On becoming a man
by Kelly Mullins

Fate didn't draw me this way, you did.
You wanted my lines carved from stones thrown by accusations and humiliations demanding I be more than any boy is capable.
But I didn't want to be more.
More than what?
More than natural reactions to things that break my chest?
No, I did not weep.
I fixed my expression, felt the warmth beneath the flesh on my face, puffed out my broken chest, grinned like a man and said things like, "Life goes on."
You wanted the boy I was to grow into a man, big and strong.

I did not want to be stronger.
Stronger than what?
Than the raw release of anguish?
Stronger than the twisted knots in my gut that existed because I was filled with fear.
You demanded I prove myself able to withstand the enormity of how I felt because
you had to prove it too.
You made me destroy my genuine honesty because
yours was cracked and withered.
No, I wanted to be weak.
To find my strength within the agility of my soul.
I wanted to be weak enough to be afraid, but go forward anyway.
A sacred little boy with the strength of my loved ones, of my tribe to stand me up tall.
I wanted a tribe.

I did not want to stand alone.
A lone wolf, an impressive cliché just like every other real man.
A solo warrior bent on domination and destruction until I would be the last man standing.
The last man standing all alone, with no one to see how great I would be.
No, I wanted you with me.
I needed hearts that would hear the melody of my joy, my sad, my courage, my fear.
I needed touches and caresses and smiles,
I would pave my path with the kind words and generosity of you who have loved me until my shell weakened and I became softer.

I did not want to be harder.
To have my lines etched from ideas of permanence in stone, or steel.
To have a countenance that withstood typhoons, unbroken, and unmoved.
I needed to be moved.
I needed to flow with the tides of idea, to flow with lines of poetry.
I needed flexibility, like the surface of a teardrop just before it falls to the ground, breaking into smaller versions of itself.
I needed to be moldable, unfixed in my positions, because my mind explored the crevasses of imagination and when I saw a new thing, I became a new thing and would not have been able to had I been so fixed in the mold you made for me.

I did not want to “be a man”.
But, I became an animal.
Primal and rabid, running unstoppable streets, destroying innocence wherever I found it and would continue until the last mirror stood unmarred.

I did not want to “be a man!”
I wanted to rage against your demands.
I wanted to be free from the prison you constructed from my marrow.
I wanted to destroy what you made me.
I wanted to destroy me.
I wanted me.
I wanted me.
I wanted me to be.