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"MAKING SENSE OF
SACRAMENTO"
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FLASH FICTION

★ **HONORABLE MENTION**

PERRIE J.

16, student, Sacramento

Heat blankets the night. Mosquitoes buzz aimlessly, searching for a meal. She lies on the pavement of a new driveway of an old house, eyes searching for a star. The sky is bright with clouds and pollution. The girl sighs into the darkness. The damp air presses close around her.

There. Something twinkles, lonely in the ashy atmosphere. A star, maybe. It blinks past, red and white. Just another airplane, passing by.

A cold Delta breeze raises goosebumps on the girl's legs. Sacramento summer nights are worth the star-searching, she thinks.

REID ANDERSON

31, case worker, Sacramento

There aren't too many people who aspire to end up at a tent on Ahern.

I'm one of the lucky few.

I travel through turmoil, shuffled through Stockton, fight through Fruitridge and deal with Del Paso. I roll through Railroad and persevere Piss Alley.

I see needles, tents, bottles and pimps. Wheelchairs, canes, walkers and stints. A man screams. A child bawls. Dogs fight. A woman yowls. Desperation is everywhere.

My lofty journey to the epitome of the gutter is just the beginning. I know there is a better ending.

This is the unseen office of the social worker.



★
★
★
WINNER

ROBERT LURVEY

35, physician, Sacramento

"You're better than your photos online," Hellen said.

"Thanks?" the boy replied.

"Come to Der Biergarten often?"

"If someone takes me."

"You've the most expressive eyes."

"Quite the leap in tone?"

"Perhaps."

"Can I go home with you?"

"That's a leap! Why?"

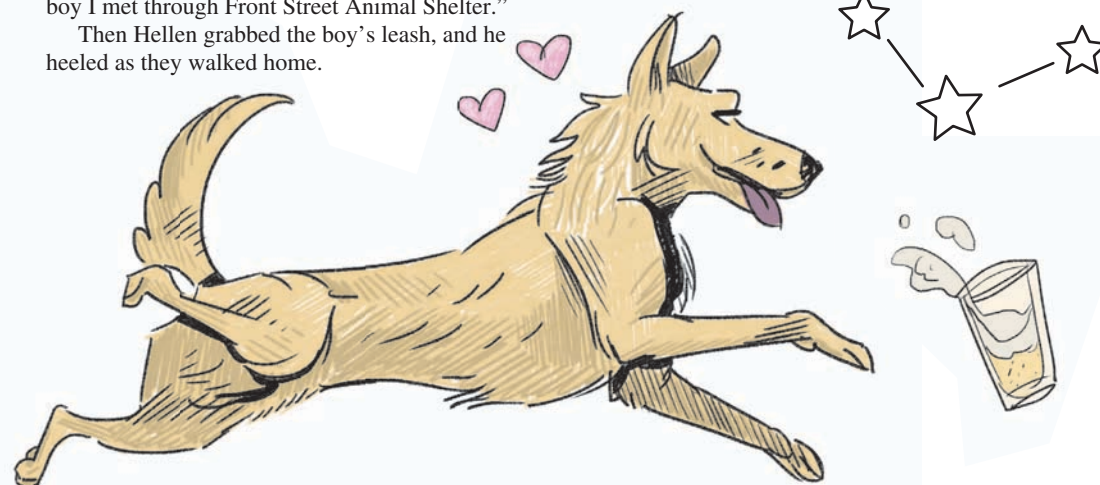
"Because I'm loyal and a protector."

"Former is necessary, but insufficient; the latter is complex."

"They're traits in my genes. I also talk. You want more?!"

"I guess that's all I could ask from a good boy I met through Front Street Animal Shelter."

Then Hellen grabbed the boy's leash, and he heeled as they walked home.



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