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Working Arrangement

By Robert McNeill

"So what do you want to talk about?" asked Rory.

"Since when do we need a reason to talk? It always came so easily and now it seems so silent." It had been a quiet lunch.

"It would be a lot easier to take this conversation seriously if you wiped that grime off your face, Donna," Rory said with a smile. She grinned back and headed to the washroom. Rory admired her backside as best he could through her filthy blue coveralls, which was the standard attire while working for the Triple Towers Corp., Maintenance Department.

Twenty workers repaired and maintained three skyscrapers in downtown Calgary, so it seemed to be very bad luck for Rory that not only had he drawn the dirty job of tracing a shorting wire to the furnace, he also had to do it with Donna. After Monday he had managed to avoid being teamed with her until today.

Rory quickly moved over to Phil, his boss and friend. Phil had come from his glass partitioned office into the Maintenance lunchroom, which had the coffee pot.

"What gives, Phil? I thought you said she would work with Ralph?"

"She wants you. Since she is my best electrician and this is a tricky job, she gets who she wants." Phil sat on the table and briefly stared at Rory. "Besides, you haven't told me why you don't want to work with her. I don't have an answer for why you two have been split this week, after a year of working together."

"Make up a reason."

"Make up your own fucking excuses," said Phil just as Donna reappeared. To her questioning look he said, "I've got work to do." He picked up his cup and left.

"Excuses for what?" Donna asked.

"Mind your own business." Rory silently cursed the emptiness of the lunchroom. They were an hour late for dinner because they had been in an awkward crawlspace and had made sure the problem was not there. They had not wanted to get back into it, although Rory wished he was back there now.

Silence descended. Donna made coffee for herself and tea for Rory. She sat down and reluctantly he slid into the opposite chair.

"I'm sorry, Donna." She contemplated her coffee as if it was fascinating, which it certainly was not. "I guess I owe you a few explanations."

"Yup." She ended the examination of the coffee with a sip, and looked at him.

"I've worked with women before, but never with one like you. The more time we spent together, the better I liked it. Then while shaving Monday morning I realized I have a serious problem."

"You have to look in the mirror to shave?"

"Even more serious than that. I was looking forward to going to work."

"No!"

"Yes. What's more I had been anticipating it Saturday night. You were a distraction from my attempt to pick up a woman even though you weren't there."

"How did I manage that?"

"By being alive. By being the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. By being the most interesting person I know."

"Well thank you."

"Don't thank me. They aren't compliments, they're problems. You're too gorgeous."

She laughed. "It is a curse I've always had to live with."

"Donna, if you were only beautiful, I could live with that. If you were just my

best friend I could live with that. What I can't stand is having fallen in love with you while you are in love with your husband."

"This is awfully sudden."

"No it isn't. It has been happening very gradually for the last year. I'm getting far too attached to you and I'm not going to get in any deeper."

She took a long drink of coffee, then put it down. "This is really an insult, you know. If we're really friends it shouldn't matter if we aren't lovers."

He avoided her eyes. "I'm not proud of this. That's why I haven't talked to you about it before. My plan was to spend less time with you, to try and stop being so close, and especially to see less of Ron."

"Ron likes you."

"I don't want your husband to like me! More important is that I don't want to like him!"

"That's too bad because you like each other."

"That will change."

"Well, maybe it should. Then I wouldn't have to listen to Ron and you celebrate when you pick up some slut. He has his vicarious thrill watching you with your latest conquest and you, Mr. Macho, get to display your technique with all the teenagers."

"What do you expect when the three of us go out together? Me to quietly sit there while you two waltz? Anyway, why should you care; you've got your husband."

"Did it ever occur to you that I might be attracted to you? That I might be as jealous of those girls as you are of Ron. What are you smirking at?"

Rory's smile widened. "Promise me you won't get mad."

"At what?"

"Promise, then I'll tell you."

"Okay, okay I promise. What is it?"

"I already knew that. You try to hide it but you never succeed. I'm always amazed that Ron never notices."

"You bastard!"

"Remember your promise. Besides, you do the same thing with Ron only I don't hide my feelings as well. I don't know who is the worse tease, you or him."

Phil slid open his window and leaned out of his office. "Get back to work before the heat drops to the point where we all freeze our asses off."

Rory and Donna gathered their tools and headed back to the sub-basement. Rory said, "We haven't lost much heat yet." He paused. "I'm serious, you know. I want to spend less time together."

Donna put her hand on his shoulder, "We'll work something out."



Photo by Louis Fagan

'Easy to Adorn'

by Malcolm Gorrill

(Based on 'Easy to Tame' by Kim Mitchell)

(Situation: Brian Mulroney is talking to his party, which apparently wants to put more focus on the issues than on Brian in an attempt to secure re-election.)

VERSE I

What am I doing to make you so mad?
We used to talk till our opponents fell to their knees;
What am I doing to make you so mad?
We used to sing like an Irish breeze.

CHORUS

'Cause you used to have love in your kisses,
You used to put my heart in flames,
You used to give me all the media attention,
You said I was easy to adorn,
You said I was easy to adorn.

VERSE II

(Can't you dig me out of the rain, baby?
Why do you treat me like I'm so bad?)
What am I doing to make you so mad?
We always put my chin up on a crane;
What am I doing to make you so mad?
I guess being in power is like being insane.
(Repeat Chorus Twice)