ALL THE PRETTY GIRLS

A Collection by
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This one's all for you
It's all because of you
It's in spite of you
Thank you

A word from the Author

Sometimes when I least expect it, crazy things pop into my head. I get this overwhelming urge to blurt them out to whoever is next to me at the time. To anyone who would listen! But these ideas come out of my mouth like word-salad: mixed up, meaningless, and not very popular. So I try to write them out to see if I can exorcise these images, to give myself some sleep, because they are pervasive and isolating.

Of course, once you crack the seal, the monsters inside become yours. I can't help you there. I suggest a cup of lukewarm coffee, a bag of pretzels, a hunk of chocolate, and a really comfortable spot to relax because these stories will either really get your motor runnin', or you'll find yourself forehead down on the arm of the couch. Or wherever your head falls off at…

At any rate, thanks for dropping dead and wear a smile.

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ID

Sex
should be violent,
and exhausting. It should not
consume
private thoughts,
but should waft,
like cologne;
or the scent of smoking meat
trapped on curls
of a summer afternoon breeze.
Inhale deep,
imagine starvation,
exhale.

"Where are you?" Lightning momentarily turns a sliver of the modest motel room into a blue-violet bolt of light; thunder from the crash vibrates the glass. Glen, a smile curling his fine lips, whistles an old jazz tune to offset the rumble of the storm. He laces his hands beneath his head and closes his eyes. Just below the thunderclaps, a woman coos from the darkness and lingers on his name, saying it with a soft click of her tongue.

"Glen…"

He licks his lips in response to his name and makes a lowing sound deep in his throat. Half-spent candles sprinkled in various areas of the room engrave deep quivering shadows across his bare body, and they appear like a loin cloth, clotting into the space between his thighs. His erection springs up from the pool of darkness between them like a strange mushroom.

"I am here, handsome..." She whispers in whiskey-soaked tones. It oozes sex. Glen opens his eyes and upon seeing her standing at the end of the bed draped in nothing but a bed-sheet, he smiles. The woman, a lusty old man's dream incarnate, bearing what appeared to be naturally large but gravity-defying breasts, bedroom eyes, and waist length hair, undulates in place and massages her breasts through the thin material.

"Well hi there..." He sits up and dispels all the dark pools, exposing the fullness of his arousal. He eyes her from head to toe; taking in the waves of her dark hair, which was attractively draped over her shoulders, and his imagination begins to run amok over her hidden curves. He makes a motion for her to come closer. Upon his wordless request she stops swaying and crawls onto the bed, keeping a light grip upon the sheet. She moves slowly toward Glen's hips, dragging her breasts lightly over his shins until she reaches his mid-thigh, and then releases the thin material. They lock eyes and he swallows. The sheet falls away, slips off her burnished curves as if she were molting. She slides her tongue out, grips his erection in her hand then flattens it along the length of it. Lightning sears the darkness once again.
"Oh yesss!" Glen's legs stiffen as he throws his head back, and he inhales

deeply. The woman grins against his hardened flesh and flicks her tongue around the edge of the swollen purple head. It throbs heavily in her grip. She pulls her tongue back so that it dangles just on the edge of her lower lip; a glittering claret in the livid thunderbolt flashes. Glen thrusts his hips a little as she gives his hard-on a soft kiss, using her tongue, and for a moment sucks it into her mouth. He arches his back slightly and reaches for her. She seems to be purring as she crawls on all fours, straddling his torso to meet him for a kiss on the mouth. Glen groans and licks her chin when she comes close. He pants as he speaks.

"I want to fuck you. Hard."

The woman leans closer, affording Glen a healthy lungful of her strange musk, and whispers as she playfully taps the end of his nose with her index finger, "I'll let you fuck me, if you promise to give me one thing."
Practically salivating, he nods.

"Name it, baby."

She winks at him, a slow blink of an eye, and smiles. Her lips are plump, moist, and slightly purple, like a bruise. They slip back easily from her pearlescent teeth.

"Promise to give me your heart."

