



Milk

AYANA enters, wearing a navy blue dress and a slight frown. She doesn't wear shoes. She paces around and pauses to inspect the ends of her hair. She looks to the sky and hums a folk song she heard on the radio the day before. She stops pacing and sits.

AYANA: Why does everyone keep on asking me that? Mama says it's because they think it's pretty. But I don't think it's pretty.

If they say that, I think they're lying. When Mama brushes it out in the morning, I scream and scream but she keeps on pulling. And even though she pulls her hardest, it never looks right. I try and fix it once she brings me to the bus stop, but frizz just gets frizzier no matter what. They always want to touch it. They don't even ask. Sophie and all the other kids try and pull my curls and I run and I run and I run but they keep on coming. And Mama always says hate is a strong word, But I think I hate it. I don't ask to touch Mary Ann's hair, even though I want to. Mary Ann is pretty. She has these golden specks in every strand, and it's not too straight but not too curly like mine. And when she runs, it bounces in the wind and it trails right behind her like a wave. And her skin is silky and smooth and it looks like milk.

I saw a doll in the toy store the other day — it looked just like Mary Ann. It had these big, big blue eyes like oceans and a fancy pink dress with frills and white tights. I asked Mama if I could buy it and she said I should wait until my birthday because I have too many dolls already, I never see any dolls that look like me. Mama says they're all bought because everyone likes them too much. And then she looks at me, and she smiles, and she says 'I wish I coulda gotten you one of those dolls before they sold out'. But I don't think I want one. I think I'm maybe a little glad they sold out. I wish —

I wish I could cut off all my hair. And I wish it would grow back long and yellow like a corn field, like Mary Ann's. Don't tell Mama! said that, she'd be angry. Real angry.

By Amira Danan