

Hot Flashes

by Jake Barnes

On high a centaur is pulling a yellow chicken on a sled. The dancers are aloft in midair, high above the houses of the city, unmoored by mortal earth. The man holds his partner's waist lovingly, the dark-haired girl spreads her arms and legs and flies.

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When I died, she said, she was going to have me cremated and put my ashes in the cats' litter box. My wife has a mean streak. I don't think she'd really do it, but I wouldn't put it past her. I told her to go ahead. I don't mind, I said. Dead is dead. Who cares what happens to the remains?

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A woman opens the gate and walks into the yard trailing smoke. She shades her eyes and watches the yellow hills rising beyond the dirt field across the street. The air is dry and smoky from a fire some miles away. The air is cool. A pair of vultures is soaring in a circle high above the rising land, above the hills that will someday once again be green, maybe, someday, if it ever rains.

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Max wanted to watch while I fucked his new girlfriend. "No way," I said. Max was unhappy with me because I had spoiled his fun. I called him later that week, but he wouldn't talk to me, so I talked to his girlfriend's mother instead. She was visiting from South Dakota.

