Amanda

In the beginning there were chocolate panties. In the end there was Nutella smushed onto a sweatshirt. You can't eat the sweatshirt.

In the beginning the chocolate was foul tasting but got the heart and mind racing. In the end the chocolate was to die for, but we were too fat at this point to race anything.

If there had been a beginning made of Nutella panties, who knows where we'd be by now.

The chocolate panties were papery thin and we loved that about them. The way you could lick them and they'd stick to my skin. The Nutella though, it was so thick you could scoop out a chunk, let it fall onto my naked thigh, and pick it up again without it leaving a trace.

We were often too heavy for our clothes at the end, and this wasn't sexy. It was an accident. Would have been a catastrophe if my naked thigh hadn't been there to save the Nutella from certain doom.

Our floors were dirty.

And when the Nutella hit the sweatshirt, that was a catastrophe. Not for soiling the sweatshirt, but because tiny sweatshirt hairs got stuck to the chocolate. Ruining things.

Where was a naked thigh on that one, huh?

You're too fat. You don't even know.

Joey

It all started with a crap. A life-affirming type of crap. The kind you know will give you absolute, euphoric relief from internal tension. It was the kind of crap that requires commitment.

And all the while you paced outside the bathroom door, yammering. I could see your shadow moving back and forth in the crack underneath the door, but I could scarcely hear your screeching voice over the whooshing of the fan, which, trust me, had to be going. I made out something about Nutella, and also that you wanted in to wash your sweatshirt.

I clicked the lock.

You thought we were getting fat. No, you thought I was getting fat, but I knew better; I knew it was just one more thing we were in together. One more thing I was stuck in with you.

Like with the dog.

I just wanted to take my crap in peace, but there you were, going on like the fucking bunny on television. It never stops you know, but it's a fucking bunny, and bunnies get eaten eventually.

Stop taking life advice from a fucking bunny that runs on batteries.

Leave me be.

Amanda

In the beginning the sex was great, isn't it always? I screamed louder just for you. Then the screaming became routine, and the positions became routine, and the climaxes lacked the excitement of unexpected bliss, because they became more a matter of understanding the plumbing than any sort of blend of emotions with physicality, and eventually the mutual feelings of disgust for one another overtook the sex completely, leaving it to disappear from our relationship altogether.
And then, no matter how loud I screamed, you just kept telling me you couldn’t hear me over the fan. A fucking fan took precedence over me. That’s what things came to. You succeeded in turning me off, and I just wanted you to turn off the god damned fan and listen.

But you didn’t.

And then something funny happened. You stopped groaning, and stopped telling me to go away. The toilet water stopped splashing and I heard you shuffle around a bit and then nothing. Then it was silent.

You shushed me.

Sshhh.

Then there were murmurs.

**Joey**

You wouldn’t stop. No matter what. So I did my business, pulled up my pants, and leaned forward to flush. Then she caught my eye.

The Virgin Mary.

There she was, in my crap. You tried to make so much out of Nutella, yelling about it in the background, but there it was making something so much better, something spiritual out of something so ordinarily foul.

**Mary**

These two had been going at it for years, disturbing themselves and the world, and it’d been decided that something had to be done.

“Listen,” I said to Joey.

He looked around for a minute, then replied, “Alright, I’m listening.”

I shook my head. “No, no. You need to listen to her.”

“Who?” he asked. “Amanda?”

“Yes,” I said, “of course Amanda. You need to listen to her and talk to her.” He was silent for a while, with one eyebrow raised and his arms crossed, and for a minute I was afraid he’d say something along the lines of that’s a load of crap.

Instead, all he said was, “What?”

**Joey**

The Virgin Mary, in the form of my stools, repeated herself calmly. “Speak with her,” she said, “and all will be well.” Then the shape dissolved and I was left with nothing more or less than a bowl filled with my excrements.

I flushed.

I came out of the bathroom and there you were. Your hair was a messy blonde entanglement, your eyes furious and accusing, and you were wearing my sweatpants from high school and a too-big sweatshirt you bought a few years ago that fit your then plumping figure. You held a tub of Nutella in one hand and a spoon in the other. I remembered that sometimes you would ask how the fuck did we get so damned far.

I laughed.

Not at you, necessarily, but a little bit and a little bit at us and our situation and everything. I just laughed.

