

Swirls

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His pride drowned. It swirled round the bowel. He lifted his hand from the silver handle and pushed himself from his knees with his hands on the white porcelain. One knee was darkened with vomit that had missed the toilet. He bent down once more and grabbed some squares of toilet paper and brought them to his mouth. The cheap paper ripped and left white shreds across his peeling lips.

He walked to the sink and cupped his hands beneath the faucet and rinsed his mouth. The spit swirled in the sink as his gut twisted once more.

"Look at you, you pile." The mirror was cracked across his face like a jagged scar.

He spat into the sink.

"Never eat that chicken again." He watched his lips move highlighted with the bits of white. He bent over and pulled the stiff chicken head from the bathroom floor. One eye pointed straight ahead while the other looked somewhere to the right. He sighed and stuffed his head inside the chicken, mashing his brains into where the chicken's should reside. His own eyes stared through the mesh of the beak as he breathed through his mouth in order to not smell the sweat of other Chicky Chicken mascots. He gave a sarcastic cluck and put a hand on the knob to return to walking the strip.

Big black letters graffitied on the wall caught his eye before he opened the door.

Call Bridget for a good time

Bridget sat on the toilet trying to think thoughts about water. The faucet ran in front of her; the water trailing down the yellow stains on the sink. It pooled around the green colored growths that grew hard when people neglected to wash their hands, and swirled with a gurgle as the sink drank like a desert refuge.

She begged herself to pee. Her heart crashed inside her chest. She glanced to the floor where her purse lay open with her high school ID on top next to the empty cardboard box. She ran her fingers through her blonde hair starting at the brown roots growing out after the fake coloring.

Her eyes traveled from the flowing water to the base of the sink.

The floor tiles looked like someone had thrown a thousand beetles into a bucket, mashed them into bits, and slapped them onto the floor. Pieces of toilet paper and spider corpses decorated the beetle graves.

She slumped her shoulders and achieved her goal.

"Yes." She shrieked in decibels only dogs could hear.

She brought the white stick she had just peed on close to her eyes and stared at the little square.

The faint markings had begun to appear.

Joe walked in.

Peed.

Spat tobacco juice on the tiled floor.

And left without washing his hands.

Christy hovered over the toilet, not willing to let it touch her skin. There was unidentifiable brown liquid with dark particles near the edge of the porcelain base. She flushed as she hummed a song from her middle school's musical, "School House Rock." She had the lead role. She knew from kids' condescending eyes above whispering hands that they didn't think she deserved the part. Her mom, the director, didn't seem to mind her daughter's pleas and stuck her in the lead anyway because "her daughter deserved the best since she was the best."

She looked in the mirror and forced her lips upwards. The light reflected off her braces and she decided on a lip smile instead. She leaned closer to the broken mirror and popped a zit. It oozed onto her fingernails and she smeared the white puss onto a section of the wall.

Her finger stopped short when it hit words written in purple marker.

Christy S is a Brown Noser

She hoisted her baby from one hip to the other, readjusted her feet and swung one hip out to create a makeshift seat for Evie. Evie squeaked. And Megan laughed. She began to hum a mindless tune to placate Evie as she locked the bathroom door. The lock snicked shut and she maneuvered a blanket decorated in yellow ducks on top of the dingy, green counter.

Evie lay on her back and kicked her feet in the air. Her mother had covered her hairless head with a pink headband, the bow turned off center. The band slipped up as her diaper was changed.

Once done, Megan touched Evie's nose with her fingertip and Evie

cooed responses.

"Oooo ooo, are you trying to talk to me?" Megan cooed back to her child.

The toilet answered with a groan from the depths of its pipes.

Evie grinned a mouthful of gums and threw her limbs in the air. Her hand, plump with baby fat, knocked against the wall just below scribbles in bright, red lipstick.

