

# Fin

by Brett Garcia Rose

We sit close on our last evening, facing our window perch high above Manhattan and watching the sun settle behind Ellis Island. With each passing minute the colors darken our silence, splashing against the whitewashed walls in sad oranges and dying yellows and foreboding purples, and with this onslaught of color we change, quivering where our legs touch, tears welling and falling inside instead of out, all of it swelling into a pregnant, weighty sadness.

I light candles, Lucy pours wine, and the colors reduce her as well, stripping away the frowns of anger and distilling her sadness into a dim silhouette of who she used to be. Time has been mean to us, as we have been to each other, and our split has left much of our shared humanity frozen in place, hurtful emotions suspended and untranslated between us, waiting to churn into something more useful, a new malignity or bitterness, something durable that will outlast our stranded moments.

The eviction notice curls at the edges outside our painted door. On the coffee table are divorce papers, signed and countersigned hours ago. We'd made a deal, and would honor it at last.

*Six months, we'd said.*

"You knew it wouldn't be enough time," she says, her voice soft and fractured.

In the reflection of the darkening window I can see our suitcases framing the door like serene bouncers, waiting to grant us entry to our new lives.

"What are you asking?" I say, sipping my wine, watching the suitcases blur as the rim of the glass touches my lips.

She doesn't answer. Ten minutes slide by unmolested in the anesthesia of cheap wine and resignation, the bouncers blurring and unblurring, the room dimming, quieting, the kaleidoscope of sundown giving way to the gentle sadness of candlelight.

In the window I see her face as it was on that final day, before our months of attrition and lawyers. A face not of guilt or fear or regret,

but only relief. I knew then, at that very moment, what I know now. There is never enough time. And no matter how we might arrange the rules, we'd both lose.

Far below our window the last caravan of tourists returns from Liberty to a line of waiting white buses. Photos are snapped, mini-vacations paused or ended, hugs and air-kisses exchanged, everyone else working surreptitiously for their pleasure and waiting to clock out. In the distance Staten Island burns, an apartment complex smoldering from late afternoon arson, the destruction of those lives silently nourishing our own media-deprived tragedy, sad colors filling out an extraordinary sunset that will soon leave everything black.

"I never knew anything, Lucy," I whisper. "That's the point."

*Leave it in the past, we'd said. No questions.*

The suitcases shimmer in the candlelight. Lucy lays her head on my shoulder, tracing lazy circles on my chest with her finger and nuzzling my neck, her nose wet from crying. The smell of her dark hair is heady, sensual and intoxicating still, even now. I squeeze her head in my arms and watch my tears fall unnoticed between us.

"He's not you," she says, sobbing and making fists with the fabric of my shirt, both of us, trembling.

I close my eyes, not yet ready to bear witness as we erase one other. There is so much that we just can't do.

She reaches behind me with her arms, squeezing me like a life raft.

"Will I see you again?" she asks?

*I hope so, I say to myself.*

Somewhere downstairs her lover waits for her call, pacing my lobby with the laziness of a fat, kept tiger. We sit there for a few minutes more, just breathing, losing ourselves one last time in the soft noise of our fading lives.

