



sagface by Kitty Cheung

Within The Walls of My Room

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I told myself I would stop making rash decisions like this in the middle of the night, but my bed has been in the far-right corner of my room for two weeks now and I'm sick of it.

It's just a mattress on a box spring, deep in the corner to the right of my window, but tonight I've decided that it would look way better in the open corner to the left of said window. In the last nine months of being stuck in my box of a bedroom, I've moved my bed against every wall and corner of this room. Corners, I've discovered, work best for my minimal space. It opens up the center of the room, leaving space for spontaneous solo dance parties or yoga if I ever decide to pull out the mat I bought at the beginning of all this.

Bending my knees to brace for the weight of the mattress, I lift it up and lean it against the wall, allowing me to easily glide the box spring across the floor. As I slide the box spring to the opposite side of the room, I see a polaroid I hastily taped next to my calendar fall off the wall. The flimsy piece of film floats down to my floor, landing face up on the dark grey carpet. Leaning over to pick it up, I look down to see three smiling faces looking back— it's me and my two friends, Alex and Jude, scrunched close together to try and fit in the frame. Dammit, I think to myself, I miss my friends. Pushing those emotions behind me, I stick the photo

back in its previous spot on the wall— fitting snugly between my calendar that I haven't changed in three months and the crease of the corner.

Despite the snow falling outside my window, I break a sweat moving the mattress across the room, plopping it onto the box spring. Stripping myself of my sweatshirt to escape the sticky heat, I'm left in just my undershirt and sweatpants. I grab my comforter and pillows from their temporary place on my floor, tossing them hastily onto the bed. My brain is flooded with the countless other tasks that I should be doing. I have a research paper due in two days. An unanswered message from my aunt on Facebook messenger. I don't know the last time I washed my sheets or the sweatpants I'm wearing right now. But, as my eyes glaze over the bright red 2:32 am on my alarm clock, I know that the only task I might successfully accomplish right now is sleep.

Closing my bedroom door behind me, I sneak out into the dark hallway. Tip toeing across the squeaky hardwood as to not wake up my parents two doors down. I slip into the white tiled bathroom, closing the door behind me and flicking on the light. I come face to face with myself in the mirror, dark bags below my eyes, my once chin length hair now grazing my shoulders. I

run the tap water warm, splash my face with it, and then scrub my skin dry with a towel. Grabbing my toothbrush from the counter to brush my teeth, spitting the minty backwash into the sink. After having a staring contest with the version of myself in the mirror, I creep back into the hallway.

I hear my name being called through the darkness.

"Leah," it's my mom, house coat wrapped around her, sleeping mask pulled to her forehead. "Why are you still up? It's nearly three o'clock in the morning."

"Why are you up?" I respond.

"Because I was awoken by whatever ruckus you were making in your bedroom. What are you even doing in there?"

"I moved my bed again," I reply sheepishly. She had told me before to stop doing that.

"I told you to stop doing that, Leah."

"I know you did, but I got bored again."

"Don't you have a paper due tomorrow?" she asks.

"Oh," I realize, "I guess it is due tomorrow."

She looks back at me, the same look in her eyes as the last time I left a school assignment to the last minute.

Disappointment, confusion, weariness.

“Well,” I decide to end this conversation. “I’d better get to bed, it’s nearly three o’clock in the morning. I’ll probably try to wake up early, work on that paper.”

“Goodnight, Leah,” my mom turns to go back into her and my dad’s room. “Try to not do any more spontaneous interior decorating tonight.”

I say I’ll try but she doesn’t hear my response. The bedroom door is already shut in her place.

Once I’m back in my room, I go to hit the light switch, my eyes catching the same polaroid from earlier on the floor again. I pick it up, Alex, Jude, and I smiling brightly. I do what I should’ve done earlier, grabbing a fresh strip of tape from my desk drawer, peeling off the old one and tossing it into the trash. I go to stick the photo where it was before – between my calendar and the corner of my room – but when I go to do so there’s no space. The edge of my calendar now sits right against the crease of my wall, leaving no room for a picture to be there before or now. Weird, I think to myself, I could’ve sworn that’s where I stuck it. But I choose to blame this moment of confusion on my sleep deprivation, sticking the picture above my calendar and flicking off the light before I flop onto my bed.

Now beneath my covers, I shut my eyes and beg sleep to come to me. Burrowing my face deeper and deeper into my pillow, I try to dig towards a place of quiet seclusion. Each time I think I’ve reached it my body awakens me. The muscles in my legs tighten, bracing for the impact of the fall I’m never landing. I hear a thud! in the far corner of my room. Sitting up in my bed, I adjust my eyes to try and see what caused it. That same polaroid has fallen off the wall, this time taking the calendar down with it. Grunting with frustration, I pull back my comforter and walk over to the fallen items. Crouching down to pick them up, the thumb tack I once used to put up the calendar lost somewhere in the darkness of the corner. When I stand up, I hear another thud! behind me, looking over my shoulder to see a stack of books I had once placed on my desk now tumbling to the floor. Okay, I think to myself, that’s odd. Now carrying the polaroid and calendar, I walk to the desk, leaning down to pick up each book and place them back on the wooden surface. I glance at my clock, 3:13 am, and hope that these noises weren’t loud enough to wake my mom again.

When the sound of her opening the door and calling my name never comes, I return to my bed once again. But as I reach desperately towards sleep, another sound erupts from the

far corner of my room. Jumping out of bed, I try to find the source of the noise. A loud, insistent whine emitting from the walls. Certain that the noises have awoken both my parents, I leap towards my bedroom door, opening and closing it behind me. Prepared to try and explain myself, I'm surprised to not only have no one waiting outside my door to scold me, but to find the whining noise gone. The hallway is silent apart from the light snoring of my dad two doors down. Weird. When I go to reopen my bedroom door, I'm met not only with the same whining noise but with another thud! The door opens no more than 45-degrees, hitting the wall it was once several feet away from. I gasp at the now significantly smaller room, stepping in as the door slams behind me. The whining noise grows louder, settling into the back of my skull. I watch as the space between my bed and my desk grows smaller, the two pieces of furniture being pushed together by an imaginary force. Jumping forwards, I try to escape the feeling that rises in my chest. The wall follows me, pressing forward, longing to make contact with the window on the opposite wall. I reach back for the doorknob, but the pressure of the other three walls makes it impossible to open. I instead press my hands against the wooden door, pushing as hard as I can, trying to get it away

from me. There's a buzzing beneath my fingertips, like a cell phone on silent is stuck within the walls, waiting to never be picked up. I push and push and push, but the space between the bed and desk still shrinks and shrinks and shrinks.

I am left with less and less and less space, claustrophobia settling in. The window behind me shatters, cold air entering the room. I am spit on by the snow. Seeping into the fabric of my undershirt. It's so so so cold, yet I am also so so so hot. Unsure if the moisture within my shirt is snow or sweat, I am forced to jump onto the bed, escaping the walls that continue to crowd in on me. The bed and desk meet with a thud! The wood of the desk begins to splinter. The springs of my mattress creak. The walls insist on moving inwards, taking the door and window with them. Left with no escape, I still push desperately against the walls. Calling out with no response. The bed and desk are slowly crushed, becoming a mess of wood and metal and foam and feathers. I feel my shoulder blades begin to grind against one another. The whining within the walls stops, only to be replaced by the sound of crushing bones. I cry out in pain but hear nothing. The walls continue to move inwards, even when there's nowhere left to go.