

Title of Magazine: Brevity

Reviewer: DJ Howard

Editor: Dinty Moore

November 2013

Web Address: www.brevitymag.com

What they Publish: Creative Nonfiction, Craft Essays, Multimedia

Submission Guidelines: All submissions should be nonfiction of 750 words or less. Submissions accepted via Submittable.

Simultaneous submissions are allowed. Three dollars covers their reading fee.

Description of Publication: The layout is organized, easy to navigate, and beautiful images highlight each piece. Brevity publishes crisp and concise nonfiction from both established authors and emerging writers. New issues are published seasonally, occasional in spring. According to their Web site, "work from Brevity has been anthologized and reprinted in various venues." They also pay their writers 45 dollars/story.

Prose Review:

*Balancing Act* by Lisa Knopff is a plainspoken first person essay in a domestic setting. Through the observations of her neighborhood rock-balancer, Knopff is reminded of the type of men she attracts. The balancer creates rock formations that, to Knopff, look like little people. They are fully adorned with coats and hats. She learns from her neighbor that these formations were human-like guideposts crafted by the arctic natives. The neighbor explains "the key to his art is contact points and counterbalances," which is ironic, as Lisa admits, "there's nothing a balanced about him." She then tells the reader she's dated shaggy rebels like him but "she found [herself] yearning for something more conventional." By the end of her undergrad degree, she finally found the balance renegade of conformist. The story ends where she explains that those unorthodox men still find her, and because "the balance is so fine that [she has to] hold [her] breath in their presence."

Humorously told, Knopff, provides the reader with a quirky insight on how to balance the duplicities in life. The imagined point-of-view in the lines, "I suspect that he belches freely at dinner [and] rarely washes his sheets, gives the reader a stark image of who her neighbor is and who her prior boyfriends were. Setting us up with her thoughts on her neighbor, Knopff slowly draws us in; each paragraph of the story gets more personal. The theme of balance functions in three ways throughout this piece, literal; the image of the stone placement, spiritual; the Arctic native origin of the ritual, and personal; Knopff's struggles between her renegade nature and conformity.

*Afternoon Affair* by Sally Ashton is a plainspoken creative nonfiction essay told in a domestic setting. Ashton sits down on a train next to a homeless man. They exchange fake names and chat until the homeless man jumps out of his seat. He waves his arms around, declaring to the narrator that he is having a panic attack. After the narrator suggests for him to meditate, he immediately tells her that he has fallen in love with her and offers her a mint. He asks her a series of personal questions including her IQ, tells a couple across from them that she has an IQ of 140. He tells the narrator that the people sitting across from them are his friends now and that they are beautiful. She agrees and leaves the train, when she steps off, she continues to hear her him call her name even after the train has departed.

Simply told, Ashton has crafted a travel story. Honest, and to the point, she lingers on subtle moments that heighten the surrealistic sense of the story. The man "has the sour smell of the unwashed." The familiarity stems from the setting, the narrator is on a train, something has to happen by the time she arrives at her destination. There is a playfulness in the tone that is eerily contrasted with the narrators thoughts: "I don't feel smart." The last moment lingers uncomfortably, long after the piece is over.

Rating: 6. The writing is bold, honest, and unflinching. That being said, they only publish three to four issues per year. Most writers are established; securing a spot in Brevity isn't easy for an emerging writer, but well worth the challenge. And hey, you can make forty-five bucks.