

The Man Whose Wife Lived in His Neck

by Bill Yarrow

This is the story of the man whose wife lived in his neck. Every morning, he would turn to her and say, "Hello, Sweetheart. How was your night?" and she would answer, *Brilliant! What else?* by which she meant she didn't sleep a wink but rather thought unceasingly through the long darkness and solved each of the problems he would face during his day. In that way, he was protected from harm, and affection toward her swelled in his heart. What a comfort to have his wife not even a muscle away from his attention. Their marriage thrived, but unlike other successful ventures in the world, this one was never in danger of collapse. There would be no shift in interest or intent. Symbiotic happiness was the key, for he continually manipulated and massaged her, touching her where she ached to be touched, kneading her where she needed to be kneaded. Then one day, she informed him that she wanted to move.

"Where?" he asked.

To the other side, she answered.

"It won't be the same over there," he cautioned, and it wasn't. From over there, he neither looked nor sounded the same. Something in him had altered and not for the better. She began, though the descent was gradual, to sleep lower and lower. She rested in his shoulder now where he was meatier and where it was harder for him to hear her breathing. Her protection thinned to a threadbare covering, more irritant than asset. He wanted to dig into her, but she was impossible to reach, so deep had she sunk into him. Would it only be a matter of time until she completely dissolved and joined the others in his blood? Who would he look to when, in pain, he

twisted and itched? Suddenly, he felt something behind him. She had turned the corner and lodged just below the hair on the back of his head. That felt just perfect. That felt just right. That just felt fine. "Hello, Sweetheart," he said. "How was your night?" *My night? How was my night? Dazzling! Just dazzling!*

