



## Stuart Thornton

STUART THORNTON has worked as an asphalt washer, a cashier at a mountaintop restaurant, a first mate, a dough prepper, a counter top mover, a dorm monitor and a park information official in Big Sur. Currently, he works as a staff writer at the *Monterey County Weekly*.

## THE BEGINNING OF US

Marathon drunk, empty shot glasses litter the bar like blown shotgun shells making it possible for a man like me, tethered to the earth, to interact with a soaring creature like you. The booze-fueled bum at the bar notices your contrasting hay-colored hair and coffee complexion. He says: "You don't deserve a girl like that." I agree, while the dance floor teems with sex-crazed drunks circling you like blood-drunk vultures. Later that evening, we tear our clothes off like cornhusks, and the next morning we wake up in a new world.



## t. mike walker

T. MIKE WALKER, writer, teacher, public speaker, published author, and mixed-media montage artist, is also a licensed wedding minister serving Santa Cruz county.

## WHAT DAMS THE FLOW?

One night of rain was all it took  
to break the river free—  
but sand is easy swept away—  
what dams this flow in me?

Clouds of grief block out the sun,  
but light keeps leaking through—  
my wounded heart is raging wild  
to bear the loss of you!

Letting go is hard to do—  
To hold you is to die;  
There is no way to lose or win,  
But still—oh God!—we try.



## Cathy Warner

CATHY WARNER is a lay pastor of the United Methodist Church in Boulder Creek, CA, where she lives with her husband and two teens. She writes poetry, short fiction and faith columns, and leads spiritual writing workshops: cathyjwarner@earthlink.net.

## ZEKE CAN'T DANCE

Zeke borrows a trick from God  
Puts on a record  
Makes dry bones dance  
In my living room

Zeke divines blood  
And bone between us  
When what exists  
Are brittle fragments  
Best left unexhumed

He tries to strip us  
From love's grave clothes  
I want to believe he can

My flesh and bone  
Long to dance  
In the living room  
Sinewy breath  
Pulsing blood  
Revived by Zeke's bones

The record skips  
The beat is off  
Zeke's sharp elbows  
And bony protrusions  
Jab

We fall  
Flesh away  
Revealing the valley  
Between us  
Prophetless and bone dry



## Bernice Rendrick

BERNICE RENDRICK was born in Kansas, but has lived in California most of her life. She belongs to The Front Street Poets in Santa Cruz, and her poems have appeared in *Passages North*, *Porter Gulch Review*, *Montserrat Review*, *Quarry West* and others.

## THE CHOCOLATE TRUFFLE

Her share is one in gilt paper,  
twisted ends spread like wings.  
Saver of sweets, delayer of pleasure  
she hides the prize  
so they'll not find it.

An hour later can't remember  
where within the labyrinth  
of catchall drawers she stashed it.  
The brain won't play: you're warm.  
In another zone it threatens  
to stop rescuing her from games  
of greed. Panic pounces  
like a scurrying mouse, she rips  
lids from canisters, you'd think  
she'd misplaced a diamond.

What's the big deal?  
She consoles herself, eventually  
faces she's unsettled  
by the lapse of memory.

That night, at her desk to write,  
in the open cigar box  
with stamps and paper clips  
the golden eye winks. A reward  
for returning here to remember  
nothing matters unless the words  
that wait are lost, stacks of them  
pressed like flowers in folders  
that find what is hidden in her.



## Art Koulakani

ART KOULAKANI earned his MA from CSUF in Film and TV. A former professor of Film Appreciation at Golden West College in Huntington Beach, Art is currently a language course writer for Persian Farsi at the Defense Language Institute. He lives in Monterey with his wife, Maryam, and his two daughters Gazelle and Jasmine.

آرت کولکانی

## ONCE I WAS A COLD AND NARROW STREAM

Once I was a cold and narrow stream  
running in jungle, mountain, valley  
I knew dead waters  
will die within  
I knew in the arms of ocean waves  
there will be a place to rest.  
Neither long ways  
nor dark deep trenches  
could stop me from running.  
Now I have joined  
to the ever resting arms of oceans waves.  
Running is my existence  
and existence is where I rest.

من زمانی چشمه ای سرد و باریک بودم  
یکه در میان جنگل، کوه، و تزه در روان  
من میدانستم که آبهای راکت  
در خود می میرند  
من میدانستم در آغوش امواج های دریا  
مکانی برای آرامیدن میباشد.  
نه راه های طولانی  
نه گودال های عمیق  
نتوانستند من را متوقف کنند.  
اکنون من ملحق شده ام  
به آغوش موجهای دریا..  
مدام جاری بودن هستی وجود من است  
و هستی من مکانی است که من در آن آرامش می پذیرم.

[First published in *poetry.com*]