

**Failbetter.com** (Summer 2006 issue)

Reviewer: Katelyn Stanek

Editor: Thom Didato, Caitlin Johnson (Fiction Editor)

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Web Address: <http://www.failbetter.com>

What They Publish: Fiction, poetry and art

Submission Guidelines: Will accept stories and self-contained novel excerpts that are generally “on the short side.” Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but send only one submission at a time. Failbetter.com acquires first-time Internet rights and will archive stories on its website. All other rights are reverted to contributors. Send submissions via regular mail or e-mail. E-mail submissions must include the word “submission” in the subject line and must be sent in the body of the e-mail—no attachments. Send to: failbetter.com, 3222 Hanover Avenue, Richmond, VA 23221, or [submissions@failbetter.com](mailto:submissions@failbetter.com).

Description of Publication: Professional-looking quarterly online literary magazine specializing in “original and personal” work.

Percentage of Prose Per Issue/Amount of Prose Published Annually: Publishes approximately five pieces of fiction per issue. The remainder of the website is devoted to poems, interviews and artwork. Very little space is dedicated to advertisements.

Prose Reviews:

*Three or So Uses of the Crab Apple* by Caren Beilin is a lyrical account of a relationship set in Chicago. It is heavily metaphoric and highly personal in tone, focusing on an unnamed narrator’s encounters with a writer who can’t write for a year after reading *Anna Karenina*. When the narrator (also a writer) meets him, she falls in love and comes to consider him her “soul mate,” both for the chemistry between them and the fact that he is her first “writer friend.” The end of the relationship prompts the narrator to read *Anna Karenina* herself, and to consider the true nature of their romance.

The intimate narrative style gives this story the feeling of a journal entry, albeit a complex one. Emotions and memories dictate the plot, and the overall content and tone seem to fulfill the publication’s promise to publish “personal” work.

*Summer Spent* by JJ DeCeglie is a complex telling of two men, Sep and Chase, who spend their night drinking and regretting lost lovers. The characters discuss these past relationships in addition to literature, sports, weather, and a host of other topics. More of a portrayal of the characters’ psyches and emotional conditions than a plot-driven piece, it ends with Sep’s realization that “there was no way to explain anything.”

Non-traditional in style (one sentence contains 369 words), the story avoids quotation marks and the traditional “he said/she said” format. This adds to the story’s quick-paced (if esoteric) narration. But the story itself is not a quick read, instead requiring a reader’s full attention to understand the author’s intricate (and at times, this reader thinks, almost convoluted) writing style.

Rating: 6 out of 10. failbetter.com is a well-constructed website despite a few minor grammatical errors. It stays true to its promise of focusing on “personal” fiction. The prose is often enjoyable and always interesting. The ease of submission makes it clear that failbetter.com is interested in unsolicited material from new and emerging writers, but every writer featured in the Summer 2006 edition has at least one prior publication credit.