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## THE MOST MOVED MOVER

by

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At the coffee shop in my town, and there's only one, Chance is telling us about radioactive cesium found in the tissue of bluefin tuna. Chance's real name is Lenny Bower and the coffee shop's name is Moonrise, painted inside with an eponymous mural, a white orb emerging from behind a mountain. This is a mountain town, so the mural is redundant. No matter where on the sidewalk we stand we can see Mt. Escadom with its wide skirt of mesas, all of it, this time of year, white and black as Ansel Adams wanted it to be. The coal miners and ranchers of our town drink their coffee at the diner called The Diner, and the hippies drink it at Moonrise, but we're all here for the view, to stand with such distance around us and then, boom, the mountain. The difference between our two

factions, if I can generalize beyond the obvious socio-economic, is that the ranchers live side by side with their families and the hippies have moved here to be as far as possible from theirs.

Chance has his laptop out and Trish and Gene stand behind him. Next to Chance sits a young father with blonde dreadlocks. On his lap, a serious boy holds his hands over his father's coffee to catch the steam. Another boy in variegated woolens is on the floor. I picture myself kissing this father, a fun thing to imagine with young men, because they can't conceive that you would. Longing on its own is fun. It's rejection that drains the morning of its hopefulness.

And just when I think this about rejection, Dov rides unbidden into my thoughts, and I can't speak for missing him.

This is fine, because although I've been standing at the counter for at least ten minutes, I haven't yet been asked for my order. Talking to me from the other side of the counter is Lucy, who began sleeping with my former lover while he was still mine. Lucy is fifteen years younger than me, and so she may wear a pilling old-man's cardigan left open to show a cropped tank top. She's telling me she has a book I should read, and I fear that it's Wendell Berry. I hate it when the younger generation doubts that the previous one has read Wendell Berry.

I just nod, yes, bring it by my house, because I'm thinking about Dov and listening to Chance talk about black sea bream, whatever they are. These bream are apparently swimming radioactive ions toward the California shore, and I begin to feel tight and fumbly. The dollar I have been clutching in hopeful preparation for an eventual economic exchange falls from my hands and as I bend to pick it up, Lucy stares blankly

at the space above me, enacting, I imagine, her daily compassionate practice of not watching those who've made the mistake of aging.

When I was as young as her, I had a boy who I carried everywhere on my back. He wrapped his skinny arms around my shoulders, and I wasn't complete without the weight of him. **It seems odd that Lucy can't see even the shadow of him on me.**

Now Dov lives in California, where, Chance is saying, babies may soon be born with thyroid cancer, and he hasn't returned my calls for twelve weeks. The sourness of Dov's disregard rises up in me, and I surprise myself by saying, "Thank you for the book," and reaching out to hug Lucy. She's been courting me for months like this, seeking absolution, and I'm sure she misinterprets this hug as forgiveness. Our bodies tip forward over the counter as if ministering to it. Once released, she pours my coffee into a mug made by Cynthia who has a potter's wheel, and so for nearly two decades we've all been obligated to buy her crockery, to give and receive them as gifts.

The next morning, Chance is there again with his laptop, but he's already irrelevant. **Aristotle, as I learned in college, called God "the unmoved mover," the indifferent anima who set the whole shebang in motion, a cretin pulling the plunger of a pinball machine.** In response, Heschel called God, "the most moved mover." It was God's deep and woeful concern for us, not his indifference, that gave us life. **Yesterday,** Chance was our most moved mover. Gene, Trish, the young father whose name I still can't remember, Lucy opening the shades -- we've all followed Chance's link on Facebook. We've read of starfish melting to white goo. We've read of bird carcasses broken open and bleeding. We're familiar with the seals with oozing sores. We know about the polar bears who have lost their fur. Sea lions are dying. Sockeye salmon are

dying. Radioactive material can be found in such tender life forms as mushrooms and berries along the wooded west coast.

We go over these facts, if they are indeed facts, with the single-minded repetition of teenagers cramming before a test. “Where are the killer whales dying?” Trish asks.

“Off the coast of British Columbia,” calls Gene from his own circular table.

“Right, right,” we murmur and begin again with the starfish.

Chance turns to me. “Doesn’t Dov live in San Francisco?”

“Who’s Dov?” asks Lucy. The girl has been in Escadom for two years, meaning it’s been at least that long since Dov visited.

