

## BLUE TERRITORY

1

Above the bar, a big TV was playing without sound. You kept glancing up at the screen. I followed your empty gaze. A talk-show host, smiling with all his teeth, was shaking hands with a confessed criminal. They fell like two mountain climbers tied together.

2

It was hard to make sense of what was happening. Back then, I still cared about the news. Our blood escaped through every pore.

3

I found a bench overlooking the cemetery. A plaque in the ground described how you had split open like a carcass in a butcher's shop. I half-closed my eyes in order to see only sky.

--Howie Good

### The odor

The odor was stuck in my sinuses and on the back of my tongue. It burned my throat and made my temples throb. The air smelled like cancer. That was the only way to describe it.

"What the fuck are they doing out there?" I asked my students, the few who were actually in attendance, as I entered the classroom, and the shock that registered on their faces was priceless.

After class was dismissed, and I stepped out into the morning light, I found myself standing next to an industrial-sized dumpster filled with roofing materials, and a man with a respirator who was filling, shovel by shovel, a portable incinerator with the toxic scraps his coworkers had pulled off the building I taught in.

Plumes of thick yellow smoke poured from the pipe atop the incinerator, and my initial reaction was the asinine, yet powerful, urge to scale the incinerator, wrap my chapped lips around the searing hot mouth of the black metal pipe, and suck as hard as I could.

Of course, I didn't do it. As I walked past the incinerator, I didn't even give it a second thought. But this was the type of desire I resisted every moment of my life.

--Josh Olsen

*Mr. Rabbit says,  
"the moment of realization...  
the moment of realization...  
is worth...  
a thousand prayers." --Mickey (Natural Born Killers)*



AIM by Misti Rainwater-Lites

### Turkish Strategy Session

At ten in the evening, under a little yellow light outside the bakery, there are usually about five or six of them. They are middle-aged or older, and their fashion is one of no fashion: loose-fitting khakis, cheap plaid shirts, untucked, loafers. They work in these clothes, they gamble, lounge & pray in these clothes. They have become their clothes and the little bit of gold they nestle in their chest hair and slip on their fingers & wrists. On the table in front of them, there is usually a pack of cigarettes with the lid open, an ashtray, a colorful lighter & one glass of Turkish tea. Apparently only one of them is drinking something, and it's non-alcoholic. Men who have spent the greater part of their lives trapped in little storefronts, serving the public, their souls getting drained. They have not been destroyed & they will not be defeated. These men are age-old and strong as the lion, determined as termites. They sit under a little yellow light outside the bakery, leaning forward a little, their feet crossed under their chairs & something in the air floating around them must have something to do with money.

--MP Powers