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FUGUE



Featuring an interview with SAMUEL R. DELANY

The University of Idaho Literary Digest

FUGUE
The University of Idaho Literary Digest

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You get yourself in situations sometimes where you don't know how or why you got there in the first place, but, in the end, whatever happened surprises and pleases you. This is the feeling I've had for this issue (my third) of the *FUGUE*.

Putting together a magazine of literature is not the easy task I once so naively thought. There were the hours of struggling with a new and completely unfamiliar desktop publishing program; organizing the staff and playing the part of taskmaster at times ("I need those manuscripts! Yesterday!"); attempting to second guess the faculty advisor, the editorial staff, the English department (afterall, *FUGUE* is representative of the department), and the readers who, hopefully, want to read this little magazine from Idaho; and, finally, but most importantly, choosing the stories and poems included in this issue. The last is the most difficult. As writers

who attempt to publish know, it's not easy. Notice I said *attempt*. I don't know how other magazines do it, but we at *FUGUE* go over each selection with a laser-sharp eye, and a screening process which requires multiple readings by multiple readers to insure that each writer is getting a chance at a spot in *FUGUE*. I don't know if this is the best way, but it's a way that works for us (at least until the next editor comes along). What I'm trying to say is that getting something published is really *hard*, whether it be in a small northwestern magazine or a slick, New England one.

So, congrats to both the writers who submitted some fine work and the reader who chooses to read our little publication; without either, *FUGUE*, and others like it, wouldn't be here (and I'd be bored silly).

—Eric P. Isaacson
executive editor (for now)

NON-FICTION**An Interview with Samuel R. Delany**Matt Baldwin

To tell a tale is to relay an emotion, an experience, a dreamed reality of something that has occurred within the imagination of the author. Many readers frequent genre fiction, of which there is a plentiful supply. Some genre fiction is considered literary, some is not, though every genre has its respected individuals. Samuel R. Delany is one such within and without the realm of science-fiction.

Delany was the English Department's Distinguished Visiting Writer for the fall semester. While on campus, Delany conducted a week and a half long workshop and read from his books, *Atlantis* (Delany's most recent release) and *Tales of Neveryön*. Other works of fiction authored by Delany include: *Dhalgren*, *The Einstein Intersection* and *They Fly at Ciron*. During his stint here, Delany granted an interview in the form of written replies to written questions.

Baldwin: Please tell me your history.

Samuel R. Delany: I was born and grew up in New York City's Harlem—one of the city's several black ghettos. With a couple of stints out, first in Greece, later in San Francisco, and [about twenty years ago] in London, I've lived most of my life in New York City, largely as a self-supporting free-lance writer. But in 1988, due to things like the Thor Power Tool Decision and the contraction of the American publishing industry, along with the works of many other mid-list writers, pretty much all my fiction was put out of print by my paperback publisher (in my case, Bantam Books) in one six month period. About the same time I was offered a professorship at the University of Massachusetts. I don't have any sort of degree. And my foreign languages are spotty—to put it mildly. But over the years my non-fiction critical work had been strong enough to provoke an academic offer. My committed interest in post-structuralism and literary theory since the middle seventies has

allowed me to bring some interesting approaches to my teaching. Shortly after I began at Massachusetts Wesleyan University Press undertook what I can only call a rescue operation, bringing various of my novels back into print. Also they've been bringing out some of my new work, both fiction and nonfiction.

Richard Kasak Books and Fiction Collective—II have brought out some others.

B: What drove you to write? Why not just go into the sciences?

SRD: Some years ago—as far back as 1961, as a matter of fact—when my wife at the time, the poet Marilyn Hacker, was coming out of the Art Students' League building on 57th Street where she was then taking classes, a bunch of men with TV cameras and microphones stopped her. They were doing a human interest story for the evening news. "Why, in this age of science," they asked, thrusting a microphone at her, "do you want to be an artist?"

Well, your question throws me back to the answer she gave. "I don't know if there's really that much difference between them," she said. "Both of them begin with fine observation of the real world."

Frankly, I'd still go along with that.

Though I began writing stories—and trying to write novels—when I was twelve, until I was seventeen or eighteen I was firmly convinced I was going to be a nuclear physicist. When that TV news cast was done, both Marilyn and I had recently finished at the Bronx High School of Science. Thirty-five years later, I would add all sorts of provisos to Marilyn's statement: Though both art and science *begin* with fine observation of the world, neither one ends there. Nor do both end in the same place. Also, what one might mean by "real" in the "real world" could fill volumes. But, provisos aside, it's still not a bad place to start your thinking about either one or both—science or art.

B: How do you view science fiction in today's world? Is it going down hill or uphill? What is the trend in the genre?

SRD: Over the years, we've seen a constant loosening of the boundaries of written science fiction—a loosening that's been going on from the time the genre was named in 1929 (with literary writers like Huxley producing *Brave New World* in 1933 and Orwell producing *1984* in 1948) until the current dispersal of cyberpunk. What was fairly limited to a paraliterary textual form between the end of the thirties and the middle of the fifties moved first into a radio form and almost at the same time became a filmic genre. More recently, starting in the sixties with the new wave, it began to

overlap the literary/paraliterary border to infiltrate the literary precincts.

As such, I just don't see it as an uphill or a downhill movement. Rather it seems: more lateral—a horizontal dispersal, with images, ideas, and attitudes traditional to science fiction and traditional science fiction readers: moving into areas and striking the minds of people whom, fifteen or twenty years ago, they would not have struck.

A number of writers, both academic and science fictional, are involved in this process. In order finally to judge it, I think we can only wait and see.

B: Many people who will read this article will be writers. Can you tell us about the writing industry? Things we should watch out for? The difficulty of getting published? What genres is it difficult to get published in?

SRD: What you ask for in a minute or two of conversation has been the subject of entire books. One of the reasons there have been as many volumes on the topic as there have is because the real answer to your question is simply, "No." I can't tell you any hard and stable facts about the publishing industry in general.

My agent, Henry Morrison, has been one of the larger New York agents working now for almost thirty years. He handles clients like Robert Ludlum and Eric Van Lustbader. Well, some years ago Henry's stepson, Michael, who was getting his Master's Degree in Business Administration from NYU, decided, for his Master's Thesis, to survey the New York publishing industry. Using his father's connections, Mike interviewed forty top New York publishing executives, as to their policies and business practices. Then he tabulated their practices against their profits.

His conclusion?

Publishing is not a business.

There were companies following the same policies, some of which were doing well and some of which were doing terribly. There were companies following diametrically opposed policies, some of which were doing well and some of which were doing horrendously. There was simply no rhyme or reason, based on what they were doing, that seemed to correlate with their success—or failure.

This is probably the best information the new writer can take with her/him as he/she enters the field. It is the only information that will make sense out of the incredible contradictions and apparent stupidities that the writer invariably encounters throughout the publishing world. Don't expect it to make sense. It

doesn't.

B: Can you give me an in-depth synopsis of your novel *Hogg*? What made you write it? What are you trying to tell us in the novel?

SRD: Absolutely not. Nor would I try. Your question simply goes against all the reasons one might have for writing a book in the first place. You write books so that people will read them—and judge that experience accordingly. Not so that they can dismiss the experience with a synopsis—that they judge instead.

Hogg is a realistic novel about sex and violence. At least one commentator, Ray Davis, in a survey of my three pornographic novels, *Equinox* [1973], *Hogg* [1995], and *The Mad Man* [1994], has suggested that the number of such books is so low as to mean that perhaps mine are the only ones. Paradoxically, to write realistically about what has not been written about realistically before is tantamount to writing experimentally. That probably means you're going to have to read it twice—if not three times. And don't expect any easy ride.

What made me write it? Largely, because nobody else had.

But the fact is, I wasn't trying to tell you, the reader, anything. I was trying to give you something akin to the memory of an experience—which is after all one of the things fiction does. I thought those memories had enough of beauty and formal order to justify writing and rewriting—then rewriting a couple of times more—the book in which I tried to evoke them.

It was nothing more than that.



Song of the Magpie

Karl Stengel

I am a middle-aged man, but still reasonably fit and able to stave off the rolls of fat that accumulate on the hips of most men my age. One of the fringe benefits, I suppose, of having spent decades hastily unearthing graves in the moonlight with inadequate tools, carefully balancing caskets rotted to the point of near collapse on my back, trussing bodies in burlap and carting them from one end of the country to the other on rickety handcarts.

One would think that in an age of technological wonder and enlightenment spawning electrical lights, the Sholes typewriter, and the telegraph, my services would be embraced by this nation's proliferation of medical schools. But such is not the case. Woefully undersupplied universities, dependent upon my wares as they are, still prefer to maintain a distance. I remain one of the many unsung heroes of this burgeoning medical profession—a body snatcher.

In this admittedly profitable but lonely vocation, I've come to know countless sack-em-up men over the years. Dedicated body procurers from all parts of the country who could, as easily as strolling through the park, sniff out a fresh corpse with nary a blemish on it and whisk it out of the earth under the very noses of the local constabulary. But none has ever left a more indelible impression upon me than Bartholomew, a real grave robber's grave robber. When I think of the future he could have realized in this trade, the potential affluence he let slip away because of his lack of self-discipline, it makes my teeth ache.

Though highly skilled at body snatching, Bartholomew was the strangest man I had ever met in a profession not suffering from a dearth of eccentrics. I've seen men hurl themselves into open graves, pry open the lids of coffins with their bloody fingers, and propose to dead bodies. I've seen men tango across cemeteries cheek to cheek with departed women. I even saw a man try to hack his way through the iron bars of a mausoleum window with his bare teeth. But Bartholomew was still the oddest duck I've ever known. After my

lurid experiences with Bart, I could never again order a meal from a restaurant without the hairs on the back of my neck pricking up.

