

Pockets of Playtime
by Dynn Javier

Petunia woke up at her usual time and went to the window to check up on the cosmos. She was sleepy-eyed and her oversized lavender pajamas made it hard for her to scratch the dust away. Outside the stars and planets looked as they always did. Now, it all never looked exactly the same. Petunia's little compartment in space was always moving, drifting. But the familiar shapes and colors were there, just smaller or larger. She stood still at the window for a short while. There were the smaller systems out there that looked like sparks or tiny light bulbs emitting different shades of blue and orange and white. There were sometimes long snaky strips of color that layered the view, too. Petunia liked these, big pink and purple clouds and galaxies with specks of glitter—probably huge asteroids—running all throughout. She thought they were very pretty.

Petunia remembered now that her father wanted to name her Petra or Pearl originally. Her mother wanted something more along the lines of Paula, or Pauline. They agreed on Petunia eventually. Petunia didn't know how or why she remembered this. She was only a little girl, of about six or seven after all. At this time she left the window and went to play with her toys in the far corner of her little floating cube.

Her favorite toy was her stuffed bear. The bear was white with two shiny black buttons tightly sewn in for eyes. He didn't have a name, or if he did she had forgotten it. She picked him up with both hands and he kept his shape. His stubby arms and legs were outstretched, perfect for sitting or hugging. Petunia set him on the windowsill, facing outside.

“Keep an eye out,” she tells him.

The bear, silent, kept to his post.

“Oh, I almost forgot—”

And she zipped back around before gently placing a disposable camera on the bear's lap.

“And take a picture if anything neat happens.”

The bear, camera in hand, was unflappable.

Back in her corner Petunia was careful not to brush away any of her marbles. She tiptoed carefully between each little sphere, lifting her pajama pants high above her ankles. After a few close calls she reached a small toy car somewhere lost in the middle of her marble field. Slowly, she pushed the car forward, a few inches to the right, closer to a small pocket of red marbles.

The marbles were some of Petunia's other favorite things to enjoy. In the wake of her toy car were some marbles that looked like little goldfish were swimming inside. Others protected little rose petals, cat eyes, or confetti dreams. Sometimes Petunia liked to hold them in the palm of her hand. On the other side of the room she flicked them together sometimes. It was more to hear them snap and click than anything else. Pop! She was never to get a good look at them when they were moving like so fast like that, but she liked the noise. Though, most of the time she liked to arrange them out on the carpet and let them sleep there in their own little rainbows. And then she would go to bed and sleep in her own oasis, too.

Petunia woke up at her usual time and went to the bear to ask him about what had happened while she was asleep. The window was almost fully covered by a shower of red light and the glow reflected off the bear's black button eyes.

“Oh, why didn’t you take any pictures?” she whines. Then she picked up the camera to turn the little plastic gear and peek in the viewfinder. There were no satisfying clicks and the lens was fogged up.

The bear, knowing just as well as she did that the thing had been out of film for some time now, didn’t know what to say.

Petunia didn’t even remember what pictures were on the film roll to begin with—she hadn’t any time to get them developed—but soon put the camera down to look out the big window again.

It was all red. It was so red that her entire little space was covered in red light. She frowned and walked over to her garden of marbles after turning the bear around so that he faced the inside of the room now. Looking down, the marbles were untouched like always, but the light was getting hotter and hotter behind her. Petunia had to squint her eyes and her pajamas felt too warm. Crouching, she stuck out her pointer finger and carefully pushed her little car closer to the marbles in front of it. It was getting really hot now. She was waiting for the pop, but still couldn’t remember how or why her parents agreed on naming her Petunia. It was a pretty name, though.