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flies in his eyes magazine



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ISSUE ONE, FLIES IN HIS EYES MAGAZINE
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The Right Thing

by Erik Fry

I crouched low in the snow, my back up against the stone wall behind me. The long cloak was spread around my form, fallen snow already gathered on it, making me look like a snowdrift. At least, I hoped it made me look that way. My hood was pulled low over my eyes and face, and I watched as much with my other sense as my sight. It was damned cold out, and the snow was flying like mad, building up quickly.

Thankfully, the thick hide that made up the lining of my cloak insulated the snow from too much of my body heat, and vice versa. The snow stuck well to the woven material on the outside, and didn't melt into a slushy mass around me. No one ever really thinks about how much heat the body puts off. We are always so preoccupied with the cold we feel blowing against us. Let me tell you, squat down like I was for a couple hours in the snow, and feel it turn to water all over your booted feet, and you will know just how much heat you put off.

I hadn't moved much in about an hour. If I twitched wrong, my prey would sense it, and run before it got close enough for my snow-covered spear to be thrown, and take it down. My muscles were starting to groan and ache, angry that they had lain dormant and tensed for so long. Just a bit longer, I told myself silently, a bit longer, and maybe one will come this way.

I saw a twitch of brown out of the corner of my eye. I turned my vision towards that area without turning my head, and saw standing there a tall, majestic bull elk. His antlers spread well over nine hands long, and he had to be over 50 stone in weight. He would do well. The thick winter coat could be used to keep someone warm, like a child. Yes, this one would do well, for meat, sinew, bone, and hide.

My hand tightened on the spear at my side, and my upper arm drew in blood, preparing for the throw. I just had to wait a moment more, to let the bull come clear of underbrush in order to have a shot worth taking. I counted my heartbeats as he moved, clumsily to some, but graceful in my eyes. His legs carefully tested each step, to ensure his footing was solid and perfect. We could stand to learn the ways of the world around us from such beasts.

His head, neck, and chest cleared the underbrush, and I smiled beneath my cowl. Without a cry or whispered word, I exploded into motion. My arm drew back, hefting the spear as my left leg stepped forward to give me leverage for my throw. No sound was made by me as the spear flew from my hand, through the air, and struck the elk just behind his shoulder. The thin point of the spear punched through his hide easily, and the bugling belch from his throat warned all around that he was injured. I heard but did not see the others of his herd burst into flight. Scarlet splashed onto the pristine snow from the wound as he moved to run.

I was scrabbling after him. I could not let him run far, tradition demanded that since I did not kill him with my throw, I must be close to him, and finish him with my knife. It was the only way to honor him and sanctify the kill. My cloak flew from my shoulders, the rest of me clad in tanned leathers trimmed with fox fur. Perhaps someday soon it would be bear fur that adorned me in winter, but for now, the white fur of the winter fox would have to do. My blade was bare in my hand before I knew how close I was.

The spear stuck in his side prevented him from moving far or fast. I caught up with him swiftly, and grabbed for his antlers. Those antlers could gore a man, eviscerating him and leaving him for dead. I know, I had seen it happen to someone else from my town. He had lain for days, bleeding slowly, the creeping reek of offal and death gathering around him. In the end, he died weeping. No fit way for anyone to die. And that included this elk.

My hand grabbed one post of his antlers, and I threw my weight against his wounded shoulder, trying to use my force and the pain of the impact to drive him down. It kind of worked, as the elk bowed his head. His eye caught mine, and I saw no fear there. At least, no fear that one usually thinks of when they think of prey. No, there was the fear of death, the same fear all have when they do not have the conviction to know what death will bring them. There was no dishonor to this fear, and I knew I must strike swiftly and surely.

My knife hand shot forward, and the knife drew across the elk's neck. I put as much muscle behind my strike as I could, shaking his antlers with my other hand to make the cut deeper. I hit the artery there, as gleaming crimson, hot and metallic washed over my knife hand. The elk bleated one last time, and sagged to the ground, twitching as best it could. He was not dying fast enough, this one. The fear was entering his heart, and that could not be allowed to happen. With a fierce shake of his head, he threw me from my grip and back a step. I had to finish it, and quickly.

