

The Reflection

Stained, round glass stares at me and I return its glowering stare with my own. It depicts me, a singular woman but also so much more. It reflects the past back at me along with my surroundings in this never changing room. The pale robins float towards the iridescent shield along with golden beams of light. As I watch they are trapped behind the reflection along with the untouched blankets on the bed, a beautiful baby pink and leaf pattern covered quilts topping the chipped white wooden frame. For a single moment I fear I may also be frozen in time until I notice the woman's tensed wrinkled hands and bright eyes watching me as I look at her.

Steadily I take a step, then another, allowing the wood beneath my feet to creak and groan. Standing before the mirror I notice all that has changed and the flitting worries of the past, ghosts that drift through this old plastic frame. I think of the girl I used to be. Afraid of her own shadow. Alive yet yearning for more. She longed to live but was incapacitated by fear of her own future. The idea of change crippled her as panic would overtake her senses and the unknown slowly became a dark place in the back of her mind. The girl would question everything she did and the floors in this room became worn with her struggle and the walls paled more by the day. Eventually she found herself pining for the child she used to be.

That little girl would paint with her hands with no care for the mess that she would cause. That girl would let her creativity flood this world and any after that. She'd shriek and squeal at the top of her lungs with no thought to those who could hear and let her laughter flutter through her parents' ears.

Now I wonder whether we all wish for what has already gone. Along the way I became emboldened with the knowledge that mistakes lead to growth and everything becomes easier with time. I imagine talking to that timid girl and the corners of my mouth curve because her worst fear finally became true, I changed, only for the better. I'd tell her that she is wrong, and no, that isn't a bad thing to be. She is wrong that things were better when she was younger. Yes, there was less to care about. No, the world wasn't easier, instead it was new and far too big. You couldn't reach the counter and you would always trip over your words as well as your feet. Something trivial to us now would have seemed all the more intense when younger. This is a secret that you will remember as a mother when things seem out of hand and you feel as though you are drowning. As more challenges present

themselves you will take comfort in the simple knowledge that although difficult now so was using your cutlery or writing your name at some point in history.

Finally I watch the woman in front of me. Grey hair, a prize for all I have achieved. Wrinkles crease around my eyes, mouth and nose are the trophies of a happy life. Beauty seeps from every pore and my eyes shine in the light streaming from the open window behind me. For a moment, a single moment I feel all the wisdom that has come with age and let the power that comes with it fill me with delight. Ecstasy fills me and warms my heart where the golden beams can't reach. In that moment, my joy is displayed in the mirror with the singing birds and tattered floors despite being frozen there, I am glad. I open my eyes and stare again at my flushed face, for once with no care at all, I get up and close the door letting go of my ghosts and letting the relief sink in that they are free to fly as high as can be.