

THE MAN WITH THE MAN TATTOO

Written by

Claire Radecki

Radeckcl@mail.gvsu.edu

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

CU: A woman's hands slice strips of raw chicken breast.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A kitchen, brightly lit, and startling white. The space is semi-bare, as if someone had recently moved in. STEPHANIE (mid 20's) stands at the counter. She doodles a cartoon image of a man's face on a paper bag and writes "Aidan's Lunch". AIDAN (mid 20's) enters the room.

AIDAN
Morning, baby. How'd you sleep?

STEPHANIE
Fine.

Stephanie puts a chicken sandwich into the bag.

AIDAN
Just fine?

Aidan gives Stephanie a little tickle. She LAUGHS.

STEPHANIE
I don't know. I feel like we've cuddled less since moving. It helps me sleep.

AIDAN
(mockingly)
You poor thing. We shall correct this immediately!

The lovers cuddle and sway in the kitchen.

STEPHANIE
Cuddle me tonight?

AIDAN
This night, next night, heck, all the nights!

Aidan picks up his bagged lunch and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is lit with the glow of the BEDSIDE LAMP. Stephanie, in a WHITE ROBE, sits in bed alone. She looks at her phone, then throws it down. She slumps deeper in bed.

STEPHANIE

Asshole.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Stephanie is cutting vegetables on the counter.

AIDAN (O.S.)

(yawning)

Did you have anything to eat yet?

Aidan walks into the room and Stephanie shoots him a glare.

AIDAN (CONT'D)

Let me rephrase that... did you make anything for *me* to eat?

STEPHANIE

What does it look like I'm doing?

Aidan reaches around Stephanie and steals a slice of bell pepper. She goes to swat his arm, but has a double-take and grabs it instead.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Is this a tattoo? Aidan?

The doodle of a man that Stephanie drew now exists as a tattoo in the center of Aidan's arm. Stephanie rubs at it.

AIDAN

Enh, the men at the office saw your drawing and made fun of it. Figured it'd be a pretty good gag to get it in ink. They're gonna lose their shit.

STEPHANIE

You blew me off for this?

AIDAN

Woah, woah, woah, we had plans?

STEPHANIE

Well, not *plans*, plans. You were going to cuddle me to sleep...

Stephanie trails off, embarrassed by her childish request.

AIDAN

Well, I meant that like, in general, like just overall I'll cuddle you more. God, okay. I put your art on my body, is that not romantic?

STEPHANIE

It's not just physical cuddling, it's the need- the desire to want to cuddle me.

AIDAN

The desire to want to cuddle you?

STEPHANIE

Yeah.

Stephanie dumps the cut vegetables straight into a paper bag and pushes it into Aidan's chest.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aidan is passed out in bed. Stephanie tosses and turns. She flips on her bedside lamp and stares at the ceiling.

Stephanie shakes Aidan's arm. He GROANS and his tattoo-ed arm flops to face Stephanie. She looks at THE TATTOO and rolls her eyes. Stephanie starts a conversation with the tattoo, speaking for both of them.

STEPHANIE

(to THE TATTOO)

So, come here often?

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

(in a silly voice)

I don't go anywhere but office chairs and couches 'cause I'm stuck to this slub of a man.

STEPHANIE

Tell me about it. Last time we went on vacation was spring break, junior year... *of high school.*

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

Go anyways. To hell with Aidan and his lazy butt.

STEPHANIE

He'd get pissed. Besides, I like the feeling of someone's skin while I sleep.

STEPHANIE (V.O.)

You can feel my skin anytime.

Stephanie laughs to herself. After a second, she reaches out and gives THE TATTOO a poke.

THE TATTOO

Excuse me?

Stephanie jumps up.

STEPHANIE

(in a whisper)

What. The. Fuck.

Long beat.

THE TATTOO

Stephanie...

Stephanie lets out half a scream before she clamps her hands over her face. She squeezes her eyes shut.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

STEPHANIE

(through clenched teeth)

Getting rid of you.

THE TATTOO

Well, good luck. Can I recite a bit while I disappear?

Stephanie doesn't respond. She tightens her eyes shut.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

"Away my needless fears, And doubts no longer mine; A ray of heavenly light appears, A messenger divine."

Stephanie relaxes slightly.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

"Thrice comfortable hope, That
calms my troubled breast; My
Father's hand prepares the cup, And
what he wills is best."

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Stephanie stands frozen in the kitchen. Aidan enters and kisses her on the cheek. She doesn't budge.

AIDAN

Steph?

Stephanie shakes herself unfrozen. She cuts at an APPLE and struggles. Aidan rummages in the kitchen.

STEPHANIE

Uh-huh. Could you sharpen these knives? They've gone dull.

AIDAN

Yeah, yeah. I'll do it.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Aidan is sleeping in bed. Stephanie stands at the edge of the bed, cautious. She climbs in. Stephanie avoids looking at the tattoo, then sneaks a glance.

THE TATTOO

Good evening.

STEPHANIE

You're back.

THE TATTOO

Never left.

STEPHANIE

So you aren't a voice in my head?

THE TATTOO

Or I'm so in your head that you
can't even tell I'm in your head.

STEPHANIE

What?

THE TATTOO

Don't read into it. You slept well?

