

Grand Prize

Suzanne LaFetra

Hot and Heavy

Suzanne's work has appeared in many literary journals, magazines, and anthologies. She lives in Northern California and is currently at work on a memoir.



Hot and Heavy

She was mesmerized by the ring, the way it pinched in so tightly, creating an hourglass from the CFO's bloated sausage finger. Sweat dripped from the tip of her nose, but she kept up the rhythmic pumping, pausing only to take a quick swipe at the curl pasted to her cheek.

Pathetic, she thought, taking in the enormous island of a torso that she straddled, his white belly rippling with every thrust. She could not look at his face while she worked.

He never said a word, only grunted once in the end. But she hadn't finished; she would not give up.

The siren wailed as the ambulance raced toward Mercy Hospital, and the last rich waves of life charged through the executive's corpulent body. Finally, she dismounted, a dark butterfly of moisture spreading across the pants of her creased navy uniform, damp from where their bodies had touched.

First Place Prose

Jackson Lassiter

The Cold Truth

Jackson was raised in the hills of Wyoming, where he learned to appreciate the vagaries of Mother Nature and human nature. He believes thoughtful writing can impact social injustice.



The Cold Truth

I heard about a homeless man found dead in the doorway of the Starbucks over on Connecticut Avenue yesterday. He tried to wait out the night and froze solid where he sat. No one had even realized he was dead until the morning sun thawed the body enough so that it slumped to the side. Still no one was all that concerned until one of the regulars complained to management about the blocked door.

When the police came they wrapped him in a pink body bag to haul him to the morgue. The store manager gave the officers free pastries for handling the problem. "Thanks," mumbled the chubby blond policewoman through a bite of her sour cream coffee cake, crumbs tumbling from her mouth. She tossed the coins from the dead beggar's cup into the barista's glass tip jar.

First Place Poetry

Carol Carpenter

Mourning Papers

Carol lives in Livonia, MI and has published poems and stories in Yankee, America, Indiana Review, Quarterly West, Carolina Quarterly and various anthologies. Her work received the Richard Eberhart Prize for Poetry. She recently retired from training.



Mourning Papers

Uncle Ed reads the obituaries every day at breakfast. He will not eat a bite of toast until he knows who has slipped past him in the navy night, who has ridden the blue heron of death. It stands watch, on one leg, ready for his fall from life.

My uncle has seen the blue heron twice: once at noon when his tractor tipped him off and he lost consciousness and once at night when his heart stopped beating. He swears it is the same blue heron that returns each year and scoops up minnows from the shallows in Pleasant Lake. That heron lifts up, wings spread wide. Its legs are like fishing lines dangling in the blue sky. My uncle watches, shades his eyes from the harsh June sun.

Greg Beatty

I Call the Dying Lucky

Greg has a Ph.D. in English from the University of Iowa. Greg writes everything from poetry about stars to reviews of books that don't exist.



I Call the Dying Lucky

The Greeks call the gods the deathless ones.

Humans were those who died.

When Odysseus visited the underworld, the disparate dead crowded hungry round, lapping blood for fleeting tastes of life.

Lucky are the living, the dead said, for after death only bardic honor remains. I call the dying lucky, even beyond the gods, for they can act, feel, and risk their all.

Pity not the lucky dying; ache instead for the erasable, whose deeds are in electrons writ, whom a magnet's pass or current's pulse can zero as if never were—

Bill stopped reading. "Jason, who printed out all this death and honor crap?"

"Oh," Jason replied, "Is it doing that again? It's that experimental artificial intelligence program. I had it running traffic simulations. Must be a bug. Reset the thing and start again."

Click.

"Did you hear a sigh?" Bill asked.

"No," said Jason. "There was no sigh."

Alice Berger

Magic Chocolates

Alice is an accountant and lives in the Pocono Mountains with her husband and three cats. She is still searching for magic writing chocolates that will cause publishers to chase her.



Magic Chocolates

"Valentine's chocolates? So what?"

"They're magic."

"What do they do?"

"Attract women."

Mike ate one. "Nothing happened."

"Just wait and see."

Lisa followed Mike everywhere. Christine giggled. Denise called fifteen times. Nicole wanted dinner out... and more. Voicemails. Emails. Wolf-whistles. Women staring, touching, ogling... stalking.

"Did they work?"

"Yep. How do you turn them off?"

F.J. Bergmann

All She Needs

F.J. Bergmann is mostly from Wisconsin. She is to blame for madpoetry.org, fibitz.com, et al. Her pseudopodia can reach from the bedroom to the refrigerator. Her hairstyle is deceptive. Her favorite authors all write speculative fiction.



All She Needs

She floats over mountains stolen from other planets. Beyond lies an aperture into the golden sky, where they build their own castles from blocks of flame. She still lives in the darkening silver spoon she was born in, wears a dress of tears. Her heart is growing its own jungle. She covers the face she does not have with hands that cannot feel. The pulsing flowers that beat instead of wings lift only her caracoles of hair. Without eyes she looks away from the light into everything else that glows.

b. lynch black

Indicia

B. Lynch is a writer, artist and out-of-work actor resides in New York City. Fifth Place Winner Tom Reid Short Fiction Anthology 2004; *Novella* and *The Gantlet* published by Yoni Press 2003; currently has novel in progress.



Indicia

I can still hear Granma's voice,
laughing silver across time
always thin and delicious,
like vanilla sprinkles
over cookies
decorating my years.

And those other memories
of cowboy promises
and ghostly conversations
waltz through my
desert garden of heartaches
whispering a healing benediction.

Christine Bodine

To my Poetry Craft Instructor at the MFA Program

Christine of Wheaton, IL attends the Low-Residency MFA Program at Queens University, Charlotte, NC. She credits Poet/Instructor Ron Rash for his extraordinary classroom readings - he is the instructor who inspired this poem.



To my Poetry Craft Instructor at the MFA Program

I know you mean well when you ask me to master
sounds in poems. You analyze rhyme and meter,
consider the impact of an iamb here, a trochee there.
And what about the frequencies of English vowels, you
ask?
We trudge through poetic terrain foot by foot,
my simple pace outdone by your sophic gait.

