

Chris Bachelder

Something Great

There's this one exact spot in the mall, it's upstairs beside a bench, where you can stand in place and slowly turn in a tight circle and see the word *great* eleven times, and that's where I went the day that Dreama ran off with the carpenter who had built our deck. *Ran off* is just an expression, really, a way of speaking. In truth, there was no running. It's more accurate to say that Dreama *ambled* off or *sauntered* off—she *mosied* off, if you like—it's just three doors down where that hammering bastard lives, in the house with that sauna or sweat lodge in back that he built himself. At night, if it's a quiet night and if I sneak over into his back yard, I can hear their hot muffled laughter in the lodge. I just lean back against the chain link and I wonder: Doesn't she miss me at all? I spun and things were great: the sunglasses (1), the lingerie (2), the corn dogs (3). It's important to stand in exactly the right spot—a small step in any one direction and not everything will be great. Some things will be great, six or eight things, but not everything will be great. It was difficult to locate the exact spot, and I rarely saw eleven great things on my first try. Later, it became much easier to find the spot because a small patch of floor tile gradually got worn shiny and smooth by the steady rotations of all of us sad pilgrims. A large beautiful woman with a horrible limp limped from the escalator to the bench and sat down next to a skinny cowboy with an eye patch and a bad cough. I didn't stare. I turned, slowly. The white sale (4): Great. I hardly need to describe the back-to-school savings (5) or the professional nail care (6), but let's just say they were great. The cowboy growled, "Hurry up, buddy. There are people waiting." The large beautiful woman said to me, "Darling, you just take your time. You look like you need

it.” I turned, slow and focused, but not unmindful of her kindness. Great were the gag gifts! (7) and great were the FIVE NEW FLAVORS (8). I was doing well. The one-hour vision care? (9). Yes, I think you know. Dreama, too, had been great, greater by far than while-you-wait shoe repair (10), but as I spun I could not picture her face, it was lost in steam and neon. The skinny cowboy said, “I think he’s on it. I think that’s it.” Near the end of my revolution, and without looking down, without breaking my steady rhythm, I said to the large kind beautiful woman, “Would you like to get a corn dog?” And I think I knew, in that instant before her ambivalent nod, that we’d end up together that night, searching for something great, like those goddamn New Releases (11), but settling for something less, something worse, locked and turning, all eyes shut tight against the time, it was coming for sure, when our hearts just wouldn’t bounce back anymore.