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## SEEN1

Abigial Long

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We bought a condo, just down from the Santa Monica pier, and spent many late nights talking on our balcony and gazing out onto the sleepy ocean. The lights of distant ships sailed across the black horizon as we charted the course for our new life together. We both wanted children, and given our age, we decided it best not to wait.

Spring came and went, and our dreamy conversations about parenthood grew increasingly tense, as if Aphrodite were eavesdropping from inside our sliding glass door, ready to curse our fertility for presuming too much. We tried everything in the course of that next year, but to no success. You were heartbroken

and shunned my attempts to comfort you. You grew distant and depressed, and slowly retreated into your own silent world. Left in my solitude, I struggled to read between the emotional lines. Perhaps we would never have children of our own, but after all, wasn't it out of our hands? And why would you pull away from me at a time like this?

One morning, you were sulking over a cup of coffee. "I can't teach anymore," you said desperately. "It's too painful to bear." Your eyes were swollen and red. I pulled up a stool next to you and you melted into my arms. Our sadness slowly turned into passion and we made love like newlyweds.

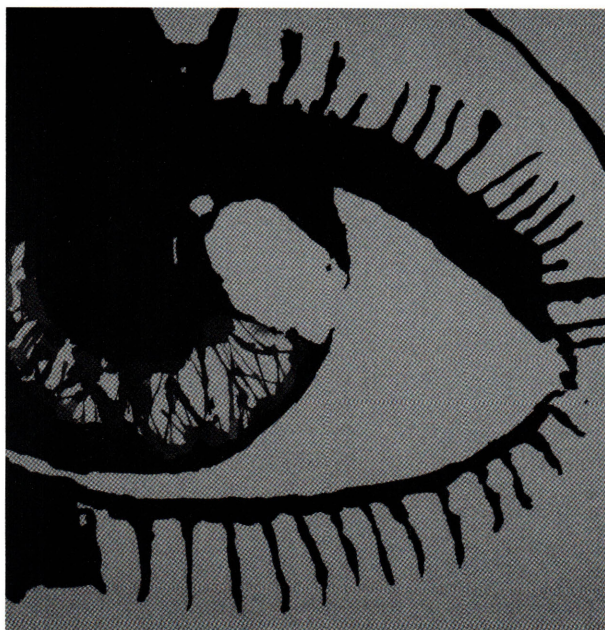
I thought the gloom was beginning to lift, but my hopes vanished quickly. Our evening walks along the beach became sufferable chores; every child we passed seemed to rip the scab off a wound that refused to heal.

Overhead, the sky rolls in a smoky haze, and I watch the cloudy figures take shape as the orchestra plays. I'm startled by the touch of your lips against neck. They tickle along my collar and I turn around to meet them. Your tender kisses give me hope and I savor the moment with my arm around you, as the two violins softly bring the song to an end.

"I'm sorry, John."

"It's all right," I say, trying to sound as comforting as possible. "Do you want to walk around, catch a little fresh air?"

You nod and look at me as if wanting to explain, but before you can speak the orchestra begins to play, and you settle for a peck on my cheek.



**SEEN1** Abigail Long