

Blue Door Option

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Everybody knew the magician was dying and this would be his last party. And it was too bad because all of his ex-girlfriends were there—even Stacey Mitchell, the news anchor who he had lived with on a houseboat when he held his breath for the whole summer. He was taking requests. He would do whatever we wanted. He would make birds explode from his chest, steal wallets from anyone in the room, build a house of cards on the back of his hand—all we had to do was ask. But no one did, because everyone was sure he would crack in the middle, fall to the floor and leave something suspended they could never fix. So instead of magic, he sang an old Nathan McCoy song about losing something in Hawaii. He had a falsetto you could feel across your shoulders. His hands were thin, he hadn't slept in two months, and you were the only one who knew a few weeks earlier he had parked his car somewhere and never saw it again. When he was too sick to come out for his own garage sale, he told you to give everything away. You watched people take his couch, his television, his doves, and you felt like you were officiating a robbery. If you're a decent magician, he once told you, when you die people will miss you. But if you're a really great magician, they'll always think you're alive and in the middle of the best trick of all time. Even though you watched him fade in front of a machine, heard his breathing disappear like a radio station slipping off the air, you still look for him. In the eyes of the teller at the bank, in the stands at minor league baseball games, in the credits of independent movies from Iceland—you suspect everyone. He was that good.