

The Kill

by Tyler Koch

We laid together most nights, her and I. She would wake me up, ask me to move closer, bring my body to hers. And I would. I couldn't say no. So we lay together most nights, chest to back beneath the thin sheets, her body close to mine.

I knew from the beginning. So did she. We both knew, from the very beginning. She brushed it aside like a strand of hair. It was something never discussed. We talked and laughed, danced and loved, and it was there always. A feeling. Knowledge is power, and power can kill.

I killed her that night. Not in the literal sense. Her heart beat. Her eyes moved. But on the inside she was dead. That part of her buried, now and possibly forever more. I cried for her that night, my tears matching her own, falling for different reasons. I killed her. I did it. I confess. It was something I never wanted to do, never tried to do. But what does that matter? Intentions go so far. Actions kill far more people than intentions ever could.

She changed that night. She closed off, barred that part of her soul, relinquished her confidence. I vowed to never kill again, to bury my guns and ammo in a drunken haze as to never remember where they lay. But to never kill again means to forget how, to lose the ability. Is that possible? To unlearn the learned?

It's a feeling. I feel it every day, like a ghost. It haunts me. I remember the words, the emotions, the tears, the shame. I can't forget, no matter how I try. Maybe I'm not supposed to. Learning is a process, or so I'm told. A process of remembering perhaps, or at best, a process of not forgetting.

They're lined up like gravestones in my mind, the ones I've killed, the only ones I've ever loved. I see them clearly, their names etched deeply into the stone. Maybe one day it'll happen to me. I'll be killed. And then I'll understand. But I already understand. I kill because I can't stop. I kill because I can.