I pour an amber stream of agave into my coffee. A few years ago the conversation at these tables was all about the toxicity of white sugar, and so we’ve collectively purged. “My son and moon,” I say and leave while they’re still talking. I have skis in my car, their tips floating companionably over the passenger seat, bread and cheddar, an apple cider jug refilled with water. I had planned on this, my day off, to park on Stephen’s Gulch Road and ski uphill for a few hours, glide home when warm and stripped to my silk long undershirt, but I drive instead the two blocks between Moonrise and the library where I sign my name on the clipboard to reserve half an hour on the Internet. There are more people to greet here. “Have you seen the thing on Fukushima?” Nancy asks. Luckily, Amos answers for me with the eagerness of a geographically-isolated lay scientist, and I hide with the magazines.

When it’s my turn, I try to keep my tone jaunty as I write to Dov and then spend the purgatorial daytime hours at home, returning to the library just before it closes. While my email loads, I shut my eyes and ask myself whether maternal intuition suggests he’s

written or not. I like to test it, to see whether it's still a pulsing force. My immediate answer is no, of course not, there's been nothing from him for over three months; but then I pause and picture Dov as I saw him last, two years ago — brown sweater, blue backpack, face sculpted like a Roman emperor's. I'm distracted by music escaping from the headphones of the girl across from me and Marni the librarian chatting with Amos. This place has all the learned solemnity of a gas station minimart. I imagine Dov in a different sort of library, light from a tall window casting golden trapezoids on the wooden table. He unhinges his laptop, stretches his legs beneath the table. What does he do when he sees my email? I look down at his fingers and yes, I see him hit reply. I see him typing. Yes I do.

I open my eyes and there it is: [Dov.Osmond@geography.berkeley.edu](mailto:Dov.Osmond@geography.berkeley.edu). So I still have it. *Hi Mom. Sorry I haven't been able to talk. Things are kinda difficult right now. Not anything I really want to go into, but an impediment to casual conversation nonetheless. And no, I haven't seen the intel you're referring to on the Fukushima leaks. Absolutely terrifying if true.*

I print the email, placing a nickel on Marni's desk. On paper, Dov's words take up just two lines, barely a response. They'd seemed weightier and more considered on the screen. I fold the page into my purse and feel a tugging grief. Is this it then? All I get from him for another three months? As I walk out, I see Greg, my former boyfriend, and Lucy coming down the street, and even in the dusk I can make out his posture of determined declamation, the way he edges into you when trying to convince you of something. Her arms are folded, and I know that stance, too. Since I can't retreat into the library – Marni is locking it behind me – I charge forward gamely, waving. Greg

understands that his proper response is to either wave or nod, but he stops. “Ruth!” Making Lucy wait, he asks me about the minutia of my life: the radio fundraiser, my message board request for a coffee grinder, an update on my car’s capricious brakes. Lucy sighs.

I’m a woman who has lived in one very small town for twenty-two years. I know how to talk to someone if I’ve fucked her boyfriend or she mine. Mostly we all edge around the fact, but maybe once every two years, it breaks open like a pomegranate and we’re all picturing Greg’s crooked dick. Other times we just talk about dry things. The town is drying up, we say. It’s true. Summer’s drought rests longer with us each year. The rivers show their white beds like the recessed gums of the elderly, and we drive higher into the mountains to fish or swim.

People like Lucy who’ve recently moved to Escadom believe they can still become better people. It takes a few years here before this resolve shrivels up. Happiness here is predicated on the lowering of expectations. Drop them lower and lower until you’re cleaning condos in Aspen and singing in a truly mediocre musical theater troupe, and you are content. You are content, that is, if your son calls or you believe he will call.

I turn on the radio as soon as I’m home. About ten years ago, when the Internet ameliorated both the emotional and financial poverty of rural life, young people moved here who weren’t adrift, but rather, entrepreneurial. They opened a brew pub and yoga studio and public radio station, of which only the station remains. Not enough of us were willing to pay to drink and stretch. Last year, I became the station’s part-time office administrator; no more commuting in the darkness to servitude in Aspen. And while it broadcasts a fair amount of dead air and far too much Celtic music, it has become my

shield against loneliness. I leave another message on Dov's phone. It's me. Wanting to send my love and I'm here if you'd like to talk.

The next morning, I skip Moonrise coffee and kinship to worship alone at the station's desktop computer first thing. There is, improbably, another missive. Nothing about his life, but Dov's included a link to an article suggesting that the government is stockpiling iodine. *Have you seen this?*

I send him Chance's link, with its dissolved star fish, the radioactive berries, the pulsing sores on the polar bear's backs.

He writes within the hour. *Even allowing for a bit of hyperbole among these reports, taken together they're harrowing.*

For two days we write back and forth like this, at one point **simultaneously sending each other the video of the man on the sand in Half Moon Bay with a Geiger counter penduluming out of control.** *Not easily forged,* says Dov.

