

Walden

SETH HARWOOD

Noah Bennett didn't know the right thing to do. He and Corinne had just broken up, something that felt right, but he couldn't be sure.

After a hard year apart, trying to navigate the difficulties of a long-distance relationship, Noah had come back to Boston for the summer break from his MBA classes at Northwestern. They had both come to recognize that spending their summer together was critical. If they never saw each other, what was the point? So Noah moved back to Boston, into Corinne's small apartment where everything was tastefully decorated in light colors and floral prints from where she'd grown up in the south of France. In Chicago, he could have lined up an internship with any of a half-dozen brokerage houses, but in Boston the job searching went slowly. After two weeks of interviews that led to nothing, he began to realize that spending his days alone in Corinne's apartment, waiting for interviews or for her to come home, was not what he wanted.

They started talking at five that morning, after she found him awake in the living room, watching the sunrise. When she came in, Noah didn't look. "I can't do this anymore," he said. "I wish I could, but I can't."

"What is wrong with this?" she asked. "We were going to try."

"I know," he said. "But it's not right. That's the best I can explain. I wish it was another way." On the other side of the street, one of the thin pipes atop a large brick building emitted a trail of steam that rose up into the sky. "I'm sorry."

She called in sick. He wished she wouldn't, but she was crying, hard, and wanted to help him pack his things. Noah left—he had to get out of the apartment; he went to Cambridge to get his mother's car, but Corinne was still there when he got back, which made packing even harder. She refused to do anything but help him, a kindness he could

barely endure, and together they turned the morning into a series of crying and ruined goodbyes.

When the car was packed, he went to his mother's. His father was there, waiting to talk to him, to find out what his plans were. Noah told him the relationship had come to a permanent-feeling close, that he felt like he'd finally made an important decision. It felt *right*, he told his father.

Then, in the late afternoon, Corinne called him. "I've just been laid off," she whispered over the phone. "I don't have a job."

"Jesus," he said, sitting alone in what had once been his bedroom at his mother's, the room where he had once punched a man named Vaughn—a boyfriend of his mother's whom Noah had thought she should not date.

Now, he held the phone close to his head and looked at his suitcase on the other side of the room. He closed his eyes. "How did this happen?" he asked.

"They said they have to make cutbacks," she said. "Jana told me they're laying off six people." She said she wasn't even supposed to show up to work tomorrow; they'd told her today had been her last.

"I thought they had to give you two weeks," he said. He had been back from Chicago for less than a month. "Do you want me to come over?"

She did. "I want to," he said. Of course he should go. He felt guilty for offering in a way that forced her to ask. He would see her, that was what made the most sense; he would go there, set himself aside and go because she needed him. He could push his decisions away for tonight, at least.

He found his parents in the backyard talking, behaving like friends, for once. When Noah told them what had happened, they couldn't believe it. "That's *terrible!*" his father said.

"I know. I'm going over there. That's the right thing to do, right?"

They shrugged. His father always pushed him to make his own decisions, avoided offering advice. But he knew to go. His mother told him to take the car, even gave him money to spend on dinner. He thought eating something would help, and so he called ahead to order ribs and chicken, the best thing he could think of at a time like this. But he hoped Corinne would eat.

She looked under control when she came down to open the door.

He set the bags of food down and hugged her, wrapped her in his arms, and held her shoulders. "It'll all be all right," he said. "Things will turn around. You'll get past this."

When she straightened, he asked her if they should eat in the courtyard, or upstairs in her apartment. She said downstairs was where Jana had told her. "She wasn't sure how to. She told me one of the principals wanted to come, that she had thought to bring Katia, but finally decided to come alone." Noah knew that Jana lived close by, that she and Corinne were friends, went to brunch occasionally. "She just came here and told me they were letting me go."

"And it's effective today?" She wiped her fingers under her eyes, nodding. "What did you say?"

"I told her I just wanted to go upstairs and be alone."

She led him into the elevator. They had ridden in this small compartment many times, holding hands, kissing, even taking off each others' clothes one night, drunk, coming in past midnight. Now they stood apart from one another, and Noah's hands held only white plastic bags of white Styrofoam containers.

