

# Helicon & the USU Writing Center West present

## Sitting Johnny

By: Susan Nyikos

This cat fits in no hat unless certified  
To hold ten gallons of maybe fish-  
Shaped hard chow, hard like candy--

Even his fur is more like caramel drops--  
Milk caramel you can buy bulk from a  
Bin next to corn, pumpkin and frog-

Shaped candy and you just know he  
Would love to know you think he is food-  
colored and he would claw and lick your face,

Your hand, your foot, especially at one am  
So you bar the bedroom door with ten  
Pound dumbbells and have his claws clipped

The next day at PetSmart where he plays cute  
But fights the carrier with all fours splayed  
And he wouldn't even run away because he thinks

Food grows in his Garfield dish in the kitchen  
So he cries like a baby when the neighbor's  
Calico or tabby come to the screen door to tease him--

Because what if they get to the dish? and this  
They do at six am while I dream of a scheme  
To slim him from the ten pound risk factor--



Photo by Ben Nyikos

Half of which he leaves behind in caramel fur  
Balls on my futon he perfectly matches in hue  
So he thinks he is invisible and when his owner

Finally picks him up I forgive the ambush of clawed swipes,  
The tone-out-of-tone puke on the rug, the bathroom  
Door pawed open while I sit on the toilet—

After five weeks of that I forgive all because now  
Vacuuming makes sense again, though the Garfield  
Dish, like a forsaken guitar, still sits under the kitchen cabinet.

## Spring City Lament

Photo by JP Peterson

By: Russ Beck

Soon after the town was placed on the National Historic Registry the canals that ran parallel to most streets in town were relocated underground for pressurized irrigation. Along the streams grew great cottonwoods. When we buried the water, the trees died. Their skeletons lined the streets of my childhood like stoic mourners and eventually were cut down and burned. The only place that the trees still grow is the cemetery. I imagine the roots of the trees digging deep like mirrored branches burrowing in the ground to embrace oolite boulders, coffins and maybe even the corpses of those that knew the trees before they died. The cottonwoods seem to survive, not by water and sunlight, but by the memory of those who watched them grow. They pull some bodies closer to the surface while pushing others further down. Like any small town, my cemetery is haunted. I can feel my ancestors' presence hovering only slightly below the fog of threads released from the cottonwoods in spring. Both sides of family are buried a few generations deep, time marked with varying levels of decay on their stones. Among my relatives is my brother who I never knew. All I hope for him is that his memory will be strong enough to hold up the trees. The trees that I love, in fact, more than I will ever love him. This is the Spring City that can't be marketed. It can't be reproduced on a canvas or poured in a glass or printed in a pamphlet. My parents have purchased plots for all of us in that same cemetery. We will all be buried there lifted and torn by those same trees, always looking up into the thin leafed canopy, next to the quarry and the lake that supported my town.

Helicon West invites you to share our open mic nights every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month, 7:00 PM at Citrus and Sage, 130 North 100 East, Logan, Utah.

Broadside Co-editors: Cynthia Harmon and JP Peterson

Sponsored by the Helicon West Planning Committee and the USU Writing Center

For more information on community broadsides contact [star.coulbrooke@usu.edu](mailto:star.coulbrooke@usu.edu)

For more information on the USU Writing Center, log onto [writingcenter.usu.edu](http://writingcenter.usu.edu)