

PHOENIX *NOW* ISSUE 5

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Rebecca

FLASH FICTION

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Flash Fiction: A Writing Teacher's Perspective

When I asked my students in my English classes to write a short story in 25 words or less, they just sort of stared at me and blinked. 25 words? A story? Right now?

Even though they looked at me a little uncertainly, they put their heads down to the task and started to write. Some, I could see, didn't know how to get started. Some were busily scribbling, probably moving onto their next story. One or two students looked like they were sleeping (but fair enough, it was usually very early in the morning).

Flash fiction - what I was asking my students to produce - is one of the fastest developing markets in the creative writing world. Type the term into a search engine and you will find countless magazines, journals, websites, blogs, books, competitions and news articles dedicated to this genre of short story. In fact, Googling it today, I find 64,700,000 hits, and no doubt more appear daily.

So what is Flash Fiction? There is some difference of opinion, but typically it refers to short stories under a 1000 words in length. Typed, this equates to a maximum of 3 pages (compare this to the traditional short story, which ranges from 2,000 to 10,000 words, or 6 and 30 pages). For journals and competitions, the word count for Flash can vary drastically, though. Some publish stories under 500 words, others request stories under 300, 250, or 100 words. A recent trend in Flash Fiction publishing has been for the six-worder: a story in precisely 6 words. Basically, we're talking about stories that are very, very short. Conciseness is the word. Brevity. Getting to the point.

I'll get back to mine now.

So after having my students draft their Micro Flash Fictions (I attach the label 'micro' here for obvious reasons), and redraft them, and also to try a six-worder, I asked for volunteers to read their work aloud. Surprisingly, many hands shot up. They wanted to share these little worlds, these fragments of narratives. Obviously, you cannot tell a whole story in 6 words or 25 words, but you can include enough information so that we, as readers, can piece together the rest. As V.S. Pritchett said, a short story is "something

glimpsed from the corner of the eye, in passing'; if this is true, then a Flash story is a glimpse at breakneck speed, like seeing the blur of houses and streets from a bullet train. The power these stories can have over longer stories is their brevity. Because they are so brief, they can stay in our minds for longer.

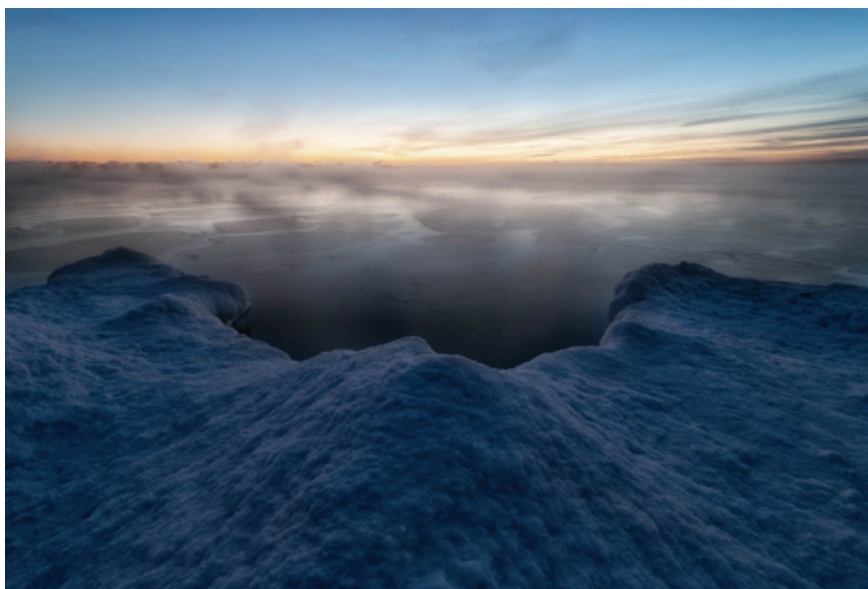
The following stories are some of the best from my students. In these micro stories, you will read about betrayal, heartbreak, despair, and hope. You will dip into the lives of characters ranging from widows and mailmen to crickets and criminals. In only a glimpse, you will find a whole world.

