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Jill Neimark

After The Fight, The Paint

Lover, you slept and I lay painting your body
lapping cleaved rock of the blades on your back, jaw and hips, too, I painted
your heart all night.

Left only your wrists and ankles untouched.
It was meticulous as prayer
like a bricklayer erecting a mosque.
You woke and whispered, *Wow, these are manacles only in reverse, the places you left free.*

Yes, now you'll always belong to me.

And what do you want to talk about, I asked, as you served morning tea.
Apples, quartered. Honey from the turned wood of a dipper.

Anything, you said. *Last week the whole relationship almost got shitcanned, so anything's a gift now.*

And then you put your arms around me. *Don't leave.*

I could feel you dredging those words out of the place
where they had plummeted when I walked out and you looked down
stoic, unmoved
And now, a man with no pride, you dove down and found them for me.

Paint my ring finger, you said, *with the word 'restraint'*

The Gist: Jill Neimark is the author of adult and children's fiction, as well as a journalist who has been published in Discover Magazine, Scientific American, Science, Nautilus, Aeon, The New York Times, NPR, Quartz, and Psychology Today. Her novel, Bloodsong, was a BOMC selection, translated into Italian, German and Hebrew, and optioned for film. Her poetry, essays and reviews have been published in or are forthcoming in The Rumpus, Aeon, Los Angeles Review, Borderlands, The Massachusetts Review, Cimarron Review, Tiny Seed Journal and Construction Literary Magazine.