Just let me rest my heady cares on my hands,
my cheek to the cool formica desk, hair splayed across
arms and face; read me poems that take me prisoner.
I close my eyes, surrender to the shackles of sound.

Cynthia A. Bowen

Sea Glass

Cynthia divides her time between Galveston Island and Austin, TX. She is always looking for a quiet stream in which to put her kayak and pull out a good story. She is a runner, hiker, and published writer of fiction and poetry.



Sea Glass

When I am old
I shall plunge wrinkled, weathered feet
Into soft, yielding sand
Feel it sift through my toes
And settle in my soul

When I am old
I shall stroll along the surf
Searching for ancient sea glass
Swept from the bottom of the ocean
And tossed by the wave of a hand
To land

When I am old
My rough surface will be worn sleekly smooth
From decades of rolling tides
And my jagged edges will be carved curves
Made perfect for holding and caressing
By the sands of time

April Bulmer

Moons

April has had six books of poetry published. She has graduate degrees in creative writing, religious studies and theology, and is interested in women's spirituality. She lives in Cambridge, Ontario, Canada.



Moons

I am the first woman.
I dream of sea, earth and sky.
And I dream of giving birth:
of the toil of labour
and of the child
like a wet bird
hatching from me.

I am the first woman.
I dream of bulbs
and their blooms:
lonely and wise.

Clara Chandler

Saxophone Man

Clara is a full-time writer and retired nurse presently living in West Virginia. Traditionally an essayist and creative nonfiction writer, she heard the siren call of flash fiction and finds it irresistible.



Saxophone Man

Saxophone Man sits in a lawn chair on the corner of Desperate and Lost. His instrument points the way to heaven as the music weeps for his tormented soul. He hauls himself to this corner daily seeking deliverance from his pain -- his song both a petition and a warning.

Passers-by atone for their happiness by dropping money into his case. Most avert their eyes. Saxophone Man's gaze pulls you into his mournful red-rimmed eyes, revealing a spirit so tortured even music can't express the depths.

The keening stops and he sucks thin brown nectar from a flask until it's as empty as his soul. Saxophone Man gathers the money and lays his horn to rest. He plods back to Hell toting the lawn chair under his arm.

Kathleen Clauson

Ten Quarters, Five Dimes, Two Nickels, and Five Pennies

Kathleen lives in a Midwestern town where there are more cats than people. Her latest stories are found in *Doorknobs and BodyPaint*, *the Flavor of Ink*, and a *Kerlak* anthology, *Short Attention Span Mysteries*.



Ten Quarters, Five Dimes, Two Nickels, and Five Pennies

Rosemary thought Bill would buy her flowers for their anniversary.

She imagined him, hurrying home, with a bouquet of blush pink roses. She washed a fluted vase in soapy water and left it on the counter.

Rosemary sliced paper thin ringlets of onions for beef stroganoff, taking care not to break the rings. Everyone knew breaking circles brought bad luck.

Bill was on time. He didn't notice the candlelight or Rosemary's pink dress. She checked the pockets of his jacket—nothing there except a starlight mint wrapped in cellophane.

After dinner, Bill went next door to help Joe with his taxes.

Rosemary's eyes were closed when Bill stumbled upstairs. He stacked ten quarters, five dimes, two nickels, five pennies on the dresser.

While he snored, Rosemary crawled, bare-skinned across the plush carpet. From his wad of cash she plucked out three crisp bills.

Tomorrow she would buy the flowers herself.

Amy Cobb

Surreal

Amy Cobb is thirty years old and lives in Greenwood, SC. She has been writing poetry seriously since her teens. She is now working on a full-length book of her work.



Surreal

Dali has a knife
stuck in his bleeding bed
dreams are leaking everywhere
they seeped into the mattress
during fevered, oily sweat sleep
and now cover the floor
to be soaked up by canvases

Robert M. Craig

Manna from Heaven

Robert is a retired former science teacher, is now an adjunct professor, professional woodwind musician and fiction writer. He has written several novels and short stories, many published. Hobbies include table tennis, hiking, and researching the paranormal.



Manna from Heaven

Cashier Helen shoved the grocery sack towards Gregson. “The Reverend there lost his church to a tornado. He comes here for picnic stuff, then looks for a new place.”

Gregson watched the minister herd his small congregation into an old school bus. A lovely blonde parishioner caught his eye and smiled.

Gregson searched out the minister. “If you reroof my barn, you may use it until you find your own church.”

But, weeks later. “Look, Reverend, your camp meetings are getting too noisy and crowded. Roof’s on, so you’ll have to start looking elsewhere.”

“Mr. Gregson, patience is always rewarded.”

That evening Gregson relaxed at the edge of his pond. He noticed the minister on the opposite bank nudging a slim form into the water. Another baptism? But the form swam across to Gregson. It emerged with blonde hair streaming, blouse clinging, and long, bare legs. And a great big grin.

Diane E. Dees

Canna Mania

Diane is a psychotherapist, writer, and organic gardener in Louisiana. Her poetry, short stories, essays, and creative nonfiction have appeared in many publications.



Canna Mania

Antique cannas startle me in the garden.
Bold leaves of bronze, olive finely striped,
green blades with vermilion veins, paint-box
blooms of sunrise and sunset, peaches and melons.
Watermelon-red slurped by ruby-throats
buzzing frantically around ancient rind.
Scarlet/yellow harlequin pinwheel,
random pats of butter streaked by Devon cream,
technicolor leopard skin,
lozenges of orange, orpiment flames.
sometimes Monet, often Rothko;
Victorian madness, sprouting across time,
mine for the price of a rhizome.

Jennifer DiCamillo

Sierra Summer

Jennifer is the President of Missouri Poets and Friends, an award-winning writer, playwright, and poet. In the last two years, she's won over 46 writing awards, sold three novels, a poetry collection, and 12 novellas.