Don't blink. You might miss it.

– Jonathan Cardew



When Fog Lifts | Markos Berndt



White diamonds. Cheap perfume. The
smell made her sick. She swallowed her
pride, and locked eyes with the beast,
broken heart pounding. “Mom?”

| Anonymous



Falling Jewels | Brittany Dailey



FLASH FICTION

Lower Morgan Falls | Markos Berndt



FLASH FICTION

Flash Fiction: A Student's Perspective

| Laura A. Bennett

⚡ Movies often portray speed dating scenes where participants feverishly try to get to know each other in just a few minutes. Imagine for a moment that you are on a speed date. To make things interesting, you are only allotted six words to describe yourself to your date. How carefully would you choose these words? Writing flash fiction is kind of like this.

Flash fiction is an extremely short story that requires no long term commitment of the reader. These “micro-stories” can consist of 25 words or less and are sure to generate further thought. Following the basic structure of a story, in flash fiction there is still a protagonist, some kind of conflict, and then resolution. A beginning - a middle - an end.

Last semester, my English professor instructed my class to try our hand at writing flash fiction. The length of our stories were to either be 6 words or 25 words. He said to “purge” the story of all that we did not need, and half of what we do. Then what will remain is the essence of the whole story. I did not know where to begin. How could I possibly fit an entire story into just a few words?

Trust me, it was not easy to write with such brevity. It took a lot of thought, and creativity. But, learning to write flash fiction has changed my life. I appreciate words more now than ever before. I’ve learned that sometimes saying less actually says the most.



She sat on the sidewalk, garbage littered around her feet. Little did she know, he was staring at her from across the road.

| Victoria Yocum



Forever alone, the widow walked. The tears of her dead husband slid down her cheeks. The water crashed the beach, as they did her soul.

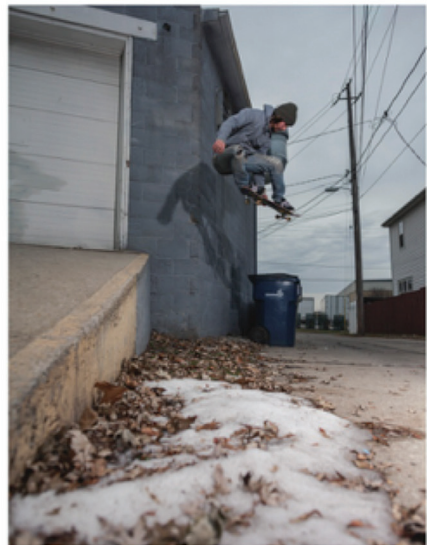
| Chad Jacquart

There was a curious catfish that swam to the shore. He quickly learned that it was a bad idea.

| Megan Jewett



Pay Vs. Passion | Buddy Wilinski

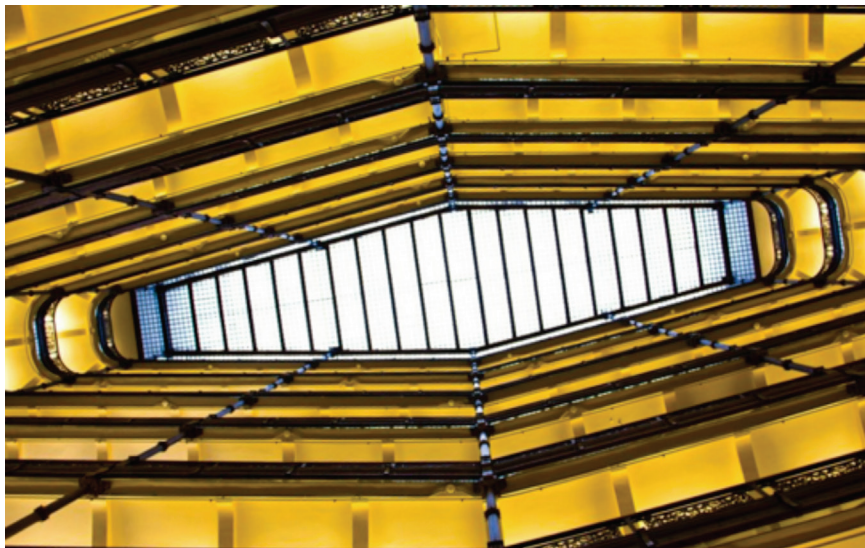


FLASH FICTION

There was a scientist who made a huge discovery, but did not get credit for it.

