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The Cherry

KIM TUFFELMIRE

The cherry on the end of her four hundredth
cigarette
illuminated her saliently sculptured foreign face
as she nervously inhaled.
The smoke enveloped us in a sallow
cloud of privacy.
I could still make out the exotic curve of her form
in the flickering light of the strobe
that so rudely penetrated our dark corner.
Her large round dark eyes hinted of
her many secrets.
Her tan was Syrian, sunglasses by Gucci.
Long midnight waves cascaded down her back.
Black leather pants fitted like a glove
bought with money hustled from a mutual
friend of ours.
By day she was a Private Investigator,
by night a dancer in a far away town.
Men would reach for her in vain.

She taught me how to drink Tequila
without grimacing.
I showed her how to drink Martinis
without swallowing the olive.
She showed me how to make a breakfast
fit for drunken champions.
Beer and tomato juice over Wheaties.
We made up stories to impress strangers.
We lied to our friends, and forgot the lies.
We worked the crowds at parties,
accepting phone numbers as if we would
really call someday.
We re-wrote the book on sex, lies and men.
She said she was a famous dancer; I said
that I could tell.
We reminded each other how much fun it was
to really laugh at everything and nothing at all.

Our mutual attorney friend called one day
said she had lied about everything.
He had proof.
I guess she didn't trust me enough to tell me.
He asked us both for a date, the Penn
club by limousine.
We conspired, for the last time
urging him to leave the country, or the planet.
The choice was his.
Her black sequin party dress still hangs
in my closet.
The smell of her perfume, still lingers
in my dresser drawer among the discarded outfits.
Her well polished eloquence and
poise remains unmatched.
So young and yet so urbane.
What lonely place did she disappear to?
Her phone number waits quietly as I evolve
enough to dial it.

I saw her today on the cover of Mademoiselle.
She made it to the top, looking great without
the boob job.
I read in the newspaper that she was elected
the first woman president; I was the first to
vote for her.
She was the lead dancer in "Cats"; I sat in the front
row.
The note I sent to her by pigeon
said that it really didn't matter why she lied.
She was just a little girl when he
stole her dreams.
There is no retribution for a broken childhood.
Our mutual ex-friend attorney called me today,
said he read in the paper that she got married.
She was always great at pretending; she
was an actress
in a foreign film when she sold her soul to him
at the altar.
She swirled her Cherry Gimlet as she
smiled that smile.
And we requested her favorite song, "Rough Sex."