

*Laurel Winter is an accomplished reader of both poetry and prose. This chronicle of loveddeath is a bit of both.*

# Flo & Eb

by Laurel Winter

**I**t was one of the more-recent-ish of the times they didn't get together. She reminded him of milk & cookies. He was into tits & ass.

You have to understand about the conservation of knowledge, even though they didn't/don't/won't understand it themselves. There always was/is/will be only a certain amount available to the two of them, regarding the nature of their relationship. It can be divided up however—a little for one, a lot for the other; vice-versa; equally dispersed into not enough for each—but there's never enough for both of them to know all that is necessary. Never.

In this case, she had it all. "Sorry kid," he said, when she rang his doorbell at 7:22 a.m., interrupting his coitus. "Not interested."

He was way into sex, but he wasn't a perv, so a little girl in a green dress didn't do it for him.

"Cookies," she said. "The peanut butter ones are really good. The Peanut Butter Patties, not the sandwich ones. You'll like them. I know you will."

"Don't need any," he said.

She tried to thrust the clipboard into the closing doorway. "Please." He was thirty-something and maybe cute, but in a scary grown-up-man sort of way. She was in sixth grade and about to move to Texas. Some other member of her troop would end up doing the delivering. But he was why she'd become a Girl Scout, knowing, somehow, that selling him three boxes of Peanut Butter Patties the year she turned twelve would be all the contact allowed in this lifetime.

"No, thank you," he said, firmly, not wanting to encourage her desperation and being rather an expert in the art of the brush-off. He closed the door and went back to his current lover, who'd come from Canada to see him and had plenty in the way of T & A. "An early Girl Scout," he said, slipping out of his robe and back

into bed. "I told her we didn't need cookies for breakfast." They laughed and got back to sex.

They finished to both their satisfactions, more or less. At a certain point he couldn't put off work any longer, so he showered and shaved and donned his office GQ.

When he opened the garage door she was standing in the middle of the driveway, behind his car, obviously late for school. "I won't go until you buy some cookies."

She was skinny and lightly freckled and something about the way she looked at him made him want to cry for a second. Instead, he bought three boxes of milk chocolate-covered peanut buttery cookies and some other girl, rounder and less intense and accompanied by her mother, delivered them some weeks later. And that was that, except that the cookies almost reminded him of something that would have made him cry. He was grateful they were over-packaged and short on actual cookies.

One or the other of them got hit by a bus before she could grow up enough to make it remotely legal.

Most of the times they didn't share location or language, just a vague or specific sense of something missing.

Only rarely did their names actually have anything to do with ebb, or flow. She was Florence Nightingale and he died before she arrived at the battlefield. Maybe that's why she went in the first place, looking to heal that wound.

Another time his name was Ebony and he cooled her with a peacock fan in the big house. She called him boy and sold him to a friend of hers when he was four years old. He clung to her leg and cried. She had to beat him with a wooden serving spoon to detach him.