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Floyd and the Grapefruit

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Floyd and the Grapefruit // Lourdes Figueroa

Sleeping

I slept with the grapefruit last night. And we ended up sleeping together for quite a long time after that. Around 11 p.m. I go downstairs, get her from the fridge, and take her to my room. *I have some company. The grapefruit is my company.* She rolls against my upper arm for a few seconds before settling in the nook between my neck and shoulder, her thick and cold skin gives me the shivers.

But after ten days, the grapefruit has started to rot. So I don't store her in the fridge anymore, I leave her on a table beside the window in my room, behind a pile of books, where it's cool and out of sight. Now my room has a bittersweet smell. The smell sticks to my clothes and clings to my hair. I keep the windows open, do my laundry with twice as much soap, and wash my hair both in the morning and at night. But the smell only gets stronger. Flies dwell my room and maggots nest behind my ears.

Now I have more company. I have the flies flying around my room, the maggots behind my ears. And of course, I have the grapefruit. She is good company.

"This room is repulsive," my mother says.

"I don't mind it," I tell her.

"This is not healthy for you or anyone in the house," she continues.

"C'mon, it's only my room. And I don't mind it, don't worry, ma."

"But I do mind it. I do worry. We are civilized people. This is a house, not a trashcan. Now give me that thing." She extends her hand. I just stare at her delicate fingers without moving.

Chemistry is Nice

Two days later I come home after school to find that the grapefruit is missing.

"I was trying to clean this pig hole and found that thing by the window. It's gone for good," my mother says.

"But I didn't mind the smell or anything, ma," I say.

She raises her voice, "For God's sake, Floyd, it's a grapefruit!" My bed feels so empty. *I am alone again. The grapefruit is gone.* I have no company. In the morning I go back to school with dark bags under my eyes because I didn't sleep. I don't realize I have them until

Tatiana, the girl who sits two desks away from me in Chemistry class, asks about them.

“Were you up all night studying? You look dreadful.”

It takes me a moment to realize she is talking to me.

“W-what?” I stutter.

“You have bags under your eyes. I was wondering if you had been up all night studying.”

“No. I wasn’t studying. I just couldn’t sleep,” I tell her.

There are only a few weeks left of school, but we had never spoken before. I like chemistry class a lot and don’t pay attention to anything except the formulas on the blackboard and the periodic table on the left wall. I notice nothing else, not even the pretty girls like Tatiana. After class, she suggests we study together for the upcoming test and I agree.

Now she talks to me all the time and I even have lunch with her and her friends every now and then. I help her with her homework and she tells me funny stories about her summer travels and her four younger siblings. We have a good time together. *I have company again. I like her company. I like Tatiana. I wish she could sleep next to me. Like the grapefruit, huddled by my head.* A couple of weeks later my room stops smelling, the flies leave the room, and the maggots disappear from behind my ears.

Tatiana and I study together for the chemistry final and the after noon before the exam we go get ice cream, as a reward for our hard work. She gets strawberry and I get pistachio. We both get rainbow sprinkles. We feel like little children and laugh as the ice drips on our hands. *I like Tatiana. She is good company.*

At the Supermarket

Classes end and the school closes. I don’t see Tatiana again for the rest of the summer and I cannot be sure I will see her next year. She is probably going on a trip with her family over the summer. To Greece. Or who knows, maybe Poland. *I miss the company. I miss her company. Tatiana.*

One day in mid July my mother sends me to the supermarket to get milk for the week. Before paying for it I stroll by the fruit stands. I grab a grapefruit and sleep with her that night.