

## **Opium Magazine**

Editor: Heather Kelly and Will Layman

Web Address: [www.opiummagazine.com](http://www.opiummagazine.com)

What they publish: There's fiction, poetry, comic strips, reviews and interviews, as well as sections entitled sports, tech, music, and film/tv, but these sections just wind up being more comedic writings on the subjects.

Submission Guidelines: 1,000 words or fewer, and the shorter the better (some are as short as 15 words), submitted either in the body of an e-mail or an attached Word file. Include the category of submission, the word "submission," and your name in the subject line. In the e-mail, tell them your name, phone number, e-mail address, the city in which you live, as well as a brief note of about 25 words mentioning who you are and where else you've been published. Separate e-mails for multiple submissions, please. Send to: [opiumsubs@gmail.com](mailto:opiumsubs@gmail.com)

Description of Publication: Online magazine focusing on literary humor that looks deceptively well-made.

Prose per Issue: It's pretty much all prose; the site is updated daily, but this apparently does not equate into new material every day, prose or otherwise. Roughly five to twelve new stories a month, with less but an equally inconsistent amount of reviews, poetry, and interviews.

### Prose Reviews:

*Confessions of a Cereal Killer* by David Jordan is a humorous jailhouse confession told in a straightforward, realistic tone as a story within a story. It starts out as a newspaper article that quickly becomes an interview with a man who has been jailed for systematically stealing and destroying boxes of cereal, much like a serial killer kidnaps and murders people. Chronicling his journey into a life of "crime" the first-person narrator depicts the emotional episodes of his desperate existence, illustrating his descent into abominable moral atrocity perpetrated against his innocent victims all the way into his apprehension and incarceration.

The narrator uses a hard-boiled, detective novel tone that really fleshes out what is essentially a prolonged pun. What makes this story strong, and what really grabs the reader, is the complete command of language and the elements of the genre being parodied; his firm commitment to each nuance of a true crime story makes the joke complete. Unfortunately, the length and attention to detail is essentially the downfall of this joke that goes on for too long and winds up cliché instead of classic.

*Spilled Milk* by Caitlin MacDougall is a realistic, contemporary-feeling tale utilizing dramatic event to relate through overall teller an ill-fated modern relationship. During his morning shift at Starbuck's, Ben's mind wanders via flashbacks through his involvement with a woman he met in a grocery store, and how their four-month liaison was cut short by an unwanted pregnancy. These scenes unfold as a stylishly disguised woman enters the shop and begins a hold-up, and the story culminates on a high note when Ben realizes that the thief is his ex.

This story gets a fair amount told in little space; the author's spare but incisive use of detail demonstrates a intimate knowledge of her subjects, and the use of shifting chronology allows for quick covering of a lot of ground. What the story might lack in density and complexity is made up for that the little presented is done so very quickly. The end is somewhat simple and maybe a little trite, but might be forgivable taking into account that this is the author's first published work.

Reviewer: E. Christopher Ott

September 2006

Rating: Out of 10, this gets a 5, and I think I'm being somewhat generous. This magazine is simply not trying hard enough. While it seems that they are ready and willing to help emerging writers, their aesthetic is lacking. The irreverent, self-deprecating, sarcastic tone smacks of a stand-up comic and makes it hard to take this work seriously, and the comedy is formulaic enough to be handled by anyone who's picked up the most recent copy of "The Onion." The one plus is that they seem eager to print new talent amongst a fair amount of frequently-published writers, but there don't seem to be any big names here, and it seems that someone looking for truly quality writing would check out a site that's a little more committed.