I am no longer content. I am sublime. I am the galloping Celtic violin of an emerald land. I feel longing, sure, but each ion of desire is quickly fulfilled by a new email. I gleam a few mundanities about his life — he met with his dissertation advisor this morning; ate a burrito for lunch — nothing of the hardship he's alluded to. But our communion feels important, as if human sustainability depends upon our decision: Is all this a cover-up with calamitous ramifications? **He writes:** *I already have a sense, not so much of foreboding, but of reminiscence. This feels like a time we are already remembering, when the science was apparent but nobody did anything. Do you think what's already set in motion can be stopped?*

When Dov was seven, we found a book called Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes in the free bin at the dump. The story, a true story we're told in the introductory note, takes place ten years after the bomb razed Hiroshima and blasted a toddling Sadako from her house. Now she's dying of leukemia. Legend says that anyone who folds a thousand cranes will be granted a wish and so, bedridden, she folds and folds. Should I have told Dov to stop reading it? Sadako sews her cranes together with thread, hanging them from the ceiling of her hospital room, but she dies anyway. Dov read the book and read it again. He read it nine, ten, eleven times that summer. Of course we cut wrapping paper into squares and ordered a primer on origami from interlibrary loan. One morning, he left a note for me by the toaster. *Is there going to be a nuclear war today?*

*No*, I wrote back. This became ritual for years. *Today? No.*

Child-led! Child-led! That's the cry of homeschoolers in my town, the Christian and the hippy both. Like solipsistic Marxists, we wished to liberate only our child from the chains of proscribed learning, and so we followed the child like village idiots. My son and I calculated the velocity of the bomb's explosion: Math! We traveled to New Mexico to explore the museum at Oppenheimer's lab: Geography! We examined photos of human-shaped shadows frozen onto the Nagasakan sidewalk: History! He folded cranes (art!) resisting my encouragement to branch out to frogs and deer or other foraging mammals. After two years of this, the nuclear war years, I entrusted his education to the state, which terrified him in an entirely different way.

And now he's asking me again, Today?

*What's your best guess? Will the water used to flush out the failed reactors, water they fully admit is leaking, make its way to my pipes?*

I don't write *No*. We are goading each other along. I write: *Maybe the question is, at what rate?*

On the second day of this correspondence, I stay at the station beyond the end of the working day. Dov hasn't responded to my final email in which I asked, *What is it like for you to live there, honey, knowing all of this?*

From the window above my desk, I watch the sky turn an oceanic blue and then dim to black as if a mother has stood over all of us and shut off the light. I carry the trash from the On-Air room into the alley, cats pressing their backs against my shins. My boots crush ice. But instead of getting into my car, I return to my desk and reload my email. I'm still doing this at nine when Logan, the evening DJ arrives. He's brought along three friends, including that same dreadlocked father, to sit in on his show called Tribal Beats. Jason is cordial but disappointed to see me; clearly he was planning to get high. He carries a grocery bag and bongos for playing along. I'm snuffing out their fun, and anyway, I feel silly waiting. Surely Dov has finished with me. But then with a ding, my computer informs me that my darling boy has just been writing to me, has just pressed send.

*Honestly? I'm pretty terrified. Given the circumstances of my life now, and then all this, I'm tempted to find a way to escape California altogether. It ties together with all the global warming weirdness. Fewer monarch butterflies this year did you read that? Also frogs. What's our responsibility if we see what's going on? I honestly can't really function for how freaked out I am.*

I know my son. This is what counts as an invitation.

*Do you want me to come?*

*Here? It's a long way for you. Sure you want to?*

Do I want to? My son lives in an apartment I've never seen with two men I've never met, one of them his boyfriend.

*Why don't I come?*

*Yeah, would be great to see you.*

Before I leave the station, I knock on the glass of the On-Air room to let Logan know that all is clear now, the crushing eye of authority blinking out.

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I leave early, when the sky is still dark, and I arrive in San Francisco too late. There is an hour after which a grown man cannot see his mother. I find a motel on Mission, and sometime after dawn I walk in Dov's direction through fog.

Dov is twenty-four. He's a graduate student, but his coursework is completed and he could write his dissertation anywhere. In your twenty-fourth year, the world will either open for you or close and everyone feels it, everyone, the world twitching as it decides. When I was twenty-four, he was three years and three months and still couldn't talk. I was working all day then. I don't blame anyone for working, but a child needs a beloved, like we all do. A child wants to lie on a chest and hear a heartbeat. Like we all do, like we're all trying to get back to.