But before saying anything more about ol' Bart, to gain a clearer understanding of his compulsions and possibly better understand the temperament of the body snatcher in general, it would probably be wise to let you know how I, myself, entered the grave-robbing business. It wasn't a decision made out of sloth, I can assure you. Just practicality. I've never been afraid to let a bead of perspiration trickle across my brow or smidgen of dirt creep under my fingernails. It's just that the Protestant work ethic never made much sense to me. Why work eight hours a day, when you can work four hours a night?

It was a philosophy shared by the three employees whose services I retained prior to engaging Bartholomew: Magpie, Ashes, and Boll Weevil. All three of them competent body snatchers despite their incessant complaints about the conditions of the office I maintained in the basement of a local medical school.

It was a cramped, musty affair with a ceiling much too shallow, forcing those who entered to withdraw their necks into their shoulder blades and lean their heads to one side as if trying to loosen puddles of water stopped in their ears. Only a wafer-thin layer of plaster and wooden struts separated the office from a multitude of rusting septic tanks buried nearby. Every time one of the students on the east end of the campus flushed, a new fissure burst through the wall and issued torrents of raw sewage onto the floor.

Although their frivolous complaints about the cold and the filth and the rats and the inch-by-inch encroachment of the arching ceiling pressing against their heads and warping their spines drove me to distraction, I tolerated the whining of my three employees. Winter was soon approaching, and I had to extract as many bodies from the earth as possible while the soil was still soft enough to manipulate.

Magpie, the first of my three-member staff, was a goodnatured codger I had met at a public hanging. He wasn't much older than myself in years, but looked centuries so. His fondness for scotch hastened the onset of jowls and deep crevices on his face. Any possible benefit his stout body might have derived from the physical demands of grave robbing was slowly depleted by his alcoholism.

Sometimes he even drank while he was on the job, but it didn't bother me as long as it was in moderation and between the hours of 1:30 and 3:00. During this period, the alcohol Magpie consumed rendered him lucid and motivated and even seemed to arrest his

habit of nervously prattling on when in the company of a dead body. It soothed his nerves, and Magpie was more than capable of fulfilling his primary duty, that is filling in and tidying up the graves that the other two members of my staff had disturbed.

Magpie was a real artist in this regard. One of his trademark finishing touches on a "grave-tidy" involved a customized rake that helped him comb the blades of grass covering a molested gravesite to uniformly flow into the rest of the cemetery lawn. Once Magpie was finished neatening up, not even the kneeling family members of the deceased suspected a thing.

Like many artists, unfortunately, Magpie's drinking sometimes got the better of him. The bargain scotch he consumed would catch up to him at about half past 3:00, and problems would ensue. The old man's attention to detail would slide, and other members of my staff would have to clean up after him. Sometimes Magpie would even fall asleep on a mound of earth and would have to be prodded in the ribs with a spade to continue his duties.

Fortunately, the second of my three employees never touched a drop of liquor. Ashes was a young medical student from Switzerland who had been expelled from the University of Zürich for, as he put it, "conducting independent research."

He was an introspective young man in his mid-20s who spoke flawless English and could usually be found hunched over stacks of medical books, brooding and preoccupied with who knows what. A thicket of brown hair going prematurely gray drooped over his forehead and covered most of his face, revealing only an angular chin covered with skin so pale you would have thought he served time in prison.

His primary responsibility was to perform the actual digging of the graves. Though Ashes was easily handsome and personable enough to have entertained any woman, he chose to spend most of his time snatching bodies for me or losing himself in the independent studies that had gotten him expelled in the first place. Indeed, he even seemed to thrive on having been liberated from the shackles of a traditional university curriculum.

Though I respected his monastic devotion to books and corpses, I began to suspect that Ashes might be pilfering bodies from my own supply for his experiments. It was a suspicion difficult to prove, unfortunately, because of an arrangement we agreed upon when I first hired him.

Any corpses we encountered that weren't up to the standards of the university I consented to sell to Ashes at a reduced cost and allow him to store them in the boiler room adjacent to my office

along with his other lab equipment. His experiments rendered these second-hand corpses difficult to identify, so I had to rely solely on the honor system when not directly supervising work in the field.

Boll Weevil, the third of my employees, was only a boy of twelve. He was responsible for acting as sentry while we plundered cemeteries and operated as coach driver for deliveries. My initial contact with the child occurred during negotiations to purchase a new horse and carriage to transport my inventory.

While bartering with the horse's owner I felt a slight flutter in my coat that I dismissed as a moth or some other pest. Moments after I walked away from the closed deal I noticed the unraveled stitching of my coat pocket and missing wallet. It was a feat that had to have been performed by a pair of tiny, extraordinarily skilled hands.

I scanned the cobblestone street for any sign of the thief, and noticed a swarthy child with large, brown eyes and a very nervous expression walking quickly away from me and trying to avoid my gaze.

I clamped my fingers around the child's neck, hoisted him upside down, and shook him vigorously. A variety of items fell from the child's clothing including my wallet. Instead of mercilessly beating the child half to death, as it would have been my right to do, I invited him to join me in the field of grave robbing. But I've digressed enough about my three employees. Back to Bartholomew.

The night I hired Bartholomew remains vividly etched into my memory. I was in my office, sitting down to a quiet meal after working late, when the doors of the boiler room suddenly flew open. Ashes, looking as if he were possessed by a demon, marched toward the table. He grabbed my wrist, snatched the fork from my hand and speared the chunk of lamb I was about to consume. He waved the slice of lamb in my face and shrieked, "It is merely in a transitional state, merely resting!" He then popped the lamb into his mouth, swallowed it in a mighty gulp, and whipped his head back. The brown hair that usually covered his face flowed backward over his head and revealed a pair of eyes bulging with madness. Considering what was to transpire only hours later, I should have counted myself fortunate that only a scrap of lamb was at stake. But I knew no better and vowed to rid my office of this gadfly, Ashes, once and for all.

With Magpie a hopeless alcoholic, Ashes possibly thieving my own supply of corpses, and Boll Weevil still not yet strong enough to retrieve bodies of any substance, I knew definitely that help was required.

Just like policemen and attorneys, we body snatchers warm the

hassocks of a favorite neighborhood watering hole, a friendly pub where one can rub elbows with friends and associates and exchange "war" stories about the big one that got away, console a broken heart, tell the latest joke, or advertise for help.

I entered "The Golden Shovel," squeezing past several acquaintances and slapping them on the back, and headed straight for the bar. Once there, I removed a wilted, white rose from my pocket and inserted the dried out flower in the lapel of my jacket. This was a secret code employed by body snatchers to communicate when one was in the market for an employee.

After about ten minutes, a young man whose face looked as if it had been constructed of uncooked bread dough sat next to me and attempted to sniff the wilted rose. We shook hands, and he held onto mine long enough to abrade his rough skin against my own. Judging by the uniform layers of calluses surrounding this man's fingers, I knew he had been well acquainted with shovels.

"You've uprooted a few shrubs, haven't you?" I said.

The young man nodded and hopped off of his stool. He disappeared behind the bar, and I heard a muffled scraping sound. Seconds later, the young man appeared before me with two immense kegs of ale on his shoulders. With his arms curled around the barrels, he began hopping around the tavern like a frog.

I followed closely behind, trying not to spill my brandy. The young man's breathing was steady and controlled. He ignored the waves of pulchritude that rolled nearby, women who were eager to make the acquaintance of a man with such stamina. A paragon of concentration, he ignored their lusty invitations and focused entirely on the job at hand.

After five minutes of this hopping, he wasn't even breaking a sweat. To many of the patrons, the man was just showing off his strength, but any flesh filcher in the crowd knew better. A job interview was in progress, and the candidate was doing quite well. To indicate that the job was his, I opened my cigarette case, withdrew a cigarette, and inserted it between his lips.

The man smiled and put down the barrels, still not issuing so much as a drop of perspiration. He guided me toward the bar and, as was the custom among grave robbers seeking employment and grave robbers wishing to hire, the young man gestured for the barkeep to pour me a glass of whatever I was drinking.

This humble exchange concluded my first meeting with Bartholomew, and although I hadn't known it at the time, the finest grave robber alive had just bought me a drink. I downed the brandy hurriedly, eager to take my new employee out on an actual

procurement.

As we strolled back to my university office, I was pleased to discover no traces of alcohol on his breath. He must have been in the pub exclusively to seek employment. I was confident that he would make a valuable addition to my little family, and I attempted to engage him in small talk. A laconic man, it took a great deal of effort to find out exactly what Bart did when he wasn't working.

"You know," I said. "In your spare time. For recreation, what do you do? Man does not live by body snatching alone."

"Cooking," he finally mumbled in response to my prodding.

"I enjoy cooking," he said and one corner of Bartholomew's mouth attempted to scale his face and drag the rest of his lips behind to form a smile.

"Cooking," I thought. "A normal enough hobby." I grew more and more pleased with my new employee. Foolishly, I gave his hobby no further thought, and as soon as I had introduced my new friend to my less than ecstatic staff, I dusted off my "work clothes" and prepared for the evening's jaunt.

Because of my age, I seldom joined my staff on their nightly excursions and ventured into the field only when it was absolutely necessary: when one of my three employees was sick or otherwise engaged. The night I hired Bartholomew, however, I made a special point of joining my charges to evaluate his skills firsthand.

