

## *In Sickness and In Health*

Madison Kranz

He gently places the dish towel over the broken glass, trying not to cut himself. He knows the small fragments will scratch their new table, but that's the last thing on his mind.

She sits on a stool at the breakfast bar, knees pulled to her chest. Her body gently shakes as she struggles to stay upright, so she delicately descends from her perch. Each step she takes towards him is like that of a newborn calf. She grasps the edge of the kitchen counter.

God, I'm so sorry, she says. I know how important tonight was for you.

Tonight, he planned to propose his latest collection idea to the director of the museum he curates for. He invited the imposing man and his wife over for dinner, hoping to make a good impression and establish the rapport he had struggled to gain thus far. She was the one that insisted they bring out the good china. Nothing could prevent this night from going well.

Just as her husband's boss began a toast to all of his good work, she felt a tension build in her shoulder - the first sign of an incoming wave of tremors. She took deep breaths and tried to remember which position to hold her arm in to alleviate the pressure on those nerves, but even a person's best efforts sometimes fail. Shoulder to bicep to forearm, the tension made its way towards her fingers, and the tremors broke through any motor progress she had ever made in occupational therapy. Her wine glass twitched in her fingers, sloshing the dark red liquid all over the boss' wife. Her apologies couldn't cover the sound of the glass slipping from between her fingers and shattering in the center of the table, thus expelling the rest of her wine onto his boss' freshly-pressed pants. Embarrassment coursed through her like acid, burning her from the inside out, but the tremors spread to her legs, and she could not escape this perfect recreation of her Hell.

I can't believe this happened, she whispers. I've been working so hard.

She pushes herself away from the counter and grabs onto the edge of the table. Her trembling hand rests next to his, their pinkies barely touching. He pauses and stops trying to gather the broken pieces of glass in front of him. Turning towards her, he gently rests his palm on her cheek.

It's okay, he whispered, smiling and nodding. I was still able to present my plan, and nothing that happened was your fault. I know how much progress you've made. The glass wasn't your fault, the tremor wasn't your fault, and even though you insist you believe it, the accident wasn't, either. *She* crashed into *you*. You are not the guilty party. I promise.

A single tear escapes the corner of her eye and lays atop his thumb.

I love you, she exhales.

I love you, too. In sickness and in health, 'til death do us part, I will always love you.