Without a conscious thought, I grasped the haft of the spear and pressed down hard. I felt the spearhead cleave through the flesh, and the bull twitch powerfully below, a convulsion of pain. After a moment, I heard a rattling breath leave his throat. I looked down to those eyes, those magnificent eyes that had shown life and power not moments before. They had ceased to gleam. In reverence, I knelt and closed them with my bloodied hand. My knife had fallen to the ground, and I scooped it up.

Clasping my bloodied knife hand over my chest, still kneeling next to this great beast, I spoke quietly.

“Great Maker, you have seen fit to provide for me this day. Let not the spirit of this great beast wander the Spiritlands aimlessly. Gather him to your grounds, and provide for him sweet water and fresh feed, as his sacrifice has provided for myself and my people.”

I quickly got to work dressing him, preparing him for the drag back to my village. All the parts were laid aside, other than the heart. My spear had torn his lungs, depriving him of breath, but his heart was complete. In reverence, I set it in the snow, packing it tight. The seat of his spirit must be preserved, until I returned to my home, and could set it free by fire, to claim its spot in the ever after.

After all, it was the right thing to do.

A Man Who Watches Flowers Bloom

by Autumn King

The sun was laughing. Not like “Haha!” or anything. Just a gentle sigh of a laugh. It shone brightly in the sky, glorious and happy and all-around shining proudly in the cloudless sky. If it could show expressions, what would they be? Who would notice? Not many would care. They would become accustomed to it and let it become another insignificant thing in their lives. But not him. He needed the sun. Without it, what would he do with himself? His life revolved around the giant fireball. His friends did too. Their heads followed the sun as it traveled across the sky. A field of yellow tracking the yellow above them like a golden retriever. They alone saw the expressions the sun made. They knew when it was angry, or when it was sad, or like now, while it was happy.

The breeze tickled their petals and they giggled in turn. The man standing near saw this and he couldn't quite help the smile that formed on his lips. He walked forward, gently rubbing their leaves, causing them to purr in response. Those he wasn't touching reached for him, asking for similar treatment like children asking for ice cream. But then again, they were children. They were his children. He raised them from seed, cultivated their soil, and watched them bloom and become what they were now. Soon they'd grow taller than him, much like children do with their parents. Though he guessed they couldn't be called children any more. Looking up, he stretched, reaching high about him, the flowers following suit.

Looking around, he continued walking through the field, greeted and welcomed by his family. No, he couldn't call them children anymore. He continued walking, talking and teasing the underside of the flowers' heads. When he had moved past, they continued following the sun. They were happy and content. That was all he cared for. They were grown up and could care for themselves. No longer children.

As he walked he noticed a small stem that just barely reached his knee. He smiled at it, his gaze fixed on it. The others may be grown, yes, but his job wasn't over.

Not quite yet.

The Price

by Terry Hoffman

Tender, that touch once seemed
A soft caress too warm to discard.
Only such a hand can make it fly;
Only after flying can it fall.

A plummet which shatters its resolve,
As the hand chokes and beats.
And there it lies, an oozing mess;
Its rancid scent plaguing all.

There it stays, forsaken and appalled.
A wretched sight those hands chose to leave.
Without warmth, it soon grows cold
And closes off so it can't bleed.

Yet from its cell, it feels a call.
Hands, newly found, try to break it free.
It wishes to be left alone;
Yet relentlessly, they will not go.

A rising heat purges through ice,
Once powerless, it seeks new strength.
New hands kindle a forgotten need.
Then it takes to the air again.

This strength can grant a higher reach.
And there it finds a longer drop...

