

Breaking Dawn

by M. Barns

This is where he died, she says to me and points to the damp pavement. Her hair is wet, and slicked against her neck. The humidity is making everything engulf her. The sleep shorts I bought her last July are loose on her now, but between the rain and her own nervous perspiring they stick in the crevice just below her hip bone. I wonder if she knows I think she's beautiful when she's sad. If she knows I sometimes miss that look more than her smile.

Tommy was thrown over there. She points to the place where a large Oak used to stand. I nod. I do not know these people, but I listen to the story she has told me many times. I listen hoping this will be the last.

She's crouching now. Tracing invisible lines over the pavement. Her legs are wobbly, and I wonder how much longer she will be able to hold herself like that. I walk over and stand beside her. I know I should tell her it will be all right, that she will accept it one day. But she has visited this spot every year for too long now, and I don't know that I can tell her something that I don't think is true.

Do you believe in heaven? She asks. I want to tell her that I believe in her. In the art she is able to create out of her sadness. In the strength it must have taken for her to step back into everyday life after losing the person she called her *soul-one*. That I don't believe she will ever love anyone like she loved him. But I don't. I simply mutter, *No*.

I feel my body brace back as she pushes me. I don't lose my balance, but come close and rock back onto the balls of my feet. She comes towards me again. This time aiming at my face. Dragging her nails across it. I can feel the cold sweat of her hands stinging the scratches as she reaches for me again. *What are you doing*, I yell. *Have you gone mad?* She looks as if she's come back to consciousness after a long night of drinking, not quite sure of where she is, or what she's doing.

Her eyes sparkle with the sweat dripping off her brow. I want to tell her that she's beautiful, and that I don't blame her. That I'd want something to believe in too. But I watch as she walks back to the spot, and begins tracing invisible lines on the concrete, occasionally looking towards the place where the Oak tree used to stand. I watch as she falls back into the trance of who she was supposed to be. And without questioning why, I sit and watch her until the dawn fades away the lines of another year.

