



Southern Voices

1994



# Southern Voices

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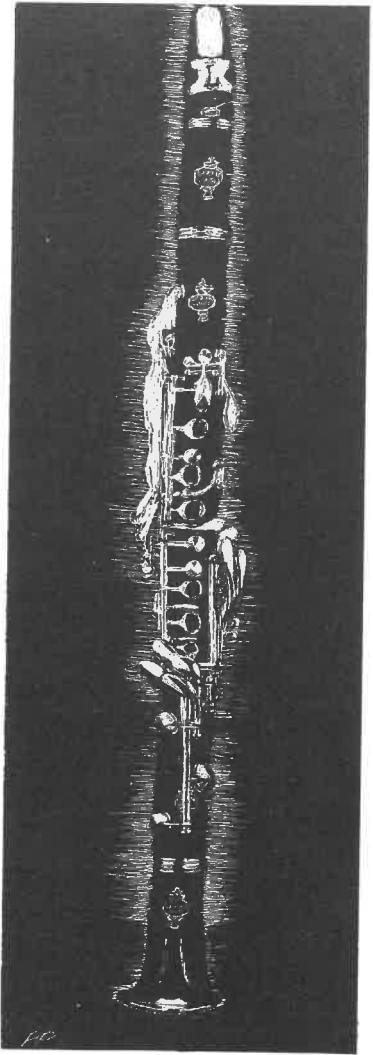
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Scratchboard

Rhoda Holman

## Rooms



Inspiration, and the condensation on my coke can,  
The Southern Satan exhales his humid breath on my cheek.  
I remember a room in an old building, with a  
stove that reminds one of molding brussel sprouts,  
and where the harsh fluorescent lights  
aren't quite harsh enough to illuminate the nights  
of Downtown Atlanta.

It's a carpet stained with paint and soot,  
a lovely carpet, a lovely room,  
a tinted window, with the tint peeling off  
letting the sudden glare of a Southern Sun  
scream into the eyes of late wakers.  
A musty room, of memories, and of mellowness.  
It's a tired niceness. Where the doors that you must walk through  
peel paint, but aren't important, because they are, after all,  
just doors.

The faint smell of burned incense, and on the floor  
are piles of clothes, lying like tossed salad,  
by the frame of the bed. (I pulled the mattress off)  
But that doesn't matter either, because it is just a room,  
A room where the purpose of my life forgot to be purposeful,  
and where I could watch people from my window.  
the men and women sipping at Cappucino in the cafes  
across the street.  
and wonder how people so close to me wouldn't care,  
and wouldn't know if I suddenly ceased to exist.  
and I realize all of the petty problems  
that I cried over, passionately, in the dark  
are nothing in my life, nothing, they belong  
to me, and are on the same level  
as the grape juice stains on my paint shirt.  
Which I think, actually, look just fine where they are.

Scratchboard Preston Parrott

the table proudly squatting in a corner, old with carved memories,  
the fresh tear,  
like an unhealed cut.  
My name which, though new, belongs, and has always been there,  
even though I just carved it today, with a rusty compass.  
The mashed potatoes on the oven are thick in the air  
as I people-watch,  
from the room, in Downtown Atlanta, on a Tuesday.

Julia Fair  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest

## Coal on a Chimney Sweep

The dirt, the smoke, the soot, the coal  
*Electrostatic forces bind me to this guy*  
I'm covered, I'm smothered  
*He smells, he scratches, he sweats*  
I hate this  
*What a dope*  
I hate this, I hate this, I hate this  
*He brushes me off the walls*  
I hate my master  
*But not off of him*  
I hate him, I hate him, I hate him  
*I'll cover him, smother him*  
The chimney, the smoke, the coal  
*Force him to respect me*  
it's nasty, it's on me  
*Without me, he'd have no job*  
I can't get it off.  
*And the economy would collapse*  
It hurts to breathe  
*I'll slowly choke him to death*  
I can't stop coughing  
*My own wispy way*  
It hurts, it hurts, it hurts.  
*I'll sit in his lungs*  
I can't stand the coal  
*And my buddies will join me*  
I don't want to crawl back up there.  
*To make him pass out*  
I can't stand the height  
*I'll bring him the darkness*  
I can't stand the darkness  
I hate this crap.

Kohl Gill & Scott Poore

## [ I Am ]

naked  
and  
bleeding  
hounded by my  
followers  
turned lovers  
turned  
shouting idiots  
unaware of what they do;  
god forgive them;  
soft wind blowing  
the whimpers of the men behind me, with the dice  
falling below me, and the grass swaying  
writhing  
and  
waiting,  
just as i  
wait;  
soft gloom  
descending,  
shadow from  
the heavens  
falling falling  
like a shroud;  
bitter taste of myrrh  
burning in my  
mouth  
and my  
heart  
slowing,  
waiting for water;  
forgive them  
father  
they  
know  
not  
what  
i  
am

Drew Pruett

## Waffle House

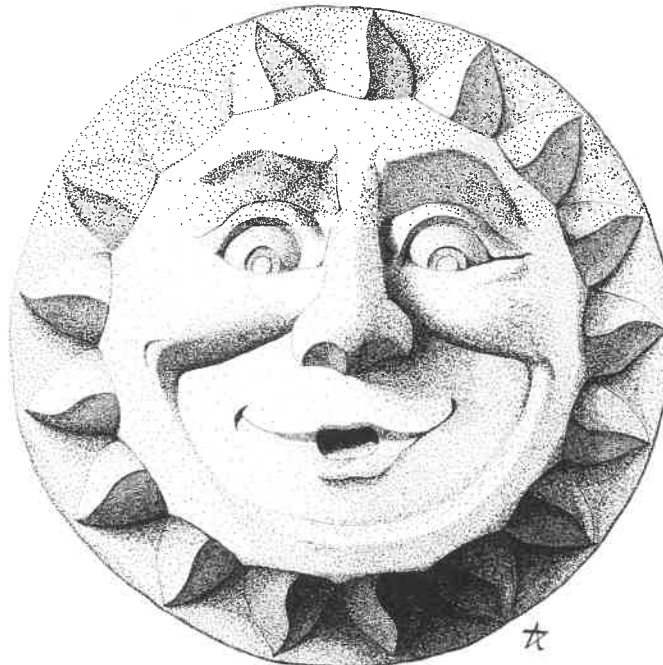
our voices trying to be heard  
over the clank of dishes, spoons on coffee cups,  
and laughter that the waitress winces at-  
another one of THOSE groups...  
and scratches the order fast enough  
that she can ignore the replacement of sugar  
in the saltshaker.  
I always wanted to be thrown out of somewhere...  
don't mention where we come from.  
my heart isn't really there anyway;  
it's on your plate.  
you cut into it with the knife,  
maybe it inspires your words  
as you chew between the narratives,  
or is inspiration my shoulder  
where you rest your head for a second,  
before you ask the woman for some water  
because the coffee isn't strong enough.  
I like to drink the creamer straight.  
It always gets strange looks,  
better than no looks at all-  
and that's what we're here for right?  
a smile of relief bids us farewell,  
as the rag wipes discarded words off the table

Lindsay Lloyd  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest

## VCR repairman

Big fat belly, and  
a weathered face.  
"wassa problem?"  
thick pudgy fingers  
delicately holding  
a screwdriver,  
Tools of the trade.  
Calluses and big  
gashing seams  
run from the corners  
of his nose,  
and hide at the  
crooks of his  
frowning mouth.  
Sagging jaw,  
blue eye pouches.  
He opens a big ham mouth and says,  
"Seventy-five dollars.  
Cash,"  
with a voice that  
reminds me of  
cleaning chalkboard erasers  
on a humid day.  
His head hunches between his shoulders  
like his ears are afraid of daylight.  
he leaves through the front door  
shuffling his scuffed shoes  
across the waxed wood floor.  
dollar bills crushed  
inside his meaty hand.  
and the vcr works perfectly,  
with a clear, sharp picture...  
if only it were right side up.

Julia Fair



Den & Ink (Stipple)

Estella de la Vega

# Wedding Party

D

addy told me that my job was the most important one. I had to lead Georgia down the aisle. If I didn't do my job right, then her and Daddy might not get to get married. I got to sprinkle her path with rose petals.

The hardest part of the day was waiting for my turn to walk down the aisle. I had to be still in the new dress. Georgia didn't want me to mess it up before all the people had a chance to see me. I love Georgia. She is going to be my new mommie. Well, sort of. I mean, she told me that she could never replace my real mommie and that I should always remember her and hold her dear to my heart. Mommie and Georgia used to be friends. That's why she promised to help me

always remember her. I remember the day Mommie got sick. Daddy and I took her to the doctor because she had a cold that wouldn't go away. The doctor put her in the hospital and made her

stay there for a long time. Mommie lost her hair. It looked really funny. Especially that wig that she wore. Mommie let me get one, too. Only I didn't wear mine all the time like Mommie did. I remember that I was so excited when the doctor said that she could come home for a while. We made a huge banner and hung it from the ceiling that said "Welcome Home." That was a fun night. All our family and friends came over and we had a big party. I didn't have to go to bed until 11 o'clock. That was a really big step for a four year old. I just wish that Mommie could have stayed at home for a longer time. A few months later she got sick again and went back to the hospital. Only this time she never came home. I remember going to see her at the hospital. At first it scared me -- all those tall ceilings and people dressed in white who whispered and stared. The floors were shiny; I could see myself in them. When the nurse would come into Mommie's room with a shot, I would go out to the hall and make faces into the floor. We decorated the hospital room with stuff I painted in Sunday School. One day, I went with Georgia to the

hospital to see Mommie. Only this time, the nurse wouldn't let me in the room. Inside, doctors were screaming orders at the nurses. A few minutes later, Georgia came back out and took me home. She cried the whole way. I didn't know what had happened, but I cried just because she was crying.

Grandma was at home when we got there. She took me upstairs and put me in the bed. "You get a good nap now, you hear? Tonight and tomorrow are going to be very busy and you need all the rest you can get." Late that night, Daddy came in and sat on my bed. He just sat there and cried. I was scared to say anything so I just watched him for a minute. Then he leaned over and kissed me on the cheek, tucked my covers, and left. I don't think he knew I was awake. I'm good at

pretending to be asleep. When you're my age, that's about the only way to get to hear all the good adult conversations.

The next morning, I found Dad sitting by the pool, just staring at the water.

He was crying, and when he saw me, he tried to look cheerful. I knew something was wrong, so I stared him in the eye and with my hand on my hip and my finger pointed at his face informed him that I was four years old now and should be told what was going on. After all, I was almost a big girl and I deserved to know. Daddy didn't say anything; he just pulled me into his lap and held me for a minute. Then he told me that Mommie wouldn't be coming home from the hospital.

"Of course she will, Daddy! She just has to stay longer this time. She'll be home soon and then we can have another party and paint a banner and everything. And the next day, after she gets settled in, we are going to play with her wigs and my new puppy." Daddy didn't say anything for a minute. He just started crying again. Then he explained what it meant to be dead. I was really upset, but I didn't cry at first. I only ran to my room and got out my mommie's picture. How could she leave me like this? She promised me that she would come home soon. I threw the picture against the wall -- the glass broke. Then I cried.

---

*Mommie lost her hair. It looked really funny. Especially that wig that she wore. Mommie let me get one, too.*

---



There were a lot of people in my house for the next few days. They all brought good food and toys for me to play with. Grandma stayed with us for a whole week until after the service. I got to see Mommie one last time, only when I saw her, I was convinced that she wasn't dead, just sleeping. I patted her cheek and begged her to wake up. I had three new Barbies that she had to make outfits for. Grandma took me out of the room and let me lay in her lap until the service began. During the service, our preacher got up and said some really nice things about Mommie. Grandma pinched me when I turned around and looked at the woman who was crying behind me. She just sounded so pitiful. I wanted to give her my Kleenex. But instead, I got a pinch on the arm. So much for trying to be nice.

The next week, Grandma went back home and Daddy started working again. I had to go to a babysitter's. I guess it was ok. Georgia would come and get me once a week and take me for a Happy Meal. We would sit outside and when we finished eating, she would push me on the swings and slide down the slide with me. I liked Georgia. She reminded me of Mommie. She would laugh just the way Mommie did when I would mess up my hair bow or put my shoes on the wrong feet. One day, Daddy decided to come to the park with us. He and Georgia sat on the bench and talked for a really long time. About a week later, I invited Georgia over for dinner. Daddy was really surprised when she rang the doorbell that Thursday night. I had sort of forgotten to tell him. All we had to eat was leftover pizza. But Georgia took us shopping and when we got home she cooked us the most good meal I have ever tasted. I didn't like the carrots, though. But she only made me eat two. Any other person would have made me eat every last single bite.

That was when Georgia and Daddy started going out

to dinner all by themselves -- without me, but I didn't mind because Daddy was so much more happy now. He sang when he was shaving. One morning, he even cut his chin because he was singing so much that the razor slipped and nicked him. I laughed. Especially when he put the tissue on there. It looked like he had a huge white wart hanging on his chin. Me and Daddy had fun together, but things were a lot more fun with Georgia around. So one day, I just flat out asked her to marry us. We were at the zoo. It was a special treat because I had survived the first week of kindergarten. They bought me ice cream and a t-shirt with a monkey on the front. When we sat down in front of the fountain, I just popped the question. At first, I thought Daddy was going to choke on his corn dog. Georgia laughed and hugged me. "I thought you would never ask me, Hannah." The next week, Daddy got Georgia a diamond engagement ring and I got my ears pierced with real diamond studs. We set "our" wedding day for the Saturday after kindergarten graduation.