I walked in mortarboard and black robe with the other English majors through Sproul Plaza in Berkeley two months before I was cut open and Dov was tugged from inside me. After a year with my father and aunt in San Jose, I moved to San Francisco to temp, six weeks with a law firm, three at a nonprofit, etc, nowhere long enough for friendships and mine from college had turned cool when Dov was born. I knew the nurse

in the pediatrician's office on Geary, and I knew Margarita of Little Treasures Day Care, who called Dov 'mi encanta.' When I complained to my favorite professor, she encouraged me to apply to study with her. Her field was Woolf, the childless wonder, and her office was papered with that sad face. For my application, I typed an essay on temporality in *The Waves* at the public library, paying Margarita for an extra hour each day. I thought little of the fact that Dov didn't talk until his three-year appointment when the pediatrician on Geary grew alarmed and asked how many hours he spent in daycare. He said that a child without a natural attachment to his mother is more likely to have this kind of developmental retardation. I insisted that Dov could understand everything; he just wanted to linger in the animal world. The doctor frowned, as if weary of liars like me.

It's still difficult to remember the elation I felt when I ran from the library to the ocean, where I would take off my pants and shirt and swim. Meanwhile, Dov waited at Little Treasures.

I'll show you temporality. I moved to Escadom with no forwarding address.

The theory of how to bring him into communicative humanity was mine alone. Needing somewhere cheap to live, I visited a friend who had veered away from college to follow a roving commune called the Rainbow Family, eventually settling with some of her iridescent siblings in this Colorado town. She introduced me to two aged orchardists, who rented me the caretaker's cabin where I still live. Three rooms and a porch from which I can see a horizon line as unhindered as that of the ocean. For years I never turned on electric lights, because I had this idea that the darkness inside him should be met by the darkness outside. I didn't kowtow to him, though. I played few games. I didn't raise

the timbre of my voice or imitate farm animals. I simply narrated everything I did. Now I'm opening a drawer. Now I'm removing scissors. Now I'm taking your hand and walking outside. Now I'm cutting lambs quarter. You could also say, snipping. I'm snipping lambs quarter. Slicing is more for a single blade. We slice with a knife. Now I'm putting lambs quarter in your hand. Soft. I suppose that's why they named it after a lamb, which is also soft, but in a woollier way.

Even when Dov began talking, I never left him. When he was content, we recited poems, stacked rocks. When he was frustrated, I would lie beside him as he thrashed. Eventually he would ebb, his body soft against mine again, his forehead damp, his head pressed into the cave between my chest and chin. By the time he was five, his vocabulary and diction far surpassed that of other kids his age. We were so attached to each other; I couldn't send him to kindergarten.

For work, I contacted the publishers of my college textbooks and offered my services as a copy editor. Soon my PO box was filled with manila envelopes. This is how we survived for a long time.

John showed up in Escadom the second summer of the nuclear war years. He spent his days at the table in the food co-op in the church basement, wearing Carhartts, workboots stretched into to the aisles, as if on perpetual break from building houses. He stared at me as I shopped, Dov following behind with an open book. John had chapped lips, blue eyes, a great height. When we first fucked, he said, "I've never tasted a yoni that's brought life into the world before." "Give me a break," I said. But then I shut up, because he went about tasting with a gusto that I'd never known before and haven't since.

Three weeks later, his bus was parked in the orchard. I was thirty —young and lonely enough that it gave me a sexual charge every time I saw it, the dreamcatchers hanging from the rear view mirror, the eagle painted on the door. He would walk naked from my bed to the apple trees where he would improvise Tai Chi, bowing lastly to Dov who watched from the kitchen while eating Cheerios. John had a sense of humor about that, at least, his wagging penis and his oscillating arms, although he lacked any about his work as a lay nutritionist. His clients, all women on the macrobiotic diet, would mail him their food and stool logs and he'd write back obscurely detailed adjustments, mushroom tea every other morning, perhaps, or sprouted rice on the full moon.

That autumn I believed that the three of us would enact a certain fantastical familial coziness, Dov on the couch writing an essay on the morality of Einstein, John at the kitchen table composing dietary directions for his ladies, me with my textbook pages, all of us warmed by the wood stove. But whenever Dov asked for my help and I sat beside him, John would insist I find something in his bus and follow me there, pushing down my leggings to finger me. I had been a mother for nine years. I was so full of wanting.

In December, when the ice came and we had to grab the trunks of apple trees to cross the orchard to my car, I gave up editing to write John's directives for him, while he pulled seitan in my bathtub to sell at the co-op.

It was John who insisted we couldn't work with Dov home. I was too distracted, he said.