The cemetery I decided we should visit first was Pinewood Lawn, an immense graveyard catering to the affluent. Security was lax at this upper class graveyard, as it was believed that nobody could possibly pick the complicated locks, scale the immense walls, or cover their tracks before dusk. Nobody but my crack squadron of body snatchers.

They played their usual roles, with Ashes digging, Boll Weevil keeping watch, and Magpie tidying up. Only this glorious evening, my golden boy Bartholomew was called into play and somehow managed to dig up six graves in the amount of time it took Ashes to unearth only one.

I walked around to various sites, experimenting with different vantage points to best witness the poetry of Bartholomew's fluttering shovel. Bartholomew had managed to unearth so many graves that poor Magpie couldn't keep up with the necessary tidying. In desperate wheezes, he implored Bartholomew to help, but received only this strange reply:

"I would prefer not to."

Bartholomew then wandered around the graves he had opened, staring into them and mumbling what seemed to be a table of

measures. He must have been in an exhausted daze, I reasoned. Anybody would be.

Though refusal to help tidy an excessive mess at a graverobbing was a serious breach of etiquette among body snatchers, I felt Bart was certainly entitled to rest and even behave like a prima donna. He had performed a magnificent feat. And if my condolence of his unwillingness to help Magpie might have ruffled a few feathers, so be it.

Our second evening at Pinewood Lawn was even more profitable, with Bartholomew showing me ways to increase my profits in ways I never imagined. He showed me how to dismantle the finer, rosewood coffins with minimal damage and gave me a list of woodcarvers who paid top dollar for such fine merchandise. He also drew my attention to the wealth of satin lining the insides of the coffins and provided tips on how to peddle it to seamstresses who used the satin in everything from scarves to doll's dresses.

Always grateful to my hard-working though occasionally vexing employees, I allowed my increased profits to trickle into their pockets as well, giving credit where credit was due. Bartholomew soon became quite a popular fixture in our office, and he was easily forgiven his pathological dislike for filling in graves.

Then, the beginning of the end. On our third night at Pinewood Lawn, as we were preparing to leave the cemetery, I caught Bartholomew dragging an immense sack of flour out from behind a Mausoleum. Where on earth did he get flour? He dragged the sack toward one of the open graves that Magpie was busy closing up. He sliced open the top of the sack and kicked it over, covering Magpie in buckets of fine, white powder.

"What's this?" Magpie sputtered. "Are you mad?" Having the best sense of humor of us all, Magpie dismissed the incident as a practical joke. But I could tell by the look on Bart's face that trouble was brewing.

On the fourth night, I caught Bartholomew pushing a wheelbarrow filled with milk toward one of the opened graves. This time, Magpie wasn't alone. The increased volume of graves opened by Bart necessitated Ashes to help out with the gravefilling and tidying. Torrents of ice-cold milk doused Ashes and Magpie, causing Ashes to let out a girlish cry that embarrassed all of us.

"I'll kill him!" he screamed, bounding out of the grave, stumbling over the milky, muddy earth and wrapping his fingers around Bartholomew's throat.

"Bartholomew, old friend," Ashes growled. "Would you help us tidy the graves?"

"I'd prefer not to," Bart managed to reply, even with his windpipe being squeezed shut by Ashes' fingers.

On the fifth night, I knew exactly how to curb my new employee's culinary impulses. Before boarding our carriage, I frisked Bartholomew from head to toe, patting him down in places only a man secure in his masculinity would ever dare touch. I inspected every inch of the carriage and even forced Boll Weevil to stop a few times on the way to check inside the carriage again. Satisfied that Bart was equipped only to rob graves, we continued.

Most of that night went as it had for the previous four evenings, except Bartholomew had raised the stakes. He was hunched over one of the final graves we planned to fill, only it was already brimming with an immense quantity of a gooey, yellowish substance. Bartholomew was slowly stirring the burial site's amber contents with a wooden spade, and he was humming a lively tune.

Magpie kneeled before the substance oozing from the burial site and scooped up a handful. He dipped his tongue into the amber goo cupped in his palm and smiled.

"Butterscotch pudding," he said. "Mmmmmmm."

"Do you know whose resting place this is?" Ashes said in a panicky voice. "Colin McWhirter's son!"

Even Magpie, who never read a newspaper, recognized the name of the politician's deceased son.

"The Colin McWhirter?"

Ashes nodded.

"And Mrs. McWhirter visits him every morning like clockwork!"

Ashes paced back and forth, loosening his collar. "What's going to happen when she visits tomorrow and instead of kneeling down on a patch of grass, she sinks into a quagmire of butterscotch pudding?"

The tombstone marking the grave began to seep into the pudding and slowly tumbled over, disappearing in seconds.

Ashes slapped his forehead in despair.

"We're all going to swing!"

At this point, I wasn't sure if Bartholomew was involved in witchcraft or alchemy, but I beseeched him to help.

"Bartholomew, will you please help evacuate the butterscotch pudding from this grave?"

"I would prefer not to," Bartholomew replied. He swabbed great gobs of whipped cream from a bucket onto the pudding, then finished off the desert by daintily arranging an ornate pattern of cherries on top. Satisfied, Bartholomew placed his hands on his hips and smiled at the beautiful creation.

Fearing the bite of the hangman's noose, we ignored Bart and

formed an assembly line of pudding dispatchers. I used my hat to scoop the pudding out of the grave, dumping it in Boll Weevil's cap, who then poured it into a bucket Ashes had wrested from Bartholomew, and finally into the upended folds of the shirt Magpie used to cover his enormous belly. Magpie snapped the folds of his shirt taut, catapulting the pudding over the cemetery walls.

It took all of us the entire night to get rid of the pudding, fill the grave backup up with earth, and, with surgical precision, restore the layer of grass to its former state. All of us except Bartholomew, who wandered off into the darkness.

With the McWhirter grave fully restored, I made myself comfortable against a tombstone and allowed myself a moment's rest. Only for a few minutes, I promised myself.

A few hours later, of course, the first rays of the sun crept over Pinewood Lawn's stone walls, and I emitted a gasp of horror. I had overslept, a mistake that might very well cost me my life. I knew I had to leave immediately, and hauled my exhausted body off of the grass, silently cursing Bartholomew for not having a vice that was as easy to hide as cannibalism or necrophilia.

For what I saw in that graveyard was something worse, infinitely more horrible than an acquired taste for human flesh or unorthodox sexual preference. The entire cemetery had been excavated. Every last grave. And to my further astonishment, every burial ground contained an entree and corresponding side dish from Bartholomew's extensive bill of fare. Menus were propped on every tombstone and waiters glided between the grave markers, being rude to imaginary customers.

One unearthed grave contained 250 gallons of chocolate mousse. The richest, lightest, fluffiest chocolate mousse I'd ever tasted. Another pit contained an entire flock of roasted ducks, each with delectably golden brown skin and cinnamon stuffing. Two graves surrounding the ducks contained orange sauce and cherry sauce, each with immense spoons.

And on it went, burial site after burial site overflowing with French-fried shrimp, mashed potatoes, watercress salad, slabs of prime rib, horseradish sauce, and squares of cornbread. The comforting smell of death and decay had been replaced by the disquieting aroma of a reasonably priced bistro.

As I wandered through the graveyard, too shocked to flee for my life, too shocked even to bear any malice toward Ashes, Boll Weevil, and Magpie who had abandoned me and taken the carriage, I kept my eyes peeled for any indication of Bartholomew.

Eventually, I found him, standing in front of a grave containing

hundreds of crepes. He was splashing brandy over the delicate omelets, threw the bottle away, and produced a box of matches.

"Bartholomew?" I called.

He ignored me, and slid open the box of matches.

"Bartholomew!" I repeated. He turned and stared right through me. I approached him and grabbed his shoulders, violently shaking him.

"You can't stay here," I said. He elbowed me away and clawed at the box of matches.

"There's still time to escape. But if you stay here—" I scanned the hundreds of empty graves now filled with a gourmand's wildest dreams and shook my head. "With all this, they'll hang you for sure."

Bartholomew kept his back to me.

"Won't you come away?"

He lit the match, threw it into the pit, and marveled at the flames.

And that's how I left him. If he had been caught and hanged, I surely would have heard about it. If he had continued grave robbing elsewhere, I would have heard about that, too, Bart having such a distinctive way of robbing a grave. The man simply disappeared.

And now, as I enjoy my twilight years and reflect on my life and career, as I try and enjoy a standard of living provided by a lucky investment in copper, I shoo the army of waiters away. I shoulder their annoyed glances and whispers while studying this menu and silently plead for them to tolerate my indecision. Everything reminds me of Bartholomew.



Eileen Malone

EATING HER WEDDING DRESS

Tossed on the vanity chair
delicious damp fingerprints
on her white velvet gown
form small, new mushrooms

I press my face to the wedding feast
eat pearls of pickled onions
raw oysters in tiny ivory shells
I release my tongue, lick salt
as spit squirts like estrogen
between emerging rat teeth
capable of grinding, chewing
this ceremony of thoughts
sliding all denial and neglect
like colorless afterbirth
down my slippery throat

I might seem old hag
devouring evidence
—what is left of the bride
what remains of my mind
—no matter, I no longer fear
I might be what I seem.

Trevor Toland

Watermelon Seeds

As I lay

suspended

between two trees,

an easy, teasing wind slowly peeled the heat
off my body.