“You’re eating Nutella with a spoon,” I said.
Amanda
“I know,” I said, “but what’s so fucking funny?”
You said something about the Virgin Mary, for a moment I thought something like, “Jesus,” and then you insisted we sit down. You took your hand and reached for mine, then lead me to our futon, which was breaking—the support spokes on the bottom popping off one at a time. We sunk almost to the floor.
I looked to the right and I saw that our stone Buddha had another joint cradled in its arms. I thought “that’s right” then you asked me what I needed to tell you. I was confused, offset by your sudden demeanor change, and didn’t know what to say. Other than asking me accusing questions like “did you walk the fucking dog or what?” or “did you smoke the last of my shit?” you hadn’t addressed me with a question in ages. Especially not an open-ended one.
“I just, I just needed to wash the Nutella off this sweatshirt.”
“Is that all?” you asked.

Joey
You looked kind of cute sitting there, your knees above you because of how low we sunk in that futon, your puzzled face, quiet. I almost didn’t want to say anything at all, just sit there with you. But I knew what I had to do. I knew it more than ever, and felt very calmly about it all, in a peaceful way. I looked to our stone Buddha and he LOLed at me and said, “Do it, man. Then smoke me out.” It seemed like a good enough idea.
“It’s over,” I said.
“What?”
“C’mon Amanda, we both know it’s been too long. We’ve been torturing ourselves.”
“That’s right,” the Buddha said. “Give it to her.”

Amanda
I thought torture was a bit too strong of a word, but then I caught a glimpse of my ballooning self in the mirror across from us. My reflection struck a pose and her flabby arms jiggled for a moment, settling downwards. She rubbed her stomach and licked her lips and said, “Baby, do we love the pasta.”
“Maybe,” I said. “But maybe it could still work, maybe we could change. You know, go to the gym, that sort of thing?” It was a plea, I knew it, and it was kind of a sad one at that.
My reflection shook her cataclysmic breasts and said, “Is this working for ya?”
“How many times have we said that in just the past month, Amanda? How many times have we promised each other we’d change? How many times have we fought over the dog, and our weight, and me being lazy and you leaving our dishes, and, and, and I don’t even know what all. Just how many times have we fought?”

We both knew there wasn’t a clear answer for that one. And it certainly required more counting than my fingers could handle.
“I bought some more of those chocolate panties a while ago. Maybe we could try that sort of thing again. You know, maybe we just need a little spicing up?”
And again, you laughed.
Joey

You were so adorable at that moment that I almost caved. I nearly gave up and said yes, that's exactly what we need. More chocolate panties.

The Jesus draping from the cross on your side of the room hung his head even lower and said in a depressed, dragging tone. “I'm a one-hit wonder, but tap that ass again and I'll send you to hell forever.”

“Sorry,” I said to you, for laughing. “I just don’t think we have what it takes to get along with one another anymore. It's just not working out and you know it as much as I do.”

Amanda

“Yeah but – ,” and I couldn’t think of anything more to say. I knew you were right. I knew it was over, that it needed to be over, that it should have been over a long time ago, but you were being so different then, so calm and nice. I really felt hope at that. At you being that way for the first time in so long.

I wanted to hold onto you. I wanted you to hold onto me. I wanted for us to be okay. But I knew we weren’t and that what you were saying was true.

I got up from the futon, which squeaked in relief, and I moved toward the kitchen. My reflection skipped along with me from the mirror to some pictures we had hanging up. “Baby,” she said. “you’ll always have me,” and she stuck her fist into her mouth.

“So this is it?” I said. “The end? We’re over?”

“Yeah,” you said. “I guess this is it. You know it isn’t so bad though, we’ve both seen it coming, and if we can just acknowledge it’s not working out we can still be friends.”

“Yeah,” I said. “Friends.” Then I looked down at my tub of Nutella and felt I had lost my appetite.

Joey

“I'll get my things packed up soon. I'll start tonight and head over to Dick's place for the next few nights while I look for a place of my own. I'll be out of your hair in no time.” Then I looked at your sadly slumping, lumpy figure. “You can keep my sweats if you want.”

“Thanks,” you said. I got the feeling you knew how badly you needed them. None of your clothes fit you anymore, and since you got fired for one of your nails slipping into a customer’s burger, you don’t have the money for more clothes.