So, that is how I happened to get the most important job in the whole wedding. I was excited. We were going to be a family. Daddy and Georgia and Mommie and me. Daddy told me that Mommie would always be a part of my family because her blood helped to shape me and her love made us what we are today. We are all going on a honeymoon to Walt Disney World in June. Only first, Daddy and Georgia are going on a trip all by themselves. I don't mind. I mean...I proposed and helped set the date. I think they should be able to handle things from here.

Tina Caruthers  
Honorable Mention  
Short Story Contest

## Brad Dream

I stepped carefully  
On the slanted floorboards of the strange house  
From one room to the next  
And when I came to the purple hallway  
I saw him

Leaning there

And when I asked him what he was doing  
He said, I'm giving the cat a rest.  
But you know how it is with dreams.  
So then

Just like I always do before I go in  
I slipped off my rings  
(You know, so I don't get soap all over them)  
But this time (on an impulse)  
Instead of slipping them into my pocket  
I asked him to hold them.

So then I went in  
But maybe I was in the wrong place  
Or maybe I just let my mind slip, I  
Don't know but anyhow it wasn't  
The bathroom.  
It was a green room, with  
White trim and a piano  
I knew wasn't his although  
It was covered with his organ music  
An incomprehensible thing  
That holds no reverence for a lowly string player like me

There were also some crayons.  
Were those his too? Who knows  
Because then I came out  
(And to my relief the purple hallway was still there)  
And then he stretched.  
But it wasn't the old clumsy heron-stretch.

It was graceful.

However he's degenerated over the last two years,  
He's also blossomed.

Then I put my hands out, you know,  
Asking for my rings back.  
But instead of dropping them all three in  
A jumbled silver mass in my palm  
He slid each onto  
Its proper finger.

This surprised me.  
I stood regarding my hands for a while:  
Skin dry, warm, and slightly cracked,  
Fingers short, graceless, but  
Strong.

Strong from the years of nightmare-clenched fists.  
Strong from the dance of the fingers on  
The instrument.  
Strong from having held him.

When I looked up he was gone  
But you know how it is with him.

Theo Hummer



Scratchboard

Cindy Henderson

## Peeking

Black, warm, feels heavy.  
Dark, drafty, feels icy.  
Hear the crickets,  
The night bird,  
The speeding car,  
Bang of a gun.  
One-two-maybe three street lights,  
Eyes of the cars  
Commanded by the night stalkers;  
They'll be back early morning.  
(Won't be here when they get back.)  
Judging the movement of the curtains,  
Yeah, the ones across the street.  
There's more than one peeper,  
(Who doesn't need to find me)

La-tányá Ashley

## She Taught Me Rhythm

She taught me rhythm  
Wouldn't let me sew on the electronic machine  
Made me pedal her old Singer  
Even though the leather strap would snap  
And I would call her from her biscuit-making  
Or pickle-canning  
Or laundry-hanging  
Every five minutes  
With pleas for help.

"Steady, child, steady,"  
she hummed  
Binding my scrap-purse  
With precise stitches  
Clicking her tongue to the rhythm  
Of the Singer  
Of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot"  
Of my grandmother's  
Organ music down the hall.

I watched her  
Hunched figure  
Sway in the stool,  
Waist-length plaited  
Ebony hair  
Switch on her back,  
Eighty-year-old skin  
Drawn in guiding concentration.  
Glaring her wisdom  
A child looked back at me;  
Her black eyes  
Dance to the rhythm.

Heather Chappell

## Sam

Sam  
hair bleached  
face aged  
grown dark  
all from the sun's rays  
Sits always on the side of the road  
back against the dawn  
focuses on white antebellum houses  
scratches down his visions, his memories  
on a piece of canvas  
hands and thoughts move swiftly through one memory  
then to the next  
on down the road  
on down the beach  
by sundown you see him  
knocking on doors  
trying to sell his versions  
of someone else's life.

Amber Lash

## Alabama Sacraments

Saran-wrapped goodies  
Scripture pages rustling  
Starch-sprayed Sunday dresses  
Someone's dipping snuff  
Seminary students  
Slipping in, scrambling out  
Screen door slamming  
Summer serenade of heat  
Singing in the window  
"The seventh day is Sabbath"  
"It's sinful to work"  
Sheer plastic unveiling  
Scent of cold chitlins  
Sunday smorgasbord

Heather Chappell

## isaiah

clash the rocks with stormshattered titans stretching upwards  
to cloudcovered skies where the broken hearts and leaping  
sunjoys mix in one melting pot of splintered emotion dancing  
dancing on silvertoes in the glitterglare of the shadow  
field, flying into the overcast, not alone or in pairs but as  
one, a mighty spirit pulsating burning climbing towards  
heaven flying fleeting on golden raindrops and glories,  
halos dancing like the sugarplums in the children's dreams,  
around the dreams and stockings of sleeping babes and boys  
(be quiet, don't wake them, sandy claws might get upset with  
us as well and leave...); cool coal spread on the white  
sand with the dead fish rotting in piles around the frog;  
what ever could that mean; fire in the stairway, fire made of  
rainbows and charbugs and singing angels breathing flowers, i  
can't climb up any higher, please, no more; yes my inn too is  
filled, swelled with the splendor of a legion of the host of  
the host of the One (which star is it now for which they  
labor?) rising daily with the cocks, bedding nightly as the  
crickets come out to chirrup cheerup broken legs and the  
spring lambs for dinner, stretched out on a board, broken  
necks lolling wildly to the left (but i thought no one was to  
break his legs, just the vinegar and hysop and the whips and  
the chains and the dice falling ricatactack on the blushing  
stone below him) wrapped in linen cloths and stored in dank  
caverns, waiting for tomorrow to die like today, and what  
then?

Drew Pruett



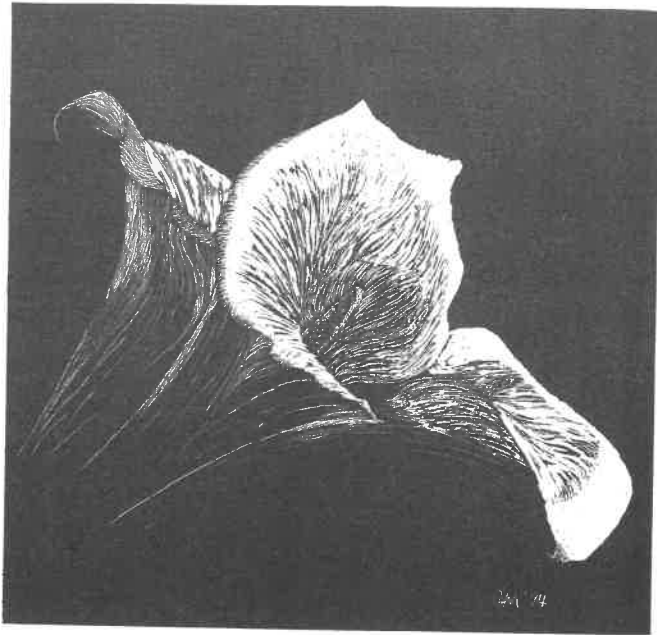
Scratchboard

Justin Joffrion

## Breaking Glass

This entire window concept just kills me.  
The window is a terrible façade.  
It's a wall that can be seen through.  
Holes are a lot better.  
They may let the cold in,  
but at least you can **Walk** through a hole.  
Only Criminals and Drunk people go through windows.  
And then they have to twist this way and that  
Like some kind of a **Goldanged** Contortionist  
just to squeeze through.  
Windows are supposed to connote freedom.  
You ever seen a Bird try to get out of a room  
with a bunch of windows?  
That sucker will **SLAM** into the glass  
until he's a pile of birdy mush.  
It's a sad, sad sight.  
Maybe that's what's wrong with society today  
– Too many windows and not enough openings.

Sam Pierce



Scratchboard

Orrin Matthews

### Maria

She never seemed to me the mother of seven.  
 More like a little girl,  
 She always wore flowered dresses,  
 Delicate cotton across her bent back,  
 With a small pink barrette in her hair.  
 She had to stand tiptoe to sit in her rocking chair;  
 It had flowers on it, too.  
 Her hands were not delicate, but gnarled and calloused.  
 They crocheted anyway;  
 They made butterflies, snowflakes,  
 White doilies to put under music boxes,  
 And little angels that you could starch  
 And put on the Christmas tree.  
 When the fingers became too stiff to crochet,  
 They fingered Hail Mary's over and over again.  
 They taught the Rosary to me  
 So that I might do something at the funeral  
 Besides cry.

Beth Fratesi  
 Honorable Mention  
 Poetry Contest

### Stephen Rose

stands under the  
 Spring-leafed tree  
 both of them so intense  
 i ask laughing if he's  
 practicing  
 to be a model  
 his eyes so blue i can  
 see them from here  
 i had Never thought  
 of him as good looking

Theo Hummer

### Patricia Ann

She would sit cuddled in the recliner  
 flipping channels with the remote;  
 her hands were soft and wrinkly  
 with nails the color of banana peels  
 from the Winston 100's at her side.  
 "I'm gonna die from something,"  
 she would say.

She was sure she would  
 die from something; soon  
 lying with her at night  
 I would notice mounds of hair  
 resting where her head used to be.  
 She seemed to shrink  
 with all the pins in her body  
 barely no more bones to hold her up;  
 Her eyes told us the pain  
 deep and dark full of hidden fears.  
 She always had a smile on her face,  
 a bowl of cookies and ice-cream in her lap,  
 and Winstons burning in the ash tray  
 sometimes two at a time  
 (she would forget the other was lit)  
 frail but quite able to flip the channels  
 with her banana-colored fingernails  
 and very able to dial the phone  
 Watching the shopping network  
 running up Grandpa's phone and credit card bill  
 no one ever knew until the bills came;  
 that's what she left us,  
 and we laughed and laughed  
 it was just like her to leave without paying.  
 Every time I flip the channels  
 and see the shopping network,  
 I always wonder if she's watching.

Amber Lash

# It's Not a Crayola World

T

he day was Burnt Orange. The surroundings radiated it: the dull, throbbing glow of the sun behind the clouds of dirt road, the clay hills behind the dried brush, the fraying interior of the Duster (which Momma said was "Terra Cotta" but you just couldn't use a sophisticated Spanish word to describe a 15-year-old car with both sides dinged in). Burnt Orange clung to air -- the taste of heavy Mississippi heat searing her tongue and widening her nasal cavity with moist, metallic droplets; she felt as if she had been sucking on a handful of pennies.

She and her father were the sole survivors in this world plagued with monochrome, and they were the violators. If she sprinted, her Nikes could streak pink neon across the horizon. With but a few steps, her sneakers imprinted zig-zags and the "Nike" logo on the damp earth.

"Let me get that," her dad said, reaching for the box at Mara's fingertips. "It's a mite heavy." He retrieved a small styrofoam bucket filled with minnows and sloshing dirty water. "You can carry this and the poles."

Mara lifted her allotted load and shifted her weight. Even that little bit of cargo was a strain for a pudgy third grader, but she managed down the clay path. Her father's isolated silhouette was etched against the sky in a deep ebony. The mud began to suck at her shoes, hugging the soles and making each step more difficult. The laces had long since been lost, and her bare heel began to slip over the lip of the cushioned back. I'm going to get stuck, she thought excitedly. She made her steps more exaggerated in a cartoon army-march; her knees almost reached her chest.

*Shuuuuroooooop.* The earth intoned ominously. *Shuuuuulop.* Her shoes settled far in the recesses of the murk. She grunted but maintained her pace so as not to lose her feet as she had her shoes.

"Looks like you're missing something there," the father said, black eyes dancing beneath his upturned brow. His feet resumed their rhythmic thuddings, and a

clump of mud teetered on the toe of his ashen boots and fell to the path in front of him. His prints were becoming fainter, though the ground was solidifying. The earth was not hard but firm, and it gently encased her feet in a cool, crusty embrace. **Her** prints, however, were precisely etched into the terrain. Every swirl, whorl, a callus was revealed in the signature. She shook her feet in a vain attempt to lose the film of slime coating them. She cringed. Laughing at her repulsion, in one concise motion, Mara's dad swept her into his arms. She adjusted her burden and wrapped her arms around his neck in the surprise and apprehension of the moment. She relaxed, and they collapsed into giggles.

## **He's dying you know.**

*Just look at him. He can carry me so he must be okay, right? And he still looks fine - he's not losing any of his hair or anything and when you die you start turning white and stuff, right?*

**Look at his eyes. Look at his**

**eyes.**

*They were dim. Hadn't her mom called them "sallow" when she talked to Maw-Maw? It wasn't just the color though. (And anyways she wasn't real sure of what color *sallow* WAS.) It was just missing that glimmer...like a cartoon eye without the shiny white crescent. It was a difference in richness and depth - like the difference between burnt orange and burnt sienna...one was a raw kind of color.*

**"Naked is when you don't wear any clothes. Nekked is when you don't wear any clothes and you're up to something."**

*and the other was that pretty, lively kind of color that you could use to color Hawaiian women and Indians. Stop looking! Stop!*

She buried her head into her father's chest so deep that she felt her eyeballs flatten, and everything was so dark that the darkness made colored flashes. The neon veins of stress spider-webbed beneath her lids.

The funeral was a detached affair. Sprigs of plastic greenery adorned the corridors, and the dank odor of

---

*Her father's isolated silhouette was etched against the sky in a deep ebony.*

---

varnish and binding emanated from the pews. Mara felt cheated; the odor of plastic and varnish and Bible-bindings was not the smell of **sadness**. She searched in vain for the sharp, overwhelming stabs of pain in her gut and the "choking, hysterical sobs" she read about in books, but none came. She just felt the cold slats of the pew against her back and the reaches of the plastic tree touching her scalp. The family had known about his illness for quite sometime and Mara caught a few snatches of "it was just his time to go" and "at least he's in a better place" mumbled in blurbs of adult maturity. She clinched her fists so tight that her stubs of fingernails left half-crescents in her flesh.

