

MELT

By Selene Castrovilla

“Instantly the wicked woman gave a loud cry of fear, and then, as Dorothy looked at her in wonder, the Witch began to shrink and fall away.

‘See what you have done!’ she screamed. ‘In a minute I shall melt away.’

‘I’m very sorry, indeed,’ said Dorothy, who was truly frightened to see the Witch actually melting away like brown sugar before her eyes.

‘Didn’t you know water would be the end of me?’ asked the Witch, in a wailing, despairing voice.

‘Of course not,’ answered Dorothy. ‘How should I?’”

— From *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

No Place Like Home

“‘What shall we do?’ asked the Tin Woodman.
‘If we leave her here she will die,’ said the Lion.”

— From *The Wizard of OZ* by L. Frank Baum

Mom stopped crying a
long
time ago.
Now
she don't even
whimper
when he does it. He comes
home
in his bullshit blue uniform shiny black shoes shiny tie clip shining
badge
he blows in and the screen door
slams
behind him like it's pissed off

he's

back.

He comes in shuts the front door clicks the lock closed

he wipes his shoes on the mat

back and forth

back

and

forth he pads across the shit-brown carpet without a sound

his eyes are empty his eyes are

dark his eyes are

wrought

lead like his

Glock.

I catch a whiff of his favorite mouthwash

Jack

Daniels

he used to smell of Listerine and Jack but he don't bother trying to

cover

up

these days.

Without a look he goes past me and Jimmy and Warren. Warren's got his textbooks

spread out across the couch but he ain't studying

not

nomore. Grim music drifts from our video game low

chilling

sounds like any second the reaper's gonna

strike. Me and Jimmy we're playing Halo on X-Box, least we were 'til

he

came

back. It's like we're paused

we're all on

pause whenever

Pop

comes

home.

We ain't putting down the controls cause if we look at him if we act like we're paying

attention to what he's doing then he

might

come

after

us

next.

The freakish Halo music plays on and

on and

on. He heads through the arch to the kitchen his shoes stamping on the green linoleum

he goes right over to her at the stove cooking his goddamn mashed potatoes stirring

stirring

stirring she don't move don't run she just fucking stirs

stirs

stirs

he says

nothing

to her to the

girl he married to the

mother

of his kids he comes behind her at the stove his shoes squeak he

grabs

her

the spoon plops in the potatoes no not even a plop not a sound it

sinks soundless

like

her.

He holds her against him blue sleeve on white apron

squeezing

squeezing

squeezing into her ribs like he's doing the Hiemlich

his tie clip presses in her back

he sticks his semiautomatic piece of crap weapon in her mouth clanks

it against her teeth shoves

it

down

her

throat clicks

off the safety and she don't

make a sound

she

just

stands there and takes it. Not a peep not a flinch not a blink of panic

nothing she just takes it she

melts

for him

melts like the butter she stirred in his mashed potatoes made from

scratch

peeled one by one

eyes carved out

she

melts she just disappears

she's

gone.

Like every husband in the world kisses his wife like this.

Like she

deserves

it like she did something that'd

make

it

okay

for the man who

swore

to

love and cherish her

to do

this

in front of

me.

Hey, I saw the video. There wasn't nothing in those vows 'bout guns or fists
neither for that matter. Do you Caitlyn Ruby Shields promise to take a pounding anytime
Joseph Thomas Riley damn well feels like laying one on? No, I don't think Father
Gallagher mentioned that.

God I

hate

that name I

hate that I'm

named

after

him. My pop I mean. Not Father Gallagher.

Mom in her satin white dress with the lacy veil and the puffed
sleeves the long

train

dragging

behind her the big-ass bouquet of white roses she

cradled

in her arms

poor

Mom she looked so happy no one told her 'bout the guns. And

him

he's standing there by Father Gallagher in his black tux black bow-tie

that

prick

he's always so fucking neat looking so smug hair slicked back I could've killed him even

then if

only

I was born.

That's a
lie
I can't even
kill
him
now.
I just sit here
pretending
to
play
Halo while my mom gets a Glock rammed down her throat I can't even save my mom
from this piece of shit who goes out to serve
and
protect
all day
some
joke.

She stopped crying like five years ago.

She stopped crying when I was twelve.

Me I never cried much not in front of him he warned me not to.

He told us me and my brothers not to let one tear drop on the carpet or we'd get it too.

He don't hit us much he just

says

he might.

Me and Jimmy we're pussys I guess Warren's nine what could he do but me and Jimmy

we sit there

day

after

day fingers touching stupid useless buttons day after

day night after

night he hits her hits

her hits

her and we watch.

Week after

week month

after month we

watch.

She gets slammed

into walls so hard pictures fall she gets shoved

so rough his finger marks are in her arm she gets thrown

to the floor and kicked

kicked

kicked

and we hold our controls and we hold our breaths and watch we

watch

we watch.

Warren cries in bed. I check on him before I go to sleep, stick my head in his door. The blankets are pulled up over him he's just a

lump

underneath. There's no noise but the covers shake he's under there holding it

all

in

I know cause I did that too.

He's only nine.

He'll learn to cut that shit

soon

enough.

Me and Jimmy we don't cry.

And she don't cry neither.

So

what's the

problem maybe this is

normal maybe this is

life maybe everybody on Long Island does this behind the doors they close and lock

when they come

home.

This's all I know and
maybe
this's right but it
don't feel right I wanna help her
but
I
don't.

I watch Mom suck steel and then we all eat. We sit at the
table slide our chairs in
we pick up our forks
like
nothing.
Pass the potatoes.