He seems to lose a bit of his macho mojo and his smile lessens a bit.
His cheeks darken with lust and embarrassment; he always despised having to admit that he has a wife waiting for him back at home.

This was his after-work beer, his one vice: he loved sex. He loved it more than a six-pack of brew, more than baseball, and more than taking vacations at company's expense.

Other than long vacations, that was the other benefit of his company—the ability to use it as an excuse. Sometimes he worked all night. He was told that he had to. Sometimes he didn't have to. Either way, they paid him the same and either way, he could get away with, "I had to work late." It was good enough to get him into the shower and into bed without having to put up with any bullshit from his wife.

She'd still greet him with a kiss and make coffee for him in the mornings before she left for work. It wasn't that he didn't love her, it was just that he didn't love her in 'that way' anymore. But they had children together and she was a great mother. That was good enough reason to keep things going as they are.

And to have his cake on the side.

He had wanted this stranger the moment that he laid eyes on her at the busstop that evening. He knew that she was jail-bait, or close enough to it; but her tight jeans, plain cotton t-shirt and cardigan seemed irresistible, almost too painful to ignore. Especially when they seemed to reveal more than they disguised: full breasts and supple hips, a narrow waist, a long neck…youth.

He still appeared young, at least younger than he really was at forty-two, with his full head of curly brown hair and tan skin. He wasn't as in-shape as he would like to be or as he had been when he was ten years younger but he knew that he still held some boyish charm.

He can't remember exactly how they came to be here in this motel room, naked and ready to fuck, but he really didn't give a shit. He lowers his head and looks up at her with feigned sincerity.

"Sure. Whatever you want, doll." He shrugs against the pillow and pulls his lips back to reveal white teeth and dimpled cheeks. Satisfied with his response, she presses into him, fully stretching over the length of his body, and he growls.

"My, you are sweet."

He cups the back of her head and grabs a handful of her ass, then grinds his hips in an upward motion as the woman moves her hips against his. Glen flattens his palm over her hip and smoothes it across the small of her back. He stops short.

"What's this?"

He rubs his fingertips across the raised pieces of flesh and wrinkles his forehead. The woman mumbles into his mouth.

"Scars. It's nothing."

Hungry for a chance to have this young girl speared upon his cock, he shrugs into her kiss. Glen smiles against the woman's mouth as she spreads her knees wider and eases her way down onto his erection.
He moans and grips the sheets.

"My God—you are so tight!" His thoughts swim in a haze of sex and thoughts of virgins, bleeding beneath his feet after being impaled by his rock hard cock. The woman licks his neck and he moans.

"Oh baby..."

She bites lightly on his shoulder and rakes her fingertips across his thick furry chest. He grabs her hips and thrusts harder. She sits up, tossing her hair back as she goes, and splays her palms upon his chest. Her breasts pat lightly against her ribcage and she trembles as she picks up speed. Their shadows dance on the wall across from the bed, a perfect negative reflection cast by wavering amber candle flames. She leans down and flicks the tip of her tongue across the edge of his earlobe.

"I'm gonna come!" Glen's voice is near child-like as he grunts against her shoulder. The woman grabs a fistful of his hair, cranes his head back and bites into his neck. Blood erupts from the wound, gushes into the pillow and soaks the mattress beneath him.

"God-damn! What the fuck—!"

He cups his neck and makes a startled sound as he looks upon the woman whose mouth now drizzles red-pomegranate onto her face, neck, and breasts—fresh blood.

He struggles to move, and she laughs. His limbs tingle and weaken. Another phosphorescent flash exposes her flesh in extreme tones of copper, silver, and black. It is now that he notices all the strange scars that are crowded upon her body. They appear to be words...or names. The skin on her shoulder splits as if cut and it bleeds with a new word. She continues to rock her hips, unconcerned. It takes him a moment to gather his wits enough to read; it is his own name.

"Get the fuck off me!"

Tears spring into his eyes as his muscles fail to draw up enough strength to get away. Her eyes...change. They appear more like snake's eyes. She blinks—a quick fog that draws over them like a camera-snap.

