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APOLOGY

Scott Provence

I was watching football one Sunday afternoon with the sound turned off when my wife came into the room. "I wanted to apologize," she said, "for leaving my dirty dishes in the sink this morning." That's big of her, I thought, coming to me unprompted like that. But then I remembered that I was the one who had left dirty dishes in the sink. In all our years of marriage, I have never known her to leave a dish behind. As soon as she's done eating, she's under the faucet, scrubbing hard. "I forgive you," I said. Then I said, "I'm sorry I left the light on in the bathroom all night," even though that had actually been her. I had woken up at three in the morning and all of the bathroom lights, including the heating lamp, were humming away. "That's quite alright. I'm also sorry about last month's paycheck," she said. I had lost three hundred dollars on a last-second touchdown. "Water under the bridge," I told her. She was really quite beautiful, standing in the hallway of our house in the afternoon light, her body still radiating from the heating lamp that she always left running. I used to hold her under that lamp after a shower, inhaling the steam as it rose from her body. "You know, I've been thinking about that Christmas party two years ago," I said. "I want to apologize for sitting on Kevin Phillips's lap and telling him I could have done better." "Kevin who?" she said with a shrug. On the television, my team was losing bad. It was like they couldn't give the ball up fast enough. My wife sat down next to me on the couch. She reached up with one hand and buried my face in her hair. "And I'm sorry for that illegitimate son," she said. My child would have been a natural athlete, untouchable on the field. Her child would have smelled like lavender and soap. He would have stayed warm the whole winter. "Ancient history," I said.