

JOSEPH LEVENS

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*LOST LOCKER COMBINATIONS*

But Buffalo is terribly miserably cold in the winter. The wind is hard and vicious, rushing in from the lake. And I hate the frigid temperature. Georgian plantation supper feasts, a Texan rodeo in July, anything but twelve new inches of snow when I wake up in the morning. My fingers are still biting from yesterday, walking through the woods hand-in-hand, my feet still dead, my tongue singed from having sipped soup too quickly after coming back in.

*Right there, yes. Don't move. That's it, he says.*

Into this cabin on the outskirts of the city, he and me, though cozy, yes, I like cozy. And warm, I'll admit. But it is Buffalo and it is winter, and I want sea grape trees and bougainvillea and tiny neon green lizards roaming freely, I don't care. They're cute in a way, anyway, even with their skin so hard, and I'm sure they mean no harm, just like the way my mother means me no harm.

*Go with it, he says. Rock a little. Push into me.*

She who wanted her daughter to be a scientist. My mother had dreams of frameless spectacles, a long white coat, spotless and accentuated by blue pocket pen caps poking out. She bought me a clipboard one year, brown and chrome and hard as a door. She enrolled me in clubs at school and said, and lied, that the late bus home was very safe. And the planets and the elements and the world of weights and measures were so very interesting, I thought, yes, a life this could well be for me.

*I like it when we collide like that, he says, your hair bouncing on impact, in twenty thousand million different directions, all at once.*

And my well-being safe and secure in those years of dreams and potentials and wall lockers that held everything new and dear to me. Stanley Morris, my first boyfriend, that first afternoon asking me to go with him to a movie as he straddled his ten-speed after school beside the paddleball courts. I kicked his tires, hard, but not hard enough to bend the rims. This your bike? You on any school teams? I had questions.