

Midnight Snack

“Hold her like a 2 a.m. scoop of lemon gelato,” says the instructor. The stranger in front of me reaches his hand across my back and places his palm on my shoulder blade. Although the extra pounds I carry around should make me feel soft, I doubt that I feel as creamy or delicious as a midnight snack. I tense up.

This is the first tango class I’ve taken at Eighteenth Street Lounge, a bar in downtown D.C. filled with old chandeliers, cloudy mirrors, and velvet couches, but it’s not the first time I’ve seen or danced tango. I’ve visited the North Hall in Eastern Market a handful of times. I’ve observed how fellows drape themselves over their leads as they glide around the edges of the dance floor, and I’ve longed to do the same.

I attempt to melt into the stranger in front of me. We are no longer just two bodies moving through physical space executing predetermined steps to music. Suddenly, I am something he craves in the middle of the night. I am desired. I am something that he holds, gently. Together, we endeavor to give this metaphor a life.

I’ve always told myself that the simple, human joy of dancing with another qualifies as self-care, but this moment feels like self-indulgence. Like a treat in the middle of the night.