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Atonement

by Lorraine Gailey

She lay in the dark and knew everything. She knew what he'd done, and she knew exactly when it happened. It was the week before he left for his most recent business trip, though she had only discovered it the day after his departure. He was returning today, and she knew exactly how she was going to confront him. She'd rehearsed a dozen scenarios in her mind, sharpening her thoughts so she could deliver her words with maximum impact. Because she knew him so well, she knew he would be deeply ashamed of himself so it had been easy to work out the best way to express her dismay and disappointment.

When he arrived home that evening, she was ready. As he opened the front door, she took a breath to begin her onslaught – but stopped short when she saw the enormous bunch of flowers he carried, the bottle of champagne, the sheepish, embarrassed look in his eyes, and above all the huge box of her favourite chocolates. He knew that she knew. And in that moment, she realised there was a better way to have him make amends. So she rushed to welcome him, and express delight at the gifts. They had a lovely, close evening, and as she fell asleep later that night she smiled to herself because she knew what the next few weeks would bring.

Her predictions proved correct. His attempts to assuage his guilt filled her life with frequent little gifts here and there, most of them chocolate. She feigned surprise each time, but her pleasure in the gifts was genuine. Things only began to get out of hand when she found herself struggling to do up the zip on her jeans and the buttons on her waistbands. She realised that enough was enough, and she knew the time had come to let him know she forgave him.

Over dinner, and after opening the latest box of chocolates, she casually said: 'You know, I think I've had enough chocolate now for a little while,' and smiled warmly at him. Relief and gratitude flooded his face as he replied 'I'm so sorry; I know I shouldn't have done it, but the temptation was too strong and I just couldn't help myself. I promise I'll never do it again.'

She doubted that he would be able to keep to his word, and in a strange way she actually hoped he wouldn't because the last few weeks had been delicious. What's more, she had to admit that she occasionally succumbed to the same temptation herself so she wasn't really in a position to preach. Perhaps, she thought, the time had come for them to have an open and mature conversation about it. After all, in the general scheme of things it really wasn't such a big deal if one of them ate the last Rolo.