Whatever it was, she did not use her eyelids. She leans down and kisses him again. Glen gasps and whimpers, continues to try and put up more of a fight, but is unable to move his deadened limbs. She lulls him with an antediluvian song of death and lust. It was in a language that he couldn't comprehend. Completely paralyzed and rapidly losing consciousness, the woman's voice seems to come from a badly dubbed movie, rather than from her throat.

"Come..." she whispers, and twists his head painfully to one side.

"Come!"

He arches his back, the pressure in his testicles like none he has ever felt before. The woman curls her fingers into his ribs and a nasty sounding crack ensues. Glen feels her tiny hands pushing through his layers of skin, forcing past organs and membranes…reaching for his heart. The woman opens her mouth wide…wider. Wider than humanly possible.

He screams as he unwillingly climaxes, but it is lost within the soft caverns of her mouth.

She swallows.

LULLABY OF SAINTS

Curl your hands unto me child,
I will not turn you away.
Speak unto me child
I will listen to all you have to say.

Do not beg upon your knees,
rather, stand and make your plea.
You have secrets, as do I.
You need not confess to me.

Your kiss is soft and speaks in riddle;
your heart with strings, a tender fiddle.
I dare not pluck nor betray your love
and I do not want you under the thumb of

Me, a graven ghost at best.
So close your eyes, child, rest,
I leave you with a kiss.
Curl your hands, child, and keep them like this:

Press them against your vernal chest
and know that I will never accuse or attest
to sins you think you have made;
Death is not your life, dear child!

Death is the masquerade.

As Andrea neared the Forest Home Cemetery, she slowed down to a near-dragging pace. Its well-manicured grounds appeared more-than-inviting to her, resting in the shades of earliest dawn. She loved to gaze upon the serene statues of angels that were sprinkled all over the cemetery grounds. Blotched with pock-marks and bird-shit, she still found them beautiful.

They brought comfort to her somehow, as well as a deep sadness that she couldn't explain or completely shake off. She often thought about the people buried there, and what they would think if they woke to find stone-women staring down at them while they slept.

An odd and unexpected smile creased her smooth dark face as images of moist bones slamming around in coffins, unable to scream, unable to escape tapped into the morbid side of her psyche. She immediately rebuked these images and widened her berth around the cemetery.

She wasn't afraid of the cemetery, she steered clear only because she knew what she was capable of, at least in the immediate degree. She didn't even have to touch them, the dearly departed, and they would react to her presence soon after she got within about three feet of their vicinity. She had many of these episodes and experiences throughout her life and she had never understood what was actually happening.

She refused to attend funerals for fear of hearing the person inside the coffin cough to life. Fear they would sit straight up and point at Andrea, moaning and clawing their way from the soon to be hermetically sealed box of eternal rest; pointing at her, accusing her of disturbing their sleep. Her favorite cat, Bertie Junior (named after itself) kept coming back, even after they thought he was gone for good. That was, until the rot started to become obvious.

Many things still writhe and flap beneath the grass behind her childhood house on Hyview street— upset things that are unable to chew through Mom's porcelain jewelry box, the metal pill dispenser, and various other impenetrable make-shift coffins. After awhile she had avoided pets as much as she could.

Until Maynard…

A feathered corpse lay in her path and she sighed as she inspected it; its wing was bent in an unnatural curve, and it flapped only from the push of the breeze. Its head was crushed, a dark stain leaked out from its nostrils and a short dark stem of a tongue protruded from its beak. Thin ribbons of flesh curled from its asshole.

By her guess, the fatal blow came from a hungry cat. The bird's lone sky-ward eye blinked—rolled in a counterclockwise fashion, then it convulsed into life. It thrashed its free wing, and issued a shrill call. Andrea watched with mild sad interest as the hunk of feathers convulsed and squawked over and over, trying to move its wings and head. It succeeded to slip around in its own pool of semi-dry brains and viscera.

Andrea slammed her heel down upon its head. She stomped until the bird had been silenced, but the beak continued to open and close; the tongue wriggled in and out of it like a digging earthworm. She composed herself and walked away hoping that no one saw her morbid outburst. Although deep down, she really didn't give a shit who saw her do it or what they thought about it. Mercy wasn't always pretty, or easy. Or given.