All that winter, the blacktop at Escadom Elementary was iced over. The boys pushed each other down, and the girls clustered under the awnings. Dov held onto the

fence taking hesitant steps. It's something to leave your child alone on ice with the mocking males. When I said goodbye, he pushed off his hood and took a favorite lock of hair between two fingers, twisted it, and inserted it into his mouth. He chewed.

You could say everyone needs to be broken thusly. God knows I'm not a homeschooling dogmatist. There are too many stupid people out there passing on their stupidity. But I watched him become crushed, his body growing sluggish with shame.

The next September, as the apples fell and stank, John drove away with two thousand of my dollars. The grass was dead and yellow in a rectangle beneath where his bus had been.

I couldn't afford to keep Dov home again and began commuting to Aspen to clean condos. Before leaving each morning, I'd open the fridge just to cast light on Dov on the couch. Try to find anything in nature more beautiful than a ten-year-old boy asleep. He would wake alone and walk to the nearest neighbor, a polite and scornful wife of a miner, who drove him to school with her own child. I was his forest and his path and then I wasn't.

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It starts raining while I'm climbing the concrete steps to his apartment, water beading silver on my wool sweater. I don't know the time, and the morning sky is no help in this matter, but surely it's still an impolite hour. I ring the bell three times. A boy answers wearing plaid pajama pants, no shirt, pleasingly broad. But his face is uninteresting, a porcine nose. "Can I help you?"

I feel something hitting my ear and realize one of my barrettes has fallen out. Putting it back in seems too intimate, so I hold it and introduce myself as Dov's mother.

His face relaxes at that name, and I know that this is the boyfriend. “Oh right. He told me you were coming. I’ll get him.”

He leaves the door open and disappears. I take a few steps onto the industrial carpet, which is at odds with the room’s two Victorian bay windows. The living room is decorated to amuse or provoke. I imagine all three young men thinking of their mothers’ reactions when they bought the blow-up penis and collaged Boehner’s head onto a naked beefcake, and here I am, a visitor from the maternal realm.

My Dov emerges from his room pushing his hair forward with alternating hands until it tips over his left eye. Sometime during college his face gained such a good topography. It was like witnessing a mountain range emerge, the ridges of his cheekbones and brow, the valley of eye socket. He grabs me into a hug, and there’s a new solidity to him.

His stubble scratches my forehead. What a strange fairytale it must be for a boy to grow and grow until he’s the one grabbing his mother so hard she lifts slightly off the floor. I imagine he enjoys all that new power and heft, but doesn’t he miss something, too? Does a boy miss his smallness? As I’m thinking this, Dov releases me with a little push, and I stumble backward.

I apologize for the early hour, but Dov shrugs it off. “No, it’s good for us. Left to our own devices we’re sloths.” He throws an arm around his boyfriend, who reemerges clothed, introduces him: Michael.

“So, here’s our illustrious living room. And, three whole steps away, our kitchen.” At the table, he pulls out a chair for me. He starts coffee, rummages for sugar. I hadn’t expected to find him so functional, so fine. He’s humming something as he washes

yesterday's mugs. Small bubbles escape from his sponge, an effervescence around him, and it occurs to me that he's excited about my visit; he's showing off his adulthood – apartment, boyfriend – with a childish delight.

I can't stop watching him, even as beside me Michael talks on about his own mother, as if we are members of a declining species, inherently fascinated by each other.

Dov takes the seat beside Michael, says, "Really good to see you, Mom."

The coffee sputters and sighs as Dov explains to Michael about the radiation, the uncanny coincidence of animal deaths, the hoarding of iodine. Michael is suitably horrified. "Fuck. So, what? You think we should leave?"

He's asking me, but I know enough to let men reach their own conclusions.

"What do you think, Dov?" I ask.

"Yeah, what do you think, baby?" Michael's hand reaches for the back of Dov's neck.

"What does Dov think about what?" A third man has entered the kitchen. He's pale, with an abrupt, haughty beauty, eyes that look reddened, as if he cried long ago and couldn't remove the mark.

Dov jumps up to stand beside him. "And this is Jason." He gestures toward me, but he's staring at Jason. "To be honest, I've actually never seen him awake at this hour." Something in the arch way Dov speaks and then Jason's sharp laugh in response tell me it's a lie.

Jason looks amusedly at me. "And you are?"

"Dov's mom," Michael answers proprietarily; he's showing off his knowledge.

“Dov has a mother?” Jason asks. “I thought he came into this world fully formed, already lecturing about surveillance and the queer body. Anyway, it’s the middle of the night.”

