

“Results”

You are sitting in Astronomy class.

You took six tokes of weed ten minutes before because the 30 mg of adderall from Wednesday have kept you up all night. And you’ve *got* to sleep one day. Everything has to sleep one day. Today is Friday. Yester-night-day, you wrote a skeleton for a horror film about a father who forces himself to forget that he killed his wife. Then, he accuses his daughter. Your astronomy professor explains to you that logistically, humans already know how to travel backwards in time; they just haven’t garnered the science to create a vessel that can move quick enough. The knowledge catalyzes your second anxious-cold-sweat to-night-day. You’re perplexed by the concept. Because if all we need to do to move backwards in time is advance science, then humans know how to move backwards in time. Once upon a time, humans hadn’t discovered microwaves. Today, the microwave in your room makes Wednesday’s lo mein relatively edible. Once upon a time, humans hadn’t uncovered the science to build time-traveling machines. But some-when-where in time, they have. You shudder at the thought of a time traveler infiltrating your present and their past. Time is a construct. Everything is happening simultaneously.

Class “ends.”

You go back to your room. You’re sitting in front of your computer. Typing. Your vision begins to tunnel, the way it does when you restrict all day and treat the hunger pains with hour-long walks. But you were sure to have at least 500 calories today. Weed doesn’t make people trip. Adderall doesn’t make people trip. You’re still typing. You try to stay where you are, but it’s getting dark again. You put your hand in front of your face and try to focus on it. It’s getting darker. You’re plummeted into in a hallway. The walls are the yellowish-brown of old paint that was once white. The shadowy walls have doors. You open them.

I.

“Oh, Nana, do you love your mama?” Her hair is still permed straight, and it tickles your cheeks as she sings.

“Yes I do, I love my mama.” The flower-shaped, foil balloons from your eighth birthday use the sliver of light from the cracked door to cast shadows on the opposite wall.

“Do you really love your mama?” You demand that the door be cracked. Otherwise, the man that shot the man you saw get shot will come shoot you.

“Yes I really love my mama.” You flip your Jesus pillow over because you can’t fall asleep if it isn’t on the cool side.

“Tell me why you love your mama.”

“This is why I love my mama; because she first loved me.”

II.

Chunks of chicken and dumplings, so big you wonder if you even chew properly, lurch out of your guts and slap (smack against) the toilet bowl. When you asked to look away, he wouldn’t let you. Child support payments and birthday calls weren’t a part of his moral duties, but seasoning you into a better adult *than your mother could*—especially when he had a few hours to spare—he could do.

Regurgitated curry burns your eyes and throat. It must look like a yellow-green disaster, but all you can see are the bodies.

Black bare bloated drowned.

Vignettes danced across the screen every 9 seconds like a graduation slideshow. But there was no potato salad, and these were not embarrassing childhood photos. They were the casualties of the Lower 9th Ward.

III.

A little girl stands, whimpering, in front of you. Her right front tooth grew in before the left, so her left tooth is half as short. Her fuzzy cornrows have beads on the ends because she feels like a boy when they're naked. There's a plastic cup half-way filled with yellow liquid in her hand. In the evening, when everyone is home, she uses the cups to make kid masterpieces, turning the shredded plastic into flowers and pretend rice for her pretend guests. Her whimpers are familiar. Slowly, she brings the cup to her mouth. Unlike the other doors, this time, you watch from just outside the doorway, not daring to cross the threshold. The rim of the cup touches her lips. She tilts her head back. She holds her breath. She drinks. You know exactly how it feels: warm in her hand, hot on her lips, scorching down her throat. Bitter at every interval. You wait. "Mmmm," she moans, hiding her grimace in a timeless smile. If she doesn't pretend to like it, he'll hit her. She's a good actress. You're a good actress.

It isn't dark anymore. You're still typing.