They got off on her floor and he followed her down the hall, the one he'd been so impressed by the first time he'd seen it. Looking at her welcome mat, the flowered design distinctly hers, he smiled. In her apartment, he could still feel the heavy effects of the day's heat weighing down on them, on the air. It was only July, but the day felt like mid-August.

Noah went out to the apartment's thin balcony, hoping for a breeze, and started setting the food on the small iron table. He brought out the two new folding chairs Corinne had just bought. He'd known two would be unnecessary soon, but had kept quiet because he hadn't wanted to rush. Now he set the chairs on the sides of the table and started unwrapping the food. They had Cokes, coleslaw, chicken, ribs, macaroni and cheese, candied yams, collard greens. All of it smelled good.

"Eating is a good thing at a time like this," he said. "It can make you feel better, even if only a little." He tasted the macaroni. "Here, this is good," he said. She came to the door and he handed her the container. She looked uninterested, tasted a small bite, and passed it back. Noah could not ignore the ribs and he started eating—he was suddenly very hungry. He was glad to see her come outside and sit down across from him, but she just sat there, looking at the street below. He kept eating,

hoping she'd relax, and he was holding a rib, with barbeque sauce all over his hands, when he looked up and saw her crying. He wiped his hands on some napkins and reached for her, but in the awkward folding chair and across the table, he only could manage his hand onto her knee. "Oh, Bear," he said.

She dried her eyes with her fingers. "It's not fair. I've been doing a good job. That's what everyone tells me. Why would they do this?"

"I'm sorry," he said. He wiped his mouth. "Let's go inside. Can we?" He wanted to hold her and let her cry this thing out, for things to be all right. He led her inside and onto the couch, abandoning the food. He sat with his arm across her shoulders. "How did this happen?" he asked. He leaned back and gently guided her down with him, helped her to lie on his chest.

"My father said I should come home," she said, putting her head against his shoulder. "I could hear my mother crying. They both said I should come home. That's their answer."

He touched her hair with his fingers and put his other arm around her back. "It's a lot to move halfway around the world from where you grew up. Maybe it would be nice to go back to Arles for a while, just to relax and let this thing blow over. You wouldn't have to stay long."

"No," she said. "I'm not ready to do that. Not now." She leaned into him and then sat up, wiping her face with her hands. He saw the food outside, the bags blowing in the wind, and got up to bring the containers inside. He set them on the coffee table.

"Here," he said, unwrapping the chicken and tasting a bite. "This is good. Try this. I think if you eat something you'll start feeling better."

"It just doesn't feel right to leave. There are other US cities I want to try. New York."

"This gives you the chance then, right?" He wrapped the food and put it in the kitchen, washed his hands, and came back to the couch. "Think of this as though you just got two free months to really think about where you want to go next, a summer vacation. You can find a new job, take time to think things over, figure out what you want." She nodded and he worked his hand up her back. He massaged the twin tendons in her neck, feeling their tension, then worked around and down to her shoulder blades and along the sides of her back with both hands.

"Now that I don't have a job I could come with you to Chicago,"

she said.

He looked out the window and thought of that morning: how he'd felt sitting on the couch, thinking, when he couldn't sleep. The day had moved on, but the buildings across the street, and his feelings, were the same. "I don't know," he said. "Maybe it's still not right for us. Maybe we still have to try something different."

"I know," she said. Her breath evened out, slowed. He handed her the tissues and she blew her nose, then he took her in his arms and lay back again. He held her on his chest, rocking slightly; she brought her legs up onto the couch.

"This is big, Bear," he said. "But some day you might look back and think how it made you stronger." He listened to her breathe, watching the clouds shift outside her windows. "I know that sounds stupid," he said.

He still loved to hold her. Sometimes at night he had imagined a world where their bed was everything and he could save her from the difficulties of life, just by keeping her there in his arms, but lately it had been just their two bodies on her hard futon, trying to sleep in the heat, her warmth making him uncomfortable. Perhaps it was her metabolism that made her body so hot—she liked her shower water scalding, always said she felt cold. Her body kept their bed warm like an oven.

