

*Spring 2008*

# *Southern Voices*





# Southern Voices

Spring 2008

## Volume XX

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*Best American Short Stories 1972*, *The Georgia Review*,  
*New Orleans Review*, and *The Carleton Miscellany*

# Table of Contents

## Short Stories

<b>Tiffany Croft</b>	
<i>Rest</i> .....	39
<b>Elizabeth Crowder</b>	
<i>The Forgotten Passenger</i> .....	14
<b>Joel Huber</b>	
<i>The Pool Table</i> .....	42
<b>Stella Nickerson</b>	
<i>My Candle Burns</i> .....	3
<b>Elizabeth Seratt</b>	
<i>Esperanza's Song</i> .....	37
<b>Brianna "Skye" Williams</b>	
<i>Vanilla</i> .....	8

## Poetry

<b>Brittany Bell</b>	
<i>A Childhood Visit</i> .....	7
<b>Cecily Carlisle</b>	
<i>Napoleon and I</i> .....	21
<b>Madeline Carter</b>	
<i>Moon Chant</i> .....	25
<b>DeAnza Collins</b>	
<i>White Shield</i> .....	26
<b>Tiffany Croft</b>	
<i>Tara Faith</i> .....	26
<i>Those Hands</i> .....	36
<b>Elizabeth Crowder</b>	
<i>Playground Weddings</i> .....	18
<i>Calculus Has Reached Its Limit</i> .....	20
<b>Donald Conn Daniel</b>	
<i>Mahogany Man</i> .....	13
<b>Ryan Deschamp</b>	
<i>I Write on Napkins</i> .....	5
<i>Mississippi River Mishap</i> .....	23
<b>Boram Lee</b>	
<i>She</i> .....	27
<i>Apples and Music</i> .....	45

## Essays

<b>Hannah Cunningham</b>	
<i>The Road Home</i> .....	19
<b>Donald Conn Daniel</b>	
<i>Gardening</i> .....	6
<b>Richard Harvey</b>	
<i>Not an Option</i> .....	32
<b>Christina Moore</b>	
<i>My Hallway</i> .....	12
<b>Stella Nickerson</b>	
<i>Reveals and Reviews</i> .....	30
<b>Laney Owings</b>	
<i>The Jeep</i> .....	34
<b>Elizabeth Seratt</b>	
<i>Texaco</i> .....	46
<b>Nickie Wu</b>	
<i>A Different Kind of Home</i> .....	28

<b>Christina Moore</b>	
<i>Goodbye Lover</i> .....	17
<i>The Closet</i> .....	25
<b>Stella Nickerson</b>	
<i>Sonnet for da Vinci</i> .....	16
<i>Prayer Requests</i> <i>in a Mormon Community, 1858</i> .....	47
<b>Aldon O'Bryant</b>	
<i>Uncle Jerry, weirder than the average uncle</i> ..	17
<b>Stephanie Oshrin</b>	
<i>Providence?</i> .....	27
<b>Miguel Rodriguez</b>	
<i>Lilia eres una Flor por Siempre</i> .....	22
<b>Hannah Ryan</b>	
<i>Blue Jay</i> .....	18
<b>Elizabeth Seratt</b>	
<i>The Grandmother's Garden</i> .....	24
<b>Chioma Udemgba</b>	
<i>On This Very Day</i> .....	11

## Artwork

### Elizabeth Barrett

*On the Coast* ..... 36

### John Bradley

*New York, New York II* ..... 2

*Sandhill Cranes* ..... 23

### Katie Caves

*The Old Country Church* ..... 24

*Interpretation of Monet* ..... 28

### Hannah Cunningham

*The Road Goes Ever Onward* ..... 18

### Rhonda Daughdrill

*Forbidden Eden* ..... 33

### Parker Dendy

*The London Eye* ..... 21

### Sweta Desai

*Pride* ..... 24

### Kali Falnes

*Morning Ride* ..... 47

### Haoran "Jack" Li

*Grand Keys of Music* ..... 16

### Aisha Lyons

*A Day in Autumn* ..... 22

*Flowers of the Night* ..... 23

### JaAnna McKinney

*The Butterfly Effect* ..... 26

*A Thing of Beauty* ..... 45

### Stella Nickerson

*Little Bird, Little Bird* ..... 26

### Wrijoya Roy

*Evening Glow* ..... Front Cover

*Mother and Child* ..... 17

*The Taj Mahal* ..... 21

### Dong Song

*Just A Rose* ..... 11

*Getting Ready* ..... 20



## New York, New York II

Scratchboard, John Bradley

## Photography

### John Bradley

*Mississippi Artery* ..... 13

### Samantha Caldwell

*Bambi* ..... 31

### Leslie Datsis

*Slapdash* ..... 24

### Jonathan Feng

*Timeless* ..... 21

*Masquerade* ..... 25

### Evan Howlett

*Night Riding in Maui* ..... 22

*Hawaiian Beachfront* ..... 27

### Wrijoya Roy

*Henna* ..... 38

### Shelby Steelhammer

*Hands of Time* ..... 9

### Misty White

*Swing Set* ..... 7

*View From the Top* ..... 22

*Lunch is Ready!* ..... 41

# My Candle Burns

stella nickerson

First Place — Short Story Competition

The Chris Read Award for Fiction

Tilly discovered Stirlings her first week on the Sewanee campus and loved it. She loved its yellow walls, the white wicker porch swing, the magenta flowers the size of dinner plates that grew on either side of the steps. She loved the random collection of furniture crammed into its rooms—overstuffed armchairs, a paisley sofa, beaded curtains, lace-trimmed pillows. She loved peppermint hot chocolate served in deep blue mugs, banana nut muffins, bagels with cucumber cream cheese, and milkshakes. And she thought she might really, really like the boy behind the counter.

He had dark hair that curled just a little and deep-set eyes. And sideburns.

That morning it rained, but didn't really mean it, the pale gray sky trickling water that made the world slick and dewy and spattered across Tilly's glasses. The bottoms of her jeans dragged in puddles—she knew they'd be all crusty hard by time she got to class. But she liked the rain anyway, liked the cool feeling of it as it gathered in her hair and especially liked coming in out of the rain, into Stirlings.

"The usual, please," she said to the boy behind the counter.

He blinked at her. "Uh... excuse me, what's that?"

Tilly felt herself blush hot beneath the cold hair clinging to her cheeks. "Peppermint hot chocolate. Small. And a banana nut muffin." The boy behind the counter whisked away to the pile of deep blue mugs and the row of silver canisters

filled with flavored syrup back against the corner, murmuring something to the girl behind the counter—her hair was short and blonde; she wore silver rings in a line up her ear. Tilly sank onto the sofa and felt like putting her feet up on the tile-topped coffee table but stopped herself. She took her book from her purse, and read:

*My candle burns at both ends;  
It will not last the night;  
But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—  
It gives a lovely light!*

She had a sudden image of herself, thinner than she was, with no glasses, lounging on the paisley-patterned sofa and smoking a cigarette. The anti-smoking campaign way back in middle school claimed that cigarettes never make you look cool, but Tilly knew they did—not if you were some pimply seventh-grader, no, but if you were in your twenties, and just rumpled enough, and not sitting properly on whatever furniture you chose, and, most importantly, you had that look, that I-am-fine-with-getting-cancer-when-I'm-fifty-because-right-now-I'm-young-and-I-am-just-that-sophisticated look.

