

*Acclaim for* **MATT BELL'S**

## **HOW THE BROKEN LEAD THE BLIND**

“These stories are at once big-hearted and humorous, containing many surprising truths. The writing is measured and penetrating, precise but with warmth. Matt Bell is a maker of fine fictions.”

—William Walsh, author of *Without Wax*  
and *Questionstruck*

“There is an insistent rhythm in everything Matt Bell writes. Not the thudding hammer blows of fraudulent drama, not the drip of leaking satire, certainly not the jolly click and tap of a story that could be—ought to have been—texted. It’s gentle and enormously powerful: the beating of a heart. It’s hard not to think of Bell’s work as a living, breathing thing—which is in fact what it is, holding us in its ebb and flow, consoling and inspiring us the way real, true art always has and always will.”

—Gary Amdahl, author of *Visigoth* and *I am Death*

“*How the Broken Lead the Blind* punctures relationships, bleeds the surreal, threads gut-punches through needles. An absolutely brilliant read.”

—J. A. Tyler, author of *The Girl in the Black Sweater*

“Matt Bell has an uncanny ability to cut to our inner needs, our fears and desires, our wishes to be both with another, yet to be alone at the same time. The stories within *How the Broken Lead the Blind* will reel you in sentence to wonderful sentence, and leave you wanting more.”

—Dan Wickett, Director of Dzanc Books,  
founder of Emerging Writers Network

“Matt Bell delivers ten inventive stories rich in language, ideas and catharsis that will leave you hungering for his next collection.”

—Steven McDermott, editor of *Storyglossia*,  
author of *Winter of Different Directions*

“Matt Bell can do what so many fiction writers can't: Matt Bell can make anything happen.”

—Michael Kimball, author of *Dear Everybody*  
and *The Way the Family Got Away*

“Matt Bell’s short-short stories gush with intricate details of love, loss, and sorrow. Each story holds a miracle waiting to be unearthed, as if this young writer was in all our lives, recording those subtle, key moments that pass quietly but speak to us forever. He is a writer with so much to say, but like with those moments, he understands they don’t have to be loud, or long, to bestow their greatest impact.”

—Michael Czyżniejewski, author of  
*Elephants in Our Bedroom*

“Like a perfect rock album, Matt Bell’s *How the Broken Lead the Blind* both celebrates and explodes the form. The form here is flash fiction, and while there may be others who are doing it as well, there is certainly nobody better than Bell. Like the songs on *Sgt. Pepper* or *Ode-lay* or *Paul’s Boutique* or [insert name of genre-busting, wildly inventive and eminently satisfying album here], each of these stories offers a jump-cut into the pain, fear, hope, joy, and questions of everyday life. Which is to say, Matt Bell does in 500 or 1,000 words what it takes most writers—if they’re lucky, talented, innovative, and soulful—about five times the space to accomplish.”

—Dave Housley, author of *Ryan Seacrest is Famous*



## **Willows Wept Press**

Matt Bell's *How the Broken Lead the Blind* (2009)

Scott Garson's *Vercingetorix* (2009)

Pedro Ponce's *Alien Autopsy* (2010)



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Matt Bell

## WILLOWS WEPT PRESS

<http://willowsweptpress.blogspot.com>

How the Broken Lead the Blind

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Matt Bell



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# **Ten Scenes from a Movie Called Mercy**

IT BEGINS with a man walking toward you from the far end of a long hallway, from the end of a courtyard between two symmetrical buildings, from the doorway of a country home and down a packed dirt driveway. You are stationary and he is moving, and although the distances between you are great, they are not infinite. Two objects in motion moving down the length of a line cannot remain separated forever. Sooner or later they must crash into each other, and, afterwards, whatever happens next will happen.

## II

A little girl in a sundress pirouettes on a coffee table, her curly red hair encircled in a costume tiara. Her expression is concentration, the grimly pressed lips of a trapeze artist. She spins around and around, and when she finally stops she is so dizzy she doesn't immediately notice the shadow moving closer, a human form with a sharp shard of darkness clenched in its left hand. The light coming through the window suggests sunrise, sunset, the dusk or the dawn. It suggests choices and borders and the parting of veils between one world and another. The girl sees the shadow's owner, and she begins to scream, a one-note blast before the scene ends.