She slid her fingers along the inside of his forearm and he moved it away from her. In a rush, what had troubled him about their relationship came back to him: it was about simple touches like that one, things he wanted to tell her and couldn't, about how they never seemed completely capable of expressing their feelings to one another. He remembered the time he'd tried to tell her why he didn't like her to touch the soft inside of his wrist, and how she'd started crying. He closed his eyes.

"We should do something," he said, helping her up. "Maybe we could go for a walk?" He doubted if anything could make her happy. "We could go to Newbury."

That she sat up and agreed surprised him; she seemed almost pleased, as if going were actually a good idea. Newbury Street had been a place where they'd eaten fancy dinners the summer before, shopped and bought expensive clothes they thought they could afford. But even then, over nice food, *something* had seemed wrong to him. Even then.

Now he would drive them to Newbury Street in his mother's car.

It would be good to drive; after two months of living with Corinne and riding everywhere in her car, he missed feeling in control, even of something so small.

He held her waist as they walked to the elevator and they held hands outside as they walked to the car. "It's hot tonight," he said. "Today was like the first hot humid day of summer, and we made it. *You* made it. You got through one of the worst days I've ever heard of today. That was a lot, Bear."

She nodded. "I hope you'll always call me that."

"And it's still hot," he said. She had her hand inside the crook of his elbow and he maneuvered his way out to wrap his arm around her back. "We should go swimming. How about we go out to Walden Pond?"

"Really," she said, her face suddenly bright. She turned toward him, took both of his hands. "Can we?"

He knew how difficult it would be to go: it was a long drive that cooled you off as you drove there, the water was always cold, and sneaking in could be difficult—but now they had to try it. She was as happy as he'd seen her all night. "Let's go, then," he said. "Let's drive out there."

She was smiling now. "Okay," she said. "Good. We're going to Walden Pond."

At a small sidewalk café outside her apartment, a trio played jazz. Noah noticed a young couple with short dreadlocks sitting on a nearby wooden bench, listening. Their arms were entwined and they held hands, each of them tapping out time to the music with their feet. There were other couples sitting at the café's fancy tables, but these two sat apart, quietly enjoying the night, smiling, not worried about how they appeared to the others. They seemed happy, and Noah envied them for this. He wondered how they had come to find one another or what it took to feel comfortable like that, a way he had never felt with Corinne, with anyone.

He opened her door at the car, glad to be helping, doing something for her after the two full months of her helping him. He wanted to do *something* that could make her feel better, that was all he wanted, to do this for her, help her to end this night. As they drove along the Charles, he saw the familiar sights he had always loved: the Boston skyline, the Citgo sign, the fancy Back Bay apartments with the big windows that

you could see into—the ones he imagined owning some day, looking out onto the river and Storrow Drive. He was glad he had come home to try living with her: nothing had been lost, he reasoned, and now he could say he had given it a legitimate try.

She stayed quiet until they got to the highway, then, with trees on both sides, she spoke of growing up in France, how beautiful the mountains and the forests were there. She told him that these suburbs outside of Boston, their tree-covered rolling hills and the nice cars, reminded her of home. And he knew that he still loved her. It pained him as he listened to her voice, as she held his hand. He wanted to do anything to help her get over this, even though he knew the water in the pond would be cold.

In Concord, he checked the front gate and found it locked as he'd expected, but there were a few cars parked by the Thoreau Gift Shop. He couldn't remember if he'd ever seen cars there at night before. But there they were. If someone watched these spots they might ticket him, but probably wouldn't tow—he hoped not.

"Do you think it'd be all right for us to park here?" he asked.

"I don't know. We won't be long, will we?"

"No," he said. "You're right."

He parked and locked his door, then went around to her side. She was still inside, looking through her purse, and he tapped on her window. "We should go," he said. "It'd be bad if anyone saw us here." He looked at the other cars to see if any of them had a common identifier, any sign of some group designation, but none did. The car next to his was a station wagon with Missouri plates, a road atlas spread across the front seat, two sleeping bags in the back.