| Megan Jewett

A Viscous Ascendence | Tj Boone



Richard could feel the ground moving beneath his feet. He could see the houses in the neighborhood go by in a blur. He felt alive.

| Matthew Waldron

FLASH FICTION

On the Other Side | Laura A. Bennett

There were only four passengers traveling across the lake today. The brisk October air made the tip of Marta's nose cold, though the constant movement of rowing on the small red wooden boat kept her warm. Blue mountains, rolling hills, and tall pine trees surrounded the lake. The gray, overcast sky covered every trace of the sun. Marta thought about how boating here in the past had provided laughter and adventures. But not today.

Marta took Pa's usual place which was situated opposite of her family, in rowing position. She felt strange to be boating without Pa. Three generations sat in silence, absorbed by the sound of waves and wind. Peter sat across from her on the port side, next to her Ma. Marta's brother, Joseph, stood stationary at the stern. His silence: serious.

This lake was special to Marta. Pa had taken her fishing here as a child. She reminisced about how Pa's serious nature dissipated once the waves sloshed against the sides of the red boat. Pa taught her how to reel in fish, and how to row.

As Marta continued to row, her thoughts drifted back to the night she heard the news. No doubt Joseph blamed himself for the accident. He and Pa had been working on that wretched barn. Decay had set in on some areas of the roof and Pa insisted on doing the repairs himself.

She watched as Joseph brushed one bitter tear aside. "Stop leaning over the bloody side!" Joseph said; his harsh voice yanked Marta back. "You will tip the boat over and drench us all!" Joseph shouted at Peter. Marta glared at her brother, but bit her tongue. She was glad that Peter was only six and protected by the sheer innocence of childhood. Still, she hoped that the sharp words from Joseph would not distress him.

Unlike her brother, Marta had a temperament like Ma: kind, soft-spoken. But she could not argue about Joseph's mood today. She could sympathize. Days and nights of tears had left her eyes

red, swollen, and sore. If consolation was only attainable from flight - then she was a bird, trapped and unable to fly.

As Marta rowed she became mesmerized by the rhythm, letting her mind wander. "My, do you look lovely in red," Pa would say to Ma whenever she wore the scarlet hat. Marta remembered how tenderly Pa looked at Ma. Today, Ma wore this gift, a symbol of Pa's affection for her.

The faint sound of music playing was heard faintly. It was a distinct melody floating on the air. Melody in melancholy, orchestrated softly by violins. Ma began to hum along to "Whispering Hope," and Marta imagined Pa, resting in his worn chair, his eyes closed - smiling.

They reached the shore, where a gathering of about twenty was waiting. "Wait till the darkness is over, hope for the sunshine tomorrow, after the shower is gone," the crowd sang. Joseph helped Ma safely out of the boat, and she marched forward.

Pa was already there, lying in a shiny black casket. Ma paused, then slowly took off her hat and laid it on his chest. Marta blinked back tears as Ma laid her hat to rest on Pa's chest. Many moments of complete silence followed this gesture. Ma whispered, "Goodbye my love"; it was a whisper of hope. It was not really goodbye, for Ma had faith that she would see Pa again. Perhaps Pa would be waiting for her, with that red hat in hand.

One by one the people came forward to say their final good byes. Marta wiped a few tears aside, and pulled Peter in close. She knew that she needed to act like she was fine as she gave Peter a forced squeeze. "Papa is in a better place now," she said, voice cracking a little. "Will we ever see him again?" Peter asked. Marta waited. Before she answered, her mind began to picture Pa, carrying a bucket for fish as he led the way onto the dock. Pa turned and welcomed her into the red boat with outstretched arms. "Yes, darling. Papa is waiting for us. All of us will be together soon," she said with what must have sounded like certainty. But Marta's words left a sour taste. Her false assurance seemed to have deceived her family. She was still that bird inside a cage;

searching for escape.