## III

Forever will not be solved with algebra but with geometry, not with ideas but with things. Even an infinity symbol can be traversed by a single line drawn correctly. Even the scratchiest record can't skip forever, even the moldiest peach can only decay for so long. Eventually, there is an end to discord, a return to either harmony or silence. After

the end credits, there will still be the clatter of film against reel, of a machine waiting to be turned off. There will still be the need for agency, for someone to help bring everything to a satisfying finale.

#### IV

No one is holding her under the water, not anymore, but still she lies there on the river bottom. She blinks her eyes but does not close them. The faces of fishes will be the last things she will ever see, their shiny eyes reflective as they float by her. Their lips purse and un-purse wordlessly. She wonders what it would be like to have gills, but not for very long. She curls onto her side, turns away from the sunshine slicing through the surface of the river. Underwater, everything is the same color, and what looked like a riverbed of pebbles from the shore turns out to be layers of baby teeth, their cavities worn white again by the flow of water unceasing.

#### V

The man again, in a series of jump cuts. The man halfway down the hallway. The man halfway

across the courtyard. The man halfway down the driveway. The human eye perceives thirty frames a second, so if you only get a one-frame close-up of his face, it is too fast to register anywhere but in your subconscious. When you immediately start sweating, you will not be able to tell yourself why. Goosebumps. These theatres are always so cold.

## VI

A fork, a knife, a spoon on a white linen tablecloth. An apple on a fine china plate. There is a bite missing, the meat of the apple turned brown in the indent. The voice of a waitress or a mother, asking, Are you done with that? Repeating herself repeatedly. Are you done with that? Are you? Are you done? When you're done with it, you have to throw it away.

## VII

Off camera, pray for editing, for the rearrangement of film. The editor could remove the first scene, just edit it out. With a pair of scissors, he could let the second scene tumble to the cutting room floor in a clatter of 8mm frames. Cellulose nitrate is highly

flammable, so pray for the fourth scene to be cut short by fire. Pray to keep her safe from the person who wants to hurt her. Take the next scene, throw it away. Resist denouement, resist the solving of mysteries and the revealing of truths, because it is in these things that you may be judged.

## VIII

Guilt is a loop of footage repeated ad infinitum: He's here. In the hallway and the courtyard and at the end of the driveway, he's here. The man's face is finally up in your face, and although film captures only sight and sound you know exactly how his breath smells, like the aftertaste of white pills manufactured in white factories then distributed by doctors in white coats who promised they would help. The man wears a mask of mirrors. Reflection: a lit cigarette between coarse-stubbled lips, a tiny fire bobbing back and forth. The smoker rocks himself, consoles or controls himself. He has urges. He has needs. They are not necessarily all the ones the audience suspects, but some of them probably are.

## IX

Hiding your face from the mirror man will not stop reflection from turning into recognition. You know what you saw, what you did, what you continue to see and do in all-too-frequent flashbacks. The problem with this film isn't what you see, but what you don't. Your flaws are the product of another's too-small imagination, a city limits delineated by bias and experience. The director is your only hope, his edits your only chance for revision. He has set himself up to be your savior, if only you'll ask him. If only you'll beg. Beg, I beg of you, beg. For her sake and yours.

## X

To begin, a new film: A little girl in a sundress pirouettes on a coffee table, her curly red hair encircled in a costume tiara. Her expression is concentration, the grimly pressed lips of a trapeze artist. She spins around and around, and when she finally stops she is so dizzy she doesn't immediately notice the shadow moving closer, a human form with a sharp shard of darkness clenched in its left hand. The

light coming through the window suggests sunrise, sunset, the dusk or the dawn. It suggests choices and borders and the parting of veils between one world and another. The camera lingers long enough that when the girl looks up, the shadow is gone. She sits on the edge of the table, flushed and exhausted. Her little legs dangle over the edge, her toes just barely off the floor. She smiles and waves, and when she is ready she stands up to repeat her dance all over again. The only thing that captures her is the camera, the film preserving her exactly as she is in that moment. This is as safe as mere cameras can keep her.



