

4 AM

by Cassie Ingaben

I watch his back as he sleeps. It kinda upset me a tad, at first—I would still be reeling from being inside him, and we would cuddle a bit, all sweaty and nonsensically tender—sometimes he would even mumble sweet things—then he would sigh and turn his back and go to sleep, burrowing against me under the cover.

I mean, not that I was expecting to cuddle all night and then, come dawn, go to sleep in a tangled heap; realistically, that's uncomfortable—wasn't even complaining that he fucked and went to sleep—it was just that seeing that back turned towards me was somehow... disappointing. Ah, I am really sounding like a bloody girl, ain't I? He lets me screw him at night, does whatever I ask him, in bed or outside it—what else should I be looking for?

And then finally the penny dropped.

We lie in bed, dim silver light outlining that perfect skin of his, his regular breath telling me he's asleep, and I see it: he's trusting me to watch his back. Never sits with his back to the door, does Bodie—not even in his sleep. He doesn't turn his back to me to distance himself—quite the contrary. He burrows and snuggles against me as a refuge and a defense. He knows he can trust me. He expects me, as always, to watch his back.

I spoon up against him, my left arm circling around to hold him in a loose embrace, and I finally, happily, go to sleep.

Written sometimes in 1999 or earlier

*First published in DIAL 22
Summer 2002*

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