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It's a Sacred Institution As They Say

Jalyn Gilmore

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It’s a Sacred Institution As They Say
Jalyn Gilmore
1st Place, Writing Contest

Notes from our judge:
This piece is short but powerful. It is impressive how much the author accomplishes in so few words. The imagery is wonderful and the suspense is used effectively, giving the reader just enough to keep them on the edge of their seats.

She certainly didn’t mean to do it and she’s not entirely sure how it happened. Her lip is still bleeding heavily making her spit and gag. She’s always hated the metallic taste of blood ever since she was a little girl. Her eye is already starting to swell shut, turning blue and purple.

She stands on hesitant, untrustworthy legs. What now? Should she straighten up? No, they say to leave everything exactly as it is. Don’t they call that obstruction? Should she at least change her clothes? It wouldn’t make that big of a difference would it? And they are so terribly tattered.

It is her favorite blouse not just because it is canary yellow but because he gave it to her, telling her she looked like a flower. His little flower. She spits out a little more blood from a cut in the back of her cheek. She means to turn down the hallway toward their bedroom, but one foot stumbles over the other and she falls.

She cuts her forehead on the edge of the kitchen table. The blood is warm and sticky in her eyes, dying everything red, the warm burnt auburn of their living room, the soft, delicate browns of their kitchen, the cherry black of their hardwood floors. No, it has always been red. All of it. The living room where he’d first laid vicious hands on her. The kitchen table where he first bent her over against her will. The hardwood floors where she would lay as he stood over her. It’s always been red, every single bit of it. Again she stands. Her feet do not fail this time as she staggers to the phone sitting there waiting, the only other witness with a voice. She dials.

“911. What’s your emergency?”

She turns at last and catches sight of him, catches the silver glint of the blade protruding from his neck. She heaves but only
manages to offer up saliva.

"Hello? What's your emergency?
She swallows it down at last. "I...I would like to report a murder."