

Like Snowflakes

I'm alone in Denver. And you know what? Good. Good. I don't even care that it's snowing. I like the snow. Love it. I'd love to pull the sky down on the city, tuck inside, and wrap myself up in all that coldness.

The suitcase is propped against an orange settee his mother gave us as an engagement gift. Should the sky actually fall and cover us in snow, the settee and its fragile upholstery would be unsalvageable. The suitcase is a softcover roller case, blue, with one bad wheel, and got lost in Houston on its way home. It doesn't realize this, but it is still lost. It is across the the room from me, three years, two days and a trip to Costa Rica between us. It is not my suitcase. It's f'ing Steve's suitcase.

The tag on the bag says "Walters," and that's how this happened. The name on the marriage certificate says "Walters," the name on our mailbox says "Walters" and I when I sign my name, I learned to curl the tips of the "W" when I write "Walters." The other Walters is home in North Hollywood with the bag whose W's have curly points, and his bag is here with me in our very empty Denver condo. I got all A's in high school Spanish, but I suppose some things fall away with the years. They're not supposed to, but they do. That's how people end up with misplaced suitcases. There is no chapter in a high school Spanish book that tells a person how to change a return flight, how to kiss your husband through the taste of her lips on his, how to turn away and not look back.

What I should do is open the damn thing. I should open it and pull out every piece of him, scatter it on the floor, breathe in the scent of it. I'd unzip the pockets and there would be the touch of his hand, warm on the small of my back. A thousand secret jokes and midnight conversations would fall onto the condo's carpet, and the more we tried to stop laughing the more we couldn't, because we knew the neighbors would start pounding on the wall again. I'd

search and search and when I was happy with the mess, I'd fold up the pieces and tuck them back inside.

I've read that if you drop a penny off the top of the Empire State Building, the force if it's velocity would be enough to kill a person standing below who doesn't know to be watching out for things that could fall out nowhere.

The outline of his vacation sandals reach out to me from the front pocket. When I pull them out, they drop grains of sand across the carpet, and this makes me so angry I nearly cry. Because you don't do that to a person. Because I'd told him that the sand was hot and that it would burn his feet. Scald him. But the sandals are here, still warm and horrible and making a mess on such a nice floor.

The suitcase is heavier than it looks, and the weight of it surprises me. A thick frosting of snow covers the porch and softens the edges on all of the benches and trees in the courtyard below. A gray sky sprinkles down around me. I welcome its coldness into my lungs and feel it pour through my body. The suitcase looks dangerous, suicidal, beautiful perched on the railing. When I go through with it, the suitcase explodes. Look out below! A flurry of t-shirts, shorts, plastic baggies and travel-sized bottles fall beyond my outstretched fingers. Mixed with the cold and the snow and that gray sky, I watch Costa Rica fall into my courtyard, with the warmth of his sandals still on my palms.