Sierra Summer

Watching the sunrise
Melon under indigo
Pushing up nightshade

The clearing shocked me
Herb laden with rosemary
Sweetness assailed me

Cedar forest fire
Neon flames sparking, snapping
Incense choking me

Betty Dobson

The Last Time I Saw Lisa

Betty is a Canadian writer who operates InkSpotter Publishing from her home in Nova Scotia. Her primary mission is to help others find the right words and unlock the stories lurking within each of us.



The Last Time I Saw Lisa

The last time I saw Lisa, her hair flowed like wheat in a tornado, obscuring her eyes, wiping away tears faster than they could fall. Shallow smiles grew to laughter, a sound so hard

I flinched. She lifted her hands as if to reach me, spread her arms wide as if to forgive every mistake made in the name of love, then

slipped into the clammy embrace of harbor fog that swirled like faded dreams beneath the over-bearing weight of wrought iron and cement.

Edward Orville Durbin

The Curse of the Centaur

Edward was born in February, 1941, at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii; left in June. He lived in bombed-out Germany in 1946 but he escaped arm-guarded Russian sector with busload of other Americans 1951. He paints, writes and prays.



The Curse of the Centaur

A herd of centaur roamed Sysyphian Isle. They spat at the sky, cursing the gods for not sending enough women to work their fields. The centaur sniffed for perfumes. They milled wildly and charged as more women sailed in. The centaur ogled the women. The boat swayed. The sea danced. The waves rhythmically poured in. The centaur were mesmerized.

The women bridled them and rode them to the fields, driving them like oxen. At sunset they hitched wagons to the centaur to haul the harvest back onto the boat. The women sang along with the seawind, as softly as lapping waves; then floated safely away.

The enchanted centaur revived, boasting of orgies, convinced that their exhaustion had come sexually. They threatened the gods again, "More women!" then drank and passed out.

Next morning when singing filled the air the centaur woke, smiling wickedly at one another.

William Blaine Durbin

Adagia And Rondor

William was born in Fort Sam Houston, Texas. His poems have been printed in 80+ publications. Prose published in, among others: *Berlin (Germany) Observer, Ultra-short Binnacle 2004, Holy Cross Purple, Out & About, St. Petersburg Independent, and Small Press Review.*



Adagia And Rondor

The beautiful Adagia, pliant as clay, turned and held the position the sculptor Rondor had twisted her into. Blue light from the skylight in the sculptor's studio poured across her naked form, making her soft skin glow.

Nude as she was, Adagia was not cold. She was nervous and as the sculptor Rondor re-adjusted her pose, her heartbeat quickened.

Perhaps she shouldn't have accepted the job. Why, the tales she had heard about the sculptor Rondor!

Adagia felt warm moisture on the small of her back. "We agreed, none of that," she said and she turned to slap the sculptor Rondor but she held back when she saw he was staring at the curve of her torso, weeping at its beauty.

Chudy Ebiringa

Murdered By Death

Chudy Ebiringa is a native of Umuariam Obowo in Imo State of Nigeria and has published several children/teenage works, including *Naughty Nana, Great Fight, and God Answers Okey's Prayer*. Chudy was the winner of honorable mention in the 1997 Eaton s/story award.



Murdered By Death

That afternoon, I walked back home, firewood on my head, a chill fluid ran through my whole being. Next, a pin choked my spirit.

Alarm. A bag full of bad news is around the corner.

What is it this time?

I doubled my steps and fought the firewood that threatened to throw itself off.

I stepped into the gate and collided face-to-face with the trauma. It was so thick that it tried to block my entrance. I perceived it, held it, but pushed it aside.

The popular route of the visitors who shook their sad heads told me the exact spot. I rushed to the hut, pushing aside many hands.

"Papa! Papa!" I called. There was no reply.

The lifeless body of my grandfather pushed me to a halt. He was murdered by death himself.

R. N. Ferguson

The Ghost Quilt

Ruth has worked as an editor/writer. She is the author of "*Reflections in a Glass Window*," published in her alma mater's magazine, *Elon Colonnades*.



The Ghost Quilt

My mother is making a quilt. Her hands work feverishly as she dozes in the chair, a chair made up with sheets, pillows and pads. By the time she leaves here, the quilt will be large because she has worked on it for six days now.

It began Monday--she could not get out of her chair. She had forgotten to drink fluids, and her body had dried out.

If she could only go home, she would be her old self again. She could throw off this cloak of fog, and think clearly, and she could walk.

"I saw Daddy go by just now in the truck. I thought he was going to stop, but he just went on by." She feels the slight, but she has been slighted before. She does not look at the window of the tiny room on the hospital's seventh floor. She sees him on the wall.

James Finnegan

Government Program

James started an internet discussion listserv called the New Poetry List. He is currently working on a web-radio project called LitStation.com, due to launch late 2005.



Government Program

Somewhere on a remote air base
out in the Mojave Desert, behind
miles of chainlink fencing, in the shadow
of a gunmetal-gray hangar, they are burning
food stamps in a jet engine, bales full,
windblown like leaves, sucked in
& split-second incinerated. Plumes of acrid
exhaust spewing into the evening air.

Amina Hafiz

Carrot Cake and Stretch Marks

Amina is completing her MFA in Creative Writing at American University. She is fiction editor of *Folio*, American University's literary journal. Her work has recently appeared in feminist news journal *Off Our Backs*.



Carrot Cake and Stretch Marks

Do you go to Church?

Yes, I do. Five times a week. But I call it The Gym.

Machines, weights, running – it all ends up as sweat. I gauge who is thinner, who is stronger, who is hotter. I see thin girls wearing too-tight clothes that accentuate their skinny fat. I watch the chubby girls more, uncomfortable in this shrine. I want to say, I know how you feel. I used to be the heaviest one.

When I exercise I think about food and sex. What I look like naked. Carrot cake and stretch marks.

Margaret Ellis Hill

Triptych Of A Tree

A native Californian, Margaret has had work published in many e-zines, anthologies, journals and has won a number of awards. Her first book of poetry, *Close Company*, was released in 2003 by PoetWorks Press.



