

The walls of Studio 13 were tumbling around me.

That's how it felt, the concoction of smog and sweat and booze and boys swirling and whirlpooling into some nightmarish *Alice in Wonderland* parody. My co-workers were all shitfaced, I the voluntary designated driver, and normally I could get intoxicated enough on the environment, of the pulsing neon lights and electronic heartbeats that crashed onto the dancefloor from the speakers. Instead, the songs and the people surrounding me were the Cheshire Cat, purple and blue and green with big doped out eyes and slurred questions that made no sense to me as an observer. The gay men around me swayed and brushed against and on me, but I felt no desire to take advantage of their advances, ignoring their labels that said "drink me", "eat me", "devour me". My heart was pounding, my breath coming up short, my brow cold with sweat and my palms clammy and my legs weak not from external activity but from internal depravity. I felt all wrong, like something inside of me was rotting, and I pushed my way through the forest of people, ignoring the Mad Hatter's tea party at the bar, and busted out of the door to the wet and cold alleyway. Smoke filled my nostrils as I passed a couple who were sharing a cigarette. I imagined inhaling it and choking on its pollution.

I leaned against the brick wall beneath the window that viewed the dancefloor of Studio 13, its lights still painting me in vibrant hues, a false participant from the outside. The music wasn't connecting. The friends that accompanied me continued to look more and more like strangers. My body felt wrong, unreal, not tethered to the night or the club or even to myself. I looked up the rabbit

hole, attempting to see out, searching for God or logic or some kind of answer as to what I was, what was happening to me.

My eyesight wasn't good enough to see that far above.