

Smokelong (spring 2008)

Reviewer: Ryan Sabin

Editor: Dave Clapper

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Web Address: www.smokelong.com

What They Publish: Flash Fiction

Submission Guidelines: Flash fiction up to 1,000 words. Submit using the online submission form. Submission periods are almost always open, so check the site. Use two returns between each paragraph. Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but inform them if the story has been accepted elsewhere. Multiple submissions are accepted, but no more than three at one time. No previously published work.

Description of Publication: Smokelong is dedicated to publishing the best flash fiction on the web, whether by published authors or emerging writers. Some pieces are barely 400 words long, while others are closer to the 1000 word limit. It's a professional looking site. Pictures accompany each story. As in this issue, they often have a guest editor. They are looking for quality writing, and to be captured by the first few sentences of the piece. They give feedback in their responses. If published, they retain exclusive electronic rights for the first three months, as well as non-exclusive rights indefinitely so your work can be put in their archives.

Prose Per Issue: 100%. 24 stories in spring issue.

Prose Review:

Last Fall by Katherine Grosjean is a plainspoken third person story set in a realistic setting. It's a story about a game of hide and seek played in a backyard. The characters are only designated by the pronouns she and he. This is a regular game they play, but on this night the girl has dug out a hollow in the ground. When the man comes home from church services, the game starts and the girl hides herself under a pile of leaves in the hollow, confident this time she will win. But the wind betrays her and blows the leaves off her body. The man finds her and proclaims his victory, but tells her not to get up.

The story is a mystery that never quite reveals all that it is hiding. At first, we aren't sure what the girl is doing, and it's not till the second paragraph that Grosjean shows us the man counting and the girl running to hide. That neither character is given a name or any physical description also adds to the mystery. We surmise that this is a little girl by her actions and the sentence: "She should have wet the leaves with Mamma's garden hose." We never know for certain that she is playing with her father. We see more from action than description, from the girl digging the hole in the earth to her breathing beneath the pile of leaves. Grosjean uses strong action verbs such as spun, crept, swirled, and whistled. The story works well because it is seemingly a simple instance telling, but there is much that lies beneath the surface.

The Last Stop by Jenny Halper is a realistic piece of flash fiction told in the first person. The narrator and her father are driving through Ohio on the night before her thirteenth birthday. They have left their home in the city and are heading somewhere else. The Doors are playing on the radio, and the girl, watching the gas stations pass by, asks her father if they are going to stop. He hands her the money and tells her to count it. As she does, she thinks about how different the world will be for her tomorrow when she is thirteen and grown up. The father comments on how much he likes Jim Morrison and wishes someone else were there to answer instead of a child. Later that night, they stop at a gas station so the father can buy cigarettes. The daughter stays in the car and hopes that he remembers

tomorrow is her birthday and is buying her a gift. While he's inside, she gets behind the wheel and wonders about all the things she would do if she were old enough to drive the car.

This is another strong story with a lot packed into a small piece. It's told from a future perspective, and the narrator is remembering her innocence from a place of greater perspective. There are strong sites and sounds and tastes, such as the Jolly Rancher wrappers across the back seat, the narrators mouth "frozen with cherry taste," and "the radio pulsing with the Doors." The narrator is young but thinks she's old, and the father knows she's too young, shown to us by him talking about Jim Morrison in a way she can't understand. She at an age were she feels the promise of the future, but it's unknown, just like the land they are driving through, just like the place the are heading towards.

Rating: 8 The stories are strong and lyrical, and contain much meaning in a small amount of space. Most of the authors have been published in many places. They are looking for good writing, so submit only your most polished work. You may want to wait till you have more credits under your belt.