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Miller,A 2014, Thief, Mascara literary review, vol. 16, pp. 1-1.

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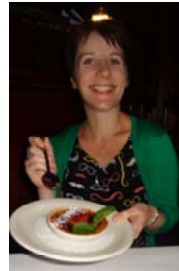
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Alyson Miller

OCTOBER 14, 2014 / MASCARA / 0 COMMENTS

Alyson Miller teaches literary studies at Deakin University, Geelong. Her short stories and prose poems have appeared in both national and international publications. Her collection of prose poems, *Dream Animals*, is forthcoming with Dancing Girl Press.



Thief

He watches them sleep, holding his breath before the dead weight of their night bodies, as though hunting. He scans her face the hardest, notes the shadows that turn white skin into a horror mask of sunken eyes and wet teeth, the pink tip of tongue, warm, sour air. An animal face, with its hints of bone and darkness. Against her belly, the tight ball of a cat, ears twitching with rabbit visions and the minutiae of sounds only heard in those curious hours before light. He takes a pillow and holds it firm to her mouth and nose; feels only a single kick of protest before the smell of earth and ammonia. He drops the cat into a canvas bag and parcels it under his arm, gently squeezing its soft gut against his ribs. He leaves the room humming, the vibrations filling his ears and throat with the melody of underwater dreams.

#Issue 16 ~ October 2014

International Creative Writing Summer School

