

Space Man

by Kathy Fish

His girlfriend's probably surfing somewhere in California right now. She is an astrophysicist and a veteran and a triathlete, but she's never been up in space, like he is now, in a failing spacecraft. He knows it's failing by the way the engine sounds, like a tennis shoe in a dryer, and also, by the way it's spiraling out of control. Alone and out loud, Space Man employs the imperative: Eject! Eject! And girding himself for the unknown, he presses the button. Untethered, he waves to his ship as it cartwheels through space. As he, himself, cartwheels through space. He squinches his eyes shut. Jane would tell him not to be afraid, that this is an infinite universe and in an infinite universe all things are mathematically possible, even certain. And so he imagines his pretty girl, walking toward him on a boardwalk or even on Pluto or some star, a surfboard under her arm, saying see Space Man? See?

Nashville Gymnopédie

by Scott Garson

If you were the one with the pawn-shop guitar, I would be kind, unfortunate, a memory to light your way. It'd go like this, maybe. But no. I won't sing for spite. I'll sing for my nameless compatriots here at the coin laundry on 21st Avenue. I'll sing for your ship, wherever it's headed, and for the word my chords will someday spell, and for each of the sharpened colors in the whirl of a tearful eye.

It Was Her Decision

by Suzanne Lamb

They both said they wanted several, but after awhile they still didn't have any. Then they said they'd be happy with one. They finally got one, but not the usual way. They also got some leftovers, which they said they'd return for later. But in the meantime they got two others without trying, and he wasn't sure anymore about the leftover ones, though he said it was her decision. She wanted them, but she wanted him happy, and when he wrote checks she saw the creases. She also saw the bags, which lately had gotten bigger. But mostly she saw faces in the dark, like the faces of the three who were sleeping, only thinner and more transparent, as though they were made of glass.

A Hundred Bats

by Robert Krut

The suburbs at night, like the other side of a painting.

Wooden beams pray openhanded atop a house under construction, an owl squatting in the attic.

The dogwood in the yard covered entirely by a tarp, hiding a hundred bats, awaiting flight.

A man hunches near the back door, pouring paint thinner through a piece of white bread and into a mason jar

under the shadow of a shadow.

Mr. Fixer

by David Erlewine

My old speech therapist Paul finally calls me back. I say I don't need more money, just closure. After a few seconds of silence, I say, "We c-c-could both use some, I think."

I buzz him in around midnight. The climb from his 40s to 50s hasn't been particularly rough. His hair is thin, face a bit saggy, but he's still trim and tucking in.

He says "no thanks" to my offer of a beer. He sounds too fluent, like he's trying out for a commercial.

I laugh. "You're s-s-still married, I see."

"Danny, I'm sorry, for all of it."

"It's Daniel."

"Of course. Look, I can't stay long."

I put on the glasses I wore in high school. Everything blurs. "I know you re-remember these."

I reach for his zipper. "How's Mr. Fixer?"

While he slides in and out of my mouth, I gag on my old address and phone number.

I jerk out of his grasp. "Your potion still contain recuperative . . . p-p-powers now that you're an old f-f-fart?"

He grabs hold of my chin, catching me off guard. I let him hold my head still.

His office always smelled like vanilla candles. It was small, and he often sprayed cologne over us as the radio played.

Now, he tells me to look up and keep my eyes open.

The potion sits on my tongue until I swallow, nearly able to picture myself cured.