

Gargoyle

by Paul de Denus

My cat Ed died two weekends ago. He died in the car on the way to the vet, wriggled out of my arms in desperation in the backseat, careened against the back window as I reached for him, fell on his back, turned sideways and stopped. Breathing. My wife pulled off the road and we cried for a good while, sat until we were clear enough to get back on the road.

The vet's outer office sound system belted Frank Sinatra's *The Lady is a Tramp*. The sound was brash and upbeat and I wondered if we'd come through the wrong entrance. A counter sign advertised the place as a "pet spa". (Is cremation a form of pampering after death?)

Can I take him? the woman at the front desk asked and I gingerly handed over the stiffening body. A week later they gave him back to us, gray dust in a white gift tin with black paw imprints.

He was thirteen and had breathing issues. Two vets told us there was nothing to do - but they were open weekends if we needed to bring him in for euthanasia. It's strange to say but right now I miss him more than I do my deceased parents. Perhaps he was around more - by my feet, on my lap, in the darkened kitchen corner by his dish doing his Boo Radley imitation, his head tilted as if to say, *where's my meal, old man!* Most of the time he perched on the corner of the bed like a gray gargoyle waiting patiently to jump onto the back of my chair, to get to the table, to get to my lap, to get to my feet. My parents never did that. They died while I was far away from them and though it hurt for a long time, I found it okay to eventually let go. This cat seems to linger. I realize it's only been a short while and I expect to see him around. I suppose that's what cats do, hang around quietly, float in and out of your life. Sometimes they'll just plain sit awhile, next to your feet or curl up comfortably in your head.