The air here was much cooler and less thick than in the city; the humidity was gone—the trees and the pond seemed to cool everything—but Noah had the air-conditioning off and the windows closed on the ride out, so they were still sticky from the city, warm enough to swim.

"It's *so* nice here," she said.

He took her hand and led her toward the entrance. It was dark, and the quiet of the empty forest brought back its familiar spookiness. They crouched under the gate, going separately, but rejoined hands after, at the top of the downhill slope of a road. They climbed down, passing under trees in darkness, and emerged onto a beach lit by the

moonlight. "It's wonderful," she said, walking to the water, bending to feel it. "And so warm."

He directed her to a trail that led to the more secluded spots farther along the shoreline. At the trailhead, trees crowded in on both sides, the heavy forest sloping above, dark and full of sounds, and a thin line of pines between them and the pond. He could hear the sound of water lapping gently against the shore.

She walked ahead, taking the trail like she knew it, as he held back, keeping track of the wire fence that protected the shore, looking for an opening where they could swim. "The air is so clear and clean here," she said.

In a few minutes, his eyes had adjusted to the darkness, but he could not see the water when he heard a panting, splashing sound ahead of them, and he grabbed her hand. "Shhh. There's something there," he said. If it was an animal, he didn't want it to surprise them, but he didn't want to surprise it either. He went ahead of her, slowly, feeling along the wire, chilled by the oddness of this sound. In the dark, his imagination always convinced him that sounds were made by creatures. Some *thing* must be in the water.

"I think it's—" she said, and she started laughing.

At a break in the fence, he saw steps leading down to the water with people's clothes set in piles. He realized that he'd heard a woman. She was just getting used to the cold water, breathing hard and splashing around. Corinne laughed. "It's all right here, Noah," she said, walking ahead again. "Don't be afraid."

As he followed, he felt along the fence for another break, hoping to find an empty set of steps to the water. They followed the path as it wrapped around a long bend of shoreline, approaching the far beaches he liked to come to in the summer. And then, when he found the next gap in the fence, the dark stones leading down were empty of clothes and they were separated from the other people by the bend; no one else was around. He saw water splashing against the shore. "This is our spot," he said.

She stopped, leaning forward to see, and said, "Perfect."

He stepped down and took her hand to help her down. He wanted to sweep her legs into his arms and carry her, but he didn't, knew he would never do something like that here, that if he fell while carrying her down the steep stones they'd both be badly hurt. Instead, he took

each step ahead of her and held her hand as she lowered herself behind him.

Tonight she wore the old clothes that had been his favorite those first long weekends after he met her at his cousin's wedding, when he flew in for visits: her long blue skirt fanned out around her feet, his favorite Nikes, and her tank top that fit her as tightly as anything she owned. She held the skirt above her knees with one hand so she could step freely down the stairs, and he saw her legs from her small blue sneakers up—her legs that were always perfectly shaven. He wanted to touch them, to run his fingers along her smooth calves. But instead he lowered himself down the steps to where only the pond was below him. Careful to hold her arm until her feet were steady, he sat and hugged her legs, feeling her shin with his fingers. "What do you think, Bear?"

"It's beautiful here. The pond, its ripples, and the moon's reflection, all the stars. It's so wonderful."

"Yeah," he said. "I hope the water's not too cold."

"You're so grumpy," she said. "You've always been sad."

He placed his shoes on the step above him, took his shirt off, and stretched his toes to the water. It was cold, but he tried saying, "It's not so bad." They had come this far. "I've been here at night before," he said, "But always later in the summer. There haven't been *that* many warm days yet."

He slid off the rock, into the shallow water, and landed on soft sand. "Yow," he said. "It's *pretty* cold."

"You're not going to swim in your shorts, are you?" she asked.

