

**Tin House** (Volume 12, #1)

Reviewer: Christopher Marnach

Editor: Rob Spillman

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

What They Publish: Original fiction, poetry, essays, and interviews.

Submission Guidelines: Will accept fiction up to 10,000 words from September 1 to May 31. Simultaneous submissions are accepted, but submit only one story at a time. Only previously unpublished works will be considered for publication. Submissions are made through Submishmash from a link on the Tin House web site. Cover letters should include a word count and indicate whether the submission is fiction, nonfiction, or poetry, and if the piece is to be considered for a themed issue. Each page should be numbered and have the author's name appear on it, starting with the title page. Indicate the final page by writing "End."

Description of Publication: Tin house publishes quarterly; fall and spring issues are themed, but winter and summer issues are open to all themes. They prefer literary fiction, often longer, between twelve and twenty pages. Current and back issues can be purchased on the Tin House web site for \$10. Yearly subscriptions are \$24.95.

Prose Per Issue: The print journal is usually around 200 pages, with about a third of that being fiction, usually five longer stories.

Prose Review: *The Locksmith*, by Benjamin Percy, is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. Brian is a subjective third-person narrator who is a locksmith in Oregon, who, while setting beaver traps, gets a call from a woman named Karen asking him for his services. He feels an immediate connection to her, even though she is married, and keeps the key he made to let her into her house. Brian is an Iraq War veteran who was injured by a road-side bomb near Fallujah. He feels numb and disconnected from everyone until one day he sees a Discovery channel special on Navajo witches who dress in wolf skins and run about on all fours. This reminds him of the gorilla suit he had as child, a Halloween costume he secretly wore when he was alone because it made him feel powerful. He decides to make a suit of his own out of the sewn-together skins of animals that he traps. He finishes the suit, complete with a beaver-skin mask, and lopes through the woods to Karen's house. He crouches outside in the bushes and watches Karen and her husband, and pictures himself "shoving his thumbs deep into the eyes of the man until blood welled from them." Brian feels his life is about to change, all because of Karen.

This is an effective, disturbing psychological portrait of a man on the brink of mental collapse. Percy does an excellent job of toying with our expectations--the introduction of the fur suit seems to come out of the blue, but reading back over the piece there are numerous hints about what will later be revealed. An original, and unsettling, treatment of PTSD. *The Locksmith* is an excerpt from Percy's novel, *The Wilding*, and while there is a feeling that much more will happen after the last sentence, the story is self-contained and satisfying, and haunts the reader long afterwards.

*Sustainability*, by Rose Bunch, is a plainspoken, realistic story in a domestic setting. Jan is a subjective, first-person narrator who lives a working-class life with her husband Charlie in Fayetteville, Arkansas. New neighbors move in next door, Alex, a English professor at the nearby community college,

and his wife Shiela, an organic gardener with a masters in Sustainability. They meet formally when Jan and Charlie are out in their backyard shooting propane-filled balloons with flaming arrows. Alex invites them over for a dinner party, but only Jan goes. She and Alex share many glasses of wine and talk about the storms that have been ravaging the area recently, and Jan mentions that they are one of the few people in the neighborhood that have a basement. The next week Charlie goes on a fishing trip, and Sheila goes to visit Alex's mother with their new baby. Jan finds a burrow in her yard, with a mother armadillo and four babies. She shoots the mother armadillo and Alex comes over to see what is going on. She explains that armadillos carry leprosy and shoots three of the babies, then hands Alex the gun and he shoots the last one. They go back to Alex's and drink wine until Alex tells her about his "magic clit finger," after which Jan excuses herself and leaves. The next night, after both Charlie and Sheila return, a tornado touches down, and Alex and Sheila come over to Jan and Charlie's to ask to use their basement. They all huddle together in the basement as the storm rages outside.

Rose Bunch is a relatively new writer, with only a few prior publications under her belt, but her story holds its own with the other writers in this issue, literary heavyweights like Benjamin Percy and Charles Baxter. The issue's theme, Class, is illustrated perfectly in this story--the educated, middle-class Alex and Sheila, and the very working-class Jan and Charlie, are not only juxtaposed against each other, but interact with the same attraction and disdain from both sides of the class divide. In the end they are brought together as human beings, not by what they do or how much money they make, because nature cares nothing for such man-made distinctions.

Rating: 6. Tin House is one of the top literary magazines in the country, with consistent quality work. However, according to Duotrope, it is the third most challenging market, with only a 0.17 % acceptance rate. They do publish emerging writers, but the competition is fierce.