**The Tangly Legs**

Bryn Dodson

Madeleine believes she should get a nightly administration of the tangly legs. I have advised her that the matter is under consideration.

“When will you decide?” she asks.

I explain that *I* won’t decide anything; the matter will be referred to the Committee for Spousal Approvals, who will deliberate.

“And how long will that take?” she demands.

I tell her it’s really not possible to say. The committee meets only so often, and doesn’t always have a quorum, as its members are very busy. First, the committee must decide whether to add the question to the official roster of business, which is already quite long… Once they take up the matter in earnest, the committee will have to debate the merits and consequences of the tangly legs in their entirety.

As Madeleine can clearly see (I say) there are weighty issues involved, and a swift resolution is unlikely.

Madeleine wants to know how the whole process could possibly take so long. She considers the virtues of the tangly legs to be self-evident.

I tell her one shouldn’t be too casual. The tangly legs are consequential. The tangly legs make a mess of all neat pairings; they create a great confusion of legs, so that when the tangly legs come to an end they can barely be pulled apart. Take now, I say—I’m not sure where your leg ends and mine begins.

Come to think of it, I ask, how are we ever going to get out of this?

Maybe we’re not, she says, maybe this is just our life now.

Forever?

Forever and ever.

If that’s the case, I say, I think I’d like a cookie.

Same, she says.

It’s not a big apartment, ours, but the cookies are in the kitchen and our legs are tangled.

Worm, or kangaroo? I ask.

We decide on kangaroo.

We swing our legs out from the bed and lower ourselves toward the floor, then lift ourselves from the mattress with one big push, straightening our bent knocked knees. Standing, entangled, we’re sizing each other up again; you think you know this person you married, and then you look off in another direction and see wild lands.

Carefully levering off our tangly legs, we plan a jump and blame each other for the sloppy landing. Still, we start to get the hang of it: things go excellently across the bedroom and through the hall, where we take advantage of the handles on the closet doors. But in the kitchen, the cookies in sight behind the frosted panels of the cupboards, we tilt backwards; I grab the toaster, which is unplugged, and comes with us; Madeleine grabs the cupboard door, which is missing hinges and also comes with us, and we fall backwards and crash through the coffee table in a cloud of dust.

The initial list of casualties includes the toaster, the cupboard, the coffee table, the crowing porcelain rooster’s head that Madeleine found on the street and placed on the coffee table, and my shoulder. The last cactus in the terrarium, thriving obscenely after all his comrades died, lies on his side in a frenzy of fuzzy tendrils. Startled by our behavior, dust swirls in the air above our heads.

There’s a knock at the door. The Chair of the Committee for Spousal Approvals clears his throat apologetically and regrets his intrusion in the matter of the tangly legs; among the chunks of shattered table my wife hides her head in my chest, the legs in question intertwined like snakes asleep in the sun.