

Lunch today, 12:45 or something like that. Sitting at a duce and just tucking into my meal. A young couple are seated at a four-top nearby. She slender, Asian, angular. He buff, scruffy, hipster-ish. They sit and glance at their menus.

I return to my meal.

Something catches my eye, a movement or something. I look up.

He, on my left, has his right arm outstretched. His hand holding her lower jaw.

She, on my right, is crying, sobbing.

His hand is holding her lower jaw still, as if by doing so, this very act of agency revokes whatever guilt or role he has in whatever has induced this tremble.

Her head is rocking, oddly. Her sobs, though dampened by his right hand's grip on her jaw, still rack her, and constrained in one axis, her head heaves in another. How does he feel about this? Is he responsible? Has he just dumped her, for example, or just what?

This goes on. I eat a few bites, but I do not look away. She is unaware of my gaze. He might be, I don't really care. I don't care if he knows I am watching whatever it is he is doing to her — comforting, silencing, cajoling — I am not afraid of his reaction to my involvement. I keep watching.

A drop, a tear drop, falls from her face and I imagine I can even see the splash as it hits the table.

She, in perfect profile, is not looking at him. She is looking up, and to her right, so her gaze escapes my own.

He, likewise in profile, is alternately staring at her, and staring at the table.

She winces. She squints her eyes and I see the tell-tale folds in the corner of her eye.

Another drop falls. The table seems to shake as it lands.

He looks down, drops his arm, he is disarmed.

She shrugs and says something, but I cannot hear. I don't care to, either. This is pantomime to me.

Just as he raises his arm to once again grasp her jaw (whatever compels this act??) the waitress approaches. They both miraculously collect themselves and order. She a fish fry, and shrimp bisque. He, a sandwich with fries.

The waitress leaves. I am willing her to offer a napkin, a tissue, something with which this young woman, Asian and angular, sad and dripping, may dab at her face. I am willing it, but I am powerless, acting at a remove.