Triptych Of A Tree

On the West one barren bough
angles to touch the ground
to support an arthritic torso.

Center branches wear only sleeves
of green-dotted swiss; a few leaves
decorate among mossy-velvet ribbons.

East-side arms bloom bright
buttons gathered like white pomp
to circumstance another spring.

Joel Hoffschneider

A Scene from a Life Time

Joel has been teaching 6th grade Creative Writing for 17 years. This contest was the first success of his return to free-lance, in January of this year.



A Scene from a Life Time

It was a November gale, and quite a bad one.

“Gilbert Lynn.”

She called in the voice he had heard for over fifty years. His robin-egg blue eyes turned from one developing storm to another, She had now cleared the rocks and was picking up speed along the sand. The storm that was “Anna” was upon him.

Sadness welled water up in her eyes, deep and alive in their mahogany essence.

This of course changed every thing. He drew her to him sensing the depth of her fear. There they stood, clinging together sharing in a thousand unspoken ways a love only they could understand.

Then it was over. She looked deeply into his eyes, and took his hand. “Come on “old man” I’ll help you home.”

And they went, he pretending to lead and she letting him, although they both knew better

Louisa Howerow

Soap

Louisa’s poetry has appeared in journals and small press magazines in Canada, England and the United States. In 2005 one of her poems was nominated for a Canadian National Magazine Award.



Soap

After each curse, mother washed my mouth out.

I learned to like the taste of pink bubbles, honey and lemongrass.

In Santo Domingo, you scrubbed the small of my back with tan soap, cocoa butter and vanilla lather.

Lovely four-letter words formed on my tongue, and slipped between your thighs.

David Jordan

Halloween Lingerie

David is a former newspaperman and college teacher turned fiction writer/poet. He lives in Portland, OR. His work has appeared in scores of journals, including *Rattle*, *Nimrod*, *Thema*, *Comstock Review*, *Pangolin Papers* and *Plainsongs*.



Halloween Lingerie

Adult Shop
OPEN 24 HOURS
Halloween Lingerie

says a red-lettered sign across the parking lot from the burger joint where I eat lunch.

Halloween lingerie! What a concept! Consider the goods sold inside the decayed gray building adorned by this bright sign . . .

Vampira’s panties. The bra of the bride of Frankenstein. A haunted negligee, maybe the one Marilyn Monroe wore the night she died. A poisonous petticoat, deadly device of white silk some murderer might buy for an unfaithful wife. Or perhaps the shop sells stuff to stir a customer’s own frightful memories, like girdles identical to the one you tugged off that long-ago girl on the floor of her family room just before her dad walked in.

The possibilities are monstrous. A mummy’s chemise, Dracula’s daughter’s drawers, a witch’s slip, pantyhose for ghosts, a zombie’s bustier.

I must come back for a midnight snack and watch who shops.

b. kanoa

october 30th

A writer in the J.D. Salinger vein, B. Kanoa contemplates the Australian surf, green candy., and strawberry freckles.



october 30th

painting our toenails the color of limes
my daughter asks about her father whom she visits
in photo albums & in dreams where the two of them
spend hours
reading comic books collecting sea shells eating lemon
ice
& surfing australia's near-isolated coasts which are so
perverse
they touch themselves before & after sundown

at nine years old the child blowing air onto what resemble
tiny pieces of green candy waits with a patience
only those who make soup or have ever wished for their
dead
to come home can really know

but something about the way she lays her questions out
as though each one were made of spider silk
tells me she might see a skeleton ripping up my clothes
& could be tracing the anguish back to the man
who gave her a wooden koala a hand-painted surfboard
& a bumper crop of strawberry freckles

Michael A. Kechula

The Fleece Jacket

Michael is a retired tech writer. He has had twenty-nine nonfiction books published and four books of flash and short-shorts published. Michael is an Award-winning flash fiction writer and the Sr. Editor of *Nimue's Grotto* magazine. Flash Fiction Editor of *Apollo's Lyre* magazine.



The Fleece Jacket

Las Vegas. Cold, Sunday morning. Church begins soon. My prayer book says, "Charity covers a multitude of sins." Uh-oh, I better add lots more to the collection basket.

The door opens. A scantily clad, tattooed streetwalker goes to the front pew. A hubbub ensues. Storming out, she yells, "But I ain't got no clothes better than this!"

Normalcy returns, but I'm troubled. Is she Mary Magdalene here to repent? Or to keep warm? Does it matter? Where's Christian charity? Afterward, she's standing outside, shivering, looking forlorn.

"Are you cold?" I ask.

"Very."

I remove my heavy jacket. "Here. Take this."

Looking incredulous, she dons it and strokes the fleece. "Where's your hotel? I give good—"

"It's a gift. No strings attached."

"Gift?" She seems unable to comprehend. Her eyes tear. Then she bolts for the church.

Walking in the cold, I wonder if I've covered a multitude of sins.

Abigail Kelly

The Depth of an Hour

Abigail is thirty-five years old and is a high school teacher who teaches by day and writes by night.



The Depth of an Hour

Our room fills with rain.

You undress so exquisitely that a current flows, pushing me up and against you. I can't not surrender, for in your complexity, your bareness, I too am exposed.

In such rawness we cultivate the ability to taste by opening our eyes with the tips of fingers.

This is our hour.

Under pressed lips my mouth fills and I drop the stones I carry with hollow thuds. I understand depth now. It is the sound of a button. Rain dries as the true weight of my body - the thunder - moves in.

Tracy Koretsky

Community Property

Tracy's poetry and short fiction have been widely published in literary magazines including *Potomac Review*, *Kalliope* and *Phantasmagoria*. Amongst her awards are three Pushcart nominations and many prizes including more than a half dozen first place citations.



