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Sleeping with Edith



Earlier, Edith had slid open the bedroom window to let in the first night air since spring. The calls of fall were in the air—a cool sky, the crisp half-moon, and a pleasantly warm breeze. “Good sleeping weather,” John had proclaimed. “Good dreaming weather,” Edith had replied. The moon spread twilight through the room; the radio/alarm tinged the white with blue. With sheet and comforter pulled to his neck, John lay sprawled on his back, gently snoring. Somehow, John always managed to attract all of the covers. On their own, they wriggled under, wrapped around, and piled on top of him. Edith slept curled up next to this insulated furnace; he was her breezebreak, heating pad, and pillow

Suddenly, Edith sat bolt upright in bed. She threw her hands to her face—fingertips on her forehead, palms on her cheeks. Slowly she pulled them down her face, dragged down her jaw, gasped in a breath, her body trembled. Her hands came to rest on her chest, palms on her breasts, her mouth still side open. She let out her gasp; her head fell onto her chin, her body still quivered. Her head snapped back up. She twisted to her left, into John. She came up on her knees, reached out—found John with her fingers. Her hands ran up his covered chest, onto his shoulders, and then down under the covers into his underarms. She dug her fingers in and started shaking him. And almost screamed, “John, John. Wake up. Wake up. I’ve had a dream. Oh my God! It was terrible, John. I was old! Wrinkled and grey I was old! Oh, John. Wake up. Wake up!”

He threw up his arms, grabbed the ends of his pillow with both hands, jerked out of Edith’s grip, rolled over onto his left side, pulled the pillow down onto the right side of his head, and held it down with his forearm. “Go to sleep, Edith!” “Oh, good. You’re awake!” “My mistake, Edith. Go back to sleep—please?” “I wasn’t asleep, John, I wasn’t. That’s what I’m trying to tell you. I was dreaming. It was horrid. I’ll never go to sleep again. I was old. I left the car parked in the front. Later, I went out back and couldn’t find the car I forgot that I had parked it out front. I couldn’t call you, John, I couldn’t remember your office number I called the police, but they never came. I was scared. There wasn’t any gas in the car What if that made the car thief mad, and then he came back to get me? And, the police never came ”

From under his pillow, now fully awake, John cut her short. “Edith, you’ve forgotten where you’ve parked the car before. You’ve called the police for that reason twice this year Can you blame them for not coming? Don’t worry Go to sleep.” “See, John. It is coming true. I am getting old and forgetful. I’m

getting what's-his-name's disease. It's happening. I'm losing my memory "

"Edith! You never had a memory It's nothing new Don't worry about it. Go back to sleep "

"I can't, John. Not ever I was turning 40." "Edith, you are 40!" "See, John, see. It's a prophesy Dreams are prophetic. They are, John. I read that. I remember I remember reading that, John."

"Okay, okay, Edith. Dreams are prophetic, I believe you. Now, please, please let me go back to sleep."

John pulled the pillow tight down onto his head.

Edith released her grip from the pillow and rocked back and away from John. She was still on her knees, her butt on her calves, her back erect. The moonlight shimmered on John's back, on the pillow over his head, and on across the bed. Edith fell onto his back, burying her face into the pillow sobbing. "John, will I forget you, the kids, their names, even their faces?" John twisted his neck, his shoulders, then twisted again. his shoulders, his back. Edith suffocated him. He gasped for a breath, pivoting his hips. He twisted again, hard, swinging his legs so that he turned onto his back, facing Edith. The pillow pressed on his chest, Edith on the pillow looking down into his face, moonlight bathing them both. John pulled her tight, sliding his palms down her sides and his fingertips up her back. Edith smiled. Blue light, pale white light caught the tears trailing down her cheeks, down the side of his neck, making a puddle on the sheet. Still gazing down at him, she managed a big, full-bodied smile. Almost laughing she poked him, "You get the wet spot now " Then, softly, "John?" "Sleep, Edith. Let's go back to sleep. You only had a bad dream." "John," she persisted, "how do you know that this isn't a dream right now, this minute? Maybe we're dreaming this." John pulled up his left leg, curled his right in, twisted to his right, turned, and eased Edith over and off of him and onto her back. He sat up, pulled the cover up onto her, leaned over and lightly kissed her on the cheek. "Pinch yourself, Edith. If you wake up, this is a dream; if not, go back to sleep." "Can I pinch you, John?" "It's your dream, Edith. Good night." John slid down into the covers next to her and nuzzled into her neck.

Suddenly, she sat bolt upright again. "John. It was horrid dream. You were in it, too. You were impotent." John jumped out of bed, grabbed his pillow on his move up, and ran for the door

Edith pulled the comforter up, settled herself back onto the bed, and turned toward the breeze. The moon lit up her smile and the big pearl tears that wandered down her cheeks.