

## She cut her hair

by Rebecca N. McKinnon

Eve cut her hair against her parents' orders in the summer of '86. Furious, they grounded her, so she snuck through the window and lost her virginity to the first boy who noticed and liked her hair. Eve cut her hair in the winter of '90 the day after dropping out of college and telling her roommate Christine (hair as long as her nose) to keep it a secret (she didn't). Her parents cut her off. Eve cut her hair in the fall of '91; it kept falling in her face waitressing in the diner. She had been trying to grow bangs. Forget it, she thought and took the chicken shears to them in the kitchen. Eve cut her hair in the summer of '93 after her live-in boyfriend drove her to the abortion clinic. He held her hand the entire time. She left him the following week. Eve cut her hair with manicure scissors in a motel bathroom the spring of '95. She had been living with a man who hit her for the first time a week before she met you in a crowded bar.

I'm not an asshole, you promise. Blank-faced and judgmental, Eve says prove it. You ask the bartender for a pop, and he says what?, pop!, what?! pop!sodapop!, and she laughs, with feeling. You compliment her short hair. It takes a year to draw the stories out of her. Eve's history grows long before you, and you wonder why she hasn't forgiven her parents, kept a boyfriend or a job. No matter how many times you have her, you never stop desperately wanting her. It's the turn of the century, and Eve's hair is long. You watch her braid it every evening and twirl the curls around her fingers when she's puzzling over some mysterious secret she hasn't let you in on. You love her completely, and she calls you her home. You ask Eve to marry you just before the towers fall and she says no, no, quickly, like you slapped her, which you never have.

You'd thought six years together would've changed her mind on the matter, but you were so wrong about it, so wrong about her.

Eve's fury furls itself around you, a binder between you both. You spend the next week apologizing in little ways – lugging the television into the back of the hall closet, bringing home a box of bargain paperbacks. Barely used, you breathe more than say, knowing it's hard for her, always has been. This can be enough, you tell her and mean it, but Eve's staring somewhere, in that way where nowhere's anywhere, anywhere else. Eve doesn't tell you she's started skipping work, but you find out through the answering machine while she's out one afternoon. You resolve to be angry, to finally meet her with the same force she's always held with her, against you, but the opening door frames her arrival, and Eve's newly cut hair frames her face – beautiful, blank, and untrusting as the night you met. She doesn't need a bruise to brandish all her pain, to avoid your gaze, your compliment, your questions, your hand as it rolls over her side, shifting away from you in bed. You pretend to sleep as she silently packs and leaves you before dawn.