Tilly heard the clink of china and realized that the girl behind the counter had appeared by the sofa and was sliding a blue mug onto the coffee table, followed by a muffin on a yellow plate. The electric light glanced off the girl's earrings.

“...the pale *gray*  
*sky* trickling water  
that made the  
world *slick* and  
*dewy* ...”

Tilly imagined a candle burning at both ends, and put out her hand to touch the girl's wrist. She gave Tilly such a look that she was reminded, immediately, that you don't touch people like that, not strangers. But she'd already done it, so she might as well pull her hand back and say:

"The boy behind the counter... What's his name?"

The girl blinked. And then, after a second's pause, she laughed.

Tilly took a deep breath, trying to will her face from getting hot and red. "What?" she said.

"It's nothing. Or—it's something, but you wouldn't think it's funny. Inside joke." She turned, as if to walk away, but then seemed to change her mind and faced Tilly again. "You must really like our muffins to walk all the way up the mountain from the high school every morning."

"I don't—I'm a student *here*. A freshman. I live in the dorms."

The girl's eyes went mock-wide. "Wow. You must be some sort of prodigy, then, off to college at your age."

"I'm *eighteen*."

The girl threw up her hands, as if in defense. "Okay, okay. I believe you already.

Chill." Then she grinned. "Stirlings welcomes your service," she said. "And we hope you come again." She moved back behind the counter, where the boy was swirling whipped cream onto someone's coffee. She leaned over to him, whispered something in his ear. He laughed, and his dark curls shook.

Tilly picked up her mug and leaned back into the paisley upholstery. She sipped hot chocolate, and the steam rising from the cup fogged up her glasses. She imagined herself with silver rings up both ears and studs in her nose and lip and eyebrows. Someone would ask *Didn't that hurt?* and she would shake her head—she was far too

hardcore to feel pain. Someone would run his hands along the lines of her face—because if she were fantasizing anyway, why not—and would feel the contrast between her soft skin and the cold bumps of metal. He'd whisper *You feel like a cyborg*.

Tilly smiled. Yes, exactly, a cyborg. You will be assimilated.

"Hey, you, where are you from?"

Tilly looked up to see that the girl behind the counter had returned.

"What?"

"It's *him* that wants to know." The girl raised her eyebrows suggestively.

"Mississippi," Tilly said, though the muscles in her face felt tight.

"Jackson? Because, you see, I'm from Memphis and he's from Birmingham, and we city people have got to stick together in this place."

"I'm from Splunge. It's not a town. Just a place with some farms and a church and a gas station."

"Well, once someone puts in a McDonald's you'll be in the Big Leagues, won't you?"

"Yeah." Tilly stared past the girl at the wall opposite with its hand-drawn menus

and black-and-white photos of the campus. She clutched her blue mug, let it warm her fingers, and said nothing more. The girl behind the counter laughed again and walked away.

Tilly picked away at her muffin and sipped away at her drink and thought of a candle burning at both ends. When she dared, she glanced over at the boy behind the counter and his sideburns, the girl behind the counter and her earrings and short hair. They mixed drinks, toasted bagels, took orders, told each other jokes and laughed at them. Tilly thought that they were each an end of a candle, burning down.

"Tilly *thought*  
that that they were  
each an *end*  
of a *candle*,  
*burning* down."

She took a napkin from the dispenser on the coffee table and a pen from her purse and wrote something down. She looked at what she wrote and wished she had either friends or foes to share it with. But there *was* the boy behind the counter.

She took another napkin and rubbed at her mouth, since experience had taught her that her lips were probably ringed with chocolate. Then she stood, wiped the wet hair back from her face, pushed her glasses up her nose, took the written-on napkin from the table, walked up to the counter.

"Can I help you?" asked the girl behind the counter, smirking.

Tilly frowned. The boy behind the counter had his back turned to her, pouring milk into a deep blue mug. She'd just have to speak loudly.

"My candle burns from one end like candles are supposed to. Or maybe I don't even have a candle, I have one of those energy-saving light bulbs that's supposed to reduce global warming. They may be dim, but *I* think they're plenty lovely."

She dug into her pocket and put a quarter, a nickel, and two pennies into the tip jar shaped like a fish. And then Tilly walked out into the rain.

## *Write on Napkins* ryan deschamp

A great writer once said,

"I write on napkins because it doesn't count."

And it doesn't.

Who has ever read a napkin?

It's like a do over, another

chance to roll the dice,

another try to get it right.

I write on napkins because no one

else will see these words.

Forbidden thoughts to the outside world—

Love. Desire. Fear. Hate.

Secrets so easily kept,

simply stored away.

Crumbled up into a ball and tossed aside.

I write on napkins.

## *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 wove 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

# Gardening

donald conn daniel

*I enjoy the smells of summer, especially out in the garden, where the tomatoes and the cantaloupe struggle with the weeds to survive. I like the stench of a sweat that comes from hard work outside. The harsh hug of the August heat doesn't bother me too much. A garden is a sanctuary for me, but it's also a lesson.*

My family has lived in Benton County, Mississippi, for at least a century. We've always gardened. When spring returns with all its vitality, my grandfather calls for me. He asks me to help my grandmother with the garden, especially the tilling.

I don't have the option to tell him no, so I say, "Yes, sir," and head for the tiller shed. I walk past the blackberry patch to the dark, rusty tin shed. The door's rotten wood frame is snapped, so the tin hangs down like peeling wall paper. I stop and cautiously peer in, checking for wasp nests. Assured of not getting stung, I drag the tiller out backwards. I crank the machine and lead it down to the garden. The brown

ground, still rough and uneven from last year's garden, is broken up with ease by the tiller. The strenuous part consists of learning how to control the vivacious tiller; it can't be forced to move or turn. I have to let it have a little leeway, and just put enough pull on the handles to keep it in a straight line. After I've finished two or three rows, my hands hurt because of the tiller's vibrating madness. Even though the spring temperature is low, sweat streams down my forehead and into my eyes, stinging them and causing me to pause to wipe my face on the sleeve of my t-shirt. After the tilling is finished, and the first week of May has passed, the tomatoes

need planting. This job is harder than tilling, for it involves driving the posts that support the tomato plants. The post-driver I use to do this is probably three times my age; my great-grandfather made it. I pick up a green, metal post, and head to the rows of tomatoes my grandmother has already planted. With one arm I pull the pole upright, and with the other I slip the crude and rusty iron driver over the top. I check to make sure the post will sink straight into the light brown dirt and I begin ramming down the driver till the post is deep enough to stand alone. Metal sliding against metal, like a raspy rhythm and

blues singer, accompanies the sharp notes the post-drive lets out when it bangs against the top of the post.

At school, I sit at my desk: elbows spread wide, my nose following the path of my pen along a piece of paper. Homework almost never stops—I could always be studying or reading for one of my classes. An ACT study guide sits thickly atop an encyclopedia

of organic gardening. I count the assignments left in my planner using French, so I can practice the language. My life in Columbus, at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, is very different from my life in Benton County. Here, I don't use a hoe to weed, but a keyboard to write an essay. It isn't muscle that keeps me going at MSMS, but the will to learn and to excel. The manual labor involved with gardening has given me a motivation to succeed in academics. I realize that physical labor will gnarl my spine, and I don't want that. I would rather exhaust my mental facilities. I know how hard physical work is—through my own experience

"Metal  
sliding against  
metal, like a raspy  
rhythm and  
blues singer..."



gardening, and through observing my father and grandfather. Pawpaw Earl, my grandfather, was much of a man. At six foot and seven inches and four hundred pounds, nobody scared him. He could take a concrete cinderblock in each hand and throw them without strain. Pawpaw has arthritis of the spine now, and mostly sits in his chair, reading the papers. Daddy is over six feet and four hundred pounds. His work is hard and straining. Daddy gets cuts and bruises and burns, but keeps working like he's not tired and worn out. My family has a lot of hope for me. Through education I can go beyond physical labor and get what my family calls "a job in the air conditioner"—in other words, an intellectually challenging and satisfying job that doesn't demand brawn.

