

Flashquake

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Editor: Debi Orton

Web Address: www.flashquake.org

What They Publish: Flash fiction, flash nonfiction, short poetry and art. Prose must be fewer than 1,000 words. Reprints accepted if author retained original rights.

Submission Guidelines: Electronic submissions only, no multiple submissions. Send to: submit@flashquake.org. Paste story into a plain text e-mail, as they will not open attachments. Include your name, e-mail address, postal address, title of work, category (Flash fiction, Flash nonfiction, Poetry, Artwork), short bio written in third person (100 words maximum). Submissions only accepted during reading periods (6/1-7/31; 9/1-10/31; 12/1-1/31; 3/1-4/30).

Description of Publication: American online quarterly specializing in flash, both fiction and nonfiction. Established authors published alongside emerging writers. A *Pushcart Prize* nominee and pays. Site has the effect of a printed journal.

Prose Per Issue/Amount of Published Annually: 22/88 pieces. (8 fiction, 8 nonfiction, 6 Editor's picks.) Receives 1,600 submissions yearly.

Prose Reviews:

Cutter by Don Shea is a plain-spoken realistic fictional story in a domestic setting told in the first person. The unnamed genderless narrator is subjective. Shea uses the first person present tense but also incorporates a frame scene to look back at the past. In the frame, the narrator meets the cutter and asks how he got his scars. The cutter explains it's how he copes with the world. There's danger when the cutter questions the narrator: "What keeps you going? Children? Coke? Power? Is it sex? "Italian shoes?" The dynamic ending occurs in the present: the narrator reflects on the cutter and sees him in the mind: alone with a razor blade, waiting for the moment until he can wait no longer to "slice himself, slowly, lovingly, delicately, fine slice by fine slice."

I'm attracted to the dichotomy of the narrator versus the cutter. The cutter is cavalier about his fate: "Hell, I've been on Oprah talking about it," he says. The biggest hook was the way he asked the narrator, and by proxy the reader, to examine our own coping methods. Shea's an accomplished fiction writer, even publishing in the *Norton Anthology for Flash Fiction*. This was the pick of Debi Orton, the editor. She wrote, "Of all the stories I read during this reading period, this is the one I couldn't forget."

Exposure by Kelly K. Palka is a mostly plain spoken realistic piece of nonfiction in a domestic setting. Palka recounts the time she posed as a nude model for an art class of the elderly. "Breathe, I tell myself. This is only new to you." When she sees their drawings, she is horrified. One man has drawn her hip "like a mountain highway;" another squished her like "Mr. Potato Head meets Picasso." "Did you think you were prettier?" she's asked. In the static ending, she remembers the *Penthouse* under the bed, the first naked woman she ever saw, the one with smoldering eyes.

I feel like this story treads ground that, culturally, has already been done. While it's new to her,

it's a cinematic cliché to see a 19-year-old posing nude. The direct metaphorical comparison to a penthouse girl at the end is overdone — I would have liked to see a more surprising connection. Palka is a young writer, a 2007 MFA grad.

Publication Rating: 7. Just by the numbers, the odds of getting published are 18%, better than most other magazines of the same quality. I'd submit here.