

The Dead
by Michael Gray

Portsmouth Harbor, UK

Waiting for the South West Train, I wander the platform and peer into the track well. A crow rots by the shunt, its clean-picked ribcage exposed like the spars of spinnakers rippling in the crisp English Channel wind. A cold one, like the four travelers, sitting on the bench, readjusting sleeping bag straps and staring at concrete. Not the bird clutching a cigarette in stiff claws. The travelers did not leave their wrinkled maps and gaze into the crow's eye-holes. In a few hours, the boats in beach muck rise with the ebb tide, and the train, soon, with the travelers, will close its doors for Waterloo station.

Cataldo, Idaho

It is Pilgrimage. We tread a road whose name I do not remember. Something crushed a turtle's shell, and perhaps its narrow head. We can do nothing. It seems best to let it hide in long, dry grass, away from cringing girls who squeal, turn their heads, or moan. They talk of other things. I take a few pictures, as in Portsmouth, and see the way the cars weave their plated bodies on this stretch of road and do not stop.