Her thoughts traveled ahead of her to the convenience store several blocks away from the cemetery. She had avoided this particular store for a long time after she had been attacked and raped by three men just to the side of the store near the dumpster. No one seemed to see a single thing that night, no one reported anything, and afterwards Andrea never told a soul.

That night changed many things, some for the better, and some most definitely for the worst. She carried no more knives; that was one of the first mistakes that night, next to walking alone in the city wearing nothing but a white summer dress and a friendly smile. She may have had something sharp, but she was unprepared to use it. The men, however, were very skilled with their weaponry. These days she rarely dons a dress. Rarer still, a friendly smile. But that is life, she learned; nothing but a sick market of trade and barter…and thievery. After a couple of years she wizened up, though time did little to soothe her restless spirit.

As soon as she started to make her way across the parking lot toward the entrance, she unconsciously slipped her fingers beneath the turtle-neck and fondled the wide decorative leather choker around her neck. She entered the store and sighed as she approached the counter.

The clerk was a dark haired man wearing square glasses. He was thin and bristled, lack of sleep obvious in his brown eyes. Andrea thought he appeared a lot older than he probably was and his grim face highlighted by the clash of harsh fluorescent light and grey early morning sunlight did little to help her observation.

But he did remind her of someone famous as he smiled at her, though it was a flat one that did not even reach the red-rims of his sleep-deprived eyes. Andrea returned the automatic hello-smile and pulled a wallet out of her pocket. She looked at it and then up at the rows of colored boxes behind the clerk.

"I'll take two packs of GPC's and a package of French Lights please."
Her voice was low, almost whisper-like. The clerk glanced at her brusquely then turned and after a short search, came back to the counter with all the requested items.

"Will this be all for you?"

His heavy eyebrows were held high (or eyebrow, as it were), cross-wise to the shadows of his heavy frames. He looked as if he were leering. She nodded, pulled a tissue from her pocket and held it out to the clerk.

"Got a trash can back there?" Andrea said.

The clerk appeared annoyed at this request, especially since there was a trash bin just right outside the entrance door. He sighed and took the tissue and tossed it beneath the counter with a flat smile.

"Thanks." Andrea said, not bothering to return the clerk's insincere smile.

She paid for her purchases and left. She made her way home as fast as her wispy legs could move her.

When she made it home she was greeted by a small emaciated dog that

made a slow excited circle around her. Its one white eye rolled loosely like a marble in its sinking skull. She lit a cigarette and patted the dog on its withered back bone; her fingers lightly bounced like numbered balls in a bingo machine.

"Long day?" she said to the dog as it clicked on its wobbly disjointed legs, following closely behind her. She clenched a cigarette between her teeth, blowing puffs of smoke out of her nose, as she opened a can of soft food. She scooped it out, winking down at the tiny mutt who went back to circling himself as she set the heaping plate in front of him.

Maynard, an old Pomeranian-mix that she acquired a few years back, breaking her no-pet streak. At least she thought it was a Pomeranian. She knew that there was something seriously wrong with the dog, and she also knew why it was following her. Its one eye was whitened with cataract, it was missing many teeth, and it had no ears; she felt sorry for it. Instead of ignoring it as it followed her, pushing itself along on its stomach with one back leg, looking literally like something someone dug up, she took it home.

Call it damage assessment, call it morbid curiosity, call it dumb hope, call it whatever, she took it to the vet to be sure—two of its four legs were broken, not only broken but shattered. The still-usable legs just happened to be a front-leg and a back leg…on opposite sides. Its jaw was dislocated and many ribs floated free from their proper place. Even worse, its intestines and stomach were no longer connected to its esophagus.

The vet, surprised in his lengthy practice, simply said, "Death is certain. Really there is nothing we can do except for put it down. I am amazed that it is alive in its present state. It would be the humane thing to do."