On the wall next to the door, Gandhi swung his head out of his poster and said, “You fucker.”

“I'll keep helping with rent though,” I continued, glancing at Gandhi. “For as long as you need. No worries. Everything will be fine.” Then, on second thought, “Better. Everything will be better.” I had a sudden rush of hope for the future, like someone just stretched out on a beach taking in the vastness of the ocean.

Amanda

You looked so calm about everything, I felt almost guilty when the tears came. I looked away, tried to hide, but you caught me.

“Oh baby, no,” you said, “it's okay, and everything's going to be fine from now on.”

“I just thought, you know, that like, we would be together forever. The way things are supposed to be. I thought we’d get married and have babies and grow old and all of that.”

“With how miserable we’ve been? You still felt that way?”

“Well, yeah,” I said, feeling a little foolish. “I guess it was just a stupid girl's dream.”

“No, no,” you said, “it was a perfect dream. You’ve just gotta find the right guy.”
At this, I started a full-out sob with gasps and snot bubbles. You kept glancing toward Gandhi.

“Stay out of this, Gandhi!” I yelled. You stood up from the futon and then I sobbed into your blue sweater with the two green stripes circling your chest. “But I thought you were the right guy!”

“Baby,” you said, “you just wanted me to be that guy. I never was. I was rude to you and ignored you and we’ve done nothing but hate and despise each other for two years now. I don’t even know how we’ve managed to stay together for so long. You’ll find that guy though, don’t worry. I know you will.”

“Oh right,” said my reflection in a thick and badly faked Mexican accent. “He goes out to fuck other women and leaves you to melt into ice cream but now he’s all, ‘you’ll find the right guy’ and out he goes to his little-assed prostitutes!”

“Look at me!” I screamed at you. “I’m fat now. I’m a mess. I don’t even remember how to do my makeup. I thought it wouldn’t matter because you’d always stay with me. I don’t have any cute clothes, I don’t remember how to flirt, I can’t even tell you the last time a guy bought me a drink at the bar!”

Joey

You were truly beautiful then, the tears making your eyes brighter and your cheeks flushed. I fixed your hair a little, flattening it out with my palms, then I held your face in my hands.

“You’re beautiful,” I said, “no matter what you think or say. And maybe you need this to see that. To get your game back and feel good about yourself again. Hell, we can get all jazzed up and I’ll even take you out tonight and buy you your first drink.”

Joseph Stalin climbed out of a History book on the bowing coffee table. “Right,” he said, “now we’ve got two dumb fat bitches in this shit-hole.”

“Really?” you said. “You mean that? You’d take me out to a bar with you?”

I suddenly felt guilty for all those times I had gone out without you, without even asking you and sometimes without even telling you where I was going. I had been ashamed of you then, always in my sweats with no care put into your personal appearance whatsoever. But now, for some unknown reason, I was proud of you, and knew I’d be glad to buy you that drink.

“Find some clothes, girly,” I said, “because we’re headed out tonight!”

Stalin walked over to Gandhi and said, “I’m a need something good for this shit.” Gandhi handed him two very white, round pills and they both eyed the joint in Buddha’s lap. Buddha laughed and slapped his own ass.

Amanda

I was so overwhelmed at that moment that I stopped crying. I got up off the floor and rummaged through my closet like a teenager again. I tried on everything pink, bright, sultry, and flashy that I owned. Showering, I felt like the water was taking ages of abuse and pounds of flesh off my body. It was as if I was growing sexier by the droplet. Once out, I did my hair in a stylish up-do with pieces falling flatteringly around my face, and took great pains to even-handedly apply makeup to my pale skin. It was difficult because my reflection kept making faces at me. The makeup had also been in a cupboard unused for so long, dust was gathering. Then I put on a black dress I had found that stretched enough to allow my figure in it, strapped on my slinkiest of heels, and appeared before you as I hadn’t in ages. My reflection in one of our portraits put one hand on her hip and the other behind her head and wiggled her body up and down.

You grinned widely and told me I looked amazing.
I took the tub of Nutella and walked into the kitchen, pushed down my foot on the lever of our silver trash can, and threw it forcefully and determinedly away. It made a loud thud and clinking noise, and we left for the clubs.