# **How the Broken Lead the Blind Until They Both Become Something Else Entirely**

THE BLIND WOMAN cannot help spoiling her seeing eye dog, so one day as they step out of her building and onto the sidewalk, she realizes the dog has forgotten its training. She ruined her first set of eyes with night reading and a refusal to get glasses and now she has ruined her second with the indiscriminate dispensation of treats. The dog barks loudly, which it's not supposed to do, then steers her erratically into a collision course with a man coming the other way on the crowded sidewalk. The man excuses himself as he ducks to the left and continues on, but the blind woman knows

it is she who should have asked forgiveness. The blind woman wonders if she can return the dog or if it would be like the time she tried to return a sweat-stained dress by claiming it was that way when she bought it. The dog barks again, giving a quick tug at its leash. The woman does not complain at the dog's bad behavior because she knows she is the one who caused it. Her blindness is her own fault, both the first time and now again that she's ruined the seeing eye dog. The next time the dog barks the woman decides to bark back. The sound of her voice mimicking the dog's makes her laugh, even as her face burns because she realizes people are looking at her. She cannot see them, of course, but how could they not be staring? When the dog pulls hard at the leash, she does not stop him. Instead, the blind woman starts to run behind the dog, tethered to him by the short leash. She has not run in years, since before she lost her vision. People yell at the dog, at her. A man tries to help her stop the dog, but, together, the woman and the dog escape his grasp. They move faster, as fast as they can on the woman's newfound running legs.

She realizes that they will eventually crash, that this exhilarating movement is temporary. Freed to do anything, the woman decides that she and the dog will become the causers of crashes, great accidental artists whose canvas is the street, whose paint is their own bodies, whose masterpieces are being created right now, starting with this thing that happens suddenly, the first of many crashes yet to come.



## Once She'd Been a Brunette

THEY SHAVE their hair together, before she even starts to lose hers. It's to show how much I support you, he says, and she appreciates the gesture even as she suspects their twin bald heads will only add to the public stares she fears more than anything. It isn't enough. Nothing is. After a year of treatment she's no closer to health, just weaker and sicker than when she started. She tells him he's done enough, that he can grow his hair back anytime he wants. He smiles and kisses her forehead, saying, Not until you're better. Not until you're safe.

They always fall asleep with him spooning her

from behind, then move apart during the night. She often wakes up first and moves closer again, hovering over his sleeping body, her hands gentle as hummingbirds as they descend upon his scalp and its shadow of stubble. She touches the soft bristles destined for his razor and wonders what it would be like to have hair again. She touches his hair with both hands and for just one moment she swears she can feel it flourishing, can feel the new cells pushing through the skin, like a springtime she'll never see.

## Player Piano

MY WIFE AND I were blessed all right. We had everything. Really, we did. Good jobs and a great home, a loving family, plus all the creature comforts and material possessions a person could want. My wife, she still looked as pretty as the day I met her, and even at my age I was healthy and had a full head of hair. On top of all her other fine qualities, my wife was a virtuoso musician. One day, she regretfully reported that our vintage piano needed tuning. In fact, she claimed it had always been the slightest bit out of tune and now she was finally tired of just living with it.

The helpful guy I am, I immediately called the repairman, who sensed my urgency and came right over. I complimented him on his speed, to which he replied quite honestly, “I’m having trouble getting started in this business, so I was hoping you’d give me some referrals if you’re happy with my service.” I nodded and said I would, then showed him to the piano. He opened it and looked inside, poking around with his fingers and tools. Finally he sat down on the bench and wiped his brow, then handed me a rolled-up piece of yellowed paper.

“What’s this?” I asked.

“I’ve seen this before,” he said. “Someone who owned this piano before you stuck a powerful, secret prayer in there.”

“A prayer? That’s why the piano was out of tune?”

The repairman nodded. “It was hidden inside. That’s why you’ve been so happy your whole life. You’ve been blessed with all sorts of good things because of that one prayer.”

“We really have been. We always say that.” I shook my head and laughed. “That’s just wonderful.”

“Not really,” replied the repairman. “It’s all over now. Prayers only work if they’re secret. Now that you know, you’re finally on your own. No more easy help from above.”

The repairman handed me a very reasonable bill then showed himself out, and although he had indeed fixed our piano I knew I’d never give him a referral. As for us, we’ve lived in terror ever since.



# **This Showroom Filled with Fabulous Prizes**

LIKE EVERY OTHER NIGHT, he orders a Diet Coke and sits at the end of the bar alone. It's not the kind of place he wants to keep going to but he doesn't know anywhere else, and anyway it's too early to head home to the small apartment over his dad's repair shop. The people in the bar aren't his friends—this isn't the bar where he used to drink—so he just sips his soda and listens to the jukebox and stares at the incomprehensible reruns of game shows playing on the television mounted above the shelves of liquor.

