

Mob

by Ajay Nair

He pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose using his middle finger; a tiny, self-conscious gesture. His finger collects a layer of oily sweat. The other hand grips the paper cup tightly, though it has long run out of juice. He is leaning back against a pillar watching the dancing; a spectator to joy — both planned and spontaneous — that's unfolding in bodies fourteen and fifteen years old in front of him.

This is when Lila bursts into his vision and smiles — that smile, *that* smile. He can't believe it when she offers her hands to him, those hands. He drops the cup, wipes his fingers on his crisp, white shirt and meekly submits his hands to her. She pulls him to her, so close, he can taste her breath. His knees buckle and he falls to the ground. When he finds his glasses and puts them on, there are four of them looking down at him, laughing. Sia mimes her action of taking him out from behind; causes a fresh explosion of mirth.

He can feel the paper cup crushed under his body. Something oozes.

There's so much joy, so much laughter. Lila's teeth are tiny, perfect. If she were to bite him, he'd feel no pain. If they were all to eat him, he'd feel no pain.

