

Everyone the Same, But Not At Once

by Cami Park

ONCE, AS A BOY, the man at the bus stop holding a tri-folded newspaper found a small ragged poodle in his backyard, curled around a gutted tomato. He sat next to it and petted it for longer than an hour, until his mother came outside. She told him two things: one, that tomatoes are poison for dogs, and two, that the dog barked too much. Now, when the grownup man checks his watch and looks at the sky, it's because the words in his paper have begun to peel and slough, like dead skin.

The boss of the man at the bus stop was so terrified of the dark as a young girl that she would pee in the floor duct in her bedroom rather than negotiate the dark stairway to the bathroom downstairs. Now her corner office has a bathroom steps away from her desk, where she'll go sometimes just to turn the faucets on and off. She enjoys the sound of her heels on the hard tile. She wears skirts and dresses always, and is never in the building after hours.

The intern of the boss of the man at the bus stop has a dead kitten in her refrigerator. Her father is building a box for it, the smallest of the house cat's litter, that could not eat. When it is finished and buried, the intern will climb into the hammock in the backyard, cupping her hands to her chest in the same way they cupped the kitten at the end. She'll lift up her face and feel the warmth of the sun on her hair and her skin; closing her eyes she'll let it run through her veins, drugged.

The sun shines on everyone the same, but not at once. The sun is constant. The Earth could go about its orbit in a purposeful way or in a lackadaisical manner and to the sun it would make no difference. The sun has eaten hearts, is regularly smothered. The

sun is the subject of much gossip, rumor, and science, not all of it true. The surface temperature of the sun is 9,800 degrees Fahrenheit. The sun has packed so many suitcases.

