

Hobart

Editor: Jensen Whelan

Web Address: www.hobartpulp.com/website

What They Publish: Fiction and interviews

Submission Guidelines: Submit stories up to 2,000 words, though fewer than 1,000 is preferred. No multiple submissions or simultaneous submissions or reprints. Attach work to an e-mail and send to websubmissions@hobartpulp.com.

Description of Publication: The editors of this monthly journal like quirk but not too much quirk. They want humor in the stories they publish, but not necessarily funny stories. Think “humorous but engaging.” The web site is great to look at; the artwork draws the eye but doesn’t detract from the stories. Archives are well-maintained. The current issue shows the contributors on the home page and each name is a link to their story.

Prose Per Issue: 80%, 4 stories, 1 interview

Prose Reviews:

House Calls by Chad Simpson is a plainspoken realistic story in a domestic setting written in the first person. The narrator is working on the roof of a house when he sees a little girl emerge from a home across the street. He sees her dressed in an old-fashioned nurse’s uniform. He imagines that she fell asleep in the costume and when she woke up the next morning she and her brother just fell into the roles of nurse and patient. He imagines her taking a temperature, applying bandages, and sitting by a bedside to offer water and occasionally check for a fever. An hour before seeing this little girl he e-mailed his family, one to his wife and one to his daughter, telling the wife that he is good and he hasn’t had a drop of alcohol in days. He refuses to tell what he wrote the daughter. As the little girl nurse walks away from him he confesses that it takes everything he has within himself not to call the little girl back and say look here, this is where it hurts.

The sadness in this story sneaks up on you as reader. It’s told simply and is all the more devastating because of it. The narrator is broken and lonely but trying and as seen in the last lines getting desperate: “...it took everything I had not to call out to her. Not to point to the spot on my chest and say, ‘Here. Come back. Let me show you where it hurts.’”

Fathers, Sons, Acorns, Oak Trees by Roxane Gay is a plainspoken realistic story in a domestic setting written in the first person. The narrator is at a prep school where she is one of the few black girls in attendance. So few are the black girls that they take turns dating the local cool kid, Big Randy. Big Randy’s father is the leader of the local KKK. Big Randy has “daddy issues” and flaunts his distaste for his father by dating all the black girls who are willing. The narrator realizes it’s her turn and they begin dating. On Saturdays, Big Randy has to drive his father around so he can recruit. During the final scene, on one Saturday, the narrator confronts Big Randy’s father recognizing him even under his hood and calls him on his hate and lust. “I stepped closer to Big Randy Sr., so close he could smell my perfume and cocoa butter lotion. He grunted, clutched his pamphlets tightly. I could hear him licking his lips — a wet, terrible sound. ‘Walk on by, little girl,’ he said. I smiled, leaned in real close, so close I could feel him hard beneath the bed sheet he wore. I stared at Big Randy over his father's shoulder. ‘I know something about you,’ I said.”

Tamara Dolson

November 2009

The opening paragraph sells the story. Gay gives us the voice of her narrator, strong and wry: “Three weeks before we started dating, Big Randy broke up with my friend Alicia who wasn't really my friend, but when there are only twelve black girls in a school with 980 students, you're flexible about your inner circle.” The narrator is self-aware and willing to be boxed in by her circumstances but only to a point. Gay gives us a character who knows who she is. She doesn't feel sorry for herself left out in rural New Hampshire with few of her kind around her. She makes the best of it and confronts the wrong she sees in her own special way.

Rating: 6. *Hobart* is a great journal that publishes some writers with serious writing credits but they do publish emerging writers. The work it publishes is consistently good and effective, quirky and funny. It's worth the effort to read their journal and send your work to them.