

—

#1

by stanley lieber

Where would you like to go today? The tone was flat. She closed the book. Cameron spent the whole morning looking for conflict, but it hadn't been necessary to look; Andrew piled into the vehicle and away they went.

At certain angles the glass seemed to depolarize, and the glint of morning sunlight cut into her eyes, making her sorry she'd awakened for... this. Andrew was deep into his book, never looking up. She leaned back in her seat, still not sure she was really awake.

Dapples of whatever on the dashboard. She noticed housekeeping had skipped the car. Andrew, of course, couldn't care less. She tried not to touch the arm rests with her fingertips. Andrew elbowed her absentmindedly.

Tried again to listen to her book but it was no use, she couldn't concentrate on the words. Her mind kept wandering to the scenery, trees and bushes whipping by outside. She made her window dark and closed her eyes.

Thump. Thump. Thump. She was awake again. Seams in the highway.

Andrew had dozed. Nearer to the coast, now, she could begin to make out the island's visual effects. Mostly, the sunlight still disrupted the integrity of the images. That and its reflections on the water.

She was thirsty, but Andrew had finished off the last of the grapefruit juice. She watched him sleeping.

The big curve around the mountain came right on schedule. The car banked, reducing its speed only slightly, and Cameron was tipped off-balance, momentum pressing her firmly into her door handle. The fluid in her ears shifted and she gritted her teeth at the familiar lurch in her stomach. She hated the car.

Andrew had awakened and moved on to another book. She decided to have a look at what he'd been reading before he fell asleep. There were crumbs in the pages, she realized, as breakfast debris rained into her lap. She stared hard at him but still he didn't look up. Why would he care, she acknowledged.

The car wanted Andrew's attention but he told it to shut up. Finally he threw his book against the dash. Cameron tried to sink into her seat, ducking her head to avoid his flailing arms. Now he was trying to kick out the windshield. She put her hand on his shoulder and said his word, which calmed him, for a while. He apologized.

It felt as if they would never arrive.

They finally did. The boat was leaving, but they'd made it in time; the ramps were still unfurled. Cameron grabbed her bag and headed for a ramp while Andrew fiddled with his trunk. The car pulled away and returned to the flow of traffic. Cameron waited at the top of the ramp for Andrew to slowly roll aboard. "Do you really need to bring all those things," she asked, knowing that he did. He growled at her and rolled away, leaving her to wonder, again, why she put up with him. She'd have plenty of time to ponder the question during the voyage home.