First Fuck Poems and Dead Nana Stories

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First Fuck Poems and Dead Nana Stories

by Elise Ozarowski

You’ve heard it. The i-just-fucked-this-guy-and-he-doesn’t-really-know-about-it-and-still-plays-with-his-sex-toys poetry. The he-filled-me-with-desire-as-his-skin-brushed-against-mine-and-i-lost-my-breath poems. Hell, you’ve written it. I’ve written it. And I will again. Soon. Very soon. Within a matter of a few pages actually. Those and the first-encounter-with-grief poems. I mean, let’s be serious. When you look at old poets, you know, the ones they bored you with before you’re actually able to appreciate them for how fucking beautiful their sounds are, they write about sex and death, too. It’s kind of a natural human thing. Sex enchants us, even after we’ve had it. Why else would erotica be so popular? I used to tell him that I didn’t need to read about someone else’s sex life because I had my own. Have. Different guy. But have. Have you ever had those creative writing classes where—even if it’s fiction—you’re reading a piece about sex and you’re like and now you’ve made it perfectly clear exactly what your sex life with your boyfriend is like. It’s a tad bit awkward. Or, on the opposite spectrum, you write something that is complete fiction and then a guy from your class messages you and says hey, I just want you to know that I’m here if you ever wanna talk about what happened with that guy since I know you say you feel like he’s the only one who will ever love you and I want you to know that that’s not true and you’re not sure if he read the same piece that you wrote or if you should be proud that your work was convincing or if you should be insulted that someone thought you wrote that ‘he’s the only one who will ever love me’ because that’s the sort of thing you wrote in your journal in sixth grade before you even knew what the roof of someone’s mouth tastes like. Idiot.

Those are also the classes where the death stories come up. I wrote waaay too many of those. Especially after Nana died. I read it back the other day for shits and wasn’t as repulsed by myself as I had first assumed I would be. I was kind of impressed how fucked up I am. That was the one that my parents read because of course they had to read something that their sweet daughter had written about her dead Nana so of course mom felt odd reading about her own alcoholism and dad didn’t like the fact that I highlighted his nasty temper and the fact that Uncle was never able to get over that girl who dumped him twenty years ago—all of these things earned me a phone call and stern don’t-you-think-you-should-write-about-how-resilient-we-are? Perfection is overrated. Writers crave imperfection. Because that’s where reality is hiding. You think Toni Morrison would have become popular if Pecola’s father baked her cookies and told her bedtime stories then went and made love to his wife? That said, Toni Morrison writes about death and sex. We’re kind of hardwired to care about them since we’re all gonna die and college students have lots of hormones and lots of stress that needs relieving. Also, they’re both real. As in if you’re going to write about stuff you care and about, you’re probably not going to write about Natty Light. Although I must admit, I did read a hilarious “ode to natty light” poem once. Some of the love poems you’ve read have actually made you feel something. Like the one about the girl walking home holding her heels in one hand as the earliest golden hour caresses her shoulders. It was from the point of view of the guy who couldn’t sleep and saw her from the bench he was sitting on and prayed oh god please don’t turn this into a cliché and have these two get together and they don’t and you’re internally cheering the writer he could go. All the way. As the guy watches the girl but doesn’t go after her. It’s the fact the he is a human noticing another human presence is enough for you because even though you can’t quite figure out why that moment is so significant, the way the writer told you about this non-interaction-interaction makes you feel you’ve just witnessed something important. Because you have. [1]

45 Months as Twins

by Catherine Kapples

My heart is jumping. I pat my hand on my chest to calm it. I look down at the cold bottle of Dr. Pepper tucked under my arm. I don’t like the taste of coffee yet. I don’t think I ever will. I prefer cold drinks or any drinks cool enough to drink from a straw. I drink a glass of Dr. Pepper with ice every morning, usually from a travel mug, so people just assume it is iced coffee, but this morning I have to settle for a bottle and no straw. I try to slow down my breathing once the elevator doors open. My brother Edward is asleep on the wooden bench outside of the entrance to the hospital’s neurological wing. His breath hums as evenly as a cicada. I sit down on the bench beside him and scan the eggshell walls lined with pictures of green landscapes and smiling babies. I exhale a long breath. My heart still feels jumpy. I fold my arms over my chest and stare at the entrance to the hospital’s neurological critical condition at least. She has had enough success stories.

“Those girls didn’t take her,” Dad says. My parents frequently interrupt each other and talk one after the other, mother, then father, as longtime couples do. They started dating during their freshman year of college, when they were still called Neddy and Mary. Before gray hairs. Before square-toed therapy shoes. Before they were old enough to be my grandparents. “Those girls could’ve easily been the ones with the head injury,” he said.

I look down at my feet and rub my fingers along the stitches that left a clump of dust bunnies, balled-up tissues, and spearmint wrappers. I had hoped Mallory would need more than an empty stomach and seven staples. I had hoped she would be in the Intensive Care Unit or in a more critical condition at least. She has had enough success stories.

“She’s going to be fine. She’s not feeling great right now, but she’ll be fine. She was just over served last night, that’s all,” Dad says. Edward shakes his head slightly. Because of his fifteen-year seniority, Edward takes his role as big brother seriously. Growing up, he gave me piggyback rides and carried my duffle bags. He got me through calculus, called on