Something New

by Amye Archer

You see the ocean for the first time on our honeymoon. Your large feet dig deep into the muddy sands of the Maryland coastline as your blue eyes swell at the infinite water before you. I wrap my arms around your thick waist and press my ear into your back like you are a seashell and if I listen hard enough I can hear the origins of you. I close my eyes and plant myself in the moment. I want to stay this way forever. Here on this beach, you are not shackled to me out of need, you are not unemployed, you are not drunk, I am not a controlling bitch, emotionally needy, or a basket case. We are newlyweds. In this moment, with the sky darkening and the shush of waves around us , we are normal, and our problems, which loom large and heavy every other day and hour of our lives, are washed away with the sand between our toes, sucked back into the majestic wake of the Atlantic at our feet.

Forty-eight hours ago we stood in a small church in Scranton, Pennsylvania with our hands clamped together, knees slightly buckled, and a pain in both our chests as we pledged our lives to one another. I got drunk in the limo on the way here. I almost ran away. You almost overslept.

It was a beautiful wedding. Years from now when people talk about that day, they will use words like elegant and tasteful, they will remember a candlelit ceremony with bridesmaids carrying star punched lanterns and wearing simple eggplant gowns. They will recall a reception in a historic house with classical music and mind-blowing cheesecake for dessert. They will forget the particulars, the obvious dread in both our eyes, the inappropriate amount of alcohol consumed by the groom, the fact that we didn't sleep in the same bed on our wedding night.

"I don't think I've ever seen anything so beautiful," You yell over the thunderous roar of the ocean. Your face is speckled with wet sand and your eyes squint now to see the disappearing skyline folding itself into the dusk of night.

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"I told you," I say, "I have always loved the ocean. Always." I want to scream: *I have been begging you for eight years to come to the beach with me. I have dreamed of this day for as long as I can remember. Water is part of the fabric of me and I've wanted you to share in that, to share in me. I won't fight with you on our honeymoon.*

"Let's head back," You say, "It's getting dark."

We clasp hands like new lovers and bump against one another as we walk. My bare feet in the damp sand connect me to this earth. My hand in yours connects me to the history of us. Ours is a complicated love, one of guilt and need, one with moments of pure, unadulterated hatred, and one with raw, burning passion. Now, I can't help but feel a new life blooming between us, forcing out all of the bad with its growth.

Our hotel is one of the nicest on the beach. It's covered in reflections, glass, mirrors, I can't differentiate them in my memory. The surface gleams like ice against the blackness of the night. We chose this hotel because it was new, because it was expensive, because it was what you wanted. I could explain this in several different ways, I could go on and on about why this mattered, but I won't. I'll say it simply this way: You are a nervous man. You suffer from Panic Disorder. You have attacks that send you grasping for a tether to this life, and usually that tether is me. You cannot do things that most of us can do without thinking. A walk down the street is a challenge. You find safety in strange places, like your computer room, a video game store, a new car, or a new hotel. Your disease controls you right now. Years later, I hope it won't. But for now, we are in the thick of it, and I have the patience to be here. It won't always be this way. It won't always be so easy, something I know in my gut as we walk into the gleaming glass doors of our fancy hotel, across the marbled tiled lobby ,and are finally swallowed by the soft glow of the elevator.

Later, you roll me onto my back, nuzzle your face between my oversized breasts, and breath heavy with the thick night

air. We know this routine, the unclothed feel of one another, the way your skin slides against mine like two plates moving across the earth. We have been naked together for almost half my life. It is here in this moment that I say the words that will change us. The words that will make this ease between us fade away into the canopy of darkness.

"I want a baby," I announce.

"Okay," you say back like I just asked you if I could borrow a spoon.

"I want you to give me a baby," I repeat.

"Okay."

You come inside of me for the first time in our nine years together. We are adults now.