I Kill the One That Kills The Flow

by Gregory Houser

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‘I’m not going to kill the flow.
I’m going to shatter the glow.’
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Occasionally, I look in the mirror,
though I take just a glimpse from as far away as possible,
squinting my eyes.

I go by the show
but feel a little off,
it's all so clean and the lights are so bright.
Really, I must be scaring someone
standing by the door
thinking about it all too much.

While smoking, I speak with an employee
who is working in the back.
He's from Chiapas in Mexico and of Mayan descent.
He grew up working a job breaking rocks
and so we get along.
He speaks in a slow, otherworldly way
while patiently and cleverly doing his job
as if he didn't really care
or was past caring.
Later, that night I stay up
remembering hauling and spreading rock one time
with a fellow employee
in the hot sun.

There was nothing on the horizon
only field after field and
a building made out of aluminum nearby.

Doing such jobs
you forget about time,
losing yourself in the same movements
over and over again.

You arrange your energy
to the necessary rhythm
and occasionally make small alterations to it,
keeping just alert enough
so that you can keep going on,
the sun at your back the entire day
making your words strong, brittle, and also lost.

Though, even if you would have likely never known your fellow
employees

unless you had worked with them,
you don’t forget times when
each other's personalities were put aside
and you were only bodies performing the same movements,
working towards the same goals.

Or, I remember, at night, alone, watching clouds
going across the dark sky.
At some point, you begin to wish you could disappear into
the sky also, that you could be gone
and part of another world.
You make a decision
and then one day you are in the new world city,
red lights from cars stopped in the street
blinking off of glass and steel on buildings
outside your window. You could be on the run,
an alien. You tell people that you’re not that bad
but they do not seem to comprehend. Each day
becomes closer and closer to a void.
What would it be like if you had power
and people had to listen to your words.

You begin talking in your own rhythm, breaking it--

the new world's gods looking at you suspiciously

like you might have a problem. Though you keep

following each transgressive honesty with another.

Really, its nothing, but it feels so good

even if you're hungry and can't sleep.

You don't know what time it is and you stay up all night

to steal the feeling of the early morning.

Soon, you have your first dream in years.

Nothing, really, just words that keep cutting

and searching for an edge.

Until, one morning, the same thing that had held you back

comes again to leave your dreams scattered

on the morning floor. And so you hope

whatever poetry had been put into them

won't be lost, that they might contribute to that

world you had been looking for.
In an Elevator

She stops the elevator between floors.

Her friends have already gone up to their place
to prepare the ha-ha.

She smiles and says

would you like to get out?

At about 6'2" and well built

she might still be a man

but has beautiful curly black hair

and lipstick about to smear.

I'm standing reflectively by the wall.

Come on, you don't want to.

She plucks a lock of hair from my head

and lets it fall to the ground, too bad,

I'm better than that sweet world you're in search of.

Finally, we get to the floor.

She makes me wait outside.

I'm beginning to get a queasy feeling. I can hear screaming

in the room.

She opens the door. You can't come in.

In the background, I can make out her friends carrying
someone. He looks heavy at points and isn't moving as they push him to the bathtub.

As she closes the door, she picks up an old towel to keep the sounds out.

Unwashed, it no longer has a distinct color and is dry with stains.

I look out the window in the hallway next to the room.

Below is the freeway.

It's a dark night, but the lights in the street leave a fluorescent orange tinge in the air.

The freeway sounds like an ancient river but doesn't lead to a different place than here.
Out of the Way

I've been wandering around all night looking for a way to continue my high.

I run into a tall, thin, older man who knows a place.

After walking, we arrive at a place on the other side of downtown. It's on a long dark street with a tall concrete wall on one side and about four or five seemingly abandoned large houses on the other.

Inside,

there is a large lobby in the center and people dart in and out. It is poorly lit except for an old chandelier that works intermittingly.

Someone takes to me a room the size of a shoebox in which a couple old enough to be my grandparents live.

My friend returns a few minutes later and we cook up some hash.

Then, a young woman who speaks only Spanish opens the door. She's desperate and seems as though beyond insanity.

She looks at me. You? Are you going to fuck me?

she says in Spanish, me chinga, me chinga.
Then, she rushes out.

She runs along the balcony screaming in pain.

Someone who might be her pimp is running after her.

She slips down the stairs, but gets up and keeps running.

Her screams echo throughout the building.

The guy who I’m with comes back to the room and we leave.

We walk around and drink in the few remaining minutes of the night, speaking only occasionally.

After a little while, we fall asleep on some leftover furniture in an alley. In the morning,

I wake up as the sun scalds my face.
City Room

The front desk has a bulletproof window
behind the old wire grating.
When I come in, they check me in the same way
every time. The guard with hip, imitation glasses
has begun to recognize me and nods his head,
though we rarely talk.
They usually give me the same room.
I don't see many people in the hallways,
but I can hear screaming and fighting at night.
When I get to my room I smoke cigarettes
and turn on the t.v.
I lie on my bed for hours looking at the ceiling.
I can hear who ever is next to me watching television also.
I look in the mirror but advert my eyes
worrying about being a murderous looking loner.
Days on end with no people anywhere.
Everyone hidden in cages.
Tonight, it feels as if someone is watching,
and writing with little needles.
Blinking lights come in the windows.
Sweat on the brow, no words, no stories,
no open gestures…

Longing for a new breath, another spontaneity,
as I hear a pointless, brutal fight in the street below,
longing to explode…
Dead Eyes

Here, Hollywood hangs over the city
as if the Parthenon over Athens,
but you have to have
contacts to experience
the life it offers.
You wander in the night
near Sunset
nearly stepping on needles on the side streets
trying to find a magazine
or listen to a show
on the East side.
At times, you stumble
and cough up blood
from the dreams you are forced to
digest.
Your stomach
can't manage it,
and you think if you don't spit it out
that you might die.
In the final stages,
the eyes become cold and brutal
like an insect or an assassin's eyes.
In the beginning, it seems as if they're
stoned, adrift, or lost to the world.
They say the trick is
to learn how to use
whatever it is that is creeping up inside you
and to turn it to your benefit.

