

Email from Helen Phillips

I wrote Fight #3 shortly after I became engaged to my wonderful husband. As I prepared, emotionally and logistically, for the wedding, I found myself deeply frustrated by the dearth of representations of love in all its complexity. Even the greatest of relationships contain moments of darkness, don't they? I didn't want advice about flower arrangements; I wanted advice about how to maintain a marriage for decades, how to weather the stormy times, how to cultivate an infinite sense of gratitude for one's partner. I didn't feel like the radiant glowing bride; I felt like an explorer about to set out on a terrifying and potentially glorious adventure.

In my book And Yet They Were Happy, I explore the idea of marriage by transfiguring it into many different (and often surreal) manifestations. Fight #3 is one such manifestation. In this piece, I was attempting to process the way tenderness and darkness can coexist. The first couple watches in horror as the invading doppelganger couple lays waste to the life and home they've carefully constructed together. Don't we all have moments when we can't believe how badly we're behaving? Don't we all sometimes come back to our partners, tail between our legs, and confess that we don't know what overcame us? True love doesn't mean always behaving perfectly; it means forgiving imperfect behavior in ourselves and in our partners. We each contain within ourselves the compassionate partner and the unreasonable partner, two sides of the same coin. This story is my effort to literalize the idea that each of us possesses multiple selves, all of which inevitably surface in our most intimate relationships.