Three Poems

by John Grey

On Becoming an Eagle

We're cruel when the opportunity arises, to our own skin, the tattoo artist jack-hammers an eagle into a leathery arm, for every wince, a tip of feather, a lick of fire, no rebirth without a trickle of blood, a spurt even better. I visualize a cymbal crashing, waves of sound splashing the ears. Or a tenement imploding, clouds of cement dust, wood like rain. I wish I were tougher, a boxer in a ring maybe bashing some lights out, an ormy devil who ought to be on a leash. I'll growl when the guy's done cutting, leap to the floor, jump around on all fours. We're animal when hungry beasts show up on our flesh someplace. Maybe I'll just bite my lip instead. I've hurt enough. I've earned it.

At the Club

We're oiled enough for what we need to do. A steamy night, we're scrappy and starved. On the prowl for anyone we wish, even the international market. Chortling on all sides, like it's a river. I trace my nails to some lovely with a fine brown map. Buddies move with the light, are coated a bilious lime green. I sit back, like I'm in rain and loving it. Hold onto that head my love or you'll find you're in the sheets. Alcohol operates in just such a way, closes in on you like men. Music blitzes stone processions. We're working that in whatever way we can. Body like a vase, may I sniff your flowers. Supernova eyes - learned that one from the Discovery channel. Have another. I'm boozing my way into your thoughts. Just waiting until the decks are cleared.

Yellow Tape

I'm the guy with the yellow tape. I arrive after the first responders but before forensic, before the detectives in the suits who've seen all this before. I wrap that strip around fire plug, telephone pole, even a parked car and a mail box. I'm paid to separate the ones
to whom death's only a job and the gathering crowds who are there for the novelty of bullet wounds and blood and tears. Some nights, I do nothing but sit back in my patrol car, sip coffee, maybe nibble on a donut, with yellow tape balanced on my knee, a whole mess of it in the passenger seat, a box of rolls in the trunk. Look in on me, one eye closed, one ear cocked for the radio. I may seem loose but I'm ready to spring. Catch a glimpse of these fidgety hands. It's never over.

John Grey, an Australian born short storywriter, poet, playwright, musician, has resided in Providence, RI, since the late seventies. Has been published in numerous magazines including Weird Tales, Christian Science Monitor, Greensboro Poetry Review, Poem, Agni, Poet Lore and Journal Of The American Medical Association as well as the horror anthology What Fears Become and the science fiction anthology Futuredaze. His plays have been produced in Los Angeles and off-off Broadway in New York. He won the Rhysling Award for short genre poetry in 1999.

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