

Summer Flip Flops

by Julie Ann Weinstein

Sal, a finder of misplaced objects notices the sunglasses, flip flops and boxers left on the pathway heading to the beach. They are his gifts today, so gallant is he of these 'strays' seeking ownership. He tries the glasses on first and feels dizzy. The world looks in 3-D as his eyes adjust. He walks over to the boxers and places them in his shorts pocket, then approaches the flip flops, though they are a women's size six, like his former girlfriend, Marybeth, and he wears a man's size 12. Still, he places his feet in the shoes and walks, but he does not know where. He can't see, not at first, as he's teleported. His footsteps are light, lighter than his normal heavy stride, the one Marybeth used to say could make elephants in a herd scatter in alarm. Yet, he hears the sand crunch under his feet, though he can't see it. He adjusts the glasses on the bridge of his nose and attempts to wipe the steam off the lenses. It is of no avail. He calls out for Marybeth. She disappeared off the beach one day, leaving only her shoes in the sand, leather flip flops with painted-on seashells, the ones hanging on the door at his house.

* * *

Into the wind he hears something. His hair moves and he turns his cheek, waiting for a kiss. She has found him, or he her. She breathes into his ear, hot salty air. He tries to speak. No words come, only air, air she takes as her own. Sal falls onto the sand, crushed by his love's need for oxygen, or so he thinks. He gives her his breath, every last one. And in return she takes his boxers, his flip flops and sun glasses and even the shorts off his body. Sal is left a ghost of himself, pale in the naked sun, whispering to eternity, "Marybeth...why...", but the sand phantom doesn't answer. Her only words are the trickle of sand grains on his bare chest.

