

seashore

We went to the sea, because there wasn't time after School™ to go under it. She and I went to stand beside it. We watched it move around. It was dead, but colorful.

It was blue when the sun hit it one way, and purple when the sun hit it another way, and sometimes yellow or green. We had on suits so we wouldn't smell it.

We sat in the sand. I made an angel with my arms and legs. She piled sand on my stomach. The suits were orange, which was stupid. I hate it when a suit is a really ugly color so you look completely dumb. After she was done piling sand and I was done with my angel, we stared up at the sky.

I was like, *I don't think you have to worry. Science is like, they're always discovering things.*

Yeah. Have you looked at the sea?

You've been reading more of that depressing shit.

Everything's dead. Everything's dying.

Some upcars floated over in the Clouds™. Some cargo ships. Some transit needles, heading off to Norway or Japan or something.

I sat up. I was pissed off with things.

I went, *You know the part that's the really ironic thing? The guy? The hacker? You almost agree with him. He completely fucked you over, and you almost agree with him.*

Yeah, she said. That's certainly the really ironic thing.

What? What are you being sarcastic about?

I'm screwed.

See? Like, that's so big negative.

What do you mean? What's positive? My body is completely falling apart. I mean, you saw it with my foot—but it's happening more often. One of my fingers or a part of my face will just freeze up. It's getting more frequent. Like once every other day, for ten or fifteen minutes. Sometimes for a few hours.

Oh shit. Don't tell me this. Oh shit.

And I'm not getting all the images that are supposed to come through on the feed. I'm getting a lot of error messages.

They can fix that.

I don't know. I don't know. I just don't know.

*I kicked at the sand. I looked at her. She looked good, through the mask, her big sunglasses brown and purple in the light. I was like, *You know, I . . .**

What?

I really like you.

*She hit me on the back of the head. *That'll do*, she said.*

o o o

... to Crackdown Alley ... only on Fox ...

"Have you given it to her?"

"You can kiss my ass."

"Have you given it to her?"

"What do you think I am?"

"Want me to tell you what I think?"

"Don't breathe in my face. Go breathe in someone else's face."

"I'll breathe in whatever face I want to breathe in."

"I didn't give it to her."

"What do you think I am?"

"She doesn't have it."

"You can kiss my ass."

"Don't breathe in my face."

"Have you given it to her?"

"Want me to tell you what I think?"

"What do you think I—"

o o o

Link
and
Quendy
prayer

On Monday, I went into School™ and I was sitting in homeroom when I saw that Calista had her hair up in this new way, and on the back of her neck was this total insane macro-lesion that I never even saw before. I guess I was looking at it kind of *Holy shit!*, because Quendy sat down next to me and chatted, *Impressed? Ain't even real.*

Quendy still hated Calista, because Quendy wanted to be going out with Link herself.

I asked her, *What do you mean?*

Calista got it done yesterday. Quendy made this face. Now that lesions are "brag." Now that they're the spit.

It's huge. It's fuckin' huge.

It's not even real. I mean, it's an incision, but it's artificial. It's not even really weeping. Those are beads of latex.

*Whoa. I'm surprised her head doesn't, you know, topple off. Like: *badump.**

It's so stupid. God. I can't believe how stupid it is.

Link came in and was kissing Calista on the forehead, with his hand behind her skull, and then he tickled her lesion.

Oh! Unit! I grabbed Quendy's wrist. Oh, unit, this is like—whoa—total error message. Major system error!

It's so stupid. I can't believe he's falling for that. It's so dumb.

Whoa! I got to tell Violet about this. She'll go crazy.

Yeah.

She's always looking for like evidence of the decline of civilization.

Yeah.

I looked at Quendy. What do you mean by that?

Nothing. Just that Violet is always, like you said. She's always looking for stuff about the decline of civilization, and everything's a mess, da da da.

Is that a problem?

I don't have a problem with it. I think she's nice.

I'm going to chat her about this.

Yeah. Do. She'll think it's funny.

I found a hitch-up to Violet. You sitting down? I said.

Calista got an artificial lesion.

So much for my Frosted Flakes.

Link is tickling her lesion.

Let me just push the bowl toward the wall.

You heard it here first.

