

In Her Wake

by Dale Marlowe

Honey's body was shared in death as it had been shared in life. Given over to a crowd of men and women, but mostly men, all of whom had gone away stained with her juices, and would remain so even when they'd washed her smell away. Her scars on their memories sank deep, all stung in the mind by her proximity.

I forgot my name when she walked in, said Fetch Brookstone, her first (male) co-star, in an interview for *Adult Video News*, remembering Honey after the explosion during Beloved's set at the Fourteenth Annual Middel East Peast Festival that had killed her and forty other fans. *She looked like a lost little girl, but she knew right where she was, didn't she? I just wanted to fuck her* (1). Still don't matter, not with Honey. Positions may change, but don't mistake it. She's fucking you.

Years on, a pocked-face survivor of the attack had remarked in *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*:

Honey Thomas, she was standing next to the bomber. She never had a chance. Holding out a jeans jacket, on an old wire hanger, he pointed to a splash of orange, a stain above a small Misfits patch. *This, man. Right here. A piece of her skull landed here. But it fell off. Then I couldn't find it.*

Found: In B----- (2), Texas, a dozen family stood aside a cheap metal coffin; empty inside, yet laden outside by an effusion of day-glo plastic flowers, in the center of which sat nestled a monochrome photo of Honey when she was merely Hope Thomas, before she became whatever it was she became, when she wore a pony-tail tied up in a threadbare, purple scunci, big-lensed tortoiseshell eyeglasses and translucent braces of the kind dentists advertised as invisible but which were were worse, actually, than the metal,

because you could tell there was something going on with peoples' mouths when they had them, just not what--

The photograph on the coffin had been mounted in a cheap plastic frame, fuchsia, echoing the not-found-in-nature color-scheme of the flower arrangement. Logan, her long-suffering father, bought the frame from at the B----- Wal-mart, where he managed the Lawn & Garden Department.

He bought it there, in part, because he got a piddly discount; in other part, because the Wal-mart represented a nexus of time and place and circumstance, where and when Hope had been of an age and innocence that put her near him, independent enough for any father, doing whatever she wanted, yet still close enough to get to her if she needed him.

For a year and a summer, the two of them worked blue-vested, sometimes lunch-mates, other times carpooling; and always, to his delight, when he and Honey were both at home at day's end, trading gossip and shop-talk.

Framing her face, frozen in that time, with a thing from that place, seemed a defiant gesture at the Universe or God or Fate or Whatever puts a Texan's daughter next to a bomb-vested raghead. *Take that.* He'd hemmed her forever in familiar margins of his choosing. It was how he chose to remember, *his* Hope Thomas, and anyone who chose different was welcome to it, 'cept they could shit and fall back in it.

The funeral parlor, a one-time ranch-style home built on spec for a never-to-be subdivision, had donated the room and time and even thrown in one of their display-model caskets. The director, a personal friend of Logan's, had synced an iPod playlist of maudlin C&W mourning standards which, crackling the mono-phone overhead speakers, sounded as if played through a bullhorn, at great

distance. Loretta Lynn, *In The Garden*; Patsy Cline, *Just A Closer Walk With Thee*; Johnny Cash, *Hurt*; also, tinny bluegrass standards, never mind they lived on the fat lobe of East Texas and were more Luzianne than Texan, and neither of those map-pinned identities were anywhere near Kentucky.

To Logan it was the Oversoul that counted, the one throbbing web of mucus connecting the whole of Confederate people, black and white and newblooded Vietnamese and Mexican alike, one swath of humanity under kudzu, who knew to slow their pace in the humid afternoon, to nod at strangers and mourn your dead right, with wailing and broken heartedness and yearning music that dared an afterlife not to be.

The music inside comprised a thin veil over the murmuring outside the funeral home. The crowd of mourners inside was smaller than the boisterous troop of ill-wishers standing roadside, at the curtilage of the funeral home lot. Those dozens, ponchoed to withstand the afternoon's off-again-on-again rain storms, seemed to want to protest lots of things; looming large among their concerns were issues of fact and taste:

Honey was a lesbian (3) an offense compounded, according to one, small and apparently inbred contingent (4), by virtue of God's clear and scripturally evident hatred of faggots, that Honey was a whore (5), that "porn destroyed families", that Honey was an abortionista (6), that Honey hated Israel (7), that Honey's "work" objectified women and supported patriarchy (8), and that the late-career empire of pixellated sin she'd built and distributed planetwide was mobbed-up big-time (9).

Logan watched Ida, his wife, Honey's mother, at the head-end of the coffin. Eyes shut, hand over her mouth, she'd cried herself dry, yet he knew every nerve in her body still burned in grief because the pangs of fear and anger and regret and pure withheld affection of

the Baptist guilt-you-back-to-Jesus variety would build and build and then rock her body in regular spasms, as if she were fighting a terrible case of the hiccups.

He knew the pangs because they were racking him too, and it was breaking his back not to twist when his diaphragm clenched and his abdominal muscles contracted like a hand, curling into a fist. She apparently felt the weight of his stare, because after a little while her hand dropped, she opened her eyes and she turned her face to him.

"What."

"Just looking at you."

Ida wiped mascara from the noseward corners of her eyes.

"Where'd we go wrong, Log?" She asked.

There was plenty to answer to that, but he said,

"Ida, I ain't sure we did."

1 Then, living as she does so much in the world of imagination, constantly living shadow-pictures of her Desire, she is not nearly so liable to the violent insanities of sheer blind lust, as is the male. The essential difference is indicated by that of their respective orgasms, the female undulatory, the male catastrophic. Crowley, Magick Without Tears, XV, Sex Morality.

2 Town's name withheld at the insistence of town's attorneys; pending the outcome of litigation, future printings of this story will designate the town.

3 Vigorously bisexual, in point of fact.

4 Prior to the Convergence, protestors of this sort were known to frequent events where they might be recorded by television "cameras" and later enjoy the pleasure of seeing their own images broadcast on television screens, usually kept in the common areas of middle-class homes.

5 True, in the sense that she made her living having intercourse with men and women who were not her spouse(s).

6 Militant pro-phallus feminist, agreed; however, those close to her assure us she herself never had an abortion, and rued her apparent infertility. An irony, she once remarked, that someone with access to so much semen had so little use for it.

7 !, To this day, no one has a clue about that one, though the placard asserting the claim was photographed clearly.

8 Per strict denotation, yes.

9 And then there's that.

