

Infatuation at First Sight

Taylor Sklenar

I see you in the mall, that urban catacomb filled with overweight middle aged men eating themselves into a coma and sugar-jacked children running from exasperated parents. From the moment I spot you in the entrance to Journey's, I can feel the chemistry—in the way you stand, shoulders slouched inward, in the way you flick your hair out of your eyes, in the way you tap your foot impatiently and call your mother by name. There is potential between us.

I would pretend that you dropped a dollar to strike up a conversation. We would talk for longer than intended and in the end it would be you who asked for my number. We would go out with friends days later, no formal first date for us. But, as the weeks pass, we'd grow together. We would share our stories and jokes and poetry and philosophies over bottomless cups of coffee in that shitty Perkins until the horizon rimmed with light. Our hands would touch as I pass you the creamer, and we'd look up into each other's eyes. And we would know that we were meant for each other, our bodies and souls built to fit together like the ceramic mugs in our hands.

Together we would share tears mostly of joy when you notice the bulge in your stomach, casting an ominous shadow like the character you know will become the villain. The words we would leave unspoken would mean more than any language could express. I would watch for months as the only vestige remaining from our night of passion grew into something permanent and tangible, no longer a mere trick of the light. Standing at the altar facing you, I wouldn't be able to help thinking how beautiful you look, wrapped in white, vestige and all, shoulders slouched in, tapping your foot impatiently. We would hear the hushed whispers and feel the too-long glances, but ignore them because we wouldn't be ashamed of what your pearly dome represents. And when she would be born, her name would be Serendipity.

We would dedicate our lives to her. Yes, her. No longer simply an it, like some object or symbol, but a person. You'd quit school after graduation to take care of her and I would get a job to support us. Every day I'd come home and spend what time I could with the two of you. And we would long to share our jokes and stories and philosophies with each other over coffee, but we just wouldn't have the energy. We would settle for family time with Sara as recreation and say that it's ok, but we would both know we miss having a chance to rest. Tensions would ignite into fights, but we would know

that we didn't mean it. As long as we could be together we would be happy. For a while.

But as the years would press on and our family would grow, our contentment would waver. We would drop any hope of going back to school or getting a better job and accept our positions as permanent. Our faces would struggle to hide what we would both know is true. But we would never say it out loud, never intentionally think it even. And we would continue our daily endeavors like nothing was wrong.

Only when Sara is acting out and we're struggling to raise Damien and Erin; only when our bills are stacking up and we don't money to pay them off; only have when each day seems longer than the last and things are getting totally out of hand would I let the thought ease in: What the hell happened?

I would come home everyday to find you waiting in the entry way to give orders, perpetually tapping your foot. You would never stop with that foot—each step pounding another nail in my coffin. You'd stand there with your shoulders slouch in, back bent as if the weight of the entire world was brought down upon you. Well, Atlas, I'd have news for you – You stay home while I do the real work. Why don't you straighten up like you have an ounce of dignity?—that's what I'd want to say. Except I would never bring myself to do it. I'd stay quiet, because the kids wouldn't want to hear another fight. I'd kiss you like I might read a paper and smile as if for a camera. For the kids.

One day I would heat you crying in our room and enter. The question would freeze air. Do you love me?

Yes, I'd say but my hesitation would say more. We would both know now, no hiding it, no pretending. Not even for the kids.

We would die lonelier than we ever could have been on our own.

Our eyes meet as I approach Journey's. With a pleasant smile and nod, I deny myself your perfect body. I return home alone and eat dinner with myself and the candelabrum for two. It's best for everyone this way.

Taylor Sklenar is a freshman studying English and Chemistry. In his free time he enjoys acting, writing, spelunking, fighting dinosaurs, and making up creative past times. He looks for inspiration in everything around him, including nature, society, and his girlfriend, who is often his muse.