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Pancakes

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there looking down at Davey, trying not to cry because I suddenly know that I’m afraid of my own son.

Davey sighs and slowly puts on his orange Astros cap, backwards as always. He’s got that orange plastic tab that lets you fit the hat to your own size head clamped so tight I can see it digging into his forehead. When he leans out of the car, I flick the tab open. He glares at me, snatches the hat off, and tosses into the Malibu. I decide to let this little scene slide away. We haven’t even made it to the front gate and already he’s having a terrible time.

Walking across the parking lot to the zebra-striped shuttle that’ll haul us over to the entrance, I see Davey and Ashley tromping straight for the stripes but looking left. My eyes slide across the Houston haze, following behind my kids, and I see what’s got their attention: the godforsaken Shamrock Hotel. I remember when that hotel was first built in the sixties, when everyone was just booming with oil-rich smiles. So they built this twenty-story luxury hotel, boasting “THE LARGEST HOTEL SWIMMING POOL IN THE WORLD.” Used to go there with my high school buddy Missy, whose rich parents had a summer pool membership. They had a water skier in that pool once, just to prove, as if you couldn’t tell, that that pool was THE LARGEST HOTEL SWIMMING POOL IN THE WORLD. And that’s what they had painted across the miniature ski boat pulling this bonehead on pink skis. They didn’t say they were using THE SMALLEST SKI BOAT IN THE WORLD. But hell yes, it was a helluva big pool. We felt like real sophisticates lolling poolside, sipping iced teas and reading Seventeen. I remember watching Larry, who’d come sometimes with his cousin Anthony, watching Larry staring at the French stewardesses who’d go topless. (Houston was so sophisticated.) I knew even then, before we had even started going steady, that we’d get married. I don’t know how, but I just knew. The way we’d be the only ones to laugh at Mr. Gerber our chemistry teacher’s jokes. I don’t know if we were the only ones to get the jokes, or if we were just more obnoxious than everybody else, but the way it’d strike us each time how we were sharing this big laugh, and the way he’d look over and smile at me... I don’t know, I just knew we’d get married.

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