Even though there's work involved, a garden is beautiful. The focus and participation I put into gardening rewards me liberally with its lovely features, fruits, and vegetables. The same is true with academic work; it's rewarding. Literature and philosophy lit my way while I discovered how to relate myself to the world in writing. Calculus and physics showed me how to approach the world in a mathematical and scientific way. Gardening has taught me to approach my studies with discipline and determination. I will strive towards excellence with the wisdom that hard work has revealed to me.



*Swing Set*  
Photograph, Misty White

## *A Childhood Visit* *brittany bell*

Last night childhood told me,  
*Come back for a visit.*

So I hopped on childhood's magic car  
and went back:

Childhood stopped at an old dance studio where  
I saw kids tap dancing;

I spotted a little girl in the corner—  
to my surprise it was me.

I was getting ready for our big recital—  
I was the worst in the group.

I had nearly cut my legs off with the taps  
and I was tired before the song started,

But my teacher had a plan:  
She let me do the solo.

"That's dumb," I thought.  
"I can't dance."

Little did I know  
Spotlights change your heart.

As I stepped onto the floor  
my heart was about to burst.

That five minutes felt like five hundred years,  
But I didn't mess up.  
After the show was over,

Childhood and I zoomed back to my room  
Where I fell fast asleep

With only the sweet twinkle of magic:  
Childhood whispered, *Come visit again sometime.*

# Vanilla

brianna “skye” williams

8:08 p.m. He unbuttoned the first three buttons of the stiff, starch-scented button-down and ditched the gray tie in the back seat as he opened the car door. The uniform noose he wore to the office every day seemed to get tighter each time he wrapped it around his neck. His dark blazer joined the tie as a careless heap on the floor board.

8:17 p.m. The digital blue of his wristwatch told him so. A waning gibbous peeked out from behind opaque masses of clouds in the dark sky. Occasional moonbeams would meander across the parking lot, over the clumps of cars parked haphazardly at random angles—barely in the marked spaces—and climb the sloping roof of St. Helena’s Tavern before retreating again beneath the cumulonimbus cover. A breeze trickled across the pavement, tainted with salt and sea-spray from the beach not too far away. But the slight puffs of wind recoiled as they neared the repulsive smoke smog and alcohol that dripped between the cracks of the barroom.

The silver-grey Honda winked as he set the alarm and dropped the keys in his pocket. They clinked against the gold band already there, a barely audible ring against the music blasting from the building as he walked towards it. 8:24 p.m., a small group burst from the tavern, a billow of smoke haloing their exit.

They stumbled down the porch steps, red faced and giggling women hiccupping and clinging to equally giddy men whose roaming hands earned playfully outraged cries.

“Mark!!” A plump brunette laughed as a taller man’s wandering palms found her backside. “If you

don’t stop that...!” she slurred, and tripped over a rock. The group laughed, clutching their longnecks like sacred grails, tipping them towards the sky and gulping the elixir of life.

He slid in behind their boisterous exit. He reeled as the smoke and tang of alcohol poured into his lungs and the heavy chords of the juke box drilled through his ear drums. Bodies were packed, clustered in sweaty groups in smoky corners, on the dance floor, around the bar. He squeezed through

the mob, tripping dancers and sweaty drinkers alike crowding in closer than he would have liked. *She’ll smell it...*, he thought, *I know she will...*

Still, he sat heavily on a barstool, waving off the bartender’s offer of a drink. The smoke was stifling...the smell of whiskey and beer alone overpowering... his head was spinning.

“Why am I even here again...?” He muttered, checking his watch for the thousandth time. 8:46 p.m.

“Wha’d ya say?”

The voice was loud in his ear. He started, and knocked into the woman behind him. Whatever drink she was holding spilled over her blouse and crashed to the floor. The glass shattered and tiny pools of glitter glared up at the dim, hazy lights.

“Oh, my God! Are you okay?” He reached across the bar and snatched the bartender’s hand towel. The blonde woman stared up at him in surprise. Long blonde hair, dark blue eyes. Conveniently not wearing white. He took note. 8:59 p.m. For an instant, he thought a light of

“Was it the  
perfume? A  
soft *vanilla* and...  
something *else*...”

recognition sparked across her face, but she averted her eyes, taking the towel from his hand.

"Ah! Umm.. yeah, I'm fine... sorry, I suppose I scared you... I thought you were talking to me," she smiled, and dabbed at the black top she wore. Or was it blue? "I've never seen you here before." She said it like it was a question.

"I uhh... don't come around here very often," he answered vaguely, signaling the bartender for a drink.

"Which is your code for 'I've never been here before in my life,'" she stated, taking the stool next to him. Mint. There was mint in whatever she'd been drinking. The smell of it doused her shirt, over the alcohol. He watched her as she accepted a second drink and stirred it, a tiny green sprig whirling with the ice in the tiny cyclone. Something about her, he couldn't place...

Was it the perfume? A soft vanilla and... something else... something subtle and fragile and somehow vaguely familiar. It tingled at the nape of his neck, conjured wisps of cloudy memories he hadn't known he'd forgotten.

She snapped her fingers in front of his nose. "Hey. The lights are on but no one's home. You doin' alright there, kid?" He hadn't realized he'd been staring.

"Kid?!?" He blanched, but she simply shrugged and grinned behind her glass. He relaxed. "Sorry... just a little..."

"On edge? Overwrought," she finished, sipping her drink.

"Yeah. That about covers it..."

She shook her head and tucked stray strands of gold-blond behind her ear, a faint smile gracing her lips. "You office people tend to do that a lot, doncha?"

He chuckled, and nodded. "Is it that obvious?"

"Not too many people come here in..." She gave him a quick once over, "Rockports and Stafford khakis."



## *Hands of Time*

Photograph, Shelby Steelhammer

Rockports and Staffords indeed. *She's good...* he thought with a touch of admiration. Clever, and classy, for a woman who obviously frequents a bar. He'd noticed, not without a certain amount of disgust, the number of women who traipsed about the dance floor, painted up like harlequins, baring all to any who'd pay attention. Buxom or flat, they thrust out their chests to the ogling, glazed eyes of lechers drifting between the bar and the dance floor and strut about like superstars, squealing like schoolgirls when their too-short skirts managed to ride up. And there was always some desperate man there to make it happen. 9:27 p.m.

"I thought I'd do something different," he responded, turning away from the grind-pit in the center of the room. "Wha'd you say your name was?"

"I didn't. Call me Eevee," she flashed him a grin.

"Tyler." He offered her his hand. She glanced down, hesitating for the briefest moment before shaking it. Warm... her hand was warm, and soft, but her grip was strong, and the instant of uncertainty, or whatever emotion that had flickered across her flushed face, was gone.