Gone with it was my dampness,

leaving on my lips only

crystals of salt. Behind my lids

luminous yellow began to slowly

die in amber. Reaching down,

my hand felt a cool wet glass

on the first try. I gently ran

the captured cube

over my lips and tongue

before allowing it to drift slickly

in the hollow of my throat: a medallion of ice,

and a seamless chain of melted water

encircling my neck.

The clinking of dishes came cleanly

from the kitchen window, carrying with it

the voice of my grandmother,

who was softly humming a song

I didn't need to know.

The screen door was opened—

then quietly closed. Shortly,

the plywood porch began to creak

in lazy time as my grandfather

rocked away, spitting watermelon seeds

in no particular direction.

Sinking Sandy

Michael A. Arnzen

*I*t's the perfect day for drowning, Sandy thinks, head drooping backwards on slim shoulder blades, neck craned up at the sun, legs crooked to air the knee pits, body poised like a deep brown insect sacrificing its carapace to sun. The ocean before her is deep blue and twinkling white—an irrelevant glare whose reflection warms her toes and knees and chin. She can feel its heat glimmering in the white gooey oil congealed on the underside of her breasts like a wiry bra of sunshine, wet with the decay of soon-to-be rust. No one is out here. She is nude and glowing and alone.

A perfect day for drowning. Later. Maybe when more people arrive to swim or surf or barbecue. Maybe when the sun throbs down in the water like a heart losing its pulse, its perfect disk infinitely hacked by the wafer thin serrated edge of the watery horizon: the butchering dusk. Maybe she'll convince herself not to drown at all, but she doesn't think it's likely. She's been through it all before—the volume of bellowing arguments inside her skull rising so quickly, so painfully, that it would always reach the point where she had to step outside and have a cigarette, leaning her back against the walls of her mind, feeling only the vibrations of grumbling voices inside but no longer making out their words—soon wandering off until she disappeared and ended up back...

Here on the beach, tanning her body. A futile gesture, she knew. But she wanted to go out in style. Maybe give the fisherman—a gray bearded man she imagined would reel her in on a hook intended for sharks—something to think about, maybe even give him a hard-on, maybe even make him spill his seed in the water before he rowed her ashore. Always good to think of rebirth, reincarnation—giving something back, making it all worthwhile. It was the only thing she was sure of: her death would mean something—something she couldn't understand yet, and perhaps never would, but that something would inevitably happen with or without her own choice to cause it into being or not. That was the way nature worked.

The sand was getting hot beneath her towel and she flipped over on her stomach to give her back some color. To share. The sand stirred around her, and she couldn't help thinking that this might be the end of the world—as if the giant hourglass that kept the time of the universe had shattered at its waist and spilled eternity here beneath her. The sand glittered like glass, confirming her suspicions, and she could feel its heat beneath her stomach like a child on her mother's chest.

The heat was the only good thing—the only thing she expected she'd miss. She wondered if the water would be warm when it flooded her lungs, warm enough to confuse her air sacks, maybe even warm enough to mingle into her blood through the linings. She liked salt, imagined it would be good to feel it coursing through her veins, if only for a moment. Regardless, she was sure it would taste good going down. It always had. In fact, that taste of sea water going places it shouldn't—up the nose and down the throat and slurping deep into the ears—was perhaps the only fond memory she had of her childhood, swimming in the ocean with Daddy. Just the sense of invasion was fond—not Daddy himself. He taught her to swim by floating her on his knees. She could remember the scratchiness and the pokiness of his hairy thighs and chest coursing over her, a blanket of quills as he pulled her up out of the water whenever she sank too low, too long—wrestling wet with his body like a spiny fish with a long hard nose until surfacing to air, wind, his smiling face, his stale cigarette breath. Daddy didn't mind her peeking through the floating fabric of his shorts underwater during this training—he was always hard, though she didn't understand why at the time—believing an erection was a boy's way of not letting the water get inside—and he always stayed in the water longer than she did under the pretense of letting her practice crawling back to the beach in the shallow end while he watched. He used to joke about evolution, but she never got it. By the time he came back to the beach where she and Mommy waited he always looked sunburned, but it never lasted long. It was really just blushing. Blushing while he finished a cigarette. Blushing while he avoided her eyes.

Some wind comes now—the sea air so salty she can almost feel the tiny crystals of salt pelting her eyelids, tiny pellets preparing her for the water, airborne particulates plugging her pores.

She thinks of Mommy, burying her in sand while they waited for Daddy. She'd always have a pit ready for her when she ran dripping and blowing snot from the edge of the water. Mommy liked playing with her toy shovel and bucket—Mommy always seemed jealous of her toys—and she would dig a hole in the sand while Daddy taught

her to swim. It was a small hole usually, but it always reminded her of a grave. A grave she dove lovingly into—sometimes face-down—Mommy immediately shoveling sand on top of her as if to hide her from the sun's rays. They never spoke while they waited for Daddy. All she'd hear was the crunch of her bare stomach against water-soaked sand and the dull tap-tap-tap of the shovel above. Like Mommy knocking on her bedroom door in the middle of the night with a fingertip. Sometimes Mommy would use the plastic red shovel and bucket to build a sand castle on top of her—right on top of her tiny buried body—and it always looked as grand as a doll house. But Sandy didn't play with dolls—she liked to imagine that she was a giant who'd fallen asleep, only to find a house built right on top of her breasts while she slept. Mommy was an artist—she worked on clay pottery for a living. And she was good with sand. But no matter how good it was, she still felt like a zombie when she lifted herself out of Mommy's pretty grave. A huge zombie losing clumps of flesh—oh, okay, sand, but it sure did feel like skin when it peeled away to powder between her toes. Only no one paid any attention. No one was scared. Just quiet, like she wasn't even there.

So maybe today she would drown when no one was looking. And maybe—just maybe—that dark fisherman with the gray beard would notice her when she surfaced. Notice her—and do something about it. Maybe build her a house and bury her in the foundation. Maybe join her in the watery deep.

The wind was picking up. She buried her face in the towel, enjoying its sea bite. She could hear it whistling sharply through the waves—almost calling her name. Maybe it was the sound of people coming. Maybe a violent storm, instead. She didn't care. Shifting sand rustled around her, creating new dunes. Some sand tossed over her back, stinging the sunburned flesh like needle pricks. She let it settle on her, burn into her flesh like ashes from a campfire.

Death would be dust, sand, grit, but the water could wash that away. She'd rather be absorbed into nothingness—dilute her soul—than die dry. Even if it meant that her daydream fisherman would never find her.

The sand blew and whirled around her, sounding like she was trapped inside a large ornate hourglass. Eyes clenched shut, she listened intently, waiting. Waiting. Waiting.

Soon the wind brought more sand into her ears, whirling inside the lobe like the grit in a gutted bone-dry seashell. Its tiny rattling particles whispered to her. Mommy's voice: you can drown in sand, too. She tried to move but it was too late. She closed her eyes and listened in the silence for the pat-pat-pat of a plastic shovel, but

knew when it finally came that it was only the final beats of a heart drying inside-out.

Holding her breath was no longer working. She tried to imagine a gray-bearded clam digger shoveling her free from the silt, but the image didn't work. It wasn't right; it wasn't what she had planned. So she tried to force the taste of salt on her tongue as she opened her mouth and let it in, fingering the wet gravel beneath her for Daddy's fingers, Daddy's kneecaps, anything bony to hold on to. There. *There*. Merely a cigarette butt. Fibrous and thick, deep in the wet sand, itchy against her thigh. Like buried treasure beneath Mommy's growing castle of salty sand. She fingered the rotting cylinder for a lingering warmth of lips, wondering if this is what plugged the waist of the universe's hourglass, causing it to explode and engulf her in sand like this as she hungrily writhed.

And swallowed.



Travis L. Sparkman

Lost Thought

I slip

at the cave's opening

and plummet

into the still

darkness

and land

in the stagnant pool

of reflection

next to the blind,

white

catfish.

R. E. Alatee
fine

I'm talking a little more realism, less Disney you know.

French Connection would be good.

is that the new one with Brad Pitt as a homosexual glam rock singer? if so I'm having none of that faggot shit.

You are so genre, man. that's all been done before, see? it's all about career and tunnel vision. try rubbin' that out with your shiny new quarter.

you really think that's all it's about? *E!* Television and movie reviews on CD-ROM?

give me a smile.

what?

i said, give me a smile.

fuck you!

come on, just do it. there's no one here watchin' or anything.

hey, isn't that Anna-Nicole on the deal there?

don't change the subject.

I'm NOT doing it.

because i asked You?

no.

well then why?

just because. look, can you just drop this shit?

no?

why? what are you trying to prove?

nothing. i just want You to look at me is all when You talk like that.

talk like WHAT? look, if you're going to be pissed about that Brad Pitt thing. . .

it isn't that.

well, what the hell's your problem? you wanna rent a movie or not?

yeah.

so what's the deal?

just the way You said it.

said what?

You know, what You said earlier.

I said a lot of things earlier. try pinning it down a little for me.

well, You know, about what we were watching the other day.

about WHAT that we were watching the other day?

over at Your place, You know, that show we always watch on
mondays?

you mean *Melrose Place*? you're grieving me over that shit with Matt
and his "new-found friend"?

no, the other one.

oh.

know which one i mean?

oh yeah, *that* one. yeah okay.

