

Ava Geyer

### Lucky People

"I'm just curious why you brought it up over dinner."

"I wanted you to know."

"Over *dinner*?"

"In case you ran in to Hugh!"

"I *just* got home."

The Pearsons are healthy people. They have a healthy marriage. When Whit gets home from business trips, Shelley takes him out and they get the Gruyere fondue at that awesome neighborhood place. The Gruyere fondue with its odd, "seasonal" accouterment—fancy sausages, pickled artichoke hearts, even black licorice. The Gruyere fondue is a tradition. It makes for good walk-home fodder, too: overcoats buttoned all the way, they laugh at the pretension. *Seasonal*. Please. By their block the laughter has usually subsided and talk has turned to friends. Usually; not tonight. Tonight no mention has been made of the fondue for two, though they ordered it.

"I didn't want you to run in to Hugh and not know!" Shelley turns to look at Whit.

"Well, now I know." He stays looking ahead.

The Pearsons are not a couple that hold hands, though sometimes—when it's cold—Shelley will slip her arm through Whit's and clasp his hand inside the small room of his quilted pocket. It's not cold enough for that yet.

“It’s so sad, though, isn’t it?” she tries. “I mean it’s scary. And they’re being so amazing, so strong about it.” A young woman in sweatpants gets into her Honda. Shelley raises her voice over the coughing engine. “Did I tell you about the blog? Danny’s started this blog to chart her recovery—her sessions with the speech therapist and the physical therapist. In the first post, he had this great analogy. He said moving his mom into the stroke ward was like moving her into college—meeting her roommate, trying to make it homey.”

“Analogy? He had a great *analogy*?”

“He’s a writer. He’s starting that M.F.A program in February.”

“This is upsetting me.”

“I know. Poor Martha.”

“No, not Martha. It’s the blog and the therapeutic bulb-planting and that freaking message board they started so all their witty friends can one-up each other with their fucking witty condolences.”

“They’re lending support.”

“She may never speak again.”

“Exactly. They’re lending support.”

“But isn’t it like creepily self-actualized? They’re in a messy, fucked-up situation and they’re making art out of it.”

Shelley sighs. “They’re artists.” Whit is now a step ahead of her. She hops a bit to catch up. “And also, I hate it when you’re upset about something, and you end up yelling at me.”

The Pearsons are lucky people. When the Guzmans—from across the street—were just about to start a three-month landscaping project, Mr. Guzman ran off with the nineteen year-old from the Korean dry-cleaners and took the platinum Amex with him. Those cement trucks would have been so loud. Mrs. Guzman mostly stays inside now.

They've stopped in front of their house, on their street: quiet and urban. Whit pulls Shelley close. "I wasn't yelling at you."

"I was here, and you were yelling."

"Promise me that if I ever have a stroke, you won't start a blog about it."

Shelley laughs. "I won't. I'll keep it messy." A minivan parallel-parks, and three children get out. "She and Hugh were just biking. On a Sunday," she says.

"You told me."

"That could happen to us. Something like that could happen to us."

"We wear helmets, though."

They both kind of laugh. "That's awful. We're awful."

"Yeah. We're awful." He pulls his wife closer, and her hair smells like Cognac, and French cheese. The Pearsons stand in front of their house. Two joggers—and one hunched old woman—pass by.