Community Property

My father only marries women who steal from restaurants. My mother, lawless for love "caught" the ashtray bearing his initials in her purse. His second wife, dreading all which too quickly passes, brought a suitcase to salad bars -- pineapples, full baskets of saltines, grapes bunched like fists, hard cubes of cheese -- good enough for tomorrow's lunch. Now my father shares his table with a woman who palms Sweet 'N Lows into a tiny pouch she keeps ready for the purpose. She bats her eyes, the innocent, her hands coated in sparkling silver, sweet now but lingering upon the tongue, bitter and changed.

William I. Lengeman III

Man Bites God

William is an Arizona-based freelance journalist, humorist and fiction writer.



Man Bites God

He is undergoing a series of tribulations that would have made Job cringe. He raises his eyes to the heavens and curses God. He is surprised and a bit miffed when God curses back.

He flings a pen cap at God. God causes frogs to rain upon him.

He pulls God's hair. God causes his house to be filled with the blood of swine.

He pokes God in the eye. God causes the sky to rain fire and brimstone, totally trashing his lawn.

He hauls off at God and misses. God takes a mighty swing and does the same.

Soon they are embroiled in a particularly nasty slap fight in which no real damage is inflicted.

He stomps on God's foot. God casts a pox upon his kith and kin.

He bites God right on the ear.

Well, that does it.

Emily Spreng Lowery

The Grass is Always Pinker On the Other (Holi)Side

Emily has won the Cave Hollow Press's 2005 Murder, Mystery, Madness, Magic and Mayhem anthology contest, with other recent fiction appearing in *Ladue News Magazine* and *Red Wheelbarrow*. She received her MFA from UM-St. Louis.



The Grass is Always Pinker On the Other (Holi)Side

Relishing in a much deserved vacation, Santa and Gertrude Claus marched along New York's Fifth Avenue, gussied up in their finest frocks. If only Gertrude (still worn out from all that heart-filled wassailing) could stop fantasizing about a simpler life -- one filled with pastel lawn waste and a husband with a bit more bounce in his step. But as she linked her hand through the crook of Santa's arm, safely anonymous for the day, she also pitied the life of Mrs. Cottontail: a woman who could never leave the house unnoticed with a six-foot rabbit by her side.

Josh Maday

Unemployment Daydream While Standing Over a Fryin' Pan

Josh was born and lives in Saginaw, Michigan. He is a bricklayer by day, not starving but always-hungry writer by night. He doesn't currently attend any impressive universities. He was previously published in *Outsider Ink* and he co-writes daily micro-fiction blog, *Dancing on Fly Ash*.



Unemployment Daydream While Standing Over a Fryin' Pan

It was any afternoon, same old bread, same two-tone cheese. Same old reverie inspired by a once-in-a-lifetime, luckier-than-a-two-peckered-goat story on the twelve o'clock news:

Loaf of bread from local grocery store: \$1.34 (after discount for small mold spots starting on the ends)

Tampered pack of generic pre-sliced cheddar cheese: \$1.79 (after discount for obvious reasons, plus some discoloring of slices)

Resulting grilled cheese sandwich with slightly crisped, nicely browned cameo of Virgin Mary, or, if you hold it this way, a bearded John Lennon: priceless (well, actually \$1,500)

It could happen to anyone.

Suzanne Martins

Americanka

Suzanne Martins is a Financial Planner living in Vancouver, Canada. She started writing short stories about a year ago. She particularly likes the ultra shorts because they force the reader to fill in the details.



Americanka

All her life Yasna dreamed of being an Americanka. To live in America; to have her own car, a dishwasher, a microwave!

Second cousin Frank blew into town from Chicago to visit his sick mother, pockets bursting with dollars. He was set up good at his uncle's machine shop; needed a wife to take care of him. A virgin who could cook and clean. (He took her in the back seat of his rental car, just to make sure.)

No more working in the fields, no more feeding the pigs. Clean fingernails and flower gardens from now on. Scrape the village mud from your shoes, make babies and live like a queen!

Now Yasna puts the dinner she prepared in the microwave ready to warm up when he comes home. Late again. Swallow the tears and ask no questions. She may be a queen in America but he is king.

Jeanine Durbin McMahon

For the Boy

Jeanine is an attorney, an adjunct college English Instructor, and a Social justice volunteer. She is also a poet, essayist, novelist, playwright and a short fiction writer who is lucky enough to have had some work published, toiling diligently to have more.



For the Boy

We shared a birthday, the boy and I,
but I was granted a yeoman's share and he allotted so few.
Sweet-faced and shy, he stepped from this life too soon
leaving behind a wellspring of grief
to ebb and flow but never to run dry.

'I was here,' testify the memories.
'I laughed,' 'I learned' and 'I loved.'
But seventeen is too short a measure by any account-
joy reaped from his being tempered hard
by sorrow at the man-child's loss.

It's extinguished now, that ephemeral spark we call life
leaving embers of love behind unquenched
to scorch in the dark of night and sear in the midst of a crowd.
While Lady Justice, veiled but not blind,
blushes deep at so flagrant and senseless a theft.

Tessa Smith McGovern

Red

(pastiche of 'Green' by Virginia Woolf)

Tessa is an English writer living in Connecticut. Her stories have appeared in journals in America and England, including the *Georgia State Review* and *Portland Magazine*. She writes a column for *BCthemagazine* (NJ).



Red

The red, chapped skin cracks. A rivulet of blood slides down over whorls of lines, and settles in a single, red bead. All day long gleaming pink lesions split and shine, tributaries twist and trace maps of criss-cross waterfalls. The sharp blades of razors, reflecting red, flicker and flame, flip-flap, stinging loud in the afternoon sun. But the thickening blood shimmers a necklace on unbroken, coffee skin, one shoulder lifts in disdain, an eyebrow goes with it; the sudden punch jerks her chin up, flips her back, she lies there, watches the red sky, until stars come out, unbroken. Evening comes, and a field grows from seed, flowers puff up into glossy red blooms that wave and sigh, the ruffled surface of a blood-red ocean. No ships come, no-one to save her, waves curdle beneath the gaping sky. It's night. The rivulets leak, spill beads of white. The red's out.