“It’s seven in the morning, Jason,” Michael says.

“Very nice to meet you, Mrs. Osmond.” Jason leans over, shakes my hand lightly.

“What does Dov think about what?”

“Really, nothing.” Dov says. He and Jason, are turned toward each other, standing close. There’s a charge to the air that would be hard to miss. I glance at Michael to judge his reaction but find none.

To lay my own claim, I say, “Actually, we were talking about the spread of radiation from Fukushima.”

Now that we’ve admitted him into our fellowship, Michael can recite the elegy for the animals and he does, starting with the whales.

“You were asking what Dov thinks about *that*?” Jason stares flatly at Michael, then Dov. “No. God no. That is total, total, conspiracy theory paranoia. Ask any scientist. He isn’t worried. Dov, you wouldn’t be.”

Now we’re all looking at Dov and he’s smiling nervously. He knows better than to argue with someone who doubts the fallibility of scientists. Must we tell Jason of Oppenheimer’s remorse when the first atom bomb blossomed over Nevada?

Dov dodges, “I’m starving. Everyone hungry?”

“No, really. You’re not saying you believe it.”

“Come on Jason. My mom came all this way. We don’t need to argue in the middle of the night.” He’s deft.

“Apparently it’s seven in the morning,” Jason says, falling into the seat next to me. “So, are you the worried one, Mrs. Osmond?”

“Ruth.”

“Well, Ruth, there’s absolutely no reason for you to concern yourself with Fukushima radiation. You’re exposed to more radiation taking an airplane, I mean...” He laughs. “Bananas give off more radiation.”

And what can I say to this beautiful, patronizing boy? My sites against his, my scientists against his, my knowledge of Dov versus his. I wait for Dov to intercede. He’s standing with a cup in his hands. I’ll miss him soon, so I miss him now. I figure I can be away from the radio station until Monday without repercussion, which means a day and a half with him before the drive home. I’d like to show him the apartment where we lived together. From there it’s a quick walk to the ocean. We can stand on the pebbled sand to watch the waves come in, the waves go out, the wet slog of it all bringing the radiation here, there, everywhere, an ecumenical dispersal.

Without counter-argument, Jason nags on. “Dov, you of all people wouldn’t worry about this, would you?”

My son won’t take the bait. He opens the fridge and releases a cruciferous smell of forlorn vegetables. “Shit, Mom, we’re unprepared. Not even an egg. Michael, would you... maybe could you go to, I don’t know, Euphoria?”

I had wanted to take Dov alone to breakfast, but Michael slips his bare feet into running shoes and leaves. Once he’s gone, Jason leans toward me conspiratorially. “Now you can tell me all about Dov as a baby. Was he the cutest? The smartest? The most precocious? The most absolutely maddening?”

Dov reddens happily. “Oh, shut up, Jason.”

And I know. I would need to be blind not to know. It was Jason whom Dov had wanted to show off to me. Jason the cause of Dov’s antsy excitement as well as the difficulties he’s alluded to. Fine. I will see him. I will admire. But I’m not willing to give up our day.

“Dov as a baby? Oh, babies are adorable. All of them.” Dov is still standing, so I look up at him. “Dov, honey. I was hoping, actually, that we could spend today alone.” As if he needs a definition, I add: “Just the two of us.”

He briefly closes his eyes. “Mom. You’re meeting my friend. We haven’t even had breakfast.”

Jason pretends nothing’s happened. “He told me all about the town where you live. About the boy he sat next to in the truck when the neighbor drove him to school.”

“Yeah, when she left me with the lions.”

“Oh Dov, not that again.”

“But you did.”

Why would he want to talk about this today? “Middle school is always awful. The worst years of our lives.”

Jason glances at Dov then sets his pale eyes on me. “Actually, Ruth, I don’t want to be impolite, but, it’s not always. ...”

“No, of course, of *course*. He was miserable there. And I hated that. I hated it.”

The men look at each other. I press on. “Anyway, we all know it ends. Adults are living proof. We all know we’ll survive it.”

Dov sits, pulling his chair close to Jason's. "So survival's the best we're hoping for?"

"Dov, it was a horrible school. But you're forgetting half of it. Did you tell Jason how beautiful it is there? Didn't you tell him about the mountain?" As if the word 'mountain' could evoke anything close to the experience of standing within view of a mountain. I repeat it in a firmer voice, pluralize it. "Mountains."

Dov is luminous when he smiles at Jason. "She likes mountains. She moved away from this city of uncommon tolerance, when I was what? Three years old? Because she likes mountains. Okay fine, maybe it's the absolute wrong place for you, kid, but at least there are mountains."

