

porcelain

by anna marie

In our bedroom Annie stood still as a porcelain doll, so much like those Lladros my mother had kept locked in a glass hutch. Pretty, but emotionless. A non-descript expression frozen on her face. The auburn sheen on black hair warmed her features, but her eyes flashed a cold complacency. I knew she was unhappy, but couldn't find the words to acknowledge it aloud.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Watching your lips move," she replied.

She had a way with drama. She had a way with her sex, and she must have known it.

"Alright," I said curtly.

I rolled my eyes and looked down at her delicate feet thinking she should have been a dancer. I found myself imagining her in a series of staged, sprawling movements and flawless formations. I hovered there in my fantasy until the sound of her sighing brought me back to where we both were standing, staring.

She moved like a breath toward the bed, then laid herself out in a spread of long legs, slender arms and taut breasts. I always wanted her, even in anger. And then, like all those nights before, she just fell asleep seducing me. I crawled into bed next to her; helpless, filled with an old, familiar longing and then spent the next few hours listening to her rhythmic breathing, cataloging each small movement to memory until I drifted off to sleep.

There I dreamt that Annie and I were laying together in the outfield grass of our old high school's baseball field. It was night and warm enough for us not to need a blanket. We just laid there

staring at a sky jammed full of stars, not talking, not moving, but I could feel her warmth towards me. I was happy.

Some hours later I awoke to the blare of a cold hard alarm. Annie had folded herself in blankets and not my arms again. Our bodies were separated by a distance somehow greater than that which was actually between us. I laid there for a moment, there in my disappointment, then got up, washed and dressed myself, kissed Annie on the cheek and left for work. She didn't stir, though I knew she had been awake for at least as long as I had.

I drove the solemn twenty-two minutes to work, passing through the morning without much regard to it's dew, or it's birds, or it's rising spring sun. I thought of nothing but Annie. I had just left the house and already I missed her. The her that smiled at me brightly, the arms that pulled me in, the legs that wrapped around me, the lips that my name fell from. The her that I had dreamt about the night before.

But I never saw any of Annie again.