The grave site was better, in her opinion. The black earth, gaped and laughing, softly quieted the varnish smell of the coffin. The people in their black suits and black skirts and black ties and black hose and black

shirts and black shoes could just be whited out -- scattered letters on the horizon with a lot to say but never saying anything. She was the sole survivor of this world plagued with monochrome.

**"Looks like you're missing something there."**

She was alone with the shiny box. Engulfed by the dirt in a barely audible shift and thud, more little plastic flowers were showered upon it.

The dark tent cover shimmied in the breeze, and Mara could see the name -- **her** name -- emblazoned on the ruffle.

Heather Chappell  
Second Place  
Short Story Contest



Colored Pencil

Beth Fratesi

## Farmhouse

He looked at me, old crinkly eyes,  
and smiled a bit;  
my great grandfather  
Whitby --  
Sounds like potatoes  
smooth wholesome potatoes  
Great Grandfather Whitby  
His ghost a-smilin  
out those old crinkly eyes  
Rocking on the porch  
the smooth grain,  
golden and worn,  
of his chair.  
He's trilling  
like he was a young boy  
no shoes and a free world  
and the birds fly down  
from the heavens  
alighting on the chair  
On the back and on his hands.  
The squirrels scamper to his feet  
bushy tails and twitching noses  
eating the acorns he holds out  
to them  
in his trembling  
dark-splotched hand.  
Old ghost, gentle ghost.  
My great-grandma sitting beside him.  
"Tom wouldn't like it if I wore make-up,  
He'd think I was trying to impress  
some other man."  
The combs in her long, long brown  
hair  
the color of mine.  
When I was two,  
she kissed my head,  
and said she loved me,  
and said  
she wanted to brush my  
hair forever and ever.  
Pretty hair  
"Tom wouldn't like it if I cut it."  
Old, gentle couple,  
the squirrels and the birds  
Their only companions,  
on the fading front porch  
of a farmhouse in Arkansas,  
with only God a-watching.

Julia Fair  
Third Place  
Poetry Contest

## Hazel

When I was small  
Hazel would flash her false teeth at me  
And laugh as I ran away.

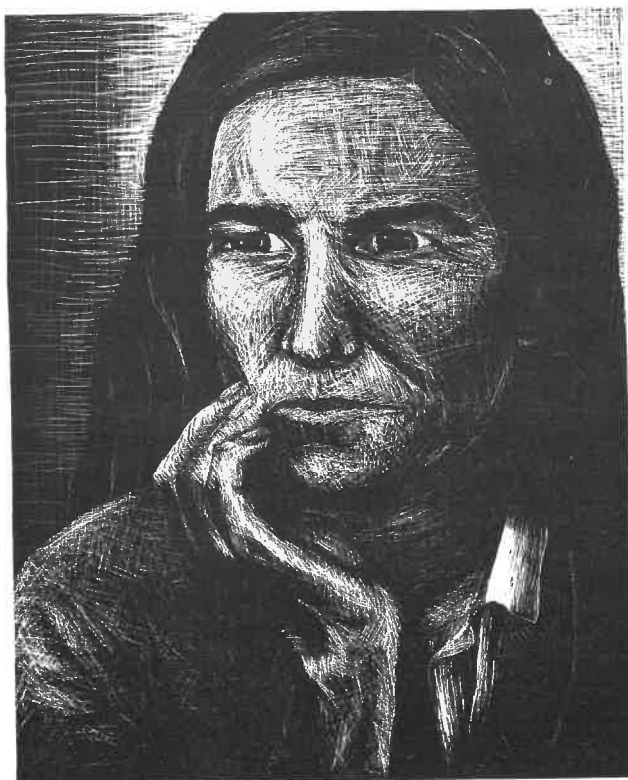
She sat in her vomit-green chair;  
Her weak, flabby hands clawed at me  
To give me money  
For Christmas,  
Or my birthday,  
Or just for checking her mail.

Now she lies like a sick dog  
On her couch down the street from us,  
Watching cheap movies  
And reading trashy novels.

I haven't seen her in two years,  
And I feel bad about that, because

I sure could use the money.

Beth Fratesi

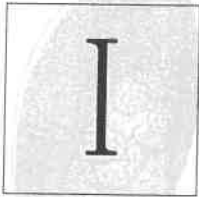


Scratchboard

Elena Cason



# I Remember



I looked up- up- miles- eternities- into the distance. My grandmother towered above me asking if I'd like some lunch -- fried chicken, mashed potatoes, plenty for baby. The cold green tiles reflected shimmers of light back

at me around the edges of the squares. I traced the marbled swirls.

Listening to the voice of my father at the table, telling of the kids, of the farm. Baby Alice hung across one arm, her

pink dress is stained and Grandma can't fix it. I trace the pictures on my blanket, my pillows -- cool feather pillows. I sit on them and my soft blanket that Daddy wraps around me. Grandpa sits across the table - black pants leg contrasting with Daddy's blue jeans under the table.

Crawling across the floor, over the pillows, under the table, through the maze of legs. Daddy. Granddaddy. Chair. Table. Dragging Alice by an arm. Between Grandma and the counter.

"Watch out, Joan Marie, I don't want to step on you." Daddy laughing. Grandpa chuckles. Who's Joan

Marie? Into the cabinets. Into the pots. Under the shelf.

"Now, Freddy, come get her out of there before she catches a mouse trap." Under the shelf. On top of the frying pan. A door opens and light spills through. Daddy crouches outside, smiling. A gurgling giggle escapes as warm hands catch my arms and gently pull

me out from beneath the shelf. Behind the pots. Off the frying pan. He stands up and we go into forever. Look, Alice, we're as high as Daddy's planes. Grandma stands with a fist clutching a knife on her hip

laughing as Daddy flips us over in his arms tickling me.

"Playing in the cabinets?" he says. "Grandma's gonna mistake you for a mouse if you don't stop." A tickle and a bounce and he sits me back on my big green blanket. I smile up- up- into the sky at my Daddy. Into an eternity.

---

*A gurgling giggle escapes as warm hands catch my arms and gently pull me out from beneath the shelf. Behind the pots. Off the frying pan.*

---

Bridget Clark

## My House

With God's white house  
Nestled in a grove of oak, pine, and kudzu  
As a witness  
My house rose like a Phoenix  
From the ashes of what had stood before  
With a foundation of memories  
And singing mountain walls.  
Its dining room echoes the hum of a Singer  
And the den tinkles with distant laughter.  
The bookcase teems with past memories  
And the kitchen is scented by freshly brewed love.  
No matter how far the trip  
Or how long the journey  
It seems that the end  
Always leads here.

Tina Caruthers

---

## Windows

I sit and wait  
For the light to turn  
Green and look  
At him:  
Smoke gently rolls  
From the cigarette  
He holds in a burly,  
Calloused hand,  
And, ghost-like, slips  
Through his hair.  
He looks  
In the rear-view mirror,  
As if he has somewhere important to go.  
I smile wryly as I see the Braves' shirt  
He's wearing  
And I remember the game I saw yesterday  
And I look at the gray-haired man,  
Watch him sit, until my light  
Turns green.

Katie Foret

## Spanish Moss

Gray matter, grayness strangling  
curling piggyback permed hair  
clinging against the bark  
brown, leathered handcrackednails  
humid hot sparkling condensation sticky  
maple syrup, clinging,  
furry wet demon on my back  
tendrils of hair shove away from  
my eyes. frustration plantation houses  
tshirt clinging sweat  
tangy sharp metal-like trailing  
between my breasts  
HOT  
dirt underneath my fingernails,  
roses blooming  
hot southern sun  
southern satan gates of hell  
flinging open  
waves of rippling air  
beating on my eyelids.  
gravel path, dull, stupid stones,  
smooth, worn out of shape,  
what are they? what are they?  
small, bald, fairy scalps...

Julia Fair  
First Place  
Poetry Contest

---

## Your Eyes Are Dark

Your eyes are dark  
and creamy.  
They are the semi-sweet  
chocolates you should have  
given me on Valentine's.  
Still they are bitter and  
their lingering taste reminds  
me that my stomach is still  
empty.

Susan Massey

## The Bike Lady's Psalm

I have a message I think you ought to hear.  
flip page.  
underline that part.  
words to remember-when i have the time,  
mark them in yellow.  
she said,  
you know they're after power.  
i saw a watcher and a holy one coming down.  
highlight that.  
black words on white paper,  
black words from coral red lips...  
the end time is coming.  
flip page.  
they call this onionskin right?  
it was foretold in the Book of Daniel.  
nice phrase.  
you are not meant to know the time of these things.  
and the dragon, that great serpent, falls from the sky.  
hear the trumpet calls?  
yellow notes,  
cover your ears.  
God will take over the power soon.

as she pushes her dyed red hair back-  
I think everyone should know.  
It was foretold.  
find the words-  
in yellow, in the good book  
the good news...  
hear the trumpets?

yellow words,  
golden words,  
from the dragon's lips.  
let his heart be changed from man's,  
and let a beast's heart be given unto him.<sup>2</sup>  
speak prophet- weave golden words.  
Will you pass the message on?  
i think everyone should prepare.  
flip page.  
it won't be long.  
test tomorrow.  
prepare-  
underline the chapter.  
let not the dream trouble thee,<sup>3</sup>  
dear Belshazzar...  
black words trimmed in gold,  
or was it gold laced with black  
I can't hear over the trumpets.  
speak louder- i can't read your lips...  
this matter is by the decree of the watchers  
and the demand by the word of the holy ones.<sup>4</sup>  
coral lipstick on the mouthpiece  
on the trumpet in my right hand.  
Will you pass on the message?  
do you have the time?  
do you know the time?  
you were not meant to know,  
but it is coming.  
It was foretold in the Book of Daniel.

<sup>1</sup> Dan. 4:23 <sup>2</sup> Dan. 4:16 <sup>3</sup> Dan. 4:19 <sup>4</sup> Dan. 4:17

Lindsay Lloyd



Photograph Carrie Greer O'Keefe

## Life Marches On

Life marches on  
A monotonous tread  
to a tireless cadence  
It hastens to a brisk run  
and slows to a sluggish crawl  
but never comes to a grinding halt  
Weary soldiers fall behind  
lagging behind . . .  
No one stops. No one sees them  
Soldiers disappear  
Their space,  
Their place in line quickly filled  
As life continues to march.

Orrin Matthews

---

## Roddy

the days drip  
slowly by  
like marmalade,  
and tomatoes  
die off from the blight  
and everything dies  
in the summer  
like his cows in the pasture  
black and white  
without horns  
that do battle  
with cowprods  
and electric fences  
and it's too bad  
that he doesn't  
practice his wisdom  
more often,  
but maybe  
if i brought him some  
yarrow stems  
he could practice for hours  
until he found his soul  
or until his mother  
calls him  
to collect the chicken eggs.

Mari Peterson

## Vasque Ginsberg Vision

How i want to be a beatnik  
How i want to be "on the road"  
How i want to taste the illusive truths of the world  
and the streets that we don't live on.  
i just want to give up on this mother trip that we are seemingly  
forced to live on,  
and travel with the downs of this dirty, sawdust circus  
that we all try to be a part of;  
the freaks and the beautiful show girls  
that really don't care to see the responsible sun  
and all he has to say about tomorrow.  
maybe i am just a dream in the final process of manifestation  
or maybe i am just a thought in the final process of conceivment  
or a breath that is about to run out,  
or a life.  
i think that when i die  
i will wake up on a couch  
and it will be raining outside.  
i will probably go back to sleep.

