

## ***Bathtub Broodings on a Friday Night***

by Eunsae Lee

Some dusky hour or other. House party. The dampened sound of heavy bass and laughter, yelling, and the bathroom walls standing as dams against it all.

Inside, I share the bare, yellowish bathtub with a few scattered specks of confetti and two empty cans. Sitting with my legs dangling over the ledge, I feel the lines of the tub curving into my back. I am reminded of the big cardboard boxes from childhood that I tried to squeeze into, elated by the idea that I would fit. The world was for playing in, and there is a quiet joy in remembering that.

It's been past any sort of sensible bedtime for hours now – hours of loud conversation downstairs that has blurred into one vaguely exciting, purple-lit picture. People are smiling with teeth, the whites swirling into their faces and obscuring them. Friends, friends, not-so-friends. All of them strangers. There are still a few more months until graduation, but these faces have already started to fade in my mind. Who knows in what distorted ways I'll remember them in a couple of years? And how will they remember me? Four years of trying not to care about what others think obviously hasn't got me very far. I thought that, by now, I would have grown into someone who didn't worry about this stuff.

What else have I forgotten to learn?

Sometimes I feel that I have lost something important, something I can't put a name to. Like it has fallen out of my pocket into an endless puddle. There is an urge to get on my knees and comb through the mud, get as messy as I can, knowing I won't find anything.

And sometimes I think I'm doing things almost properly. Like being a girl. Here I am, eyes stinging from smudged eyeliner and a stray eyelash or two. Glitter everywhere. Feeling vaguely romantic. And the hair! It takes a sort of insanity to take the red-hot metal of the curling iron to your hair and listen to it sizzle. To twist it into impossible curls that belong on a stick-figure, and then like it more than your real hair. To want to flatten yourself into a drawing. Sometimes I have what it takes.

A muffled thud and a shattering sound from somewhere vaguely below. A bit of a hush, then the buzz of laughter returns to the walls.

I'm fiddling. Sticky hands – must have spilled something at some point. I look at them and the light washes them in a bright, sickly white. A bunch of chunky rings on rather stubby fingers. The wrinkly lines are more visible than ever, but I don't mind. It's actually a relief to see them in focus, fished out of the current of shadowy pink and purple. I stare at the familiar lumps and bumps of my knuckles, the callus on my middle finger that exposes my awful pencil grip, the greenish-blackish dot embedded in my left thumb that I'm pretty sure is pencil lead... I wouldn't want to live with hands that aren't mine.

Earlier, I stole some grapes from the freezer downstairs to snack on all night. I stuffed them into a ziplock bag that I brought to keep my phone dry. Then I lost the bag. I think I became braver when I turned eighteen.

You get braver when you get to know the fleshy bits of yourself and learn to live with them. The awkward things, the jealousy, the nights you feel like a toddler. The fact that you can't really

dance. A truce with the body. It's not all hard; imagine sprinting across a clovered field, legs swinging wildly and skimming wet grass. I imagine being invincible.

And I find that I am. The feeling balloons into my body. A stillness, oddly familiar. Cramped legs, bathtub, and glitter. Weightless.

\* \* \* \* \*

Eunsae Lee

Grade 12

St. Peter Catholic Secondary School