

If

We can fall in love with anyone,
I tell people even when they don't
want to hear it. *If* (I add) *we are*
with them long enough. On an island
perhaps, the fish just offshore needing
both of us, working together, to catch them.
Or a starship that takes its sweet time
getting to a planet where humanity just may
have a second chance, though that is never
guaranteed. We sleep in suspended
animation but wake by accident at the
very same moment—"Fate!" you shout—
and what else is there to do but get
to know each other over penne in vacuum-
packed bags with a sauce made from hydroponic
tomatoes. You cook the pasta, and when
it's done, *al dente*, you keep it from floating away
in the null-g rooms we have to ourselves,
while I ruin a dozen tomatoes trying to find
the five best in the tanks because the sauce
I have in mind, an *arrabbiata*, needs the ripest.
We laugh at ourselves, and I can tell we are both
sneaking looks at the doorways and listening
for footsteps, hoping that no one else will
wake because what we have (we say this
with our eyes, not with words or the
whispers of naked bodies) is pretty
damn special, don't you think?

—Bruce McAllister