Self-defiance

by Nell Schumacher

A 2 p.m. breakfast,
in the pocket of smothering silence surrounded by noise.
Suffocating in the happy non-sequiturs of people I don't know.
Crimson quiet envy
scalding my heart,
But shattered by the warmer glow of defiance.
I will not
accept cold loneliness.
Lionesses have prides,
hellkites soar together,
solitude dies forever.
I'll kill it tonight.
Hello and a spark ignites a bond,
Bombing the gray city of misery and blasting eternal fires in its place.
Cammora or crusade is born.

The Four A.m. Laundry Room

by Nell Schumacher

The light fades out again.

A lazy shift of a writing arm revives

its shivering glow

for a while.

The late night's last launderer looks over
the machines

quaking like straight-jackets,

frothing and writhing inside,

loud enough to shake the room,

and trust

that the noise-masked silence

veils sleepers

and dreams of self-folding laundry.

An Old Acquaintance

By Red Cardinal

Step back, and she'll thrust her hands into your veins. Blue nails into red, bleeding veins, and all I can think is, no, that's not how you paint 'em red.

Step back, and she'll push up and in, inside of your arms, following the veins, and there she'll be, perched in your brain, those blue bastard nails.

My darkness. Her patience unrivaled. She sits and waits. Waits. Waits for the light to burn out, run out of wax, run out of oil, out of power, out of time. Waits for the Sun to move, waits for the moon to hide its face.

When it's all gone, there she'll be. All that's left.

I had to stand my ground. But she has her way, my darkness. She knows the world, and how it wears. Wears at you till you tear, wears at you till you give. Till you

Step back.

"You won't even know it's wrong," she said to me. Back then.

Back.

Way back.

Once.

In that way she waits, saying once, only once.

One day. Surprise. There she was.

"Hello, it's me."

My darkness... I felt it numb, my lips. They parted for soundless breath to spill out, touching past dead-nerve flesh.

"See, I usually don't go to these lengths, I'd rather lay around and wait..."

Cold, my breath, like her blue hard nails. Cold from bloodless lungs, heart having stopped, waiting for her to say it. Say those words I dreaded to hear. Wanted to hear.

"...but I'll make an exception when I see craving."

She had me. I was caught. Caught in the clutches of those deadly black eyes, swirling. Sucking in all light.

"You're craving me right now, aren't you?"

Be still, my lungs, breathe not. Give nothing away. But I know. She knows.

"I'm here to say you don't have to crave. Here I am."

I wonder. She told me I'd not find it wrong. Did she mean the world's cruel pushing,

Or hers?

"You can have me."

So she proclaimed, the one I'd been trying not to give into. My darkness. Stepped. Forward.

And I

Step back.

LITTLE BOY LOST



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LITTLE BOY LOST SAT ALL ALONE
 ALL ALONE AND FAR AWAY FROM HOME
 HE CAN'T ESCAPE
 BUT THAT WASN'T HIS FATE
 FROM THE MONSTERS HE FLEED
 AND FROM THAT HORRIBLE DEED
 WHEN HE GOT FAR AWAY
 WITH NO-WHERE TO STAY
 HE Huddled OUT OF SIGHT
 FROM THAT TERRIBLE NIGHT
 BUT AS THE RAIN STARTED TO FALL
 AND THE PUDDLES DID FORM
 ALL OF THE FACES APPEARED
 OF THOSE MONSTERS HE FEARED
 HE SHOOK AND HE CRIED
 NO MATTER HOW HE TRIED
 TO TELL HIS OWN HEAD
 THOSE MONSTERS UNDER HIS FEET
 WAS NOTHING BUT A CREATION
 OF HIS OWN IMAGINATION
 AND THEY WOULD FOLLOW HIM FOREVER
 NO MATTER HOW HE ENDEAVORED
 TO RUN FROM THEIR CLAWS
 AND SHARP TEETH THAT COULD CAUSE
 THE PAIN AND THE FEAR
 THAT WOULD CAUSE HIS LAST TEAR
 AND REKNOW THERE AND THEN
 AT THE SWEET AGE OF TEN

