

After He Stays

by Melanie Yarbrough

When the sex that is new and promising in its awkward moments is over, you turn to him. You expect that he's figuring out a way to leave; the parts of you that know wait for him to stand up and put his clothes back on, quicker and with more eagerness than when he took them off. You expect to stand at the door, your head against it like you've seen in movies, watching him go and wondering if he'll be back again. But he doesn't, he stays and asks if he can look around your room, even though it's small enough to see from where you lay. He asks about your parents, your past relationships, why one of your walls is painted gray when the rest are painted yellow. You tell him there isn't much to tell, but you tell him anyway, things you haven't thought of in a while, things you have never tried to articulate. He tells you things about himself, about his older sister's bout with depression, about taking a year off from college to move home with her. You notice the patterns of his facial hair as he talks, and you are comforted by his comfort in sharing this with you. He says he feels he had fun in his twenties, that he wants children someday and marriage. And it isn't weird the way it's weird sometimes when people say they want to get married and you've just met them and you think, *Oh, I don't want to marry you.* It's normal and comfortable and you think, *Maybe I could marry you.* Maybe years from now you could be lying in this same bed, in this same position, and you could say, "Remember that first night you were here and you said you wanted to get married?" And you could both laugh and move closer together.

You don't plan on it, but he sleeps over. You grow nervous that his smell will seep into your sheets, that you will grow used to smelling him and you won't know until he's gone that it was ever there. You leave him sleeping in your room. You drink chocolate milk in the kitchen, smoke a cigarette and smell that instead.

