

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Tim Bemis

One Person Bathroom

"WHERE CAN WE GO?" she asked, but I didn't answer. She dragged her feet while we walked through the hospital towards the elevators, and it made me angry. When I grabbed her arm, the strength I used could have pulled her shoulder out of the socket, but I didn't care. Once I saw our blurred reflection in the steel doors, I let go and she rubbed where my firm grip was.

"And where can we do it?"

I told her not to ask me again as the elevator doors opened. No one was inside, and we were the only people waiting to get on. I pictured doing it in the elevator, but knew it was too risky.

"What was the floor your Mom told us she was on?"

I pressed the button with number three above it. "The maternity ward, but we're not going there right away."

The doors opened, and we rushed to find the closest bathroom. The white hallway and bright florescent lights made my vision hazy, like opening your eyes after a long sleep. Walking blobs passed for a few seconds, but turned into patients wearing medical gowns, doctors, nurses, and a couple of visitors after a few blinks. At the end of the hallway, a door had an image I yearned for: the navy blue stick figure. I opened it and peeked inside.

"Damn. It's a two-person, and the door doesn't have a lock on it."

She partially opened her mouth like she wanted to say something, but I didn't give her the chance. I grabbed her arm and we kept moving. My mother knew we were on our way, so we had to do this quick. The other two bathrooms on the floor were the same as the first, but the maintenance closet near the maternity ward's reception desk gave me possible hope. We dashed towards the door, and almost sideswiped a passing nurse. She stared as if she knew what we were up to. There was a drinking fountain next to the door, and I drank until she turned the corner. The reception desk and hallway was abandoned at the moment, but I waited a few seconds to make sure we were clear before opening the closet.

As I walked in, I stumbled and my left foot splashed inside a mop bucket. When I looked down at the lead colored water, I felt hatred for the entire maintenance department. "Lazy, sons-of-a-bitches. I'm gonna put someone's head in this shit if I see one of them." Water was up to my lower calf, but I forgot about it when I noticed the closet was deeper than I expected. The light from the hallway barely went into the room, and I shimmied deeper inside to look for a switch.

"Be careful," she said. "You still have that bucket on your foot."

"No shit."

My hand brushed along the left side of the wall until I lost my balance. The bucket slipped without hesitation, and a shelf interrupted my fall as it collided with my head. I seemed to be tangled in a cobweb of cleaning

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products, broomsticks, and mop heads. The murky water began creeping towards my upper thigh when I heard a click. Light hit my eyes, and I could see the surrounding damages. She was looking down at me. Her blonde hair was a little messy, and covered her left eye. She was wearing the pants and top I thought she looked good in. When I looked at her I could tell my face was expressionless.

"Are you okay?"

"No, I'm not okay."

"Are you hurt?"

"That's the last thing on my mind."

"What's wrong?"

She looked at me waiting for an answer, but I didn't want to tell her how annoying it was when she suffocated me with concern. "Nothing. I'm just upset that we can't do it as much as we want to."

"I know, but we can do it now if you want?"

"I'm not in the mood anymore."

She helped me up, and fixed my shirt collar while I dazed off. "You're soaked," she said, and put her fingers near my hairline. "Oh my God, you're bleeding."

"Am I?"

I touched the right side of my forehead and looked at her like I wanted her to feel sorry for me because if she didn't, I probably would have let myself bleed to death. She fell for my stare, found a rag in the rubble and tied it loosely around my head to cover the wound.

"We should get that looked at. I think you cracked your head open."

"Let's visit my Mom first." I walked out of the closet and didn't wait for her.

"Are you okay?" She was scurrying to catch up to me. "Because you're acting weird. If you really wanted to, we could have done it."

She was trying to get me to express myself again, but I used one of my classic excuses to shut her up. "I don't want to anymore. I do feel kinda funny, but that's all."

We walked to my mother's room, and I could feel everyone in the maternity ward staring. I imagined them thinking of me as some hoodlum visiting his baby's mama. The rag from the supply closet hung over my right eye slightly, and I was limping from my fall. I felt like a pirate. We reached my mother's room, and the freak show was over. I knew there would be a second showing once I left, and contemplated jumping out the window to escape the embarrassment. My mother was on the phone when we walked in, and her eyes widened at the sight of me.

"I gotta go, Skyler and Allison are here. Okay I'll see you then." She hung up the phone, and her shrill voice pierced my ears. "What in God's name happened to you?"

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"Some guy jumped me."

"In the Hospital?"

"Yeah."

"Don't worry, baby, they'll find him." She reached for her call button, but I stopped her before she pressed it. "What are you doing?"

"He's long gone, Ma. Besides, I'm fine."

"I think he might have cracked his head open." She crossed her arms, and stayed standing while I sat down on my mother's bed.

"What am I going to do with you?" my mother said. "You're almost a full-grown adult. I have a baby now, I can't take care of you both."

"I can take care of myself," I said.

My mother spit in my face from laughing. "If it weren't for Allison here, I bet you wouldn't be out of bed by noon."

"You couldn't be more right," she said.

My mother looked at her. "Get yourself a real man, instead of wasting your time with this child."

"I probably should," she said, then shrugged. "I guess I love him."

I looked at both of them, then out the window by my mother's bed. And that window kept looking more and more promising.