You might be going through something like this also.
If you are locked up all day
inside of places--apartments, cars, offices--
it sneaks up on you quietly
tearing apart the fabric of the image
you had begun to make for yourself
until, you've forgotten how to begin once again,
or what the image even was.
Unable to think clearly, eyes watering,
you plan to make tomorrow a better day
though everything looks so close, so appealing,
ev-en if you can't quite reach out and touch anything,
maybe it's a state of horror
you don't quite recognize.

Some, torn from pleasure,
begin to think only in abstractions
seeking money and sex,
madly rushing, reasoning, and crafting
for a little slice
of pleasure
until one day, they are caught in the intricacies
they've learned so well
afraid to do anything,
mummified, neither dissonant
nor harmonious.

A few artists make things like clouds--
a little imperceptible or somewhat understandable--
as if to put in disarray or to comment on
such states.

I also lie in my bed
listening to the pulse in my body
unable to follow anything else,
running in the night,
as someone
who has begun
however mistakenly to refuse
the sickness,
not quite like the others now,
lost,

enough to kill.
After the Protests

Like many people, we go to the protests hoping that, at least to a small extent, we might contribute to a changing America.

We walk along the areas that have been set up for protesting along Sunset as it veers off into other areas, passing an opposing location that has been set up for people with more conservative viewpoints to protest us. We continue to hang out in the evening with people after it is over. A group continues to walk along the streets chaotically, refusing to go home, in the night.

As the group heads towards the West Side, more and more police are called in until finally they begin to surround the few remaining protestors on a blocked off corner.

There are about three police officers to every protestor, helicopters in the sky, and an endless amount of weapons, assault rifles and the like. One of the police shouts through a megaphone to us that we must 'disperse immediately' or we will be
arrested.

They begin to walk in from all sides.

The few remaining people are arrested for disorderly conduct or disrupting the peace in the quiet corner of the Los Angeles night next to a freeway with no residents to disturb in sight as if a few final stray flames from the fire that had momentarily lit up a distant area in the night were carefully stamped out.
In Transit

I want to scream fuck.
I do not care if I am happy or sad.
I don't know if I am hungry or not.
I don't know where any of my important information is at.
I want to take a knife
and a hurl a curse
at the glassy eye
that imposes this silence
shattering it
on the smooth tiling of an endless floor.
Conversation

Sitting on the corner in the morning sun,
I am drinking a coffee.

When I walk along the street,
I run into a woman with a book in her hand.
It looks like she's chosen the day
to read outside.
I stay back a little at first because it seems
as if she might be searching for
a certain good-hearted type,
but after a few minutes
I realize that it's possible she might be interesting.
She's studying avant-garde work and theory
including the latest developments
in regards to reworking boundaries.
She asks me about myself
and I mention that I've been to school
though I'm currently in need of work.
But this isn't quite what she wants.
The conversation changes
as we begin to talk about politics,
the sky, or whatever comes to mind.

After about an hour,

it has turned a little cold outside,

and it's time for us to leave.

It seems like she wants to meet again later,

but, then, as if unable to help doing so,

or, just to be sure,

she reverts to her previous line of questioning.

You seem so mysterious, really tell me more about yourself,

could you give me just a few more details,

it seems like something's missing to your picture.

It's beginning to rain and my throat's a little sore.

I cough and feel as if I've just stepped out of some new world

Chelsea Hotel.

I drink my last sip of coffee and throw away the paper cup,

but by this time it's too late.

She gives me a card with her company's website and her email address.

Everyone is quiet, productive and in their own mental spaces,
as I walk

amidst ruins or a sparkling, white stoned cemetery,

thinking about how to breathe.
I'm Not Going to Kill the Flow. I'm Going to Shatter the Glow.

Writing this poem,
I just want to shatter the fuck out of the sterility of this world.

With a leather jacket,
I sit on the steps,
body thin, fed on cheap supermarket food
out of control,
no hope,
just setting off words like bricks
that shatter,
shatter, shatter
the joy you were about to exclude others from,
everything in the streets--chaotic,
open, joyous.
Who Are You?

"A continuous perturbation without images or words beats at my temples and obscures me." —Pasolini

No one really.

I collect my words
from the places I go
off a sign
or from a magazine or two
and rearrange them.

Just wandering around in the depths of
the city,
not saying anything,
lips kept together.

No face,
just a pair of eyes,
some desperate clothes,
might as well be alone.

Working day and night,
in an empty echoing building,
just another blue flame
ready to set the world on fire,
ready to explode.
**GREGORY HOUSE** is a poet.

He now lives in a room off the JMZ in Bushwick, New York. Though, he has dedicated time to political concerns, he draws from various avant-garde approaches and contradictory energies found in the beginnings of punk and others. He is opposed to the increasing control being implemented in cities, cultural centers, and throughout society, and he is for breaking apart the boundaries that have been rebuilt or are being reconstructed by ‘unrestrained free-market’ capitalism and other developing social arrangements. He has no interest in settling down or wising up.