

HUSBAND AND WIFE TALK WITHOUT TALKING AT A DIFFICULT DINNER PARTY

Their elbows on the table are *yang*, their backs against the hip, uncomfortable chairs are *yang*, the jokes are witty and cruel, the bread-crust hard, the red wine sharp and showy. When she unhooks an earring and pulls at the lobe of her left ear, he knows she has a headache. When he starts shredding the paper napkin, she knows he is thinking about his father's jumpy, medicated heart. He drinks more, and she stops drinking. It is for the same reason. Her earring tings against an empty wine glass. His father, miles away, tosses in his sleep. Underneath the table, their bare feet find each other, *yin*, arch against arch, making a soft space where speech can grow, in the darkness.

from *The Same as Yes*, Joan Fleming
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