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For Those Who Do Not Swallow

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Johnathan McClintick

The sun angles shadow onto the man's face but colors his friend's in light. She lights a cigarette and draws. They talk about her husband. How he has not wanted to sleep with her in three months. They are sitting on a bench at a local marketplace and letting their problems be carried store to store on the ears of passing customers. The breeze rolls the cigarette up its stem. She ashes. The man lays a hand on her thigh and promises he will talk to the husband tonight when she is at work.

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Later, when she is at work, the man grabs the throat of the husband. The man pushes him into the wedding bed. They are tearing at each other's clothes. When they kiss, it sizzles with the anger of fired coal sinking to a well's bottom. When they lock hands, the wedding band pinches the man's skin. The man sinks lower to taste.

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On March 5th an apartment building in London was set ablaze by a pigeon. Matt Cullen of the London Fire Brigade explained, "The smoking gun was when we found a partially burnt bird's nest." This theory corroborates eyewitness accounts that said they saw a pigeon take a recently smoked cigarette, thinking it would be a fine addition to its nest. The pigeon, simply wanting to build a home among other like-minded London citizens, could not be reached for comment. The story serves as a reminder for all those who do not swallow their cigarettes.

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The man brushes his teeth before the wife gets home. She accepts the kisses of her husband; the two embrace and talk about her night. The man slides into a back-ground where a discarded cigarette might be found. Its smoke twisting into the vaporous air.

Layout and photograph by Annemarie Menna.