You remember what You said about that guy passed out on the
couch.

no.

well You should You self-absorbed asswipe!

sorry, man. what'd I say?

fuck, if You can't remember. . .

no, now wait I remember now. he was all spread-eagled on the couch
there with a dumbass grin on his face.

right?

am I right?

yeah, You're right. go on. what'd the other guy say?

something, something about how he looked so peaceful, or how he
couldn't stand to watch, or, or I don't

fucking remember! why don't you just level and tell me what I did to
piss you off so bad that you're basing this

oh-so-crucial decision of what we're gonna rent tonight on?

just forget it, man.

no, fuck you! you brought this up to begin with so just tell me
goddammit!

no.

why NOT?

because.

because WHY?

because if i have to tell You then it's not worth the trouble.

will you stop with the mind games? just fucking tell me!

it's nothing. really. JUST FORGET ABOUT IT, OKAY?

oh sure. I'm just supposed to forget about this whole thing now, just
because you said so! wow! how about

that? I have somehow forgotten all about this incident, nothing more

than a flash in the pan, one of those crazy little trivial things that just happened one day and might have been important to someone but not me! no sir! I will be completely oblivious to everybody else because that is the type of person I am. Captain Oblivious!

what?!

nothing.

no, what was THAT for?

it was just something i remembered seeing on television once.

nothing, really.

no it wasn't! tell me what you're REALLY smiling about.

i told You. just something i saw a while ago. that's all.

fine.

fine what?

FINE. you know, BE THAT WAY?

fine.

fine.

12:42AM



Who Said Heroes Don't Come From Idaho? or How to Find Love After Thirty

Ryan Patrick Witt

It was one of those relationships where you don't know who was the behemoth.

On one hand, you had her, Bernice, or Bernie as her friends called her. She was known to still others far and wide by her CB handle "Mama Cass," not just for her slight resemblance to the singer (although Mama Cass wasn't six-foot-two, 251 pounds), but also for her motherly touch. In high school, Bernie wasn't allowed to play powder puff football because she almost played for the varsity squad, but she wouldn't have played anyway. Despite the fact that most of the girls on the powder puff team were cruel to Bernie, she didn't want to hurt them.

And she would have hurt them.

Besides, Bernie wasn't a powder puff, and being called such would hurt her ego. At best, the opposing team would have been puffs of powder when Bernie was done with them. Calling her "mama" was something she could handle; it expressed the side of her that could be a loving, doting sap—a side few could imagine, yet a side she enjoyed.

Then, on the other hand, you had him, Silver. You're probably thinking that Silver is a strange name for an eighteen-wheeler, but Bernie couldn't bring herself to call him Fatsy. Besides, he was her steed, her iron-and-aluminum clad mount that would charge sure-footedly into any adventure.

And, yes, Silver was the only man Bernie could count on.

Two years ago, Bernie thought she had found *him*, the man that would be hers, the man that would settle her restless truck driver's heart. His name was Earl. He was a dishwasher and bartender in Missoula, Montana, and Bernie had met him at the 1992 National Finals Midget Throwing Competition. Now, you might think that the midgets would mind getting tossed in excess of thirty feet over and over again all in the interest of fun, but with all the free booze the human shot puts could choke down, you'd be surprised how many

little people actually showed up.

But when Bernie saw Earl get out the sawdust to sprinkle on the Jack Daniel's laden vomit of champion midget toseee Bruce Bilkins, she knew she was in love. Or lust. Or something.

She loved the Smurfette tattoo on his left bicep, his long black hair, and how he smelled like Pine-Sol and Marlboro cigarettes when she got close to him. But even before the night was over, she knew it would never work. She thought she wanted a man to settle her down, to whisk her off the open road, take her to a double-wide trailer in the suburbs, and eat her french fried carrots, but she was wrong.

Besides, he was married.

But, alas, this is not a story about a jilted, love-tortured woman who finds the man of her desires only to discover he is a woman, and she is a lesbian, although NBC is showing the made-for-TV movie of that exact scenario Sunday at 9. Nor is this even the story of a woman and her passive-aggressive love for her truck.

This is the story about Bernie and Leslie.

No, they are not lesbians, but thank you for asking.

Leslie is the handyman in a truck stop in Mountain Home, Idaho. Now, to call this place merely a truck stop would not be doing it justice. It had everything. It was practically downtown Mountain Home—they just needed to move city hall in next to the Orange Julius. It was not hard to figure out exactly why the center of Mountain Home commerce was the truck stop: there was simply nothing else out there. A sign fifty feet across, held two hundred feet above the ground, swaying and lollygagging listlessly in the southern Idaho desert wind enticed all travelers on I-84 to stop, for if they didn't, the truck stop might lose money. If the truck stop lost money, the good, though slightly crazy and misguided, residents of Mountain Home could lose their jobs. Luckily for them, there was not another gas pump or public pisser for at least one hundred miles. And the people did stop. So all was right in the microcosm of the Mountain Home Flying J Truck Stop/Restaurant/Mini-mall.

As stated before, Leslie was the senior handyman extraordinaire for the complex. He was thirty-three years old and he lived in his parents' garage. Well, calling it a garage was not really fair. The garage had been remodeled into an apartment, complete with its own bathroom, after Leslie's father, Ron, wanted to make his room inside the house proper into a disco rompus room. Ron figured that after thirty years of Leslie living in the same room across the hall from his parents maybe Leslie was ready to have his own place. Leslie had tried to move out before, but it was always so much

harder than he had imagined—rent was too high, his landlords were intolerable, and strangely any roommates he had nearly made him vomit and break out in hives (he was allergic to many odd things, including some other people). So he kept moving back in, back to that same room with the *Star Wars* poster and the lime-Jello-colored carpet.

And he kept going, everyday, to that same job, always on time and always dutifully happy.

He endured the hardships of his daily life in Mountain Home well: he pretended he didn't overhear the workplace gossip that claimed he was gay; he changed grubby, palm-sweaty dollar bills into quarters for the brats and punks in the arcade, accepting their harassment as well. Leslie did what had to be done. He did his part, desperate and meager though it was at times, to help the place run smoothly. And it did.

But when Leslie lay in bed at night, trying to ignore the high whines and low thumps of a Bee Gee's song as it leaked through the walls, the fourteen-year-old who spilled a cherry Icee on his new blue handyman jumpsuit, and the fact that *TV Guide* will be his date for another wild weekend, he hoped that a woman, some woman, any woman, would whisk him out of here, take him somewhere special but nowhere in particular. Leslie thought about the trucks that come and go, thunder in and thunder out, and wondered if his destiny lay somewhere on the road, in the hands of a stranger.

Don't worry. Despite the language used in the last paragraph, this little tale won't digress into a cross between Jack Kerouac and Danielle Steele. I'm saving that for my next story.

No, our wistful hero Leslie dreams about a lot of things, even on the job. This hasn't made him the most popular man in the micropolis. And it just so happened that one day, as he daydreamed while mopping up vomit around Sega's newest virtual reality jet combat game, he would make another seemingly harmless mistake.

Wouldn't you know it that just when Leslie's karmatic tide went out, Sapphire McNulty would have to stick his mug around the mini-mall. Sapphire was a six foot two inch in-shape Mountain Home native who moved away to seek "bigger tings," as he would have said in his fake New York accent. When he lived here, he tried to hustle everybody. He started when he was six. He tried to sell greeting cards and crappy seven sheet packs of two foot square wrapping paper—you know, the kind that you buy from some whiny, boogery-sleeved kid that comes to your doorstep crying about how he needs to sell two thousand more Care Bear stationery packs to get that

PlayDoh Body Part Creation set that Santa Claus absolutely will not bring for him. Imagine a kid like that, only he's hustling everybody all the time (that and he just wants to buy the last Cabbage Patch kid in Mountain Home that has red hair).

The good people of Mountain Home try not to psychoanalyze too much—they try to stick to the things they know best: reruns of the *Partridge Family*, drinking Coors Light standing around an El Camino up on blocks, and gourmet farts—but if they were to see Sapphire from Freud's perspective, they would probably guess that the reason he grew up to be such an absolute asshole was that he was made fun of a lot.

Oh come on. Like the guy's name didn't tip you off that maybe school kids would beat him up just out of principle. Hey, it's rough to be a kid today.

Sapphire's mother, Lisa, moved from New York after she had met and fallen in love with her pimp, Sapphire.

That's right. Sapphire McNulty is really Sapphire McNulty, junior.

As if it wasn't bad enough to be named Sapphire and have an affinity for dolls, every time the kids at school called your mama a whore, they were right—even if she was a prostitute for only two days. Of course, his mother and father disavowed their vocation as soon as they fell in love and decided to move to Mountain Home (he became a well-respected hair stylist and fashion consultant; she worked as a dental hygienist).

But as I said before, Sapphire left to find his calling in New York, land where his mother found probably the only pimp in the world with a heart. And the only pimp with velcro-attached pink and black leopard print bikini briefs. Maybe.

Sapphire wanted to be a gangster. His favorite movie was *The Godfather*, and he loved to mimic the Italian accent the gangsters had. He wanted to be a tough guy. Once, when Sapphire was seven, after his brother Joey had thoroughly throttled him in a game of Asteroids, Joey awoke to find the severed heads of all his favorite dolls lying next to him—including that of Juju, his favorite stuffed rabbit. Now, it was never proven beyond a reasonable doubt that Sapphire actually carried out this heinous crime, but all were certain that if he did it, the act must have been very emotional (the kid likes dolls, remember?). This worried most of the parents that had children Sapphire's age; if he could tear apart dolls in anger, who knows what this kid could do?

But enough about Sapphire's near-typical Mountain Home upbringing.

Eventually Sapphire moved back to Mountain Home. Some said it was because he didn't clearly fit into any of the strongly ethnic organized crime families. Apparently even the lazy, yet verbally poetic Canadian mafia wouldn't take him. He must have never gotten the hang of saying "eh" all the fucking time. Who can blame him?