Joseph helped Ma back into the boat. Peter and Marta walked towards them to head back home. The sun began to break through the clouds sending streaks of light across the lake. Marta shielded her eyes as she gazed toward the shore. Then, she saw something she did not expect. On the other side of the lake, Marta saw someone standing on the dock.

The figure was just a speck at this distance. "Joseph, do you see someone standing on the dock?" she asked. Joseph whirled around, squinted towards the dock and then with a puzzled look shook his head, "No". He studied her face. "Marta, I do not see anything", he half whispered. Was she seeing things? This had been a stressful week, maybe her mind was playing tricks on her. Marta thought it was peculiar to be the only one that could see someone standing there. She looked again and the person was there, standing in the same spot. In a daze, Marta got into position to row. She stopped. If she was facing backwards then how could she keep a watch on whoever it was.

She convinced Joseph to row. Her eyes were locked on the silhouette. Her heart pounded and breath quickened as every paddle stroke drew her closer. Marta could see the person a little clearer now. It was a man. It was hard to make out before, but she could see now that he was holding a fishing pole. A wave of excitement rushed into Marta. What if this was Pa? Hope surged throughout her body. Marta watched as the man skillfully casted. Then he began to reel in. The waves gently sloshed against the sides of the red wooden boat as she watched him fish. And she remembered.



Autumn's Tale, Ending | Tj Boone



I'm sorry, but there's not enough room for everyone. I'll tell them you were a super hero.

| T'Juan Balfour



Zack goes to a movie theater with his girlfriend. There, he sees his ex sitting one row in front of him. Popcorn begins to fly.

| Pat Sullivan



A dark hallway. Narrow. Cold. She rushes for her door. He waits in the corner. Escaping one threat, she runs into an even darker kind.

| Austin Allen

Once there was a mischievous cricket.
He loved to make his way into the homes
of people, and play his song. He got
stepped on.

