

THE FALL

by Kaye George

published in "Writer's Post Journal" September 2005

first prize, flash fiction under 500 words

I was awful glad I found Sherrie to talk to, but it was hard to see her what with us livin way out the back a beyond like we did. Howard only took me to town oncet a month. You could count on im gettin mighty drunk ever time, though. I could sneak into the women's shelter to see Sherrie whilst he was in the bar. She gave me ta see I could leave the snake – no more bruises, cut lips, smashed ribs. I could just stay at the shelter. I decided I would cut and run next trip.

I took a pretty bad fall the week before, though. The emergency nurse looked at me like she thought it was the usual; me sayin I fell, but it not bein true. This time it was, but I couldn't make her believe it. So that's how it happened I was in the hospital for the next trip to town.

The day I got back home, damned if Sherrie didn't show up at the door. She was wonderin why I hadn't showed up like I said I would. Howard seen her from the barn, but she hightailed out a there fore he reached the house. He cussed and slapped me for hours, askin who the hell she was and what the hell she was doin out here. So I was right back in the hospital. This time that uppity nurse had good cause to give me her look.

Well, I laid in that there cot thinkin on Howard and the future, and I couldn't see just walkin out and him not gettin no consequences. I was goin to walk out, sure enough, but Howard was goin to suffer some. It was only right. I wanted that nurse to look at him like she looked at me, thinkin, You nothin but a liar.

Okay, so I rigged it up one night. Howard had some beer at bedtime so he was sleepin all noisy-like, couldn't hear a thing. I stretched a cord across the top of them stairs, the same ones I really fell down that one time. I laid awake the rest a the night, couldn't sleep a wink.

In the mornin Howard got up, all right. He pissed and spit, rinsed off his face and swished out his mouth. He smacked my rump comin past the bed tellin me it was time to get out and do the chickens. I propped up a little and watched him go for the stairs.

The noise was mighty when he fell, but there was no moanin nor groanin after he landed. I pussy footed out the bedroom and peeked down the steps. His neck was at a terrible angle and blood dribbled out his mouth.

Now I stay in a pretty nice place. Don't ever have to feed chickens or milk cows. All my meals and clothes provided. Don't even have to sweep no floors. This is called takin a fall, they tell me.

THE END

© Judy Egner