He was at the truck stop/restaurant/mini-mall for a very important reason: there was a shipment of contraband underwear that was arriving shortly on its way east to Pocatello and Idaho Falls.

Yes, some places in this world do have "good taste" ordinances for personal items. At least for the purposes of this story. And Sapphire, with his seeming genetic tendency towards all things sexual and his "entrepreneurial" mind, figured he could make some money running undies. It's not as glorious as Ollie North, but, hey, this is a *frustrated mafioso*.

You wouldn't know it to look at them, but the staunchly conservative residents of southeastern Idaho have a real passion for edible bikini briefs, real leopard-skin tights, and purple and green tie-dyed polyester string bikinis. And, despite what the local lawmakers say, they are going to get their undies. Of course at a considerable mark-up, you understand, making the whole thing interesting to Sapphire. That and he gets his pick of the best ball-huggers of the lot.

Obviously, this sordid shipment couldn't just roll into town and start unloading at the nearest Walmart. Sapphire has a plan. A refrigerated truck from Portland was loaded with the underwear. This truck is now about to roll up and be unloaded by Sapphire's men. The underwear will be loaded into a potato truck (yes, this is Idaho for crying out loud; there are potato trucks *everywhere*) and dumped in a warehouse near Pocatello. A run down house on the outskirts of Blackfoot will be the distribution center. The locals call it the "butt-crack house" where the fancy undie junkies get another fix. Thus Sapphire gets his big time-small town money to grease politicians' palms to keep the "decency" laws on the books. And keep him in the money. But just as Sapphire McNulty strode by the daydreaming mopmaster, disaster struck.

Well, not really. You see, Leslie's vomit-laden mop just slided over the top of Sapphire's three hundred and fifty dollar Italian leather shoes. At least Sapphire said they were really Italian. No one has ever seen real Italian leather shoes in that shade of pink before. Nevertheless, this was a big deal to Sapphire.

I did mention that this guy was a complete asshole, didn't I?

As soon as he felt the mop move across his shoe he wheeled in front of Leslie, who was shaken from thoughts of Delta Burke covered strategically by sections of fruit leather. Sapphire's voice cracked and his face became so red it probably matched the color of his silk monogrammed briefs.

"What in the fucking hell are you doing, sodomy breath?" Sapphire screeched, his Italian accent wiped away with the sweep of the mop.

Leslie froze. He stood there like a bizarre Statue of Liberty, holding his mop tightly in his right fist.

But Leslie's luck wasn't exactly as bad as it could have been. For down the corridor a bit was Bernie, enjoying a chili-fried burger dog and a few Schlitz drafts in Mountain Home's only negative-two-star cafe, The Puckered Starfish. She was within eyeshot of this whole affair, but wondered if she should intervene; after all, this was a small town and the dispute was none of her business. Yet something about Leslie's blue handyman suit attracted her. Maybe it reminded her of Earl and his tattoo. Maybe Bernie felt that motherly instinct well up in her.

Actually, Bernie had just slugged down her beer too fast and was catching a buzz. And when she starts buzzing, she starts looking for love. Anything in a blue handyman suit is fair game.

Bernie had just paid for her meal and taken three steps out of the cafe when Sapphire shoved Leslie to the ground. The handyman, rigid with fear (can you blame him—the poor guy hated conflict), fell stiffly backward, his mop remaining parallel to his body.

Now, most people would agree that Leslie would never escalate a situation like this on purpose. But it was nearly obvious to all who watched that Leslie raised his mop a little as he fell, guiding it up the front of Sapphire's freshly cleaned and pressed Grimace-purple suit jacket. Why Leslie helped this catastrophe along is a mystery, but it's not a mystery that Sapphire was furious. His face turned from red to almost purple and tears welled up at the corners of his eyes. Even the melon-like sound of Leslie's head hitting the cream colored tile did little to cool Sapphire's anger.

But just as Sapphire reached down to give the handyman the beating of his life, Leslie's karmatic tide came back in.

Bernie, at almost a dead run, demonstrated why she probably should have played football. Or gone into Pro Wrestling.

She dropped her shoulder into Sapphire and knocked him almost into Foot Locker. The hit was so hard and brutal that all of the diners at The Puckered Starfish cheered.

Few things in this world are as spectacular in person as a good

hit. Especially to the white trash occupants of the Puckered Starfish.

But as Bernie surveyed her victim—now a motionless purple pile—something caught her attention.

No, smart ass, it wasn't the red and white banner announcing recyclable all-natural tampons hanging in front of the General Nutrition Center. But that was an eye catching banner.

A smell Bernie only vaguely remembered came back to her. It was a strange mix of bleach, vomit, and Old Spice. She couldn't remember if it was her father, grandfather, or some exboyfriend who smelled like that, but it had to be the most alluring and comforting smell Bernie knew. As near as Bernie could tell, it was coming from the man below her.

When Bernie looked down at Leslie's rigid form, her eyes hazed a little at the corners, like when the camera was on Cybil Shepherd on those old *Moonlighting* episodes. Although our heroine wasn't paying much attention and wasn't too certain of this, she could have sworn that she heard the Muzak version of "Dreamweaver" thump slowly and melodically in the background. She reached down and grabbed Leslie's suit by the zipper and hauled him up.

Leslie's first impression of Bernie was a little more clouded, at least at first. See, when Leslie noticed someone big at his feet, he thought it was one of Sapphire's men. The size of the person frightened him, and when this mystery person hauled him up by the front of his uniform, he couldn't help think of all those prison rape movies he watched on Saturday and Sunday nights. But as soon as Leslie looked into Bernie's almost swaying green eyes, his body lost its rigidity and he tried to smile.

Leslie was never good with girls, or even with women. The first dance he went to his seventh grade year was a disaster. In a desperate attempt to say something interesting and flattering at the same time, Leslie told his date that she must have a very beautiful uterus and that if he had one as beautiful as her's, he would look at it in the mirror all of the time. Of course, Leslie didn't know what a uterus was at the time, but his date did. Yep, she and her family were Democrats, the only ones in Mountain Home. They started little Sally's sex education early. Poor Leslie caught a mini handbag in the nose for that one. Later, Leslie showed her his lint collection and then vomited on her dress. He just got too excited. Needless to say, Leslie had few dates after that.

But when he looked into Bernie's eyes, something was different. He couldn't quite place it. Maybe it was the beer on her breath, or the kidney beans in her teeth. Whatever it was, Leslie liked it. He was in love.

Although this was a new experience for Leslie's heart, it was the same old thing for the rest of his body. When Bernie set him on his feet, he couldn't stand. He simply tumbled back into the slop he was trying to clean up. Bernie laughed contentedly at this and shook her head. Leslie was shocked: for the first time a woman was laughing at something he had done, not just at him. He smiled and picked himself up.

This wasn't Bernie's usual type of guy. Leslie didn't look like he rode a motorcycle, had a tattoo, or liked to spank his women with rubber tubing when they were in bed together. But something about his ineptly kind thirty-something face told her this is where she belonged.

Somehow, Leslie mustered up the courage to raise his reeking left hand to Bernie's cheek. He noticed how dark her hair was, and how her skin felt like silk beneath his. Or maybe that was just the mixture of the vomit and his sweaty palms that felt like that. Leslie tugged gently, pulling her lips to his.

You may think that this is the part where our two strange but slightly-less-than-deranged heroes kiss and drive into the Idaho desert sunset. Unfortunately, that is where you'd be wrong.

You guys didn't forget about Sapphire, did you?

Just as our heroes moved toward one another for the greatest liplock in Mountain Home history, Sapphire's men ran down the corridor wailing and screeching, prepared to aid their fallen leader. Bernie and Leslie looked back at Sapphire in time to see him jump up and point at them. Assuming this was their cue to leave, Bernie grabbed Leslie by the hand and they ran out to her waiting truck, the beloved Silver. The two were in such a hurry that they didn't notice the group of four or five well-dressed locals who were hanging around behind the truck. Bernie clambered up into the cab holding Leslie's hand, but just as she started the engine something happened.

If you guessed that MacGuyver came swooping down with a gun made out of pubic hair, phlegm, and Tori Spelling's severed head to save the day, you would be wrong. That and you obviously don't enjoy the brilliant acting talent of Miss Spelling.

Leslie stopped. He would not go any further.

He said, "I...I've got a job here, and a lot of neat stuff. I can't leave it behind. Sorry." Bernie was shocked, but in some strange way she knew this would happen. She just smiled sadly and nodded.

"When can I see you again?"

"I don't know," Bernie sighed. She looked at her steering wheel and said, "Get out of here before those jerks catch both of us."

Leslie shut the door, jumped down, and ran to the back entrance of the cafe. Sapphire and his men, held up by Orange Julius patrons throwing food at them for ruining a beautiful moment, ran out the door in time to see the truck's taillights head towards I-84.

"Why didn't you guys stop her," Sapphire screamed to his men, who were standing around behind the truck before it left.

One of the bold ones spoke up, "We thought that's who you wanted to drive the truck."

"Morons! Now she's driving to God knows where with my undies!" Sapphire exclaimed to the snickering of the people at the gas pumps. "You loaded the wrong truck!"

Yes, Silver was supposed to be hauling an empty potato trailer back to Pocatello where it was going to be refilled. Bernie, heart broken and only slightly comforted by the near hypnotic thunder of the "man" she may be alone with for the rest of her life, Silver, drove east, sullenly oblivious to the destination of her heart and her cargo.