He looked down at himself, knowing that he still had shorts on. "No," he said. "I was just feeling the water." He heard the people they'd passed, the gentle splashing of the man and the woman, but he couldn't see any movement or shapes along the shoreline in the dark. He unbuttoned his shorts and, careful not to lose his wallet or keys, stepped out of them one leg at a time, holding them above the water.

She touched his shoulder, steadying herself for balance as she removed her shoes.

He folded his shorts and put them on the step next to her, naked in an unfamiliar, unembarrassed way. His penis stood out below his stomach, but he was not ashamed of how the moonlight revealed it. The water cold on his ankles, he was here, with her, and for the first time everything seemed fine. He told himself everything *was* fine.

She stood above him in the moonlight and slipped out of her skirt. Her body looked as beautiful as he'd ever seen it, her legs long and pale, a simple white thong, which she slipped down over her feet, onto the stones. When she pulled the top over her head, her nipples pointed in the cold. He saw the flatness of her stomach, thought how her body was as perfect as any he'd ever known, with a realism that was fully human—she had bones under her skin. He stood below her, beholding the simple beauty of the pond and the trees around them, and her bright pale form above him. She shone in the moonlight, illuminated as if the moon for that moment had focused its brilliance on her. She stood no less than three feet above him, nude, shining. The shadow of a tree branch cut across her side. He followed its curve to her breast with his eyes, thinking as if his gaze were his fingers. He passed over her shoulders, along the line of her collarbone, and up her white neck. When he came to her eyes, she smiled as if she knew the moon had caught her this way, given her such light.

"We're at Walden Pond," she said and laughed.

He heard the wind and felt a cold gust prickling the hair on his legs, making his skin tighter. After a chill ran through him, he touched her leg, felt its smoothness. She giggled. "You're beautiful," he said. He held his hand up for her to take it and when she did he steadied her and she bent down to step into the water. "It's only sand here," he said. "Don't worry."

As she crouched and slipped her leg down, she laughed at the touch of the cold on her toes, squeezed his hand. When her left foot fell onto the sand, she slipped slightly so that she landed suddenly with both feet in the water, both of her hands on his shoulders to steady herself.

"Ha. It's not so bad, then," she said. "This can be our baptism. Where we wash it all away and start fresh, promising ourselves that from here on nothing bad will happen to us. That we'll wash it all away and leave only the best things."

"But some of what happened today won't change." He was sorry as soon as he'd said it, but he wanted everything to remain clear.

"I know," she said. "But this will clean us, this can change *something*, even if only for us as separate people." She caught her breath as the water hit her thighs. "Only good things will happen after this for us. Let's promise." Her voice was soft. She put her hand on his arm and he noticed her eyes were closed. "We can wash away the bad luck and

whatever is hard, and come to something new.”

“Okay,” he said. She led him out into the cold water. “I promise,” he told her, stepping forward, wading deeper until the water reached his shins, then his knees and—too quickly, it seemed—the tops of his thighs. The water was clean and cold, pure. “You deserve good things,” he said. “They’ll come to you.”

“We’re washing everything bad away.”

His penis seemed to be floating above the pond, standing erect on its own. She looked at it and smiled. “I see you,” she said, and reached out to touch him.

He stepped forward. “Co-o-o-ld,” he said. “This is where it hurts.”

He stepped into deeper water, breathing like a Lamaze student, fighting the shock. She laughed. “You’re brave.” He raised his hand to splash her, but realized how out of the question that was—an act for a summer day, with the sun hot on their skin.

Now *he* led *her* deeper, until he was in to his sternum and she to her shoulders, and she was shivering, shaking in the water. She swam in front of him and stood against his chest, her teeth chattering, their bodies together. When he touched her shoulder, she shied away, but then held him when he took her in his arms. He ran his hand along her legs, feeling the goosebumps on her skin, and brought them up, around his waist. He felt surprise at how warm her body seemed against his; she was warmer than him, warming him in the cold water. He held his arms along the backs of her thighs, supporting her as she grasped him by the shoulders, her legs around his waist.

“It’s *so* cold,” she said, her hair wet against his neck.

“You’re keeping me warm, Bear. Your oven.”

