

Bird

by Morgan Atwood

He'd made the best coffee in the world. He'd had this old aluminum dripolator. Boil the water, pour it in via the top and let it drip through. She'd almost stolen it when she left. But it wouldn't have tasted the same not in his kitchen. In her kitchen, the one she was going to have, it would've tasted bitter, or not bitter enough. Too much of aluminum, or not enough. She'd left it, sitting in the early morning sun on the kitchen counter.

That was really the problem with leaving. She had to leave everything, could take none of the perfection with her. Anything she took would've been too little, or too much, once removed. Once not in his house, not in his vision or touch, the magic would be gone. Not in their house, their vision. Even she had to be someone else. Her key slipped, rasping, into the slot. Flecks of chrome fell from the keyway, sticking to the red car door. She wondered if he'd been in it for the car. The old blood red Volvo 1800. She smiled as she slid behind the wheel. It had been hers, and never his. She would take this with her. Let him keep the coffee pot. All the good it would do him.

The little car rumbled, happily, as she backed down the driveway. The last of her clothes already in the trunk, and one last thermos of coffee on the passenger seat. She'd always wanted a dog, tried to get him to buy a dog. Now she was glad, her hand on the warm steel cylinder, to have that seat free. A dog would remember, and try to take things that had to be left behind. But it would've been such a terrible thing to leave a dog. Without food especially. Though, she guessed he'd have eaten, eventually.

She rolled down her window, and listened to the wind and tires. No radio, not yet. Wait until she was in another broadcasting zone. Then she would find an oldies station, and listen to music they had never shared. Dangling a hand out the window, she played in the air currents. Fingers splayed, then closed, angled up, then down. Like an airplane wing.

"I wanna fly, daddy," she said to the air rushing past, "like a little bird."

She looked at the gas gauge. Enough to cross the state line before she needed to worry. She'd thought about not taking his money. But money changed so many hands, what could it possibly take with it? She had plenty now, and could claim it as hers. She'd also thought about siphoning a little gas. But why spend the extra money? She'd never yelled at him for smoking in bed anyway, it had been part of the perfection.

Another mile marker rushed up and she began to play a counting game. She was going backwards, towards mile one. Smiling, hand soaring out the window, she wiggled down into the seat for the drive.