Link is . . . He's a great guy, but do you mind if I say he's not the quickest bunny in the centrifuge?

I laughed. No. Not our Link.

Did I tell you I thought he was youch the first time I saw him?

Link? Our Link?!? He's butt-ugly. Have you met him?

That's why I thought he was youch. You all were so beautiful. He was hideous. There was some, I don't know, some texture there.

Are you kidding?

Until he opens his mouth.

Right now, he and Marty are skipping rope with some coaxial cable. Ah, he's tripping. He's falling into a desk.

I liked talking to her like this, first thing in the morning. It had a kind of bedroom feel to it. It was kind of flirty, kind of drowsy.

She was like, *Can I ask you a question about Link?*

Yeah?

The name. Link. As in "Missing . . .?"

No, I said.

So?

I don't think you want to know. It won't help much with your worry, you know, about civilization ending and stuff.

Huh? . . . Oh my god. Oh my god. . . . It's a penis thing, isn't it?

No.

Yes, it is. It's some gross boy/locker-room sausage joke, isn't it? Sausage link? Oh. You are so . . . Oh.

No, it's not.

Is so.

Is not. He's the product of this government experiment.

What?

His family's like really old and meg rich? So they got this . . . you know . . .

What?

He was cloned from the bloodstains found on Lucy Todd Lincoln's opera cloak.

There was a long silence.

Then Violet was like, Mary.

Yeah. Mary, then. Mary Todd Lincoln.

There was another silence. I sat there, waiting.

She was like, So he's the genetic clone of Abraham Lincoln.

Yeah.

Abraham Lincoln.

That's what I said.

Tell me what he's doing now.

Eh . . . the limbo. With the coaxial cable.

I thought so.

Except, he's bending forward instead of backward, so it isn't as hard.

This is extremely grim.

How about over there at your house?

Let me recover.

What's doing at Violet's place?

Dad's off at work. Mom's just a mom-shaped hole in the front door. I'm eating cereal, putting on my stockings, and reading ancient Mayan spells.

You know Mayan?

They're not in Mayan. They're in Spanish. The feed's translating them into English. I'm reading a spell to preserve dying cultures.

Uh-huh.

Written sometime before their empire fell, I guess. "Spirit of the sky, spirit of the earth, grant us descendants for as long as the sun moves, for as long as there is dawn. Grant us green roads; grant us many green paths. May the people be peaceful, very peaceful, and let them not fall; let them not be wounded. Let there be no disgrace, no captivity. O thou Shrouded Glory, Lightning Lord, Lord Jaguar, Mount of Fire, Womb of Heaven, Womb of Earth. Let our people always have days, always have dawns." Then it goes, "O King One-Leg, Giver of Green."

King One-Leg.

Amen, brother.

Link and Marty are doing a lasso with the coaxial cable.

Yeah?

Calista is combing her hair. And she keeps jolting each time she scrapes the edge of the lesion.

Thank goodness for home-schooling.

There's a party on Friday night. You want to come?

Do they hate me?

They don't hate you. Quendy just told me she thought you were nice.

You were talking with her about me.

Don't worry.

I won't. They hate me, don't they?

They think you're like meg cuddly.

Okay. I want to live a little.

Exactly.

I'll come.

Brag.

Will you get me?

Sure.

What time is it right now? Do you have to go?

Yeah. It's time for announcements.

I make my own announcements. Into the garbage can, so it echoes.

Lonely.

I tell myself to come to the office.

Yeah.

Then I pace in circles, waiting for me to show up. I wait and I wait, you know. I wait and I wait in the office, she said, but me never comes.



... this month's 20 Hot Sex Tips for Girls.

Hey! You wanna leave your boyf with his head spinning?
Then check out what Lucia, our Lady o' Love, has to
say about these chicks and their sich in the sack!

Natalie from New Jersey messages us, "My guy sez, 'No
nookie at parties!' But I feel that in order to do our
duty to the party, we gotta—"



"... which is why I ask it. Consider: The United States has
been instrumental in the overthrow of truly genocidal
dictatorships. We dole out billions of dollars each
year in foreign aid. We support failing economies.
We give harbor to many who seek our shores. We are
trying to do what is right. We are trying to do
what is—"