ONLY HE COULD ERASE
 EACH AND EVERY FACE
 THAT STOPPED HIM FROM BEING
 AND STOPPED HIM FROM SEEING
 THAT BOY HE ONCE KNOWN
 FEARLESS AND HAPPY WHO
 TREMBLED IN HIS SMILE
 FOR EACH AND EVERY MILE
 HE WALKED WITHOUT FAIL
 FOR MANY A TALE
 UNTIL HE REACHED THIS PLACE
 WHERE FOREVER HE RACE
 AWAY FROM THE FEAR AND THE THOUGHT
 THAT KEPT HIM CAUGHT
 IN HIS OWN PRIVATE HELL
 NOT A SOUL HE COULD TELL
 BUT ONE DAY HE SWORE
 HE WOULD UN-CURL HIS TAIL
 STAND TALL ON HIS FEET
 AND HIS FEARS HE WOULD EAT

Cruisin'

by Nora Connlain

Curious enough is that I am floating
carelessly on the maple leaf.

When I land in the water,

I will surely drown.

Yet, do I not have the option to float
and let the current drift me down stream?

The Wall

by Nora Connlain

This is what I was meant to do.
I had the means to participate in the over flow of inspiration,
Truly, Honestly, Sincerely.
But the ropes held fast by the hands,
my fingers cracked by the restraint
Those ropes... what were they made of?
Fire? Fear? Doubt? Hate?
No... none of those are adequate.
I am deceiving myself.
What kept me from my love of self expression...
What ill will kept me from my passions...
Was slothfulness.

Traumatic Evening with Grandma

by Cristina Saylor

“Come on Izzie. Its dollar shot night and that punk band I like is playing at The Club tonight. Let’s go have a girl’s night out.” Jenn swerved around a large truck on the highway.

Izzie groaned and rolled her eyes. “I thought we were just going to dinner with your Grandma and then going home. You know I don’t like going to bars, and I don’t like that band. What was their name?” Izzie pulled a bottle of pills out of her purse and popped a couple of small yellow pills in her mouth. It was a miserable mid-July evening and rubbing elbows with a bunch of idiots sounded like even more misery to Izzie.

“It’s Poe’s Revenge and we are going to dinner with Gram, but I also want to have a girl’s night out. Please Izzie? I haven’t been laid in like two weeks and I want to bring a guy home tonight. I look pathetic going alone even if you don’t dance or talk to anyone.” Jenn pleaded harder.

A night out wasn’t Izzie’s idea of fun, but Jenn would keep it up until she agreed. “More like revenge on poor Mr. Poe if they’re using his name for that shit. I’ll go but only for the drinks. Don’t even think about introducing me to someone or bringing them back to the table for me.”

“I don’t know how you do it. You would never leave the house if you didn’t have to. Don’t you get bored of just sitting around reading books all the time?” she asked her for the ten thousandth time.

“I like my room and I like being alone.” Izzie wished she could be more free and fun like Jenn, but could never bring herself to do anything crazy.

“We’ve been friends for the last three years and roommates for two and you’ve yet to even talk about a man. Are you sure you don’t want to try women? Don’t you need some physical interaction?” Jenn asked.

“I like being alone because you don’t get hurt when you’re alone. That’s why I like reading so much. Those relationships last forever and I don’t have to deal with the morning after. It’s not like you’ve found a good man in all the ones that you’ve brought home. I don’t think they exist today,” Izzie said. She never even thought about men anymore unless they were part of a plot in a book.

“I know you’ve said it before and you’re right. We’re drowning in a sea of douche bags and parched for the fine wine on the lips of a good man. You know you should write some of that shit down. You have a great way with words,” Jenn said. “Why don’t you just bring a man home for one night to clear out the cob webs? You don’t have to marry him.” She smiled.

“I’ll let you have the sex with the douche bags and I’ll dream about men. Before you ask for the millionth time yes I have been laid and no I’m not a virgin.”

