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## **THE QUESTION**

by Brian Carlisle

Debbie and I drove out to the hills one Saturday afternoon, like we do from time to time. We usually just sit and talk on the hood of my van, like the friends we are. It's relaxing out there. Nice. Peaceful. Usually, that is.

We had been silent the entire drive up from town. A Zep song on the radio jammed in the background, but I wasn't into it. Wasn't in the mood, I guess. Only when I cut the engine and we jumped up on the hood did either of us actually break the ice. Deb went first.

"So what happened between you two, anyway?"

Taking a deep breath, I searched myself for the answer. The truth was that I didn't really know for sure myself. The way things had ended between us, "Why?" was left unanswered, leaving me searching for reasons unknown like a blind man in a fog. Of course in the end, it didn't really matter. What was, was - and what I'd dreamed could never be. But that didn't keep me from asking anyway.

I gazed into infinity as I began to speak.

"We grew apart, I guess. Sort of the same way that a lot of people do. But it wasn't like that - not exactly, anyway. I still loved her at the end."

I paused and turned away to look off at the cliffs in the distance. The haze of dusk rolled off their jagged edges, shadows popping out here and there.

"Just - she didn't love \*me\*. So I guess you could say that she grew apart from me over time." I shrugged. "It probably happens more often than you'd think. What're you going to do? You know?"

Debbie nodded sympathetically as we lapsed into a long silence. I could tell she knew exactly what she wanted to say - and yet, she held it in. Her face showed something intangible, but very real; a pain, buried deep inside. I knew what she wanted, but I just couldn't give it to her. Not now, anyway.

I spoke without looking at her.

"Why does it hurt so bad, Deb?"

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see her face, a transparent mask that covered nothing. She smiled thinly, though I could tell that her heart wasn't in it.

"Because you loved her, stupid."

"Yeah. I know," I said plainly. "And I guess some part of me always will."

Suddenly, Debbie jumped off the hood and turned away from me.

"Damn you," she said quietly. "I know you're right, but damn you anyway."

I looked at her sadly, then off into the distance again. Deb sighed and turned, glancing sidelong toward the inside of my van. I knew what she wanted.

"Want to go fuck?" I asked.

"Yeah, sure."

So we did.

**Questions? Feedback? E-mail me at [quickturn5@yahoo.com](mailto:quickturn5@yahoo.com).**