

"Look," he said. "Look at the knife. See how I hold it?" It was true. In his hand the knife was pointed and dangerous. It was a weapon, an extension of himself. My mom's reddened, shriveled hand had reduced the knife to nothing more than a feeble, clumsy thing that fumbled ridiculously with vegetables, pawing them into a slow and painful death. The blade stuttered and hung its head foolishly, until it became as dull and lifeless as her tongue.

Dad looked over at mom once more. His eyes rolled together in disgusted formation from one side of his head to the other, a trembling final summation of his entire contempt, and without another moment's hesitation he gripped the knife like nothing less than a leader of men, and using swift, competent, ruthless strokes, sliced the remaining portion of the tomato that mom had not been able to deface, whereupon the tomato-eighths, also prepared to show her a lesson she would not soon forget, dropped neatly away from each other and lined themselves up efficiently, cleanly, and precisely -like well-trained little soldiers in uniform red. Dad gave her one more derisive look and swaggered out of the kitchen. Mom stared at the tomato, and then after dad.

"This is your head," she said. Mom slammed the remains of the tomato against the wall and watched them slide artfully, gracefully down to the floor.