* * *

Stalin

“Can you believe these fuckers?” I said to Gandhi, tossing back the pills he gave me. I’d learned not to ask about his drugs, and trusted him because he’s fucking Gandhi. He thought he could change me through words and wouldn’t give cyanide to a fly. What a dumb shit.

“Yeah,” said Jesus, moaning. “They don’t understand love at all.”

Buddha laughed. “Man,” he said, “your daddy loved you so much he sent you down to earth to be tortured and strung up like a scarecrow!”

“Don’t think you’re any better, Buddha,” I said. “You left your wife and son on a spiritual whim!”

“Yeah,” said Gandhi. He swung a massive hand out of his portrait and flicked the now-lit joint out of Buddha’s grasp. “Aren’t you supposed to be a religious icon?”

“Nice knowing ya,” said Buddha, then he fell over with blazed eyes, making a loud “oomph” sound.

“Fucking stoners,” I said, and went on a quest for alcohol. “We’ve got work to do, people! Work!”

Gandhi

“Work indeed,” I said, taking a flask of Vodka from Stalin.

“What work?” asked Jesus. “They’re breaking up. Didn’t you hear them?”

“They went out to a bar, dumbass,” said Stalin.

“So?” asked Jesus. I looked at him, saw that he was serious, and downed the rest of the flask.

Buddha

I got the giggles fits with that one, enough to bring me back to sitting upright. Jesus had such infinite love for all people and they crucified him for it. And after all that, he still didn’t even understand people.

“It’s like this, man” I said, searching around for the joint. “Amanda and Joey are still together under the worldly attachment illusion of love. You catch my drift? Having fun together will bring that illusion back. Especially if it’s done with alcohol. I mean, if I’d had fun and experienced love with my wife and son the night before I left, I might never have left, and then where would I be? I’d still be some life form on earth going through blasted reincarnation. I might be a fuckin’ slug right now.”

I located the joint behind the couch and hopped my way over to it. My stone body, though lean, was quite heavy and I made loud, shaking thumps. I reached it and took a long drag, instantly going into another giggle fit.

“You guys,” I said. “I just really love you guys.”

Jesus

“So what?” I said. “We can’t be responsible for the mistakes and unhappiness of others.”

“Yeah, that’s right,” said Stalin, rolling his eyes and belching the foul smell of rum at me. Love your neighbor. Love your neighbor. “You and your daddums,” he said, “know everything, are all-powerful, allloving, and yet do nothing to stop any of the shit that goes down here.”

“That’s not true!” I said. “We give people the strength to change things on their own.”
“Oh,” said Gandhi. “You mean like the strength to start religious wars and massacre everyone who doesn’t believe in you?”

I hung my head low and thought for a moment. “Exactly,” I said. “They’re all going to Hell anyway, what’s wrong with a little expedited shipping?”

**Stalin**

“Carpenters,” I muttered. Gandhi threw the empty flask against a mirror and shattered it. I saw my broken reflection and put my chin up a little higher and rose up on my toes.

“At least that takes care of that damned reflection,” I said, puffing my chest out. Gandhi shrugged. “It’s bad enough with just one fat chick in this place.” Buddha fell over laughing again at that. “Now, how do we get rid of the other one?”

“You’re a master of extermination, why don’t you tell us?” slurred Gandhi, twirling around in drunken circles.

“Isn’t it the boy who’s supposed to go anyway?” asked Jesus.

“Yeah man, remember the figures?” chimed Buddha.

“Where in the fuck is Mary?” I asked, searching the house. “Is she planning something? Is she under-mining us? I thought she was in on this shit. I knew that bitch was up to no good from the start. Virgin my ass.”

**Gandhi**

I went ‘round and around and around and around...

**Buddha**

Man, it was like watching a damn cat chase a laser pointer, but then we heard the door and Stalin was all like, fuck you guys, we didn’t get nowhere. And then the THC settled and my paranoia kicked into overdrive. You can’t trust nothin’ in this world.

**Abe**

I decided to walk in the front door to scare the bastards and hopefully settle them down a bit.

Wrong decision.

They all screamed in unison, as part of my skull was still missing. You don’t make enough from history books for reconstructive surgery, I’ll tell you that.

“What’s going on here?” I asked, looking around the room. I approached Gandhi and smelled his breath.

“Have you been working or what?”

“Yeah,” said Gandhi. “Working real hard.” Then he leaned an elbow on Stalin’s shoulder and they both burst out into laughter.

