



**Lakefly
Writers**
Conference

2015 Winners
Flash Fiction

*We would like to thank the Friends of the Oshkosh Public Library
for their generous support.*

FLASH FICTION

There's not much to be said about the period except that most writers don't reach it soon enough. ~ William Zinsser

First Place

Kids on an Overpass by Dan Anderson

"Shotgun!" Little Michael called.

"Don't think so. Dad and I are up front, pilot and co-pilot. You and Shiloh in the back, our crew." Sarah tried to smile.

On highway forty-one to Winneconne for putt-putt, the family's Tahoe tires spun so fast they looked motionless.

Atop the deserted overpass, two boys leaned over the hot metal railing.

"Nice shot. That was a thick one," Tyler said.

"Yeah, phlegm and ketchup spit helps the loogie." Carl hawked another. "Runs in the family. Granddaddy Adolf Anderson, a loogie master." Carl spat another loogie, missing a car below.

"I'm bored." Carl kicked the gravel. "Loogieing cars is too easy. Without any ketchup left, it's stupid." Littered around them were empty ketchup bottles. Carl pointed across the overpass blacktop. "Dude, check it out." He ran towards the basketball-shaped rock. "It's so freaking round." They rubbed their hands against the rock.

"Smooooth."

"I got an idea. What better than ketchup or loogies?" Carl said.

Sarah twisted the cap and sipped from her Dr. Pepper. She winced. Too much rum, not enough Dr. Pepper. Her husband and son played *"I Spy"*. If Michael once more *spied* barn, she was going to flip, Hulk-style. She wished she never called the marriage dull. Her husband now felt compelled to schedule free days with touristy activities he thought exciting: mini-golf, bowling, bird-watching, camping. Thoughts of the schedule he'd written out--*months* of outings—ignited her irritation. Michael leaned forward, ranting into her ear, "Mommy, *Mom*, Mom, Mummaaah, Maa-maah, mee-*maaaw*."

She turned to him. "Can't you just shut up for, I don't know, two minutes? A barn. I bet you *spied* a barn, didn't you?"

Michael was silent.

"Didn't you?"

He nodded.

“Dammit, I need quiet *sometimes*.”

Her husband reached to her. “Honey, we’re trying our best . . . ”

She looked out the window and took another swig. “You’re smothering.” She exhaled. “It’s why all that . . . mess with your br--” She glanced at her son. “Your *you-know-who* started.”

“Don’t. Not in front of him.”

“See? Smothering. For once, shut your mouth for two goddamn seconds.”

Silence fell over the vehicle.

“Fine,” Carl said. “I won’t. But why don’tcha try *one more loogie*. See if you can hit *something*.”

“I *know* I can hit a car.”

“Prove it.”

Tyler leaned over the railing, hawked a big one. It splattered on a Buick’s windshield like a bug. Tyler smiled proudly.

Carl yelled, “Make way for C.J.!” He lifted the rock between his legs, and ran bow- legged. He tossed the rock, granny-style, over the railing.

Below, the highway’s calm rumble exploded into chaos. Tahoe tires screeched, drawing a black line across the highway into the grass. The vehicle accordioned into the fence and the husband’s weight fell on the horn. Shiloh slammed against the dashboard. Little Michael, in silent shock, reached to touch his beautiful mother. His hand felt a wet rock littered with shards and warm red.

The boys ran until, years later, they finally collapsed.

Author bio: Once a snot-nosed whippersnapper, Dan Anderson began adolescence as a paperboy. Quickly he grew into a cannon-armed full-bearded ten-year old paperman. When not saving the elderly from burning buildings, he teaches literature and writing while wearing nice clothes. He recently finished a humor novel and, for the first time, will be published within the next few months

Second Place

The Year of Intended Pursuit by Jim Landwehr

8/3/2078

Simeon Foster slid the AvaBoost levers forward on the console of his XylaCraft and felt his chest push back toward his spine. He was deep into his time-leap mission, trying to reach Mach twenty-one without having the rivets of his fuselage disintegrate from heat and friction. The premise of the time leap theorists he worked for was that if you could achieve Mach twenty- one, you could actually go forward in time. The International Board for Future Studies had undertaken the effort to go into the future to see if it held more promise than the present. As it was, things were dire on planet Earth with widespread famine, and an antibiotic-immune virus that had wiped out three quarters of the population

worldwide. The climate was creating havoc on agriculture and drying up lakes, rivers and fresh water reservoirs including those in the wettest regions on the planet. War and violent skirmishes were becoming increasingly frequent as the remaining people fought for the dwindling resources.

Simeon adjusted his flight helmet and checked the digital readout of the speed gauges which read 20.97.

“XylaCraft 2112 leaving the year 2078 and entering 2112 in 3...2...1” Simeon said into his microphone.

