

## THE PINK BOWL

By Helika S. Campbell

My sister Moki stirs pudding like a baby duck might— awkward, all elbows and wings, spreading out on her tailbone in the corner of the kitchen bench while I finish washing the dishes. She presses her rounded little beak forward, staring intently down into the pink bowl nestled in her lap.

“Sissy,” she chirps suddenly, and I reach across the sink to turn the faucet off before turning to her. She raises the bowl and asks, “What do you think this bowl is made of?”

“Plastic,” I reply too bluntly, the fourteen year age gap between us getting the better of me. She scrunches her face up at the word, her wrinkled nose sitting atop a disappointed pout. I grab a kitchen towel, drying my hands and tossing it over my shoulder before I finally ask in return, “What do *you* think it's made of?”

The ghost of Galileo Galilei suddenly possesses my sister. He beams up at me from behind her face, his confidence lighting her gray-blue eyes as he announces primly and proudly, “Copper.”

“Copper?” I repeat, more to my sister than Galileo.

“Copper,” Galileo doubles down on the answer, and with my little sister’s voice, I’m afraid I might believe him. I shake him off, pulling the white kitchen towel off my shoulder and looping it around the oven door handle. I reach for the pink bowl, feeling the light, smooth material stick to my damp palms.

“Copper would make a different sound when you knock on it,” I explain gently, tapping the side of the bowl with my left finger three times to demonstrate. The sound is high, but dull, without the echo of metal behind it to prove my point. “It’d also be a bit heavier if it was copper. So that’s how I know it’s plastic.”

I offer the bowl back, but it’s Galileo who takes it. He pouts at me again, only this time furrowing my sister’s eyebrows and glaring indignantly at me. The baby duck I had been observing just moments before is lost to the astrologer, the man who stood against the curve as he argued for the curve of the Earth, as my sister— or what is left of her— sternly replies, “I still think it’s *copper*, Sissy.”

Then the dog comes padding into the kitchen, and the ghost of Galileo is exorcized from her body as Moki carelessly abandons the bowl on the windowsill to chase the dog out. I listen to the sound of her feet pounding against the hardwood floors, my father shouting for her to quiet down as she erupts into a pile of giggles down the hall, all the symphony of sounds playing to the life of an eight-year-old girl in her childhood home.

But the ghost of Galileo remains in our kitchen. He lingers at my side, watching as I pick the bowl up with a sigh and run my finger along the inside of the rim. The runny, lumpy banana pudding pile sits on my tongue, silting in my mouth for a moment before I give it a strained swallow.

“Plastic or copper, I should’ve asked if she knew how to use the *whisk*,” I say to Galileo. He snorts, then with a waive of his hand, disappears.