

II. DID MY HEART LOVE TILL NOW?

Here is my plan. I'm going to fall in love with you by the end of the night. I imagine my heart will swell to the size of a grapefruit and stick out of my chest like a tumor, that's how in love with you I'll be. I'll look into your eyes, blue like the color of a brine pool, or maybe brown, like a frothy cocoa. And I will feel something indescribable, something foreign, something invigorating, something.

Here is how it will happen. Unprompted, you will take me out for a fancy dinner. You will order the New York strip and I will order the snow crab legs with butter. Combined, our meal will be more expensive than anything you've ever spent on me before. Before our salads even get to the table, before our faces are flushed from the white wine—or do you like red?—you will look at me with those eyes, illuminated by the waxy candles (there have to be candles), place my hand in yours, and speak something of value, something that actually *means* something, and for once, my heart will burst and I'll feel a rush of warmth between my thighs.

No, that won't do, that's far too formulaic. Plus, I haven't even decided what you should say to me yet.

Maybe you could surprise me at midnight in your little Volkswagen Beetle. That's not the kind of car you have, but you could rent one for my sake, and I could squeeze into your silly, charming car—that's so you, to own a yellow Beetle—and you'd drive me out to some scenic overlook, windows down, with a checkered picnic basket that you made all by yourself in the backseat. We'd handfeed one another grapes and thinly sliced cheddar under the moon and you would brush the hair out of my eyes and I'd melt under your touch. Just melt, helplessly, onto the

picnic blanket, now a part of the fibers as I seep and settle into the fabric. You can't dry-clean me out of this blanket, I'm not going anywhere.

Or I could meet your eyes through aquarium glass—it's always something with the eyes, isn't it? But that's the way Romeo/Leonardo Dicaprio and Juliet/Claire Danes do it in the 1996 film, eyes and sculpted cheekbones amplified by the blue-yellow angelfish. Did you know that the pair allegedly despised working together? Although Danes was only sixteen and Dicaprio a ripe twenty-two, Danes was reported to have become "fed up" with Dicaprio's habit of playing pranks on set, while Dicaprio considered Danes "annoyingly reserved and uptight." They didn't even speak if the cameras weren't rolling. Isn't that funny? Though this could just be a headline I saw on a tabloid in the grocery store.

Now I've got that song in my head—*but I can't help falling in love with you?* Remember that one? Tunnel-like reverberations echo in my head. *Would it be a sin if I can't help falling in love with you?* I read somewhere that the song was originally written for a woman, and that "you" was supposed to be "him." That way, it could rhyme with "sin." I can only imagine Elvis Presley in his tight little pressed jumpsuit, gyrating his hips and crooning over another man. The image almost makes me want to laugh, an expulsion of oxygen interrupting the silence of our bedroom aside from the whirring ceiling fan. I turn to my side and watch your back rise and fall with each jagged breath. Though you're facing away, I can see that your desire for me to touch you is radiating off your sides, like little red cartoon squiggles. I run my fingers down your curved spine, protruding bones all wrong beneath my touch. I wonder to myself if you have scoliosis. You could probably use a massage. I look back at the ceiling fan and squeeze my eyes shut. Tomorrow night, perhaps.