

You, her, and me.

By Tabatha Delgado

She's a lot like you, you know. I really think you'd like her. I know, I know. You always tell me that it's opposites that attract, but I really think you two would hit it off. And I'm not just saying that this time. Well... maybe I am. Maybe I'm just telling myself you'd be friends. Easier that way, don't you know. For instance sometimes, when she's lying on your side of the bed, I forget for a moment that it's her and not you, and it feels... well it feels. I woke up one morning and groggily called her your name, but I don't think she heard me. Well I don't think she really heard what I said. She rolled over to face me, and I realized that it wasn't you only a split-second before I saw her face pinstriped in the morning sunlight through the blinds. I smiled at her, but she just kept her eyes closed and sort of nuzzled into my chest away from the light. You hated that. You'd always just squint and roll over again, doing that thing with your shoulder blades. You were always so cold in the morning. I miss that.

She smells different than you. Well what I mean is she smells... she smells like wild orchids. Or maybe it's lilies. I mean you know I don't know anything about flowers. Maybe it's the Caribbean. A vacation, I think that's it... she smells exotic. Like that hotel we stayed at in Port-au-Prince. Except I'm not in Port-au-Prince here. I'm at home, and I get up and go to work, and here she is smelling like Port-au-Prince. You always just smelled like home. Hah, it's like even though she smells like exotic Port-au-Prince orchid lilies; it's not even foreign, is it? Because it's still our vacation. I wonder if I'll wake up one day and she'll smell like you. Like home. I really miss that.

She has no idea who you are. I started putting your portrait into the dresser drawer

the last few weeks, because it seemed weird. You know what I mean. At first it sort of felt like you were watching me. Well, us. But after a while I just did it because it seemed respectful. Like in the movies when people do it out of shame, or guilt. I never quite figured out which. But I didn't feel either, really. I realized I was just doing it because they do it in the movies. Anyway so I began putting you away. And then the other day I came home to her tidying up the apartment, and I found you back up on the night table. Heh, you were even facing the bedroom door, as if you had watched her walk away after putting you back, and were then waiting for me to walk in. I put you back in the dresser, of course. But mostly because I wasn't really sure if she HAD moved you, or if I had just forgotten to put you away. I really don't think she knows who you are, so I really can't be sure. She doesn't seem like the jealous type. I've let your name slip a couple of times, absently. But she didn't seem too interested in who you were, really. I mean Christ, remember how you flew off the handle every time I mentioned somebody new from work, or you saw Christine's number on the call display? I... I kind of miss that.

We fight ALL the time. I mean not like we used to fight. We haven't like, yelled at each other. I mean they're usually pretty petty little fights. Arguments? She thinks they're cute, actually. Maybe we don't fight. You never thought we were cute, ever. ESPECIALLY when we fought. I mean she gets upset sometimes over them. Frustrated? She doesn't ever seem too concerned about it, really. Frustrations? Alright, so yeah we definitely don't fight. We frustrate. Each other. Have frustrations? Fuck I hate this. She hates using conventional words, like fighting. Like it's too broad of a definition. Or too severe. So we don't fight. We have frustrations. They last a lot longer than our fights used to, that's for sure. I tried apologizing once or twice, you know, with a sneaky hug from

behind, or a massage when she was making dinner. But she just sort of hung there looking at me like I were a creepy uncle or something. I don't think she understood. Remember when we'd fight, and then after you'd screamed at me and I stormed away, we'd usually calm down while preparing dinner together, or driving into work? Well I don't miss the fighting. It was always totally fucked. But I miss the speedy recoveries.

I thought of telling her about you today. We were eating breakfast, and it was quiet (we were frustrated again). I started to say something, but as soon as she looked at me I just took a sip of orange juice and pretended to crack my jaw a little, like it was sore. I don't know. Jaws could get sore. Anyway I didn't tell her. We finished breakfast in virtual silence and I drove her to work. I'll tell her about you tonight. I left your portrait out on the night table this morning. I'm sorry I haven't come around much lately. I sent flowers earlier in the week, but I don't know if you got them. The orchids? I should've just brought them with me I guess, but I'm pretty sure the superintendent already thinks I leave too much around here for you. He says he always has to pick everything up because it blows all over the yard after a few hours. I keep forgetting that I'm not the only person who leaves stuff for you here. I talked to your mother yesterday for the first time since the funeral, and she said she's been leaving flowers every three days or so. That's a lotta flowers! I haven't spoken to your dad since the accident really, other than the morning of the funeral, briefly, on the phone. Has he been by? I know you two were having problems. I'll see if he wants to talk when I call your mother again. She says he's not drinking nearly as much as we were worried that he would be. Maybe you were right; maybe he really is just a seasonal drunk after all. It's warm again after all, all doom and gloom a full year away again. In fact if it keeps up I might not have to bring any flowers

for a while, the plot looks like it's starting to grow in just like the super said it would.
Anyway, the super. I'll ask him if the flowers came.

There's a lot I never got around to telling you. I mean I say never got around as if I was ever intending to, but why kid myself, right? We woulda had some beautiful kids together, hon. Two girls, just like you wanted. I'm sorry. We tried so hard... SO hard... but I knew I'd never be able to have children, hon. I need to tell you that I've never loved anyone as much as I loved you. LOVE you. The way you'd talk about those kids... like you could see them. Feel them already growing inside you. I couldn't... well, I just couldn't. You understand? I need you to understand that, even if you don't believe anything else I've told you. As hard as it was watching you go into the bathroom each time to check... and then to have to watch you come out, KNOWING the result... KNOWING how dejected you were about to be... baby, trying with you was the best thing that ever happened between us. I hated seeing you cry ever damned time... but you don't know what it felt like being inside of you those nights when you tried to swallow me whole, oblivious to my tears through the sheen of sweat. I don't know what I'm sorry for, hon. But I am sorry. So fucking sorry.

Look. I didn't come here to apologize today. I know you have all the time in the world now, or maybe none at all... but just let me lie here with you for a little while. I called in to work after I dropped her off, and all I really want to do right now is lie here with you. With your back to me. God I miss you. I have my whole life to miss you, hon. For now just let me lie here with you. Let me just bury my head in your back.

You still smell like home.