The force of the landing in San Diego bay pressed him hard against his full body harness. After a few minutes of regaining his bearings Simeon clicked the craft into marine mode and shuttled toward shore. The craft shook as it slid onto the beach. He climbed down the side of the vessel onto the brilliant white sand. The heat hit him with oppressive fury. He estimated it had to be close to a hundred and thirty degrees. While putting on his solar reflective headgear, Simeon quickly realized that the shore was not white sand but salt that had evaporated out of the sea water.

This can't be a good sign.

He walked up the crusty salt toward the city. The beach and city were both deserted. As he crossed Harbor Drive, he saw a figure about fifty yards away, pushing a shopping cart full of tattered belongings. He broke into a run, anxious to find out the year. When he reached the figure, he approached slowly, not knowing what to expect.

“Hello, my name is Simeon Foster, can I bother to ask you what year it is?” he said.

The wrinkled woman who wore a cloak over her and to keep the sun out looked up at him startled and said, “It’s 2112, a’course. What ya think?”

“Sorry, it’s hard to explain,” Simeon apologized. “One more question, if I may. Where is everyone?”

The old woman laughed as she said, “Well, the few that’s left are all headin’ North, bankin’ on that rocket back to 2050 they’re buildin’ up in LA”

Simeon took a moment to process what he had just heard. Then, he dropped to his knees and started to cry. He cried inconsolably for his past and his present. He cried for the future of humanity.

Author bio: Jim Landwehr’s poetry collection, “Written Life,” will be released by eLectio Publishing on March 31st, 2015. His first book, “Dirty Shirt: A Boundary Waters Memoir” was published by eLectio Publishing in June of 2014. He has non-fiction stories published in Neutrons/Protons, Parody Magazine, Boundary Waters Journal, Forge Journal and MidWest Outdoors Magazine. His poetry has been featured in Verse Wisconsin, Torrid Literature Journal, Wisconsin People and Ideas Magazine, Off the Coast Poetry Journal, and many others. Jim lives and works in Waukesha, Wisconsin with his wife Donna, and their two children Sarah and Ben.

Third Place

Hostage

by Nancy Sweetland

It happened so suddenly Marie didn’t have time to react to the knife at her throat or the growled, “Don’t make a sound. Start the car and drive real slow out of the parking lot. Got it?”

She swallowed, nodded. Why hadn't she locked the car? She always locked the car. But she was only going to pick up a gallon of milk...oh, God. Tom's out of town and the kids are home alone.

Her voice was barely a whisper. "What do you want?"

A maniacal laugh erupted from the man behind her, accompanied by a cloud of fetid breath that pulled bile up into her throat. "Want!" He tightened the choke hold on her neck. "I want to get the hell away from here now. And you're going to help me. Start the damn car!"

Marie nodded as well as she could within his grasp, leaned forward slowly and inserted the key in the ignition. Please, God, let it stall. It always stalls when I don't want it to. Give me time, maybe someone will come from the store, or drive up and park beside me.

But the parking lot remained empty except for her car. Who else would be out buying milk for breakfast at eleven-thirty at night but a woman whose job kept her on shift until this late? Her hand shook so badly she could hardly turn the key but her unreliable old two-door Pontiac started up for once without a hiccup.

"Back up! NOW!"

The world drifted into slow motion as Marie put her hand on the gear shift. She tried to swallow but her mouth was dry. I've learned about this sort of thing. I've wondered what I would do if something like this happened. I was sure I would think clearly. But I never knew how afraid I'd be. She could feel the knife's cold steel at her throat. She stared straight ahead at the big plate glass window of the convenience store, at the man behind the counter who was too busy racking cigarette packages to look outside. If he'd only look.

Marie took a deep breath. She'd make him look.

She reversed and slowly backed away from the curb. Then, so quickly there wasn't time for her captor to realize her plan, she shoved the shift into forward.

The tires squealed as the car jumped the curb and rammed straight into the store window. Glass shattered into thousands of shards in the split second before Marie wrenched herself loose from the startled man's grasp, pushed open her door and leapt out. She reached into her purse and grabbed her .38.

"Police!" she yelled. "Come out of there with your hands up. NOW!"

He did.

"Next time you decide to kidnap a woman," she said as she pulled her handcuffs off her belt, "don't pick on an off-duty cop."

Author Bio: Writing ever since getting her first rejection at age 13, Nancy Sweetland has published articles, juvenile poetry, stories, picture and chapter books. She has published over 100 adult short stories, three romance novels, two mystery novels and has won over 40 regional and national awards in short stories and poetry. She lives in Green Bay, Wisconsin. She loves to hear from readers. You can contact her at nancysweetland@gmail.com