Her hands weren't like the women who sashayed through the office buildings. Theirs were sickly-soft and painfully smooth, plastic-acrylic nails too long and too perfect. Hers were a strange mixture of soft and calloused, the nails clipped almost to the quick. If she ever spent time on them, he couldn't tell. *Somehow, I really don't think she cares*, he thought, and waved at the bartender.

"A uhh... Black Russian, if you make them...?"

The bartender nodded and turned away.

"Looking to keep awake? Or something else?" Eevee asked casually, turning her back to the bar. One foot was crossed beneath her while the other was

flat on the seat, her hands clasped beneath the sole of her shoe and her back braced on the edge of the bar.

Something was so fleetingly familiar about the gesture, her blonde hair falling over her face as she turned to him, and the heavy blue of her eyes. Unconsciously, he dug his left hand into his pocket.

Summer? No... it was fall. A faint vision stirred in his memory. Flashes of gold and reds hovered around skeletal branches, highlighting the

ultramarine sky while dashes of brown littered the viridian grass.

"Tyler? Seriously, you keep spacing out..." He felt her warm fingertips on his forearm, and shook his head to clear the haze.

"I'm fine...it's just..." The bartender set the drink before him. The ice cubes clinked against the inside of the glass, and beads of water dripped lazily down the sides. It smelled almost like coffee, with a little extra kick. "Have we... met before?" he asked, holding her eyes with his own.

Time slowed to a lethargic crawl. The seconds ticked by like hours. 9:56 p.m. For a breathless eternity, she gazed up at him. It was her sprightly laughter that broke the silence that had settled

between them. The quiet sphere that had enveloped the two dissipated into nothing, and the pounding of the music, the hollering drunkards, and the smoke smog suddenly swamped him. Beneath the assault on his senses, Tyler was certain he'd heard that laughter before.

"Are you crazy? I think I'd remember if I met you..." Eevee giggled, draining the last of her minty drink. "No... we're just two strangers in a small world."

The smile never touched her eyes. A poignant sadness, though, so fleeting he wasn't

sure he'd even seen it, fell through the blue. *No... he determined, it was definitely there...*

12:48 a.m. and a few Black Russians later, Tyler had forgotten about it. Eevee's third drink sat untouched, ice melted, and a shiny pool of water gathering about the base of the glass, but he didn't notice. She sat cross-legged on the barstool as he recounted animated stories from the college-days—not that they were that terribly long ago. The liquor had done him some good, and for the first time in a while, he felt like he could breathe.

Flashes of  
gold and reds hovered  
around skeletal  
branches,  
highlighting the  
ultramarine  
sky...



She paid rapt attention, and laughed at even his most ridiculously far-fetched stories.

Tyler never expected her to believe he'd been involved in a fraternity gunfight which he had heroically, and single-handedly, resolved, but he didn't care. Her laughter was so refreshingly evocative, and strangely nostalgic, for reasons he still couldn't place.

"So anyways," he continued, attributing the spinning in his head to the excitement of the story, "when the office building caught fire, it was my quick thinking and obvious bravery that saved it!"

Evee laughed and shook her head in disbelief, applauding the tale in spite of the extreme exaggeration. "Crazy kid..." She flipped her wrist, glancing at the tiny gold watch hiding beneath her long sleeve.

"It's almost one..." she said, meeting his eyes, "I should probably be goin'." She slipped from the barstool.

"Wait!" Tyler pushed through the throngs of people still skulking about the bar, and followed her out the doors. Logically, he knew he had no reason to. But something in him told him he needed to. She halted mid-step, confusion and something unreadable in her eyes.

"Evee..." He caught her thin wrist in his hand. That same, toasted vanilla... *God, where do I know you?* He asked himself over and over —

There.

High school. It was high school. Fall. Evelyn McAllister... The images flashed across his mind, spinning and whirling into one spiraling anamnesis. How could he have forgotten? His eyes searched her face, one so familiar and still so different from the girl he'd fallen in love with years ago. When she took off without a word or warning...

Gently, she pushed him away, holding onto his left hand. The tan line on his third finger was obvious in the white moonlight. "Would you..." she began carefully, slowly raising her eyes from his hand to his face, "would you mind ... taking me home...?"

## *On This Very Day* *chioma udemgba*

As the wild wind roared and the tall tree danced  
A little heart was breaking.

The load of love too strong, heart pounding  
like thunder, hands shaking like the earth was  
quaking.

Eyes red as a rose, face so pale and white.  
All the world was ending on this very day.

As the wild wind roared and the tall tree  
danced true love was growing.

Inside of two young hearts, floating as if on  
clouds, lighter than any feather

Eyes so glassy and clear, face glowing oh so  
bright.

All the world was beginning on this very day



*Just A Rose*

*Honorable Mention Drawing, Art Competition*  
Charcoal, Dong Song

# My Hallway

christina moore

*Armed with a box full of peroxide, I sit on my small chair waiting for the battle to resume. I move to find some comfort on this lumpy stool, but every movement just seems more and more futile. In my own bubble of silence, I watch women, children, and men, all clutching belongings that may have once held great value but now seem meaningless. They wait in a never-ending stream of bodies mostly caked in grime, some in blood, that flow into this shrinking hospital hallway. Pillows and hospital blankets, whose sterile white color is now unrecognizable, line the walls and whole families squeeze into vacant patient rooms.*

Behind me, a man has broken silence's trance with, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: For thou art with me; Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." Matted gray hair covers tired gray eyes that gaze into his lap, where a rosary lies. His brown dress pants and a beige shirt, that possibly may have been white at one point in time, suggest someone of class. There is no acknowledgment of classes amidst this pandemonium.

In this man's lap lies the key to his salvation. He clutches a turquoise bead rosary and prays for hope. Death is already coming for him; the bags under

his eyes darken as a procession of bone-rattling coughs spontaneously ignites from within him.

I've been sitting here for an eternity. In reality it's probably been only a few days, but reality is too obscure to grasp amidst the chaos before

me. A never-ending line of people with gashes, scratches, and bruises of indescribable colors have stood in front of me, yearning for basic first aid. I listen to stories of death, and I read those stories in people's eyes. Stories of survival and hope grace the hallway if only for a second; they are quickly swallowed by the despair that consistently paces up and down our hall, our own piece of hell.

The oppressing humidity thickens the dirty sweat-stained air. The generator has flooded along with the whole first floor; our only source of light is four flashlights. After the batteries die, we have only darkness. Just a sliver of light escapes through a crack in the plywood armor that protects dull

glass double-paned windows. Soon, light will return to us as the plywood peels away in pieces from the glass.

All is silent save a baby's terrified screams, save the roaring wind accompanied by torrents of rain that threaten to take the only thing we have left: our lives.

"Have you seen my daddy?" Through my exhaustion I focus on a small little girl with a dirt-infested cut on her arm. Her bright coffee-brown eyes look into my soul, pleading for a positive answer. Her sweet sing-song voice is a light in the dark. For a moment

there is a sign of humanity.

"What's his name?" I reply, dazed at the sound of my own voice.

"Daddy," she replies, earnest. She looks back at me, her brown eyes desperate for the answer I

"...the *bags* under  
his eyes *darken*  
as a procession of  
*bone-rattling*  
*coughs*  
spontaneously  
*ignites* from  
within him."

cannot give. She asks the same question I have been asked innumerable times within the past couple days. I watch her face contort as I cleanse her cut with alcohol.

