

**Blue Skies**  
(excerpt)  
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Senior Short Fiction

She must move carefully, not let Carl discover her secrets. Sometimes he reminds her of an animal, scanning his environment, sniffing the air, focusing in on his prey.

Amanda pictures herself in a shadowy alley handing over cash in exchange for a new passport, a new identity. She laughs out loud.

Carl walks up behind her, wiping his mouth in a towel. "What's up," he asks.

"Just a video, a viral video," she says.

"Show me," he says, gripping her shoulder too tightly.

At random she clicks on an icon. A kitten tries to rouse a sleeping dog. Amanda laughs hysterically.

"Didn't think that was your kind of thing," he says. "Nice to see you lighten up."

He kisses her, biting down on the edge of her lower lip. When he leaves, she wipes her mouth, trying not to gag on the mingled taste of blood and toothpaste.