

Fire Sale, Y'all

a trauma response
in poetry and prose

Kerry Lynne

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note to reader

Trigger Warning

This collection of stories and poems contains graphic and vivid depictions of sensitive and potentially distressing topics. It explores intense and challenging experiences that may be triggering for some individuals. Reader discretion is strongly advised.

Dialect

Some poems in this collection are written in dialect to reflect the cultural and regional influences that shaped my experiences and storytelling.

introduction

What is a fire sale?

Definition from Oxford English Dictionary:

FIRE SALE *noun*

: a sale of goods remaining after the destruction of commercial premises by fire

: a sale of goods or assets at a very low price, typically when the seller is facing bankruptcy.

For me, it was a trauma response. My marriage ended in betrayal. I was in a post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) episode lasting from the moment I learned the truth to likely months after the divorce was finalized.

Part of this PTSD episode included a deep feeling of claustrophobia. The marital residence and all its contents felt like a heavy anchor drowning me. I had to free myself of the burden somehow—and fast. I sold virtually everything in the house using a quick and efficient online auction and then sold the house. This is my definition of a Fire Sale, Y'all!

I offloaded things I needed.

I sold things I wanted.

I sold all the things.

I couldn't see past the moment I was in.

I was in crisis.

It didn't take long to realize I'd made a mistake. Fittingly, I have titled the chapters of this poetry collection based on the stages of fire development: Incipient, Growth, Fully Developed, and Decay (see Figure 1*).

In the incipient stage, you see how my childhood experiences and modeled family environment set the stage for dysfunction.

It's the growth stage where my own choices and state of mind are now in play, leading to a snowball effect as the fire rages to the flashover, which is the most intense growth point leading to the full development of the fire.

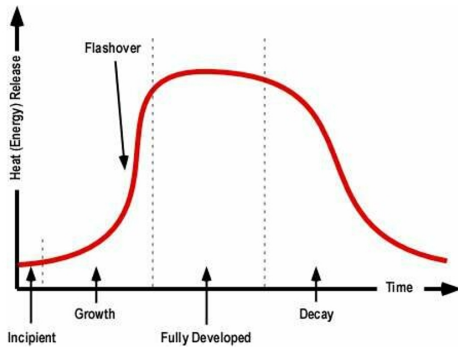
As the extent of betrayal is revealed, I make my way to the fully developed stage.

With time, the fire starts to die down and I regain control of my life as the embers of all the decisions I made in crisis now decay. The decay stage sounds terrible; however, it is in this phase where my healing occurs.

This is where I am now. In a state of acceptance and hopeful optimism. At least, most of the time.

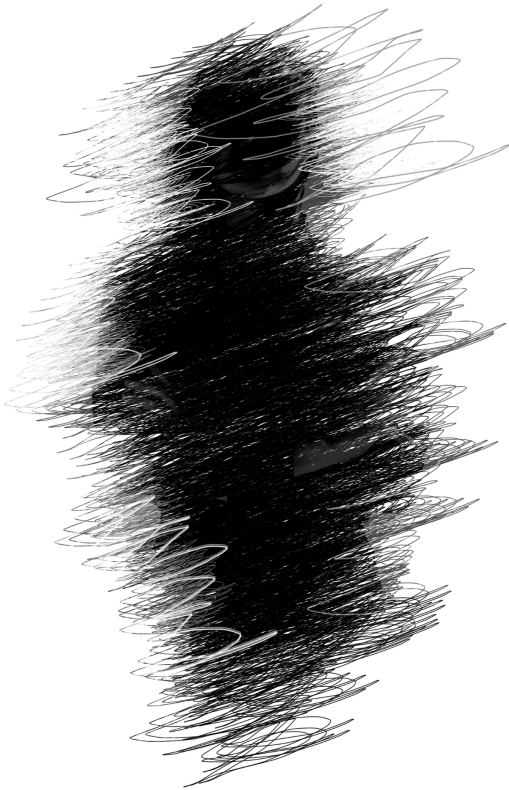
Perhaps the fire sale had to happen to get me here. I no longer find myself in regret. I am understanding. Let me show you how I got here...

Kerry Lynne



**Figure 1: Fire Development*

incipient



to me

This thing happened
A tragedy really
It happened to me
I mean, it was done
To me
Afterwards, I looked for help
I didn't find it

Alone
Truly
Those in my life
Who were supposed to help
Nurture
Protect
Did not happen
To me
I was young
Very young
Just how it was
So I thought this must be
How it is to be

Adapt
I went about my life
As best I could
Broken inside
From the thing
The doing thing
The done thing
Paralyzed inside
At times
Most times
I am good at alone
No one can hurt me again

When I am alone
It's safe

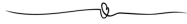
Doubt
All things
I stay busy
With doing things
Done things
Do more things
And so it goes
Choices present
I pass them by
By and by
It is nice
Staying still

Alone
Safe
Sometimes sad
I am sad
Sad doesn't hurt anymore
I know sad
It's always there
Like alone
Much time has passed
I am older
I'm wiser
I am strong but afraid
I feel weak but steady of hand
What do I have to show

Done things
Amount to nothing
Gone places
Nowhere is home
No one is my home

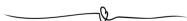
Nothing has happened
Since the thing was done

To me
No one belongs to me
I belong to no one
I am no one



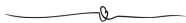
set me free (*written in childhood*)

I remember being scared
Praying once again
It will be my mother to hold me and carry me home
The door opens, a man...
His face hidden by my own mind
I wrap the covers around me so tight
My fingers dig into my palm
His breath stinks of beer
His hands cold and rough
I begin to hate her more than he
For she was never there to set me free



bills and pills

Momma sits with puffed wet eyes, black from the night before
whoring
Only the pillow to wash her face
Not really
End of the month keeps coming
Every damn month but the money don't
The pills and the thrills ain't cheap either, but she ain't ever
gonna admit to that
A required numbing of the senses, no doubt
"Gotta roll the quarters and pinch the ends tight, girls
Stack the ones and count them twenties...
Man, this can't be right
Short again"
Long, hard sodomizing drag on the cigarette
"Don't scrub the stockings too hard, child, I have to wear 'em
this evening"
Tears staining her still perky breasts
Not perky enough to pay the bills
Damn it



remember

“Don’t worry, he’s here to help
Met him at the bar

He ain’t gonna hurt us at all
Let’s hurry and go before this one gets outta jail itching for
another soft face to bashup”

I touch my busted lip as she adjusts her collar over fresh purple
stained skin
I hadn’t noticed it was purple until that moment, I remember
now

Feeling stronger that day though my lip wasn’t right
I spat in his face this time

Hadn’t ever done that to no one let alone a grown man chok-
ing my momma
Me and sis had to leave the kitties

I hated it, I remember still
Their soft cries

I cried too but not in front of nobody
Especially no stranger from a bar

Wasn’t long before he put his hand in my shorts
I was the older one, still am of course

My boobs hadn’t come in but he was squeezing them anyway
“Least he ain’t hitting you, child

You remember that, okay?”
I never did forget, at least not about my kitties soft cries or his
hands, which never hit me