

By William Alton on *Flesh and Bone*

I'm prone to visions and voice, nightmares and flashbacks. There are times when I completely lose touch with reality. So I keep a journal. In my head, I see things. They're detailed and sometimes frightening and graphic. Whether they are memories or imagined doesn't matter. They become the emotional kernel around which I build my poetry and fiction.

While I am a survivor of abuse, sexual, physical, emotional, I no longer see myself as a victim. But I do remember sitting in my room in the middle of the night shortly after my mother died and things started happening. *Flesh and Bone* formed in my head like a migraine, full blown and vivid. The book is not a memoir but it is memoiristic. I was much younger than the characters in the novel. I didn't go through the exact progress they go through. But I imagined and remembered and fought and wrote and the next thing I knew, I had a manuscript.

People ask about my creative process. I am an absurdist and a stream of consciousness writer. I live each chapter and each story with my characters. I become them and they become and for a little while, we each forget the lines between reality and dream. My style of writing is borrowed somewhat from Sandra Cisneros, Suzanna Kaysen and a slew of flash fiction writers. I've tried to emulate John Irving and Tim O'Brien, but I do not think in narrative arcs or outlines. Things come to me piecemeal. I write what comes when it comes.

Part of it is because, at heart, I'm a poet. A Confessional Poet at that. But I like to write in series or inter related pieces. When it ends, it ends. Sometimes, it's abrupt and nonsensical. Other times, it just peters out. Knowing when to stop writing, knowing when the story is told, is like knowing when to stop making love. It happens many ways, but it's always clear and definitive.