“Fine, but you’re getting drunk tonight,” Jenn said as she turned into the driveway of her Grandmother’s modest yellow ranch home.

“That I can do,” Izzie said as she opened the car door.

“There’s my girls,” Gram said with a bright smile as soon as Jenn and Izzie stepped through the door. At 83 Norma Munn looked every bit her age and she had a crazy story for each line on her face. She had more spunk and energy than Jenn and Izzie combined.

“Hey Gram” Jenn said as she gave her a big hug. “What do you want for dinner tonight?”

“I was watching a show and they had a cute Mexican on there. Let’s go for Mexican tonight.” Gram said as she stood up. Izzie noticed her outfit at once. She was wearing a vintage 70’s yellow shirt with a large owl on the front and green camouflage pants. A typical night out with Gram.

Izzie could feel the familiar fog coming over her as soon as she plopped into the back seat of Jenn’s brown Kia. She took a deep breath and put her head on the side of the car and listened to Gram tell the play by play action of last night’s Bingo game while Jenn drove to the restaurant.

Izzie was half asleep when the car stopped and the front doors flew open. The rude disturbance of her high wasn’t welcome, but unavoidable.

“So what are you girls doing tonight? You’re not going out again are you?” Gram asked and eyed Izzie’s drugged appearance. “You have to be more careful these days than when I was young.”

“Come on Gram, we’re 25. We need to go out and have fun. I’ll be careful because I have angelic little Izzie with me.” Jenn said to prompt Izzie to attest to their good behavior.

After a quick look at Gram’s outfit by the hostess, the three were sat near the back of the restaurant. “Just a few drinks and listen to a shitty band Gram. Then we’ll walk it off on the way back to the house and go to bed like good girls.” Izzie tried to tune of the conversation out and focus on the menu.

“Good then the first round is on me.” Gram said as the waitress walked over for their drink orders. “Your biggest pitcher of strawberry margaritas with three glasses.” Gram ordered and Izzie automatically reached for her ID and handed it to the waitress before she asked.

The waitress took it and eyed Izzie then the ID. “You don’t look 25. You look more like you’re 19.”

“I know,” Izzie said as she held out her hand to take her license back. “That’s what years of chemo and no sun does for a person.

“But you beat it,” Gram said with a gleam in her eye.

“Yes I did,” Izzie sighed as she picked up a chip and dunked it in salsa. What good did beating the leukemia do? She couldn’t leave the house without the pills.

The girls ate and drank while Gram told them about the latest gossip and who was sleeping with whom at the Senior Center. “I told Sam that he should cover up the prune if he’s going to sleep with her. She gets around,” Gram said.

“Uh, gross Gram. I don’t want to know about old people sex.” Jenn said as she took a bite of her enchilada and shivered.

“Just because we’re old doesn’t mean that we don’t want sex. The best orgasms are after you hit 60.” Gram shrugged and raised her glass for another drink. Izzie just sat and tried to ignore the conversation.

“Hear that Izzie? Ninety year olds are having more sex than you,” Jenn joked.

“Good for them. They don’t have to worry about getting knocked up or STDs.” Izzie took a bite of her shrimp taco. She knew better than to even as much as comment on one of Gram’s stories or else she would have to hear more details.

“You know Izzie that I’ll go with you to buy a vibrator. I’ll even pay for it. Thanks to modern technology you don’t have to put up a man at all. Jenn, that might be a good thing for you too. It’s better than all the dating you do,” Gram offered just as the waitress approached out table. She looked at them as if they had three heads. She dropped the bill on the table and walked away as quickly as possible.

Izzie choked on her drink while fighting the need to laugh at the idea shopping for porn and sex toys with Gram. “I’ll pass but maybe next time.”

“But I do want to go pick up a few things before we go out tonight. I’m out that massage oil that I like and I need some more flavored condoms,” Jenn said.

“Off to the porn shop we go.” Gram stood up from the table with a big smile.

Before Izzie knew it the three pulled up in front of Mallory’s adult store. “Come on Izzie,” Gram opened her car door.

