

Our Story  
A collection for her.

The Bar

Maybe it was the beer but more than likely it was you causing the world to spin. It started with the window behind you, muddling into a blue and orange neon blur that flickered and danced to an unheard tune. Then, the waitress and the lonely man at the bar faded silently into the liquor-stained wallpaper, an apron and a dirty glass the only evidence that they had ever existed. Next, the high-top chairs all grew into towering oaks, their leafy branches and wide trunks weaving a tangled mess of greens and browns, painting over the incandescent yellow that had previously coated the ancient room. Finally, the floor and ceiling bent and bowed so that the two became one, encircling us, protecting us from the hurricane of time that pounded ceaselessly against all else. So it began.

## The Drive Home

The street lights bend over the highway like half cooked spaghetti noodles, glowing from their tips as they try their best to stand erect in a boiling pot of water. The dashed lines jump and dance like a parade of white caterpillars caught on a hot summer sidewalk, scurrying for the shade of the tall, green grass. The music splatters on the windshield like comic book exclamations; the crash of a symbol, a prolonged high note, a powerful chord on the guitar, all momentarily fill my field of view before being washed away by the apathetic arms of the wiper blades. The steering wheel melts under my grip, dripping to the floor where it puddles and steams, eating through the chassis and spilling out on the highway, leaving a Hansel and Gretel trail of molten plastic back to you.

I know there is no way that's what was going on, that I was driving through some Salvador Dali painting, but that's how I remember it, the drive home on the night we first kissed. Maybe I stopped for red lights. Maybe I used a turn signal. Maybe the wheels turned into dinner plates and I rolled all the way home. I will never know.

I woke up the next morning convinced that I had concocted it, that it had all been some fantastic dream, a bastard child of my wicked loneliness and a Seussian imagination, but the restaurant receipt stuffed in the back pocket of my blue jeans and the fire that burned in my chest proved that I had been there, that you had been there, and that you kissed me and it was wonderful and that my brain and eyes and ears had shut off and trusted that my heart would get me home.

## The Ferry

I get out of my car and race to the top of the hill. Where is it? Where is it? I search frantically, the haze of the morning rain blurring everything. Finally, I spot the scar in the water and trace it back to the ferry.

*I blink.*

We're lying in my bed. She's tracing a scar down my side from the time I clipped it on the tooth of a fence while scrambling to retrieve a mishit wiffle-ball.

*I blink again.*

The boat is getting smaller. It turns to the right and sounds its bellowing horn, shaking the ground around me.

*I blink.*

It's raining. We're sitting in my car, stuck as a train drives slowly by, blowing its whistle to clear the tracks. It shakes the entire block. We're laughing about everything and nothing. The windows fog from our breath.

*I blink again.*

The boat is creeping out of sight. I can barely make out its shape against the mist. One bright light shines on the aft end, giving me one last thing to cling to.

*I blink.*

We're stretched out on a rock beach. She complains about her back hurting but I promise her it will be worth it. We both are looking skyward. Finally it appears, the first star in the northern sky.

*I blink again.*

The boat is gone.

*I blink.*

A week has gone by and I'm standing on that same hill, looking out over the water. I see a light coming towards me. I smile, knowing what is to come.

*I don't blink.*

## The Wedding

I know I should be watching the bride, but I can't look away from her. Even in that purple dress she hates she looks beautiful. She tilts her head ever so slightly to the side, listening politely to the pastor's words, words that do not reach my ears, or if they do they're filtered, my brain having only enough capacity to focus on her.

The cloth draped over the wedding arch blows free from its hook. She smiles wide, doing everything she can to keep from laughing, but a smile isn't enough. Her laugh needs to be set free. From my seat ten rows back I watch as it travels from her chest to her throat, up past her nose, until it comes roaring out her eyes. They sparkle with a blue-green laughter so bright that I can't believe I'm the only one who hears it.

We're inside now. One by one her friends stand up to toast the bride and groom. She lays her head on the shoulder next to her. I'm jealous it's not my shoulder. She glows, the warmth of memory radiating from her. I can only dream that someday she'll glow amber with our memories.

The music finally starts. I've waited for what has felt like lifetimes for this dance. She pulls me in close and rests her head on my chest, her arms wrapped around my neck. The wine and wedding air has made her soft and happy. She tells me she loves me. The music stops but we don't. We dance. For hours, days, years we dance. Her eyes sparkle and my feet never touch the floor.

## The Future

It used to be so easy, when I was a child, to imagine my future. Whatever I wanted to be, wherever I wanted to live, whatever I wanted to do, I could see it. I painted it on the walls and floors and ceilings of my mind. It was right there, attainable, palpable. Every brush stroke was deliberate and detailed. Every color was handpicked. It was beautiful and it was perfect.

But as I grew up that future dissolved, slowly white washed by reality and responsibility. What was left was a total and terrifying nothingness. For years I existed in that nothingness, the walls of my mind tauntingly barren. Forsaken by my imagination, I wallowed. No direction, no desire, only survival.

But then suddenly, when I least expected, she arrived and in an explosion of color painted me a future once again. It didn't look like the painting I had before, the details were hazier, the colors swirling, but she was there, and none of those other things seemed to matter. That is my painting now and it is beautiful and it is perfect.