

## Exercise 4

by Madeleine Dougherty

Her eyes flipped open, then just as quickly scrunched closed against the...light. She smelled moisture and felt liquid surrounding her. She was laying on a smooth hard surface. She felt it along her sides, so she knew that it cradled her in some way. She could smell flowers, too, and the underlying sting of something chemical. Her...knees were bare, but droplets of liquid lay on them, growing cold. She shivered. She heard the liquid splash against the walls of her basin. The echo told her that the room was big, larger than just her little cold space. She peeked her eyes open carefully. The room was...white. The walls were made of big...tiles. The room was empty except for the...bathtub and a...drain in the floor. It was hard thinking of the...words to things. She didn't care what things were called, but the words just seemed to pop into her head. She didn't know where she was. In fact, she didn't know there existed a world beyond the...door to her left. All she knew was white, tile, and...water, that's what it was called. Water, clean and clear. H<sub>2</sub>O with minerals and dust and salt to make it impure. She didn't know how she knew these things. There was only the room, just the room. And her. Birthed from water, porcelain, and white. She wanted more, but didn't know what else there was to want. Her...hands grasped at the water. Her...feet pushed. She tried to stand, but fell hard. There was a burst of pain at the back of her head. Still no knowledge, no self, but now the blood was actually there. She waited for the dizziness to settle, then tried again. Balance, her mind told her. She gripped hard at the side of the tub and centered her feet under her. She stood, carefully, feeling the weight of the water and gravity and her own mass pull her down. The water splashed out of the tub and gurgled down the

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drain. The thought pushed in that it sounded like a person choking. She didn't understand how she knew that. Her mind was empty, just sensory, just reactions and effects. As she stepped from the tub, she could see her blurry, shadowed reflection in the water on the white tile. Her soft voice startled her as she said, "Who am I?"