You know, this story sounds frighteningly like a country-western song. All this story is missing is a lazy, gimpy ol' coon dog with a name like Shep or Ol' Blue.

Leslie slipped into the cafe and quietly slouched in a corner booth, waiting for his heart to burst. He couldn't believe what he'd just done. He waited all his life for a compassionate, strong, and hopefully stench-forgiving woman, and when she arrives to whisk him away, he said he got stuff here he wanted. "What's here to want?" he wondered. His self-damning meditation was broken by the appearance of a waitress.

"What'll it be, sugar?"

Leslie looked up into her face. He had seen it many times before, working in the mall. She was by no means ugly; hell, Leslie thought of asking her out once. But today, after seeing Bernie's splendor, this waitress's face looked strange. Now, Leslie wouldn't have said this, or even thought it, but it needs to be said, just for illustrative purposes: she had a face so comparatively screwed up that you wanted to call ball four on it, not just because things on her face were high and outside of where they should have been, but also because she was so freaky-looking you just wanted her to walk. Maybe the two hippies in Mountian Home succeeded in dumping LSD into the city's water supply. Or maybe the stress was getting to Leslie.

"I'll just have a Schlitz," he murmured, looking at his hands.

"Pint or a mug, honey?" she said as she popped her gum.

He answered, "Give me a pitcher, please."

Leslie didn't want to wait for his mom or dad to pick him up, so

he caught a cab home. As soon as the cab drove off, Leslie could hear the loud, brassy sounds of a seventies song being blared in the rompus room. He went inside and walked into the kitchen where he noticed the answering machine had a message on it. He cranked up the volume on the machine in order to hear it over the song rattling the door of his former room, and recognized it as "Son of a Preacher Man." The message crackled and echoed off the refrigerator: "Ahh, Leslie? This is your boss, Mr. Shoemaker. Remember me?

Apparently not. I saw you show up for work today but I couldn't find you after some rucus in the mall. Those God damn Orange Julius people can't control their customers. Look, I got some complaints about you from a certain Mr. McNulty. He strongly recommended that I fire you for the way you treated him today. And after you ran off like some irresponsible schoolkid with your shift half over, I have to agree with him. Pick up your last check next Friday."

That was it. Eight years at the truck stop and after one bizarre day it was all over. Leslie didn't know what to do. Usually, during times like these he would either watch one of the *Baywatch* episodes he had on tape or he would put his Frank Zappa vinyl on the turntable. Between large, scantily clad breasts and twisted humor, Leslie could usually find solace. But tonight, for some reason, that just wasn't going to cut it. Desparate and alone, Leslie needed someone to talk to, someone to listen. He lumbered down the hall to the disco room with the weight of lost love and dried vomit on his shoulders. The door was unlocked so Leslie just tapped on it lightly as he walked in. What he saw shocked him beyond words.

For the first time in his life, Leslie walked in on his parents doing the nasty. Yep, they were playing hide the salami; they were doing the horizontal bop; they were taking ol' one eye to the optometrist.

Get the picture?

Leslie's parents looked up as if God Himself were standing there watching them. Leslie noticed how their flabby fifty-five-year-old flesh sagged in all the wrong places, like under their armpits and over their backs. He also noticed an empty bottle of pink champale and a crumpled pile of silver sequined clothes on the green carpet.

Our hero tried not to look—really, he did—but it was like flipping through the channels and finding the *Ricki Lake Show*: it totally disgusts you to watch, but as soon as something shocking happens, you can't change the channel.

After about two seconds, Leslie's dad, Ron, yelled, "Dammit, shut the door, Les!" Come to think of it, Leslie should have known what was going on. Dad always told him that "Preacher Man" was the sexiest song ever made.

Ron shrieked, "Get out of here, Les. Go away. Take one of the cars. The keys are hanging up. Just *please* leave for a while!"

Leslie knew what he had to do. Although it was a tough decision whether he should take the 1976 AMC Gremlin or the 1979 wood paneled Oldsmobile station wagon, he finally settled on the wagon. He jumped in the front seat and headed east on I-84.

Bernie, who was just past Twin Falls by now, felt a little better. She had stopped at Taco Bell and picked up two beef Mexi-melts and a Pepsi—her favorite road food. "Maybe Leslie likes Taco Ball, too," she wondered to herself. She hated thinking about him like this, but she thought it would be different this time. As near as she could tell, she was wrong again.

Just as she was cursing herself for being a fool, she noticed something odd.

As much as I'd like to tell you that our heroine saw June Allison on the side of the highway trying to hitch a ride wearing nothing but a Depends undergarment, I can't.

In her rear-view mirror, Bernie saw a big black limousine weaving in and out of traffic and honking its horn. She figured it was some kind of emergency so she slowed down and pulled into the right lane. But as the limo pulled along side her, it slowed down. The passenger side window slid down and a man was holding up a gun and a sign that read: "folow this car or you will be killd."

Ah yes. Sapphire's spelling made the Mountain Home school district proud that day.

Bernie couldn't quite tell who these people in the limo were, but she had a hunch. "Boy, that guy at the truck stop sure doesn't like to get his ass kicked, does he?" Bernie thought. Yet she could tell that these guys meant business. If her CB wasn't on the blink she would have radioed for help. But now, all alone, it looked as though Bernie was at the mercy of an underwear pimp.

Leslie drove east faster than he had ever driven before. Yes, he knew it was dangerous to be exceeding the posted limit by five miles an hour, but he was a risk taker and a man in love. His teeth grinded, his eyes squinted, and his sphincter tightened. Leslie was, for the first time in his life, on a mission. He stared intently up into the cabs of all the potato trucks he came upon, but not one of them contained his true love. Finally, just outside of Pocatello, he pulled up next to a beautiful, shiny truck hauling what appeared to be potatoes. That is, until he saw a pair of silk crotchless panties fly out the back and over his car. At first, he couldn't tell if the driver was a man or an ape (he had watched *Any Which Way But Loose* too many times). Then the driver looked down and Leslie knew it was Bernie.

She smiled nervously, kind of half-assed. Leslie thought her smile was one hell of a way to greet him after he had driven all this way.

Before this moment, the only sixth-sense type of feelings that Leslie ever had were ones that told him when he had toilet paper stuck to his shoe or when his zipper was down. But now, for some reason, he felt that something was wrong with Bernie. He decided to follow her a few yards back so he wouldn't attract any attention.

They eventually pulled up at an old Albertson's warehouse outside of Pocatello. The limo stopped just in front of the building. Two greasy looking toughs got out and pulled open the warehouse doors and signaled Bernie to drive through.

Leslie had no idea what was going on. He thought he recognized some of the men, but he wasn't sure. Regardless, he knew what he had to do. After watching the goings-on for a few minutes, Leslie pulled his car around to the back side of the warehouse. He backed up and faced the warehouse wall, about one hundred and fifty feet from it. He made sure his seat belt was fastened and he put the car into neutral. The car's mighty six cylinder engine whined and bitched as Leslie revved it, but what else could you expect from a fifteen-year-old family wagon? Leslie's just lucky he didn't bring the Gremlin.

After five or six one-minute prayers, Leslie threw the automatic shifter into second and stomped on the gas. Although the car was only going about fifty miles per hour when it hit the wall (hey, these cars aren't made for acceleration), its pure size and weight carried it through the three-eighths-inch thick corrugated steel wall.

Then again, maybe the Gremlin would have been more of a challenge.

The shocked inhabitants of the warehouse all ran for cover as Leslie jumped out of his car with a gas can in hand. He clambered up into the trailer and pulled out his lighter.

"Who's in charge here?" he screamed breathlessly.

"I am, pisano," Sapphire answered as he came out from behind a crate holding a gun to Bernie's head.

"What do you want from us? I'll pay for the darn dry cleaning!" Leslie snapped.

"Please watch you fuckin' language, huh?" Sapphire said as he thickened his accent.

He continued, "Look, alls I want is da undies, and since da undies is in da truck, I want da fuckin' truck."

"All right, all right," Leslie resigned. "Just give me the girl and everything's even."

"An' yous won't tell no-fuckin'-body about dis place. Capice?"

"Yeah, I understand," Leslie sighed.

"Good," Sapphire said, "now get da fuck out."

Now, few people would know Leslie to give up a good deal like this—his and another life for silence—but something was missing. On his way down from the trailer, he dropped the gas can into the underwear. At first he wanted it to stand upright, but as he threw one leg over the side of the trailer, he knocked the can over.

"Hey," Sapphire yelled, "gimme the fuckin' lighter."

Leslie threw him the lighter which Sapphire used to light a cigar.

Bernie ran to Leslie and hugged him so hard Leslie about lost bladder control. Leslie walked over to Sapphire and tried to make peace.

"Hey. No hard feelings, huh? Let me take a pull off your cigar," Leslie demanded. His heart was pounding so bad he about vomited.

Sapphire smiled and handed him the cigar. Leslie, without missing a beat, threw the cigar into the trailer. Its contents immediately went up in flames.

Sapphire's face grew more purple than last time. "You son of a bitch!" he yelled. "I'm gonna kill you, asshole!"

While the undie-runner fumed, Bernie had dislodged the trailer from her beloved truck and jumped into the driver's seat. Leslie clambered into the passenger's seat and the two were driving through the wall faster than Evil Kinevil fell to the bottom of Snake River canyon. As they drove away, they heard the almost primordial sounds of an over-inflated ego's death throes.

