

## Anti-Gravity

The night that gravity reversed, George was standing in his kitchen, hands propped against the sink's edge, eyes fixed on the reflection of his grey hair in the steel faucet. The twilight room was quiet save for the song of cicadas which drifted in through the open back door. Beyond the door was a deck where his wife, Amelie, sat, her presence only disclosed by the occasional creak of a patio chair. George inhaled deeply, then pried himself from the sink and walked back outside.

Just as he passed the back door's threshold, the world plunged into chaos. At first George felt lighter, as he and everything around him began to float. In an instant, the air above became dense and forcefully absorptive, tugging everything away from the Earth's surface. The tranquil summer sounds were dwarfed by a cacophony of car alarms and crashing, screeching metal. Screams echoed in every direction, and chief among them was the panicked cries of Amelie losing her tether.

George's feet swung above his head as he was thrust into the air. He quickly grabbed the doorframe to stop his fall, leaving him hanging beside the house. He reached out with his other hand just in time to miraculously catch Amelie, grunting as the brunt of her weight tugged on his arm. Inside the house, dishes, furniture, and appliances crashed to the ceiling below.

Below Amelie's dangling body, the sky formed a bowl, towards which endless shadowed masses plummeted. The purple and orange clumps of sunset seemed to swallow the Earth's debris just as it did the fading sunlight. George gripped Amelie's hand tightly. Her fair skin was pearlescent in the multicolored light emanating from below. He remembered holding the same hand on their wedding day decades ago; he remembered how the glint of her silver ring

matched the twinkle in her eye, how her veil had framed her face like a halo, and how he'd cried as their lips joined to consecrate their bond.

The memory fled George's mind as Amelie became heavier in his hand. Her body was motionless and her eyes closed, but her sandy hair bounced gently in the breeze. The deck groaned, threatening to come loose.

"Amelie, dear, climb up my body and get inside," he said urgently.

Her eyes remained closed. "I can't," she whispered. "Something hit my arm. I think it's broken." George looked to her other arm, which hung as lifelessly as the rest of her. His palms began to sweat, loosening his grip. He squeezed harder and pulled her towards him with all his strength, but doing so only twisted his wrist and sent a wave of pain up his arm.

George looked up to the kitchen above, desperately searching for a way out of this. The room was now barren, as everything but the cabinets and the sink had tumbled to the ceiling below. The house hadn't looked this empty since the night they'd moved in. They had flown ahead of their moving truck, leaving them in a house with only a suitcase full of clothes and one treasure George had snuck away with them--his prized stereo. That night, they ended up eating chinese takeout on the floor and, later, slow dancing in each other's arms to an old bossa nova CD.

The rough wood of the door frame began to pierce George's left hand, and his right one stung as he tightened it to compensate for Amelie's growing weight. He stared intently at the empty kitchen, knowing he needed to find a solution soon, but now all that flooded his head were memories. He remembered standing at the stove on their first Thanksgiving, frantically moving his hands between wooden spoons until a pair of arms gently wrapped themselves around his back and calmed him. He remembered stumbling into the kitchen drunk when the house was dark and slumping against the fridge, sobbing to Amelie about how she no longer

loved him. And he remembered being at the sink only moments ago, before the world flipped, but after his life did. He would give anything to go back to that moment, to call Amelie into the kitchen, to be there together, in safety, when the chaos erupted..

Instead, they hung in the air, and Amelie only pulled George away from the safety of the house. As the pain shooting up his arm increased in intensity, so did the likelihood that he would be unable to save her. In fact, he wondered whether even he had a life left to live on Earth. Screams continued to punctuate the darkening sky. They came in waves; new panicked voices emerged from the surrounding neighborhood as more people lost their tether, but the screams became faint as they fell further into the atmosphere.

“Don’t worry honey, I’m going to find a way to save you,” he reassured Amelie, his voice strained.

“Always the hero,” she replied, her eyes still closed. George wondered if they’d been that way all evening. The screams had started before the world flipped, although he didn’t remember what caused the fight--there never seemed to be an actual reason. All he remembered was standing at the deck’s railing, a glass of gin in hand, waiting for her tirade to cease, and when it did, responding with monologues of the same intensity. When finally they found themselves quiet, she’d spoken four hushed words: *I want a divorce.*

Amelie’s hand grew more slick in his. He couldn’t imagine a way out of this. Every solution that ran through his mind was tainted by the burning in his muscles and the resounding ache of Amelie’s words. He looked to her eyes, hoping they would open and show that twinkle they did so many years ago, hoping they would give him a reason to hold on. They didn’t.

The deck groaned louder. There was no more time to wait. With tears in his eyes, George relaxed his palm and let Amelie’s hand slide from his. He felt light as her weight left him.

He looked below and watched as she drifted into the sky, body limp as she became one with the periwinkle abyss.