“I’ll pass this round. You two have some family bonding experience.” Izzie reached for the book in her purse determined to keep what little dignity could muster.

“No, you’re family too. Come on.” She didn’t have a choice. She would have to go sex store shopping with Grandma.

The three walked in and everyone in the place stopped and stared at the little old lady like she was going to start throwing a protest. “Oh look they have a sale on crotch less panties. Do you like those Jenn?” Gram asked and headed to the stripper clothing section.

“Depends. Do they have any red ones?” Jenn followed. Izzie felt like apologizing to everyone but she thought they would get a kick out of it once the shock wore off. She walked around and noticed that just about everyone avoided looking anyone in the eye.

Izzie was overlooking the shoes when she heard Gram’s voice yell. “Elizabeth, get over here. They have a good sale on sex toys.” Everyone in the place looked around to see who Elizabeth was, and if she looked like she need a toy. Izzie sighed and slowly made her way past the bondage gear over to Gram.

“I’m fine and don’t need one,” Izzie sighed as though Gram was trying to get a new pair of mittens. Her

ability to be embarrassed by Gram or Jenn's antics had been crushed years ago, and she now just went with it.

"Your birthday is in a couple of months and I'm just getting you an early present. Do you like the white one or the black one? Oh, look they have a blue one."

"You're the expert," Izzie said as she tried to walk off.

Gram continued to shop as though she a kid in a real toy store. Izzie stood back and watched people's reaction to Gram and her reaction to the devices and aids.

"I have everything that I need. You girls ready to go?" Jenn walked over with a hand full of bottles and boxes.

"Please, let's go," Izzie said quickly as she glanced at the DVD rack next to her and seen a myriad of sex acts that she would never think of doing.

"Live a little Izzie" Gram carried the blue vibrator and several more items she found at a good price to the counter.

After 20 more minutes of looking at the impulse items in the front, Gram and Jenn paid for their things while Izzie stood in the corner in an attempt to blend into the novelty section.

An older man walked by looked her up and down and smiled. "I'm going to need a whole bottle of pills after this," Izzie groaned.

Gram handed Izzie the bag of treasures and announced. "Here Izzie, you can have a fun Friday night." before they could get out the door.

Izzie just rolled her eyes and took the bag. After all, who was going to talk about running into an old woman buying sex toys for her young looking granddaughter? Not exactly dinner conversation for most people.

"Thanks and I hope they came with manuals." Izzie promptly opened the car door and tossed it in.

"Run me by the store on the way home and I'll pick up some beer. I like to have a couple of cold ones in this heat." Gram said on the way back to her place.

After a quick beer run they took Gram home for the evening. "You girls have fun but don't do anything that I wouldn't do at your age," she said as she gave them each a hug.

"Don't worry Gram. We'll be fine." Jenn said as Izzie gave Gram a hug.

"Thanks for the, uh, gifts, Gram," Izzie said.

"Use them," Gram told her. Like that would ever happen.

"Well if I didn't need therapy before I will now." Izzie said as soon as they got into Jenn's car.

"Well now you know why I'm the way I am," Jenn said with a wicked grin.

"I know," Izzie said.

"We still look hot for The Club let's go and I'll drive. I know if we go home I'll never get you out again."

"As long as you know that I'm only going for dollar shot night." Izzie looked into her bag of toys.

"What the hell is this for? I know human anatomy but I haven't the slightest idea where or how to use this." She picked up a clear package with a red plastic butterfly inside and looked down a funny looking long blue plastic thing that looked a little frightening. "I have no idea how to use any of this stuff and no I don't want to know before you ask. Oh god, she gave me extra batteries and lubricant? Am I supposed to use condoms with this thing? Why do I have a bunch of condoms if I'm supposed to use this on myself? Take me to bar now!" She was almost appalled at the thought of using sex toys on herself. The drugs had killed her sex drive and no amount of plastic was going to bring it back.

Jenn started laughing. "That's my Gram."

