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She doesn't do it on purpose. Everything comes to her naturally, her freshness, her beauty, her animal intelligence, her all-over tan. Everything's landed in her fleshy, exposed lap, legs elegantly crossed, feet sheathed in twisted rope sandals. She's worked for nothing her entire life. You could say she's a pig destined for gold and silver, feted to a life of luxury. I guess one shouldn't say that. Being born in the year of the pig can make you a pig in clover, not a literal pig, though in leaner moods you could see the resemblance. Don't get me wrong, I love pigs. I want to marry one. Give me *Babe*, baby. Plump and perky. Give me crackling.

I've got it all written down. I didn't find a shop like that, like yours, \$20 for a pearl necklace. I wasn't obsessive about it. But everything I did there, I've written it down for my friends, exactly what I bought, where I bought it, how much it cost, I got the cards, everything, all of it pasted in my notebook.

'Did you spend your whole life by the ocean? In it the whole time as a kid? I wish I could be less scared of the sea. It means I'll never swim out beyond the surf, I'll never be able to surf, I'll never be comfortable on a boat, I'll never trust a glass bottom.'

'And you'd be right, you should be scared of the sea. I wish more people were scared. That many I've pulled from the surf.'

'No way, I'm forcing myself back in the water, going where the waves are. Even little ones give me that feeling of panic, but I go there, I have to.'

'You got to remember, you do it for the pleasure. You got to balance the pleasure and the fear.'

'Believe me, it's all about fear now.'

'Otherwise what's the point?'

So my little girl, there she is, always hiding things. Face tilting forwards, shooting me her secretive eye. Some people call it fate, the alignment of stars and planets, what you choose to see. The choice already made: the Yellow Emperor with his back turned, the Three Lesser Evils nowhere in sight. That makes for a good year, no tsunami, no matter what your sign. That was the year I noticed her, lucky thirteen. She walked by in a grey check pinafore, white ankle socks, heavy black shoes. Her green backpack sagging half empty, a taggle of boys sniffing along behind her. Thirteen going on sweet sixteen in a grey hair tie, golden wisps escaping. She's a firehorse, I can tell. I'm in love with a firehorse, the hardest to handle. Beware husbands, the firehorse will be the cause of your death.

'Put your snorkel back on, breathe through your snorkel.'

'I think I'm panicking.'

'Hold on. Keep kicking.'

'I can't. I can't breathe.'

'It's not far. Keep kicking, keep kicking.'

A little kindness will go a long way, even the hollow kind.

Because she's hungry for the feel of skin against skin. She wants your skin against her skin. She wants your fingers sliding through her fine hair. She wants your weight on her body. She wants the dozey look on your face, just waking, that could mean something, anything. She wants the you that comes from nowhere, fluid, inchoate, before you become a narrative and she a character in it. The moment just before you step from her peripheral vision. She wants your crazy moves and balletic leg stretched out from the bedcovers. Your hot shower dance. The long moment before you solidify, you could be amoeba floe, free intake of nutrients, free exchange. Not fish but the sea.

I told you, got it all written down. I'll photocopy it for you. Everybody's talking about going there. Now's the time. I'm seriously thinking about it, teaching English there, but I'd only do it for a month. I'd have to get a certificate. You can get everything there, and it costs nothing to live there, *nothing*.

'It's good if you can think you're panicking while you're panicking. Means you're not *really* panicking.'

'Man, that would be my ambition. To *really* panic. I mean, wouldn't it be great to really *feel* something, instead of observing yourself feeling it, saying to yourself, oh look, *that's* what I'm doing...'

'I think that wave swamped you and you got scared, that's all.'

'I've never been rescued before.'

'I've never rescued anyone before.'

'Always wanted to be rescued.'

'Always wanted to rescue someone.'

I'm sorry there ain't no happy ever after. There ain't no big picture, there ain't no better world where all the voices unite and all the pieces fit. You can't make head nor tail of it, and you'd be right. Everything you thought about anything has been wrong. You can't save anyone, even if it's scoured in the stars. You can't make the voices disappear. If you could make me you, everything would be perfect. If I could be you, I could have it all. I could look at a girl and run my tongue up the side of her thigh. I could lock my thoughts up and throw away the key. I could make me disappear.

So you will lift the teaspoon to your mouth and lick a fleck of coffee foam from its lip. You will fit your tongue to its hollow and suck for a moment, with perfect concentration, like a baby. Then replace the spoon quickly on its saucer. You will misjudge the distance. You will start, then recover. Then, finally, you will speak. And I will speak. And then you. And me. And we'll pause to listen to the babble echoing around us. We won't look at each other, we'll lower our gazes to the bright metallic surface of the table. We'll watch the thing between us, lying wet and new among the breadcrumbs and the cutlery, and we will wait, and watch it, to see if it moves.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Beth Yahp.