| Ryan Roberts

FLASH FICTION

Fallen Remains | Brittany Dailey

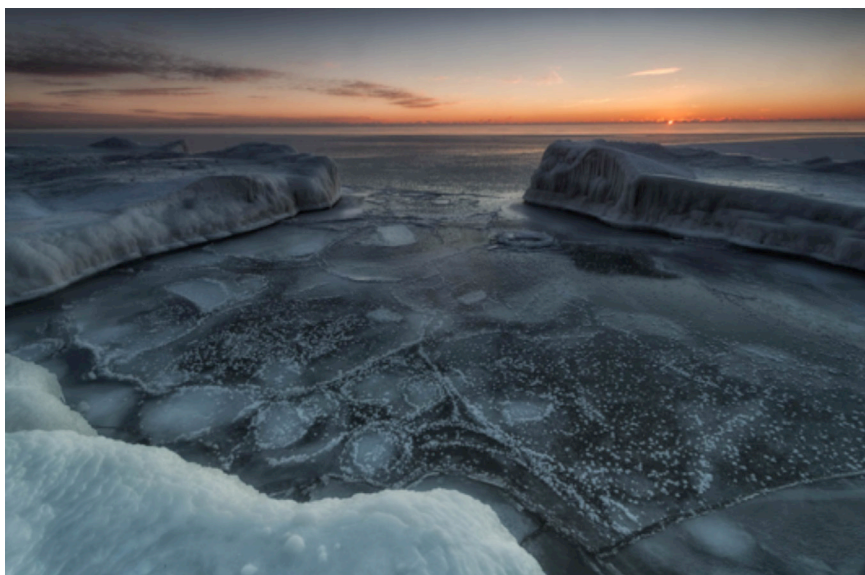


FLASH FICTION

Death. Never know when it will –

| Debbie Schaefer

FLASH FICITION



I Would Not Pass | Markos Berndt

A Window Seat | Brittany Dailey



FLASH FICTION

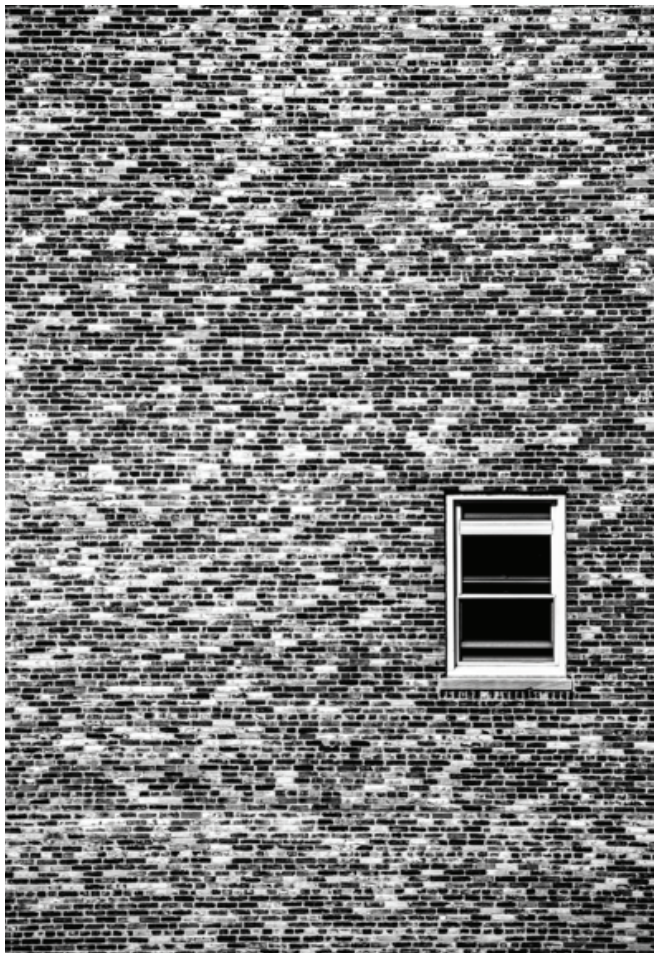
As the sun set over Milwaukee, the wind began to pick up, all the trash that laid in gutters began to stir, and alley cats chased alley rats.

| Alan McNeil

Money brought me a lifestyle: Loneliness.

| Victoria Yocum

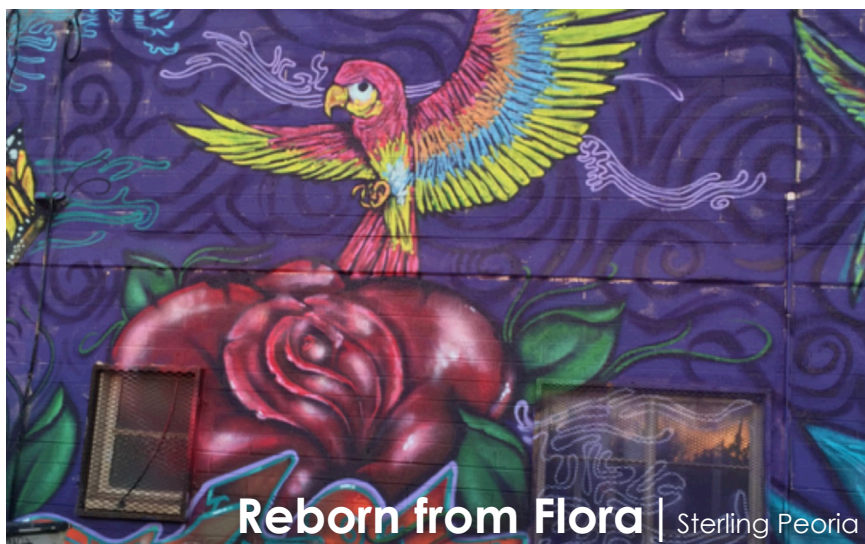
FLASH FICTION



Lonely Tenant | Tj Boone

Rain dripped through the hut's unstable roof. Buckets caught the rain. Each family smiled, and prayed.

| Victoria Yocum



Steven and Penny rode off one day to start a grand adventure. In all the obstacles they encountered, mother was number one.

