

emilee

They were holding hands when the wave hit them. Walking up the beach from the water, so it came on them from behind. It pushed Gabe forward while sucking the sand out from under his rear-lagging left foot, so he fell, pulling Emily tumbling on top of him. They both floundered in the water and the same thought occurred to each, so when their heads emerged gasping for breath they ran up towards the crowd shouting "Run – Tsunami", before they had a chance to think of the probability of a tidal wave in Meach Lake Ontario.

The wave of laughter broke around them as they pulled one another up and faced their companions. Not entirely friendly laughter and not entirely unfriendly, enough to wash away your social footing and leave you clinging to whoever might be nearby. So they turned and searched one another's faces for ideas. Emily reached for her glass and smiled at Gabe over it, an agreement as their eyes met to present their sudden dive to the floor as a couple thing, a shared and intimate plunge rather than two coincidentally alcoholic slides.

A better picture, that way. It reminded Gabe of composite pictures she used to make. She would take her less satisfactory prints and cut them up, putting them together so that one person's hand continued from another person's arm, interrupted by a third person's head, to make a large composition where colours and shapes made a large scale sense in spite of the small scale lunacy. The artistry of everyday life was a central part of Gabe's life in those days. Bedspreads, the colour of walls, the sounds of computers and phones. These things got a lot of her attention then, before Emily. Emily cared about truth and honesty and clarity, and was indifferent, to the point of hostility, to pleasant distractions. So Gabe changed, slowly, from pattern-appreciating to reason-seeking.

Emily changed too. Even in name. It had been a teenage tease, at first, to pronounce the final e of Emile, and then a kind of bravado for a disturbingly delicate and unaggressive lad to insist on the e by writing it y, or sometimes as ee. Delicate and unaggressive but not at all intimidated, so when he felt that people were failing to see past the surface of things he said so. And then he met Gabe.

Now they did everything together, mind in mind as Emilee would say. They thought each other's thoughts and felt each other's emotions. Gabe shared Emilee's vivid sounds and colours; Emilee shared Gabe's scientific projects. Sunsets and sea creatures, rock pools at low tide with wonderful tiny creatures inches below the cloud-reflecting surface. So there they were,

kneeling in salt water, when something hit them from behind.

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