The Fleas
by Mat Caceres

My house is infested with fleas. I call the exterminator. He speaks with a French accent. Later I learn his name is Maurice. That’s his mother’s name. She died in the Great War; she was a torpedo. I ask why they’re going crazy. He says the heat from my dancing and heavy breathing disturbs them. They remain dormant until I step over them. I ask him if I need to leave during the killing. He says no. I read the paper. He reads my obituary. He does my crossword. I walk out the house. Then back in. Maurice is gone. He left a note on my nightstand: “I saw you at the funeral for the color blue.” I smell the house. The chemicals reassure me. I lie down but feel my legs tingling. It’s the fleas! I get up and escort them out. They’re wearing old straw hats and wedding gowns. They’re all dancing, but they don’t know how.

The Red Ship Takes It All
by Mat Caceres

I look out my window, into the backyard, to see an empty fjord. It houses nothing nor does it ever want to. I don’t ever go back there, but it looks nice enough to leave alone. I lay my head back down on my pillow, which is filled with boysenberries, and they’re bleeding through to my cheeks. I look back to the fjord and see my old family in it, calm and unmoving like corpsed roots. I want to tell them they can’t do that. I want to tell them it’s not allowed. I try to open the window but it won’t budge. My fingers keep slipping. It’s nailed shut. I cut my fingernails too short. If only I had a hammer. It’s there, buried in the flowerpot on the windowsill. I drop it and it falls between the bed and the wall, into the glaring dark, never to be seen again. I can’t break the window anyway: father won’t let me. He’ll be upset. We’re supposed to get some rest for the ballgame in the morning. I look at the clock. The hands of the clock are spoons. It says Those Were the Days. I stab it with an ice pick. I look back to my family. The window is foggy. I try to wipe it. It isn’t there anymore. My hand goes through. My family isn’t looking at me. They’re smiling. They’re ringing round the rosie. The fjord is now full. I see a captainless red ship. My family is boarding. I wave goodbye. I take a deep breath and blow. It’s sailing away, taking the water with it.