U-Meleni Mhlaba

Feelings Are Only Temporary

U-Meleni is a multi-talented Zimbabwean Artist who has been performing her poetry/songs in many venues in since 1996. She released her debut CD " SOUL PSALMS- birth, death, resurrexion in 2003. When not performing, U-Meleni teaches Health & Wellness to youth in the Boston Public Schools using the Arts.



Feelings Are Only Temporary

what is really real is what I can touch
he made me think I was safe when our palms touched
why then did he forsake me and why did i forsake myself
he took all the water and felt deserts in between my thighs
misery makes fools of us all
now that is he is raging like a bull cloaked with the blood
of my heart
he needs me no-one
no-one he needs the love i did possess
i gave him my heart underneath the wattle trees
center of the world we were royalty
and then he had be beheaded and dethroned as he smiled
and blew me a frozen kiss
from his life i was suddenly dismissed
feelings are only temporary
temporary

Neeldhara Misra

Bloom

Neeldhara is an aspiring writer and undergraduate student of mathematics and computer science. Her writing interests are focused on fiction and poetry.



Bloom

Velvet-like violet
erupts
in a riot
on miniscule
white canvases
harp-like;
focused at
a bunch of seeds.
All trouble
to no avail,
one day the bee will come
and take it all away.

Nancy Olwen Morrey

His Old Shirt

Nancy is the author of five chapbooks of poetry and short prose. She is the Artist in Residence (2005) for the city of Cambridge, Ontario.



His Old Shirt

She lifts the old shirt to her face, inhaling his memory. Her fingertips trace the frayed collar. She wonders how many times she kissed the nape of his neck and if there is some imprint of him still on the cloth; perhaps the scent of his skin remains.

The cuffs are worn soft from being rolled back, a gesture she loved for the way it exposed his arms. She would often observe him at work just to see his muscles flex, just to watch the way his fingers moved.

Slipping off her clothes, she shivers in the lonely bedroom. His shirt covers her naked vulnerability and gives the illusion he is still there, embracing her. She climbs into their bed wrapping the long flannel sleeves around her, dressed in the dream of his immortality.

Ellen Birkett Morris

Dark of the Moon: Ocracoke, N.C.

Ellen is based in Louisville, KY. Her poetry has appeared in *The Heartland Review*, *The Pedestal Magazine 2004 Political Anthology*, and was an Editor's Choice selection in the 2004 Binnacle's Ultra-Short Edition.



Dark of the Moon: Ocracoke, N.C.

Lucky to see a handful of stars from our city yard
Hidden as they are by streetlights and the glow of
commerce
The island sky held us in thrall
Myriad tiny lights
The occasional smudge of a galaxy
Constellations indecipherable
The stars made brighter by the dark of the moon
Whose absence left us feeling slightly unhinged
Alone with the heavens
Our backs to the hood of the car
Held down by gravity and wonder

Kate Nicoll

Rage Unspoken

Kate is a clinical social worker, mom and wife who lives at home with her family and eight animal companions. She is a graduate of Elms College and Smith College. She is the author of a recent book, *Soul Friends: Finding Healing with Animals*.



Rage Unspoken

You live in a fantasy world
Of black-blue towels
Thrown over railings
Like statements of fact.

In your laundry is a chaotic
Mess of feelings,
Betrayals and lost dreams.

Fold them, put them away
Or hang them out to dry
To blow in the wind.

Patricia Parkinson

Fleurs de Lis

Patricia lives with her family in the suburbs of Langley British Columbia. Her work has appeared in *Electica*, *Ink Pot* and *Smokelong Quarterly*.



Fleurs de Lis

She likes jazz and all things purple. He brings her irises from the flower shop down the street. The owner, a fat woman with varicose veins, sneezes into her hand before wrapping them.

He gives them to her, five stems, not much, he knows, but enough, he hopes, to make an impression.

She kisses his cheek and puts them in a vase.

They walk to the club.

She starts coughing and rubbing her eyes.

“I’m cold,” she says.

He gives her his coat.

They sit in the back, at a corner booth.

She has a tickle in the back of her throat.

By the end of the night, she’s got a temperature.

He hails a cab and carries her into the house.

He stays overnight, sleeps in a chair next to her bed. In the morning, he brings her a tray with tea and a singular iris. She is impressed.

Janet Paszkowski

That’s What They Say

Janet is a Georgia based fiction writer and poet. Her fiction and poetry have received numerous regional and national awards, and her work has been published in several literary journals and mainstream venues.



That’s What They Say

“I’m going to marry that young nurse, sure as tomorrow is Tuesday.”

“Tomorrow’s Wednesday.”

“Wrong! Look at your plate. Tonight is meatloaf Monday. Tomorrow is tuna Tuesday and I am going to marry her!”

“Nothing good comes from an ol’ fool who still wants to dance.”

“Who you calling an old fool, old fool? I can tell she loves me by the twinkle in her eyes when she gives me my sponge bath.”

“She looks at all us ol’ geezers that way. It’s charity. Marry Eleanor; she’s already asked you to marry her three times this month.”

“I’m NOT marrying Eleanor! Everyone knows if the devil can’t come, he sends an old woman?”

“Young women, are like rainbows - destined to disappear.”

“Rather be beaten, than pass between two old women.”

“Smartest thing you’ve said today. Let’s nip a second piece of banana pie.”

Adrian S. Potter

There’s Something About Mary Ann

Adrian S. Potter was the winner of the 2003 Langston Hughes Poetry Contest. He has been published in more than 50 different literary journals, magazines, and websites. He also won First Prize in the Memoir category of RockWay Press’ International Writing Competition 2004. His first book, a memoir called *My Own Brand of Blues*, is forthcoming through RockWay Press.



There’s Something About Mary Ann

At first I cringed at the concept of parenthood. Most self-gratifying bachelors react this way.

But now I adore this kid, her toothy grin, how she bounces beside the refrigerator begging for “apple spider”, and how she falls without injury (since her world is somehow governed by cartoon physics).

