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Warnings We Do Not Heed

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1, 760 Words

The Last Argument We Had

The glass shattered against the wall sending wine and broken glass crashing to the dining room floor. Natalie didn't care -- not about the wine. Nor the stain left on the wall. Not even the broken wine glass.

Scott did and immediately got up to clean the mess.

"Don't," Natalie said. "I'm not done with you."

Scott crouched beside the broken pieces, picking shards gently off the floor. "Fine. But if you need to throw another glass, at least aim for the curtains so they'll match the wall."

She hated him for trying to be funny at a time like this. She hated herself more for nearly laughing -- though, honestly, it would've been more from frustration.

The letter from the outpatient surgery center sat on the table like an anchor between them.

The letter. That damn letter. Addressed to him. Reminding him to make a follow up appointment so they could verify he was in good health -- and to ensure the vasectomy he'd had had, indeed, taken, post-procedure.

Natalie picked the letter up again, reading it despite having done so more than a dozen times. "Say it. Say it out loud," she demanded.

Scott remained crouched, picking glass gingerly from the floor. "Natalie, let's not do this. What's done is done."

"Say it, dammit! Tell me!"

He stood carefully. A shard of glass pricking the palm of his hand, leaving a shallow cut and a trickle of blood. "I had a vasectomy six weeks ago. I didn't tell you."

She crumpled the letter in her hand and threw the ball of paper at him. "You had a fucking vasectomy!"

"Yes."

"Six *weeks* ago!"

"Yes."

"While I was out of town."

"Yes."

"And you didn't tell me."

"Yes."

"Even though we'd agreed we'd try again!"

He closed his eyes and sighed. "No, I don't believe we agreed."

That made her angrier than had he tried to justify what he'd done. "Look at me, dammit!"

He did.

"You sat there! Not even two weeks ago in the doctor's office. You sat right there next to me while Dr. Mellish explained how it was possible to get pregnant again under the right circumstances. If certain conditions were met."

"Yes."

"You held my hand."

"Yes."

"You asked questions."

"Yes."

"You let me think we could try again. That we could still have a child."

Scott walked to the sink, dumping the broken glass into the trash along the way, and washed the cut out of his palm.

"We agreed to try again," Natalie spat.

"No. That decision had already been made. By you. By your body. By all the abuse you'd put yourself through long before I had any say. There was never going to be a baby."

"Fuck you!" Natalie screamed, grabbing the other wine glass -- the one Scott had been drinking from, still half full of wine -- and hurled it at his head.

Neither moved nor spoke for a moment.

"Natalie, it wasn't right. You knew it wasn't right. Your body wasn't going to let it happen. The doctor made that clear, but you weren't listening. It was possible to get pregnant, sure, but the chances your body could carry a child to term was highly unlikely. Thus the first miscarriage. And the second. And the third. You know it wasn't possible."

She was tempted to throw the bottle at his head this time. "I know no such thing! Plus, it's my body! It's my choice. You had no right."

Scott had had enough. "No, it's *NOT* just your choice! Not when it takes two to get pregnant. Not when there's a baby involved. Not when it's a decision that could alter both our lives. Especially when that decision includes the risk of losing both your life and the baby's in the process. You nearly bled out last time or have you forgotten?! You would've too if I hadn't found you curled up on the bathroom floor, refusing to call for help and insisting you were still pregnant. So, NO! It isn't just *YOUR* choice! No matter what your feminist-bullshit ideology says."

"Well, look whose finally decided to grow a pair after having them cut off?! Is that how it's gonna be now, Mr. Tough Guy?!"

He held still. He stayed calm. "Natalie. Is what I did any different than what you've been doing for over a year now?"

"What are you talking about? I didn't get any vasectomy, or whatever the female equivalent is! What did I do?"

"You stopped taking your birth control, intentionally, without telling me and got pregnant. Then, after the first miscarriage, you didn't start them up again like you said you had. Even though I'd specifically told you I didn't want to risk your life by trying to have another baby naturally. That we could find alternative methods -- like adoption."

"What are you talking about?"

