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New Math

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New Math

On her tenth Valentines day as his wife he told her he wanted a simpler life which confused her by its mathematical complexity; long division of future, friends, furniture, odds and ends and the exponential power of another woman. Subtracting memories, inside jokes, and their plans, she forgot what it was like not to feel the 5th grade greasy queasiness globbed in the bottom of her belly. She couldn't figure out how her eyes ever danced in firelight when now they could only fractionate in flash floods or dog-paddle helplessly in residual puddles. Integers of pale beauty, quick intelligence, compassion and bawdy wit failed to sum the arithmetic of the heart: it just didn't add up to her—two in ten (each forty) divided by one (twenty-five) take away one.

—Margaret Harrill