

You'll laugh, you'll weep, you'll fall asleep. Uh huh. Typical. Newt backs into nude spray. It's the swimming pool shower, heat molds him wet. Steam bones his shoulders and he blinks drops. Other dudes soap or think or neither. There's lots of fat guys. And tiles squeak moist feet. A kid scrunches eyelids and gawks at Newt's weenie. Newt once lost a Mets cap. Later he blew up toy army men with M-80s. He tugs into surfer trunks and shakes his curls. Water ivies down his mint neck. He licks drops off his young smile. You will never be that calm.

Newt hums past guys, they fool with towels or cheap shampoo. Where a door mates aqua space it's the pool. It's still indoors. Newt lungs tingle chlorine musks. A lifeguard scopes him to make sure he showered. Newt stands lithe as sky. He scans swimmers. Where arms slice antiseptic waves. Where toes churn past striped ropes. Muscles bathe his citron eyes. Limbs sculpt his mind. This is not fate or a story. It's about Alysha who meets Newt, he's a sculptor. She's a Bahamas girl who once fucked her father. And when she wouldn't anymore Dad raped her. Then she tried to snuff Dad and killed her Stepmom instead. But it was an accident. And Alysha blamed it on Dad after he escaped. Then she fled here to Seattle. And Dad died already but Alysha don't know it, she thinks he's hunting her. And she'll love Newt and then hafta leave. And maybe she never sees him again. And Newt squats at pool side, straps goggles on and lowers in. And swimmers cross water like beige or black dashes. Or hands match turquoise shadows.

Two wet guys yak about lamps. One's scared of balding. Newt floats between them and planes into lanes. He's glad cause the pool ain't too warm today. So he can thrash a fast pace without boiling. Get some stuff off his mind. He glides behind this sleek woman. He eyes her spandex ass, it sluices chilled foam. He pictures butts in granite. Newt slides arms into a brutal crawl. He breathes then won't, then does. He spans liquid with hands. That's why he's called Newt. It's his lizard elegant paws. His mom nicknamed him. He cups tides through silence. Even his nails seem amphibian, they flatten like tadpole pads. Cause he touches too much. Not your problem.

Newt flips underwater and pushes off another lap. He wonders if you can maybe catch AIDS from pools. Then laughs into waves where nothing hears. What a dumb idea, Newt muses. Sculptor snuffed by sex pool. No, better—champ swimmer buys the farm in viral pond. Then something wakes and nags him. Ex-champ swimmer, it taunts. You ain't been champ since high school. You gave that up. You give stuff up. Maybe soon you're just an ex-sculptor too.

Newt swims and scowls at it. It's him inside him. It's his other, his double, his psycho split. The one he is when he's brave. It only talks in minds. You've never felt it. As it rags Newt more. Silly artiste. You keep botched sculptures. You're scared to destroy them. "Yeah, yeah," Newt mumbles bubbles. As he treads to a breast stroke. And forgets art and swims harder. His goggles globe through rude splashes. He watches gliding girl auras and tits. He sighs and almost chokes. Cause it's been too long since her. The ex he won't think about. A woman armed with dusk and icons. Fuck

her, it growls. Burn her memory please.

Newt taps the lap end, stops and trances. Where his mind shows these birch constructs. They're two years' work, mostly of his ex. And her fake moods. It murmurs how they're dumb pieces. Let flames devour them. And Newt seethes, without words. How they ain't that bad. As it only laughs, lower than fever. Or Newt leans on lane concrete, he breathes mixed sweat. He pants raw dioxides. And sifts her memory kisses. Her was his last love. This dawn-spawned Czech, made from rage and stasis. Newt spits male salts into a pool drain. As he agrees. Dammit. Those carvings are weak.

Très weak, it murmurs. Then Newt swims more, now behind some older woman. She swims a dazed stroke, bubbles moss her hips. Newt muscles up her aerobic wake. He slashes sleek triceps at fading waves. He forgets others and blends into wet. Now inner sight takes over. He daydreams his art again and spots all the flaws. It's gloating them. See? This birch tendril here, too clumsy. This wood face, hey buddy, look. Just fucking dumb. It montages carved faults, it nags with truth. Newt rests at the lane end again. His goggles mist where he wipes them. Two other guys talk about rugs.

"The shag was too neo-Byzantine."

"I've never liked that end-over-end technique."

Newt figures they're carpet layers. He lags back to a butterfly thrust, calming limbs with speed. But dull sculptures blossom within him. Where brain flames bathe each lathed curve. Where Newt grunts underwater. Uh uh. I'm not snuffing two years of my work. First my love mucks

up, now I should burn my art? His mind answers with pretend fire.

Some guy ahead swims too slow. Newt gulps brined air and silvers down, skinning bubbles with aqua. He tilts under the slow man, passes, then bevels up and breathing. And he swims more. And his other scalds his mind with sour jibes. It growls about torching sick art. You would've done it before, it drones. As Newt grits teeth and glides. Drops scale off his biceps. While it whispers hot abuse. And love dead tongues swarm gold flame, raining memory blacker. While swimmers fit color with hands. While some pool radio's chanting about superb fucking. Newt's a white guy without chest hair. And he never finished art school. And he swims faster.



“Yeah ha ha,” Alysha brays when she grabs the boom box. She’s the black girl who Newt’s gonna love. Till she stabs some innocent guy. Cause she thinks it’s her Dad. She’s 22 with gold-scented skin. “We’re not listening to any more of this jive house shit,” she growls drunk. She twirls where teal nylons whisper her skirt. And the black dude tries and grab his tapedeck back. “No more funk!” Alysha grins. Her smile hurts male eyes. “Just don’t wreck the box is all,” the black guy shrugs. It’s a party that smells like beer.

“I won’t hurt your deck,” Alysha purrs and slinks a tape in. Her fingers slash deck buttons till some rap slums on. “Uh huh huh huh,” she drones along, stabbing heels at the pale floor. Her dancing makes a room brim skin. She smells like forest copper. You smell like work. “Hey, rap’s fine,” the deck owner nods. He chills past two punkers. Then wanders for the kitchen, maybe there’s some ales left. He smiles inside about Alysha. That bitch be white till she get drunk. Then her black momma peeks out. Was she Jamaican she said? Something Haitian. She ain’t Caribbean, he decides. His night hands search the fridge. Bitch just don’t wanna be no Seattle black.

Taped males chant about fly girls, about beer or fucking. Everyone dances or drinks and smokes. Or smoke sperms through fingers, phrasing mouths softer. Alysha cranks the boom box up. “Yeah ha ha,” she laughs off the beat. Or tosses quasi red hair. It syncs with danced air. The room stinks like mummy wine now. Someone spills another Chablis. “Hey watch it, jackoff,” a skinhead girl snarls, “it’s me that cleans the fucking floor.” The spiller just broods away. There’s little sparkly things on the ceiling. And the rap song’s over. “I need a beer,” Alysha barks. She sweats and smells it. Her calm nostrils dilate. Her face exists alone. Like sun inside a hand. “Hey, I need a beer.”

“They out,” Rosalind nudges her arm. She’s her buddy. Who worries about Alysha. What be bothering her and shit? She peers at Alysha’s slit swamp eyes. Tungsten eyeshadow gilds both lids. Alysha quit high school cause she’s mulatto, everyone made fun. Not white or black enough. Newt’s from Texas. He has metal yellow eyes. They ain’t