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Pearl in the Dust

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PEARL IN THE DUST

by Marka Rifat

Pearl watched the twisters dance around the plain. A two-mule plough could not shift her bones. Let the spindles of ochre dirt do all the rejoicing. Eb was dead. Three words to cover the months of whispered, patient planning with her young cousins when Eb slept, then the way it happened and how long it took. It was supposed to be quick, killing an old jack rabbit with a rock, but Eb was some Bible beast when it came to it, roaring, screaming fury.

Looking at the plain lulled her claw thoughts. The fields had long gone, the green crops sickened, the shoots yellowed, turned paper dry and blew away.

When they had seen Eb was beyond fighting for his sorry life, brought to ground by Pearl and the wood axe, the cousins continued to pummel their captor with their bony boy fists. Then they ran around the farm house, Aaron and James, throwing onto the splintered boards what they didn't want to steal. Aaron, Eb's blood stiff in his hair, launched a plate spinning into a window. Glass and china shattered and that set the pair on busting every pane.

Shrieking, they broke down the locked larder door. They ate as they stood, silently packing ham and peaches into their split-lip mouths.

When the boys had dwindled to grey specks in the swirling dust, the axe fell from her thin fingers and Pearl managed four steps to sit in the empty window frame.

Marka Rifat

Marka Rifat lives in north-east Scotland. She writes stories, poems, plays and articles. Recently commended in the Toulmin and Janet Coats Memorial prizes and featured in the John Byrne Award, her work appears in more than twenty North American, UK and Australian anthologies.



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BACK TO TOP