

## The After

We meet where we always do. The lone rock along the beach where I first came to be. I love the sound of rolling waves almost as much as the scent of salt water being churned over.

I make my way along the sand nearest the shoreline, and a periodic wave offers up a patch of seaweed. The seaweed rolls and tumbles further up on land as each wave crests and rolls up on shore before retracting back into the sea. Then another takes it a bit further, cementing the seaweed's fate. Further up the beach, the small flies are busy with the seaweed already dried out.

I think I may have a chance to sneak up on her. A last-minute movement towards me tells me I don't.

"Were you here long?" I ask.

"Not really. Ten years- maybe twenty. It can be hard to keep track after so many sunsets."

I pause for a moment without speaking. "Sometimes when I wait for you, I count the sunrises instead of the days themselves. They are much more pronounced and more memorable, I find. Not that it makes the time go by any faster."

"What were you this time?" she asks, ignoring my insight.

"A cobbler. In Paris. Noble enough work, as tedious as it was. But the city life made up for it. The pastries alone are worth going back for."

She looks out to the ocean. "I was there once, during the French Revolution. Not a great time in history, cobbler or not. It must have settled down some since then. It smelled foul."

"What were you this time?" I ask.

A doctor. In Lima. Peru."

"I know where Lima is."

She looks at me. "It's good to see you again."

"It's good to see you also. As they say, 'nice to leave, nice to get back'."

"I suppose you will be leaving again right away?" She knows my taste for this far exceeds hers.

"Actually, I thought I may step back for a term. That is, if you are ok with that," I suggest.

Her eyes brighten. "I suppose I would be. There's a storm coming tomorrow. A big one. You're just in time."

"Can this week possibly get any better," I ask. If we had hands, I would take one, as we make our way along the coast, two blue orbs without a care in the world.

This world, at least.