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CLUELESS

Tara Isabel Zambrano

There was a line outside the women's restroom. Inside, someone had left a human heart in a transplant container. Women who'd seen it described its shape like a fist: brown with blue stinking edges, pipes in and out, like old fashioned plumbing. The heart had spoken to them about their past, they'd seen it twitch; flip a beat.

A woman sobbed inside and a chill spread through the line. Outside, in the parking lot, the August light whited out all the vehicles. When she emerged from the bathroom, she claimed the heart was watching her while her hands shook, her ears rang. She felt older and tired in its presence as if her own heart wanted to stop and stay still.

I'm scared, exclaimed a young girl, her forehead beaded with sweat. A blonde who visited the heart twice, twitched up, leaned towards the girl. *There's nothing to worry*, she said. *What if the heart knows my thoughts*, the girl asked. *It's possible*, the blonde replied.

Two women in flannel shirts decided to go in together. The stark brightness of the bathroom flashed for a moment. The power flickered. *Must be the heart*, a black woman whispered. Another female suggested making an offering to the heart. *It's that time of the year when the spirits descend*, she said with a nod of familiarity while collecting money to buy Snickers and bottled water. A police car and an ambulance stopped at the entrance of the building.

The officer urged everyone to go back to work. The white-gloved attendant grabbed the transplant container and rushed back to the ambulance.

The blonde and the sobbing lady tightened their lips, looking beyond the ambulance merging with the traffic as if committing something to memory. They thought they'd found the roundness love is supposed to bring, they'd put it to greater use. They'd understood how a heart, snug in its own body, found solace in its constant rise and fall, but now, after face to face with the heart in the transplant container, they realized they'd no idea at all.

Tara Isabel Zambrano lives in Texas. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in Lunch ticket, Moon City Review, Gargoyle, Juked, Parcel and others. She moved from India to the United States two decades ago and is an Electrical Engineer by profession.