

Perfect Lady

by Ann Bogle

I promised a Tea Party member I met at Fletcher's that I would write an essay when I got home about why I am a liberal. A fresh-water hurricane had blown in across the Lake and threatened our survival. He invited me to shelter in his boat. We stopped rain drips with our fingers and talked gay marriage—all of us in favor of it—while his Republican cohort rubbed my unresponsive arm, unresponsive though the Republican was rich. The Tea Party member was married but cuter. He worked as a caulker, a tub and basin man. He had sold marijuana after losing his license to a D.U.I. Then he lost the right to vote. He let his wife vote for him. He told her how to vote. At least their votes didn't cancel out. He complimented my pretty feet.

I vote at a Recreation Center after voting for years at the Presbyterian Church where I was baptized and after that at a Lutheran Church that had been a Methodist Church where I also went to Al-Anon. I suffered over her, the one I called "Perfect Lady," who, though not the oldest or most senior, was the figurative leader. She wore slacks and her understudy, Perfect Lady Juniorette, wore slacks, too. They had daytime for manicures and pedicures. They smoothed themselves with the roughness in the group. Perfect Lady Juniorette's husband, who had stopped drinking to marry her, had taken to porn, and she had caught him on his computer. She was not aware of crisis compared to the quietly brave, underprivileged, white guest speaker, whose abused childhood had fated her to live with domestically violent men.

"I feel lucky," I said, though smoke seemed to rise indignantly behind my head. I had the longest hair and had waited through a manicure and pedicure, too, but the dermis on my legs looked bad.

Perfect Lady cross-talked. "We don't say 'luck' here," she said.