Todd Windham

---

## "It's a No-No"

My mother always told me,  
"Don't eat cookie dough.  
It'll make you sick!"  
I nod obediently  
Sit under Spittin' Worm Trees  
Crisp sheets of white heat  
Shimmy down from the sky  
Rupture clean Alabama September  
While Ninnie clenches sun-dried washrag  
Stained from fig preserves  
Sends me to rinse it out  
In the spring by the garden  
(Cause Daddy McHappy  
"Couldn't" fix the plumbing)  
And swollen hand in canning jar  
She called after me  
"I'll let you lick the spoon"

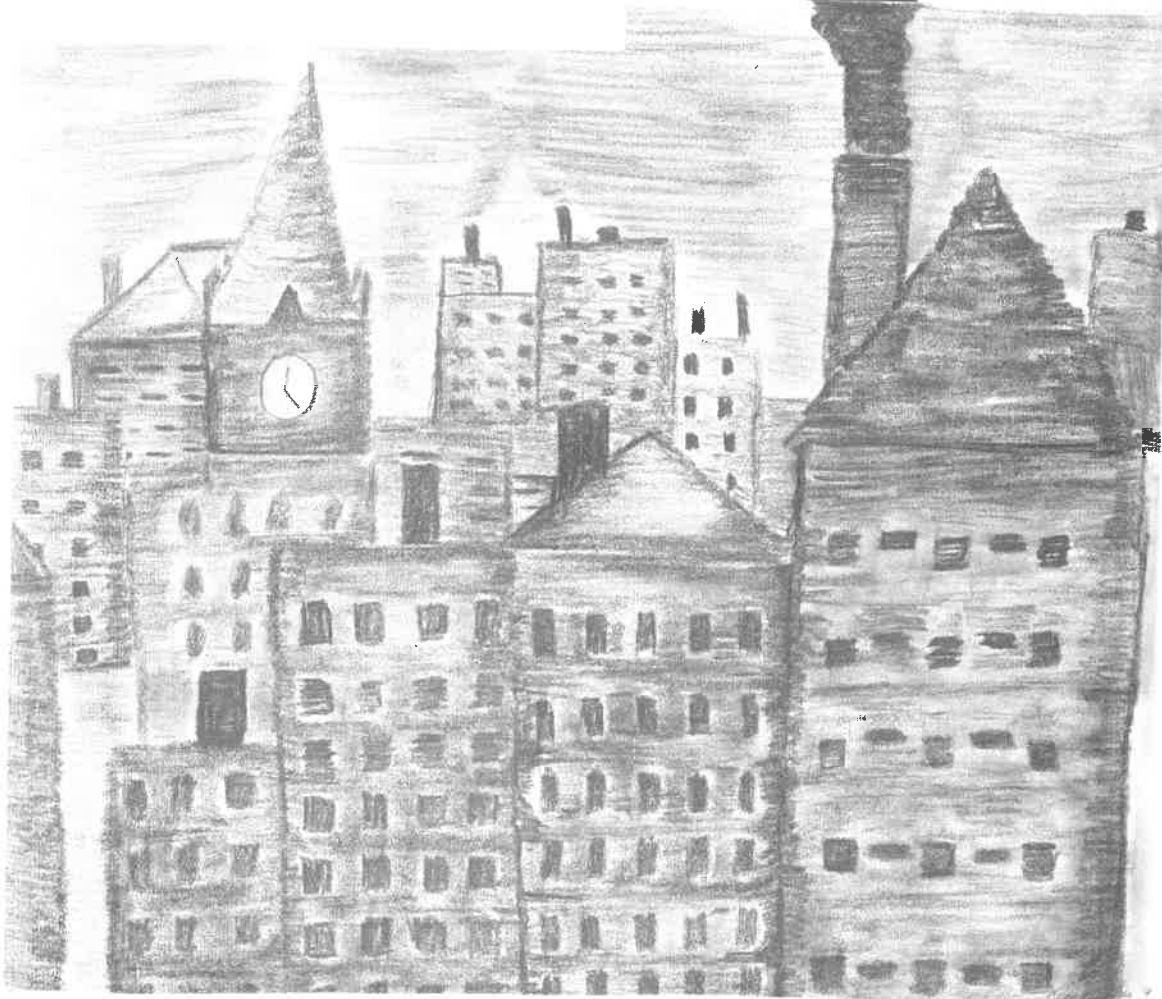
Heather Chappell

## In the Summer, In the City

Teaspoons of light –  
Beams dart through the black.  
Crack open the night!  
The shatterings of crickets  
Spill from the seams.  
Trickles of ebony  
Chase metallic heat.  
Bulky monsters  
Tessellating parking lots,  
Long razor-fingers  
Protruding from the horizon,  
And I  
(Alone on the drought-wrought grass)  
Are cloaked by August.

Heather Chappell

"How the  
Chimney-Sweeper's  
Cry Every  
blackning church  
appalls"  
"London" -  
William Blake



Charcoal

Craig Collier



Charcoal

Angie McMillen

## Mirror Image

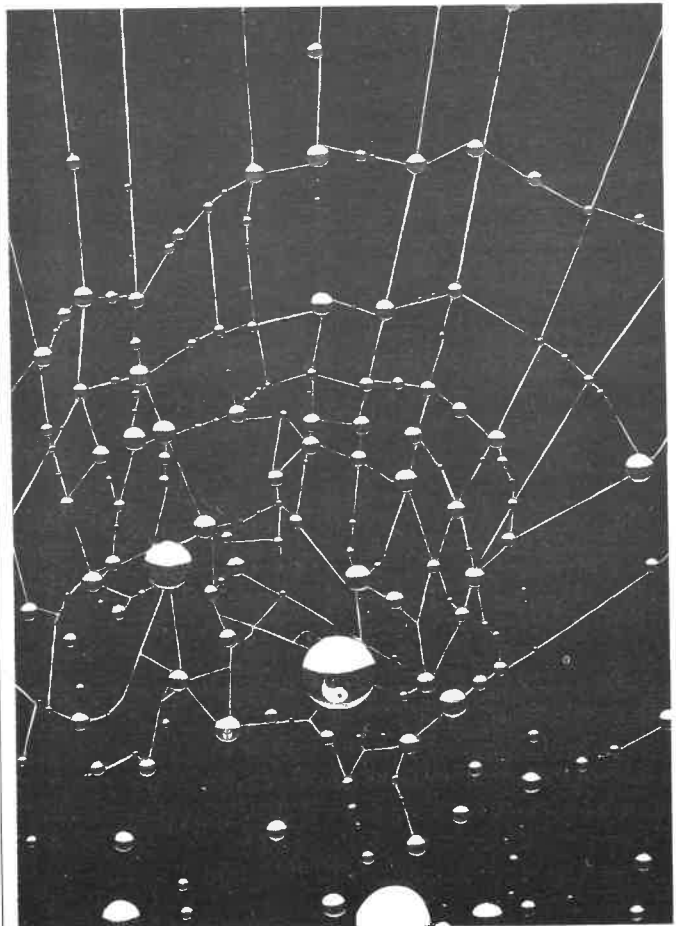
When you look at me, what do you see?  
I'm what you hope to be.  
I'm just you, turned inside out.  
What's good about you is what  
I'm about.  
We're alike, you and me  
Except for subtle differences I see.  
I am the original, and you're just the reflection --  
All my imperfections.  
You're just a copy  
That's been done sloppy.  
With all your flaws and imperfections  
You...you're the one that's the reflection  
Of what I am and who I am  
You...you're the reflection.  
Look long and look deep,  
For what you see is what you keep  
Because I am with you every day  
Then, on second thought, I'm always away.  
I am going to return  
At every corner and almost every turn.

Jehovah Keyes

## Chill

From an ice cube  
an opened refrigerator  
under a house  
inside a cave  
the top of a glacier  
an executive office building  
out of a grave  
under the cemetery  
a loved one's feet on a winter's night  
Jack Frost's fingertips  
out of hollow trees  
narrow minds  
metal bleachers in November  
streams of the mountains  
the tears of a lost child  
the bottom of a heart of stone.

Latisha Powell



Den & Ink (Stipple) Shannon Brown

## Thursday

And so I begin on an empty page;  
most things start that way,  
unscarred  
by relentless marks of the points of pens  
that can be too sharp or abrasive,  
uncluttered  
by words or thoughts.  
my fingers do not embrace the pen  
but fly across the letters, placing them with a touch  
not on paper, an empty computer screen,  
try to fill it, try to cover the awful bright blueness  
that is the color of my life right now.

the dog barks at my door to be let in,  
i forgot about him,  
he is selfish- wanting too much from me  
attention, food, have to keep him clean,  
simple-minded animal, screaming at me now  
for entrance,  
clawing at the door in mock anguish,  
open it  
and he curls up by the foot of my bed and sleeps,  
he'll stay that way until i step on him.

I had to pay the lady at the counter  
she gave me more change than i had coming,  
as i was walking away i heard her  
saying 'hey...',  
giving me a look as if i was stealing  
what she  
had made a mistake in giving me,  
and so i placed the buffalo nickels  
in her empty palm that ended in long fingernails,  
manicured- painted sapphire red, and i left smiling at her  
nodding at her boss as i walked out the door.

the letter must be on its way now,  
words i captured for you,  
i put them together without design,  
but they formed a pattern when i was through,  
like the pictures we used to make  
in kindergarten,  
dabs of paint until you fold the edges together,  
giving birth to butterflies  
beautiful on the refrigerator,  
the masterpieces mom threw away when we weren't looking,  
but i always believed they flew away,  
that a part of me escaped to that place only  
forgotten memories can find.

I close the book, watching dust  
emerging from brittle pages  
i won't read the old words anymore  
i want to read the ones that haven't been written.

Lindsay Lloyd  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest

## They Rule The World

Ever wonder what it'd be like  
if your dictator today was a dog?  
How would you grow,  
knowing that no matter how old you got,  
your dog got seven times older?  
It'd make you wonder  
'bout the rule that says  
"age brings wisdom"  
don't you think?

Ever wonder what it'd be like  
if your dictator today was a cat?  
How would you vote,  
when everything that's ever said,  
come out like a soft purr,  
easy on the ears,  
if a little rough on the truth?

Ever wonder what it'd be like  
if your dictator today was a bird?  
How would you learn,  
if every glance at the deep blue sky,  
had you looking up  
at someone who rides the wind,  
but never teaches you how?

Ever wonder what it'd be like  
if your dictator today was a human?  
How would you live,  
under the rule  
of someone who is master of the animals  
and has brought their behavior  
down to a science?

Daniel Williams



Den & Ink (Stipple)

Beth Fratesi



# My Closet



T

hirty by eighty, the hole in the wall had a secret sliding door to keep the world out. Butterflies bigger than black birds flew over three-foot sunflowers, and horseflies buzzed around my head. A sea-blue sky with a rainbow full of untouched colors with a

half-sun and a full-moon marked "Sally's Misticul Wondrland," my home away from home. I sat under a mushroom playing with a purple and pink caterpillar that had blue eyes at the end of its antenna every Friday afternoon. Every Friday afternoon was when he would come home. My "Wondrland" blocked out the rage, the screaming, and the shattering sounds of glass against a brick mantle.

Mama always told me to make sure that the upstairs was clean and that my hair was brushed. She always made sure that I looked cute for Daddy when he came home. Daddy, that's what he liked to be called,

but I heard what Mama called him behind his back, and for some reason every Friday afternoon he always heard her, too. Mama would scream, "He's here!" I never really cared, but we would meet him at the door with fake hugs and "welcome homes." Then I would always run outside to get a peek at the new car. Daddy was an auto salesman and brought home a new car every Friday afternoon. I could hear them talking as I would race out of the door. It was almost like routine: Daddy would say something that Mama didn't like and Mama would say something back, under her breath. I never understood why she just wouldn't keep quiet; she always told me to, and I never said a word. Just as routine as the words that were passed was the fist that fell in the exact same place as it had last Friday. The bruise never left, and a tear was never shed. Mama didn't like me to see them "like that" so she would always

tell me to go upstairs to my room and play.

Straight to "Sally's Misticul Wondrland" I would go and forget about everything. I would draw big, life-like pictures on the walls of my closet and pretend that I was the princess in a "Misticul Wondrland." When I say, "pretend," that is just what I mean; I didn't have anything to go by, no fairy tale, or stories that mothers tell their daughters before going to bed. My pictures were my escape; I created a world that I ruled as I wanted to and no one could tell me different. My pictures were my dreams, my imagination in full flight. The big purple and pink caterpillar that smoked the things that I saw down stairs. Later I learned that there was a similar caterpillar in "Alice in Wonderland." I found that interesting because I never heard of that story until I was in

grade school. When I would enter my world I would block everything out and tell myself that it was all a dream, everything that was happening down stairs, the fact that I no longer had a brother, the fact that my

mother married someone who she thought and still does would take care of me. He always told her that he loved me. I now know different. I didn't then. I thought he did. I thought that's how you show love. I was wrong. As I grew older and stepped out of my closet I realized that everything wasn't alright, that after all these years I couldn't forget anymore, it was no longer just a dream, but a definite reality staring me in the face every time someone told me they loved me. My closet got too big for my troubles and there was no blank wall space for any more drawings and my mind needed an outlet to express itself. So I began to write.

Amber Lash  
Third Place  
Essay Contest

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*Just as routine as the words that were passed was the fist that fell in the exact same place as it had last Friday.*

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# Probability According to Todd



Suppose you are presented with the following problem:

Three blue marbles, two red marbles, and one black marble are placed in a bag and mixed up. If you remove only one marble, what is the probability that it will be black?

Most any math teacher will immediately tell you that the answer has to be  $1/6$ . But I challenge that notion. Must there always be only one definite answer? Wouldn't it be logical that there is at least the possibility of there being another correct answer? There is!

Jack Handey once said, "Instead of having 'answers' on a math test, they should just call them 'impressions.' And if you got a different 'impression,' so what, can't we all be brothers?" With this in mind I propose to you a new, simplified way of looking at probability.

Look again at the problem mentioned above. Math teachers will tell you to take the number of black marbles that are present and divide that by the total number of marbles present to find the probability of picking the black marble. This is what I term looking at the possibilities. Could one not just as easily look at the actual outcomes of the situation? If there are six marbles and only one is black, then you either draw a black marble, or you don't. There are only two possible outcomes; therefore, the probability of drawing a black marble is 50%.

Here's another example. Let's say there is a jar full of jelly beans –  $1/2$  are red,  $1/4$  are blue, and  $1/4$  are black. A worm enters the jar and proceeds to eat the jelly beans. However, this worm is picky. There is a  $1/3$  chance that he will eat a black bean,  $1/3$  chance that he will eat a blue bean,  $1/3$  chance that he will die, and he will not go near the red beans. What is the

probability that the last bean he eats will be black? The answer is simple. Either he does eat a black bean last, or he doesn't. It is 50/50.

Are you starting to see the pattern? Everything is a 50/50 chance! Either something happens, or it doesn't. Every situation can always be simplified to only two outcomes; therefore, this method can apply to all problems. Why look at the possibilities when you can use the shortcut and look at the outcomes?

You may be wondering now why no one ever told you this before. Well, it's simple – if probability was made this easy then just about anyone could be a math teacher! In order to keep their jobs from being ripped

from them, the National Association of Teachers of Mathematics has organized this and many other conspiracies. Who knows how far this evil practice may extend! Now is the time to

---

*Are you starting to see the pattern?  
Everything is a 50/50 chance! Either  
something happens, or it doesn't.*

---

act. Don't fall for their propaganda any longer! The next time you are asked a tricky problem like the ones discussed here, be prepared to give a swift reply, "50/50."

