

## Fire

By Michael Estabrook

I'm new in the shop  
where they manufacture metal parts and fixtures  
end of the day time to go  
I make sure the back door is locked  
check some windows  
flip switches to turn out the lights  
but one switch closes only halfway  
and suddenly fire bursts out  
in the far corner  
of the back basement the flames leaping  
and clawing at the air  
but there is no smoke just flames.  
I quickly close the switch all the way  
but the fire rages on  
but only in that one corner  
no wood burning or people getting hurt  
I pull the alarm  
co-workers appear immediately  
seemingly popping out of the walls  
concerned, more annoyed, not panicked  
frowning in my direction  
the new guy fucking-up as usual  
everyone staring at the fire  
from the edge of the basement  
until a woman officer shows up  
tall, short hair, sharply dressed  
removes something from a cabinet  
descends the stairs  
to go put out the fire  
and she's frowning at me too

## Books

By Michael Estabrook

How many books  
have I read in my lifetime you wonder  
one per week my entire  
adult life  
that's 2,444 books give or take  
and for what?

To get into college?  
already done that

To get a good job?  
they don't care if you've read 24,440 books

To get into heaven?  
there isn't one  
and I've never heard  
of people reading up there anyway

To win the prettiest girl?  
already done that  
she's here next to me sleeping soundly  
while I'm reading yet another stupid book.

## Light

By Michael Estabrook

So what's wrong with all these  
shadows in the hallway  
splinters of light sneaking  
under the doors  
do you have to watch TV all damn night  
haven't you got more important things to do  
something, anything  
learn something earn something  
a university degree perhaps  
or some money  
paint the garage  
clean the gutters, repair the shutters  
pull some weeds, call your mother  
anything

Do you even know  
what's behind those doors  
in the hallway  
have you tried to figure it out?  
why not grab a flashlight  
and take a look?  
No, of course not, you're too busy  
slumped on the sofa  
watching TV  
crime mysteries for Christ's sake.

What would Dad say about you  
wasting your time?  
or Grandma Sadie  
what would Thomas More do if he knew  
or FDR or Caesar  
Dante, Michelangelo, Mozart  
Ernest Hemingway or Jesus. . .  
what?

## Lizard

By Michael Estabrook

Staying at Aunt Alice's  
flew in last night  
cannot find my camera damn!  
seem to recall taking some pics  
in the airport lounge  
of some friends  
but don't remember it after that  
must've left it in the lounge  
or on the plane  
just realized I had no ID on it  
so it is gone for good double-damn!  
Waking up after a fitful sleep  
need the toilet  
strangely it is in the kitchen  
but there's a divider wall  
half a wall really so I can use  
the toilet and Aunt Alice  
doesn't have  
to watch me  
she's over there cooking something  
she was always cooking something  
I wander over whisper good morning  
suddenly some sort  
of creature scampers across  
the kitchen floor  
she grabs a broom starts chasing it.  
Hold on I can get him  
I yell and snatch him up  
in my hand  
not smart at all it's a rat-like critter  
more like a gerbil or something  
close to a gerbil and could bite me  
but he doesn't  
what do we do with him now she asks  
I'll let him go outside  
so I bring him out the front door  
some boys come walking by

# Writing Raw

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I wait for them to pass  
then stoop down  
and let him go in the grass  
the little thing looks up at me  
maybe it's a lizard  
I think now  
as I look down on his head and long tail  
and lizard body  
with the scales all over it.

## Rita

By Michael Estabrook

her room was messy  
I was surprised about that  
she was such  
a tiny girl, neat and pretty  
energetic

I returned with her there  
after we had  
some wine only a glass or two  
she had a roommate too  
not her husband Danny  
which surprised me even more

she fell promptly to sleep  
in a fetal position on top of her messy bed  
but I didn't want to sleep  
I wanted to kiss her  
but I didn't  
I'm married and so is she  
I only stood there watching her  
as she slept smiling  
so pretty so sweet so innocent so pure  
just like she was back in high school

I left to go to  
The Tower where Danny worked  
fixing stuff up high  
he wasn't afraid of heights  
but I needed to  
hug the walls and cling to the railings  
like a frightened lizard

I had to tell him  
about wanting to kiss Rita  
he laughed and said yes of course  
we all want to kiss Rita  
especially when she sleeps

# Writing Raw

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she's so beautiful then, exquisite  
when she sleeps

yes, yes she is

then we made it to the top of The Tower  
bursting outside into the cool air  
the night closing in  
and all this  
because I became Facebook Friends  
with Rita  
even though I never knew her  
all that well back in high school

**Michael Estabrook bio:** Michael Estabrook is a recently retired baby boomer child-of-the-sixties poet freed finally after working 40 years for "The Man" and sometimes "The Woman." No more useless meetings under florescent lights in stuffy windowless rooms. Now he's able to devote serious time to making better poems when he's not, of course, trying to satisfy his wife's legendary Honey-Do List.