She kissed his neck and her lips were cold, but she’d stopped shivering. He pressed her against him and carried her out until the water was at his neck—where only his feet could touch the bottom—and he did not feel cold.

“We’re in,” she said. “We made it.”

“Because of you.”

She kissed his forehead and his temple; their lips met and he could feel hers cold and soft, moving as she told him she loved him, and then they finally kissed, the tip of her tongue warm between his lips. Her legs had smoothed but her nipples stood erect against his chest. He nuzzled his face into her shoulder, holding her tight to his chest for her

warmth, squeezing her.

The cold water occurred to him as if it was only a fact now; he discerned its clean film against him, but she staved off his feeling the cold.

"We're clean," she said.

The moon and the Big Dipper hung above them; the trees along the opposite shore reflecting darkness against the still water of the pond. He felt held: by her, by the water, and as if the crispness *had* done something to him, something he could not explain. He wondered how many more times he would hold her body, if he ever would again, and he thought about times he'd held her: in a hotel room on a vacation in Barcelona, after she'd flown all night to see him; the night after his grandmother died, when he'd counted the beating of their hearts; and after their first time together, when he peeked under the covers and secretly looked at her body.

Then, from somewhere in the world beyond the trees, he heard the rumble and the whistle of a train coming, and soon he saw the lights and the cars themselves skirting along the top edge of the pond, just behind the tree line in the woods. He turned so she could see it. "It's a train," he said.

It was headed away from them, taking strangers to their homes in the night—places he might never see, places inhabited by people he'd never know.

It rattled on its tracks, a line of a dozen passenger cars knocking along in the night. The rush of it speeding away toward destinations he would never take her to—places he would have to explore on his own. This chilled him. He couldn't move until the train was gone. Then, when it had passed, they stood and listened. Her body felt clean and smooth; she held her lips cold against his neck, and the wet ends of her hair brushed his cheek. She squeezed herself against his body. He smoothed her hair back, cupping her head in his hands.

He kissed her then, felt the cold slipperiness of her lips and the sharpness of her tongue moving against his. Her eyelashes tickled his cheeks. Her lips were dark from the cold. She looked cleaned, *cleansed*, and he believed it, believed in her. They kissed again, and, though he knew it was time to go, he held her more tightly. He felt the protection of her legs around him and her warmth against his chest, the comfort from the cold that he'd never expected, and he *knew*: he knew what it would mean to be alone.

notes on contributors

JULIANNA BAGGOTT's fourth novel is *Which Brings Me to You* (co-written with Steve Almond). Her second book of poems, *Lizzie Borden in Love*, was published in September. She also writes a series of novel for younger readers, *The Anybodies* (now in development with Nickelodeon Movies at Paramount) under the pen name N. E. Bode. She teaches at Florida State University's Creative Writing Program.

REBECCA BARRY's fiction has appeared in *Ploughshares*, *Tin House*, *The Mid-American Review*, *One Story*, and *Best New American Voices 2005*. She was short-listed in *Best American Short Stories 2000* and *Best American Short Stories 2004* and her nonfiction has appeared in many publications, including the *Washington Post Magazine*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *Best American Travel Writing 2003*. Her collection of short stories, including "Eye. Arm. Leg. Heart." will be published by Simon and Schuster in 2007. She lives in Trumansburg, New York.

AIMEE BENDER is the author of the short story collections *Willful Creatures* and *The Girl in the Flammable Skirt* and the novel *An Invisible Sign of My Own*. Her stories have appeared in *Granta*, *GQ*, *Harper's*, *The Paris Review*, and other magazines, and have been heard on PRI's *This American Life*. She lives in Los Angeles, where she teaches at the University of Southern California.

SARAH BLACKMAN is an MFA candidate at the University of Alabama, where she served as the fiction editor for the *Black Warrior Review*. Her work has most recently appeared in *Best New American Voices 2006*, *The Laurel Review*, *Parthenon West*, and *The Greensboro Review*.

