

# DRAWER

Rick Moody

She called it an *armoire*, which was the problem, which was why he had dragged it onto the beach behind the house, and surveyed its progress over the course of a week, the elements driving down their varieties upon her *armoire*, their drama of erosion upon her *armoire*, a winter of steady rain, and had she been willing to call the *armoire* a *chest of drawers* like anybody else maybe they never would have arrived at this moment, or maybe he would never have arrived at this moment, he would not have found himself on the deck, in the rain, overlooking the beach, overlooking the *armoire* buried in sand up to the bottommost drawer (the work of tides), strands of kelp like accessories arranged around it, gray driftwood, lobster buoys, a Clorox bottle, a red plastic shovel, the pink detached arm of a chubby doll, plovers piping

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there, alone on the wet deck with a stiff drink despite the newness of the day, with a Sears deluxe crowbar with lifetime warranty he intended to use on the *armoire*, if you want to know the goddamned truth, specifically the top drawer of the *armoire*, which was locked now as it had always been locked in his presence, though when they bought the imitation 18th century, Sheraton-style *armoire* at a flea market in the city, it hadn't bothered him then that the drawer was locked and that she had taken control of the little antique key, with its pair of teeth, *Anyone should have been able to pick that goddamned lock*, open that drawer, and yet, for all his accomplishments in the world of *franchise merchandising*, he couldn't do it, though maybe he had picked it and had forgotten, plenty to forget in these last few days, maybe he'd asked the boys with the cooler and the Frisbee who'd chanced along the shoreline, maybe he'd asked if they'd give a hand opening this *armoire*, using her word when he said it, but they had backed away, politely at first, then vehemently, into a temporarily radiant dusk, even when he called after them, *Show a neighbor a little good cheer! I got a thousand and one jokes!* Hadn't bothered him at first that he had no key to her *armoire*, had no tongue to share the word with her, the tongue which calls an *armoire* an *armoire*, not a *dresser*, not a *chest of drawers*, as his father and his father had said it, hadn't bothered him when the *armoire* was damaged in the *relocation* to the seaside, *just a chip off the side, just a dent*, but she'd gotten *apoplectic*, she'd taken photographs of the *armoire*, poorly lit Polaroids, she'd called the dispatcher at the van lines *demanding compensation*, though they had a hundred other pieces of furniture, deck chairs, poster beds, and a *joint bank account*, and she had her own room to work in (painted a stifling blue), and he'd left her alone, he'd walked upon the beach whistling lullabies, but he'd never learned how to say the word *armoire* with any conviction at all, and he would have included *demitasse* and *taffeta* and

*sconce* and *minuet*, actually, he'd gone gray trying to learn all these words, he'd become an *old unteachable dog* trying to learn how to say these things, how to say *I love you* he supposed, an isolated backyard hound in bare feet upon the coastal sand the goodly heft of a crowbar and the way wood gives under such an attack he would burn the damned thing plank by plank and heat the house with the past tense of her, would burn her diaries, leaf by leaf, in the *antique potbelly stove*, weather descriptions, breezy accounts of society functions, he would consume her secrets and her reserve so hidden as to be hidden even from herself, Lord, these people who never gave a goddamned thing.