The Energy of Girls

by Laurie Stone

Emma and I were in a shabby part of town with vacant lots and overgrown yards, and I wondered if something would happen as we loped beside Tom, who was slow-witted and 21. We were 13, and it was dark, but I wasn't afraid. My parents were doctors. When they hugged me, they scanned for disease, so I was used to a low-level atmosphere of alarm. After a few blocks, Tom led us into a lot with tall weeds, then along a path to a clearing with stones that smelled of fire. We sat on sandy ground, light raying off Emma's bleached white hair and fading into the trees. We ate chips from the store where Tom worked the register. He cupped his face in his hands, looking at us, and Emma touched his soft hair and long body. I touched him, too. My fingernails were dirty. His legs were firm. He said, “Nice.” I closed my eyes. It was quiet except for our breathing. When I opened my eyes, Tom was stretched out on the ground, slipping down his pants. I looked at the stars and weeds and wondered if this was how my life was going to go. Emma had lived in New York, and I wondered why she had chosen me to be her friend. The thing Tom lacked was also something he had, and the thing Emma and I had was also something we lacked, and so in this way we were a good fit. Tom's penis stood up. I didn't have a brother. I thought that when I was dying I wouldn't remember where I had traveled or the work I had done but who I had touched.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/laurie-stone/the-energy-of-girls»*
Copyright © 2013 Laurie Stone. All rights reserved.