

# Lost and Found

*by* Meg Pokrass

*house-painter card*

T. looks like the man called "House Painter" on the Dream Date Card my friends and I played when we were twelve. We sit on the cold fire escape. Smoking. Watching the whores curdle and separate.

*rat*

I bribe T. with a bag of sunflower seeds to my loft. A futon, dust mites, overdue plays. Empty shells.

*ring tone*

One night I make my phone's ring a Medieval Druid Rap. He is acting like those poor fireflies I caught and jarred as a child, though he hasn't lost his flashing eyes. Yet. He wants to die cute. Like River Phoenix. His ice blue cell phone in his back pocket like folded money.

*list:*

almond message oil  
almond sunset tea  
dark chocolate 80%  
dry rhubarb soda  
lavender bath oil  
musk candles  
red light bulb

*found memory*

What's his name took my hand, led me to the bathroom, opened the door and slipped in behind me. The bathroom was dark. "Mari," he said. Through the window I saw file cabinets lined up in black, like widows. It was an office building, the late shift.

*how we survived*

We made calls, sold diet products. All of us were actors or models. Carla was the token "real person". I hoped she'd invite me to a real house for Thanksgiving. She had a real house, a real husband, and two real kids. I gave her Three Musketeers during break. I couldn't figure out why she wanted the late shift.

*mari*

He unzipped. "Mari," he said. His tongue tasted like fruit and tacos. Sweet and sour and rude.

*sometimes*

I can remember his name. Sometimes it escapes like a bug. He was so tall and stupid. These qualities often came bundled together. He (what the hell was his name?) wanted me because I was:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

*locked*

Outdated things make me sad, like the word "howdy". Inside my life are moments nobody wants to remember. My jaw gets stuck in sleep, by the morning nearly locked, dreaming about the twisting

coil cigarette lighter my father had in his car.

*benadryl*

I answer, in case he's decided to come for Thanksgiving. His friend is still asleep. He took too many Benadryls, he says. He knows because he saw the package floating in the kitchen trash.

"Not enough to kill himself," he said. He coughs, says he wants to come see the cats.

*dressy beagles*

We're sitting on the sofa in the den just a few feet from each other, holding the cats and turning on the laptop.

"Pick," I say.

He types "dressy beagles" into the search bar.

Four guys dressed like soldiers holding Beagles in pre-Civil War southern belle costumes. Bonnets and velvet dresses with leg holes and collar trim. The beagle's faces fall, but the men are smiling.

