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In Between Cigarettes...

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In Between Cigarettes...

Cover Page Footnote
Choking on Wishes
by
Jan Mater

I’m standing outside the concert shell watching the rest of the audience gush out. With Jacki, tall and thin, red hair and freckles, cowboy boots and biker jacket. Me short and pudgy and blondish, neon pink tank top and shorts. Watching the crowd. Wishing I were one of them. Wishing I were someone else. Wishing I were who I was in high school when I was busy wishing I were who I am today. Wishing I had the nerve to turn around and spit on those teenage punks who threw stones at me earlier. Wishing they knew I used to be stoned for looking like them. Wishing I were more like Jacki who had already collected a fistful of phonenumbers from fine guys for later use. We’re watching the bobs and the mohawks. The Reebok Pumps and the combat boots. The Gap and the Salvation Army. And I don’t know what I wish. When two young men approach us, I wish I could tell them to get lost. But I don’t. We’re awkwardly civil toward them, rolling our eyes and willing them to leave by mental telepathy. They’re too smashed to pickup our brainwave signals. I’m thinking that we should leave but worrying that they’ll follow. Wishing I could whip a switchblade out of my boot and wave it around my head chanting a voodoo curse at them. Instead I just smile and wish they’d go away. Then the one with the greasy hair is squeezing his hands around my throat and everything goes quiet. I can smell the stale beer floating off the ground wishing I knew what to do. He’s squeezing a little tighter when Jacki lobs him in the head. And he’s gone. And I almost wish I were.

In Between Cigarettes

In between cigarettes
is
a feeling
when
there is
emptiness.

Roman Divezur

Kristen’s Window
The Window Upstairs

The Window Upstairs
by
Christina M. Pawelczak

There’s something about an upstairs window that always intrigued me. When I was growing up, my bedroom was a converted attic and I would sit at my window and watch the world below me. Voices would drift up from the street. I would see the people — friends and strangers alike — walk by, living life each in their own unique way. And I would observe silently, unobtrusively taking it all in.

At night there would be times when I couldn’t sleep and then I would quietly creep (as quietly as was possible over those creaky floorboards) to the window at the end of the hallway, at the top of the stairs, overlooking the backyard. There the tall trees and the street lamps didn’t interfere with the wonderful view of the stars. I was that much closer to being able to touch them. I could see over the house tops. Lights were reminders of the world below. But I was apart from it. My attention was focused on the treetops and the sky. It was calming, reassuring. Then I would creep back to bed and I could sleep — and dream of wondrous things.

But my experiences at those upper windows were not always related to the physical. There was an element of fantasy to it, too. Recall all those childhood fairy tales of the princess locked up in the tower waiting for her prince to rescue her. Or the king’s sorcerer whose room filled with magical implements was always reached by climbing a long winding staircase all the way to the top of the castle’s highest tower. I was that princess and I was that sorcerer. And should a winged horse ever happen to fly by, or perhaps a dragon, I would be the first to be able to reach out and touch its majestic wings. All because I happened to be looking out from the window upstairs.