I rolled my eyes. “Where is he?” I asked.


“Ah, Booth, yes,” I said. “But no. I mean the kid, what happened to him?”

**Stalin**

“He took the broad to the bar,” I said.

“Well shit,” said Abe. “How could you have let that happen? That’s a catastrophe!”

“Yeah we tried explaining that one to Jesus but he doesn’t get it.”
Jesus

Though I am God, and therefore know everything, I've forgotten. "What's going on again?"

Buddha

Leave it to Jesus to forget about Darfur. "Tell him, Lincoln, tell him," I said.
"First, a drink," said Lincoln.
"Smoking is a better buzz, man," I said, holding out the joint. "And you won't die from liver failure from it."
"Well I can tell you this much," said Lincoln. "It's not the liquor that killed me."
"Touché," I said, then took another hit.
Lincoln clinked around in the liquor cabinet for a while, then Stalin said, "Brandy's behind the SoCo."
"Aha," said Lincoln. "Southern Comfort, eh?" He tossed the bottle up in the air a few times then caught it by its neck. "I think a little Reconstruction is in order!" He swung the bottle hard against the kitchen counter and shards and splashes of alcohol crashed to the laminate floor. I bent over with a stitch in my side from laughing.

Abe

Once I had my glass of brandy, I took out my notes and went through everything with them one more time. "Okay, okay," I said, standing up. "Doesn't anybody have a cane around here?" Everyone shook their heads. "Oh, well, no matter. So anyway," I continued, "Four score and seven years ago –
"No, no," said Gandhi. "You've got the wrong speech." He stretched out onto the futon I left vacant.
"Oh," I said. "Right, right." I sat down on the coffee table. "Sorry about that," I said. I pulled out a black Moleskine notebook and began flipping through it. "Ah," I said, settling on a page. "Here we go. That's the one." I pulled out my glasses, rimless spectacles, from my coat pocket and placed them on the knob of my nose. "Two years ago," I began, "Amanda and Joey moved in with one another, and since then a war has been under way."
Jesus moaned. "It's killing us all," he said. "And they're not even Jews."
I glanced at Jesus without moving my head. "Moving along," I said. "Mary and I have been checking the web news regularly, and have been tracking the status of the war and linking the dates of major battles with world events. What we've discovered," I said, standing up and looking down severely at everyone over my glasses, "is that for every battle occurring in this apartment, a child joins a rebel force in Darfur and kills its parents." Nods of agreement passed through the group, and Jesus made a sound like "ah."
"Now there isn't any room in history books for problems in Darfur, so you can see why it is imperative that we break these two up. I've been using spreadsheets to keep tabs on their war and have confirmed that Amanda is ahead by two battles. That necessitates that Joey will need to move out." I closed my Moleskine, took a swig of brandy and wondered when the next good boxing match would be.
That's when they came back.

* * *

Joey

In the beginning of the end there was an egocentric reflection and talking stools, and in the end of the end there was complete mayhem. Gandhi and Stalin were falling over drunk, and Buddha was sucking back tokes, shifting his eyes. Even Jesus seemed a little second-hand high.
“Jesus you guys,” I said, entering the apartment before you.

“Mmmyes?” answered the dangling Jesus.

“What the fuck is Abe doing here?” I said.

“What was that, babe?” you asked.

“Oh nothing,” I said. “Never mind.” You never seemed to notice these things.

“Whatever,” you said. “God dammit,” you said, picking up a lit joint lying next to Buddha. “You left one lit again!”

“I swear, it wasn’t me! Buddha’s too stoned to know any better.”

You rolled your eyes and said you had to go take a crap. I heard you whispering in the bathroom, and assumed you were talking to your reflection again, but when you flushed and came out, you looked at me with wide eyes and said, “I see your point.”

Amanda

I came out of the holy bathroom to see that, among a cluster fuck of religious figures, Gandhi had managed to dismantle himself entirely from his portrait and was stumbling around the living room, running into things and knocking them over.

“So you see what I’m saying?” you asked as our floor lamp fell to the ground and shattered.

“Yeah,” I said. “I think I do.”

Jesus groaned and said, “My hands, my feet.”

“You can’t feel them anyway,” you said to him. “You’re almost as stoned as Buddha.”

