

## Doubt

It starts with him waking up at 5:30 a.m. to hit the gym before work. He says it makes him feel good because he sits at a desk all day. He needs to move. You believe him. Why shouldn't you? Fitness is important to you, too. You also go to the gym, albeit in the evenings. He tells you he is *really only putting in thirty minutes*, if he's being honest. And he likes to be at work early so he can come home early. His pants size drops from a 36 to a 35. He looks stronger. You're happy for him. He still eats the food you cook.

One morning you notice his car starting and leaving the driveway at 5:15. You don't say anything or think much of it because it's *only* fifteen minutes. You try to fall back asleep but now you're awake. He starts eating less—avoiding the small bits of avocado you throw in the salad. Or the cheese. Crumbles up rice cakes instead. Frowns when you use oil to sauté the vegetables. He gives up eating chocolate Müsli. You don't really mind—he did say it gave him stomachaches. Suddenly all the products in the fridge are light, or *lite*. Even the ketchup. His go-to foods are that Icelandic Skyr that tastes like paste but is low-cal and high-protein. “I like it with fruit,” he says. Suddenly you are no longer buying the full-fat Greek yogurt he said he loved. You notice he's made a pile of clothes in the bedroom. They're too big now. Now the only pant size that fits him is 34 or 33. His ribs are protruding—but you don't notice it enough because this process began a year and a half ago.

You wake up at 5:00 and he's already gone. When did he leave? He's having an affair with an elliptical machine. At least it's not a woman. Now the oil and vinegar on his salad is replaced with lite ketchup, which you can't imagine tasting any good. When you have sex, sharp hipbones jab your legs. He takes in deep breaths and looks skeletal. It gets hard to look him in the eye. The bags under his eyes make him look gaunt. The pictures from vacation show his legs stringy, sinewy. Where are the muscles going, you wonder? He used to have a butt. Thick, strong thighs. He says he's fine. Nothing is going on. But his butt is *gone*. You used to tell him

that you coveted that nice, plump thing. You see his skeleton through his skin, the frame of a human protruding. In the front and the back his ribs like a xylophone. His breastbone. Two new bones in his lower back. You wonder if you should call his mom. Or sister. He has that complicated history with food, after all.

Noises from the hallway wake you up at 4:37. He's leaving the house to go to the gym. He must be putting in 90 minutes before work. If he were a woman, he would have lost his period by now. He swims in his size 32 pants. *Swims*. He should probably buy size 30. Where did your boyfriend go? He lives on rice cakes. Light ketchup—bottle by bottle he eats it. Lean cold cuts. Carrots. Hummus.

You go away for a few weeks and when you return, sharp bones now edge his face. His jaw. His beard kind of covers it. You worry. In the fridge sits a cucumber and a bottle of ketchup. An unopened package of Gouda. You know you *have* to tell his family. He still claims everything is fine; maybe he just ate less while you were away? He doesn't know. He acts like he doesn't know.

He's sold the house and you're moving into separate apartments. You don't see each other for a long time. Maybe it's partly your fault. Maybe it's not. You hope he can figure it out.

But you have your doubts.