

An Obvious Symbol of Something

While I have been sitting here trying to think what it means, such an obvious symbol as a picture frame with a photo of us together, breaking—it was not even our wedding picture or anything really special—just a snapshot cropped to fit a three-inch plastic frame, I think we took this picture three years ago when we visited your mother, but the background is indistinct, the colors blend and bleed away at the edges and whoever took it probably focused on your face because I am so much shorter than you, even though on that trip I wore my red leather gladiator sandals with the three-inch heels, “Not for the sake of fashion,” you said, “but to try to be as tall as me,” which was not true, I was meeting your entire family for the first time, in Greece, no less, where I don’t speak the language and you are fluent, able to tease or laugh or argue, able to assert your will in every situation while I observe silently, I needed decent accessories, but now I look at it, this was only a torso shot before we cropped it, and we have not been back to Greece since then, last summer you complained how you needed your psari, plaj, ilios fix, I know the Long Island beaches beloved of my childhood only upset you, “so full of fat Americans with radios, so devoid of mythic magnificence,” but actually I do not remember the picture being taken in Athens because I am pretty sure that was when you broke the Nikon I bought you, and we were fooling with the camcorder most of the time on that trip—which I remember for sure because your sister has since lost thirty pounds and refuses to watch that video—but in the photo we are standing slightly apart, and you are squinting with your brown eyes under the brim of a straw cowboy hat, so maybe it was taken during our cross country road trip right after college, when you decided you’d try to be a ten-gallon American, teasing me so relentlessly about it until I told you ten-gallon has nothing to do with how much whisky the hat can supposedly hold, it’s a corruption of the Spanish word for a sombrero hatband, and now I think about it, we probably took this picture last fall when we went apple picking in Westchester County with the students from your comp lit seminar, I enjoyed that even with all their silly jokes about Eve and her apple, that must have been the day (we are smiling and it was after we were married, I am sure) except that it bothers me because the frame having broken is such an obvious symbol of something, an end or a beginning—but of what?—I have been thinking over how to pose it to you, you’re right here in the room with me cleaning up after the party we had last night, which must have been when the frame broke because it was fine yesterday, I noticed it in the morning before I left for work—I liked to look at us together when I first woke up, especially if you were already in the shower and I could turn off the alarm and linger in the warm bed half dreaming, knowing you would wake me if I fell back to sleep—and I do not remember there being anything wrong with the frame then, but here it is in two pieces in my hand—though if I ask you, you might say, “I will buy us another frame, baby, is the picture OK?”—yes, it is, and we can easily get a new frame, a nicer one, probably, though I have been happy with what we had.