I looked at Buddha, rolling back and forth on the ground with reddened eyes, laughing his ass off, and thought I understood how things were.

Joey

“So things definitely have to change then,” you said.

“Yeah,” said Gandhi. “First thing to change is this lamp.” He pointed at the broken lamp and laughed.

“It’s doing nothing for the flow of energy in here.”

Stalin walked over to where Gandhi was standing and put his hands on his hips, staring down at the shattered glass and pieces of broken ceramic on the floor. “Shit,” he said. “They’ve commenced first strike! Time to take the Polish!” Then he waved his hands up in the air, lost his balance, and fell into Gandhi. Gandhi pushed him back upright and grabbed the stone Buddha, holding him in a threatening way toward Stalin.

“Can’t everybody just get along?” cried Buddha.

“Yeah, what happened to non-violence?” said Stalin, grinning madly. “You ready to take back your life’s philosophy?”

“N-no,” said Gandhi, wavering. “I’m just a bit tipsy is all.”

“Man,” said Jesus. “You guys were my worst inventions.”

“Oh stop giving yourself all the credit,” said Stalin.

Abe went into the kitchen and tried to clean something off the floor with tissues.

“Yeah,” I said to you, grabbing Buddha from Gandhi and stepping between him and Stalin. “Things definitely have to change.”

Amanda

“What’s with you guys anyway?” I shouted.
"What do you mean?" asked Abe from the kitchen.
"Fuck," I said to you. "It's fucking Abe Lincoln! I mean," I said, facing Abe, "like, what're you guys doing here?"
"PAR-TAY!" screamed Stalin.
"Oh, don't listen to him," said Abe. "We're here because of Darfur."
"Is this one of those programs?" I said. "Jesus they're getting pushy."
"Mmyes?" said the crucified Jesus.

_Abe_

"Not you again," I said. "Where's Mary?"
"Flushed," said the girl. "But I saw her just now when we came back."
The boy smiled at the girl. Things were looking to fall apart.
"C'mon people," I said to the staggering, laughing, dueling lot of my historical brethren. "We've got a break up to attend to."

_Joey_

Lincoln walked over to the futon and sunk into it. Stalin walked over to the futon and creaked into it. Gandhi walked over to the futon and fell into it. You and I stood on the other side of the coffee table and stared at them.
"Fucking futons," complained Stalin.
"Yeah," said Gandhi to you. "You'd better get a new one when Joey moves out."
"Now wait just a second here," I said. "All you guys want us to break up?"
Lincoln leaned in toward Gandhi. "Not the sharpest tool is he?" he said. Then he turned back to look at me. "Yes," he said. "We all want you to break up."

_Amanda_

"But," I said, "like, why?"
"That information is on a need-to-know basis," said Stalin.
"Bone time?" asked Milo, perking his head up.
"Here," said Stalin, picking up the stone Buddha. "Chew on this for a while, you lousy mutt." Milo began licking Buddha and took him from Stalin's grasp. He laid on the floor and nibbled. Buddha laughed heartily.

_Joey_

"Just what the fuck is going on here?" I said to Lincoln, who appeared to be in charge. "Gandhi and Stalin are drunk, Milo is eating Buddha, Buddha got Jesus a little high, you smashed our bottle of SoCo, the apartment is in ruins, I mean, what the fuck? I thought we had things covered with talking stools and an egocentric reflection!"
"Yeah," you said. "And all you guys want is to break us up."
"We're just doing God's bidding," said Jesus. "I mean, my bidding."
"Oh shut up, Jesus," said Stalin. "This has nothing to do with you or your daddy."

_Abe_

I explained to them the Darfur situation and they looked as dumb as they always looked.
"Can't you see," I went on, "how things escalating in Darfur would be catastrophic to our history books? Children killing their parents, it's a whole new form of genocide."

"And so," said the boy, "by us breaking up, somehow things will settle down in Darfur?"

"Yeah, man," said Buddha. "You never know how your negative energy is going to affect the world balance."

"And your relationship is definitely upsetting the world balance," said Jesus.

"Thanks for just reiterating what Buddha said," said Stalin sarcastically. "You’re really original."

"Hey," said Jesus. "If they kept the other deities who came before me with December 25th birthdays, born of virgins, supposed to be the sons of whatever Gods being worshipped at the time out of the history books, then that’s basically like saying I’m the original. Don’t harp on me about it, check the books, man, check the books."