Andrea agreed to have it "put-to-sleep", but no sooner had she breached the clinic doors, it started to bark and whimper. Its rasped barking was almost unrecognizable as that of a dog's. It made Andrea think of crickets trapped in a well. After a furious walk around the parking lot she brought it home where it slid in circles, unexcited; more lost than anything, and it never ate anything that she gave it.
Not one single crumb in nearly five years.

"Bon Appetit!"

She didn't even look twice at the dog as it stared down at the plate, licking its lips as it once again refused to take so much as one bite. Her thoughts turned to her panty drawer, where she immediately gravitated to, and after a few short swirls through the satin and cotton feminine
finery, she found what she was looking for: a small plastic baggy filled with a dark clutch of green. The plastic warmed in her hand as she curled her fist around it. She brought it to her nose and inhaled deeply.

Maynard tapped a stalking tune with its working feet and made a sniffing sound just outside her bedroom door. Andrea changed out of her turtle-neck sweater and jeans into flannel pajamas then planted herself happily into the center of her bed. She snipped the green leaves, trying not to reflect back on the woes of wage slavery, then rolled a joint and cleared away the mess.

She royally hated her job, but she had to do something to pay bills. A graveyard shift at a textile factory kept her far away from the scrutinizing public eye. But she was getting older and weaker as time passed, much quicker than she expected or hoped. She was extremely tired this morning, straining against her fragile skin, and willed her aching muscles to move just one arm. Once, not so long ago, she had been very beautiful. At least, that was the general reaction she received.

Now, however…it appeared that time wasn't the friend she once thought it was.

Andrea shook away her thoughts. She had been looking forward to relaxing with this particular brand of smoke all night and nothing was going to stop her from enjoying it, not even a little bit of muscle weakness or old memories. She leaned back on her bed and looked up at the ceiling, spotting the spider that she squished before leaving for work the evening previous. Its legs still wriggled, struggling to move its pancake of an abdomen across the ceiling. Some of the broken limbs had fallen off and Andrea wondered to herself how long it would take for the
remaining legs to wear away.
She put the joint to her lips and lit it, slowly inhaling the fragrant pine-flavored

smoke. A few thumps and moans rattled the glass figurine collection of octopi on her nightstand.

"Ahhh, he's awake."

She thought with a genuine smile. The sounds of scraping followed the fervent thumps and were soon chorused by muffled cries of, "Oh God, oh dear God… I'm not dead! Please, somebody! There's been a mistake, I'm not dead! Help! Help me!"

She instinctively caressed the choker around her neck and loosened it with a gentle snap. It slipped softly onto her chest. She returned to watching the spider through heavy lidded eyes for a few seconds before she turned her attention to the mad, silent slither-pace of Maynard on the other side of her bedroom door. The man in the oblong box below her bed continued to howl.

She closed her eyes and exhaled through the slit in her throat. Then she laughed and laughed and laughed.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LORRAINE

Windshield wipers clear the rain,
nicotine stains in the darkness
swirl
just beyond
the nose.
The rhythmic click-squeal
keeps time
with the red ticker inside.

She blinks-blink-blink-blink—

She lost the map sometime back
in that odd fifth dimension;
Translucent,
dark,
humid...

…she hopes she does not run out of gas.

She is beyond redemption:
Lost,
stormy,
mournful.
A wavering ghost
on the road.

Maybe she is past
that last service station in Hell,
thumbing her way toward
a horizon
that never
ends.

Ensnared in headlights,
the shadow
from her arm
does little to
shield her.

She does not want to be here,
blinking to hide the green in her eyes.
But no amount of rain
can wash it away.

SUFFERING IS OPTIONAL.

"Please…" her words were weak and thin. She reached for every creature as they passed, whimpering in pain and barely able to perform the act. The lissome and fluid bodies of the creatures, unlike her yet oddly similar, passed by without a single vocalization. They simply gazed upon her with their enormous multicolored convex eyes; puzzled…disgusted.

They reminded her of horseflies with their dull hexagon-laden shape and sagging mouths. She ached from the inside out, her bones felt as if they were breaking, though they weren't. The thirst that built up inside of her made speaking, let alone swallowing, a difficult task. Her raw red lips split and bled as she tried to smile at passersby, pleading with them to release the shackle around her neck.

