

Some Kind of Change

by James Yeh

Over coffee a friend was telling me about a dream she had had the previous night.

You're going to think I'm crazy, she began.

Probably, I said.

She told me her dream, in which she had dreamed she was a building. Bricks, mortar, and networks of piping. I don't know why I felt like that, she said, but in the morning I felt like everything would be different, that I would be different.

Were you, I said.

No, she said.

Across the coffee shop I saw our server getting up from her laptop computer, where she had been checking her email and browsing the internet profiles of friends. I thought about my friend's dream, of change and non-change.

It's probably just because you're moving, I said.

Could be, she said. How's everything else?

The same.

She gave a sympathetic frown.

Well, I said, she's immature. So am I.

At least you had something in common.

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At least.

It doesn't change anything.

No, I said, it doesn't.

Our server walked over with the check. Outside was cold and windy and the streets were still damp with rain. I walked my friend to the subway. At the station for a moment I considered getting on too, riding out of my way so we could keep talking, a habit of mine, prolonging things, sometimes too far. She was flying back in the morning, returning to a long-distance boyfriend I believed she had cheated on while she was here but didn't ask about because I thought it would have been too obvious and somehow ungentlemanly. We said our goodbyes.

Be safe, she said to me.

You too, I said back.

I turned around, walked down the empty streets, thinking about my friend's advice, my friend who had been mugged not too far off, not too long ago. A group of men in hooded sweatshirts passed me by. I kept my hands in my jacket, my face serious. Jaw clenched. It was that kind of neighborhood. The neighborhood was changing—the coffee shop we had just been in was evidence—but it was still that kind of neighborhood. Beside a high-rise and the park there was a gas station. A brown-skinned man was refilling his sports car as his wife and child waited inside. A car in the city, I thought to myself, was a curious thing—the maintenance, the parking. The man's wife was getting impatient with how long it was taking, she was opening the door. I walked on. I was the air and fog. I thought about what I liked about the city, what I liked about being there. So many beautiful things, constantly around me. I walked on. My body

swelled up like a blowfish. My cheeks started to hurt.

I remained unchanged.

