Frederick (from Unsaid literary journal)

by Rick Rofihe

1. “Never the same hotel twice, Marie.” I understood him perfectly. And there's so many hotels in this big old world.

2. *Good* hotels. Good sheets. Everything just right, the whole bit!

3. “Do you like *this*, Marie?” “And *this*, Marie?” “*This* way—or *this* way, Marie?” My God, my God, my God.

4. O.K., so we're in separate hotels tonight, in different cities. It can happen. In the meantime, *the next time*.

5. I picked up a book in the lobby newsstand, *The Cat Who Saw Stars*. I was hoping it was a kind of children's book for adults—but it was a mystery! So I went back down and bought a *stack* of magazines.

6. We didn't talk long on the phone. What was there to say? My presence. His absence. Nothing to do but wait. For weeks? Anyway, for our next chance.

7. Television on—but no sound!

8. I could call his airline to check if everything he said is true—I did that once. But we *burn* for each other, why wouldn't it always be true?

9. He always grabs me somewhere *after* he says his good-byes—I *love* it!

10. God, I hate when one of us has to leave in the morning—and never together.

11. If he and I could be, were together all the time, would it be like this, could it stay like this?

12. *Frederick*. Not *Fred*. Never *Freddie*. *Frederick*. (He's not even here and he has my full attention.)

13. I feel cold now and I'm not sure how to get warm. If I could just get angry at him, maybe that would heat my body up.

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14. There's a way he pays attention to my mouth, my lower lip, that makes *me* swell, I swear.

15. Code Names: He calls me ————, I call him ————. (He knows I keep a journal, he said I must *never* write those names down.)

16. Such a common fantasy. Her away, even for the day. *Me* in their bed. In the middle of the afternoon. Lots of light. An ordinary, logical, common fantasy— but not one bit boring!

17. The e-mail thing, the text-messaging thing, the cell-phone thing. Then the hotel thing. All over America. (*But*—I have to wait.)

18. Missed connections, like tonight. And now I resist touching myself, alone.

19. We always have to hurry. It doesn't sound ideal, I know. Not having to hurry, now that *sounds* like it would be perfect, but hurrying, having to, can also be delicious.

20. It started like this: just him saying, *Nice to meet you, Marie*, and me, while I just said his own name back to him, at the same time thinking, *I want you to take me to a hotel room someday, Frederick. I think I'll like the way you'd make me feel*.

21. Almost bedtime. It's going to be a rainy day tomorrow. (I like the sound of that word, *bedtime*.)

22. In Denver once, we had room service before *and* after. The lemon pie was really good.

23. Did I have a feeling he wouldn't show up tonight? Maybe, but I always have that feeling. And then—almost always—he shows up!

24. One night, in the middle of it, I told him, *I wish you were my brother*, and then I thought whatever will he think? But he didn't miss a beat, he said, *I wish you were my sister*. And we got hardly any sleep that night!

25. On nights like tonight I can start to worry that Frederick is hiding from me because he knows what I might want. More than one night?

26. *God* I'm glad I met Frederick.

27. I hope I have good dreams tonight.

28. I hope tomorrow will be a nice day for me.

29. I want to go to sleep, but I don't want to stop thinking about him.

30. I think I'll lie down and close my eyes.

31. I don't want to just wake up—I want him to wake me up.

32. He was doing me spoon-style when I turned my head to ask him—I almost *never* mention her—if he does it this way with his wife. I whispered it, really, but he had to have heard me. He not only didn't answer, there was nothing about him that showed any reaction to what I'd asked.

33. She can't watch him every minute. She must know that. She doesn't know about us, but *still*.

34. I couldn't take it. I mean, O.K., let's say he was mine, with me. Probably she'd get the house. And then me, one day, alone, just for an hour or two, and I'd start thinking he's back in that house that was his, stealing a few minutes with her.

35. I'm not much younger than her. She'd think it was because I am, even by just four years. She'd be a little bit right in that sometimes that's all there is to it, but sometimes it's *more* than that.

36. Anyway, she'd hate me. I don't hate her. Hardly ever think of her.

37. I'll get some sleep now. Get up early, take a shower, dry my hair. Have breakfast at the airport.

38. Good night, my love, my lover. (Sometimes it's enough. Sometimes it's not enough. Sometimes it's enough. Sometimes it's not enough.)

39. I feel sick.

40. Sometimes it's not enough.

41. Good night, my love, my lover.