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Photo

Abby Chiaramonte

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Photos

We had both slept with other people, but that was not the secret. We had never spoken of it, but instinctively knew by the guilt in the eyes and the overzealous fucking following. Our kisses were pieces of a puzzle I'd done many times as a child, but now couldn't remember how the pieces fit together. The tongues were in the wrong places. It was safer to assume we were relatively even, and resume as normal. I loved him after all, and what's a little indiscretion between lovers?

He said he was a photographer. When we met I believed him, I was impressed when he talked about aperture and angle. After eight months I thought he just liked to take pictures. He was taking pictures at the party that night, but that wasn't unusual. He took candid shots that were remarkably unflattering. "Unflattering" was my word choice- "honest" was his. I never did appreciate honesty.

We were at the New Year's Party. There were about sixty people there, and he was taking pictures of them. All of his friends liked to DJ. They made some strange genre of dub-step that sounded like car crashes. At first I thought it incredibly avant-garde. After a few shots of the acid green sludge they were serving, I felt like they were playing bumper cars with my eardrums. Someone came up and hugged me from behind.

"POLLY!" Natsumi said. Her eyes were all pupil.

"Hey- I didn't know you were coming!" I tried to turn, but she had yet to let go of my torso.

"Yeah- I'm here with Joe! Where's Lars?" She threw her arms in the air and gyrated against me.

I motioned vaguely around. "You know, taking pictures."

"Oh! Let's get him to take one of us." She grabbed two shots of sludge from the bar, and handed me one. "Cheers!" She continued dancing. I fell into the sway; alcohol made less self-conscious.

I met eyes with Lars, who was standing on top of a speaker. His stork legs were perched awkwardly, so he could get a shot of our revelries from above. He looked like he was about to take flight. I felt like a skeet shooter.

"Lars! LARS! Take our picture!" Natsumi shouted.

The flash left orbs of light in my eyes.

They were beginning the countdown, and he hopped off the speaker and strode toward me. I wanted to stop him, to ask him why he called his pictures "photos," and why he preferred to see people through the camera lens rather than through his own eyes. I wanted to ask him if it was Natsumi. But I didn't. I knew the answers to all these questions already. I knew the answers wouldn't resolve anything.

I don't remember the kiss at midnight. I remember going home with him, and rolling around on the floor while he edited his pictures. I pedaled my feet in the air wildly.

"Polly, look at this."

It was the picture of Natsumi and me: a girl with long dark hair with a euphoric grin, and the other with humid red curls and a face utterly devoid of emotion.

"You look beautiful."

About Abby Chiaramonte

Abby Chiaramonte is a B.F.A. fiction student at University of North Carolina Wilmington. In her spare time, she teaches yoga classes, makes sandwiches, and reads competitively. She is currently working on several short stories