"No, but I'll look for him." I give her a weak smile. I am unable to tell whether her eyes glaze either from the stinging of alcohol or the pain of missing her father. After applying a large band-aid, I watch her run beyond my view into the crowd of zombie bodies.

Time collapses around me. Now, eight ambulance drivers, a few friends of mine, have chosen to

run away into the light from this turmoil that rots Gulfport. The old man who searched for salvation was taken by nurses a few hours ago; only whispers of death return. Our last defense against the outside world has begun giving off threatening creaks and moans. More people have flooded into my hallway as rumors of the roof collapsing in on the fourth floor run rampant like anxious shadows on the walls. A new man stands in front of me with familiar dark worried brown eyes.

"How old is your little girl?" I ask him as I open a new box of peroxide.



*Mississippi Artery*

Photograph, John Bradley

## *Mahogany Man*

*donald conn daniel*

*Third Place — Poetry Competition*

He is a mahogany man  
made sun-ripe by the summer sun,  
working like the rotting tractor he drives.  
He wears triple-patch overalls,  
sagging straw hats, and slanted cigarettes.  
"Yahsirs" and "Nahsirs"  
slide up out of his chicken-craw throat.  
The dirty sweat ring of his cap  
is a crown, giving him dominion over his  
birds and beasts.  
The sun tucks him to bed,  
and the limp ears of his bed sheet sweep aside  
to reveal the morning.  
Go with us,  
you striving, settled spirit.

# The Forgotten Passenger

elizabeth crowder

Julia could validly claim that she had attended no fewer than 399 performances of the Broadway show *Lipstick*. This feat would be quite impressive, if not a little obsessive, were it not for the slightly lackluster fact that she was a cellist in the show's orchestra. Julia basically knew the show's every note, line, dance move; she could even predict the exact moments when the audience's "ooh's" and spontaneous applause would overpower even the obnoxious trumpet players.

Julia had always relished the surreptitious role of being a musician in the show-biz world. Something about being a main component of the show without dancing and singing in the spotlight gave Julia an incognito thrill, like an undercover CIA agent at the heart of a search-and-rescue investigation. On the street, she was just Julia; without her conspicuous blue cello case on her back she could blend into

the mass of New Yorkers who thronged outside the theater, straining for a glance at the stars who graced the stage with their musical declarations and spunky personalities. However, dressed in concert black, her bow poised above the slightly vibrating strings of her instrument, Julia transformed into the invisible heart of the show, the driving force that pierced the audience's ears and souls without the knowledge of their unobservant eyes.

The performance on the night of Saturday, February 28, would be the 400th performance of the show, and the *New York Post* predicted that this monumental event would be the social highlight of

the Broadway season. The whole theater community, as well as the privileged who funded them, would assemble to the special event. Flocks of penguin-suited men accompanied by their peacock be-jeweled wives relished attending theater performances, especially centennial celebrations, and Julia knew that tonight's performance would attract a significant number of esteemed individuals.

Julia loved riding the subway with her cello in

"Flocks of  
*penguin-suited*  
men accompanied  
by their *peacock*  
*be-jeweled*  
wives..."

tow. Sure, it could be awkward during rush hour; other passengers seemed annoyed by the fact that its bulky case took up valuable standing room on the mechanical worm that snaked through the bowels of New York. "Did that monstrosity pay for its own ticket? 'Cause the rest of us paying passengers could sure as heck use that room." Julia could think of a multitude of obnoxious comments to retaliate at the talking blob

of liposuction that could barely squeeze into the plastic subway seat, but she simply pretended like she was lost in the music penetrating through the white ear-buds that connected to her hidden iPod. The iPod was currently in the off position, but she had heard many entertaining conversations when others thought that her ears were otherwise occupied, so Julia often played this little trick on unsuspecting bystanders.

Riding the subway to shows was Julia's preferred mode of transportation, but the night of the celebration Broadway performance called for a cab ride. She knew that the throngs of humanity



would congest the path leading from the train station to the theater entrance, and she and her cello would have a hard time maneuvering through a stagnant mass. The fact that she was wearing an extravagant concert gown didn't help the situation, so a cab ride it would be.

"Whoahoa, are you going on stage tonight? The leading lady better watch out, gorgeous! You are gonna steal the show from right under her powdered nose!" Julia was used to the flirtatious comments that escaped from behind the Zorro-esque mustache of Enrique, her building's doorman. His exclamations might have been slightly more enticing if not for the car grease that plastered his ebony hair and eyebrows to his graham-cracker skin. "Can a girl get a cab around here?" Julia ignored his snide comments and picked up her cello case in preparation for the arrival of the sleek black Lincoln sedan that pulled up to the curb in front of her apartment building. Enrique knew better than to help her load her cello into the trunk of the car; Julia wouldn't even let her own mother carry her Mercedes-priced instrument.

After securely cradling her cello into the trunk of the cab, Julia slid into the backseat of the sedan and escaped into the rhythms and human-like reverberations of the Bach Cello Suites via the earphones of her sleek iPod. The nostrils of the New York city streets were congested on the way to the theater, and the lights of the city began to blink their insect eyes as the electric air of Times Square dimmed to a deep twilight. A block from the theater, Julia decided to finish her journey to

the show on foot. She wanted to make it to the orchestra pit in plenty of time to tune her vintage cello and practice for the opening number, a series of tricky rhythms that never ceased to challenge her, even after 399 repetitions.

"Thanks for the ride," she muttered in a sing-song voice as she handed the driver a crumpled clump of dollar bills and hopped out of the cab. Julia was easily able to slither through the crowd and arrived at the stage door in plenty of time.

Backstage was the usual organized chaos, with the added stress of the anniversary performance. Stage hands, performers, and musicians scuttled hurriedly along the cramped corridors, yet Julia fit right into the flow of things as she made her way to the orchestral room. It had never been this easy for her to travel in constricted hallways because of the cello that attached to her back like a tortoise shell. Wait. Her cello. That's what was missing; the lack of her hefty cello; nestled in the trunk of the cab that was probably half-way to Brooklyn by now! Julia felt the narrow walls close in around her; her most treasured and expensive

Julia turned  
around to see the  
*slick* Mexican,  
dressed in his  
*doorman*  
cap, holding her  
*sapphire* cello  
case...

possession was now being trundled along the pot-holed streets of New York in the back of a common taxi; the wooden masterpiece that had traveled from the Baroque recital halls of Europe to Julia's Manhattan apartment was now in the hands of a random, perhaps even criminal, cab driver.

Julia tried to think rationally as thoughts came of her beloved cello being dumped on the side of the road, or Heaven forbid, being played by some filthy-fingered bum on a street corner. She began

wracking her mind for some phone number that she might have seen in the cab, some indication of the car company or identification of the driver. She had been too immersed in the music emitting from her iPod to observe any significant details. Julia's mother had always told her that the portable audio device would be the downfall of this generation. "Music should be used to enhance the world, not block it out." Maybe her mother was right. If she had been paying attention to her environment, no matter how dingy it may have been, finding her cello would have been the simple act of remembering a phone number.