She’s young, but her facial structure is defined. I recognize the maternal contribution to her genetics, but there’s no trace of me: no chocolate eyes, pigmented skin, wide nostrils, or curly hair.

Some folks use what they want to believe as a way to ignore what they don’t want to know. I refuse to be one of those people. So after arguments with my devious girlfriend and receiving negative news from the doctor, I am cringing once again, this time while moving out of an apartment and forsaking a child that I’ve learned to love, despite our dissimilar DNA.

John Ravenscroft

An Ice House

John lives in England and spends much of his time writing fiction and co-editing *Cadenza Magazine*. His short stories have won prizes in various literary competitions and also been broadcast on the BBC.



An Ice House

“Build me an ice house,” you said.

And because I loved you beyond measure, that was what I did.

I bought an ice-maker. Day and night it hummed and rattled and throbbed in my basement, turning out great blue blocks of glittering ice.

I worked those blocks. They froze my fingers, numbed my hands, fogged my breath. I hauled them into place, wrenched my back, tested my limits - all for love.

Finally, it was finished. A huge igloo in an English basement. A glittering wonder beneath rows of fairy lights. An Ice House for the love of my life.

“Come,” I said, heading for the basement.

You stared.

“What the hell is that?”

“What you asked for, my love. An Ice House.”

You sighed, shook your head. “Build me a nice house, I said. Not an ice house. A nice house.”

And then you left me.

Frances Reddick

Millinery

Frances is a new writer with a background in psychology and an extensive athletic background. This is his third published piece, the other two articles were for my local *Arts About Town magazine* where I profiled emerging artists.



Millinery

Can you see the hats of people
in the opera
hats for girls in the crowd
beige woven with a band, wrapped in silk
greens blues shells
By the beach to ward off the sun
your own shade
Can you see the horizons of hats
in the stands at the game
caps, visors to hide the sun
on the course
braod brimmed hats to see far and beyond
visions vistas views
can you see the melting horizon
pools, images
hats are you

Shelly Rich

Last Night at the Rodeo

Shelly lives in the western North Carolina mountains where she teaches and writes. Her work is found or forthcoming in *Eyeshot*, *Opium Magazines* first print issue, *VerbSap.com*, *FlashFiction.net* and The Binnacle First Ultra-Short Competition.



Last Night at the Rodeo

Fireworks began at 10:00 p.m.

Smells of cotton candy and popcorn wafted behind Derek as he returned from concessions, as the first bursts of red, white and blue 3-D stars spewed.

“You’re sure sumthin’ today.” Ginny raised her eyebrows, pursed her lips. “Sure like a man in chaps.”

“What?” He handed Ginny her soda, crunched his apple.

Ginny rolled her eyes. “I see how you’re watching her.”

A girl, about 17, in a tight midriff top worked the concessions trailer, rolling apples in nuts, spinning pink fuzz on white cones.

“Hmmm?” The candy, sticky in summer heat; red specks coagulated in the corners of Derek’s mouth. “Who?”

Ginny hoisted the picnic basket she’d packed for two, dug her heels in. The fireworks continued; gold, green and silver rain trailed her bouncing ponytail.

Derek turned toward the trailer. The girl smiled, licking cotton candy off her fingers.

It was 10:07.

Margaret Rozga

Elk

Margaret's poems have appeared recently in *Porcupine Literary Arts Magazine* and *Out of Line*. She teaches at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha and offers a poetry workshop at the Sitka Center for Art and Ecology.



Elk

December, and elk move down into the meadows near our cabin.

You see them just beyond our door in the morning, but let me sleep.

I almost miss them again in the early afternoon on my way to the river.

They graze, heads bowed, necks angled downward, tan flanks unmoving.

Only the lighter buff around their tails offers contrast to catch my eye.

I meet you headed the other way, your sketchbook in hand. You saw a hawk.

It hovered overhead, just long enough for you to catch the shape.

I ask what modeling fee Hawk charges. We laugh in the cold afternoon.

You hurry back to your drawing board, I to see low tide, and as for the elk—

In early winter, there comes a point when a group of words grazing on the hillside

Get that startled look, raise their heads and stand alert, ready to run.

Kenneth Ryan

Sure Thing

From Lynn, Massachusetts, Kenneth writes like this all the time and has been published in many fine print and online journals. His novel is in the works.



Sure Thing

She said, “We could double this money at the dog track tonight.”

He slipped the rent check into an envelope and whispered, “Baby, we’re too unlucky.”

She snatched the envelope, jabbed a gun finger into his ribs, and smirked. “We’re due. I found a face-up penny on the bus today.”

He traced a slow heart upon her breast and sighed. “There was a crow on our sill the night Bird ‘n Hand got bumped at the first turn. Stevie Wonder sang on the radio the night Super-Stishun faded down the stretch.”

She closed her mouth over his ear and stabbed it with her tongue. “I got a form. Penny Pincher runs in the fifth.”

“You’re killing me,” he said, and gnawed her throat.

“An omen,” she tapped his chest, “like the day we met. Remember, Hal?”

“Yes, Laureen. October thirty-first.” Even odds: they kissed. “Let’s go double up!”

Susan Sabia

Slice of Life

Susan's writing career began in college working for the campus newspapers. She was a corporate newsletter editor and is now pursuing her life-long dream - writing a novel. She lives in Connecticut.



Slice of Life

“What do you want?” Tara snarled.

“We need to talk,” her mother pleaded. Her bedroom doorknob jiggled. “Unlock this door!”

Tara fingered the scissors in her lap. The blades reflected the afternoon sun.

“You were three hours late last night. I found you passed out and you stunk of beer.” She paused. “Tara, you were doing so well. Sober for two months. You stopped cutting yourself. What happened?”

Last night. Jill’s house. Tommy teasing Tara for not drinking. Him rubbing a beer bottle against her lips, spilling the liquid when she refused it. But she licked her lips, savored the taste, wanted more. Shots of tequila. Making out with Tommy. Throwing up outside. Finding Tommy with Jill, his hand down her blouse.

“Tara, answer me!” her mother demanded.