| Anonymous

The crowd cheered to the music's heartbeat. They huddled above, trying to drown out the beat so they could fall asleep.

| Victoria Yocum

FLASH FICTION



Brick Wall Dragonfly | Guinevere Hicks

FLASH FICTION

Staring out the window, at the tall buildings, I imagine my life changing after I bring my special gift into this world.

| Denise Miller

Her one kiss tasted his betrayal.

| Laura Bennett



A Beach at Dusk | Caravaughn Frizzell

Picture broken, hands swollen, glass, and tears, cheeks are wet, breathing is heavy, the front porch is empty, yet my smile will last for years.

| Alan McNeil

FLASH FICTION



White Falcon Staff Duty | Daniel Kasza

FLASH FICTION

The mailman is missing. Detectives are all over the place, but we are still getting mail. What is really going on?

| Sarita Walker

The Beauty Standard | Caravaughn Frizzell





Phoenix Horizon | Sterling Peoria



FLASH FICTION

The wall buckled. Her knuckles bled.

| Morgan Davis

FLASH FICTION

A Brief Discussion on Quick Creative Works | Megan Jewett

Jonathan Cardew has been an English Instructor at MATC since January 2012 and he is also a fiction writer. Megan Jewett is a Liberal Arts major and is in her second year at MATC.

Megan Jewett: What got you inspired to write and when did you start writing?

Jonathan Cardew: My English teacher when I was eight or nine, so I think third grade here in the U.S. I remember writing a comic book for one of our tasks and it involved a story. I enjoyed developing characters and my teachers used it as an example for the class. It really gave me confidence. That was an early memory, but I think I always wrote little comics. I dabbled in lyric writing, which was terrible. From that age onwards, I felt I wanted to be a writer. I was set on becoming a writer. Throughout school I tried to write short stories and novels, then continued with English.

M.J.: How do you balance work and writing?

J.C.: Good question, I don't know. It's a work in progress. When I was younger, college and out of college, I would go through spurts of writing. I would write all night feeling really inspired and then there were days where I wouldn't write at all. I expected more things to happen, but realized in my early twenties that I need to be more disciplined. I did an English degree and then did a Master's in Creative Writing. During the Master's I met a lot of well-established writers and they had told me to write every day. Whether it was crap, whether it's like anything, just something off the top of your head or a story you're trying to develop, the main thing is to just write every day. The more you write, the better you'll get at it. So balancing work, as a writer, unless you are a full time writer at a magazine or newspaper reporter, but if you're a creative writer, only the top one percent will make enough money for it to be a full time job. The rest of us, the other ninety-nine

percent have to support it in another way. Which was another reason why I went into teaching, I didn't know I wanted to go into teaching; I tried it and decided I really liked it. It was a good opportunity to still talk about my love for writing and make money from it. So teaching has enabled me to have an income but still have some time to write. I'd like to say I balance work and writing over the past years, but I didn't. Right now I take Fridays and make sure it's free so I can devote it to writing, research or reading. I do think writing is great, but you need to read as much as you write in order to become a good writer.

M.J.: How do you develop a story or short story?

J.C.: Short stories are my main thing, but I find or am inspired to write a short story by overhearing someone talking or a conversation in the streets or I find a headline in a newspaper. To get into a story, I just write the first line and see where that takes me. I normally write a lot of a story in one sitting for my first draft and then I figure out what I'm trying to do. After a first draft and getting my ideas down, then maybe going into a second draft and not look at it from the first perspective, I'm going to look at it from a different perspective. I may use a different character or maybe use the same crisis or conflict, but write with different characters. It starts off kind of organically, and see where that takes me, then once I've written something that I think I want to keep writing, like an idea I want to grab a hold of, then I start to shape it into what I want it to be.

M.J.: How do you develop characters?