Now, I don't want you all believing that just because this was set in real places means that all of this happened. However, if in your travels you see a huge black and silver eighteen wheeler with a kitchen attachment, Montana plates that say "SILVER" on them and a "If the truck is a-rockin', don't come a-knockin'" bumper sticker, pull up beside that cab and give them a wave. If they honk their horn and it sounds strangely like the Busch beer jingle, remember this story. For you may have just met two Idaho legends. At least in my mind.



beginning

Eve Willadsen

The smoking gun ghost of turpentine and love came to me again last night. Smelling, burning, walking that fine line between water and spit. They say the unnatural can't pass over bridges, but I do and all the while I am thinking of you.

She lights another ten minutes of her life. In the middle of the night, drunk on sleep, crazy with sex, worn down past enlightenment, dull, cuddly, he tells her he's always liked her hips and that spelling a word is worlds away from writing a word and that liars tell the bestest truest stories. He babbles and holds her heavy. And every breath, every moment of suffocating, every crazy true love lie, these are her special, most precious things. She lives if only for one more story of bodies lit by darkness, thrown against each other and grounded in bed smell.

"This restaurant is too crowded"

"I had that dream again."

"Let's get out of here"

"the one where I wake up."

"I'm waiting for someone."

"the one that wakes me up."

"I'm hunting werewolves."

"the one that isn't scary"

"the silver one"

"the one that throws me out of bed..."

"screaming"

"this restaurant is too crowded, let's get out of here"

"I'm waiting for someone"

"hmmmm?" two months ago my hands were full and I reached out with both of them, now I dream empty.

The ghost stands over her while she sleeps. It's the cigarette smell that wakes her up just in time to catch the last burning ember

and a pale silky tapeworm of smoke. waiting. She am waiting.

Last night we went down to the river. It was strange to be there without her. As if months of gobbling up her memory were enough to satiate the full blown ache of her missingness. As if the river were everybody's, not only hers, ours, theirs. The ghost doesn't mind. It watches me watch. It's pale green face slowly fading into view. It tempts me, hatchet-wise. It wants nothing from me. But I do.

"How long you just gonna look at that?" bauble-like, smooth, cue-ball hard shrugs.

"look like that?" purring along

"at that. how long you gonna look at that? this is stupid. Let's go somewhere. Let's do something."

"Let's push each other." down below the ice, something wakes up.

"You better push hard."

"I can do that."

"go head" sthhhhhhh, STHHHHHHHHHHH....

"How long you gonna look at that?"

They wander around in bed, somehow she makes a wrong turn, she's lost, but he still sees her. So he doesn't know and she stays lost, sets up house, dusts the cobwebs out from under lost and stays lost. She loses everything. She's lost. She's a loser. And deep down, everybody knows it. And that's why they want her, lost loser robber souls of everyone. They seek her but she won't return, she really is lost. She takes a part of all of it with her.

He goes to work in the cold bright morning. Work isn't so bad. He gets lost sometimes on the drive there but he always finds his way back. He hates it when he gets lost but there are beautiful fresh daisies and hot dog stands and clever girls wearing pink panties under police officer suits to help him. So he's never really lost. He's always o.k. even though he doesn't think so. Funny, he never sees her going to work she slips out in the early aching hours of hangovers and runners. The bed still holds her weight and sometimes he's confused, dreaming she's still there in the bed and he reaches out for her but can't find her even though his dreaming is sure she's there to be found. The alarm clock knows better. It never looks for her.

It saves itself for his hands. If he hits it, then it means he really does care. It loves his morning glory, his bright red plumage surrounding a groggy, sleepy, privateness, his freckled body, and his quiet eyes. The alarm clock moans under his hand. The alarm clock

fiddles quietly, quietly, quietly, aching for his sleeping form, fantasizing, growing impulses, thinking of all his positions, the curve of his thigh, the beauty of his penis. hard and soft at all hours of the night, the alarm clock knows exactly when too. It dreams of him on top, coming down. face flushed and hips heavy. The alarm clock surges and wakes him with a noisy orgasm, shameless hussy begging for more. Sometimes, he hits snooze.

"I'm thinking about getting one. you know, just so I wouldn't always be using yours."

"o. k."

"I mean, it's probably kind of inconveniencing you to always be without it."

"it's not so bad."

"are you sure?"

"I just feel guilty since it really isn't mine, you know."

"yeah well, I was thinking about it" what are you thinking about?

Today's ghost is new. The lingering smell of marlboro reds hangs from yesterday lips, dangling on a piece of spit. Today is a non-smoker. Today gets up at six and runs. Today doesn't buy pork rinds and cases of cheap american piss beer. Today drinks heinekin, evian, fruit juice. Yesterday sighs and refuses to come back, spitefully whistling tunes of grease and semen past today for tomorrow to think about. For tomorrow to ache for. For tomorrow to be wiser with a huge horrible black hole of missing something better than what it's had today. But today finds her in bed.

She would finally be found by a non-smoker her non-thinking....coughing. bleh. They get up and get ready to go. Yesterday senses the awkwardness, tomorrow gets itchy. Yesterday goes off to get laid and passes out later in a golden tequila haze. Tomorrow gets a yeast infection and begins to suspect yesterday is a disgusting lush who should really learn to look ahead. Tomorrow begins to suspect love. Today takes its prize and pushes it.

"maybe we could go the cities" maybe we could bake bread together.

"maybe later we can make love" or have sex.

Maybe later the werewolves will leave.

"maybe if I told you this you wouldn't.

but then again maybe I would." you don't know.

Tomorrow weeps for its lost yesterdays. Tomorrow knows today won't change anything. Today's a bitch cloaked in sunshine. Today

won't help. Today's already gotten what it wants. Tomorrow thinks about quitting and skipping town with its last paycheck—cash payable to eternity.

"come on, I need this"

"I've got a lot going on right now. I'm sorry."

"no "

"what can I do about it now?"

cry me a river, kidnap me, learn to rob trains and presidents, lead a love ravaged hermit's life with striking differences, bring me the mountain and throw away the taj mahal, change the station, buy me a rose, stay, stay for just a little while, stay forever...half of forever? the last half. the last half of every second of forever.

"we'll split the bill"

"I gotta go." don't put this off

"later, I promise, later" Later, I'm jumping. I'm falling down on the last railroad track the Indian's left just for me. I'm slitting the wrists of this whole goddamn mess and watching it bleed out all its hope and joys down my thighs. Later I'm finding out why sex and violence are really the same familiar fear of death and why when I smell you I am afraid of all three. God the father, sex, and violence. I miss you especially when you are here.

She burns herself with cigarettes because she's stupid and beautiful. The martyr who loves death, who pulls us in and shames us all. The prisoner who is afraid of freedom, who dies for it just the same. The lover who bursts with happiness, erupting bloody tendons and disjointed phrases all over her lover's body and can never put it back together again, can never collect it and put it back inside. It's public now. It's obscenely, public.

"stop it"

o.k.

"I mean it"

" o . k . ! "

"tell me a story, a real story"

"what about?"

"anything"

He begins the story of her. He begins the story of loving her of never knowing she would love him back, more fiercely, more crazy, more dangerous than anyone in the world would ever love another. He begins...

"no, not that one. tell me my favorite. the one I like"

"I don't know that one. You haven't written it yet."

"but I will, if only you will tell it to me, just this once."

"will you come back then?" she is suddenly surprised. She didn't know he knew she was gone.

"back?"

mistaking the question mark, the ghosts back off leaving vespers of sulfur that disappear in a good wind.

"will the lost look in your eyes go away. Will tomorrow resurface in your daydreams? Can we live for more than this disease because once... just this once..."

Once there was a desert of grass that stretched out forever. And now it's gone. But she remains, and waits for him to find his voice and call her home.

And now there are no happy endings. Now we are bad and we peak beyond "*The End*" to the land where frogs like fellatio and ruby red slippers mean virgins while bad witches are victims of menopause and beautiful princesses shave their heads and march on washington because basically we are all disgruntled postal workers. There are no truths. No one lies so well as me. Once upon a time...



GUIDELINES

FOR SUBMISSIONS TO FUGUE

* **FUGUE** is a biannual, multi-genre magazine containing fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. The magazine is staffed by English majors and funded by the UI English Department. A limited number of hardcopies are produced each issue for contributors and free distribution on campus. A single copy by mail is \$3 US funds. FUGUE is also accessible through the World Wide Web at:

http://www.uidaho.edu/Letters_and_Science/Eng/Fugue/

* **Submissions:** Professional ms. format and a stamped, self-addressed #10 envelope for response are required, or submission will not be considered. No simultaneous, reprint, or disk submissions. Send manuscripts to:

FUGUE
c/o UI English Dept.
Brink Hall, Rm. 200
Moscow, ID 83844-1102, USA.

Submissions are reviewed by staff members and chosen on consensus, with final approval by the executive editor and/or faculty advisor.

Accepted material is published within nine months. No major changes are made to a manuscript without author approval.

* **Fiction/Creative Non-fiction:** Complete—no excerpts, episodes, or serializations. 6000 words maximum.

* **Poetry:** All forms/themes.

* **Deadline:** All submissions must be postmarked by April 5th to be considered for the next issue, #13, Spr./Summer 1996. Late submissions will be returned unread. Reading commences in early Jan. 1996. Reading for #14, Fall/Winter 1996, commences in Sept. 1996. Response time is usually 12 weeks. FUGUE does not read during the summer months.

CONTRIBUTORS

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Eve Willadsen sends her fiction from Saint Peter, Minnesota, where it's probably a lot colder than where you are, regardless.

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Featuring:

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