She cried out, "Please! I'm hungry! Water! WATER!" Some would react by making a wide berth and doing their best not to turn in her direction. After awhile, she could no longer form the words. She could merely eye those who passed, with defeated urgency.

She tugged on the chain, her repeated movements of trying to free herself evident in the long charcoal colored semi-circular marks upon the floor around her. She pawed at the wall that she was chained to; again, it had become grimy with her repetitive touch. She pissed herself and wept openly. She made no move to cover-up anymore, like she had when she was first chained to the wall. Her throat was beet-purple and raw. It ached with the slightest breath, but the pain of that burden paled in comparison to the mounting list of pains that flourished inside of her.
She sprawled on the floor, prone and stared at the ceiling—pleaded silently and without eye contact as those beings passed by.

A few had stopped and stared, silent and morose appearing. They regarded her coolly, as if she were nothing more than a painting on a wall or their

reflection in a mirror. Her mad laughter at the situation morphed into sobs as time passed. She wept louder and moaned as clamorously as her weakened body would allow whenever the rare few would stop, but they were unmoved by her suffering and would eventually move away without as much as a backward glance. Some would pull each other closer, almost hugging, as they moved out of view.

This only made her curl into fetal position and hum as she thought about pizza and potatoes. Meat and bread. A hot bath…water. She gnawed at her fingertips until they bled, and bit several places on her arms and legs where she could. The blood saved her for awhile and spared her the strange headache that wracked her skull in pain…but never for long enough.

One of the passersby had paused long enough and expressed enough feeling in its foreign face that she understood it felt pity for her. Something silvery gave its dark eyes a pearlescent luster as it reached for her. When it did and made contact, several other creatures descended upon her and dragged her away while making loud rasping sounds, and sounds like barking and hissing. They were disapproving sounds. The moment was brief, but the woman could feel that although the creature was cold to the touch, it had cared for her. Still, the woman reached no more. She moaned no more. She watched as the others lent no hand, tentacle, paw, or otherwise to her.

No more would.

The One who had captured her and chained her here in the first place came, just as she was staring a hole into the ceiling, and she would have screamed or recoiled, if she was able to…but she couldn't. She knew that she was dying. She could feel it. Her insides finally stopped burning and the eggshell colored walls that surrounded her had managed to make her feel blind. All she could see was hatred, and those damnable creatures. Her thoughts mourned as it neared her—The One who captured her was followed by an entourage of others like it, who made cooing and chirruping noises. Sounds that she couldn't understand, but she knew they were approving sounds. They erupted into a litany of whistles and what seemed to be applause. She watched as the creature waved a thin arm outward, and it vaguely reminded her of a gameshow hostess waving an arm to direct your attention to the new car behind door number three…

She closed her eyes, wondering what they saw in her suffering that made them applaud. After that, she fell asleep hoping that she would not wake up again.

And she didn't…

PYGMALION

It has been
an eternity
since you have spoken;
stone faced, staring
at the ever setting sun.

Where have all the flowers gone, indeed.
They are black with age and broken,
crushed across the ground at your feet.

Gifts
for the girl with chiseled features and soft marble eyes.
An offering to grim and time.

You remain unmoved by your admirers;
I like that in a girl.
But what is a relationship
between stone and flesh?
A marriage of grave proportions.
I offer my love,
worth its weight in dirt.

Permit me to entertain you
with a song
sung by sparrows on a limb
shaken
like pepper
to the ground.

"Part those granite lips, precious,
allow me a kiss.
Please do not tell me that I am doomed
to love you forever,
like this..."

ME, MYSELF, AND EYE

He told her that he had found someone else, and Lisanne caught her weeping reflection in the dark pupils of his blue-green eyes. She was so angry, so hurt. But her reflection laughed at her tears—grinned like a sated cat. She just wanted to pluck it out. She grabbed him and pulled him close, close enough to kiss and he resisted.

"Didn't you hear me? I said we're done. I can't take your jealousy anymore."

He stood and curled his lip.

"Besides, you have really let yourself go."

It had been matter-of-fact. It was like he never loved her at all.