Little Baby Mocking Bird

by Roxanne January

“Don’t scream,” he says,
“Don’t cry. It doesn’t hurt, baby mocking bird.
Cry in scars, scream in pleasure, like always, my little baby mocking bird.”
He laughs as he marks me his, his teeth burning my skin like paper to a flame.

I’m his to the bone, and he won’t let me forget;
Nails, skin, lips, teeth.
All wait for my blood to shed.
False love, even crueler as he pretends
“Baby mocking bird,” he’d chant,
“You broke your wishing bone long ago,
So how can you fly home?”

Baby mocking bird flies, he fails
He can’t do it, and how could he?
With pride and lust his only weapons,
He hides in the shadow of the housecat,
The cat who only raised him to be devoured.
So cruel, but this bird won’t die.
I will fly.

Fly far from here, make a scar in a tree;
Not in skin.
Both fade with time, but my trauma survives.
How can I fly?
If I can’t fly, I know I’ll die.

Make it rain, storm clouds;
Cry for me, because I can’t do it anymore.
Blood is my only form of tears, and if I stand in the rain
Can I cry harder than the pain?
More tender than the bruises?
I bet I could, if I could only get out.

If I can fly, I tell the cat,
I could go mark the world
Give them my song.
“Baby Mocking Bird,” he replied,
“Only the foolish want to hear you.”
Even so, I know that they will love me
No matter how tasty I am.

If he holds me, does it make a fool?
Or just when I sing?
Maybe I’ll know when I can fly.

I can fly, I know I can! If only he didn't bruise every part of my soul first.
I'm just a baby mocking bird, but I'll fly like an owl;
Silent and swift, I'll fly away from it all.
I'll be free to sing, and free to cry.

Can't you see, Daddy? You're hurting me.
Don't you care?
Of course he does, I tell myself.
He has to!
I know I'm only to myself...
Those hands on my skin every night, lips tasting my sweat.
I know there's more to this love,
If I can call it that.

Should I finally tell him I'm scared?
Scared of what he's doing, scared of every brush of skin.
I tremble around everyone, even the plastic ones.
They're all just like him, they have to be...

The world wants to kill me, use me like a tool.
That's what he taught me to believe, so a fear rushes my soul.
Each passing day... each "passionate night," he calls them.
Hah! I could laugh.
Blood spilling from my body is not a loving touch, nor a single sweet kiss is healing the damage done.
A loving touch or bite can't help this fear growing inside of me.
If I get away, can I be safe?
Nothing, not even words, can explain this.

He laughs in my face.
"Baby mocking bird, you can't fly free.
You'll die too soon, can't you see?"
What do I have left?
Obviously not enough to let me fly.
I have to escape.

"Little Baby mocking bird, don't hide from me.
I will find you, just wait and see," he sings.
I tremble as I press naked to the window, starting to sweat.
He can't lick it away now, and it grows cold as the wind starts to blow.

"I'll find you no matter where you go."
No, you won't!
I have to fly.
A broken heart, I can't return to him.
He wants to use me, it'll never change.
This little baby mocking bird has to fly away.

It starts to rain, I'm crying.
I can cry again!

He wants me back, he says.
No sweet words can work, no hot lips can touch my neck.
No sharp teeth can bruise my wings.
I don't have to hide behind pride and lust.

Am... I free?
No.

I'll never be safe from myself, or from my nightmares.

The Art of Not Breathing

by Molly Kearns

One is said to have perfected the art of not breathing when they no longer can take a breath. In a scientific view, they are dead. Their lungs no longer work; the circulation of oxygen to the brain is cut off. They are scientifically pronounced dead.

In a metaphoric sense, they are alive, but are suffocated. They yearn for something they cannot achieve, cannot touch. It haunts them; it chokes them, knowing full well that it will never be achieved. They yearn for something greater than they are and that road to that greater something is full of hardships that can smother even the greatest of people. It is when everything comes down of them at once and it weighs down everything that they do., it lingers; it haunts; it chokes.

