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Length: 95,300 Words

## **A Novel Existence**

by Mike Hammersly

## ONE

### THE EASTGATE AFFAIR

Tom and Delores Frederickson hated one another. That was obvious. It was also to be expected. He had killed her younger sister. She had maimed his favorite aunt.

But that didn't keep them from seeing eye-to-eye on things. Nope. In fact, it was just the opposite. When Tom had proposed to Delores that wintry Chicago evening as the two worked their way north from the Loop along Michigan Avenue, bracing themselves against the gusts howling in off the Lake, Delores knew it would be a marriage made in heaven...*and* hell. What she didn't know was just how easily their relationship would slip from one into the other.

"Can you believe this *wind!*" Tom called to Delores.

"I'll let you know when my lips thaw out," she said. She wished she were home, sitting before the fire, knitting. Not home in their twenty-third story stainless-steel-and-wicker condo overlooking the lake. But home, her real home. Her home in Oregon. The home she thought she'd never leave. The home she now wondered if she'd ever see again. Home.

A tear rolled softly from the corner of one eye. It stopped there, froze over, and blew quickly away in the wind.

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