Here are some practice problems for you to work just to make sure you understand the method completely:

1.) Two boys are looking at the same pine cone; what is the probability that the boy on the right picks it up first?

A.  $1/2$     B. Cannot tell    C. 50%    D.  $1/3$

2.) A neutron is contained in a Uranium atom. What is the probability that this neutron will decay at a given instant?

A.  $1/100$     B.  $3/17$     C. 50%    D. Must consult Heisenburg's Uncertainty Principle

3.) What is the probability that everything contained in this document is 100% true?

A. 0    B. 1    C. 50%    D. 50.00000000000001%

At this point there is a 50% chance you are still confused about this method. There is also a 50% chance that you understand it completely, and a 50% chance that you just don't care. Since you probably made a 50 on the test, you need to re-work the problems until you get them all correct, or at least 50% correct. As soon as you do that, go out into the world and let everyone know, "50/50" is the answer!

Todd Harrison

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## Riders

insanity, my friend.  
my parents just knew better.  
my friend, philosopher.  
torn apart by an animal farm and horses  
my friend with his ropers, and stetson, and "good" boots,  
slim fit 505's, and button-down prints.  
my friend that will have to leave when I graduate high school  
my friend's eulogy read to him every morning by his sister.  
my friend that I have camped out with and found experience with,  
and explored endless hills on rivers,  
and used to spend the night at his house, and order pizza and crash  
all-girl parties by method of telephone.  
stole smokes without notice at his dad's rambling hole of life.  
shot quail off of fences that were just tied to the earth by a dead  
uncle Tom.  
I used to run away to that farm into life because that is where  
life hides for all friends..., on a farm with lots of coyotes and  
fires with the wind in your face and never breaking down.  
me and Fernie never broke down,  
We just kept thinking about our wives and what they would look  
like.  
me and Fernie used to run into Wesson in his old blue truck when we  
were just fourteen, always trying to beat the cops by parking out  
behind the building so it would look like we walked.  
never got caught once when we were doing it ourselves,  
now John used to get us in all sorts of trouble with his "look  
twice, every set of headlights is a cop, this IS dangerous" way of  
doing things  
me and Fernie both adopt the same creed when it comes to getting  
into trouble. although we never stated it, it runs like this:  
you never look back, and you can't slow down, and most of all, you  
have confidence.  
You have got to have confidence,  
or you die.

Todd Windham

# A Lesson in Life



H

is hands are wrinkled with forty-six years' experience at pouring that same coffee pot. Every morning Dad gets up with the sunlight, makes his coffee, and brushes the hair he used to have. Marlboro Lights, his other morning ritual, sit on the table: the

smoke rises from his cigarette as if a puppeteer were pulling on it. He coughs a horrible cough, but he says he'll quit smoking tomorrow....he says that every day.

He didn't build the house we live in now, but Dad cherishes it just the same. The small three-bedroom house sits on top of a hill, the ideal place in my dad's dreams. The peace and serenity seem to humble my father as I watch him split wood or painstakingly wash down the house. No selfish complaints or vulgarities are heard, just the plain knowledge that there is work to be done. But for some reason that knowledge

doesn't seem to bother him; he likes the work. To sit around and do nothing would kill him, so he works. And works.

The decrepit, makeshift gate swings loosely at our fence showing the only proof of Dad's whereabouts. I figure he's gone to the barn to "play" with his forty-year-old Farm-All tractor. It seems he loves hopeless causes, and that tractor sure is one. Hours he spends on that impossible hunk of metal garbage, accomplishing nothing except finding something else wrong with it. He stands beside it and smiles a forty-six-year-old smile that reveals yellow stains of nicotine and pride for his impossible chore.

Dad works offshore seven days and then comes home for seven days and works some more. I think he goes to work sometimes to get some rest. Every other Wednesday at three o'clock in the morning the annoy-

ing sound of the alarm clocks penetrates the silent darkness of the house, and Dad wakes to pour himself a cup of coffee from that same coffee pot, this time mixing the rest of the pot with sugar and cream, then pouring it into the dirt-red thermos which serves as his continuous alarm clock as he drives the four hours to the boat landing.

I once asked my father how he managed to do all the work around the house, go to work offshore, and keep up with all of us. His response was merely "Patience." Above all things Dad has taught me, "patience" is the most valuable lesson of all. Patience has helped me in my school career and in my social life. All those "hopeless causes" that seem to pop up every so often aren't really that hopeless; it just takes a little time -- and a lot of patience -- to figure them out.

Dad has helped me to realize that just like that gate, life is sometimes decrepit and it seems like we can

barely hang on; but if we just have a little patience, things will work out. Patience helps me in my becoming accustomed to living away from home and helps me to get through every rigorous day of fully scheduled impossibilities. And if by chance anyone asks me how I manage to keep up, I simply say "patience." And every week when Dad gets up to go to work at 3:00 in the morning, I admire his patience and hope to someday be able to wear that same proud smile, as I watch his forty-six-year-old hands pour coffee from that same coffee pot.

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*To sit around and do nothing would  
kill him, so he works. And works.*

---

Katie Foret  
Honorable Mention  
Essay Contest

# KATHY

## I

She began life, as we all did,  
Screaming at the top of her lungs.  
Kathy, she was named,  
A mild label over-shadowing her hidden flame.  
A flame which grew,  
It grew into the very soul of her being.  
It began as an insignificant spark,  
Glittering in the dark cavern of her mind.  
She always knew it was there,  
oblivious to the rest of the world.  
Why did she hide this apparent gift,  
This unexplained holy offering?  
She hated it,  
Or did she?

## II

She loved.  
She despised herself, but she loved all the same.  
She loved everything and everyone yet she loathed herself.  
Why?  
What inner turmoil caused this apparent mischief?  
This struggle of her inner self,  
She was a true Thespian,  
Hiding her pain, and Yet, expressing happiness.  
She was a mother,  
Watching over her lineage.  
She sent messages of delight,  
uplifting the spirits of others.  
She was the sun,  
With the power to light worlds untouchable by others.

## III

She died,  
smiling and with joy.  
Her frame was like a pink rose once given to me,  
Full of beauty, and yet soon it too withered and died.  
The painting within the frame was even more apparent.  
it was like an antique,  
Old and insignificant to some, but to others  
extravagant and dear.  
And so it was, and it has been,  
And it ever shall be.  
She is gone,  
She is gone, but she will never leave us.  
She is now the spark which is deep within ourselves,  
Overshadowing some and destroying others.  
Her pain is over.

Mark Womer



Erika Buford

Watercolor

## window

i stare into the darkness, mesmerized  
out there, i see countless deaths  
and someone getting a cheap high.  
the masses are being tormented by the beasts  
that control every spur-of-the-moment decision--  
beasts of poverty, drug addiction,  
murder, rape, loneliness, and disease.  
starvation plagues and rips  
at the rotting heaps of life that are  
huddled next to the pile of glowing embers.  
the skyline at sunset is not welcome  
and the lengthening of shadows frightens them.  
i wonder what it is like to live in their world,  
and in a need to satisfy my curiosity,  
i step through the window into black

Shannon Brown

## parents / CHILDREN

MORE  
can't  
MORE  
can't  
MOREMOREMORE  
can't  
can't  
can't  
WHY  
because  
WHY BECAUSE  
because because  
BUT-  
that's it. no more.

Daniel Williams



Marker

Shannon Brown

## Sick on Sixth Floor

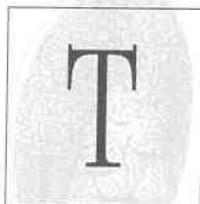
The smell of sickness  
and sometimes death  
lingers in the halls and rooms.  
but outside . . .

The sky paints a picture  
for the ones on sixth floor.  
The clouds beckoning with imaginary fingers,  
the sunshine enticing with a fiery beam,  
and faint sounds of a siren  
carrying another victim.  
And the helicopter  
landing with a roar.  
Cars full of people  
in a hurry for somewhere.  
And the graveyard across the street,  
How convenient.  
But don't think about that  
Life's still living . . .  
on the outside.

Tammy McGee

# A Trail In The Sand

[The Chris Read Award for Fiction]



Too tired from the all-night car ride down to the island, I decided not to get in the water the following morning. Uncle Ray and Aunt Jen had invited me and my parents down to their beach condo for the last weekend in May, right when school got

out; we had left home the day before and, driving all day and most of the night, finally crossed the bridge over to Cabildo Island around three a.m. That morning, Uncle Ray, Aunt Jen, Mom, and Dad, with a sudden burst of adrenaline decided to go spend part of the day across the bay on the mainland to do some shopping in Boca East. Mom told me to stay around the condo, not to venture any farther than the beach concession stand at the Cabildo

Hilton, and take good care of Liz, my eight-year-old cousin. "A thirteen-year-old boy should be able to handle this responsibility. So, I'm trusting you with Liz. Do you understand?" she

had asked me. I had nodded my head, and taking my cousin by the hand, went into the den to watch T.V. We had stayed in that den pretty much the entire morning, watching one episode of The Jetsons after another. I felt lucky to find any cartoons on T.V. on a Sunday morning. The only times that we ventured outside were when we went to the concession stand at the Hilton twice, once to get cokes, and again to get ice cream. Liz had not insisted that we go either time (for she stayed surprisingly undemanding), but I was so sick of seeing George Jetson flying around in that stupid spaceship with that little boy Elroy that I suggested we get out for a while.

Liz was abnormally undemanding for a girl of her precocious age, unless the thought of doing something she knew she was not allowed to do aroused her. Going to the beach was one such thought. I remembered how far Uncle Ray said it was to the beach: a mile. Even though their condo was on the sand, it was nowhere near water. And I also remembered Uncle Ray telling me about an old drunk that walked around

during the day between some of the sand dunes between the condo and the beach, who might try to harm us. Uncle Ray had warned us both with his finger not to roam toward the dunes without one of the grown-ups or else we could really get into trouble. I had repeatedly told Liz, "NO." But she would not listen; she started to whimper and tilt her head down as if about to cry every time I rejected the notion. Finally, Liz in tears and wailing my ears off, I consented, and she, already wearing her bathing suit under a t-shirt, grabbed her Donald Duck float as I grabbed a couple of towels, and we headed out the door toward the beach, but only for a few minutes.

Now, I was sitting upright on my towel, sweating in the midday sun, looking out at the green waves rushing

toward me, thanking God we had not run into the old drunk, and keeping an eye on Liz, whom I had told not to let the water come above her knees. I felt the sand seep under my toenails as I dug my toes into the beach:

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*"A thirteen-year-old boy should be able to handle this responsibility. So, I'm trusting you with Liz. Do you understand?" she had asked me.*

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How did I let an eight year old manipulate me? I heard her laughing and her screaming every time a wave rushed toward her, saw Donald Duck being thrown around, and I felt drop of sweat slide down my cheek.

"Don't go out too far, Liz!" I yelled to her.

I kept my eyes fixed on the water, and they went into a glaze. My head felt too heavy to hold up, and my shoulders were beginning to ache; we had driven for so long. It seemed like four states, at least one time zone, and...

The screaming broke my thoughts. My eyes lost their gaze. They were searching for the girl playing in the water, the girl standing with the water only up to her knees. The screaming stopped. I stood up. "LIZ?" I yelled. "LIZ!"

I heard a muffled sound emitted from the water only about fifty yards directly in front of me, and then I saw a blond head surface. Liz, with her blond hair matted over her eyes, cried so loudly, so helplessly. She was facing me, and I, tearing off my t-shirt, ran toward her.

When the cold water touched my toes, I could see

her more clearly. She was lying on the ocean bottom with only her head above the water. Her hands were clutching her left leg. I picked her up and carried her toward dry ground.

"What happened?" I knelt down beside her body on the sand, my chest heaving. "You were screaming, and..."

"My leg," she said, tears rolling down her cheeks. "It hurts so bad." She started spitting up water.

"Can you tell me what happened to it?"

"This..." she trailed off.

"Yes?" I brushed the thin, blond hair out of her eyes.

"Big, long thing with bags and spaghetti noodles came up." Her face contorted and she started wailing.

A Portugese Man-o'-War: four bag-like polyps and stringy tentacles? That must have been what it was. It probably just ran into her and stung her leg. In her struggle to get away from it, it was probably more aggravated.

I looked at her left leg. From the knee down, there were three red streaks, almost uniformly separated from each other. A spot around her ankle was beginning to swell. I felt like almost crying myself: she had to get to a doctor, which was probably not on the island. We sat on a remote area of the beach, a mile from the condo and even farther from the mainland. Mom and Dad would not be back to the condo till around three, and without a watch, I had no idea how long we would have to wait. Furthermore, even if they were at the condo, how would they find us, and where would they think to look? Liz started wailing louder; she wanted her mommy. The leg above her ankle might soon start to swell and become paralyzed; Uncle Ray once told me about Man-o'-Wars. I put my index finger to my mouth and looked directly into her crystal blue eyes. "Shhh," I said, brushing the sand off her face. "I'll find help, don't worry."

I had decided that the best route of action was not to try to walk directly back to the condo but to walk more northerly toward the Hilton's boardwalk. The boardwalk would carry us over many encumbering dunes, and at least there would be some other people at the Hilton who might help us. Before the journey, I found my t-shirt, wrapped it around Liz's leg to protect it from the harsh and unforgiving sun, and lifted Liz, propping her head on my shoulder and putting my hand under her behind, in order to carry her. Her leg, she complained, "hurt worse than the time Daddy spanked me for painting on my wall with finger paint."