"God damned Horus," said Stalin. "If only he had a little more publicity we could finally shut this Jesus up."

"Don’t forget Krishna," said Buddha.

"Mithras and Prometheus were good too," said Stalin.

"What about Zoroaster?" said Milo.

"Aw, Milo, good boy," said the girl, "keeping up with your world history." She petted him behind his left ear and his tail wagged in bliss.

"We’re digressing here," I said.

"Yeah," said Jesus. "And I don’t like it."

Amanda

Everyone was silent for a very long time, then I said, to all of them and none of them at the same time, "Battles? War?" I walked over to the futon and when Gandhi lifted his feet to leave a vacancy, I squeezed down next to him. "I thought this was a relationship," I said.

"C'mon, babe," you said, "This is a bunch of shit and you know it. I mean Mary was one thing, but Darfur? And since when has the world been balanced?"

"Well that depends on who you ask," said Stalin. "The poor will say never and the rich and famous will say always. Me and Hitler say it was getting there."

"Yeah," said Buddha, "but the important thing here is to find internal balance, not look for external, and your relationship has no internal balance therefore it is upsetting the external balance. Once you reconcile the internal conflict of a situation, externally things will be resolved."

"What the hell does that mean?" you said. "We fight, yeah, but we have good times too."

"Yeah?" said Stalin. "Like what?"

"Like, like with the bar. Tonight," you said.

I thought very hard about us, something I have maybe never done, and felt confused. "Yeah, we had a good time," I finally said, "but weren’t you breaking up with me anyway?"

Joey

I looked at how beautiful you were at that moment and thought of how much fun I had with you at the bar. I couldn’t say I wanted to stay with you, but at that point, I couldn’t imagine life without you.

"I’ve changed my mind," I said.

I’m allowed to do that, you know.

But then you just started yammering again.
Amanda
In the beginning we shot the shit. And in the end, it was just shit.

"Listen," I said to you, "it's been shitty for a long time now, and you know that. And if we stay together, it's just going to keep on being shit."

"You can't seriously believe this crap abour Darfur?" you said.

I looked around the room at the world that was doing everything it could to make us see what we were doing to one another. "Not really," I said. "But maybe they have a point."

Joey

Now, I had thought Mary was divine intervention, but I felt like what our apartment had turned into was bullshit chaos, and I wasn't about to give in to it.

"We had fun tonight," I said. "We could still have fun. We could go back to how things were."

Thinking that breaking up would be either more bullshit or more chaos than staying together was bullshit in itself, and I sighed heavily realizing this.

Amanda

I looked in the broken mirror at my wiggling, flabby reflection with the double chin and fat cheeks. I remembered the slow, rotting depression of our relationship over the last few years, and the spectacular feeling of hope I had throwing away the tub of Nutella. I knew what was easy, I knew that even hurt could be comfortable, but for the first time in a long time, I knew that I wanted better. For both of us.

"It's over, Joey," I said, looking straight into your eyes. "It's over."

Joey

Stalin whistled, and the rest of the world stopped. I could tell that you were done. After all these years, I at least knew you that much.

"Okay," I said, nodding my head. Slowly, our historical figures took back their places on the wall, in books, on the table, and I watched them blurred through teary eyes. I took a deep breath, gathered a few things in silence, took my keys from the wall-hook and walked out of the apartment that would no longer be my home.

Amanda

The sadness was so heavy, so acutely painful as you left, that all I wanted was some shred of comfort. Everything felt suddenly surreal and foreign, even though it was the same apartment it always was. I looked to my reflection and she was still. And I petted Milo but he had fallen asleep.

I went into the bedroom and stripped down then slipped into the sexy new lingerie I had bought but never worn. I felt foolish, a fat girl in lace, and did not look in the mirror. I curled up at the foot of the bed, beginning to cry. Taking out the pair of chocolate panties, I ripped a tiny square piece of them, placing it on my tongue.

Foul, as always.

I went into the kitchen and reached into the trash slowly and found the Nutella, safe from any garbage nastiness. I fished it out, thinking "god damned comfort foods." I stared down into the Nutella.

"Do you love me?" I asked it.

When there was no response, I dropped it back into the can and laid down on the floor next to Milo. He awoke and licked my face a little, and then we slept. I was the big spoon.