Tara clutched the shiny blades. She gasped as she made the first cut on her scarred forearm. Sweet release.

Lynn Veach Sadler

Begging Miss Emily's Pardon

Former college president Lynn had won an Extraordinary Undergraduate Teaching Award, pioneered in Computer-Assisted Composition, and published widely in academics. She's now a fulltime creative writer with many publications/awards (fiction, drama, poetry, non-fiction).



Begging Miss Emily's Pardon

Beg pardon, Miss Emily, but
Hope's no thing with feathers.
Hope's a ship in which
we sailed/sail Immigrant Seas,
hoping to sight an Ellis Island,
hoping America would/will be open to receive us.

We have been—will be—its Nile Delta,
its Fertile Crescent. We came,
come in thousands, each with
a thousand dreams, ten thousand hopes,
each for a new beginning swathed in dreams—
feathery dreams, if you must, Dear Miss Emily.

Oh, Miss Emily, we wish you'd seen
West Side Story. But anyhow,
we're still coming, Miss Emily,
still coming to A-mer-i-ca!

Kay Sexton

County Court Digest: Man bites God

Kay is a philosophy graduate, recreational runner, and hostage to a capricious muse. She has had over fifty short stories published.



County Court Digest: Man bites God

Terence O'Malley (no fixed abode) received 100 hours Community Service for biting Samuel Npara, a self-medicating schizophrenic.

'He said he was God,' declared Mr O'Malley, 'so I tested his claim. Sadly, reverse transubstantiation didn't occur. He's flesh and blood, not wine and wafer, but my faith is still strong.'

The two men left court together.

Diane P. Smith

Oh Foreign Turn

Diane wrote "*Oh Foreign Turn*" for families suffering from cancer. In 2005, she placed first for "*The Dance of Life*" (Ottawa, Canada) and was a finalist for her novel "*Balancing Against the Wind*" (Ireland.)



Oh Foreign Turn

Drowsy and heavy with mourning dew
Mist shrouds light with humid air
An eastern clip, a silent faire
Oh, foreign turn in cancer's snare

Autumn leaves waltz with the winds
Shedding tears from heaven's limbs
Lonely trees in barren lands
Break the silence of this lamb

Snow white blizzards chilling comes
Whispering angels, "Two dark tombs."
Winter winds blow quick and cold
Lift this shroud that bares the soul

Flutes shall play a healing song
Melodic tunes of lives so strong
Soft spring rains shall wash this fear
Then shed the light and hold thee near

Patricia A. Smith

The Way to a Man's Heart

Patricia grew up in ethnic Newark, NJ. She was raised by her non-murderous Lithuanian grandmother. She currently resides in Corvallis, Oregon. She is nurtured in her writing endeavors by supportive non-murderous fellow writers.



The Way to a Man's Heart

Grandma accidentally killed Grandpa. They'd been drinking. He'd smacked her around extra, because, "It's our silver anniversary." She had served him a spicy squirrel casserole with spinach and acorns for the occasion. Grandpa hit her again.

She sobbed, "I thought you'd change, get nicer as we headed for the gold."

He yelled, "More salt, stupid."

She mistakenly handed him the rat poison.

Dying, Grandpa wrenched Grandma's head to his poisoned lips and whispered, "I always knew your cooking would be the death of me."

She whispered back, "You were right."

Maryanne Stahl

The Secret Key Society

Maryanne is a native New Yorker, who now lives in Savannah, Georgia. She received a nomination for the Georgia Author of the Year Award in the first novel category. Her children's story, "*Where Do Cats Go?*," won the Spirit of Moondance Award at the 2004 Moondance Film Festival.



The Secret Key Society

When I was ten, I found the place where the devil lived, a fetid tunnel into darkness dug out beneath the porch, behind a trap door in the basement. A big dirt hole with a bottom I couldn't see, but with things in it, nasty things.

When I lifted the door, horns rose from the shadows. A heap of something--bones? body parts? old clothes?--threatened from a corner. In a slant of light a bottle labeled with a skull and crossbones glinted danger.

Evidence of the devil. Proof.

So I founded a society: The Secret Key Society, and I made myself president. And although the trapdoor to Hell had no lock, only a swiveling piece of wood on a nail, the name sounded good, I thought.

And it got the point across to my cousins who lived down the street.

Judy W. Swann

The Bus Ride

A true daughter of the south, Judy was born and raised near Atlanta, GA. She currently crafts screenplays which have yet to be sold, that is, "when she isn't on the bus".



The Bus Ride

I am in the back of the bus again, escorting the battered and neglected children to the public school. Five-year-old Sara is starting to lose it.

Touching is a delicate matter. Too many of our kids have been touched inappropriately, and some have diseases that shouldn't be spread.

I pull her away from others. She wiggles and falls to the floor. I sit in her place and lift her to my lap. She relaxes almost instantly.

"Are you ready to sit down now?"

She shakes her head.

"Do you want to just sit here in my lap?"

She nods.

She leans her head on my shoulder and sighs. I kiss her hair.

I don't have a magic wand to change her past, or drugs to erase the memories, or a new mommy anxious to make new ones.

But I'm here, on this ride to school, and I have a lap.

H.Masud Taj

Yellow

Architect poet H. Masud Taj directs Black Cube (www.taj.ca). He is the architect of The War Memorial for the Indian Navy and co-formulator of New Millennium. His writings have appeared in BBC, *National Post*, *London Magazine*, Penguin Books, and *Harvard University Film Studies* bibliography.



Yellow

Light would not be as yellow
If shadows were not as black.
Cat walks between
The sun and its shadow.
At night yellow recedes into
Fireplaces and cats' eyes.
Yellow can cut through black
With blinding sight.
At night, shadows unite
To mask the sun.
Black always dreams yellow;
Yellow never sleeps until
The sun implodes into a Black Hole:
Homecoming of all shadows.

Scott Carmichael Funday Bay

Scott Carmichael is a firefighter who lives in beautiful Machiasport, Maine. Photography is a hobby for him.



Funday Bay

