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Hands

by Chelsey Clammer

Your body tears, shatters.

But first, you were walking home at night, thinking about how your ex was an asshole for ripping down every precious picture of you from her office walls, threw them into a box in the middle of your apartment floor, waited for you to discover the silent rage before you moved out the next day. You were walking and thinking about how ten days ago you tried to stay, to listen, to wait for her sobbing to stop, her sobbing over the fact that you wanted to leave, waiting for her to calm down until you realized she would not calm down. You were walking home alone, thinking about how you could no longer stand it, standing there against the wall, standing with stiff emotions, standing there stoically as she crumpled on the wooden floor and sobbed, then finally leaving, leaving her there. As you walked home to the home that would not be yours in a few days, walked home alone with the sobs echoing through your thoughts, you braced yourself for the possibility of another box of torn pictures of your face in the middle of your apartment floor.

You walk. You are thinking about all of this, and you are not thinking about him, the him that is behind you, the him you don't even know is there. And then you hear him. You hear his footsteps, running, and you assume they are the footsteps of a runner. They are quickly approaching, and you step aside to let the late-night jogger slide past you. He does not slide past you. Instead, he grabs you from behind just as you approach the alley. He grabs. You tear, shatter.

He makes you shake. You fight him on the sidewalk, fight him past the darkness of the alley, fight him until he finally walks away. He finally walks away and you barely remain standing as you wait. Waiting for him to leave. You see his back, his back dressed in black. A black jacket and tan pants that will begin to look like every black jacket and tan pants you see on every man's body on every street near every alley. He leaves. He walks down the sidewalk just past the alley. He starts to walk away, then he turns around. Faces you. Turns back around and walks away. Turns around again, walks toward you, getting another look of what he controlled, conquered, then turns again, head held up high. He walks away with shoulders puffed up broader than you will ever feel your own shoulders broaden with confidence again. When he turns the corner, tucks his body around the brick building, you sob, collapse. But somehow you pick yourself up and continue your walk home, still sobbing, still collapsing.

The places where he touched you, where he left his unwanted claw marks have burst into your skin. He pawed at the pieces of you that already felt vulnerable. The back, your center of protection already crumbling under the weight of your break-up. Crumbling from the metaphor of torn sentimental pictures in a box. Your shoulders, too, used to be there to protect you, have always been there, ready to fight, to raise like hackles in the face of encroaching dark suspicions. But as he left you there sobbing, your shoulders sank, drowned in the shame that they failed to protect you when he grabbed. You walk as they become shuddering shoulders, trembling as you blame yourself for wearing this dress, for walking home alone, for stepping aside instead of turning around to guard yourself against the sound of feet sprinting. You walk and lines crackle out from these places, from your back and shoulders. Fissures blast from each area's core. The places that

are torn, shattered.

Now you watch him stagger down the hallway of your memory, watch him crash into your walls, smashing picture frames with his shoulders, leaving remnants of himself in the foyer. You trip over a small bit of the memory of him every day when you return home. An arm, a leg, a chunk of his gelled black hair. Sometimes his hands grab, again. Sometimes you struggle, again, to gain freedom. To repair what tore, shattered.

A year later, it will be her hands that repair, her hands that grab you safely, grab you safely from behind, her hands that hand back to you those torn and shattered parts.

There is a cross on her heart. She is not religious. The cross is more like an X, really, perhaps marking where it is she hopes for something to be found. The scar puckers up three inches above her pierced pink nipple, her almost translucent and smooth flesh a stark backdrop to the gnarled crossed tissue. Her skin is soft, but not innocent. She has marked herself. Marked herself many times. Cut. Slashed. You do not know what she has tried to guard her heart against. You have never asked why, why the X, why over her heart. You can make your assumptions. You can understand.

You have asked her to grab you from behind. To plunge into you, plunge into what it is you need to feel. You are aware that you might be triggered, that you might think of the man who grabbed you from behind a year ago. He, thankfully, did not plunge into you as hard as you want to feel her thumping inside of you. Maybe her pounding will relieve the pressure that has been building at the base of your back, growing with a silent anger and rage. You need her to release you.

She straps on the appendage. Extra Parts, the brand name of the dildo and harness. You watch her hands fondle the straps and silicone mass, and adjust it all to fit her slim hips. Her green Mohawk spikes upward from her smiling face. Her safe face. Her face of solace. You have requested the lights to be on, because you do not want to lose yourself in the dark. You want to see everything in front of you, the maroon pillow, the teddy bear grabbing a plush "I love you" heart, the periwinkle walls with pictures of smiling faces hanging on them. You feel her kneeling behind you, ready for you, ready for the possibilities of your reaction—ecstasy, shuddering, screaming, terror. A combination of all of these things.

You are prepared to tremble in whatever way your body needs to tremble. To tear and shatter if need be.

The quality of her hands makes what feels raw and tender lean towards comfort. The tendons of her palms form themselves around the angles of your hips as you wait expectantly for her to push inside of you. You can feel the two hard metal rings that decorate her fingers against your hips. An anchor on one thick ring circles her middle finger, the other piece of metal on her index finger bears the word cunt. You need these fingers to grasp and control your own cunt. To anchor you. She asks if you are ready, and as you brace your knees and hands in the sinking mattress, you nod your head,

yes. She enters. She steadies her own rhythm and begins to guide you. At first you are not enjoying this. You know you will not come, but you need this. An orgasm was never the point. The point was to feel. To feel her hands. To feel her hands grabbing you from behind.

You fall into her. Your hips buck and rise, but she holds you steady. She controls you with her grabbing hands. You begin to release just a bit, and you do not know how this is possible. How it is that your body trembles in the same way from two different types of hands grabbing you from behind. But you tremble anyway, and something leaves you. You cannot tell what it is that has left. You assume it might be his hands.

Later, in her bathroom, you will wipe yourself clean and see the sign hanging above her sink. *The world is waiting to hear your story*, it says. And it is true, you are finally back in the world, waiting for your story to emerge, to hear what it is that needs to be said. Months after this, she tells you she wants to start writing again. That she was looking through her journals, sifting through the pages with her ringed anchor and cunt fingers, and on every page she found details of her sexual adventures. That is what she wants to write about. You wonder if she will write about you. You wonder if the world is ready to hear that story.

Chelsey Clammer received her MA in Women's Studies from Loyola University Chicago. Her writing has appeared in a number print and online publications, including "Windy City Times", *Make/shift*, *THIS*, as well as upcoming nonfiction pieces in *Sleet Magazine*, *Spittoon*, and *Stone Highway*. She has an essay in the forthcoming Seal Press anthology, *It's All in Her Head*, due out Spring 2013. A resident of Minneapolis, MN, Chelsey is currently working on a collection of creative nonfiction essays about finding the concept of home in the body.

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