

# Lobster

*by* Tyler Koch

She loved me once. When we were young and the world revolved slowly in our hands. She never said as much, but she did. I knew by the way she moved, the looks, the whispers in the dead of night that carried only to my ears.

We spent weeks on that beach in Mexico, just the two of us. Staring out onto the ocean seeing nothing but each other. She wore sunglasses, a red bikini that left her with tan lines around her neck. I joked with her about that. She only laughed and said mine were worse. A lobster, she called me. My lobster.

In a fit of courage I spoke to her father about marriage. He looked me up and down and said I better not do anything to harm his little girl. With his blessing we said our vows beneath the shade of an oak tree. I spun her around as we danced, her white gown twirling and floating to the cadence of the wind. She never said she loved me, but I knew by the way her eyes looked into mine.

We never had children. Her or me, it didn't make much difference in the end. Some things just weren't meant to be. So we traveled, planted trees, considered adoption halfheartedly then seriously. I can't, she said. I don't know if I know how. Of course you do, I answered. All you have to do is love.

She left me in the winter. I came home to an empty house, the pictures of us all taken from their frames. There was a note. I burned it without reading, the unknown less painful than the penchant for truth. And so I sat on empty couches staring at empty frames while snow piled against the windows and frost bearded the roof.

I moved to Mexico, a small rink-a-dink shack on the beach that provides me nothing and everything. I sit mostly on the sand, watching the ocean seeing nothing but her. Time hums slowly by. I have one friend here, a crusty old fellow who scuttles around indecisively. He's hard of hearing but I don't mind. His company is preferable to the solitude.

Toward the end I saw her. She passed by with another man, gray hair, two teenage kids in their wake. She turned and saw me. I held up a hand. She looked at me the way she used to, when we were young and the world revolved slowly in our hands. That was the last time. The final time. She never said she loved me, but I knew in the way she turned and never glanced back.