Showtime was drawing near, and the performers and orchestra members had long since taken their places onstage and in the pit. Julia was the only cellist in the small but powerful orchestra that sketched sound waves from the wooden and brass instruments that constituted their livelihoods, and

Julia knew that the absence of her cello could ruin her career, at least in New York. "Excuse me, have you seen a rather distressed young senorita? About ye tall, with hair the color of salsa?" Julia heard Enrique, her obnoxious doorman's, voice echoing through the cavernous hallways. Smiling, Julia turned around to see the slick Mexican, dressed in his doorman cap, holding her sapphire cello case delicately in his calloused hands, his mammoth build de-emphasizing the effect of her bulky instrument. Julia almost collapsed with relief. If Enrique had asked her to marry him right then, she just might have agreed. As she accepted her cello from her beaming doorman, Julia scrounged around in her small black clutch for one of the extra tickets that the theater always supplied her.

"Here, Enrique, go enjoy the 400th performance of *Lipstick*. Know that I am playing all for you!"



### *Grand Keys of Music*

*First Place Drawing, Art Competition*

Pencil, Haoran "Jack" Li

### *Sonnet for da Vinci*

*stella nickerson*

*Second Place — Poetry Competition*

I copied, once, the girl with tousled hair,  
But used more color: ochre, umber, green.  
I had a crinkled print of her. I'd stare  
And paint and work for hours at the sheen  
Of cheeks and chin, the shadow of her lips,  
The angle of her neck and umber eyes.  
When I copy, something always slips  
Out from my brush. At least the effort buys  
A portrait of a sister, not a twin,  
A clumsy echo of the girl he saw.  
He saw sienna curls surrounding skin  
And had to paint the object of his awe.  
I have never been compelled so strong,  
To paint like making color solid song.

# *Uncle Jerry, weirder than the average uncle*

*aldon o'bryant*

Uncle Jerry, Uncle Jerry, there are many observations I've made about you:  
The way you always come to every occasion in nothing but a pink suit,  
How you always start every conversation with "When I was in college..."  
How you always talk in third person when you are mad about something,  
How you always manage to get out of chaotic situations safe and sound,  
How you can always talk sense into just about every crazy person,  
How your eccentric shoes always get attention no matter what;  
These qualities I've noticed about you since age seven;  
I don't want you to ever change the way you are,  
Because you just make the world go round.



***Mother and Child***  
Scratchboard, Wrijoya Roy

# *Goodbye Lover*

*christina moore*

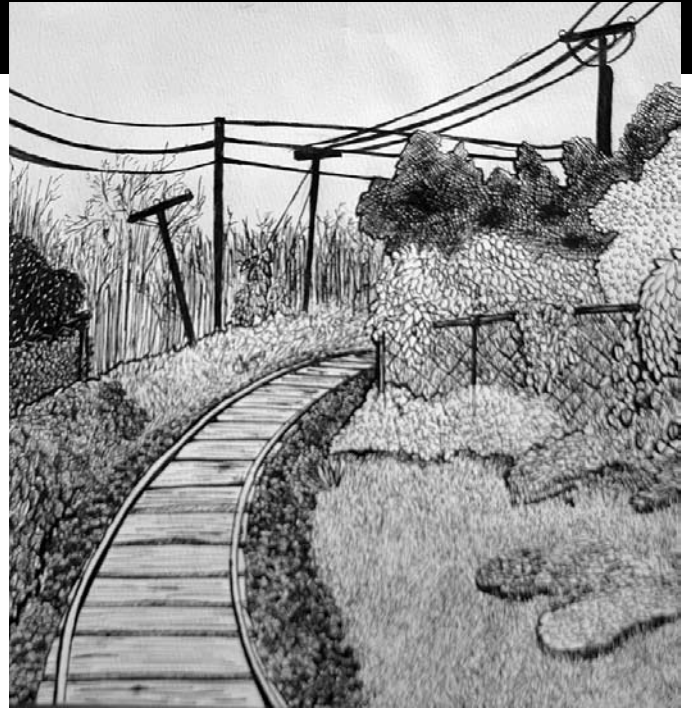
Goodbye my dearest love,  
You are abandoning me for a while.  
Like a soldier going off to war,  
You leave me cold, alone.  
No longer can I dip in your salty waters,  
Or bask in the warmth they offer.  
It's the last time I feel your breath  
That dances on my neck,  
And winds its loving fingers through my hair.  
As you leave me,  
Life from this paradise goes with you  
You steal my passion,  
Leaving my heart to freeze  
When you, Autumn, make your annual departure,  
The gorgeous emerald grass turns like a banshee's eyes  
Leaves rot and bare the skeletons of mighty trees  
I share the same bareness without you  
I have been stripped naked to my chilling core  
Left shriveling and cold in this barren land  
Only bits of you are left to gather.  
Though your fierce love trickles away,  
I cherish what you have left me  
And hoard the pieces until next summer.

*Blue Jay*  
hannah ryan

Your stare obliterates —  
Onyx missiles for eyes,  
Striking, detonating,  
And leaving nothing  
Where someone once stood

A silent explosion  
Felt only by the soul  
That crumbles,  
And floats to the ground  
Like ashes  
From a shattered urn

You are the only bomber  
I know  
Who wears a white shirt  
With flamboyant roses  
The color of cobalt,  
That sweeps and constricts  
Your ample form.  
Their thorns prick you  
The way you pierce everyone  
Around you.



*The Road Goes Ever Onward*

*Honorable Mention Drawing, Art Competition*  
Pen and Ink, Hannah Cunningham

*Playground Weddings*  
elizabeth crowder

*Honorable Mention — Poetry Competition*

Dandelions and blow-flowers are  
The only ornaments at my playground wedding.  
Braided blades of grass are the rings  
That seal our oaths of undying love,  
Made beneath the iron arms of the jungle-gym.  
The preacher's daughter guarantees  
that our bond will stay strong,  
In sickness and in health,  
Or at least until the next big boo-boo,  
When my daddy is again the main man in my life.  
Animal crackers and juice boxes are  
The refreshment of choice,  
My guests are distinguished, you know.  
The scream of the teacher's whistle  
Abruptly ends my nuptial bliss,  
But all is not lost.  
Another playground wedding is  
just another recess away.



# The Road Home

*hannah cunningham*

*Third Place — Essay Competition*

I go home from my residential high school every month, once a month, for three days. Those days consist mostly of sleeping — on a real bed! — and eating — food not from the cafeteria! — more than anything, much to my mother's chagrin. Every month I look forward to "extended weekends" like a couch potato looks forward to the premier of "American Idol." Each month the date is marked neatly on my wall calendar in blue ink with a heart or smile-y face for decoration, and the days up to it are religiously checked off during each night's study hours. Thursday night at room check I can be found in front of my door, doing a little dance and chanting, "Tomorrow's Friday, tomorrow's Friday."

When it's finally time to go home, my father pulls up in our family's gold minivan and throws my suitcases into the back like a bored porter. Without fail I warn him that there's a computer in the black backpack, and without fail he places it under my heavy suitcase. I hope he'll learn better someday, but my mother says she's had him for seventeen years and can't even teach him how to put down the toilet lid. I sigh and yank the laptop back from under the suitcase and put it safely in the well at my feet; when you're five foot nothing, you have plenty of legroom.

As soon as the van cranks, Dad turns up the music to a volume even my practiced punk rock fan ears can't handle and sings along to music older than I am — loudly, for the next four hours. My iPod headphones drown most of it out, but I cast him an occasional pained look when he fails to hit

a single note of "Dancing Queen," mostly because someone must remind him that ABBA is socially unacceptable on all occasions but especially when your teenage daughter is in the car.