MICHAEL P. BRANCH is a Virginian who lives in the remote high desert of the western Great Basin in Nevada, where he writes, plays blues, and curses at baseball on the radio. He has published five books and more than one hundred essays and reviews, including essays in *Utne Reader*, *Orion*, and *Isotope*. His most recent book is *Reading the Roots: American Nature Writing before Walden* (University of Georgia Press, 2004).

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland. His essays have appeared in the *Best American Essays* collections of 1998, 1999, 2003, and 2005, and he is the author of seven books, most recently *The Wet Engine* (about the muddle and mangle and music and miracle of hearts) and *The Grail* (in which a total wine doofus spends a very cheerful year indeed in an Oregon pinot noir vineyard).

KATIE FALLON teaches creative writing at Virginia Tech. Her creative nonfiction has appeared in *Fourth Genre*, *River Teeth*, *Appalachian Heritage*, and elsewhere.

GARY FINCKE'S fourth collection of stories, *Sorry I Worried You* (University of Georgia Press, 2004), won the Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction, and Michigan State published *Amp'd: A Father's Backstage Pass*, his nonfiction account of his son's life in two signed rock bands, in 2004. His latest book is a collection of poems, *Standing around the Heart* (University of Arkansas Press, 2005). He directs the Writers Institute at Susquehanna University.

CHRISTIEN GHOLSON'S poems and stories have appeared or will appear in *Hanging Loose*, *Mudlark*, *Big Bridge*, *2River*, *Cimarron Review*, *Lilliput Review*, and *Alaska Quarterly Review*, among others. A book of linked prose poems, *On the Side of the Crow*, was recently published by Hanging Loose Press. He lives in New Mexico.

SARAH GORHAM is the author of three collections of poetry: *The Cure*, *The Tension Zone*, and *Don't Go Back to Sleep*. She co-edited the anthology *Last Call: Poems on Alcoholism, Addiction, and Deliverance* with Jeffrey Skinner, published in 1997 by Sarabande Books. Recent poems and essays have appeared in *American Poetry Review*, *Southern Review*, *Five Points*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *Fourth Genre*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Poets and Writers*. Gorham serves as president and editor-in-chief of Sarabande Books, an independent literary press.

SETH HARWOOD'S fiction has been published in *Twenty Pounds of Headlights*, *Inkwell*, and *The Red Rock Review*, among others. He is a 2002 graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and, as of this summer, a new husband. With his wife, Joelle, and their dog, Hadley,

Seth lives in Oakland, California. He is currently at work on a novel.

PETER MAKUCK'S stories, essays, poems, and reviews have appeared in *The Hudson Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Sewanee Review*. Author of five volumes of poems, he has edited *Tar River Poetry* at East Carolina University for twenty-seven years. *Off Season in the Promised Land*, a new volume of poems, was published by BOA Editions, Ltd. in October 2005. His short story collection, *Costly Habits* (University of Missouri Press, 2002), was nominated for a Pen/Faulkner Award. He lives with his wife, Phyllis, on Bogue Banks, one of North Carolina's barrier islands.

JILL MCCORKLE is the author of five novels: *The Cheer Leader*, *July 7th*, *Tending to Virginia*, *Ferris Beach* and *Carolina Moon*, and three story collections, most recently *Creatures of Habit*. Her work has appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Ploughshares*, *Best American Short Stories* and *New Stories from the South*, among other publications. The recipient of the New England Book Award, the John Dos Passos Prize, and the North Carolina Award for Literature, she has taught creative writing at UNC-Chapel Hill, Tufts, Harvard, Brandeis and Bennington College. She is currently on faculty at NC State University as the Lee Smith Writer in Residence.

CLAUDIA MONPERE'S poetry and fiction has appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Spoon River Poetry Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, *Calyx*, and elsewhere. She is a recipient of the Georgetown Review Fiction Award, and her essays appear in collections by Persea Books and the Haworth Press. She directs the Creative Writing Program at Santa Clara University.

ALISSA NUTTING'S work is recently published in *Playgirl Magazine* and forthcoming in *Swink Magazine*. She is an MFA candidate at the University of Alabama, where she is managing editor for *The Black Warrior Review* and assistant editor for *Fairy Tale Review* and *Alabama Heritage Magazine*.

