

Glue

by Charles Huschle

The glue holding them together was based on the delight of hatred, a rose cream with a peanut butter texture. The massing of years of unspoken, carefully nurtured resentments rose above their heads like cumulus clouds. A bullet wouldn't be enough to destroy them. There is no cement stronger than the one holding a miserable couple together. I told them this, and wondered idly why, between our meetings, they didn't do the homework I assigned them. You know: speak to each other as if you're interested, repeat back to each other what the other has said, notice when you become defensive; listen, listen, and then ask questions, like "Are you saying that ___?" and then attempt to understand in your own words, like "I hear you saying that ____" and follow them with I-statements like, "And I feel ___ when you say that ____."

If you have any luck, the yarn the two of you have so carefully woven will begin to unravel. But you won't have any luck. Did I say that to them? Because they tasted so good, I hated myself. Some people are bent on their own destruction.

I wanted to tell them that I was glad, in a resenting kind of way, that they were paying my salary. But I was beginning to feel under my own ribs the pain they must have carried in theirs. I wanted to say that the palms of my hands became damp when they avoided each other's eyes and didn't talk. At the end of their last session, I told them where to find a cheap moving company, and the man, the ex-husband-to-be, looked at me and grinned and said, "Ah, you're a full-service therapist," and he got up and left me and the wife. "Sorry he was so rude and nasty," she said. "It's nothing," I said. "I'm just trying to be helpful."

