

Lobster Clouds
and
Pieces of People

words by
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fourteen

The water fills the cabin in between heartbeats, and Maura and I are overwhelmed.

Gasp—

A breath shared between us consumes gallons of water.

The temperature of the water defies imagination. It's so cold that the only things keeping the ocean from freezing over are the rolling waves larger than redwoods.

Like wind through netting, heat escapes from our bodies faster than we could imagine.

Nothing so frigid.

Tiny bubbles of disturbance and chaos scramble to the surface.

Ice-water solaces and murky endings.

Hands and knees and outlines of faces drifting through the deep.

I think, hold on tight. I know Maura hears me, because I can hear her, how she feels safe and calm as we sink deeper toward the bottom.

Sinking, our hearts like sand. Heavy and solid and complete. Unable to drown, but become a deep part of the other's survival instead.

It's not happiness. Something more transcendental and deep, inside us where we know those things we just *know*.

We wait for the bottom, but this ocean has none. The train is long and far gone, and now, it's just the two of us drifting forever in a dark, crystalline, comforting underwater garden.

And we're together.

The lobby was no match for us.

The incoming cops jumping out of the main elevators? Amateurs.

Maura and I, we were professionals. Sleek and smooth, finished in satin camouflage. We couldn't be caught as we ran into the stairs around the corner and down the hall. We couldn't even be seen.

And then, we were on the roof.

Just like that.

Funny, the way you remember shit sometimes.

I remember pushing Maura up six flights of stairs before taking off into an elevator on the first vacant floor we could find. I remember listening—recalled the *sounds* the floors clicking up under a buzzing fluorescent light, and how Maura seemed to glow underneath it.

I remember racing out of the elevator at the top floor and I remember the piercing noise the roof exit made when I shot through it, dragging Maura behind me.

I remember,

I remember looking down over fifty-two stories at the street below.

Acrophobia, the fear of heights.

“Well, this was a spectacular idea, David. Where the fuck are we going to go now?” Maura asked.

“Just fucking brilliant,” she told me.

Goddamned.

Mother fucking.

Brilliant.

I’ve always liked girls with dirty mouths.

“And why the fuck are you standing on the ledge? Get your ass down and figure something out!” Not so much panicked as not into the idea of spending twenty-five years in prison talking to her brand new *life partner*.

Om I can fly if I believe I can.

“Come up here with me,” I said.

“I don’t like heights, David, and that’s not going to get us anywhere. The cops *know* we’re here somewhere. After what I did to Cherry, not that she didn’t deserve it, I mean, but after that—”

“Just be quiet and get up here.”

And she did.

I looked down, way down over the ledge.

Ants.

Flecks of pepper.

Tiny dots of paint.

I felt Maura’s hand tugging at my fingers.

The sky.

A fading cerulean blue.

Perfect and complete and serene. Like something separated it, made it a different place from the world we were looking down on. Not broken or corroded, not some diseased and decaying pool of polystyrene landfills and sporty family caravans.

There were famous people floating in the sky.

Elephants and giraffes and lobsters.

Cumulonimbus breaths of freedom and release.

“I love you, Maura,” I said.

Walls came down, and I was standing on the ledge of the Knight Building.

“Say it like you mean it,” she told me.

“I don’t know why it was so hard to tell you, but I do. I’m sorry it took so long,” I said.

“I know.” A pindrop of a voice. This was a place for tears, it felt like, but there were none.

Her smile crept across her face, and I melted a little more inside. We stopped breathing for a moment and just listened—

Really listened—

To the sound of the wind curving across our ears. Birds taking off from adjacent buildings’ windowsills. Maura’s dress snapping back and forth.

“If you would have asked me a year ago, I would have said everything would always be a mess,” I explained. “I would have said there would always be noise, and there would never be any rest. You’re the greatest thing in the universe, even if none of it—”

She got the point, she said.

Maura let out the longest, smoothest sigh anyone could have.

“There are those places to which only your heart can travel, and then there is little that matters.” It was the most beautiful thing I’d ever heard in my entire life.

“My mother said that once,” Maura said.

Hand in hand, we leaned over the edge and slowly began to pitch into the strong winds.

She’s there, and I’m there, and now, I’m falling.

And falling.

And falling.

