

RS Deeren  
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**Black Denim Lit (August 2014)**

Editor: Christopher T. Garry

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

What They Publish: Short Fiction up to 7,500 words, Novellas up to 17,500 words, Novel Query Letters up to 5,000 words

Description of Publication: *Black Denim Lit* is a monthly online literary magazine that publishes eight stories per month. It is a 100 percent fiction magazine with a somewhat higher word limit than other online zines (7,500). Black Denim is looking for fiction that is “less pretentious than khaki and more understated than blue jeans” and they are looking forward to seeing how submitters interpret that. That being said, a sprawling epic about a fishing trip told half in Latin will probably NOT find a home here.

Prose Per Issue / Amount of Published Annually: Eight short stories per month. Ninety-six short stories per year.

Prose Reviews: “The Quickening” by Kate Morrow is the first person dystopian chronicle of Sophie’s life with her best friend Nuria. In a war-torn future, people are born with one of four “sounds” playing in their blood: Strings, Pipes, Brass, and Drums. Sophie and Nuria meet hours after their births and are connected instantly. At the age of seven, each human is marked to symbolize their sound and spend the rest of their lives trying to the three musical Sounds that complement their own. The nation that Sophie and Nuria live in is at war with The Eastern Nations and completed “Songs” are drafted under the idea that their connection makes them a better fighting unit. When Sophie and Nuria find their other Sounds, Brass Barrows and Strings Alan, they are forced to run from the government and are hunted down.

Morrow begins in medias res with Sophie, Nuria, Alan, and Barrows barricaded in a shed under siege by some violent military force. It’s very jarring and violent like a battle or attack is supposed to be and the voices of Sophie and Nuria are captured immediately. Before a violent end comes, Morrow jumps to Sophie’s birth. The story then gives snapshots of her and Nuria’s lives. Dialogue is very authentic and balanced with exposition while maintaining an air of mystery towards certain dystopian tropes: mysterious government, war, overpopulation, etc. The story circles back to the beginning and finishes with a strong feeling of unity that has been built throughout the piece.

“A Suitable Poison” by Linda Boroff is the story of Roberta’s terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Roberta works for Ted, a tyrant of a magazine editor, and she couldn’t be more miserable. Along with her fellow long-term employee/crush, Brian, Roberta is introduced to the new girl, Alexis, who happens to be Ted’s daughter. She’s beautiful, young, the target of Brian’s desire, and everything else that Roberta is not. To add to this envy, Roberta is walked out on by her long-term husband, something about football players aren’t supposed to marry nerds; it’s a law of the universe, Roberta says. Roberta is fired from her job for some reason and later told by Brian that she shouldn’t have been fired, that there was a mistake. Days pass and Alexis dies in a drunk driving accident and Roberta never hears from Brian again.

The structure of “A Suitable Poison” is very basic and chronological which makes for a quick read. So I reread this piece because I must have missed something. However, the characters *are* bland and lack any attempt at personality. The dialogue stumbles when it tries to force a bit of light-heartedness which renders conversation completely inorganic. There is no justification for action in this piece and that inevitably leads to an inability to answer the “so what?” question writers must address.

Rating: 7 for emerging writers. Simply a wonderful chance for talented new writers to get their work alongside established writers.