

“When I Find You”

by: Jonathan Stockman



Some night, I will take you into an evergreen forest situated on a promontory. We'll grow extra long legs and take a few Ent-sized steps to the horizon. It won't be able to outrun us with our new legs, you see, and there we'll be, dangling our feet off the edge of the world. First ones ever. We'll be the giants of the earth, with front-row seats to the universe, pointing to this or that star with the eternal beams of our flashlights. We will find one that looks just ornery enough to make a ride to Japan fun but not so wild as to buck us off and leave us skating on Pluto 'til the end of time. Staking the horizon with my flashlight (the night is all ours), I will take your hand as you slackline that track of light with tintinnabulant precision. We'll get nearly halfway to Betelgeuse before we realize that we'd create an entirely new cosmic order if we rode him to Japan; and, neither of us willing to risk that, you will turn around. I will see in your moment of repentance, in slowest motion, that our star's reddish light has permanently rested on the apples of your cheeks and will be relieved to realize that convincing everyone back on earth of how heavenly you are will be even easier now. We will slide down our track of light, hands in the air, you squealing with delight, and land on a puff of marshmallows. "I never knew they grew in the wild like this," I'll say, but you'll not understand a word of it because I'll be deep in the throes of defeat in a fierce match of Chubby Bunny. We will ask all critters to kindly leave us alone for the night and weave a mattress of pine straw to lie on. We will share your hair as a pillow, which will smell as sweet as ever. A tootling black bear will ask us if we'd like him to roast us some marshmallows. "Why, yes, thank you," we'll say. He will build a cozy fire, spread Nutella on graham crackers, and top it with golden, molten marshmallows. He will serve the s'mores to us on plates of moonstone with dew in honeysuckle cups and recall tales of him and his brother romping through the countryside, of his brush with a traveling circus, of his daring escape from it, and of his opinions on the decline of hand-written letters, especially bemoaning the critical endangerment of sealing wax. We'll begin to yawn, and he'll take the hint. We will express our appreciation of his entertainment with an alabaster jar of amber honey, and he will run away, tail tucked, doing an outright terrible job of stifling his tears of gratitude. The earth will tremble with every stomp of his gait, and the vibrations will relax us to sleep. Long after that bear has fallen asleep, snoring wide-mouthed with his paw still in the honey jar, the earth will continue reverberating with his joy, and our joy, and its own joy that we managed a fantastic evening without devastating the universe.