

Spring 5-1-2014

## Fire Eater

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### Recommended Citation

Blue, Psiren (2014) "Fire Eater," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 36: No. 2, Article 61.  
Available at: <http://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol36/iss2/61>

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**There were rumors of his arrest . . . an incident in a men's room somewhere. . . his dismissal from the faculty. That explained it all to my 1950s sophomore mind. I didn't stop to question the rightness of his firing or the wrongness of his act, never wondered if he was hungry for love and would have preferred to share a home with the guy he met in the men's room, something society would not permit. I never asked, Wasn't he created equal to all the straight men with wives and neat clothing? Forgive me, professor, wherever you are.**

# **FIRE EATER**

Psiren Blue

I heard her say it numbed the pain. She said with it, she could find happiness. Whenever they had their rows, she'd clutch a bottle tight. He'd storm out, and she'd nurse like a baby, mouth to bottle.

So I found myself wondering what sort of magic she found. What had she discovered? What magical elixir existed in her bottle—or was it only at the very bottom? My curiosity got the better of me one day, home alone and searching for adventure.

Happy with excitement, I started my search. Thoughts of my mother's glimmering eyes stayed my shaky hands. Whenever she drank from her bottle, she looked like Peter Pan returning to Neverland. Jealous, I kept searching. I found her hidden treasure easily.

A whiff caught me off guard. What was that smell? The burning made me think fire, some puff of hot smoke in my nose. But it was just my mind. I was just too giddy. I stared down at the clear liquid expectantly. Water that smells of fire? Surely this is the magic my mother keeps hidden. I thought again to my mother's glimmering eyes; they glowed with the same fire I held in the bottle. I swallowed my fear first, and then my mother's liquid magik.

Until then, I'd never given much thought to the fire-eaters I saw on the TV. But as the flame traveled down my throat and burned its way into my stomach, I wondered if I could breathe fire like they could.