

Everyone Is Going Away

by DeMisty Bellinger

"I don't know what's going on there," Hank, who hated his name and wanted a more Biblical name because those names (Jeremiah! Matthew! David!)—although common—sound ominous, said as he pointed up to the top of the apartment building that housed the whores and crackheads. Or crackhead whores.

Hank-named-Henry would even have preferred a made-up name like Losand, or a Spanish name like Lopez, a French Laurent or like the Greek Titan Lelantos. L's were nice. Lazerus, Lance, Leonard or Laurence. Lester had an effeminate feel, though.

Marie, who liked her name, or was even indifferent to her name—it was an okay name—followed Hank's pointing finger to the fifth floor of the apartment building. He was pointing at a window and Marie couldn't see what Hank saw. She shaded her eyes with her hand. She squinted. She needed glasses.

Who could not like the name Marie?

"I can't see anything, Hank."

Hank, who was thinking of the name Lance and how daring it sound, turned to his girlfriend of fifteen years, and shook his head at her. "Don't look so obvious, Marie."

"Well, you pointed!" she said. "What's more blatant than that?"

Marie, Maria, Mary. Mother Mary. A good, strong and safe name.

If he had a name like Lance—If he had the name Lance! "Does Lance sound gay?"

Marie was still trying to see what was through the fifth floor window. She thought there was a person looking down at her.

"What, Hank?"

"Lance. Do you think that sounds gay?"

"Stop it. Your name is Henry. A nice strong name."

Hank looked at Marie. Fifteen years was too long to call her girlfriend. She is now wife. Or a common law wife. She needed glasses.

He looked back up at the fifth floor window of the apartment building. The man up there was moving around, pacing away from the window and back to it. Once, he stopped to spit out of the window. Hank saw the man look at him. Hank looked away.

"He's noticed us," he told Marie. People prayed to Mary. They hailed her.

"Is he. . . does he have any clothes on?" Marie asked.

"Stop looking, Marie, he's noticed us."

"I need money. I can't continue to raise my kids in a red light district."

Our kids, Hank thought. "You see, if I was named Lance, I could get a job."

"Hank."

"Who could deny someone with a name like that? It's a weapon, it's one syllable." He lowered his voice to a smooth bass and said: "Lance."

"Hank, it doesn't matter."

"Stop looking, Marie!"

"Is he naked?"

"Yes! He's naked. Now look at me."

Marie took her hand from her forehead. "You think he sees us?"

"Yes!"

Marie looked at Hank. "We can't live here anymore." She felt tired. She felt out of breath. If, she thought, she could take the kids to live with her mother, maybe, now that they were older, now that the youngest was nine years old, it will be okay. She could take them to her mother, who loved her grandchildren like a grandmother should, who hated Hank like a mother-in-law should. But really, she wasn't Hank's mother-in-law, Marie reasoned.

Marie wanted to look up at the window and see the naked man clearly. She wanted to see pass him into his home. What was there? What does a crackhead keep in his home?

The prostitute, who yelled at the men who drove by and waved her hand seductively (or wildly; Marie didn't know how to describe it), finally got a date. An old man in an old Cadillac picked her up.

Hank looked up at the window again. He saw the man pace back away from the window, stop, and run right back to the window. Pass the window. "Marie, look at that. Shit."

Marie looked, but she couldn't quite see. She noticed a change in the window, then she got a falling sensation, a dreamy fall. Everyone is going away, she thought.

"Shit," Hank said again. "Icarus would have been an apt name for that guy."

