

[JAS or Jeffrey Scudder]

I want to tell you why husbands stop loving wives
there is a tearing
always a tearing of our hearts
into the geography of Projection
and what is most close to us must
always be found out there

and when the wife
is a valve of the husband's heart
and he cant really tell
her cunt from the pie on the table and the sweet
filmy curtains dancing in her windows
and all is one lovely lovely landscape
of intimate dailiness then
Christ stands up in his heart and says Get out
of her, lech lecha,
what is most intimate
is already you and you
must find her outside again
for a man must leave wife and father and children
to follow the Me that is himself
through the fervid gethsemanis of adultery
up the bleak hill of divorce.
And night after night the husband
hears that in his head or his heart.
Let this cup pass, and let me drink
always from the warm brown coffee mug she gave me,
let my hours count themselves her servant
and let her stand at the door at nightfall
reclaiming me back from the abstract day.
Let me love this woman
for I love her as I love my life.
And the harsh Christ of the heart says That
is why you must leave her. For every
man who studies to save his life
will lose it. And he
is implacable. The husband
in secret agonies of fantasy
sees her betraying him, sees himself
betraying her with all of her friends,
waitresses, stewardesses, actresses,
anyone at all. He speaks shyly
or she speaks shyly
of other loves and open marriages
and all the bandaids that fall away

night after night and the wound
speaks in him again. He hurls himself on her
desperate to ignite his own passion
to love her once more as he did when she was other.
But his head is turned wrong way round.
He loves where they have been and where they are.
He does not love her future.
Long ago he stopped knowing his way into her dreams
her secrets her subtle rhythms of self-disclosure.
They have feasts. They have friends.
They talk about children.
She knows it all. She has always known it
and pieces her day together from the merest signs.
For Christ talks in her too,
a Christ who wants her for her own:
woman, you belong to no one;
I gave you sun to be continuous
and night and rain
and you need no more.
They all have voices, they all
have arms. To belong
to him is to belong to society,
to Caesar—is that what you want?
And sometimes it is what she wants:
that it all could be done once for all
and life a gentle long echoing
of her first shy assent. But the voice
that hounds her says
Look at him—he brings
hardly the half of him to your bed.
He loves you too well, and you
have become landscape: Even your storms
are common in his well-known sky,
like a thunderhead heavy, handsome
over the brow of his own familiar hill.
You belong to your contract
as he does. Nothing
but what I do is done only once.
Everything else is again.
Die to each other and live.

[via Robert Kelly's *Under Words*]