

Unplugged

by Gary Jordan

Fumbling with the plug, Sammy couldn't help but remember Vince's fumbling attempts at foreplay. Everything was preparation for inserting "Tab A" into "Slot B." She could feel the mixture of emotions, the conflict, threatening to overwhelm her as they had a year ago on the first anniversary of his funeral. She shuddered, wanting to throw the toaster's plug across the room. Instead, she thrust the two flat prongs and large round grounding plug into the wall socket. Her duty; the children and Nicky would have no toast for breakfast if she let symbolism stop her from even the most mundane task.

Duty. Sex had been her wifely duty while Vince lived, like some cheap Victorian novel. Something to be endured. Guilt and relief were two of the emotions that battled to ruin this day. She had tried to explain to Vince that she enjoyed the holding and caressing more, but couldn't bring herself to deny him the other. For Vince, hours of snuggling and touching **inevitably** led to penetration.

Had a jeep accident not interceded, Sammy knew that she would have gradually become more neurotic. Perhaps alcoholic, or suicidal. Each act of "love" was a submission, a wearing away of the self. Like it said over and over in his precious Uniform Code of Military Justice, "Penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete the offense."

Nicola required no such submission. Sammy cherished her for that, and for the way Nicky cherished her. Friends, then more-than-friends, then lovers this past year, and Nicky had never demanded any invasive touch. Sammy had asked, "Are we lesbians?" and Nicky responded, "Can't we just be two people who love one another?"

Sammy paused with two slices of bread above the slots of the toaster. She began to tremble again. Then she felt arms encircling her waist. "It's just bread; it's just a toaster. There's no symbolism. Let it go." She did. She depressed the slide and turned within the arms to kiss Nicky's cheek. Perhaps this year it wouldn't be so bad after all.