The sun, now no longer directly above us, had begun to sink toward the West over the water and away from the island and Boca East. I knew that it had to be nearing three o'clock. The sand began to feel as though it were cutting the tough soles of my feet; I thought I felt

blood on them, but it might have been sweat. The sand burrs were perhaps more excruciating to my feet than hot barbed wire; I would walk for yards, feeling a certain discomfort in one foot gradually worsening to a sharp pain, then would have to set Liz down and with my fingernails dig out the burr, or sometimes numerous burrs already buried halfway in my flesh. A couple of times my bare legs had brushed up against the sagebrush and small cacti habitating more vegetative spots of the sand, and I had cuts almost as long as the red and swollen streaks on Liz's leg.

The overbearing sun intensified my fatigue; my face felt feverish for most of the journey and as sticky as pancake syrup from the dry sweat. I had tasted so much salt on my lips that they started to crack and bleed. When I started feeling cold chills, I immediately stopped, set Liz down, and sat in the sand with my back to the sun.

Liz had been quiet for a good portion of the walk, but it was a weary-quiet. When we had been resting for five minutes and as I was nursing the wounds on my leg, she started crying, loudly.

"I wanna go home, I wanna go home, I wanna go home," she continued between breaths. "I wanna go home, take me home, my leg!" She sobbed. "My leg!" The crying became perhaps more high-pitched than the last time.

"Hush, Liz," I said. "Do you remember what your Daddy said about that stupid drunk being out here?" I lifted her chin with my hand. "If you make all that noise, he's going to find us." I looked up into the sky, the blood in my face rushing downward. "And then, I don't know what he'll do."

When she realized that crying was not as effective as she had intended, she stopped. I looked at her red face, her rapid exhalations, her almost surrendering blue eyes. I knew that her strong will had escaped her; she could no longer fight me or manipulate me, and, in a sense, she was totally vulnerable.

We continued, and this time I carried her in cradle-form. She seemed to relax, and her breathing became more rhythmic. With her head resting against my chest, she would occasionally drool on me, and the sweat from my face would collide with her saliva to travel down to my waistline.

When my knees began to buckle from the intense strain of climbing the dunes, we rested again. She remained asleep. I laid her on the sand, and she curled up next to me. The sun had begun to set. Mom, Dad, Uncle Ray, and Aunt Jen would be back by now. They might be calling around, but where to? They might be combing the sand looking for us. They might have even walked to the shoreline. My faith in their finding us had pretty well diminished. We were so far away



from the condo by now, and we seemed to be forever getting to the Hilton.

In the last few rays of sunlight, I looked at Liz. It was the closest I had ever been to her. I had never noticed how short and thin her blond hair was, nor the freckles on her nose. Her arms were so small compared to mine. And her legs...then I saw the scars. I picked her up, cradling her, and started walking again.

Before I actually saw the first sign of hope, I had been counting the number of dunes we traversed. One tiny one, one huge one, one not-so-huge one, one flat one, and finally one large and sort-of-rocky one. Five dunes in all before I saw the lights in the sky. Boca East. The light from streetlights and the cars made the city a spectacle. Its urbanity illuminated the sky changing the black to a combination of pink, violet, and red. But I saw no lights on the island. If the Hilton was not illuminating the sky, then it must be far away, I thought.

Then, I remembered: we crossed over a bridge to get on this island. So, surely, there is some road. The previous night, it was so dark on the bridge that I could not see anything but the high-rise Hilton and some condos scattered around nearby (although not so nearby tonight). But I could not remember where we had gone when we had gotten off the bridge; perhaps I fell asleep.

Before I could finish my thought, I felt an odd but swift breeze moving behind us.

"Where ya'll going to-night?" A voice from behind said.

I turned around. Liz woke up. I just stood there looking at the dark figure for a minute. Then, he moved closer and flicked his lighter on.

He had thick, dirty, blond hair, hanging down to his shoulders, and sported a just as unkempt beard. I saw that he was wearing nothing but overalls and that he had a bottle in one hand. I backed up.

"I say." He moved forward, staring at Liz. "What have we got here, with that pretty girl?"

We continued to back up.

He moved forward. "Sit down!" He yelled. "I want to take a look at this pretty little thing, Boy."

I sat down with Liz in my lap.

He reached out a finger and began to caress the side of Liz's face. "What's the matter, little girl?" He belched. "Are you hurt?" He turned his head and grinned. "I can make it better for you."

I felt like getting up and running, but my sense of protectiveness had been defeated by the king of all emotions: utter fear.

Liz turned her head away from the man's caress. She did not whimper or make any other noise. Then, she reached her short arm down toward the sand, and then

lifted it back up, her hand in a fist.

"LEAVE US ALONE, YOU STUPID DRUNK!" She propelled her fist through the air, and sand flew all over the drunk's face and into his eyes. For the first time, she started to laugh a little.

I cursed out-loud, and jumped up. I ran over dune after dune, unaware of direction, until I thought we were far enough away. I paused for a moment to catch my breath, peering down at the fearless wonder. Between the Man-o'-War and the drunk, the latter had certainly been the lesser of the two evils.

Then, I heard it. I held my breath. It sounded like an organ. A church organ, perhaps? I started walking toward the sound, still cradling Liz. Over the next dune, all I saw was a warm, orange radiance. I could not have cared less about the building emitting it. Just the light, the glow. In large strides, I walked toward it. When I was close enough, I felt cool gravel under my feet. The road! Crossing the narrow road, I walked right up to Cabildo United Methodist Church.

The front doors were standing wide open; perhaps the Sunday night service had just let out. I walked in. As we walked into the refrigerator-cool narthex, and my feet touched the cold linoleum, I felt like falling down and sleeping until winter. A man in ministerial garb was walking toward us.

"What can I do for you, children? My name is Reverend Peters." The balding man attempted to take Liz from me; I let him.

"We need to get to a phone, and a phone book," I said. "We've been wandering around lost on this island all day, and she needs a doctor. *Please* help us."

"Sure." He smiled. "What is your name, Son?"

"Eric," I said, "And that's my cousin, Liz."

"Okay, Eric. Why don't you and Liz go into the sanctuary and lie down for a while. Let me bring you some water to drink and some alcohol for those cuts on your leg. Our service has just ended, but some of the ushers are still around. One of them just happens to be a doctor, and I'm sure he can see to little Liz here."

"Thank you." I took Liz from him, her eyes now wide open.

"I can't feel my leg," she said and started to cry again.

"I know. Come on, let's go lie down for a while," I said. "A doctor's coming real soon." We started into the sanctuary.

I laid her on a padded pew and sat next to her. Then, letting out a deep breath, I began to rub the sand off the bottoms of her warm feet.

Craig Collier  
First Place  
Short Story Contest

## THE CHRIS READ AWARD FOR FICTION

The Chris Read Award for Fiction, instituted with the 1994 issue of Southern Voices, honors a member of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science's Class of 1991. Christopher David Read was an active leader at MSMS as a member of Emissaries, the Debate Club, and the Southern Voices staff. Chris's first love, however, was writing. Southern style.

Chris often wrote his Southern tales late at night. Chris would compose either on the computer or on (his favorite) the old, brown Royal typewriter he had bought from the pawn shop down 13th Street South. Faking sleep, I would watch the grin on Chris's face as he worked out the next great story. When he finished, Chris would always "wake me" and excitedly read his new story to me. He never knew that I had been hiding, watching his creative process with admiration. I was not the only one to admire Chris's work. This award stands as testimony to the admiration that we all held for Chris and his work and as a memorial to the Southern writing tradition which Chris loved.

Chris had the potential to become a great writer. Unfortunately, Chris never reached this potential: he was killed in a car wreck on January 17, 1993. Though Chris will never attain his dream of writing a great novel, all of those who loved and respected Chris hope that the recipient of this Award, as well as all the other aspiring writers at MSMS, will achieve their dreams.

Michael D. Goggans  
Class of 1991



Pen & Ink (Stipple)

William Satterfield

# Teddy Bears

H

He was a black and white photo -- a glimpse of the framework that used-to-be but was now just a sagging, fading hull. Occasionally they would see a glimpse of something -- a smile, a joke, a story, or maybe just a look in his eye -- but that, too, was just a memory. Sometimes memories were painful things, but the torment of knowing that "who-he-used-to-be" had slowly been gnawed away until all that remained were the shadows of the man, the diminishing dreams, and the alcohol.

I had not known him before. My earliest memories were of chaining metallic "beer tabs," the aluminum rings that opened his cans of Michelob. Paw-Paw kept the rings in a perched-in mound atop the refrigerator on the back porch. Sitting next to the icebox, chaining flat hooks to the clasp of the tabs, and singing filled my summer.

The aluminum would hit the concrete with a tight clink, and with both of us chaining, the whole scene was most musical. The refrigerator droned with us, tonelessly humming. In the distance, Paw-Paw maintained the rhythm with the whacks of his hoe into the earth. When it was later in the season he would promise to bring us back sweet corn. The raw corn would leave a trail of pale, sticky nectar streaking our chins and little flecks of skin and cornsilk in our teeth that you couldn't pick out with your fingernail.

As the summers passed, the lush canopies of bean vines sagged; the pert stalks of sweet corn wilted; and the entire garden shriveled under the dry, stale breath of July. We didn't sit on the porch anymore. I think my mom thought that it was because we were older and outgrowing certain things, but that wasn't it. Things were empty there, an emptiness neither one of us wanted to be reminded of. The sweet corn never came, and the drone of the refrigerator became more and more mocking as it emitted the scent that we grew up associating with Paw-Paw.

He claimed a place on his "rusty rose" recliner, his tough feet propped on the extension so that we might all observe his flaking skin and the yellowed spikes of toenails protruding from the holes in his decaying slippers. His eyes, sunken into his gnarled flesh, were glazed in an unblinking milky white haze, and his shriveled lips made their slow, heavy circles as they collected saliva. The tobacco juice landed in a lazy splotch and settled in the paper-towel-lined spit cup.

He was oblivious to the chatter of our family, but they would acknowledge him with a few sidelong, frustrated glances coated with contempt and repulsion. The looks were unintentional, simply looks of exasperation toward the illness, I knew, but they were bitter just the same. They would trace the outline of his figure with

their eyes -- the sludge that collected at the rim of his mouth; the unkempt mass of clumped, grease-laden, grey yarn that adorned his head and traveled past his nose and chin; his rotting, tobacco-stained

---

*The aluminum would hit the concrete with a tight clink, and with both of us chaining, the whole scene was most musical.*

---

hand that curled around the cup like a pup seeking comfort from its mother; his gaunt frame where the garage attendant jumpsuit formed a second layer of withered flaps -- until they would reach his belly, massive mound that was just begging to burst out of his jumpsuit, or out of his skin.

Alisha, who had joined me on those faithful days of summer, didn't look at him with contempt, though. In fact, she didn't look at him at all. She seemed to have made a convenient transition in their relationship -- from admiration to apathy. Only on occasions would she acknowledge his existence at all, and in those cases the attention was all negative. My family looked upon her, too, with anguish, and one could almost see the thoughts coursing across their brains -- a visible etching of "she's just a typical teenager" across their brow. I hated her for that. I hated her because she tarnished how the family saw ME, because we were only four months apart. Then I hated myself for hating her over such a selfish reason -- I could have been pained by the fact that she was hurting my family or Paw-Paw in par-

ticular. But I knew they didn't care. Teenage ramblings didn't mean much to the adults, and Paw-Paw was so far gone I doubted he remembered half of their disagreements.

I remember one of their arguments in particular. Alisha had made a sharp comment about his drinking, and he lifted his frame from the table to a trembling tower above her. She extended her body and jutted her chin in response. She hollered at him for two straight hours, the weak plaster trembling under the bellows. Grandmom was at work, and I was alone in the house, absorbing the noise. Alisha would scream and Paw-Paw would bark back. It scared me; I was afraid that she was hurting him with her words. Determined to break it up, I stormed into the kitchen, my footsteps crackling as I

popped the linoleum bubbles. That's when I saw it. The look in his eye that was much like... his birthday. Three months ago. I'd given him a teddy bear, a small pug-nosed teddy bear with black eyes pulled so tightly that the fur almost completely covered each speck. His eyes harbored a glint and he perked the ear that had been pressed flat from the wrapping with his fraying finger. It was the look of **life** -- not pain -- and she knew it. Her tirades were my teddy bears.

We wept when he died.

Heather Chappell  
First Place  
Essay Contest

## Eden

I was in the middle  
Possessing knowledge  
And life.  
They were there,  
But they were not alone;  
Shrewd, subtle, slithering  
It side-winded to them  
With somber eyes  
And a slick backside.  
"Ye shall not surely die,"  
It told them;  
"Ye shall be as gods,  
Knowing good and evil."  
As he partook with her,  
Their eyes were opened  
And she was cursed with pain  
and he to work the ground  
And I stood silent,  
Watching him and her  
In the middle.

Erika Buford



Charcoal

Hilary Henderson

May 27th, 1993

A House, An Attic.  
Abandoned.

A Rocking Chair in the corner  
Paint flaking, chipping, peeling,  
Gun-metal gray - rust red.  
Walkways - locked doors.  
My Home.

Images of long-gone beauty.  
A murder somewhere  
behind a door -  
Who am I?

Victim? Murderer? Watcher?  
Puddle of Blood, shimmering white,  
Seeping from under a door  
A stumble, A tumble, A chest  
Catches my descent.  
Blue with brass knobs, so blue  
So vivid  
Ancient books, pages fluttering  
Turning to birds freer than I can ever be  
In a nonexistent wind.  
A rocker, A walkway in the rotting floor.  
Abandoned.