Neither of us is in any real hurry to get back home, but my father sometimes taps the wheel and says, "Long ways to go, short time to get there." He grins as he says it and I grin back, giving him a thumbs-up because there's no way I can project my voice over the sound of the radio.

It is a long ways: four hours of shifting seats

and whining until Dad's giving me his own pained looks and I decide that taking a nap is in my best interest. So I curl into a soft microfiber blanket and snooze. Inevitably I wake up a few miles from home and spot the "Welcome to Pascagoula, Mississippi" sign in the darkness. The air reeks of processed fish from the plant across the river, and the mosquitoes swarm

“...mosquitoes  
*swarm* in clouds  
thick enough to  
*cast shadows*  
on the ground.”

in clouds thick enough to cast shadows on the ground. As we pull into the drive, the smell of the low-tide swamp across the street overpowers the fish smell, and I presume the chorus of croaking frogs is doing its best with the bugs. From inside the big white house I hear the squeal of multiple small children and brace myself as I pull the bags from the back. Just as I reach the top of the porch steps they escape: five of the younger kids, pushing and shoving to get out the door to be the first to tackle me and knock the entire group down the stairs. As I wade through the crowd I grin at my dad over my shoulder and holler, "Hey, ya'll, I'm home!"

# *Calculus has Reached its Limit*

*elizabeth crowder*



*Getting Ready*  
Charcoal, Dong Song

Calculus is a hoax.  
 I am convinced of it.  
 It began as a conspiracy hundreds of years ago by a group  
 Of decrepit self-proclaimed "scholars"  
 And haughty taughty "philosophers,"  
 Bored out of their minds and desperate  
 To make the rest of mankind  
 Suffer along with them,  
 Lonely men who aimed to tame gravity  
 And tried to tether atoms.  
 Alas, this alliance of scholars  
 Has tricked even the most vigilant  
 Of minds, with its fancy theorems  
 And combo meal sized terms.  
 Integration.  
 Differentiation.  
 Asymptote.  
 Beware! Professors and teachers,  
 Those whose words we  
 Accept as if they were from the lips of God himself,  
 Will try to convince you to accept those terms,  
 Those abstract definitions used to turn  
 Zeroes into numbers and numbers into letters.  
 Do not yield!  
 These are not the characters  
 Of some secret code that will unlock the secrets of the universe  
 Or help cure the world of disease,  
 The study of Calculus is no more  
 Than a giant practical joke,  
 A big "HA" to those who spend  
 Hours in dank libraries  
 And stuffy classrooms,  
 Integrating until their asymptotes are sore.  
 But you have been warned,  
 One day the world will rebel,  
 And the joke that is Calculus  
 Will reach its limit.



## *The Taj Mahal*

*First Place Painting, Art Competition*

Acrylic, Wrijoya Roy

## *Napoleon and I*

*cecily carlisle*

*Honorable Mention — Poetry Competition*

Can tree branches whisper to me and my lover  
The hideaway bungalow of long untold treasures  
Or let the ants keep guard of the rooty sap sweetness  
That threatens our elbows on the rust-painted table—

Till the withered arms whistle to hoppers of pirated ships  
Who call out to bliss summer their maritime merriment,  
Playing fiddle on the hairs of each neighbor-bug's leg and  
Paying homage to the tree, fly with our off rubies?

Or might the bark-bearded father give in to our begging  
And let the knobs lick our knees and leaves nibble my ear—  
To tell stories of these buccaneers,  
Until we tug at his beard and flutter down with the seeds  
And Plant bare feet in a castle of ants.



## *The London Eye*

*Second Place Painting, Art Competition*

Acrylic, Parker Dendy



## *Timeless*

*Honorable Mention*

Photograph, Jonathan Feng

*Lilia eres una  
Flor por Siempre*  
miguel rodriguez

A small, hunchback of Chicago  
full of fluffy, white, love.  
A cook that would cost hundreds  
and never makes you full.

Trembling hands hug you  
and tears fall as if forever.

Diabetes, arthritis, and old age  
starve her.  
Imprisoned behind thick glasses  
and isolated in a cold room as snow falls.

Grandmother, your beauty will never fade  
A life more pure than the snow outside  
A life always inspiring.



*A Day in Autumn*

*Third Place Painting, Art Competition*

Oil, Aisha Lyons



*Night Riding in Maui*

*Second Place Photograph, Art Competition*

Evan Howlett



*View From the Top*

*Honorable Mention*

Photograph, Misty White



# *Mississippi River Mishap*

*ryan deschamp*

I, Luke Lovett, am one of the drivers who survived. The yellow school bus transporting the Boys and Girl club was three vehicles in front of me.

I had just arrived on the bridge, anxious to get back home, ready to sit in my broken-in recliner.

I heard the monotonous pegging of the jackhammer below, the sound jutting at my ears intensifying in the dragging of time.

I saw the bridge give way, collapsing all around me. SUVs, taxis, sedans, and sports cars fell like a torrent from the sky.

I heard screaming and shrieking. Gasps of shock and horror replaced the repetitive pegs of the jackhammer. Sirens could be heard from off in the distance.

Volunteers from the after-school club helped the panicking children to safety. Intensifying fear became palpable as we felt the segmented bridge rumbling beneath us.

Today, I sit in my broken-in recliner, browsing through the channels, but all I see

is the destruction on that day. The cars plunge into the treacherous waters of the Mississippi, followed by echoes of screams and sorrow.



*Sandhill Cranes*

*Third Place Drawing, Art Competition*

Stipple, John Bradley



*Flowers of the Night*

Encaustic, Aisha Lyons



*Pride*

Ink, Sweta Desai



*The Old Country Church*

Acrylic, Katie Caves



*Slapdash*

Third Place Photograph, Art Competition  
Leslie Datsis

## *The Grandmother's Garden*

*elizabeth seratt*

Countless hours, days we spent in  
that secluded paradise,  
Discovering hidden ruins of faraway lands,  
swimming with mermaids,  
living in trees.  
Every day we uncovered more secrets:  
a strawberry patch, ducklings, an abandoned gate.  
But only until nightfall was it a heavenly haven.  
With the darkness came all the scaries:  
Indian ghosts  
gaunt vampires  
dejected werewolves  
Fred, mythical father of all alligators  
Innumerable others came with them.  
When twilight came, in all her glory,  
it was time to come in  
And though we always begged,  
"Five more minutes!"  
We were secretly glad when it was not granted.



# *The Closet*

*christina moore*

Now I lay me down to sleep  
I pray the Lord my soul to keep  
I am willing, though I weep

If I should die before I wake  
I pray the Lord my soul to take  
Heaven is to be my escape

Old spars and faded scars  
It's my heart that has been charred  
Shh, now I'm hiding in the car

I'm praying to God,  
I'm waiting for Jesus,  
Hoping he doesn't see us

His yells echo in my sleep  
Shh, don't make a peep  
It's my life I'd like to keep

Bud light and cheap whiskey  
If I run, he won't miss me  
No sore sight for him to see

Love is yelling and bruises  
It's whichever color he chooses  
In the end, it's me that loses

Shh, I take cover in the closet  
The door, the door! I can't lock it!  
When the dark yells for me I know I've lost it

Hurry, scurry little mice  
It's not you who pay the price  
I'll only scream once or twice

God bless my mother,  
Angelic like no other,  
I wish she had picked a better lover

God bless my daddy  
Your love may be the key  
To fix he who has broken me

I see the light and close my eyes  
I feel so numb, to my surprise  
Still, I know his fist will rise



## *Masquerade*

Photograph, Jonathan Feng

# *Moon Phant*

*madeline carter*

On this blurry night  
My thoughts unclear  
Relating to the blur blocking the night's sky  
Covering the clarity of stars  
The stars must have minds as colossal as ours  
Although tonight their genius goes unnoticeable  
If I was the moon my logic might be free  
To soar with the limited gravity  
Thinking, bouncing, speeding, running, reading  
Ah! If I was only the moon!



