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## Ballet of Blood Water

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## Two Flash Fictions

Aubrey Roemmich

### Ballet of Blood Water

I have not been here in centuries, returning like a lost crew member of a long-forgotten ship. The perfume the other girls use to disguise their sweat surrounds me, but the tinge of body odor still permeates the air. The floors are grey and scuffed, aligned in horizontal panels, and kept in place with silver duct tape. I am surrounded—trapped—in the mirrors. Standing in the center of the room a long, tan beam, a ship's mast, cuts through my center: stable, sturdy. I do not recognize myself.

The ceiling starts dripping. Thunderclouds cover the shaky fluorescent lights. The first notes of the piano ring out. I look into the eyes of the girl in the mirror. It's coming faster now, the dripping thunder. The violin joins cutting through the noise like a captain's orders and moves me. Or maybe I move it, the voice of the captain resounding from my own body. I cannot tell any longer who controls the ship. The girl in the mirror copies me, but all I can hear is the dripping. She holds my eyes. They drown out the orchestra waves rushing in her blue eyes. My feet hurt—I'm not longer accustomed to standing on my toes. The tights are strangling. I feel exposed in my leotard. The bun at the base of my skull is pulling my hair tight enough I can feel the strain in my temples. My body rebels against instruction and I am consumed by the dripping. The girl moves gracefully following the swell of the music.

I am moving and it is moving. My ankles are now wet, but I cannot stop. The music is thundering along competing with the monstrous

noise of the water. My feet are bleeding through the pink satin. The girl in the mirror smirks at me. I cannot stop. The dripping is now rushing. It is up to my knees, but I cannot stop. I am spinning... spinning... spinning...

Spinning through stage wings, bright lights, and dressing rooms, my life is rushing around me as I dance. All the laughter and tears are crashing over me in a thunderous wave. My eyes are locked on a light up ahead: a goal, a dream, a longing of my heart. The lights cut out—

The orchestra is gone. I am alone. My left leg is tucked behind my right in a curtsy. My arms sit gracefully curved away from my body. My head is bend in difference to the crowd. All I can hear are the waves of the ocean. I close my eyes tight in a vain attempt to ignore my own pain. It is up to my waist now. The wind picks up and I start spinning again like a flag loose from its ship. The water is turning pink, reef sharks are starting to circle around the smell of blood. The dripping will not let me rest. My heels are blistered. My feet ache. The ribbon cuts into my ankles. The dripping reaches my shoulders. I lift my arms and hold my head high. Fighting against the waves that crash into me. My mind is tired, but my body will not rest. I am gasping for air as the water creeps up my neck. It's cold. My lips are turning blue, and my head is thrown back into the salty water.

I see myself in the mirror: a grotesque imitation of what could be. She is back and she is angry. I cannot meet her gaze any longer. She screams at me like a sea monster from the deep for destroying her life, her work, her purpose. She pounds against the mirror creating fractures that streak across the glass like lightening in a storming sky. The water is to my eyes now. My tears slowly contributing to the ocean as I look up. I can see the sun, the moon, and all the stars. The wind whispers in my ear. The water welcomes me gently.

I have finally stopped. I sink lower. My once pristine tutu is stained with salt water as it floats to the surface. The sun peaks through the middle as I reach like it's a life preserver. Laying at the bottom like a sunken ship, I turn my head once more to the mirror. My hair is loose and floats around my head like a halo. The tights have dissolved, and

a coral reef has grown where my leotard used to be. The waves crash above, and seaweed begins to grow around my limbs, an eel has made a home in my chest. I am smiling. The orchestra sounds lovely down here.