

Alone and Lonely
Tamara Clough

My ears ring with the silence of this re-purposed room.

I'm alone, and lonely. Every child of mine has used this room until it's time to move on. Time to move on to school, get a degree, and make their way. This multi-purpose space is supposed to be my studio and office. A place where I'm supposed to create stories to entertain people or make them laugh.

I can't.

Today, my thoughts race...how can I settle on one particular feeling?

Sadness—fear, anger, animosity, or maybe it's all jealousy. I don't want to be white. I'm proud of my skin tone, chocolate and smooth. You are unaware of my superpower of observation. You don't see me because I am trained to blend in.

I admit I want your rights. Maybe I want your rights taken away—none for all.

Despite this, I've tried to do everything I can to become white. My hair, straight, shiny, and neat because I want them, the whites, to like me.

I joke and use our familiar words of endearment to make you feel special. "Hey, homie" "Girl!!"

I want them, the whites, to like me.

I'm generous and share my cooking style, food, time, and even my ideas when I feel I have nothing else to offer.

I want them, the whites, to like me.

I don't speak up when my feelings are hurt, because you refuse to say my name the way it's intended to be said. I smile and shorten my name to make it easier for you because I want them, the whites, to like me.

I don't listen to my music if we carpool; Franky Beverly and Maze aren't black artists in your eyes. Instead, you turn up R.Kelly and recite every word to "Ignition." I don't lecture you the way I would lecture my children about that awful man. You sing all the words as I gaze out the windshield biding my time.

I want them, the whites, to like me.

Why do I want them to like me? Those who imprisoned, sold, beat, and raped us?

There is a deep-down feeling, an emotion...today I realize that its envy. I don't want to be you. I envy how white skins privilege to walk as they please without fear. I need you to see me, hear me being me, and after that, just let me, be.

Tamara Clough lives in Bremerton, Washington, and attends Full Sail University, where she will get her BFA for Creative Writing in 2021. She enjoys writing flash fiction, poetry and is a Sci-Fi geek. A few of her favorite authors are Attica Locke, Ta-Nehisi Coates, David Baldacci, and Steven King. Tamara is in the process of discovering what she wants to be when she grows up now that her youngest has moved out. Look for her weekly blog at dragonfliesascend.com.