

## Periwinkle

Her life had always been a shade darker, but not sad. She felt very much all right most of the time and smiled a lot. No, not sad but *heavy* and *deep*. She had gone through more pain than a heart could stand and she carried with the problems of the world like she carried her own. Soon she became a walking submarine, a heavily pressurized vault of emotions that sank deeper and deeper into darker shades of the same emotions. And just like a submarine, she held her breath that night and let herself sink to the bottom of the bathtub. She opened her eyes after what she thought were only seconds, shaken by a feeling of sinking, only to find herself *actually* sinking and drifting further and further away from the surface. She was scared to her bones and tried to swim back up, thumping her feet against the walls of a bathtub that was no longer there. She closed her eyes and counted to three hoping to wake up from an absurd dream, but she could still feel herself dropping lower down. She saw the bathroom ceiling getting smaller and smaller above her head. Eventually she let herself go and stopped fighting back. All kinds of shapes passed her by, everything from cantaloupe fish to plum sirens with reptile eyes and scaly skin. In the background, she heard a muffled jazz song playing. She tried to scream for help, hoping that Célestine - her flatmate - could hear her but the only thing coming out of her mouth were bubbles, big, round, iridescent bubbles.

The fall was painless, like a stone landing on the sand at the bottom of the ocean, only the bottom was no sand at all but grass. Her water-filled lungs were swelling. She felt three mild spasms on her chest and then the swelling stopped. Her heartbeat was gone. She needn't breathe anymore, everything was all right. She touched the grass underneath her palms and back, and as she looked around noticed a beacon of light going back and forth at the top of a lighthouse. She stood on her two feet, the flow of her movements was slowed by the water that, however dark blue, was still very much warm. The strangled notes from Célestine's jazz - she was probably cooking something in the kitchen - kept swimming around her ears as she walked towards the lighthouse.

As she came closer to the lighthouse she noticed her reflection on the door. Her naked body had acquired a cerulean tint and her lips had turned to lavender. Her fingers were wrinkled like an old man's but she felt more beautiful than ever. She opened the door and climbed up the stairs, half-walking, half-swimming. The jazz faded away as she reached the top. She

opened the door that lead to the only room in the lighthouse but what she found inside was not what it should have been. The door lead to a room that was, unmistakably, the sixth floor of the *Bibliothèque Nationale Universitaire*. Only it wasn't exactly it. Although everything seemed to be right where it belonged, it was very much empty. A few chairs and tables were scattered around the floor here and there but the atmosphere was dark and silent. She explored the room with an arrant curiosity, touching the walls with the tips of her wrinkled fingers and feeling the slippery floor with her feet. It was definitely real. She swam slowly towards the winkle-shaped stairs and carried on exploring the building. Although she couldn't possibly find an explanation to any of it, she found that the library had never looked as beautiful as it did to her in that moment. The reflection of the water on the walls and on the floor turned the inside of the library into the most magical place she'd ever seen. She realized that she rarely ever took the time to look around her in her daily life, that she was always in a hurry and worried too much about trivialities. And just as this thought came wandering in her head she felt a presence behind her. It was a godlike figure, very much like one would imagine Poseidon himself, it came swimming from behind the stairs and stood behind her in silence. She turned around and couldn't help but laugh at the absurdity of the situation. More iridescent bubbles came out of her mouth as she produced a muffled giggle and the Greek-statue-looking man glanced at them with profound curiosity. She couldn't possibly - not in a million years - remember the conversation that took place in that moment, but she did remember one thing that got stuck in her head for the rest of her life: "You live in a shade of periwinkle blue, and that is all right."

And just as she felt on the verge of discovering the true meaning behind that cryptic phrase she *opened her eyes* and was immediately blinded by the bright yellow bathroom lights. Four paramedics were standing next to her, staring in awe her every move. A few minutes went by and she was able to breathe normally. Her lips started to regain color and she slowly came back to her senses. The perplexed paramedics spoke to her in a calm and raspy voice and informed her that, technically, she had just been dead for two whole minutes. After a long pause of disbelief, one of them - he seemed younger than the rest - couldn't help but ask her what death had been like. To this, she obviously couldn't answer that she'd *probably* met Poseidon, so she let out a weak laugh and settled for a much simpler answer: "very, very blue".