The Eighth Wonder of the World

by Chanel Dubofsky

She says, “He's like, the eighth wonder of the world.” She says this without irony, and this makes you feel embarrassed for her. The laughter in this small, smoky space is getting louder. You chew your chapped lips and put your fingers through the hole in your jeans. She's playing with her hair, combing to the ends. The smell of her coconut shampoo floats into your nose, and your knees feel gummy. The other girls move closer to her, as though through proximity, they might be able to absorb him.

Last month, you lay naked in her bed together, her head on your breast, her hand making a smooth circle on your stomach. You worried that your nipple might be in her ear, but she seemed not to notice. You rubbed her back, each knob of her spine, the gentle dip right above her ass. The two of you had managed to shrink the world down to just each other. You were aware of this miracle; it carried you gratefully from day to day. You let yourself be lifted, and now you are here.

You picture them together; you can't help it. He is hairy. You've seen the black whorls sneaking out of the top of his shirt. In your mind, he is greedy, he covers her, he swallows her whole. She allows this. She invites it.

And still, you've come this place that so little resembles the universe you once inhabited together that it makes you dizzy, surrounded by these girls, their shrieky laughter, their heavy eyeliner, their sentences leading to nowhere. You would rather be

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here with her than anywhere else alone. This makes you embarrassed for yourself.

Your silence is now conspicuous. “Why are you so quiet?” she asks you. You can smell the wine on her breath; she likes the sweet, bubbly kind that tastes like soda. She drinks it from a martini glass. You say, “I'm just listening.”