In the Bathtub with Esther Greenwood
Betsabe Gomez

I find her soaking sorrows in my bathtub face blank and stopped like a dead baby.

I step over girlish clothes, a rumpled white blouse, a green skirt, thinning.

When she notices me, her body slumps deeper into the water.

“I suppose I should have asked,” she says, sheepish. “But, I wasn’t planning on being alive much longer.”

I see the thin razor on the floor, pluck it up with two fingers, put it in my pocket.

“I couldn’t do it. You’d think it would be easy, but this dull pain is safer than that sharp one.”

I nod to show her I understand, but my fingers are thumbing at the sharpness hidden in the dark of my pocket.

She keeps talking, her big toe peeking out from under the bubbles, beckoning.

She tells me a story I already know. About a dead baby, hypocrites, mothers.

They’re all dissolving in the bathwater
and she keeps repeating:

“I am pure and they are not,”
over and over until
I think I believe her.

I’m suddenly cold
and want nothing more
than to dive into the water,
soak my body in her bubbles
of dissolved impurities.

She asks me if I’ve ever been in love.

“It’s better that way,” she says
when I shake my head no.

“You don’t know freedom until you lose it.”

I ask her what she means
but her eyes point
to the ceiling.

A strange glass hangs,
suspended, pushing
towards our bodies,
a quick-cutting, painless death.