The woman who sits beside him has a face full

of cigarette smoke and lips wet with easy answers. He's seen her in here before with a man, a guy with a temper twice his size. He doesn't look at her, just keeps his eyes fixed on the show, where people are busy turning their worn-out educations into something worth taking back home.

She says, "You don't drink anymore, but you used to," and he nods without looking. She says, "Are you quit for good?"

He thinks for a moment, says, "I'm trying to be."

The woman reaches over and touches his forearm with fingers still cold from the icy glass of her whiskey sour. Without moving her hand, she says, "Sooner or later, I'm going to need to do something like that." Drains her drink. He turns to look at her, then scans the bar for her man. She smiles at him like a mistake. It's an expression he knows what to do with. He smiles back, then returns to the television.

Onscreen, a contestant has just won something that makes her happy enough that she's jumping up and down and clapping her hands. Her smile is

so wide as her family comes running onto the stage. Everything happens too fast. Without volume, it's impossible to tell what they're saying, but still he gets the idea.



# The Present

THE MORNING of our anniversary, Emily handed me a present wrapped in purple and gold. I tore away the wrapping to reveal a gift box filled with thin, crinkly tissue paper. Inside was Emily's left hand, cut cleanly at the wrist. Her fingers curled inward, each nail polished red and filed immaculately. I looked up and saw that she was bleeding, staining the sleeve of her pink fleece robe.

I asked, "Have you been bleeding this whole time? Why didn't you say something?"

Emily said, "I didn't want to ruin the surprise."

I nodded, appreciative. I liked surprises. "What

am I supposed to do with it?" I asked.

"Anything you want," she said.

I said, "I think I'll use it as an ashtray. Your palm really is the perfect shape for one."

Emily wasn't pleased, certainly not then, and not later, either, when she returned from the hospital and I showed it to her full of ashes and spent cigarettes, her hand not spilling even a single gray flake.

# The Trophy Wife

YOU BUY HER a new trophy every six months, to mark the anniversary of your first time together. It started out as a joke, but it's been a long time since you last thought it was funny, and you tell yourself that this time needs to be the last time.

Afterwards, while you're still tangled together in the motel bed, you tell her that something's got to change, that she can't pretend to be gone bowling forever.

You say, I want you to make a decision already, but she just laughs.

She says, If I keep winning like this, I can do

whatever I want, then snuggles closer and turns on the television so the two of you can watch the late show together before she gets dressed and drives home. Colonial Lanes closes at one in the morning, so you get her for all of Leno and half of Conan and then he gets her for all the days between now and next Thursday.

After she leaves, you lie back down in the bed. You've already paid for the whole night and there's no point in driving drunk. Trying to sleep, you picture her at home, placing her newest trophy beside the others, like a chronology of gaudy alibis.

The fake gold figurines atop her trophies, they're all poised mid-stride, the arm with the ball flung back, gathering momentum. Each statuette is frozen between one motion and the next, a pose that tells you nothing. It is impossible to know what will happen next when you see only the middle of a story. This is the moment right before victory becomes failure, or when a sure strike turns into a gutter ball. You wonder if she'll ever leave him, and what will happen if she does. Once, when she was still a real bowler, she told you that there are

four hundred and fifty-nine combinations of possible splits. She said, It's hard to pick up after a split but not impossible. Tonight, you wish you knew for sure.



## Her Ennead

HER BABY IS A JOKE. It's too small to be taken seriously, just a tiny bundle of cells dividing. For another week or two, it will still be smaller than the benign tumor she had removed from her breast two years ago, a realization that leads to touching the place where the lump once was whenever she's alone. She jokes about this to her friends, who don't find it funny. She doesn't really either, but she can't stop herself from sharing. About her tumor-sized baby, which just keeps growing and growing and growing, taking over her body. This time, no one wants her to stop it or get rid of it. This time, people

say congratulations and hug her instead of pretending she's contagious, instead of forgetting her number until they hear she's better. Just like before, she's only angry because everyone assumes they already know exactly how she feels about the things that happen to her. She is careful to keep her true feelings to herself, to see that just like with the tumor, there is much that she could lose.

