

# Slanting Rain

*by* Chris Galvin

In the waiting room, the hunchbacked woman is writing a poem of slanting rain. Rain-diamonds glittering, the cutting rain slanting and slicing the air, hard and glittering diamonds, pelting. Verses of swirling maelstroms of nothingness, yawning black and deep, boundless but palpable. She writes of falling into that breathing abyss. She feels her heart pounding against it. A falling and falling that's never ending. Frightening. How hard the thump will be, if ever she lands. The darkness continues to breathe all around her. A faint whoosh of air when she expects to hear a roar; all that air she displaces as she falls, where is it going and from whence does it come? It is the sigh of the centre of the earth. It is the woman, as she falls.

She writes the end of her poem with a flourish, and offers me her pen. I poise it above the stack of blank pages. I begin: the sensation of a dream where the wind scoops you up and suddenly you're off the ground, feet in the air, and don't know whether to rejoice at this new freedom, this ability, or to fear what will happen next; how high will you go, how will you get down? It's thrilling. Your head swims with the wonder of it as you look down at the rooftops and the people and cars dwindle until they are dots and you can go anywhere. Adrenaline courses through you. Still, the biggest concern is how you will land, or if you will land. You choose to ignore this concern.

I stare up at the Escher print on the wall of the clinic. I tap the pen on my knee, and then I continue to write, writing of angst and existentialism, and I write in a strange and symbolic language that flows and seems to make sense, even when it does not, expressing true strangeness beyond what anyone has ever imagined. Expressing with mere words a warping and bending and morphing and swirling; using words inappropriately so that they seem to have other meanings; inventing words and sliding them into the narrative sideways so that they fit into the flow and readers reach for the

dictionary, never suspecting that these are not words from eons ago.

I write and write, and write of a solitary man. Wandering a windblown, forlorn street where the only other movement is that of leaves, swirling in eddies into dark corners, piling up, mouldering. A pall of cloud or smog hangs over the city. A strange noise from an alleyway pulls the lone traveler in, his curiosity pulling him in. A hissing and thrumming, vibrating, humming in his bones, pulls him into the alley. The alley is deep and winding. The man walks along the narrow passage-way, the walls of the cement buildings so close that he can touch them on both sides, without fully extending his arms. The hissing sound grows louder now. The man pulls his hat down over his eyes, sweeps the alley behind him with a last glance, and steps into a space between two walls. It's dark in the alley. It's black beyond the fissure the man just stepped through. Everything else is tinted in odd chrome yellow tones. This story is doomed: a famous director will ask for the rights to adapt it for the big screen. The original meaning of the story will be lost.

The final story I write tells the tale of several outlandish wizened and bespectacled men poring over necronomicons looking for incantations to enchant tiny animalcules. The words in the necronomicons pulsate with cosmic matter. The animalcules expand until their consciousness is our earth, our humanity, our very souls. The bespectacled men nod and rub their calloused hands in pleasure at the wonder of what they have produced. They attach filaments to limbs, making creatures dance and live and die. Some of us gain knowledge of what is going on. The rest of us just carry on, at the edge of existence. None of this matters.