"Oh. My. God." Regan shut her cell phone with a satisfied snap. The scent of hairspray and expensive products wafted around her frame like an aura of money. They were in the bathroom, the one the color of green vomit. Gina looked up from the toilet where she had forced lunch from her stomach. Half digested lettuce leaves ran down the side as she stood from her knees to flush.

"Did you notice I lost three pounds?" Gina's face plead for recognition.

"No stupid. I just found out the juiciest piece of gossip ever." Regan looked as if she had the most delicious drop of candy behind her heart-shaped lips, even though bile still flavored it.

Gina's face puckered but then switched to interest.

They locked heads that had grown too large for their skeletal frames. It looked like their heads should loll about their shoulders from lack of neck strength and food.

Whispers came in fragments.

"-pregnant."

"No!"

"Yes."

"-a slut."

They parted with snickers, and pulled out their lipsticks. Regan kissed the mirror just below the crack as she sent a mass text to the contacts in her phone. The sink rattled as she leaned her body against it. The imprint left from her lips matched other writings on the wall.

Gina wrote a new one encircled in a heart.

GS+RF=BFFs

Richard set up camp on the counter that ran alongside the side of the bathroom. He heaved the broken mirror from its hanging and set it on the counter. A piece of hair fell down and he smoothed it into the proper

place. He pulled a clear baggie out, brimming with white powder, and set it on top the mirror. He was careful to avoid the crack and lipstick kisses.

"Stupid whore." He yelled this at the wall.

The image of his ex-wife wrapped around another man radiated through his mind, the man's hand grabbing her dainty curves, curves he paid the surgeon to create. The man's mouth pressed against her plump collagen lips in a way she never let Richard do to her. Men dotted along the timeline of their marriage, men that had started not long after their honeymoon. But she was so clever, he never had a clue. She was always in a book club or PITA or coffee with a friend or girl's night. Her quick smile never said she was unhappy. She looked at him how she looked at him from the day they met when he was shy of his thirtieth birthday and she just graduating high school. He saw love, but after the truth, he saw pity.

He reached for a gold-inlaid pocket knife from his pressed suit with shaking hands and cut open the plastic. The powder spilled on top its reflection. From his Italian leather wallet, he selected one of his many plastic credit cards and began to arrange it in three rows about four inches long. He plugged one side of his nose with a finger and bent over the mirror.

Tina and Jose twisted in circles, trying doorknobs till they found one open. Their lips remained locked the entire time in a transfusion of spit and particles. The light switch revealed the greenish black tiles and toilet that sat in the corner. She wrapped her fingers in his shoulder length hair while he pulled her slim body closer.

They twirled round the glorified closet that dared to call itself a bathroom. Jose bumped into the sink and they were thrown towards the counter. Tina's back hit the mirror someone had left there. It tilted upward and slid to the floor. Glass exploded.

Jose and Tina burst apart.

The mirror lay in pieces. Silver had fallen on the floor to look like stars in a sickly colored sky.

Tina giggled. Jose grabbed her hand and pulled her from the room.

His pride drowned. He once again kneeled in front of the toilet. The strong scent of bleach and disinfectant stung his nostrils and he stuffed the cleaning brush into the throat of the toilet. The chicken suit laid to rest and replaced by the navy blue of a janitor's uniform.

He tried not to think about the liquid and chunks, one resembling

dried lettuce, around the toilet as he wiped them with brown rolls of paper towels.

He tried not to think about his freshman year of college interrupted and torn from possibilities of return in the future. The texts from his friends ceased. He became someone they used to know, a dropout.

He tried not to think about the three children his mother left in his care. His stepdad had packed and grunted bye before the dirt had even been packed down by the back of a shovel. Three pairs of eyes turned to him. His half-siblings had no one. They had him. They had no one.

The mirror shards had been swept into the garbage. A piece about two inches wide lay on top, a bright lipstick kiss marring the reflection of the greenness of the room.

His stomach growled despite the smells. He had left it empty since that morning. He chewed a piece of dead skin from his lip, and sighed as he wiped down the last bit of sink, and gathered his supplies.

He reached a hand and turned out the light.