J.C.: I think I'm still working on that. It's interesting especially with the short story, because with novels, you have time to develop the characters and let the reader know a little bit about the character. But in short stories and especially in flash fiction, you really don't have that much time to develop the character. However, I have to picture the character myself and give a few little crumbs to the reader, just enough for them to kind of take it and run with it so they can try and form a picture of the character in their mind. Developing a character I really got to start to think

about what their motivations are. What are they trying to get out of the situation they're in? What is some of their backstory? What have they done in the past? Especially for a story, you might want to give the reader an idea of where the character is going afterwards. Even though you end the story at the climax, you always want to give the reader an idea of where they are going in the future, whether it's in the next day or how the result of the story will affect them in the future.

M.J.: Who inspires you to write?

J.C.: My tutor at grad school, his name was Archie Markham, and he was a phenomenal teacher. He was in his sixties and he had a big white beard. He had been published a lot and worked with a lot of writers. He actually passed away in the middle of my grad school. He was my creative writing and short story tutor and he really inspired me. He gave me feedback on some of the short stories I wrote. So when I write now, I think of him and if he would enjoy what I am writing or what would he say about what I'm writing. Good art in any form – be it music, paintings, or film – inspires me to write as well as I can.



The Writing Man | Jonathan Cardew

The Writing Man is there again outside my office block in downtown Milwaukee. He has the white shirt, the flip-flops and cracked-leather face of a man who has lived somewhere warm. He sits to write on the sidewalk, letter-sized papers taped in a long line like stepping stones. He could be a vagrant, but his hair is too well-groomed and his fingernails, if you look that closely, are clipped and clean.

It's late when I finish one night and I decide to head down to see what he's written. I'm not too interested, but my wife and I are going through a rough patch and home-life is strained and strange, even when I make the effort. I suspect she is sleeping with somebody; her skin is different, softer somehow.

When I get to him, he looks up. His eyes are very blue, his smile infectious and easy.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

He immediately looks down, picks up his pen again, and writes with the careful strokes of a calligrapher.

I don't move; I don't feel like it. "Is it a story?"

He pauses.

"Is it something that you just *have* to write?"

The Writing Man stares at the ground near to where his left hand is propping him. I stare at the back of his head and get the feeling that he can observe me through his scalp - *read* me, get to the bottom of my questions.

I hail a taxi.

At home, dinner is deadly quiet. Even the sounds of our five year-old son drain away. I think of the Writing Man, and what he has written, and why he has. Is it alcoholism, or painful sobriety? Later, I open a document and throw a few words on the screen. I hit delete and lay out papers on the floor of our apartment to try with a pen.

"I can't write," I say to the Writing Man on my next visit. He does the pausing thing again; keeps himself absolutely stock-still. "I don't even know how to start."

He resumes writing.

Originally published in: *Flash: The International Short-Short Story Magazine*, Vol. 4 No. 1, Apr. 2011 (University of Chester Press).

Middleman | Jason M. Kolodzyk

Drink sloshes, spilling on the bar's countertop. His head pops up, eyes squinting at the neon blue. A stray hand grasps the keys next to his wet wallet, splayed open and displaying a blurred and worn photograph: *His son, so far away? His wife, long gone?* Head resting defeated on his arms, he tastes the slow rolling tears gathering in the crevasse between his wrists; he releases the keys. He grabs his cellphone with his other hand, fingering the buttons, searching in earnest for a name.

FLASH FICTION

Suspended Tears | Jason M. Kolodzyk



FLASH FICTION

ATTENTION: Writers, Artists, Photographers and Creators:

GET PUBLISHED IN: The Phoenix

The Phoenix is MATC's award-winning literary magazine. We now publish a compilation of the best artistry from MATC students, alumni, faculty and staff online and in two print magazines.

We are now accepting submissions in the following categories:

Art: Digital, Electronic, Pencil and Ink, Acrylics, Pastels, Watercolors, and more.

Writing: Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Essays, Plays, and other forms considered.

Photographs: Digital Prints, Black and White Prints, Color Prints, Electronic, and Transparencies.

Special Categories: Songs/Lyrics, Short Comic Strips, Short Graphic Novels, Sculptures, Jewelry, Furniture, Welding and anything else you consider a creative work!

***Please Note:** For non-digital creations, please take a digital photograph of your work in the highest quality possible and then submit your work through our website.

