

**Emily  
Salamon-Andrew**

# **Our Bathroom**

**The Art of  
Short Fiction**



**THE SCHOOL  
OF MEDIA  
ARTS AND  
HUMANITIES**

## Our Bathroom

The room's apathy is deafening, that's why I feel white noise oscillate in my ears...I've been watching the water rise since the rain stopped, watching single droplets dissolving into each other every so often. I've been staring at the tap too, thinking I should turn it and let the water pour at the pace it wants to. I watch from the floor next to the mat; hunched flesh, cold against the tiles. My face has given up its expression, hanging and malleable like a sheet in the wind and so I float about, without moving at all.

A shadow fogs my right eye, I hear its sound as though I was drowning. My present has become a blurred film, muffled in an old coat pocket. My head is being supported and my legs are cocooned in something warm. I don't look to see what it is, what it is that covers me, it's just there. My eyes remain on the tile to the left, the one with grime on it. I decide never to clean it.

I don't know how long it's been but I know the bath is full. I think I've let my body become too settled in its limpness. I don't trust my legs to lengthen and then put me somewhere. Where would I go? I think I'm making noise or saying something, the white noise makes an enigma of me.

Well...doesn't everything? I feel the heat of external speech now, from above. I decipher the words 'lift' and 'relax' and upwards I fly... When was I last suspended like this? letting the air and arms around infantilize me. She lifted me like this when I refused to rejoin clothes and the swing of bedtime, my robust legs kicking, desperate to stay amongst the splashes of adventureland.

**“I’m cold” I’d say, legs blurred with movement, determined to attack each available air pocket.**

**“Would madam like a towel?”**

**“But I just... mmmmmaa” looser kicks this time and with a slightly cunning look upwards I’d say “five more minutes please, you said” “hmm...I don’t think I did say,” she said slowly, smiling and lowering me to the ground in gentle triumph.**

**On the mat I threw myself into prayer, arms extended dramatically. I slowly retracted this gesture, squashing myself together in a huddle resembling a raw chicken, rocking in the realisation that I did want a towel after all. Not that I would ever have admitted it. It always came though, wrapping and lifting simultaneously. My nose squashed and my mouth puckered against the nape of her neck, trying to blow raspberries; failing, but not caring.**

**No urge to touch grips me now in this stale cradle.**

**I feel myself being lowered with no sense of protest. The water draws a line across my face and my eyelashes grow wet with steam. I am submerged but the heat fails to sink me. I look down at my chest and notice then nothingness I feel about the lifelessness there.**

**You have to care to feel self-conscious and you can’t care if you’ve forgotten how to do it. I can see that feeling but I can’t remember the hold of it, the utter urgency to diffuse someone’s image of you to which you are denied access. I pretend to know it; guiding the water to bleed over my right breast. I can almost see the foam of a cheap bubble bath, tactically poured to drown out the swells of my new body.**

**I’d watch her in this wrapping, my childhood sealed. Each strident stroke of eyeliner would come hand in hand with a jaunty tilt of her chin and if wine rested against the mirror there’d**

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white, flowing dress, is floating in a blue bath. She is lying on her back, with her head tilted back and her arms outstretched. The water is clear and blue, and the background is a blurred view of the bath's interior.

be a tap of the toe and slight sway of the hips.

In this state,

in this rush, the room would be  
sent into effervescence...

This bath sits flat, my body: clear and still.

The hum of the room buzzes in my chest,  
rising to my head like sparkling wine.

This intoxication pulls me forward.

My body: a rag doll made of stone.

Gravity pulls me backwards: Wall. Ceiling. Light.  
Water.

I wait in this moment that can never last,  
ignoring the need for breath.

I know I'll burst, but not yet.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

