

Tofino

by Katrina Gray

We're missing the storms in Tofino, I told him, pouring tea for him and scowling. It was November.

"No shit," he said. "I'm here to find out why."

I told him everything, as if he didn't know.

There was a Samain Psychic Festival in Bend that was just supposed to be for fun, so I went a couple of weeks ago. I went, and I wasn't the same when I returned. After it I cancelled our room, cancelled the Washington State Ferry reservation, canceled the car—cancelled it all. There was no need to make the drive to Anacortes on Friday. There was nothing to do with the Canadian money.

I had planned it all, intricately but loosely. Planned it so he wouldn't have to, planned it so it would get planned. We would get there before the clouds, put on turtlenecks and coffee, and watch the first raindrop turn into a million. We'd be right in the center of the most famous, most beautiful Pacific Northwest storms. We'd be paying to see what woodland creatures would have the good sense to escape. Except now we wouldn't leave Oregon, and now we weren't a "we."

The thing is that the past life regression I underwent at the fair gave me valuable information. He had tried to kill me once. I think it was in Nepal, or somewhere near there, somewhere with cold and mountains in Asia. I was the man, and he was woman. God, she hated me; I could feel it. She hid food from me when food was scarce enough already. Fed the babies but then left me out when I had spent all my energy going out and catching the goddamn thing she was cooking. I had skinned it, too—the buffalo or whatever. She invited the neighbors over from the next cave. Our cave was nicer, more modern, and larger too. I'm the one who found it, but she left that part out. She wanted to impress them and show them what a nice family we were, how our fire always lit up when we needed it,

how the children sweetly slept through tigers shredding antelopes. How our children had the best fur, the kind that was easy to pick things out of and smooth down after. It was true: our kids did have fur to envy, but goddammit—did she have to brag? It's like she didn't even get that survival was the game here. And what the hell did she think she would do without someone to catch the roasting animal she generously shared to impress the neighbors anyway? They giggled at me when they thought I was asleep, giggled at the size of my balls, which I had never been a problem before her. Said it was because of my tiny balls that we only had two children. And I needed glasses, but there weren't glasses. I was going blind and hungry, and I was wilting by the day. And then—God!—it hit me: maybe she had another hunter lined up. She had no need for me anymore. He could kill things, skin them, and give her more offspring. Fuck.

The psychic's bill meant that I would have to pay the electric company late, but it was worth it. I mean, what if I hadn't found out about this? Her name was Star, and word had it that she was quite good. She recorded the session, and I told him I'd play it back for him as proof, but he wasn't having it.

I told him all of this as I stirred honey into his tea on the day we were supposed to be in Tofino.

So I say that he tried to kill me once, but I think he succeeded. He told me he was sorry, but still. I wasn't taking a road trip with someone who tried to kill me, no matter how long ago it was. Trying to work out that kind of karma in this life was a cheap way out. I mean, he shouldn't have done it in the first place. He didn't even feel guilty about it. He expected me to entirely forget all of this after my regression and move on like nothing had happened. The bastard. I knew his secret now, and no way could he hide beneath his gentle Canadian façade.

He would've proposed in Tofino. Gray rain and seawater hitting the windows, buckling us in for at least a few days, nowhere else to go. That was what scared me: he could try that bullshit on me again. Try to hoard all the food and freeze me out, thinking that a ring would make everything better. I'm smarter than that now, and I have

proper glasses.

You're crazy, he told me. Said he couldn't be held responsible for what he did in another life, and how did I know that my mind wasn't making it up. You're just jealous that I'm the one with the upper hand this time, I said, and people can survive alone these days, can hole up in their caves and remove themselves from society thanks to technological innovations. He said he would not miss the storms, or me. He would go alone.

I kicked him out instead of killing him. I gave him his toothbrush and condoms, deadbolted the door, and turned on the television. AMC had on *Same Time Next Year*. He slammed the door of his Volvo and yelled something at me before tearing off.

We are more evolved now.

