

ROMANTIC DRAMA by Stimson Snead

Sample from a short story concerning a divorce and the subsequent romance with a high powered lawyer.

THE AFFAIR

I paused before knocking.

Why knock? He never locked his door. He was home alone, and it was my home as much as his now anyway. Besides, this would be the perfect chance to surprise him. I had flowers and wine and was running early from my day out writing. Try as I might, writing with him in the room was too distracting. Not because he tried to distract me. Only because his ass had a charisma that couldn't be ignored or softened by loose-fitting jeans. I imagined a long afternoon together.

So, as quietly as I could, I entered what I had thought was *our* home.

Some of you more clever listeners, may have already guessed where this is going. You're right, unfortunately. Like so many before me, I crept up the long stairs toward his office, and paused, like a million soon-to-be-jilted lovers before me, at a strange sound.

Fully embracing the cliché, I imagined a dozen explanations for the wet smacking noises.

A damp cloth being slapped against something. A plunger, used with inexplicable enthusiasm in a room without plumbing. Incredible, in hindsight, that I didn't jump to the obvious explanation sooner. But that's denial, I suppose.

I knew it sounded like a-fucking-asshole-fucking-a-whore's-asshole, but I didn't want to believe it sounded like a-fucking-asshole-fucking-a-whore's-asshole. A crucial, if somewhat pedantic, distinction in my emotional state.

But in that spirit of hope, I remained open to being wrong.

So I entered the room and, lo and behold, there was a-fucking-asshole-fucking-a-whore's-asshole. Now that my eyes were involved, it was harder to stay open-minded to other possibilities.

I must have stood there a full minute before they noticed me. Her face went white, terrified, like a child caught with their hand in the cookie jar. And him. He looked at me, his smile fading. Then he looked at her. He leaned down, kissed her on the cheek, and said in that familiar, comforting voice, "Don't worry, baby. It's going to be okay. I'll take care of this."

Odd, really, that his comfort going to her was the most painful part.

In the months that followed, when he told me he'd made a terrible mistake, insisted she meant nothing, when he listed all the ways he'd make it up to me, or spoke about the work he'd done on himself, I would return to that moment again in my mind.

Him, seeing me standing in the doorway watching my world end, but choosing to comfort that frightened young thing instead.

It took some time to articulate it, but I knew right from that second that I was going to destroy this man. Not just him, but his entire world.