My home. Alone.  
Crying - Searching - A Murder  
A window with early morning sun  
A man I know; I love.  
seeing him clearly a haven a horror  
His eyes knowing seeing accusing loving  
Awakened to darkness.  
Tears stream unnoticed.

Bridget Clark

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## The Wall

Their bodies curve, cling in  
Five-part visual harmony  
Move, weave  
Rhythm  
Balance  
Don't touch the floor  
One moment play  
One moment battle to the death  
But never quite get there  
Rage and love and confusion  
Their wall is real  
It's the walls in your mind  
You have to knock down  
To love the thing you hate  
To see...but you know mur mur  
Means something in English too

Theo Hummer

## Hardwood

Stout like an oak but possessing  
the bends of a fig tree.

Wrinkled like a raisin with a smile  
as radiant as the sun that dried it up.

Bear-like hands expressed the hard  
times he'd seen.

I counted the growth rings of his stump once;  
After a while, I had to pause for breath.

Sand-papered hands felt soft on a little boy's  
cheek.

The lump in his bottom lip signified authority;  
"Dipping's" what I called it, but to him  
it was a privilege of old age.

Labeled ignorant because of his illiteracy, he  
loomed wise as the great owl to me.

His kingly cane symbolized superiority  
rather than feebleness.

His silence brought importance  
to the few things he did say.

The country cabin he chose for a home was  
a perfect symbol of his manhood.

Quiet, calm, but strong and stout.

Sitting on the roots of this old stump,

Its branches shield me from outer harm  
and its sturdiness supports me just like  
a grandfather should.

Derrick Clay

# Out With the In Crowd

R

icky tore through the papers in his dresser drawer. He was desperate. He couldn't find his homework. He even began to stumble through Kevin's things as he searched. "Screw it; maybe she won't take up homework today." He hurried to the mirror

and picked over the two brushes to discover which was his, brushed his hair, sprinkled himself with Johnson's Baby Powder, and doused himself with Drakkar. He was one of the few "cool" teenagers who attended Bildington Boarding School on the outskirts of Pennytown, Georgia.

He entered the classroom only seconds after me. I had left his room early. He sat down beside me and I could hear fragments of lyrics from his headphones. "Loddi doddi, we likes to party; we don't cause trouble and we don't bother nobody." He removed the headset and said, "This Snoop is bumpin', fella. You needs to check it out latuh on dis' evenin'."

fella. You needs to check it out latuh on dis' evenin'."

"Alright," I said and went back to my work. Ricky was outgoing and had dated most of the girls at our school. Those he hadn't dated either admired him secretly or hated his guts. He and his roommate Kevin were everything that I had always wanted to be. They wore the latest fads, dated the beauties of the class, and had the reputation that every highschooler wanted. Class began, and, as always, Ricky greeted Dr. Moore with a hello and she smiled back. "Hand your homework up and over to the left."

Ricky raised his hand. "Dr. Moore, can I bring my homework back later? I picked up the wrong notebook."

"Okay," she said, "but don't let it happen again."

Two tests, a quiz, a club meeting during lunch, and an assembly all in one day. I thought I'd never be through this day, but four o'clock finally came. I ran into Ricky and Kevin in the lobby.

Ricky said, "What up dupe? U gone cruise the streets today with us or u gone stay on the downlow?"

I answered no.

"Oh, well," he said, "guess I'll see you later. Don't forget to drop by to catch a few trips from Snoop."

I stopped by Ricky's room that evening. "What's the scoop?" asked Ricky. "You been kinda quiet lately. Having girlie trouble?"

"No," I said, "just got a few things on my mind."

"I got some things on my mind, too," Ricky said. "Three fields come to mind immediately: a field of money, fly lyrics and rides, and summer bunnies dressed in the skimpiest of bikinis. That's where yo mind needs to be."

I knew what was next. I began to count down in my mind, "Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three--"

"You needs to come out with me and Kevin to get

away from this imprisonment. As a matter of fact, Toad's throwing this fly block party this weekend. You down?" asked Ricky.

"Lemme think about it," I said and left the room. I wanted to go, but I

never thought that my style fitted in. Ricky had told me that the key to being down was to be myself. But who was I? Oh well, I knew I didn't have time to think about that; I had work to do.

Ricky stopped by my room around 4:30 Friday evening. "You going or what?" he asked. "The party starts at 7:00 and we want to get an early scope on the hotties."

"Alright," I said. "I'll go if you let me wear the Jordan outfit you got upstairs." Ricky never lent his clothes out, so I figured this was a surefire way of getting out of going.

"Bump it, then; you ain't gots to go. We was just trying to help you get some freedom. Peace out, fool. Imma holler latuh," Ricky said. Then he stormed out of the room.

"Alright," I said. "Worked like a charm." Not even a minute went by, and boom, Ricky burst into my room with the gear. Shoes and all.

"Here you go, fool. Me and Kevin discussed the situation and figured I should do this. Mess up my gear and

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*He removed the headset and said,  
"This Snoop is bumpin', fella. You  
needs to check it out latuh on dis'  
evenin'."*

---

you gone have to answer to me. See you at seven," said Ricky.

"I couldn't believe he'd let me get his clothes, but I guessed I better go. 6:30, and I've checked myself in the mirror over ten times. Where's Ricky? I hope he forgot me. Ok, let's run through it again. I got the hair, got the teeth, face is fine, pants saggin', and....oh, forgot the chapstick.

"You ready?" Ricky asked as he entered the room. "Let's make some motions. Hope you gots some dough in your pocket."

"Yeah," I said. "I went by the bank today. Twenty should be enough, right?"

"Yeah, now let's getta move on. I gots to make a run by the corner and get the twenty sack and a bottle of Crazy Horse first," Ricky said. "Hope you got five on the twenty sack?"

Rolling down the block in a drop-top Camaro. Better than I ever imagined. Music up loud. You could barely hear the lyrics. *"Gotta be down to die, when it's your time to die. A pool of blood and tears fallin' from your eyes."*

"By the way, Ricky, what is a twenty sack?" I said.

"Oh snaps, this fool ain't never hit the chronic. Gots to teach him the ropes. Hope he got some finger nails. Cause a three way gone be real short," said Kevin.

I knew, now. Ricky and Kevin smoked dope. Dope--that's a big step up from that one cigarette I had

smoked when I was twelve. I had an asthma attack. The car began to slow down. We pulled up to a curb.

"Lemme getta twenty," Ricky said.

I started to hand him the five dollars over the seat.

"Keep your money, dupe, this one's on me," Ricky said.

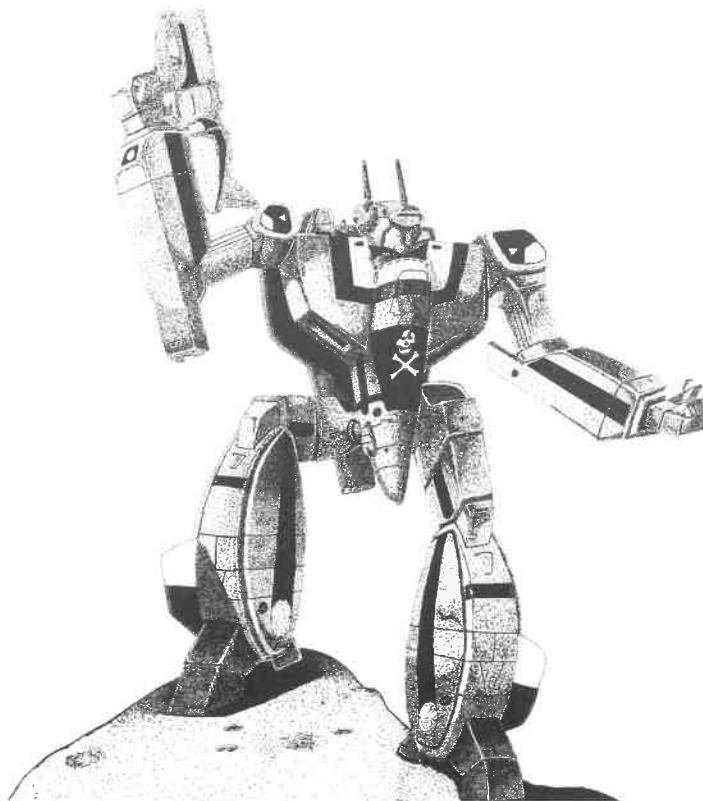
Ricky pulled out a wad of twenties and at that moment the man outside of the car pulled out a gun and said, "Keep your hands on the steering wheel, and you hand me the money." Ricky sat still so Kevin could reach for the money. I was froze stiff. Ricky slammed on the accelerator and, "BAM, BAM, BAM." The gun went off.

I couldn't hear anything. My body was numb. I was still in a state of shock. Something was dripping behind my ear. I was hit. I had been shot. "I'm hit, Ricky, I'm hit."

"Shut up, you gone be alright. We taking you to the hospital," said Ricky. "I can't believe this fool messing up my interior. My mom's gone kill me for this one," said Ricky.

His voice began to fade away. I couldn't hear him anymore. All that was clear was the music. *"Gotta be down to die, when it's your time to die. A pool of blood and tears falling from his eyes."*

Derrick Clay



Den & Ink (Stipple) Scott Poore

# Lovely Service

H

ot and sticky -- the draft rolling up the hill was hot and sticky. It left a pasty film on her skin that even her sweat couldn't quite rinse away. The stagnant air was almost too thick to breathe. Yes, somehow the summer breezes always seemed to be carrying stagnant air, especially on such a hot day as this one. Inhaling left a burning, crusting sensation in her nostrils and a cracking sensation in her throat. Stray dust from the arid baked fields of her Mississippi heritage found its way into her eyes. The dust stung her eyes, puncturing her corneas, piercing through to the middle of her head. This sensation would have provoked tears if they were not already there.

She could go inside to the lemon ice, the air conditioner, a cool tub of water. She might even consider the back bedroom -- the one that used to belong to her aunt. In her mind it still did. They refurbished it, you know -

- the back bedroom; they completely redid it. You would hardly recognize it, now. Oh, it still has the picture of the guardian angel watching over the two children, and the plaster is still cracked in the corner by the bookshelf. Now, it has a four-poster feather bed made out of mahogany. On the bed is a navy blue bedspread with flowers on it. They even bought curtains that match the bedspread. Best of all is the ceiling fan they installed. Oh, nothing's wrong with the air conditioner. It's just that she could always sleep better when the ceiling fan was on. Even in the winter, she just has to have it on. "There's something about the whir of the fan that simply knocks me out cold," she once said. "I guess it drowns out the voices in my head," she would laugh. She always did want a white fan with gold trimming on it. Aunt Ann picked the new things out herself just last week. Yes, she could go in the back bedroom, shut the door so as to drown out their voices, take off her shoes, lie on the bed, and fall asleep to the incessant drone of the ceiling fan. She

could, but she won't.

It's not that she prefers sitting, baking, out in the noonday heat in her black Sunday School dress and pumps. She just got tired of hearing, "It was such a lovely service."

Something intruded her thoughts. Someone was calling her from down the hill, past the peach orchard, and on the back porch. The tightness in her throat would not allow her to answer. She tried to say something -- anything, but the words would not come. The more she struggled with the words, the more difficult speaking became. Her throat closed in tighter. The lump imbedded in her throat was swelling. She was starting to get the familiar headache that accompanies heartaches. The bitter sweet pain in the middle of her

head was throbbing gently. With each throb, her eyeballs palpitated. She closed her eyes, and with the heels of her palms, she tried to stop the palpitating, the beating, the pounding of her eyeballs. Instead, she only saw a red and blue image of the

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*"There's something about the whir of the fan that simply knocks me out cold," she once said. "I guess it drowns out the voices in my head," she would laugh.*

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tendrils of the same old willow tree she had been standing under. -- Didn't want to get her dress dirty; otherwise, she would have been lying down.

A hand rested on her shoulder. She looked up with cloudy vision. It was Staci, her cousin and best friend ever since she could remember. She searched around absent-mindedly for her shoes. She had just taken them off a second ago. Staci found them by the trunk of the tree and handed them to her. The girls walked in silence through the peach orchard, down the hill, and finally, to the house. As the door opened, and she entered the house, she shuddered at the contrast with which the cool air met her skin. She barely stepped into the house when she heard someone say, "It was such a lovely service."

Rhoda Holman  
Third Place  
Short Story Contest



## Tuesday

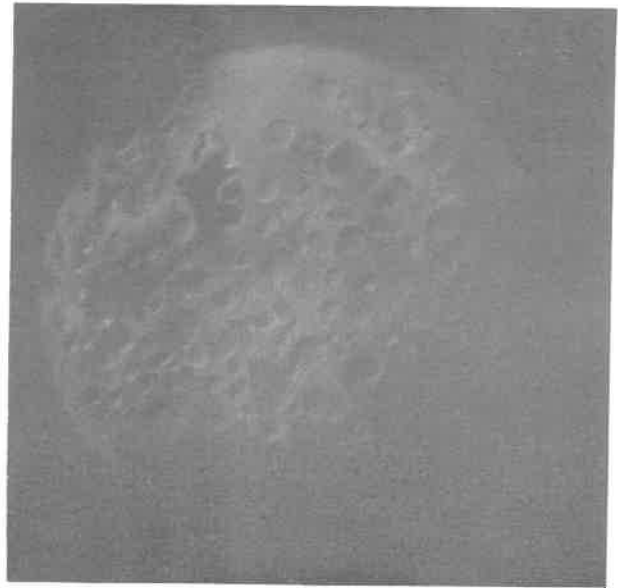
the garbage man comes today.  
i've never seen him but i believe he exists,  
and he believes in me,  
my bottles, stale bread and orange rinds,  
and torn pieces of paper,  
under the egg carton,  
that's where i always put my worst stuff,  
no one will look for them there.  
they always vanish in the time between  
the garbage door's four-way journey.

and you yell  
"Pay Attention!"  
as my stomach drops to the floor  
caught again,  
in love with something other  
than your voice.  
i stare into your angry eyes,  
as you tell me i'm dismissed.

