

The horrifying thing was, if she had been outrageously mean about it, that might have been my sole indulgence. But it was on my side in something merely average. So I knew there would be a next time. I didn't promise myself never again. And then the next was very good, and the next after that was great. Soon Andie became a pleasurable counterpoint to all things Amy. She laughed with me and made me laugh, she didn't immediately contradict me or second-guess me. She never swooned at me. She was easy. It was all so fucking easy. And I thought: *Love makes you want to be a better man—right, right, right? But maybe love, real love, also gives you permission to just be the man you are.*

I was going to tell Amy. I knew it had to happen. I continued not to tell Amy, for months and months. And then more months. Because it was cowardice. I couldn't bear to have the conversation, to have to explain myself. I couldn't imagine having to discuss the divorce with Rand and Marybeth, as they certainly would insert themselves into the fray. But part of it, in truth, was my strong streak of pragmatism—it was almost grotesque, how practical (self-serving!) I could be. I hadn't asked Amy for a divorce, in part, because Amy's money had financed The Bar. She basically owned it, she would certainly take it back. And I couldn't bear to look at my twin trying to be brave as she lost another couple years of her life. So I let myself drift on in the miserable situation, assuming that at some point Amy would take charge, Amy would demand a divorce, and then I would get to be the good guy.

This desire—to escape the situation without blame—was despicable. The more despicable I became, the more I craved Andie, who knew that I wasn't as bad as I seemed, if my story were published in the paper for strangers to read. *Amy will divorce you, I kept thinking. She can't let it linger on much longer. But as spring faded into summer came, then fall, then winter, and I became a cheating man of all seasons—a cheat with a pleasantly impatient mistress—it became clear that something would have to be done.*

"I mean, I love you, Nick," Andie said, here, surreally, on my sister's sofa. "No matter what happens. I don't really know what else to say, I feel pretty..." She threw her hands up. "Stupid."

"Don't feel stupid," I said. "I don't know what to say either. There's nothing to say."



"God, it's like some bad noir movie."

I smiled. I'd introduced Andie to *noir—* to Bogart and *The Big Guy*, *Double Indemnity*, all the classics. It was one of the things I liked best about us, that I could show her things.

"Why don't we just tell the police?" she said. "Wouldn't that be better?"

"No, Andie, don't even think about it. No."

"They're going to find out—"

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me no matter what happens."

out loud anymore. I'd said it once at her neck, homesick for something so was a lot more. I thought there was a hidden love affair that I hadn't known about. I had a security camera, I was in the cell. I'd written her a dirty valentine across the news, me throwing fruit was twenty-three. I assumed my words, they captured in various electronic. I'd called her phone one night, jealous, possessed shots of an ex or two smiling proudly one point I'd join the club—I kind of for some reason that hadn't worried overloaded and sent to a million people and.

And situation, Andie. I just need you to be

"You can't say you love me, no matter

I held her eyes. Saying I love you was not saying it.

pered. She began tugging at my belt. "It's right now. It's a bad, bad place for us. It looks beyond bad."

red about?"

g wife and a secret girlfriend. Yeah, it

ary." Her brows were still out.

Andie: "They will think it's..."