Lisanne got up from the couch and stalked into the kitchen. She grabbed a nine-inch butcher knife and stared at the blade. She brought the knife closer to her face and pressed her fingers to her cheeks, avoiding her own direct gaze. She grimaced.

"Look at that ugly nose! Eww, black heads and pimples... and those wrinkles! I really should quit smokin'…fuck!"

She pulled at her temples and sneered at her reflection.

"Is that a gray hair?"

She appraised neck and upper arms mentally.

"You really do need to lose weight. Look at you! Yuck! All that saggy skin…"

She thought about him and the other woman and pressed a fist to her lips.

"I hate you." She whispered into the curls of her fingers. She met her own gaze, which reflected flatly from the silvery-slice.

Somehow, the image of splitting herself from navel to sternum, and pulling the cut wide-open in front of him sprang to mind. She thought about her guts pushing forward through the opening and unwinding as they fell from the wound much like that of silly string. Her heart hammered in her chest. Thoughts of how she feels more like a butterfly trapped inside an ugly cocoon only managed to bring tears to her eyes. What kind of wings will she spread once the ugly skin is shed? She allowed the thoughts free-reign. They are hers anyway. Who cares if they are sappy and unoriginal?

She pressed the flat-side of the blade against her temple. The handle lined up with her left eye and she noted that the point reached well beyond the back of her head. She pressed the butt of the handle against the kitchen counter-top and imagined slamming her face downward upon the blade, allowing it to easily sink into her eye.

"I hate you!" She growled through clenched teeth.

"HATE YOU!"

From a dark place within her, laughter issued. It burned from the back of her brain like a smoldering ember. Her thoughts crowded to the front of her brain like roaches fleeing a fire; the sound of it like pebbles against glass.

The light above the stove flickered—

"I'm sorry Lisanne."

Upon hearing her name, she snapped her head up and swiped at the tears in her eyes. The knife glared up at her from her white-knuckled fist, and a silvery mustard-sheen slipped across the blade. She scowled at her reflection. It mouthed the word, "Chicken." and scowled back. Lisanne flipped it the bird then slipped the knife back into the wooden cutlery-caddy.
She wiped the tears from her eyes with the palms of her hands as she thought about his wandering eyes, those hateful cheating eyes…strange

thoughts possessed her, seduced her with mixed-up images of blood and scoops of ice-cream.

She grabbed a serrated-edge grapefruit-spoon and came back into the living room. She cocked her head to one side and shook the spoon in his direction as she spoke.

"Sorry? You're sorry?" She quaked, and swallowed hard. He looked dumb-struck; mute and falsely apologetic.

"Yes. I'm sorry it can't work out between us. I think we will both be happier this way."

Before he could finish his sentence, she charged over to him and cupped the back of his head with her free hand.

"Please stop. You're making a fool of yourself. It's over--"
The past few months swirled in heavy clouds in her head and they fogged her vision. All the calls she waited for. All the nights he came home reeking of perfume, cigarettes, and alcohol. All the snide remarks about how she could do nothing right. He tugged at her wrist but she
did not let go. He raised his voice, speaking to her as if she were a child.

"Lisanne, let go of me right now."

She plunged the spoon into his eye and cranked it hard to one side.
He screamed as his eye tore free from its socket.

"You—fucking—bitch!" He cupped his eye socket and stumbled back. Lisanne dropped to the floor. Blood coursed through his trembling fingers. She rolled her eyes and came at him again. He threw his hands out and waved them.

"Stop! STOP! OH GOD STOP!"

She pummeled into him and knocked him onto the couch. He punched her jaw and sent her sprawling across the living room floor.

"Crazy bitch! You crazy bitch! What-the-fuck!"

Lisanne rubbed her jaw and came at him again. He swung, missed. Lisanne leapt on him and grabbed his dangling eye in one hand. She squeezed and plunged the spoon into his other eye. He screamed and kicked at her, clawing

at her hair, face and arms. He swung again, connected with her breastbone and knocked her down. He brought his hands to his face and howled.

