

Don't Hurt Me

By Nneoma Prudence LaMarche

I stepped on a rusty nail when I was 9.
I winced in pain, but deep down inside I enjoyed the feeling.
To feel, to hurt, to bleed.
To need the care of someone who loves me,
As a result of my own carelessness.

I would walk around outside
Wearing cheap shoes,
waiting for the time
When one of these things
would pop up and slide
through my heel.
I'd hobble around, balancing on one foot,
Racing to someone who could care for it.
My foot, but really my heart.

You see, what I really needed was for someone to see
The pain deep inside.
That if they saw my external hurt,
It would help me to heal the wounds within.
Two times I remember going outside
Just hoping to get hurt by the little iron spear.
I wouldn't even cry, I thought.
I refused to shed one tear.

But I'm a woman now.
I no longer wear those kind of cheap shoes,
And I'm careful about which ones I choose
To wear outside.
No longer do I hope for that pain,
No longer do I want to feel that kind of hurt.

Now that I think about it,
I could see the nails lying on the ground in the dirt.
I was a foolish girl to want that,

To want to inflict pain upon myself.
I didn't realize the risks,
Therefore, I could not resist.

But now I know pain all too well.
I am afraid to get hurt,
And I wonder if you can tell.
I don't want to step on any rusty nails.
I don't want to hobble on one foot
And then let out a faint yell.

So forgive me if I fear the pain
That you could cause
By me giving you my heart.
I was a fool in my youth
And I fear that this still is my truth.
I don't want to be a fool for loving you.

I don't want you to hurt me.
Having my heart broken could feel like
Someone stabbing me in the heart
With rusty nails.
Though my feet may be strong,
My heart is weak.

If you ever love another woman over me,
Please tell me and allow me to accept defeat.
If your eyes can only see me,
Please don't make mine to cry.
I can't handle the pain.
So I ask, if you truly love me,
Please, don't hurt me.