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The Vernal Pool

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Black Water

By Noemy Campos

It was the year 2018, when I tried to control my sleep paralysis. I was a senior in high school, ready to graduate. I had my dream school in the bag, three AP exams in front of me, and graduation only a month away. The weight of the world felt like it was on my shoulders; at any moment, if I slipped up, everything I worked hard for would shatter or slip away. That night, I went to bed at my usual time, 1 AM. My room was cool, the ceiling fan was on, and the windows were open letting the spring breeze in. The only light that appeared was from the moon outside the window. Beyond the usual snoring of my sister and the humming of cars, it was silent. I climbed into bed and closed my eyes. That's when it begins.

My eyes open, all I see is black. Black below me, black above me, black all around me. My body is floating. I'm underwater, warm water.

Shouldn't I be scared? I ask myself, *I can't swim*. But I'm not scared, far from it actually. There's this odd euphoric feeling going through my body. I close my eyes again, and this time I can see myself floating in the black water. My face is very relaxed and peaceful; I kind of look dead. Suddenly, my vision goes black and now all I'm thinking is: *I want to stay here forever*. *No school, no kids, no friends, no drama, and no worries. Just me and this water.*

How blissful.

But, what if I'm not alone? What if there's something in here with me?

My eyes open and suddenly I'm not floating anymore.

I'm sinking and I'm paralyzed. I start screaming and water starts filling my lungs.

Oh God, I'm drowning. I'm suffocating. I don't know , but my chest is feeling tight. I can't think straight. And my vision is flashing between first person and third person angles of where I can see myself starting to struggle.

Stay calm, stay calm, this didn't happen when I was calm. I tell myself over and over, but my heart beat's starting to race AND...AND...AND...

That's when I wake up. My hand touches my chest, my hearts practically bouncing in my hand. My breath is rugged and my hands are shaking. I'm feeling panicked, but honestly, all I'm thinking about is how good it felt to be alone. A part of me wishes it weren't a dream.

So, I close my eyes again, and just think about that euphoric feeling. The way the water felt on my skin, the silence, the emptiness. I end up falling asleep, now I'm back in the dream. I tell myself to control it, to stay calm. But, I can't and the nightmare repeats over and over... My eyes open again, and all I see is black.