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# THREE BLIND MICE

SARAH RAMSEY

Three women and I are sitting on a porch. Technically, it is four women. I am twenty years old and have moved well beyond the awkwardness of puberty. But I still feel like a girl. One of them starts talking about when she had a parasite and lost fifteen pounds. How the other girls were jealous of how she could eat anything. She tells the story as if she were mocking their absurdity, for choosing a disease over their health, but ends the story with too little fire.

She was proud of that parasite.

Another one jumps in and admits that whenever she drank too much in college and threw up, it was actually a good thing. The “toxins” from the night could all leave her body. Goodbye eight shots of raspberry Rubinoff. Goodbye mozzarella sticks. Goodbye self-worth.

Hello hot stuff.

The third one is nodding her head in agreement and casually remarks how she could lose a few. But when I turn to her, I can see the delicate bones protruding out from under her dress. Her delicate frame has become even more slender since I last saw her.

My stomach is turning inwards; their conversation is making me sick. My body hunches as I curl up in a fetal position. I know their pain, but am angered by it.

I want to put plates of hamburgers, french fries, cake, and pasta in front of them. I want to force them to finish every last morsel. I want to put healthy, pure fat on their bones to protect them from disease, heartache, and insecurity.

I want them to know that they were my role models growing up.

How I revered their skinny, long bodies, when I still had my baby cheeks. How they taught me that their definition of beautiful wasn't to be strong, but to be self-degrading, weak, and sad. How I followed suit, and forced my body to fit in their shadows. How I would weigh myself every thirty minutes. To see if that glass of water had made me fat. How I skipped meals and lied to my loving parents.

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But most of all, I want them to see that their method of living can be changed. I changed.

I gave up the act.

I want them to know that they can still be beautiful even if they don't fit into size zero dresses. That their worth is not an encompassment of their appearance.

That they can be powerful.

But I know I can't force others to believe. My sense of truth is distorted when it reflects in their eyes. They will be blind until they choose to see.