

The Four Seasons

by Rachel Yoder

After the first snows fell, the men began coming to our street. At night, dark cars lined the sidewalk, and the men sat inside, heads bowed in silence. They waited. Snow materialized and dematerialized under the streetlights. It drifted unseen next to their car doors, in the bushes, behind the fence. I walked the long row of cars and tried not to see them, the forgotten Renaissance statues, the second-hand mannequins. So still, these men. They had lovely necks.

It was dark and cold that season, and we were desperate for something. There was no going out. There was no staying in. The sofa didn't work anymore, nor the bed. Our desire had wrung the comfort from everything. We walked through the gray snow to The Four Seasons. It was a couple blocks away, down where M Street split. As we walked, darkness came in walls and built a house around us, a place where neither of us wanted to live. In the hotel lobby, the gold light and warmth and flower arrangements were all lies, but they reminded us of spring. We imagined happiness. We checked in.

The room on the fourth floor overlooked the building next door, and we immediately closed the blinds. He opened and shut the mini-bar. I snapped on the TV. We had nothing but what we could carry in our hands: cash, identification, rings of keys. We watched pornography and then fucked the way they did. After, we were naked and unmade. Then, we did it again, and again, and again.

The television stayed on, and pornography resolved to romance, then comedy. I put on my underwear and opened all the desk drawers. I took out the blank stationery and had an urge to write to people who knew me. Instead I pulled back the curtain and looked out at the graying. Our house still surrounded us. It kept being built

outside of every place we went. Taxis honked and the sound zigzagged between the buildings. I want to say that I smoked, but I didn't. It felt as if I had, though.

I had hoped for a night of restful sleep, but instead watched the TV light color him blue while he slept. The wide bed was a mess of white sheets. I was either too hot or too cold, with strangers and faraway islands flashing at my feet. I thought about Ohio in summertime, how it felt as if I would never see it again, the green. He moved beside me as he dreamt.

When we walked back to the apartment, all the cars were gone from our street. He went to work, and I went back to bed. In the night, I sat by the window and the men returned to wait for the others, to touch and then part, to never speak a name, to remember love, and then to forget.

