



SYNECDOCHE

I told Celeste if she wouldn't change her mind about this, she had to leave the final choice up to me. Unless she wanted to go it alone. I wasn't sure it was a bluff. She wasn't either.

"There's no question of fault here, never is," Dr. Jagerson said to us before he showed us the test results. "There isn't even any question of infertility. Your sperm, Ralph, are mobile and plentiful. Your ovaries respond to Clomid, Celeste."

"Is it just that I have an irritable uterus?" Celeste asked.

"No. Your uterus is normal. I have no doubt with an implanted embryo you could carry to term."

"What is it then?" I asked, eager to get to the point. It's been a rough year what with teaching seven composition classes as an adjunct at two colleges, frantically applying, like thousands of others, for every tenure-track position in the country—and Celeste with that thermometer in her right hand and her phone in her left, with me on speed dial, expected to drop everything when her blood heats up. "You promised as soon as you got your degree it would be my turn," she insisted.

"Bluntly," Dr. Jagerson cleared his throat and looked at the wall chart of a pregnant woman on the opposite wall, "there's a chemical antagonism between your sperm and her egg. They repel rather than attract."

"Like magnets?" I asked, my body filling with giddy air. I could see the little Scottish terriers scooting across the paper. I couldn't keep from smiling.

My wife, who is one of the most lovely beings on earth when things are going her way and a Siberian tiger when they're not, began to lift her upper lip. "This is no laughing matter, Ralph."