

YOGURT

They were fighting more than usual lately, or perhaps fighting had just become usual, he thought, as they walked home from Yogurt Express along the dark side street. There was no moon, and in the darkness the houses loomed huge and unfamiliar.

He was thinking about earlier in the week, at the grocery, when they'd fought over the sugar cereal. He'd tossed it into the cart, and she'd taken it out, reprimanding him.

"I don't want you buying this crap," she'd said.

"Jesus," he'd replied, wheeling off cockeyed down the aisle. "What are you anyway, my mother?"

These petty clashes rankled him more and more, and he held on to them for days, replaying every nuance and detail, running his mind over them like a tongue on a sore tooth.

Now, as they walked along the quiet street, not touching, he thought what it would be like to live alone, all that freedom. The idea of a separation—he with his own space, his own time, his own decisions—increasingly gave him pleasure. There were, of course, the complications of the kids, the house, the two cars, the bank account, the country property, but was that any reason to stay together?

A rapid slap of feet on pavement just behind them brought him up short, and, as he turned, startled, a cup of cold yogurt slashed into his face, blinding him.

"Hey!" he shouted.

A dark shape scurried past, turning the corner. "I *hate* couples!" it snarled and disappeared.

He felt weak, his breath uneven. "What was *that*?" he said, wiping yogurt from his eyes and chin.

She was silent a moment, and then, "I've seen him before," she said. "In the daytime. He wears a skullcap, and sort of slinks around. I thought he was harmless."

"Jesus, it's such a . . . a . . ."

"Violation?" She gave him the word he was looking for.

"Yes, a violation. I wonder if we should report him. Warn the children. Lock our doors."

They had reached the corner, but no one was there. In the light of the street lamp, she looked serene, and, he thought, well, *valuable*. He put his arm around her and drew her close. Slowly, she put her arm around him.