Her baby is a seed, just barely planted but already pushing roots through its waxy coat, searching for purchase inside her. She pictures it flowering but knows it'll be years and years before her baby is old enough for flowers, for seeds of its own. Her doctor emphasizes nutrition, suggests she drink six to eight glasses of water every day. She doesn't respond, doesn't tell him how many more she's already drinking. At home, she holds her face under the faucet, her throat pried open to swallow all the water she can. When she stands, her face and neck and shirt are soaked through, but it's still not enough. She puts her lips back to the flowing water and drinks as deeply as she can, as deeply as she knows she must.

Her baby is a stone, and she wonders, How can I love a stone? It is cool and dark, something formed not in an instant—as she always assumed her baby would be—but instead over an age, an epoch. Everything about her pregnancy feels slower than she'd imagined it would. She pictures her stone skipping across the hidden darkness of a lake, each point of contact a ripple expanding, then disappearing. She practices skipping stones herself while she waits for the baby to come, transforming every ditch and puddle and pond and lake into a microcosm, a point of departure, a possible place where one day she will have to just let go.

Her baby is a thunderstorm. It is a bundle of negatively and positively charged ions about to interact violently. It is a hurricane or a monsoon or a tsunami, but she doesn't know which, doesn't know how to tell the difference. She feels it churning inside, growing stronger with each revolution. If her water breaks now while this baby is inside her, it will not be covered by her homeowner's insurance. The National Guard will arrive to try and contain her

baby, but they will not be enough. Their levees will not hold. What happens after the baby comes will be different than what happened before. Whole countries she once knew will be swept away, their inhabitants scattered and replaced by new citizens, by other mothers and other children she has not yet met.

Her baby is a bird, mottled with gray and brown feathers that will only last as long as its infancy. Its mouth is open wide, waiting expectantly. Sometimes when she lies still in her quiet apartment, she can hear cawing from her round belly. She has cravings, contemplates eating quarters, little bits of tin foil, even a pair of silver earrings. She hopes her baby is building a beautiful nest inside of her. She wants to give it everything it needs so that it might never leave. Nest as a lie, as false hope. Her baby is a bird of prey, something she has never been this close to before. All those talons. All that beak. It hooks her, devours her. They're both so hungry. She eats and eats. Before this, she never knew birds had tongues.

Her baby is a knife. A dagger. A broadsword, sharp and terrible. Her baby is a dangerous thing and she knows that if she isn't careful then one day it will hurt her, hurt others. When it kicks, she feels its edges pressed against the walls of its sheath, drawing more blood in a sea of blood. She is careful when she walks not to bump into things, not to put herself in harm's way. She wonders what it will feel like to push it from her body, to have the doctor tug her baby out of her as from a stone.

Her baby is a furred thing, alternately bristled and then soft. She hopes it isn't shedding, wonders how she'll ever get all that hair out of her if it is. She searches online for images of badgers and then wolverines, looking for something to recognize in their faces. She types the words *creatures that burrow*, then adds a question mark and tries again. The baby is so warm inside her, curled in on itself. Like her, it waits for winter to end, for a day when all the breath it's been holding can finally be expelled like a dank heat fogging the air of a still too cold morning. Sometimes, when the baby rolls over and

makes itself known, she can almost smell it.

Now the water breaking. Now the dilation of the cervix. Now the first real contraction, more potent than any of the false warnings she experienced before. Now the worry that this is too early, that she hasn't learned yet what her baby is supposed to be. Now the lack of thought and the loss of discernable time. Now the pain, which is sharp and dull and fast and slow, which is both waves and particles at the same time. Now the hurry, the burst into motion after the near year of waiting. Now the push, the pushing, the rushing stretch of her suddenly elastic body expanding to do this thing, to give birth to this baby. Now the joke, the seed, the stone, the storm, the bird, the sword. Now the tiny mammal, warm-blooded and hot and yes, now the head covered in hair. Now the shoulders, now the torso and the arms. Now the hipbones and the thighs and the knees and the feet. Now the first breath. Now the eyes opening. Now the cry, calling out to her like *déjà vu*, like the recognition of someone from a dream.

Now the baby.

Now the baby.

Now the baby, an event repeating for the rest of her life.

Her baby is a boy. Her baby is a girl. Her baby is potential energy changing to kinetic, is a person gaining momentum. Her baby is a possibility, or, rather, a string of possibilities and potentialities stretching forward from her toward something still unknowable. With the baby in her arms, she smiles. She coos. She tells her baby that it can be whatever it wants to be. She tells her baby that no matter what it turns out to be, she will always recognize it when it comes back to her. There is no shape that could hide her baby from her, no form that would make her turn her back on it. She says this like a promise, swears it like she can make it true, like it's just that easy. Some days, no matter what she says, her baby cries and cries and cries.



