

## Graduation

By Ciara Albrecht

Age 17

Coquitlam

A girl stands in front of a mirror, in a round room with marble walls. Built like a mausoleum, it houses the dresses of prom queens past, remnants of their tiaras gleaming in the dim lights. Her skin has a spectral quality, almost translucent in nature. She wears a blood-red silk ball gown, with white lace circling bony wrists. The color is everything she imagined, a deep velvet all her own.

Her eyes have sunken into her skull after late nights spent working, but it all will be worth it for the look on their faces. Awashed with awe, they wouldn't notice the stains on her fingers or how her face was tinged purple and pink.

They *will* love me, she thinks.

She plucks a necklace from the assistant, the woman stiff as a board, and she pushes the body out of the way of the door. As she walks, she imagines a tiara. Adorned with strands of hair pulled from the undeserving owner, the black clashes with blonde as she crowns herself. She twirls the skirt, blood splashing marble walls, just like it had hours earlier. She laughs at the macabre scene, leaving behind the assistant's corpse, withering and drained of blood.

Her mood is spoiled by stained lace. She sighs. She will dye it red as well. She kneels before the store owner, impaled upon a stiletto heel. Smiling, she yanks it out and they let out a shuddering gasp, reaching out to her before falling limp. She grabs her cup and shoves it under the wound, the blood pools in the bottom and she pours it over the lace. A laugh escapes her lips as she leaves through the back door. She wipes the bloody shoe on her soaking dress and marches towards the graduation.

That night, a body was found in the school gym. Lying amidst the decorations for the dance, a streamer is wrapped around her neck like a scarf poorly disguising the stab wound. Her black hair spills over the wooden floor, raggedy and unbecoming of a prom queen.

The girl who reported it shuffles her feet and holds a tiara to her chest, her high heels clacking on the floor as she is dismissed by the officer. He watches her leave, her red gown swaying as she walks. He looks down at the red dye splattering the floor and he wonders why-

No one else saw the body.