me?”

Prolonged silence lingers before I ask, “Did it hurt?”

“I don’t remember.”

“Would you do it again?”

“Probably. Do you hate me?”

I twirl my wine. “Are you in pain now?”

“No.”

“I can’t begin to understand, but I don’t hate you.”

She returns to her seat.

I wipe a tear from one cheek. “I wish—”

“I know.”

“Will you be all right?”

“Yes.” There is a long pause. “I have to go.”

“Can you come back?”

“No.”

I look to the horizon. The sunset emits streams of yellow, orange, and red reminiscent of Monet’s *Sunset in Venice*. High above, the winged angel has dissipated.

I turn to face my friend, but she has vanished. I rise and walk over to the banister, smile, and then pour the remainder of my wine onto the rocks below.

“I’ll be all right too, my dear.”