

There were dancers across the way. I would take the F train to 23rd street every so often. I was always late. Once arrived I walked a few blocks and took a freight elevator up to the fifth floor. I was always greeted with a smile and enthusiastic, "Hello!"

He had the kind of high energy that can't help but be contagious. He was an excited man. Always wanting to talk about everything. Always eager to try a different cut or a new type of product. I never let him though. Always the same haircut. Every time. Though I did let him use wax on my hair like a blank canvas. Go wild I figured. I'm gonna go home and wash it anyway. But the cut was good. Every time. No one layered a haircut quite like this man. To his own detriment in fact. He cut it so well that it grew into stages of varying hairstyles. This often meant I only saw him once or twice a year. I'd come over on an afternoon and he would have me lean over backwards with my head in the kitchen sink while he tried to be professional with a hose sprayer. Every time I went he had a new squishy neck cushion. He could never seem to find one with suction cups that stayed stuck.

"Warm?" He'd ask me.

It never was.

"Too hot? Too cold?" He would make the adjustments on a classic kitchen sink with no knobs; just one big center stick to steer left or right. The design did not lend well to fine tuning and I usually had a cold shower surprise somewhere in the process before a quick adjustment towards the right temperature.

"How have you been?" He'd ask.

I always made small talk. I didn't know what to say. I mean the conversation wouldn't last long enough to really get into a real topic, and any moment he would finish washing my hair and we would move to the living room where we'd start a new conversation. I didn't really have to talk about anything. I only had to politely get to the next break in the conversation and then I could shift the topic to asking about him.

"How have you been?" I asked.

"Oh Good. Everything is fantastic. We're hoping to travel next month."

"Oh yeah? Where?"

"Thailand."

"Oh wow."

He giggled, "Yeah! Right? It's gonna be so cool. I've never been before."

"That's awesome," I said.

We sat down in the center of his living room. Me taking a chair and him sitting on a stool next to me. There was a stylist's version of a surgical tray to our side: complete with drawers of who knows what, scissors, and combs in varying sizes laid across the top.

I looked ahead of me out the window: there were dancers across the way.

"Same as always?" He asked.

I laughed, "you know me."

He smiled and gestured for me to tilt my head back.

I followed.

"So how have you been?" He began cutting.

"Same as always."

"Seen any good movies lately?"

"Nah..." I trailed off as I tried to think of what I had last seen.

The dancers across the way had distracted me.

Up and down and left and right and legs out and in and out and in: the white shapes moving in graceful unison against a wall mirror that doubled their number: there was something wonderfully otherworldly about it all.

"Ballet class," he said, apparently noticing I where I had went.

"They're beautiful," I said.

"Yes, they are."

"Our own private show."

"Yes!" he laughed, "I suppose so."