

The Color of Egg Yolk

by Meredith Shepard

I sat in a room the color of egg yolk while the officer got my story down.

Yellow, yellow, the color of pedophile, rang a little rhyme in my head. Not that I was a pedophile—the words came from an old high school friend of mine who'd complained bitterly about her study abroad dormitory room in London. "The walls are pedophile yellow," she'd whined, and I'd known exactly what she meant but I didn't say so because I was too jealous that she got to be in London when I was still stuck in the States.

Wherever I was, I wanted to be back in England. "Back," because, when I was in eleventh grade, I got to live in a small village in England where I had my first love and everyone on my family, even my depressive mother, were happy with their own things.

"I was just wanting to return to that, see?" I told the officer, who tapped his pen on the paper and nodded encouragingly, like a therapist would to get you to keep talking. "If he hadn't known me so well, if he hadn't invited me to go on walks in the moonlight WHILE listening to Beethoven's moonlight sonata—I mean, how romantic is that? It's not like he did that with his current wife—fat German thing."

The officer wrote what looked like a straight line on his paper.

"My brother even ended up wearing his brother's boxers!"

The officer raised his eyebrows and his pen.

"His mom messed up the laundry so my boyfriend had his brother's boxers in his room. And I borrowed them because, you know, we were sharing EVERYTHING." He nodded again with the therapist head tilt, which made his aftershave look sad and droopy instead of jaunty and aggressive the way I imagined he wanted it to be. Alex had always been clean shaven, as smooth as a baby. Still was.

"So I'd wear them home and then MY mom would mess up the laundry and my brother would end up wearing those boxers to school and then at gym class Alex's brother would see them and be like, are those my boxers?"

"Remind me how old you and the deceased were at that point?" the officer asked.

"Seventeen. I was seventeen. He was eighteen. Jesus, why?"

"And your brothers?"

"Thirteen? Fourteen."

He made a few notes with his pen. The yellow walls were so close it was like I could smell the yolk. Hard boiled and sulfurous. Probably the way a real pedophile would smell.

Fourteen, seventeen, and eighteen,” the officer said.

“Yes.”

“And none of you knew how to do your own laundry?”

I looked at him to see if I'd heard right. He stood up and laughed the way my uncle used to, with his mouth a perfectly round entrance; the sound so loud you could tell he was making up for the lack of anyone else laughing along with him, a sound so loud his own ears couldn't hear the silence around him.