Argentine Disco

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to get cigarettes. She said she didn’t like for the boy to see her smoke. Mark didn’t know if it was too late to ask for his name, at this point it’d been a full day. It wasn’t until they were left alone that Mark realized just how little time he spent around kids. One of his sisters had children but she lived in Florida and he wasn’t sure if he’d even been in the same room as a kid in over a year. The boy didn’t talk much but he stared a lot. Right into Mark’s eyes and eventually Mark could only look away. He asked the kid about girlfriends and hobbies but rarely got more than one word if an answer came at all. When Elisa got home she smelt like her purchase and Mark was counting the minutes until the night was over. She put the kid to bed in his room and Mark was counting the minutes until the night was over. She put the kid to bed in his room and told Mark Greta would be at the station until the morning. Given the on-the-road nature of his work, it was the first time he had been with someone in longer than he cared to think about, but even in bed the spark was missing. She was fun, but he wasn’t having any.

That night when Mark fell asleep he didn’t dream of tornadoes, not even thunderstorms. In his dream he woke up to the sound of knocking. He was in room thirteen of an unfamiliar motel. It wasn’t on his door but it was loud. It stopped. It came back, a little bit louder for about a half minute. It stopped. Knocking again, even louder for another thirty seconds. Then nothing. In the short hiatus Mark came fully to, and walked to the window of the motel room to find the source of the noise. The knocking started again, Mark peeled open his blinds and saw what looked like a young boy hitting on the door three rooms over. He was knocking ferociously with bloodied knuckles, leaving four red dots on every door in the motel. The kid stopped and started walking towards Mark’s room, stopping two rooms over. Once he began again Mark realized that the TV was still on. Lunging to the TV he pressed the power button. The sound of the boy went away, just silence. It started again, clearly on room twelve’s door. Mark moved against the wall. Silence. Footsteps started, getting closer and louder, then a hard stop. Mark breathed in and immediately the knocking began. The kid’s hand slammed against the door as Mark sat motionlessly behind it, a cop car flew down the street with sirens blaring.

Mark stayed pressed up against the wall until the knocking completely stopped. A familiar moment of dead silence preceded footsteps that headed in the direction of room fourteen. The pattern continued, and Mark looked out in the parking lot. Only his car was at the motel. I must be the only one here, he thought. The kid finished knocking on the last room of the first floor and headed towards the road. Mark sat on the bed for a second then looked back at the boy. I need to see if he’s okay. He slipped his shoes on and walked out the door.

Mark woke up in a warm, fresh sweat. He looked around the room for eyes looking back but there were none, Elisa was no longer in bed. He had to take a minute to reorient. Once he fully remembered where he was he took a moment to think about whether he wanted to be there, and another to think about supercells from which funnels never formed. He wrote nothing down. He walked out to the living room and only Greta was there.

“So?” She said to Mark.

“I might go, but it’s got nothing to do with what you want. It’s none of your business what goes on between us.”

“Then why are you going?”

“Do you know the last time Terre Haute got a tornado?”

“Must have been about ten years ago now.”

“Ten years ago. Hasn’t been a thunderstorm here for a couple months, no?”

“Could be, I don’t know exactly.”

Mark spent a thoughtful second in the living room then headed back to the boy’s room to pack up. When he got back to the living room he turned to Greta, “What are you going to tell Elisa?”

“I’m not sure, but it’ll be nicer than you telling her she just wasn’t what you wanted,” Greta pulled out her keys, “I’ll drive you to a motel.”

“Just drop me off at the bus station,” Mark said. “I’ll get a new ticket.”