

SOPHIA J. NOLAN

NO RESERVATIONS

I apologize again, "Johnny, I'm sorry." I'm drunk on one shot, a cranberry and vodka, and lack of sleep. The light from his one-person kitchen spills into the living room that also serves as his bedroom where we lie on the bed. I'm on the bottom and he's holding himself up over top of me.

It's 2:37 a.m.

He puts his hand on my face, thumb on my lips, and uses words to make me hush. "Amanda, I've already told you, it's in the past." He nestles down closer to me and his bare chest is warm even through my T-shirt. He holds me close to himself, slides his fingers through those of my right hand and drunkenly begins to whisper.

I drive to the Whistle Stop Café in Narrowsburg, New York, just over the border from Beach Lake where I live. It's June. The sun is hot, the wind cool. It's been a rainy summer mostly, but we catch it on a good day. Johnny picks me up in his charcoal Mustang. He's late but now it's shiny and clean both inside and out. It's been years since I've actually *seen* him and I find myself surprised by the deep sound of his voice.

We race along the backroads of the boonies we've both spent good chunks of our lives in. He turns the music up loud and opens the windows. The wind sends my hair in every direction and I find myself inadvertently smiling at the ridiculousness of all of this. He grabs my hand between shifting from fourth to fifth gear, continuously speeding through the pined forests, and shakes it around in an attempt to get me to dance.

I'm too shy to tell him that I'm cold with the windows down. I'm enjoying it too much to put the window back up. I feel young and free.

He apologizes several times for the mess of work clothes in the back seat but I assure him over and over again that I don't mind at all. He hasn't

seen the inside of *my* car.

He takes me to an early dinner at The Carriage House where he orders a beer and we both order sandwiches. I'm hardly interested in the food and mostly too nervous to eat, but happy to be reminded of the fact that he can carry a conversation.

I'm wishing I wasn't too nervous to talk.

The Mustang roars to life once again and soon we're racing off in no certain direction; we just know we don't want the night to be over yet.

A decision is reached eventually and we take a drive to his father's lake house. Ben, his father, and Kathleen, Johnny's stepmom, are there opening it up for the summer, airing it out and cleaning when we arrive, but assure us they'll be leaving soon. Kathleen gives me a huge hug; the last time I saw her was on our cruise to Canada three years earlier.

It feels like my family, which is close to his family, has been trying to get Johnny and me together for a while, always asking how Johnny is or if I'd seen him recently as though we went to neighboring schools, not schools four hours apart. Ben talks to Johnny like a friend rather than a son but it's nice to know they are so close in that way.

"How have you been, Kathleen?" I resort to starting our own separate conversation to avoid feeling as though I'm hovering.

Kathleen excitedly replies that she's been doing well; her smile is friendly, captivating, and unavoidably makes me smile too. I feel eyes on me and turn my head only to find Johnny taking a glance back at me.

Ben and Kathleen go inside. Nervous that he'll push me in, I follow Johnny to the end of the dock where we dip our feet into the dark, brisk water. He shows me the Celtic tattoos on the arches of his feet and tells me how they mean something about family. I tell him I don't have any tattoos yet.

His father and Kathleen yell goodbye from shore and they've only just pulled out by the time we're taking off our shirts and shorts. I applaud myself for having thought to wear a flattering bra and panties that cover my rear as I follow Johnny who jumps fearlessly into the water. I'm a better swimmer than he, but I'm deathly afraid of dark water. I beg Johnny to stay near me; he gives me that quirky, overly confident smile, his blonde beard glistening with water, and assures me he'll never let anything happen to me.

I blindly believe it, every word of it.

Eventually the sun begins to plunge below the mountains surrounding