

COLD TEA: The Beginning and the First Draft
By Sarah Bodman

Something about staring at a seemingly ordinary object never fails to invade Haley's ignorant peace. The weapon of choice today: a spoon. The more dull and worn, the easier to spark what people call her "over-active imagination." While staring at her warped reflection in the shiny metal, her mind moves like a rushing stream. The rough water casually hitting rock shaped topics before moving swiftly onward towards the next consideration. At one point she thinks, "How can one look to the future so admirably, look back so longingly, but simply glance at the present? I mean isn't the present once considered the future and will one day be the past?" She contemplates this for a while before moving on. Eventually questioning, "how can a warm cup of natural herb infused water help make worry melt away?" Shaking her head at what she considers to be an Aristotle-level contemplation, she catches a glimpse of her large blonde curl glide through the air and land in her chai tea. "Great," she thinks. "This is what I get for trying to be fancy this morning. I should have just made my typical black cup then I wouldn't have needed the spoon." Haley carefully remove the probably-drooled-on curl out of the cup and onto the paper towel with a spoon shaped tea ring on it. Disgusted at herself, she dumps the tea in the sink while griping her hair in the damp napkin. Looking at the time, she says, "time to shower anyway." So, that was that. The LED lights on the clock decided her next move. "But," she mumbles to herself, "that is a deep discussion for another day."

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"Soaking wet. How can my hair *still* be soaking wet from my shower?" Haley thinks. Similar to a dog peeing to mark its territory, her hair leaves marks on her fresh shirt. However, her yellow-toned pale skin is as dry as a man's mouth caught in a lie. Applying lotion to her face, she swishes her hair behind her and grimaces at the wet mark left on her breasts. Regardless, she turns to leave her apartment deciding that a Saturday should not be wasted on untamed hair. Locking her door, she walks to the elevator and waits for the "*your ride has arrived*" uproar that breaks another train of thought: what to do today. She considers being adventurous and going to a new city or town. To taste something new, *feel* something new. Oh, the endless possibilities. Stopping abruptly, she looks up. Her feet had deceived her. She was standing in front of her go-to café: **Calming Coffee**. With a shrug, she gives in willingly and all adventurous thoughts are left behind the sidewalk. The bell on the door announces her presence and affects her like she is one of Pavlov's Dogs. The salivating begins.

The coffee shop resembles that of an old book store. Assortments of mismatch chairs and tables scatter the floor while the walls house knickknacks and books. The small layer of dust never bothered Haley.

"Tea?" is all that the employee asks Haley.

"Yes, an Earl Grey," she replies with eyes down at her wallet.

Haley sees no point to wasting time getting cozy with Jay. She read his nametag, acknowledges his existence, and buys his product. For that, she pats herself on the back. Any friendly or flirty pass from him she sums up to "it is his job." She relies on her logic. Yet, she acknowledges how her heart can double-cross her at any moment. Completing the transaction, she turns away knowing he will be back again to deliver her order. Comfort sets in as she sinks into a large,

mustard yellow bergère. Safe within the armrests which act as walls. Haley fumbles to place her laptop on her thighs. Ignoring her pressing work, she decides to take a deep breath. The café's smell, her favorite smell, invades her nostrils. The not-so-fresh ink lay on the pages of books that bear stains from coffee, tea, and tears mix beautifully with the fresh smell of tea herbs and slightly burnt coffee beans. She inhales deeply. Suddenly, she smells something new. Something citrus. Yet, it is also warm, rich and honey-like. Smiling, she opens her eyes to find Jay standing there bewildered.

"Sorry," she jolts upright "thanks for the tea" Haley blurts out.

"No problem, it's my job," Jay winks and walks away.

"That it is, that it is," she thinks. *Work. Job. School.* Those words act as her personal trigger. Finger at the ready. Yet, those words consumed her life. An achiever, a planner. These are a few of the adjectives people use to describe Haley. Beautiful? Yes.