J. D. OLENSLAGER is currently an English student at Southern Utah University. While he has published numerous poems in local magazines, this is his first publication outside of Utah. He is planning on moving to the East coast for graduate school in the fall. **(update?)**

PATRICK PHILLIPS'S first book, *Chattahoochee*, received the 2005 Kate Tufts Discovery Award, as well as a "Discovery"/The Nation Award. Poems from the collection have appeared in many magazines, including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, and the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. He recently completed a doctorate in renaissance literature at New York University.

LIA PURPURA'S new book of essays, *On Looking*, was published in August 2006 by Sarabande Press. New poems and essays are forthcoming in *Agni Review*, *Tin House*, *Sonora Review* and *DoubleTake*. She is writer-in-residence at Loyola College in Baltimore, Maryland.

SARAH REITH completed her BA in English at Mills College in Oakland, California. She is now working on her MA in German literature at San Francisco State University. Her work has appeared in *The Village Rambler*, *R-K-V-R-Y*, *The Hurricane Review*, and *Poetry Motel*. Originally from San Francisco, she lives now in El Cerrito, with a view of the Golden Gate Bridge.

ALICITA RODRIGUEZ lives in a Colorado ghost town with her boyfriend and their three crazy dogs. She teaches at Western State College. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *TriQuarterly*, *New Letters*, and *Fiction International*.

REG SANER'S latest nonfiction book is *Reaching Keet Seel: Ruin's Echo and the Anasazi*. His poetry collections include *So This Is the Map* and *Climbing into the Roots*, the latter the winner of the first Walt Whitman prize for poetry. For a more comprehensive bio, please see page fifty-five.

DAVID G. W. SCOTT'S poems have appeared in numerous literary publications including *Poet Lore*, *Euphony*, *The Madison Review*, *West Branch*, *New Delta Review*, *The Lyric*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Red White and Blues* (University of Iowa Press), and an essay is forthcoming in *About What Was Lost* (Plume, 2006). Winner of the Irene Leache Foundation's award in free verse poetry, he is also a recipient of fellowships in fiction and poetry from the Delaware Division of the Arts. He received a PEN Discovery Award for Fiction in 2004.

ROBERT ANTHONY SIEGEL'S second novel, *All Will Be Revealed*, is forthcoming from MacAdam/Cage. His first novel was *All the Money in the World*. He teaches creative writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

ABRAHAM SMITH hails from Ladysmith, Wisconsin. His recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *jubilat*, *Northwest Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Court Green*. He was a 2004–2005 Writing Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center, Provincetown, MA.

JOAN SNYDER'S work has appeared in many public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. For a more comprehensive bio, please see page sixty-four.

JILL TALBOT'S work has appeared in journals such as *Under the Sun*, *Cimarron Review*, and *Blue Mesa Review*. She teaches creative nonfiction and literature at Southern Utah University. *The Art of Friction: Where (Non) Fictions Come Together*, an anthology she is co-editing with Charles Blackstone, will be published by the University of Texas Press in 2008.

CAROLINE VAN HEMERT currently works as a wildlife biologist, and recently received her MA in creative writing. Much of her time is spent pursuing field studies across Alaska, Botswana, and other remote parts of the globe—chasing birds, charging through brush, and attempting to make sense of the data that result.

EVAN MORGAN WILLIAMS has published over thirty short stories in magazines including *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Northwest Review*, and *Blue Mesa Review*. He has stories current or forthcoming in *Alimentum*, *The Fourth River*, *The Healing Muse*, and *You Are Here*. His website is www.pahoehoe.edublogs.org.

DAVID WRIGHT'S poems have appeared in *Artful Dodge*, *The Mars Hill Review*, *The MacGuffin*, and many others. His most recent poetry collection is *A Liturgy for Stones* (Cascadia, 2003). A past recipient of an Illinois Arts Council fellowship for poetry, Wright lives in central Illinois with his family.