"Let me say it clearly. Over a year ago, you purposely got pregnant claiming it was "an unexpected accident" even though you were on birth control. Or so you said. Then you had a miscarriage. After that, you said you were back on birth control, but you never went back on like you said. Then you got pregnant again, claiming, oh me, oh my, it was an another miracle accident. Saying it was because your hormones were out of whack or some such thing. But then, golly gee, what happens just two months later? You become pregnant a third time. Because you didn't go back on birth control like you said! And had another miscarriage that almost put you in the ground."

"I did no such thing. And they were all... accidents. I *was* on birth control."

"Don't lie. We've been married twelve years. I know your habits and moods better than you do. I may've been slow on the uptake this year, but I finally came around to seeing what you were doing."

"Such as!?"

Scott stared at her. "Do you think I'm naïve? Or have you just lost all respect for me? I know you haven't taken birth control pills for over a year now. You said you were, but you haven't been. Because you lied. You stopped taking them long before the first pregnancy and never went back on them. Not the entire time – even though you full well knew the risks."

Natalie stared at him. "None of that's true! How dare you accuse me of that."

"How dare I? I admit I'm an idiot for wanting to believe you. Who trusted you. Who worried and loved and cared for you after every single miscarriage. I even

wanted to believe they were accidents. But a part of me knew from the start what you were doing.”

“Which was?”

“Come on, Natalie. You kept after me – wanting to have sex all the time. More than even when we were first dating. Even after that first miscarriage. At the time, I convinced myself you were just trying to reassure yourself. Or make sure that I still desired you. Or, heaven forbid, trying to comfort me. Or even block out the pain and disappointment. But then I realized what you were actually doing. You were trying to get pregnant. Even though we’d agreed not to try again because it was too dangerous. We agreed we could adopt instead.”

“I...” she started to say. “Oh bullshit!”

“Don’t lie! I checked your birth control prescription in the bathroom. All the pills are still there from over a year ago. You haven’t taken a single one. I even checked with the pharmacy and confirmed you haven’t refilled your prescription for over a year. Not once! So don’t tell me you weren’t making decisions for yourself, on your own, that affected the both of us.”

She couldn’t accept what he was saying. “Listen, you prick, don’t try to turn this around on me! This is about you getting a vasectomy without telling me. *YOU* made that decision without me and took *MY* choice away!”

Natalie took a breath and realized this could very well be the last argument of their so-called dream marriage – a bitterly contested debate over their failure to have children. “You have no right to accuse me of anything after what you’ve done.”

“Yes. I do.”

“Like hell you do.” Natalie stared straight at him, wanting to fight more, but not knowing what else to say. Because she saw something new in his face – something she’d never seen before. Plain as day like she was a fortune teller. His love had just turned to resentment. And whatever care he felt had become spite.

This is the moment, she thought, when he no longer loves me. This is when he leaves me. The thought scared her more than she was willing to admit, but her anger covered it up. She was the wronged party after all! So fuck him! If anyone was going to fall out of love first, it'd be her.

But Natalie couldn't hold his stare any longer and was the first to look away, realizing she didn't want to face what was about to happen. Or let him be the one to walk away, demanding a divorce. "I'm going to bed," she said. "We'll talk about this in the morning when I can stand to look at you again. Don't even think about joining me upstairs until you're ready to admit you were wrong and apologize."

Scott stayed quiet, watching her as she took a step toward the door, waiting a beat to see if he'd stop her. If'd he break and give in. That maneuver had often worked for her in the past -- no reason to believe it wouldn't work again. She knew he couldn't stand when she was angry with him and would come crawling to make peace. But not this time apparently. He just stared silently after her.

Natalie quickly walked out of the room heading upstairs – thinking how sad it was his child would never grow inside her. Or possibly any child. How she would never have a family of her own. Or a husband who was her knight in shining armor again. And it made her feel bitter. Because he should believe her. He should fight for her. He should give her whatever she wanted to make her happy. That's what a husband did.

"Good night," she called from the top of the stairs, giving him another chance.

No answer. Just the sounds of him cleaning up the shattered glass off the dining room floor.

The End.