

# Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal

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Volume 10 | Issue 2

Article 17

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January 2011

## Katherine the Great

Mark Neely

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### Recommended Citation

Neely, Mark (2011) "Katherine the Great," *Harpur Palate: a Literary Journal*: Vol. 10: Iss. 2, Article 17.  
Available at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/harpurpalate/vol10/iss2/17>

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## Neely: Katherine the Great

### KATHERINE THE GREAT

Mark Neely

She towered between two crooked geezers  
like an Egyptian statue perched on a garbage heap,

and though in all my life I'd only seen her back,  
that was enough. The Mill spun like a carousel,

blaring "Sympathy for the Devil."  
Lorenzo couldn't help himself.

"Your friend didn't show?" he said,  
resting a hand on the back of her barstool.

Katherine said (this was good), "Maybe he just did,"  
and walked her martini to our table without a drip.

We talked about the Pixies, eighties movies,  
our childhood leaps off Skinner's bridge

into Snake River, our favorite books, the risks  
we took, the bus stops and cruddy basements

where we first kissed—until the two of them  
ran out of innuendo and cut

right to the point. Katherine touched  
Lorenzo's cheek like a museumgoer

brushing the skin of a strange dinosaur.  
"You can call me Kate," she said.

But Lorenzo would always prefer *Katherine the Great*.  
Then like any ride the night began to slow.

A moon behind black chariots, Katherine  
tapped her ring on Lorenzo's glass, and rose.