Francine Witte

**Chess Story**

One night, over at the Tempest Bar, Smith turns into a chess piece. And not a lowly pawn, like his mother would have thought, but a full-on, crown-bearing king.

Why this has happened, he isn’t sure. One theory is the tequila shots. But it’s not enough like that. He is oddly clear-headed. Wise even.

In the mirror, behind the bar, Smith is polished ivory, lustrous in the little light. In the mirror, he can see the ebony bishop. He can only imagine the trouble *that’s* going to cause.

The bishop is hanging around the queen, *his* queen if only he would believe it. She is directly in front of him. To be certain, Smith could knock the crap out of the bishop, and together he and his queen could leave this board forever to live in some non-chess corner of the world.

But who is he kidding? In his head, he may be wise, but he is still pawnthinking. The bishop knows it, Smith’s mother knows it. Even the tequila knows it.

He gives up and turns back into his human self, a blob at the bar, staring into the blue-shadowed eye of Rebecca, a most unqueenly hooker, whose entire being seems to be waiting to see what move Smith is going to make next.