

# Flotsam

It was the oddest thing when I first left school during the day. I saw capri-pant wearing and pram-pushing women and furrow-foreheaded men floating down the streets. Before then people had only existed between walls but at 12, on the cool crinkled leather school bus seats, I began to see that we were all floating as blind as flotsam- like those strange speckles of light that sometimes infiltrate your vision-an army of floaters.

I am 17 now. It's a peculiar stage-a bit like a dandelion which has lost it's brassy petals and is left waiting until a kid's fat finger finds its stalk and sends the white fluff spiralling with a foggy, foody breath. A phase where I phrase myself as an interphase- one third juvenile, two thirds grown. Measuring things in thirds is awkward but at the moment I am just as painfully uncomfortable- a 0.3333 rounded to a single decimal place.

Occasionally I forget I'm not already middle aged. Not a 48 year old mother with a blowave and colour booked for Thursday 3pm, not a home-cooking magazine subscriber searching for the perfect starter for the next family dinner. And then eye floaters speckle my vision -those inconvenient spots and threads in my head-and I'm back to the 17 hip-hip-hoorays and candles and dancing queen references. Back to balloons and lab partners and ball dates-17 isn't an age that feels safe and snug- I'm in the middle of a mid-youth crisis.

Other days I feel like I'm back to where I was before I became old. At 9 I heard that the closer you get to the earth the faster it spins- that crouching down makes a day pass faster. I tried it out once - eager to pass the time. It was a

few days after I'd tried ribboning myself to the corners of my bed to stretch my bones and grow tall and lithe. Neither theory seemed to work- only the old wife's tale about squeezing lemon juice on your hair turned out to be a reality, so I ended up with green- bleached hair in weedy slithers and a short, unimproved stance. A wasted afternoon spent crouched on the lounge room floor watching the clock tick over.

At 14 I became fascinated with cells- those peculiar base units. Egg yolks in floating fields of white infiltrated my internal imagery and I began to see everyone as laced with flecks of these impossibly relevant bacterium. It's desperately hard to move backwards once you're focused on a fact like this. People became clusters and layers of cells until, thankfully, the eye floaters returned. They wormed their mirrored figures across my retina, bringing me back to uniforms and unilateral graphs and university applications.

At 17 I still let thirds of words flicker under my breath before I say them sometimes, I still imagine the world speeding up on it's axis as I crouch to pick up a coin, I still sometimes see people's eyes as eggy cells and i still find myself thinking as a 54 year old with children to pick up from basketball. Perhaps at 18 though, the school bus seats won't feel quite so cool, the passer-bys won't seem quite so alien and my habits will pass with the dandelion wind- soon I will move from the back of the bus and join the streets of floaters.