"You're going to pay for this you fucking--!" Spit ran down his chin and mixed with the blood and ooze upon his chest.

Lisanne smiled as she raked her fingertips across her breast bone. She stood and watched him make drunken circles. He cupped his head with bloodied palms.

"I always knew you were shallow. Go on now. Go to your new fucking girlfriend. See if she still thinks you are quite the catch!" She heaved, a grin cut upon her face. Blood and clear fluid dripped from her fingertips. He fell to his knees, his screams pitched into high notes.

"You're fucking insane. INSANE!" His words dissipated into blubbering. Lisanne walked over to him and with one swift movement she grabbed his dangling eye and squeezed it.

He screamed a wordless plea, swung once, and then succumbed to unconsciousness. Lisanne lost her smile and threw the spoon at him. His unconscious body remained unmoved.

"Fuck—YOU!" Spittle gathered upon her bottom lip and flew as she spoke. She stood heaving for a few minutes before going over and stooping to stare at his face. She smiled at the clot-filled eye sockets; they appeared to her like dark carnations, blooming above red curtains on his cheeks. Lisanne gingerly smoothed his sweat-caked hair back from his forehead. She cooed and leaned in to kiss him. Immediately, that burning voice had started in.

"I told you that you were ugly... Stupid!"

She flinched.

"Fuck you too!" She screamed out. She slapped his face in reaction and backed away from his unconscious body. The voice from within only laughed. Lisanne panted and grit her teeth. She whirled around and made her way back through the living room, and stopped in the kitchen. Her skin burned. It felt as if she were being stung by a million pissed-off wasps. She slapped at her skull.

"You stupid bitch! You stupid bitch! You ugly, stu-pid BITCH!"

It was relentless, this voice in her head. It wasn't even her voice and it didn't even sound feminine. A thought slithered across her brow. She remembered his eyes and her ghostly reflection there. She twitched as she looked down at the silverware drawer, still open from its last use. She grabbed another spoon and held it up. Her reflection in the curve of the spoon laughed without sound, and pointed at her.

"I'll show you."

She said, and with stomp of her foot she jabbed the spoon into her own eye. It came free with a slight popping noise and she dropped the spoon, the clatter of metal on tile unheard.

"Dammit!" She screamed, dizzy.

It was more painful than she anticipated it would be, but not as painful as she imagined it. She trembled now as her world turned strangely two-dimensional; fuzzy and flat. Through the pain she cupped her dangling eye, held it up, and looked at it; Glared at it. She grabbed a fork and gripped it, white knuckled, in her free hand. She wavered on her feet and fought the creeping darkness that came at her from all sides. She brought her free-dangling eye closer to her face. Tears leaked from her good eye, but they were simply a side-effect. She hissed at the eye in her palm. "Good-bye, bitch!"

She squeezed the eye in her fist and cackled as her reflection screamed at the oncoming tines.

MAESTRO

I count the ribs;
arc my fingertips,
stroke his bones like
piano keys:

the organs, symphonies.

Taut stomach
a drum,
I hum into the hollow
of his head drag
my thumbs
along his spine.

A tune springs to mind,
a percussionary masterpiece
where I flap my tongue
in
various cavities;

high hat - - knee caps, and tendons
strum with a pulse
that courses
beneath my feet...

...terminus;

my opus,

a most elusive
melody.

THE DEMENTED MIND

Mary Goff lives in Wisconsin with her lover and two sons, who are all really dead and stuffed, but don't tell her! She spends her days telling them little demented stories in the cemetery where she likes to sit and watch clouds roll by with her close-knit family. At night she is known to stalk the neighborhood placing shards of glass outside teenagers' bedroom windows to "Warn them of the evils of the outside world" as she likes to say.

Her hobbies include sneaking into the morgue and touching dead bodies. She has been known to lie on a slab with her arms crossed in the refrigeration unit in practice for her own death one day. She secretly hopes to rise from the grave and taste human flesh, hoping that she will enjoy the chase and kill. Her only regret would be not having the ability to write down her experiences. She assumes her only thoughts would be on finding the perfect moan, avoiding head trauma and feasting on fresh meat.