For questions, please contact Jason Kolodzyk at: kolodzyj@matc.edu

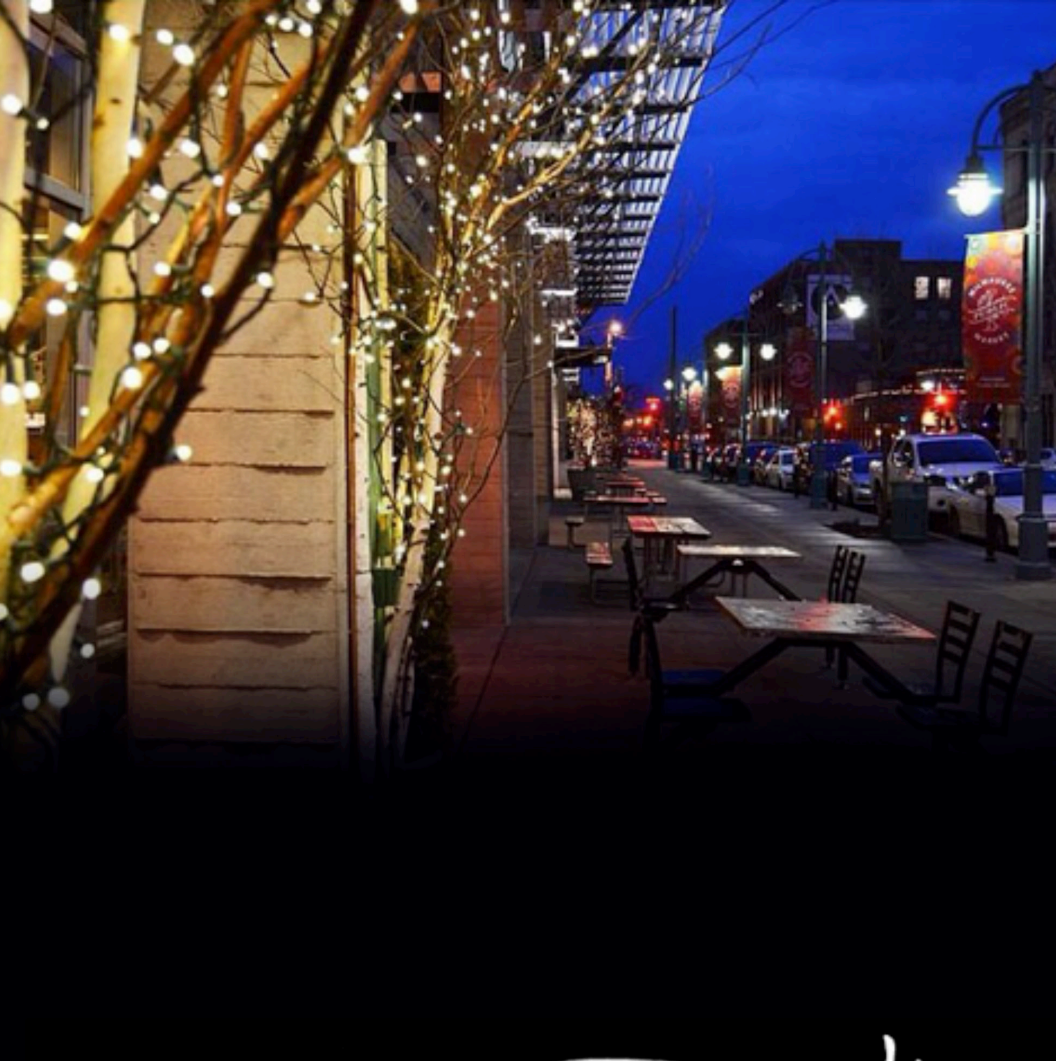
To Submit Your Work: go to <http://matcphoenix.com/submit/>

Finally, Please Consider Joining the Free Creative Writing Student Group!

Are you passionate creative writing or writing about art, literature, or photography? Would you want to go see a play, go to an open mic, or meet up and talk about being creative? If so, you are in luck: We can do these fun things together!

The Phoenix Student Organization is currently recruiting members and leaders! Please contact Jason Kolodzyk at the above email address for details on how to join.

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