

Fourteen Hills

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Erratum: in our previous issue, we misspelled the title of Megan Erickson's poem, "Le Macchine." Our sincerest apologies for the error.

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LANUGO

Bronte Lim

A RUSH OF COOL AIR mists over your naked form. The breeze travels from the open window to the crack beneath the bedroom door, and with it, tiny hairs whisper against your skin. The sun has yet to break on your east-facing window, towards which you sleep each night like a vine seeking light. Outside, an elderly woman is singing in the shrill, wavering style of mournful Chinese love songs. The tune tugs at a forgotten memory. *A woman... a man... love... rises the sun...*

Though your window faces another high-rise, its many windows like the facets of a compound eye, you do not worry about being seen. In the summer, a few reaching trees offer their leaves for modesty's sake, but near year-round, your bare, nocturnal flesh illuminates the lonely apartment. Regardless of whether trees bear crinkled leaves, few, or none. The local residents are old. Their prying eyes no longer feel human. They are inert masses, whorls of color and texture, needing maintenance. In your work, you know this well.

You rise. The decision follows the action, so familiar are you with the routine.

Poorly ventilated, the cupboard-sized room weeps from its walls, still wet from your post-work shower hours earlier. You gaze at your reflection, then pick up the name tag next to the sink. LINA TSE. You hold it up against your left breast and looked to the streaked mirror. Pale-skinned, black-haired stranger, skin dashed with soft hairs. The blankness of her gaze disturbs you and you turn away, dropping the nametag which clatters on the tile.

Into the shower now. The metal handle jams. Both hands, you wrench the handle once, twice, thrice—the water sputters. The hairs rise, lifted by goose-bumps springing to meet the chill. You reach for the razor with clinical calm.

In the daytime, you scrub old leather, a daytime routine as rote as the night's. At seven a.m., you rouse yourself from bed and exit your apartment building to the noisy embrace of Chinatown and walk ten minutes to the nursing home.