STEPHANIE

I slept. You got the words wrong though. It goes "what he wills" not "what he wants." Will not want.

THE TATTOO

Good catch. You know your Charles Wesley.

STEPHANIE

Of course. That's my favorite of his. The symbolism of the robin

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

-flying into the window.

THE TATTOO

-flying into the window.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I always thought it signified, I don't know, a glass prison?

THE TATTOO

Like possibilities just out of reach?

STEPHANIE

Yes! Precisely. You get it.

Stephanie beams and sighs. She yawns and turns off the BEDSIDE LAMP. It's completely black.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'm worried that I'm a robin.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Stephanie hums to herself and pulls out ingredients from the fridge onto a cutting board. Aidan stands at the counter.

AIDAN

... and then I woke up to you clutching my arm. Fucking death grip. Any tighter and Bob's gonna get bruised.

Aidan shows Stephanie her arm. She traces the tattoo lovingly.

STEPHANIE

Hmm. He deserves a more sophisticated name, like Arthur.

AIDAN

We hate the tattoo, and now we like it? I can't catch up.

STEPHANIE

Keep up.

AIDAN

I'm trying to.

STEPHANIE

No, you said "catch up."

AIDAN

Let's keep wordplay out of this relationship. The only -play I want is foreplay.

STEPHANIE

Ha. Ha. You're not as clever as you think.

AIDAN

Really. Name one person who is clever-er.

Stephanie points at Aidan's arm.

STEPHANIE

Arthur.

Aidan groans and leaves. Stephanie struggles to cut food. Realizes the knife isn't sharp enough and throws up her hands in desperation.

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

Stephanie and Aidan sit up in bed on their phones. Aidan fake YAWNS and places an arm around Stephanie, pulling her in.

STEPHANIE

Ugh, lamest trick in the book.

AIDAN

I'm cuddling you, like you said you wanted.

STEPHANIE

Well, stop. I'm too warm. Plus it's never just cuddling with you.

AIDAN

I've done nothing wrong and already you're on a rampage.

STEPHANIE

I just-

AIDAN

Go ahead. Point out some more flaws. Reject me again. You've been like this for weeks.

STEPHANIE

Aidan. Stop.

Aidan rolls over.

AIDAN

(mumbling)

You're hysterical. This is rich.

Stephanie holds back tears. When Aidan falls asleep, Stephanie grabs his arm to face The Tattoo.

STEPHANIE

Distract me please.

THE TATTOO

You want to travel, right? What's the first destination you'd go.

STEPHANIE

Italy.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Charles Wesley's birthplace.

THE TATTOO

Charles Wesley's birthplace.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

Of course.

STEPHANIE

I wish I could bring you along.

THE TATTOO

I haven't seen any of the world. So far you're my world.

STEPHANIE

I'm your world?

THE TATTOO

You're the most intelligent,
interesting person I know. Which
isn't saying much because I haven't
met anyone else.

STEPHANIE

I'm still honored.

Aidan SNORES.

Stephanie props a pillow up to hid Aidan's face.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Sorry about him. I wish I could
talk to you fully alone, but...

Stephanie SIGHS and traces the tattoo.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Is it crazy to imagine a life with
just the two of us?

THE TATTOO

I think "crazy" is a relative term.

The two laugh and gaze at each other.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN

Aidan reads a note saying "Gone Shopping. Food in Fridge."

Aidan searches around in the fridge and only manages to
emerge with a beer. He leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stephanie and Aidan lay in bed. Aidan wakes sleepily.

AIDAN

Hey honey, I know you hate this
tat. I've got a removal session at
like 7am, okay?

Aidan murmurs and nods then falls asleep again.

Stephanie's eyes widen with realization.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Stephanie enters and grabs a knife from the block.

A note nearby reads, "finally sharpened them for u xoxo."

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Aidan is passed out, with duct tape over his mouth. Stephanie finishes tying his arms up.

She holds her knife and preps it by Aidan's arm. She falters.

THE TATTOO

Remember the reasons?

STEPHANIE

Freedom. Italy. Charles Wesley.

THE TATTOO

Relax. Close your eyes. Recite with me.

Stephanie nods and shuts her eyes.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

"Away my needless fears,
And doubts no longer mine"

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

"A ray of heavenly light
appears,
A messenger divine."

STEPHANIE

"A ray of heavenly light
appears,
A messenger divine."

They continue to recite as Stephanie slices in. Blood splatters onto her dress and face. Aidan wakes up, screaming through his gag.

THE TATTOO (CONT'D)

"Thrice comfortable hope,
That calms my troubled
breast; My Father's hand
prepares the cup, And what he
wills is best."

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

"Thrice comfortable hope,
That calms my troubled
breast; My Father's hand
prepares the cup, And what he
wills is best."

Stephanie removes The Tattoo and holds in her hand a chunk of human flesh. She grins.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
(to The Tattoo)
Are you okay?

Aidan protests, eyes bulging.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Not you.

Stephanie motions to the skin in her palm and gives The Tattoo a kiss. She smiles psychotically.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Aidan, I'm no longer the robin in
your glass prison. I'm going to
soar to Italy and write poetry with
Arthur.

Aidan struggles to free himself and instead flips over onto his face.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Ah, there's that cleverness.

Stephanie pauses, then skips off frame, smiling and laughing.

CUT TO BLACK.