He knows nothing about us, like a lover with amnesia. It's true I never once spoke about his nonverbal years, about his tantrums and the way we would lie together, but I thought he knew. He was there, after all.

"Dov, be nice," says Jason.

I turn to Jason, "There was more to our lives than his school."

I'm thinking about how, even on the terrible days, we ate tacos and watched *The Twilight Zone*, and we walked through the orchard to look for owls. Did he tell Jason that?

Dov nudges Jason. "Tell her what you said. How my middle school experience was the worst you ever heard."

Jason grimaces. "Me? Okay, Ruth, here's the thing, all of us have a story of being closeted and miserable, but I've never known anyone to be so..." He pauses, flips his hair out of his eyes. "Okay, think about who lives in your town. Ranchers and miners and

nobody else for miles? It chills my blood to imagine Dov there, that isolated. And that time with his boots...”

“What time with your boots?” I turn to Dov.

He glances down, smiling. “I actually never told her.”

“Never told me what?”

“It was the day after you came into the school wearing that pin.” Turning to Jason, he adds, “She had to wear that pin, of course, who cares how everyone there had a dad in the army or reserves.” And back to me: “The next day, at the end of school, I’m walking downstairs and a group pushes me down and ties my laces to the banister. Do you know what I mean? I’m lying there on the landing with my feet up, my ass in the air. And they take my backpack and my Discman. It was the janitor who untied me. Hours later.”

“But you didn’t tell me. Why didn’t you tell me?” His beloved Discman. “You told me you lost it.”

I had gone to speak to the principal about the teasing. To stop the teasing. The towers had just fallen, and, yes, I must have had a pin on my purse about not bombing for oil, no blood for oil, one of those.

“Why didn’t you tell me? Why, Dov?” I need to comfort him, to shrink him to a portable size, to start again. But I’ve set him off and I don’t know how to get him back. He stands, turns his back to me, fills a glass at the sink. I say, “Should you even be drinking that water?”

Swiveling around, he wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. His face is scrunched, concentrated. “No, you know? You know what? He’s right. Jason’s right. It’s

all conspiracy theory. You always do this, Mom. Always. You get me to be afraid. Animals are dying. Okay, but why? Maybe a virus? Maybe bacteria? But you call and call until you freak me out. We're all going to die! No, really. She freaks me out and then she shows up. She came to Chicago six weeks into my first semester. And then Berkeley. Endless phone calls about global warming, and then she showed up just like this."

And now Michael bounds through the front door in athletic triumph, his brown hair slick with rain, a dark stain on his sweatshirt. Jason claps as Michael skids a greasy bag across the table. "Jackpot."

I'm both hurt and furious. Little wavelets crashing in my head. I stand. "I'll leave then, Dov."

"Mom. Come on."

"I'm sorry I *freaked* you out, as you said."

"Mom, we can talk about it."

"Talk about what? How I always do this to you?" I can hear myself screeching. My hand is gripped around something hard. I open it and see my barrette.

"Mom, please." A hand on my sweater sleeve.

I shove it off. He was tied by his laces to the banister and never told me? I can't catch my breath. Trembling, I force myself to cast an egalitarian gaze on the two onlookers. "Goodbye Michael. Goodbye Jason. It was very nice to meet you both."

"Mom!"

I shut the door behind me.

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I've been here so many times in my memory that it seems ghostly and redundant to be here in person. I park at the Dutch garden at the end of Golden Gate Park -- a stumpy windmill, tulips in the spring but nothing growing now. I wait for a break in the traffic and then run across the four lanes toward the low cement wall, but I've misjudged, expecting the agility of my 23-year-old body, and a car swerves around me honking. I'm unnerved, but I reach the wall. Sitting straddled upon it are two young people made androgynous by hooded raincoats although the rain has subsided. They take a break from kissing to watch as I place one foot on the wall and push myself upon it. I stand above them, my skirt pressing against me in the wind. I always perched like this in the afternoons before I swam, just watching the line where our country ends.

Today it's all white and fogged in. There's the tang of ocean, slough of waves, but I can see nothing. "You've got it wrong, Dov," I say out loud. I never wooed him with terror. I'm the one who coaxed him into the speaking world he was so fearful to join. He wanted to stay animal. Of course I'm the one he calls when he's upset. Of course we talk about that.

I untie my boots and place them beside each other and jump down. I've missed the push of my feet in cold sand as much as I've missed anything in my life. I walk into the fog. It's impossible to tell where the ocean begins, until there it is before me, white froth visible against the black waves and the dark tumble of seaweed. The spray hits my skirt. It rushes my face. I feel it on my lips. Without thinking, I stick out my tongue to taste the salt and then I remember the radiation.

