

The Hill

Lauren

It's Wednesday. I remember when I was a kid, I often wished I was a boy. I would build forts out of fallen palm trees and concrete barrelpipes at the playground, and climb trees and play roughhouse with some of the foreign kids because they didn't seem to notice that I was a foot taller than everyone else for at least 6 years in school. I remember fond memories of going through rockpiles, trying to find odd rocks that I later would find out to be other minerals than the regular; and sitting under the foot of a tree that seems to me, a memory now of a warm-lit cloak, sounding off rustling trees, whose tressed foliage hid the library behind me.

In a world where you can write your way into a promising tomorrow based on an ethereal air of innocence from the past, I've infrequently found myself within the resounding quiet of my head, while eyes peered out into concreteness of reality around me.

Saturday. There is a child with wavy hair, probably with dark skin; or maybe straight hair or a mix, formidable within a skin like mine. I come back around, sitting within the living room, my mother passing by to turn on the television. I grab the throwpillow as an attempt to hide my growing belly, as my cat Snowflakes saddles up next to me. I exhale and become thankful for not being found.

Monday. People at work tell me I'm glowing, that my skin looks perfect. Ysa asks if I am on the pill. I ask what she was talking about, I never really knew what pills did growing up. I was from a small town, no one really talked about sex safety. Nor pills. What pills? Which pills? Not sure. I ignore the question. My friend Karl from college sees me at the mall, outside of Tower Records where I work, and tells me I look really pretty and that my boobs seem particularly big. He then starts dry-humping me while making grunt sounds and Ysa's taken aback. Karl stops and bursts out laughing. "Don't worry, he's not into women. He's gay.", I explain. As we all walk back into the store, I wonder again what pills were really meant for.

Friday. I finally talk to Eric. He has been avoiding me ever since I told him I was pregnant. So annoying. Worrying, really. He asks me what I want, and I said I cannot keep it. His face shows relief. He tells me he'll help me with the abortion, and I feel reassured. A few days later, I do not hear from him again. Not a peep. I feel punched in the gut.

Thursday. The tattoo shop is finally open, and I walk in to find Arvin. Glad no one's around. "I know you mentioned to me before you and your wife have had unwanted pregnancies." He has two kids. "I need help. I don't know where to go and I don't know what to do. I'm scared, but I am certain that I do not want it."

Saturday. The memories of following Arvin and Ahbie somewhere within the city are blurry. The smell of it feels chaotic: dust, litter in the streets, the loud noises of vehicles careening and honking, the prattling of tongues by vendors selling their wares. It's ironic that what we are looking for can be found with candles, religious and mythical relics, strange herbals and paraphernalias. Arvin tells us to stop and wait as he saunters over to a woman, her woven tray full of some strange leafy and spiky herbs that almost resemble like the crown of thorns. She lifts the tray and gets something from the basket as Arvin pays. She signals me to come and gives me instructions. Arvin repeats it again. I feel a little lost despite finding what I need.

Sunday. My abdomen hurts all night as I try to sleep. I bleed. I try to think nothing of it in the morning, but I feel like I have razors with wings fluttering, taking tiny nicks at my insides. Come afternoon, I feel a jolt of heat in my abdomen and a flash of hot blood in between my legs, as I rush to the bathroom. I couldn't take the pain. The agony spoke to me in my head, "Take it. Take it out." I felt a big clot of blood and pulled at it while crying, then I felt terror as I kept taking it out. I could touch sinews of blood forming something. I cried as quietly as I could despite my horror, because my mother was in the living room; took a deep breath and yanked whatever it is I could find inside me. As I felt the warm red on my shaking hands, I tossed it in the toilet bowl, washed myself clean, and stood up. Cried, flushed it, and sorted myself out. The afternoon outside by the toilet window is breezy and bright; sunlight dancing in between the rustling leaves. Like being on that hill.

Like being a boy again. Yet the boy I could have been or what could have been like me is gone.

Tuesday. My period's been going on for weeks. It hasn't stopped. I tell my colleague I'm lightheaded and need to get home. I crawl into bed and fall asleep. My brother heads down to go somewhere and finds me lying down on the mattress, with a pool of blood. He panics, carries me and calls our flatmates to rush me at the hospital. They stop the bleeding. My mother, being alarmed, came down. The doctor tells me my bleeding is not normal and that my bloodwork shows signs that I have had an abortion, and that if I had continued to lose blood, I would have died. I get a blood transfusion. My mother shames me. No one else in the family still knows.

Wednesday. Today. Years later, I get a renal transplant and the nephrologist tells me I am to avoid getting pregnant. My then-fiancé calls me and tells me upon the second day of arriving home from my transplant surgery, that he cannot be with me. In the early days when we first met, he shared that he dreamed of having a child in the future, running happily in a garden, and they play. He puts the phone down, and I try to hide the tears streaming down my face in the dark shadows of the bunkbed, as my mother cooks a few feet away in the condo kitchen.

In a world where you can write your way into a promising tomorrow based on an ethereal air of innocence from the past, I find my body as a forest cathedral; my womb is not someone else's battleground, but a playground. A playground of a memory that plays hide and seek that brings both sadness and a weightlessness of bright light and breeze, dancing in an aria of rustling trees.