It is falling in love. When one falls in love with another, that person is their world and without that person, they feel that they cannot breathe. Ones who feel love feel their breath being taken away every time they see their other half. It is everything their other half does that makes them scared, makes them cry, makes them fall in love all over again. It is truly the meaning of the art of not breathing.

Child of Mother

by Taylor Fedrizzi

Ancient tombstones
Pre-laid before a conceived child.
Unknowingly she cries.

Flake

by Taylor Fedrizzi

Jaded inside the crystalline fragment
Broken, Cracked, Beautiful, and Different

She's only here for a season

and how fast the White Sands of Winter pass
Time is frozen long enough for it to end.

She's only there while you're cold.

But when her warmth returns
Sun will blister your hands that reach

For her, in the moment of clarity
She's only there for a reason.

Outside the frozen wastes
Sorrow, fills the cracks and leaks

As you're trapped where she was...

Back inside the fragment of perfection...
Broken, Cracked, Beautiful, and Different

Describing God

by Patrick Conners

I admired the way you
Described god so clearly,
While dusting the cold
 glass window.

The evening is like that,
Grave and alive, as you
Said. Tall and short,
Nothing to marvel at,
 really.

Like a child reading a
Book out loud. Some
Words he gets and
Some are skipped over
 entirely.

Subway Series

by Lionel Martinez

Lionel Martinez began his media career as a New York underground filmmaker. He has worked on many documentary commercial and industrial film productions, and currently works in independent television and Internet production. His still photography has been exhibited in several NYC shows.

Lionel Martinez has authored seven books. His photographs appeared in “The Time-Life Book of Century – the 1960’s”, “The History of the Irish in America” and “Fire Engines in America,” and other titles.















American Sentences

by Erik Fry, Christina Lohr, John Groom, Erin Klitze, and Aleah Prenni

At the tail end of 2011, a group of students from Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania partook in an event called American Sentence Week. The American Sentence is the Western answer to the haiku created by Allen Ginsberg. Like a haiku, American Sentences contain seventeen syllables.

These pieces are not meant to be read as a whole. Rather, each sentence tells its own story.

We would like to thank these writers for contributing their American Sentences to this issue of *f/e*.

American Sentences

by Erik Fry

I am so tired right now that even my ass doesn't want to drag.

With the mighty hammer Mjolnir, you can really build a nifty house.

Oh, Mother Mary, tell me true, did Jesus ever have days like this?

Why are there monkeys that fly in a world without one banana tree?

She walked in on gazelle legs, leaving me to wonder just where they led.

The song comes on the radio, and I find I can do nothing else.

My fist balls up at the mere sound of your voice; just stop breathing, you prick.

I really just want to punch you in the neck when you open your mouth.

The things he tried to tell me as I sat in slack-jawed, drooling wonder.

And the storm descended, a murderous roar weeping tears of pure rage.

Tell me, why am I so enamored with a jackass who plays with dolls?

I'll be damned if anger isn't just a midget on my back with a stick.

American Sentences

by Christina Lohr

My expectations are too high, and yet I wonder why I'm single.

I shudder to think what my life would be without your love, mom and dad.

American Sentences

by John Groom

The loss of one idea, a catalyst in the destruction of time.

A lack of trust, founded upon tales of a world long decimated.

One man fighting his mind, losing all he holds dear becomes a lost cause.

American Sentences

by Erin Klitze

To lay, to sleep, to dream: we imagine realities abed.

American Sentences

by Jennifer Willard

What you want most, I think, is to be someone you can be proud to be.

American Sentences

by Aleah Prenni

They lock you in and it is hell, but its all about you and it works.

The blank page stared at her; the ticking clock, tick, tock, took the time away.

Best friends are forever, but she and I are forever in a day.

Your beautiful eyes told me the story your mouth refused to reveal.

I watched her walk away smiling, with terror and heartbreak in her eyes.

Homework is like skipping through daisies, except it's not at all like that.