Everything I've done was to protect him. I think about this and I watch the waves. There's a specific amount of time a reasonably meditative human can spend watching

waves in a single stretch and I exceed that. I can't bring myself to leave. I walk forward with the receding tide. The front of my sweater grows damp and my skirt thrashes wetly around my legs, but I don't mind. Although I know it's irrational, or at least currently unproven by science, it becomes clear to me that as long as I'm here, at this changeable boundary between water and land, Dov can stay safe in this city. I picture him in his apartment, finishing his muffin, pulling on a sweater. Maybe he walks with Jason and Michael to catch a movie at the Castro. Maybe they're sitting three across in the theater, my son in the middle. Maybe Jason is reaching for his hand in the darkness.

A woman and girl run up beside me. The mother is bony, wearing some sort of tights instead of pants. The girl's raincoat has mushrooms on it and she gets right to work digging with a red shovel.

"She's a darling," I say.

"Not exactly my idea of a beach day," says the mom, zipping up her sporty down jacket. "But she insisted. I couldn't keep her away."

"Oh, you might want to. You might want to keep her far away from this water. It's poisoned, you know," I say with my face in the spray.

The woman laughs uncertainly and turns from me to sit beside her daughter. "Are we making a castle? Are we making a big castle?"

Eventually the child starts whining and they walk away. I step backward with the tide. My hair grows wet and my bangs cling to my forehead. Drips plunge off my nose. A few joggers pass and hours pass and then the fog all at once vanishes, revealing blue sky and the shocking zoom of the low sun. Dov leaves the movie theater and squints into the light. A man comes to the water with a yellow dog, a retriever who, as promised,

retrieves the stick his owner throws repeatedly toward the fathomless depths. When the sun sets and the waves turn black once more, the man calls to the dog, who runs out of the sea, pants proudly beside me, and shakes. Water flies from his fur. I collect each filthy droplet from him just as Dov, now home again, turns on the tap and pours himself a glass of clean water. **I am his forest and his path.**

###

A full-service move offers the most convenience, but it comes with the highest cost. A DIY move can save you the most money but will require the most elbow grease. Hybrid moves allow you to skip the moving chores you want to avoid while still saving money by doing some of the work yourself. Move type comparison. Move type. All trustworthy full-service movers carry basic liability moving coverage that protects your belongings for \$0.60 per pound. For example, if your 300-pound table broke in-transit, it would be covered for only about \$180 ( $300 \times 0.60 = 180$ ). Most quality tables cost at least a little more. More than 15.9 million people moved during the first six months of COVID-19, and temporary moves are up 27%. Read more to dive deeper into the data. An address change can be permanent or temporary (if the mover plans on living at a second location for less than six months). You can file a change-of-address for a business but for our analysis of coronavirus moving trends, we only looked at residential requests. Hire Professional Movers. Find trusted professionals to help lighten the load. Save yourself time, stress, and back pain by calling in the pros. Whether you're planning to DIY or just need help with the heavy lifting, we can help you find a solution that fits your move and your budget. Moving Supplies. Packing & Unpacking. Moveout: The Tuple Mover moveout operation periodically moves data from a WOS container into a new ROS container, preventing WOS from filling up and spilling to ROS. Moveout runs on a single projection at a time, on a specific set of WOS containers. When the moveout operation picks projections to move into ROS, it combines projection data loaded from all previously committed transactions and writes them into a single ROS container. Mergeout: The Tuple Mover mergeout operation consolidates ROS containers and purges deleted records. In most use cases, the Tuple Mover requires little or no config The unmoved mover or prime mover (Latin: *primum movens*) is a concept advanced by Aristotle as a primary cause (or first uncaused cause) or "mover" of all the motion in the universe. As is implicit in the name, the unmoved mover moves other things, but is not itself moved by any prior action. In Book 12 (Greek:  $\lambda'$ ) of his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle describes the unmoved mover as being perfectly beautiful, indivisible, and contemplating only the perfect contemplation: self-contemplation. He equates this Aristotle - Aristotle - The unmoved mover: The way in which Aristotle seeks to show that the universe is a single causal system is through an examination of the notion of movement, which finds its culmination in Book XI of the *Metaphysics*. As noted above, motion, for Aristotle, refers to change in any of several different categories. The unmoved mover. The way in which Aristotle seeks to show that the universe is a single causal system is through an examination of the notion of movement, which finds its culmination in Book XI of the *Metaphysics*. As noted above, motion, for Aristotle, refers to change in any of several different categories.

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