

## Blank Is the Color of Calendars

When first we met, I loved his plans.

We sailed on Saturdays, preparations beginning at eight o'clock, the cooler and car ready by nine. Laundry was always done on Tuesday evenings. Maintenance overruled everything else. "A stitch in time," he'd say as he got up in the middle of our discussion about metaphysics to repair the loosening arm of the chair. Our house was well-maintained, the dogs trained every evening at seven.

I stopped reading novels after a while because a lazy day on which to lay around with Willa's classic or Tyler's latest never appeared. "Plan it!" he'd say when I complained, but how do you plan a lazy day?

We sailed, we cleaned house, we trained the dogs on his schedule. Our Christmas cards were always the first to go out. Last December I begged him to go on a last-minute skiing trip. He smiled as if I were a child and reminded me that it was our weekend for writing Christmas cards. I nodded; after all, with our month all planned, there was no time to reschedule the cards. Once again he'd saved me from last-minute cramming. But later, when we drove the neat stack of envelopes to the post office, I raged at the open mouth of the mailbox. "God, it hasn't even snowed yet!"

"You need to relax more," he said. "Plan a day off — you work too hard."

I clenched my teeth. Once, I would sit for hours in the rocker beside the patio doors, staring at the sky, a cup of coffee in my hand, cooling because I was in no hurry to finish it. I knew all the colors of the sky then. But now, when I sit in the rocker, he hurries in with a calendar in hand, planning the months ahead, not even stopping to consider what color the sky will be.

Today the patio door calls to me from the breakfast table where we sit confirming the day's plans. I get up and walk to the door, look up at the spring sky. I am shocked at how strange it feels, like a friend I haven't seen in years. "Let's go for a walk by the river," I say.

"When?" he asks, flipping calendar pages. "Next weekend is busy, but maybe one evening—?"

"I mean now." I turn back to him.

The thought alone stops him. He looks at his watch. "But we already made plans for the day." His voice is a cross between childish petulance and parental assertion.

I look down. He's right; we planned to clean the house this morning, then shop for paint this afternoon.

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A cloud passing the sun darkens the room for a moment. I turn and look out the door just as the first ray shoots out from the edge of the cloud.

“No,” I say as I slide open the door, “the color of the sky is for walking.”

I can feel his confusion choking his thoughts like weeds in an untended garden, but I don't look back.

“I've been waiting for this color forever,” I say, and walk out the door.