

maybe. It's so hard to tell! So hard to focus with all the water and crying. The water's up to his chin now, where he's sitting on my lap. "Shit, hold on, Bud!" I stand up, holding him and his feeding extension. The formula is almost gone.

*You mus?* Or *youmus?* I can't really see anymore, looking up into pouring water. My eyes burn. The water is too high; I can't keep him above it. "You have to hold onto me," I say, moving him to my back.

And for the first time, he does. I drop the syringe and extension. It floats away from his mic-key button like an umbilical cord. He holds onto my neck, and I tread water, my face getting closer to the message — still blurry from the places the pouring water has split the ceiling — as the flood rises. He's much stronger than I thought, holding so tightly I can't breathe. Choking me. But I keep treading, a little slower. His head is above mine. That's what matters. I dip down every once in a while, but I come back and gasp, fighting his grip just enough to inhale. I'm so close to it now. Two separate words, that's clear. I dip a bit and struggle back up, my chest and throat burning.

We are right under the message, close enough to touch the letters, and I wonder how I can possibly keep him from drowning. How? If I go under, he will, too. He cannot survive without me. I kick hard, pushing us up a tiny bit, and wipe the water away from the words. *You must.*