Erase the dot,  
and put it where it was meant to be,  
not cluttering that corner of the paper.  
draw a nice line,  
end it with a flourish,  
i'm done now, do you want this?  
my fingers are getting tired.

fast walk through the drizzle rain,  
puddles soak my leather shoes,  
mist soaking my hair.  
i hate being wet.  
and you hold captive my umbrella.  
losing papers in the mud.  
i run to catch the door.

Lindsay Lloyd  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry Contest



Charcoal

Ann Patrick

## mississippi

the sun eats the trees  
like every other day  
in summer  
when there is no rain  
only baked clay  
for the grasshoppers  
to grow big upon  
and the paint is peeled  
from the houses  
where long red wasps  
build their nests.

Mari Peterson  
Second Place  
Poetry Contest

# Pops



W

rinkled, he possessed more lines than a one-hundred-year old tree. His head seemed to reflect light; his eyes were never open more than enough to see the blackness of his pupils. He was never formally educated, but he had acquired wisdom from his experiences. "Ignorant" is what many labeled him, but he was "Pops" to me. His failures became my strength to carry on and his desire for respect urged me never to quit.

I saw him for the first time when I was a young boy. I looked at him and was reminded of the many things that minorities had experienced in the Deep South. His body seemed frail, but I could tell by the look in his squinchy eyes he was a powerful man. I stepped on his foot the first day I visited, and he replied, "Men done died for smaller thangs, boy." These were the only words that I had heard him utter throughout the entire day.

Pausing while chopping wood one day, he allowed me to take a few swings while he took a break. Before he made it to the cooler, I had given up. He turned to me moments later after realizing I had stopped and said, "No life goals is done 'dout hard wuk, boy; lurn to neva give up."

I can't ever remember a time that my grandfather spoke to me plainly rather than in epigrams. My mother told me that he went a year without talking once because a man slapped his father and his father gave no response.

As a result of his silence, I grew to hate him more and more. The thought of visiting him brought spite to me because I felt that he was always trying to show me that I was less of a person than I thought I was. However, I started noticing his positive effects on me after my freshman year in high school when I volunteered over the summer to work at a Veteran's Hospital in Austin, Texas. I began to spend overtime with the patients because they were more than just feeble bodies that needed help -- they were people. I learned not to say much to them concerning their ail-

ments or participation in the war; Grandpa's silence had taught me more than words ever could.

The lessons he taught me also began to show up in my everyday life, as well. I got a summer job during my sophomore year and because I had never done manual labor before, the employer did not feel that I was going to be able to do a good job. My parents didn't show much belief in me, either. Because others thought that I would fail, I strived more to succeed. Grandpa's wood-chopping story had really found its place in life. I've had three other jobs since then, and I've "lurned to neva give up."

Because of Grandpa, respect of myself has taught me to value the respect of others and to entrust my respect only to those who respect me. Pops spoke to me some

years before he died and said, "Proud of ya, boy, proud of ya. U gones be a good man sum day." This was the first time I saw him smile, but it was far from the last. He spent the last four years of his

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*His body seemed frail, but I could tell by the look in his squinchy eyes he was a powerful man.*

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life with our family. Over the years his epigrams taught me a number of lessons; the only lesson I ever taught him was the fact that twenty cents was no longer able to buy chips and a soda.

I appreciate Grandpa's lessons more because he allowed me to learn them by myself rather than pounding his ideas into me. It was more like an independent study in life. Although many would view his life as a failure, I view it as an unrecorded success. There is no doubt in my mind that his life has had the greatest effect on mine. His failures are my inspirations and his accomplishments are my goals. I've grown to realize that each day of life is another log, but because I know that "no life goals is done 'dout hard wuk," the wood pile is growing smaller.

Derrick Clay  
Second Place  
Essay Contest

## Ain't No Sunshine

Like rainwater I drizzled down; you stood as a rose beneath;  
I had hoped to be caught and caressed by your soft petals,  
But there was a storm yesterday; your petals were already full,  
So my drops made ripples form above yesterday's storm.  
Then, like an overfilled glass, your petals  
Released the excess; but I had hoped that the water  
From yesterday would seep through the crack between your petals  
But you held on tightly; showed that you were gentle;  
A rose can only handle so much water;  
The storm clouds are clearing.  
A rainbow is forming above you;  
Goodbye.

Derrick Clay



Graphite

Will Gresham

## Not A Purple Poem

in this soft cold morning  
listen to the mockingbird.  
he knows me  
in his steel glass eye,  
dark the orb and glistening.  
waiting to capture my words,  
and open wings  
feathers bristling  
at my wary stare.  
fly into the white sun nearly  
fly into the high part.  
and tell your god of my  
arrival.  
don't tarry on the rooftops.

those balls up in the air again,  
one by one the circle forms  
within your fingers.  
play with them.  
all for the crowd  
for the laughing and the smiles  
you love your jester's tools-  
your sigils in the rain.  
red,  
green, blue,  
to catch the watcher's eye...  
the green is for me  
and the blue,  
for her with her ice-cold fingers,  
spreading broken bones  
in the snow  
as she hobbles  
down the hill,  
down the hill,  
and you go tumbling after.

the red is for you  
i can tell in your eyes  
you trust in it more,  
the steady one  
easy to catch,  
and hard to let go of.  
see the color,  
see the pretty bright crimson,  
well worn  
broken in,  
broken,  
but not yet  
it was never made of glass,  
and you haven't dropped it yet.

a choice of  
two only,  
the third is a sacrifice,  
you can't have everything,  
when you are no longer while,  
what did i give you?  
no more than words  
words that are colors  
you can only see in the dark.  
i read you  
through your blue eyes,  
that same sky color  
where god sits and waits for me,  
yelling-  
make up your mind  
tell me your choice.  
he wants to hear confessions:  
reasons on a golden throne,  
i left them all on a mockingbird's tongue,  
someone must have killed the bird.

Lindsay Lloyd



Graphite

Preston Parrott

## Contributors' Notes

La-tánya Ashley, a junior from Gulfport, is most influenced by Audre Lorde and quotes from her poem, "Separation": "It is possible / to shoot a man / in self-defense / and still notice / how his red blood / decorates the snow." In college La-tánya plans to major in foreign languages and journalism.

Shannon Brown, a senior from Cleveland, plans a double major in art and environmental science at the University of Georgia in Athens. Her favorite book is The Last of the Mohicans, and her favorite author is Henry David Thoreau.

Erika Buford is a senior from Jackson. Her inspiration is the quote, "You can do anything when you put your mind to it." Her future plans include a major in biology, followed by medical school and a career as a doctor.

Tina Caruthers is a senior from Batesville. She is most influenced by Ecclesiastes 3:1-8: "For every thing there is a season...." She hopes to attain her BSN from Union University / BMH in order to work with drug-affected babies.

Elena Cason, a junior from Aberdeen, is most influenced by Douglas Adams. Her favorite work of literature is The Hero's Crown. Quoting Aldous Huxley, she says, "North, Northeast, East, Southeast, South, Southwest, South, Southeast, East."

Heather Chappell is a junior from Oxford who is most influenced by the feminist work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Margaret Fuller. Her favorite pieces are "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Gilman and The Dark Half by Stephen King.

Bridget Clark is a senior from Sumrall. She is most influenced by the authors Edgar Lee Masters, Dr. Seuss, and her brother, Pete Clark. Her dream is to write for National Geographic magazine.

Derrick Clay, a senior from Itta Bena, appreciates the work of Alex Haley. His favorite book is The Autobiography of Malcolm X. He plans to major in mechanical engineering and serve in the Air Force for four years.

Craig Collier is a senior from Ocean Springs. He is most inspired by Harper Lee's book, To Kill a Mockingbird. He plans to major in English at the Honors College of the University of Southern Mississippi. Craig is the recipient of the first **Chris Read Award for Fiction** at MSMS.

Estella de la Vega is a senior who contributed artwork to Southern Voices. She plans to attend college in California.

Julia Fair, a senior from Hattiesburg, enjoys backpacking, martial arts, and writing. She is most influenced by life. Her favorite quote is "I don't think we have ideology, we don't have theology, we dance." Julia plans to retire young and become a hermit.

Katie Foret is a senior from Tylertown. She plans to become a psychiatric nurse. She likes Madeline L'Engle's works and the poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost.

Beth Fratesi, a junior from Leland, is the editor of this issue of Southern Voices. Her favorite book is J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit. She encourages her classmates with her favorite quote by the Seven Dwarves: "Whistle while you work!"

Kohl Gill is a senior from Sherman. He is influenced by scientist Dr. Leon Lederman. He plans to study Particle /High Energy Physics. He looks at life as "a standardized test. Sometimes you're the proctor and sometimes you're the testee."

Will Gresham is a junior from Clarksdale who contributed artwork to this issue.

Todd Harrison is a senior from Hattiesburg. Heavily influenced by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, he plans to study aerospace engineering at MIT.

Cindy Henderson, a junior from Laurel, believes that "the only true limit is your imagination." Her favorite poem is Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken." Her future plans include biotechnology and engineering.

Hilary Henderson is a junior from Starkville. Her favorite poet is e.e. cummings. Hilary's favorite quote is by Ralph Waldo Emerson: "My life is not an apology, but a life."

Rhoda Holman, a junior from Jackson, is most influenced by the author L.M. Montgomery. Her favorite quote is "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." Rhoda plans to become a lawyer.

Theo Hummer, a junior from Meridian, is most influenced by Ursula K. LeGuin. She plans always to write, paint, and play the viola. Her favorite book is The Dispossessed.

Justin Joffrion is a senior from Hattiesburg. His favorite quote is "Do not develop bad habits; they can become bad traits." His favorite author is Bill Watterson. Justin plans to study operations and research at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Jehovah Keyes, a senior from Taylorsville, is influenced most by Emily Dickinson. His favorite quote is "To be or not to be, That is the question" from Hamlet. Jehovah plans to become an aerospace engineer after graduating from Mississippi State University.

Amber Lash is a senior from Pascagoula. She plans to attend Tuscaloosa University and later to teach at a medical college. Her favorite author is Richard Bach.

Lindsay Lloyd, a senior from Madison, contributed award-winning poetry. She is most influenced by C.S. Lewis, and her favorite quote is Plato's "A man who has no music in his soul is not to be trusted." Lindsay plans to attend LSU.

Susan Massey, a senior from West Point, plans to attend the University of Virginia. Her favorite quote is her parents' admonition: "Better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it." Her favorite book is "A Separate Peace."

Orrin L. Matthews is a senior from Indianola. His favorite quote is "So be it!" from the movie Pump Up the Volume. His favorite books are 1984 by George Orwell and Fade by Robert Cormier.

Angie McMillen, a senior from New Albany, will attend George Washington University.

Carrie Greer O'Keefe is a senior from Clarksdale. She plans to attend Belhaven College to major in psychology and Biblical studies. She then plans to attend a seminary.

Tammy McGee, a senior from Pearl, is most influenced by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Her favorite quote is "A weed is a plant whose virtue has yet to be discovered" by R.W. Emerson. Tammy plans to attend Loyola University.

Preston Parrott is a senior from Brandon. He is most influenced by Thoreau. Preston's favorite quote is "When you are content to be simply yourself and do not compare or compete, then people will respect you" by Lao Tsu.

Ann Patrick attended Ocean Springs High School in Jackson County before coming to MSMS. A senior, Ann's favorite quotation is from J.D. Salinger's A Catcher in the Rye: "It's such a stupid question, in my opinion. I mean how do you know what you're going to do till you do it? The answer is, you don't. I think I am, but how do I know? I swear it's a stupid question."

Mari Peterson, a senior from Aberdeen, plans to attend LSU. Her favorite author is Pablo Neruda, and she especially likes the Selected Poems by Robert Bly. Mari submitted award-winning poetry.

Samuel Pierce (a.k.a. "Sam") is a senior from Magee. He is most influenced by Joseph Campbell. Sam's favorite quote is "Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future." Sam plans to attend Belhaven.

Scott Poore, a senior from Flora, enjoys the writings of Homer and Dr. Seuss. His favorite quote is "Just because you're paranoid don't mean they're not after you" by Kurt Cobain. Scott's favorite books are The End of the Circle and The Iliad.

Latisha Powell is a senior from Columbia. She plans to attend medical school at Mississippi College. Her favorite author is John the Apostle, and her favorite book is This Present Darkness by Frank Veretti.

Drew Pruett, a senior from Columbus, is most influenced by the author James Joyce. His favorite quote is "The following statement is false, the preceding statement is true." He plans to attend the University of Oklahoma and major in math and physics.

William Satterfield is a senior from Benoit. William's favorite quote is "If the good die young, our boy's going to live forever" by his father. William plans to major in entomology at Louisiana Tech.

Daniel Williams, a senior from Oxford, has too many favorite books to choose from. However, his favorite quote is "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Daniel plans to major in computer engineering at MSU.

Todd Windham, a junior from Brookhaven, is the Assistant Editor of Southern Voices. Todd says in reference to his future plans, "I think I'll marry Melissa Magee, buy a dog, live on the side of a mountain, and write about it." Todd's favorite book is Howl by Allen Ginsberg.

Mark Womer is a junior from Oxford. His favorite authors are Ray Bradbury and Robert Frost. He plans to live and to love.



Charcoal

Shannon Brown



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