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Cassandra Atherton

The Frog Prince

It starts with boysenberry swirls behind my eyelids. Twirling like curls of paper ribbon. I can smell vanilla. Not that cheap scent that clings to teenage girls’ wrists, but pure vanilla. Long brown stalks of vanilla, tall and slender. Standing upright in a glass tumbler. In your very seventies kitchen. I hear the sound you make in the back of your throat. Almost a growl. Bear. Bare. And then your tongue is looped through my belly ring. Its pointed, pink tip darting in and out of the silver circle. I arch my back. Strong, pale fingers splayed on either side of your neck. You nip at the small silver ball. Rotating it with your lips. I hear it grind across your teeth. A dull clink. You plunge your tongue into my belly button. Spasm. My hips convulse. You pull my belly ring with your teeth. Small tugs at first. Playful. Petulant. Piqued. You pull harder until it tears through the creamy fold of flesh. The bloodied silver ball resting between your lips as you kiss me. You push the metallic ball into my mouth. It rolls onto my tongue. A heavy pea. A ball bearing. A miniature eyeball, only heavier, much heavier. The weight of it forces my chin onto my chest. You trace a line from my breast bone to my belly and it is red. A red snail trail. A long red ribbon. It becomes a river of blood flowing between my breasts. You drink from me. Red tinged teeth. I try to move but you are too heavy. The small silver ball begins to grow until I begin to choke on blood and metal. My belly button becomes a gaping wound at which you pry with your fingers. My blood collects under your nails and stains your hands vermillion. You stare at your hands and then at meand leave. The silver ball shoots from my mouth, through the roof in your bedroom and over the tops of the trees in your backyard. The corners of my mouth are cracked and weeping. I prop myself up on your bed, trying not to let the blood trickle onto the icy sheets. I don’t know how to get up without using my hands. And they are covered in blood and clutching at the hole in my stomach. Fever.