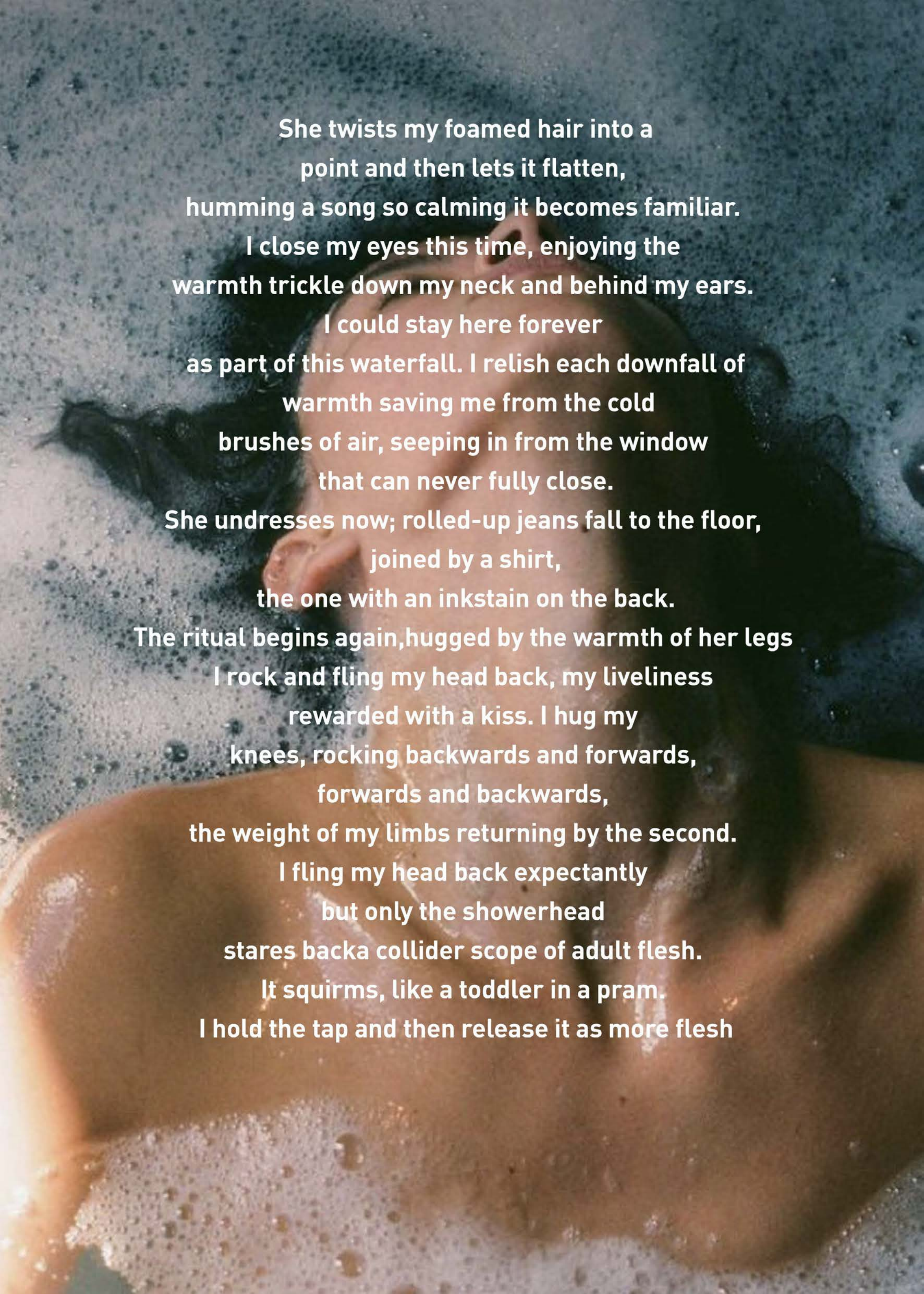
explodes in my head with a gasp.

I stare upwards as my shoulders settle.

She stares back, hands clasped  
around the small red bucket, the plastic one I found  
at the beach.

She lowers it into the bath, letting water  
glide in by choice. The bucket pours from above  
and soapy water streams down.

I squint at every interval, letting my eyes sting at  
the expense of seeing her.

A close-up photograph of a person lying in a shower. Their hair is covered in white soap suds, and their skin is wet and glistening. The background is a dark, textured wall, possibly a shower curtain or wall panel. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the suds and the wet skin.

She twists my foamed hair into a  
point and then lets it flatten,  
humming a song so calming it becomes familiar.  
I close my eyes this time, enjoying the  
warmth trickle down my neck and behind my ears.  
I could stay here forever  
as part of this waterfall. I relish each downfall of  
warmth saving me from the cold  
brushes of air, seeping in from the window  
that can never fully close.  
She undresses now; rolled-up jeans fall to the floor,  
joined by a shirt,  
the one with an inkstain on the back.  
The ritual begins again, hugged by the warmth of her legs  
I rock and fling my head back, my liveliness  
rewarded with a kiss. I hug my  
knees, rocking backwards and forwards,  
forwards and backwards,  
the weight of my limbs returning by the second.  
I fling my head back expectantly  
but only the showerhead  
stares back a collider scope of adult flesh.  
It squirms, like a toddler in a pram.  
I hold the tap and then release it as more flesh

A photograph of a person sitting in a bathtub, viewed from above. The water is clear, showing ripples and reflections of the person's body. The person's legs are crossed, and their hands are near their face. The lighting is soft, creating a calm and intimate atmosphere.

reflects between my fingers, taunting me. I am stuck in a  
wet hall of mirrors - tempting me to lose myself.

I tie myself in a foetal knot. Eyes to skin. Hairs upright.  
The water's brim circles cold, my hands are like hers now,  
mermaid's hands she'd say.

"Am I a mermaid?"

"Of course, that's why your hair goes glossy underwater.  
The water brings it alive".

I want a story like that, I want everything to have beautiful  
meaning. I do.

I used to say I'd marry you so I could live with you forever.  
I did. I do. I did.

My heel knocks the plug. I can already feel my  
body being left here.

I won't untie myself to the air, to the room.

Everything is too exposed now and I have no  
strength to look at it. I am an ice cube in an abandoned  
glass, waiting to dissolve into my  
surroundings, no trace left. None. I feel the  
water tickle my ankles, I can't watch this. With  
the smell of every day awaiting I am struck lightheaded  
with the want to be held, wrapped  
around you, wrapped by you, your voice swimming  
around me with wafts of warm  
camomille as I fall into sleep. My knees grow damp as  
this thought consumes me. I wipe my  
eyes coarsely, again catching sight of the showerhead.

It's not her I see but bits of her,  
fragments cut out and stuck on a new landscape, I lean  
in and she magnifies. I make her  
smile, just a bit...

"It's time to get out now" she whispers.