Sacrifice on Maple Drive

by jake fuchs

"**Sacrificial Vic Bleeds Out On Maple Drive. Writer Wastes Day.**"

My headline if I edited our neighborhood newsletter.

The neighborhood is the Berkeley hills, the favored side of town, and like most such areas is entirely residential. That's fine, but when Sandy and I bought the house up here I didn't anticipate having three kids. Maybe Sandy did. That's my suspicion. So now, besides having to descend to the flats for groceries, we're constantly taking the boys to their schools and soccer and music lessons and, of course, picking them up. As Sandy's teaching, I'm the usual driver, so when at home I must always keep one eye on the clock and can't ever count on an open-ended period of time for writing. This screws my career, obviously, my novel, but family comes first—in our house, anyway.

We can't move lower down, for safety reasons. So I have to just make the best of it. I tell myself that at least twice a week. We have a view of the Bay, but you get tired of that.

The streets here are very twisty. When a cop came to a neighborhood meeting we had because of a rash of car break-ins, he told us his department referred to our part of town as "spaghetti," because of the twisty streets. It was an awkward meeting, since everyone understood, but couldn't say, that the folks grabbing things out of our cars were black kids from the flats. We pretend to be liberals, but it's an act, and it pisses me off. Yeah, I do it too. Talk the talk, or risk ostracism, and that screws up my writing by getting me in the habit of saying things I don't think.

The best solution would be to go up to Mendocino, where it's quiet and I could really get something done. But Sandy likes her job, the kids are doing okay in school, Jason's on some hotshot elite soccer team, Nate loves his piano teacher. I'm stuck.

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Oh, but the twisty streets. They attract sports car drivers from God knows where, all convinced they can earn a try out with Team Ferrari by making their bones on Maple Drive, Berkeley, CA. Yesterday one such moron plowed into a deer.

They wander down from Tilden Park into our territory, our streets, eat our roses. The big one yesterday morning got hit right in front of the house. The wrecked Miata was promptly towed and the concussed driver ambulanced away, but the deer lay around, in pieces, until late afternoon. It took that long for Animal Control to send up a truck. Three pieces if you count the heavy-antlered head, which landed on the sidewalk with the tongue sticking out and one eye closed in a macabre wink. The neighbors came to gaze at the remains and stood around on our lawn talking and making other noises. I pondered selling lemonade. One long goddamn distraction from my work—that's what the entire day came down to.

Whenever I went outside, hoping for Animal Control, I heard mumbles about how this territory is rightfully the realm of beasts, the gentle deer, playful raccoon, noble cougar, and we humans—white humans, they must mean--were the ones who don't belong. So move, I wanted to say. Let's all tear down our houses and let Mama Nature move back in. And this particular slain beast, they kept saying, was a sacrifice--*blood* sacrifice, someone insisted. All this while they're occupying *my* territory and disturbing me.

Now I gotta go. Two kids to pick up. Another afternoon when I did nothing, did not even start because I knew I would have to quit just as I got rolling. The *deer* was a sacrifice? Tell me about it.