

Long Way To Riker
Paige Pagan

We would walk
the mile from the bus stop to where he was,
the long gray buildings
where the fog ended. The whistling
winds caused the buildings
to creak, but the barred windows always remained still.

I only saw him through squinted
eyes. To him, the blur of the old,
scratched window skewed my vision.
I stood on the outside and him on the inside, separated
by the sedentary window. With one hand holding
the cold telephone to my inattentive ear
and the other pressed against the division between us,
I prepared for our routine goodbye.

His hand would rise to meet mine
where they should have touched.
He always ended the visit with an “I love you.”

I would hang up the telephone,
drop my hand,
and turn to walk away,
whisper, “I love you”
to the solemn air that could not reach his ears.