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The Old Catholic Priest

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The Old Catholic Priest

The old Catholic priest walks sad, but quick, with head hung low and case in hand. His armor of black has no dents, for it has not josted for many years, and lack of a grail has made the knight frail. His head is gray with many thoughts of another day, when baseball and Harry S. Truman were quite the rage. Oh, what child's hand could have held? What woman's stew could he have smelled? What, in the past, could he have foretold? Now, in the autumn of his life, what need he thoughts of a wife? He chose his diverging road, and paved it well with his steps and the Holy Code. Now as leaves fall from his limbs, and light leaves the chamber of his heart, where does he walk alone? What parish sits and waits for salvation anymore? Yet, there goes another Catholic priest, in a hurry, out the door. He feels he has a mission, and has yet to do much more.

Roger Scalzo

BEAT

by Laurie L. Barczak

Two kids drive down Singer Ave. in the middle of the day. They give the rusty old Mustang a boosed hug as each dangles a lazy arm out the window.

"Damn, it's hot," says the driver, and wipes a sweaty hand across his sweaty forehead. His hair, long in the back, usually wings up at the ends and all the girls go crazy over it. But today it's matted straight against the back of his neck. "I could go for a beer.

His friend in the passenger seat grunts in agreement. His blue eyes are glazed, like windows that haven't been washed in awhile. "Man let's DO something!" he whines, jerking his head around. He slams his fist onto the scorching dashboard, already faded and cracked from long hours under the sun.

The driver is getting nervous. He doesn't like to disappoint his friend. But they've already polished off the four Bud Lites he swiped from dad's stock in the garage.

"Jesus! I gotta take this dumb shirt off!" the driver says. By now his brows are knit together and his lips form a thin line of concentration. "There's gotta be something man. I mean, I'd get more beers but last time that cashier dude almost took my license away. He said he was gonna call the cops."

His friend turns away and throws his head hard against the seat, his eyes half-closed. He tries to blow a few sticky strands of dark brown hair out of his eyes, but it's not working. His fingers drum an irritating rhythm against the door of the car.

The driver turns up the radio to drown out the sound. It's making him nervous. There's a lot of static on the air, and that annoys him too. But it's the only station he can get. "Hey let's go swimming or somethin' huh?" he says to his friend. "I just can't take this heat.

They are passing their high school. The grass in front of the building is parched and withered a sickening yellow color. One of the bushes that stands by the front doors seems a skeleton of its old self; the heat has turned its green splendor into fried brown clumps that look unnatural against the stately brick backdrop of the building.

His friend runs both hands through his hair. His breathing is a little heavy. "...my last year," he mumbles. "What?"

"I said--THIS IS MY LAST YEAR." His laugh comes out more like a short bark. "Seniors, man--that's it." He cocks an imaginary pistol and pulls an imaginary trigger. He grins.

A bunch of guys are playing basketball in the parking lot behind the building, and the driver turns in. None of them wear shirts, and the sweat from their bodies glistens and the sun is in his eyes. He looks to his right and notices that his friend has put his shades on already.

One of the guys in the lot is chugging Gator-Aid and suddenly the driver feels like his throat will close up if he