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The Table

G. Tarsiscis Janetka

“You’re back?”

“I can’t help it. This is where I was happiest.”

“Here? A cheap metal table and chairs, in a strip mall, under the blazing hot Arizona sun?”

“Sure. Well, content anyway.”

“That was 11 years ago. This—THIS—was 11 years ago. How are we even here? I’m no longer this person. This moment was the only time I’ve ever been this person. We drank chai and you gave me your biscotti, that’s all.”

“We drank and I gave you my biscotti. And we sat and looked at each other. And we were truly alone for the first time. And the breeze made your hair dance and we were both off our guard, trying to make sense of the situation and I, for one, didn’t want anything else, anything more, for the rest of my life. I only wanted to sit with you here, at this table, drinking chai.”

“So you return, trying in vain to recapture that moment. You wrote it down in detail then, you’re even writing about it now, aren’t you? If it was so great, why even bother to go on?”

“To repeat the past until I get it right. You used to believe that was possible too. You sat at the end of that dock, staring ahead at the promise of a tomorrow solidly anchored in a happier past.”

“I don’t think we were happier then. I *know* we weren’t happier then.”

“Which is what made this moment all the more special, earned. We earned this through our tears, don’t you see? The restless, angry hours, the sad drinking, the endless attempts to escape reality—in the midst of such deafening bullshit was this quiet, soft moment—the only one I’ve ever had. We had more emotion then, more of a potential, a future to believe in. We called ourselves jaded, but we were only naive. We believed in things, things that could save us, make us happy. Make us breathe deep. This moment is the eye of the storm, peace amid chaos. For everything else I’ve learned since then I’m no happier. I have less understanding and less belief. This is the greatest moment of my life, can’t you see that? When I get drunk I return here, in dreams I return here,

at the moment of climax I return here—to peace, to calm, to the only moment that makes sense. Can’t you see that?”

“Can we just drink our chai?”

“I’d love nothing better.”

“Good. Let’s make it last as long as possible, but then never, ever, return here again.”

“Yes, let’s. Maybe this time I can finally get it right.”