## **An End to Efficient Vehicles**

IN THE SKY, invisible microwaves crisscross like jet trails, undetectable to us but disorienting to migrating birds, rearranging the Vs of geese into characters from new, unknowable alphabets. I point, and you follow my finger as we try together to read their messages. The V is an efficient vehicle, you say, its shape doubling the potential range of the geese. I wonder if their new letters will be any better, or if all that will happen is that they will fall frightened from the sky, unable to tell their crashing families that they love them, the way I want to tell you and know I'll never be able to again. Instead, we will

move cautiously around each other, interference rendering impossible our old structures, even as we become unable or unwilling to find the new shapes that might save us. I scream something, words you might never hear or understand, and then I too am plummeting, racing you headfirst to the bottom.

## **Excerpt from Volume H-Hn: Hair Boxes**

HAIR BOXES were not discovered until late in the twentieth century, when they were developed as a response to the saturation of beauty-based advertising and/or the disappearance of understandable social rituals. The boxes themselves are most often created from scratch, the maker sensing that store-bought containers are inappropriate to his need. This is not to suggest, of course, that the maker realizes what he is going to do with the box nor why he must build one. Despite this uncertainty, the maker still manages to assemble a receptacle roughly the size of a shoe box, most commonly out

of wood but sometimes from metal or plastic. It is not until the box is finished that the maker decides to remove his own hair. Once the maker is shaved (sometimes he shaves just the head, other times the whole body must be shaved), he puts the hair into the box. Just as the idea of shaving was caused by the completed box, the box full of hair causes the idea of the fire to enter the maker's mind. The maker will resist the urge because he believes that the flames will destroy both the hair box and its contents and if so, then what was the point of the making and the shaving? In the end, the urge always proves too strong for the maker to resist.

The fire does not consume the box or the hair, but does smell terrible. The maker's friends and neighbors complain loudly. Forgetting their own hair boxes, they pity the maker and wrinkle their noses at his task. Despite their worries and complaints, the maker will not be turned aside. Once a hair box has reached this stage, it is nearly impossible to prevent its completion.

Inside the box, the burnt hair is brittle now. It must be handled with care or else it will turn to

dust and ash. The maker does not touch it. It is too risky to do anything but seal the hair box and send it to the receiver.

The maker did not know who the receiver would be when he began the box, but by the time he is finished all has become clear. There is only one receiver for each maker and so it is eventually obvious who he must send the box to. This is how the maker becomes the sender. Any person can be a sender or a receiver, but no one is ever both at the same time. If the first sending should go wrong and a second hair box be desired, it is unlikely that the conditions of the first will be repeatable. Once a maker becomes a sender, it is almost always impossible to return to the simpler state.

The modern postal service is efficient, so it can be safely assumed that the hair box will be delivered to the receiver before the smell has even left the maker's own home. This is how the maker and the receiver are connected: by the scent of burnt hair, the feel of ashen clippings, the craftsmanship of a carpenter compelled not by aesthetics or artistry but by the need to communicate loss, sacrifice,

and the ephemeral nature of appearance. The hair box symbolizes the giving of a gift that need not be given, the reception of a present one did not ask for or expect. Compulsion leads to connection leads to catharsis. This is how the sender tells the receiver that he loves her. Eventually she starts building her own box. She touches the strands of her hair, wondering who she will be when they are no longer there. Her hair box is still a secret her hands are keeping, her receiver a figment of her heart's imagination. One day soon, she will greet this other not with a handshake or an embrace but with a burnt offering of her own, given freely so that he might know how she really feels. This is how the hair box travels from one person to the next, touching us one at a time, until finally all of us are healed.

## About the Author

MATT BELL lives in Ann Arbor, MI, with his wife Jessica, where he is working on his first novel. His fiction has appeared in magazines such as *Meridian*, *Barrelhouse*, *Caketrain*, *Monkeybicycle*, and *Keyhole*. He was the winner of the 2008 Million Writers Award and has had his work reprinted in the *Best American Fantasy* anthology series. He can be found online at [www.mdbell.com](http://www.mdbell.com).

