

Killing Hope

by Ron Earl Phillips

I was six years old when Mrs. Greene introduced our first grade class to Hope Parsons, my first crush.

Hope was beauty before I even knew what beauty was with her golden pigtails, brilliant blue eyes and an infectious smile — even after Jamie Delano flung his Frisbee, knocking out Hope's two front teeth.

It had been an accident, but before Jamie could say he was sorry I was on top of him flailing my fists, each repeatedly finding its mark.

Hope smiled through her tears and her purple fat lip.

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I eyed her when she walked into the bar, a gorgeous fuck on heels. Long blond hair teased back to yesterday, a peak-a-boo skirt receding north with the ebb and flow of her stiletto boots. My eyes traveled up and down, settling on her tits; both jumping out her cheap low cut blouse deliberately bought a size too small.

The townies knew her. Like Adam knew Eve.

Setting her round ass on the stool next to me, she rummaged through her purse before leaning close.

“What's a girl gots to do to get a drink around here?”

The regulars laughed on cue, knowingly.

“What do you want?”

Her blue eyes smiled, “What do you got?”

I didn't answer. I pulled a fat wad of twenties from my pocket and peeled one off, laid it on the bar. I walked out and got into my car. She followed.

We went to her place, a room at a rundown lodge that rented by the week, the day or the hour.

“I ain't a whore.” She insisted, but she didn't mind the twenties I laid on her nightstand.

We skinned out of our clothes and got to business.

The bed springs squealed as she rode me. Hair whipped, I could feel she was riding fast to an orgasm, so I held on. We came together.

She flung her hair back and shot me a toothsome smile.

I bucked her off and the bitch crashed into a battered dinette.

I sat up. My face was hot with tears.

I thought of Hope.

* * *

Hope Parsons vanished on her eleventh birthday.

The town mourned, filled with sadness and flyers. Every telephone pole and shop window was littered with her picture. Her blond hair now straight, with a hint of a curl, her blue eyes were brighter and she still had a captivating smile.

Hope was never declared dead, but on her twelfth birthday the town dedicated its new park in her honor. It was an abandoned field, a favorite place of hers to hide and play.

I tried to remember that last day.

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They found the body a day later. Her face was crushed and impossible to identify. Blood splattered violently across the walls and bedding, and pooled around the body.

The red blue neon of a dozen cruisers — local and county cars — flooded the parking lot. Officers stood around, whispering. Seasoned cops were smoking while several rookies were bent over sick.

They all saw the woman in the middle of the room, grotesquely bludgeoned, same as the nine before. A painted red message again read — No Hope.

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Hope's field was smothered with asphalt and covered in useless shops. It had been her favorite place to be, but now it was no longer a field. Not even a park. The town had forgotten Hope, moved on.

I remembered.

She snuck down to the field after her party with my promise of a special gift. Hope smiled when we met and I took both her hands, guiding her deep into the overgrown field. She didn't mind.

We laughed.

My chest fluttered when she asked about her gift. I pulled her close like I'd seen older kids do and pursed my lips.

I didn't expect Hope to pull away, so I tried to hold tighter, but she tugged harder, falling backwards.

The metal spike punched through her chest, a bloody pop. Her eye rolled, her skin paled and her perfect smile withered.

A final body spasm and Hope was gone.