### *Little Bird, Little Bird*

*Honorable Mention Painting, Art Competition*  
Watercolor, Stella Nickerson

## *White Shield*

*deanza collins*

You roam the halls in your white lab coat every day  
And in its left breast pocket are always four pens  
Rain or shine  
Hot or cold  
You wear that thing  
Why?  
You can't be doing dangerous experiments all the time  
Can you?  
Nooo you just can't be  
Not everywhere you go  
Is there something you're hiding?  
Come on—  
Show me  
Are you afraid to show the world?  
Is the world not ready for your something?  
Or are you not ready for the world  
And your white lab coat  
Is your shield from it all?  
And those pens  
The red, green, blue, and yellow ones  
They must be your swords to fend off attackers  
Don't be afraid, shy fighter  
The world won't hurt you  
Come from behind that shield  
And show the world what you're hiding.

## *Tara Faith* *tiffany croft*

Wild-eyed, knock-kneed  
Troublesome child.  
Keen to fly, though your wings  
Have just sprouted.  
Free-spirit, love-child  
Clouded with passion.  
Too young to know  
How you really feel.  
Don't grow too fast:  
Life's just begun.



### *The Butterfly Effect*

Ink, JaAnna McKinney

# Providence?

*stephanie oshrin*

The air hangs from the car ceiling,  
afraid as we are.  
My mother and her second sister chatter,  
nervous and shallow.  
I am silent in the back seat,  
admiring the New Jersey green that  
I do not really see.  
Anticipation pounds in each of us.  
My eldest aunt's house is quaint and brown;  
an iron eagle hangs from the door.  
The Polish sitter greets us,  
ringing a pale blue rag with her fists.  
My eldest aunt is vacant as her sisters call,  
"Cah? Cah? Hello Carroll. It's so nice to see you."  
Auntie Carroll's face contorts — anger or frustration.  
She musters a lost smile.  
My mother's eyes fill with tears;  
I can almost hear those films about ghosts —  
memories of childhood.  
Silver Beach waves.  
White sheets on the clothesline.  
Barks of Smokey Joe.  
Rough hands from the textile mill.  
First communion and dirty bare feet.  
Kielbasa.  
They float within blank stares.  
And no words.  
No words.  
Do you know you are my aunt?  
...  
And we do not say the tragedy we think.  
That perhaps your present has been captured  
in the future that pulses in our veins.  
Will we see your world in the years to come?



## *Hawaiian Beachfront*

*First Place Photograph, Art Competition*

Evan Howlett

# She

*boram lee*

So delicate—  
the girl, I mean  
with her once white dress  
dancing on the pale sand  
frail and elegant  
small and graceful

I should have liked  
to dance with her  
but to merely watch her pirouette  
petit saut and pas de poisson  
alone  
this was enough

So exquisite—  
the girl, I mean  
with all her poise and charm  
dancing on the pale white sand  
no roses for her reception  
but the crashing of the waves



# A Different Kind of Home

*nickie wu*

*Honorable Mention — Essay Competition*

*Driving through cotton field roads after three hours of anticipation, I finally spot the familiar sight of the chipped, discolored paint of the walls, the rusty half-dismantled sign spelling the words “Hong Kong Market,” and the usual tangle of cars. Sighing, I think to myself, “It’s great to be home.” I walk into the corner grocery between the rows of chips, down the aisles of canned goods, and past an array of candy. The store is packed with people, and my parents could use the extra help since Gong-Gong (grandfather) is busy peering over his Beijing newspaper and Mui-Mui (sister) is diligently doing Geometry homework. After greeting my family in Cantonese, with a slight English accent because of long disuse, I hug them all and hurriedly scramble toward the house to unpack my baggage.*

Practically out of breath from carrying numerous bags and slowly dragging my body along through doors and hallways, I at last reach my destination. The living room feels the same—homely and comfortable—though my shared room looks like a herd of elephants has stampeded through it. My sister tosses her clothes everywhere, doesn’t make her bed, and expects me to clean after her. However, everything is where I left it, before my departure. Eventually finished with unpacking, I rush back out to face my past dread of working. I smile. I used to call the store part of the building “the other half,” because it felt like going to the underworld after being in heaven. The horror of having one-sentence conversations, the memorization of price goods, and the constant cautiousness of counting out the right amount of change kept my days busy. I used to be tired of having to work while my friends went to parties and hung out. I used to be tired of feeling lonely, isolated, and secluded in this small family grocery. I thought that it was this lifestyle that hindered my success. However, I know now that it is the simple gifts and knowledge from the customers and my family that have made me who I am today—and perhaps what I will become in the future.

Walking through the green and white checkered tile floor, I spot the same people who gave me the enlightenment I could never have imagined. Our customers are teenagers, drug dealers, and pot smokers, but there are also many principled people to balance out the negativity. Though not a day passed by without me learning something about life from all of them. My morals did not shatter, but instead they strengthened over time. Even a simple exchange of dialogue changed my view of life.



## *Interpretation of Monet*

*Honorable Mention Painting, Art Competition*

Acrylic, Katie Caves



After approaching the cash register, I see a Fruttie on the counter, and I recall something happening three years ago. It was summer, and I was distressed with work again, when a small boy around the age of five with tattered clothing and a bright smile came bursting through the store. Clutching a ten-dollar bill and a list of food for his grandmother, he ran around the aisles as if they were a track, pausing occasionally to pick up food and ask me to read a word. I scanned the list, and realized that I had to cut him some mild souse. After slicing a dollar and fifty-five cents worth of meat, not precise because of inexperience, I viewed the items he placed on the table: Lipton Tea, lemons, cake mix, eggs, and sugar.

Once I added the price of all the items, I replied with the usual sentence, "That's eight ninety-seven." After bagging everything, I expected the boy to buy a treat for himself. Maybe that was why he was so happy.

So, I was surprised to see him turn to leave, and I decided to call him back. This was a first, because I am ordinarily indifferent to matters, but this boy really piqued my curiosity.

Out of my comfort zone, I asked him, "Do you not want anything else for yourself? You have some change left."

He replied softly, "Naw, my grandma is baking a cake for everybody, and cookin' for us. I'm doing this to help her out. I dun need nothing."

Shaking my head, I told him to take any candy he liked for free, and I didn't do this often. Finally, he decided to pick one, and out of all types—Sour Punch Twists, Jolly Ranchers, Snickers, Bubble King, and Orange cream pops—he chose the smallest and cheapest one we have: Frutties.

He told me, "My grandma doesn't want me to have cavities," and he hurried away with a bigger smile on his face.

For the rest of that day, I worked without complaining, because I learned two things that changed all my thoughts. It doesn't take a lot to make people happy and brighten someone's day. I also learned that I should repay my family for all that they have given me, like the simple repayment the boy did for his grandmother who cooked the

family's cake. I might not receive anything back in the end, but I will still smile the same way that boy smiled to me. Since then, I've given people gifts or helped them out. I volunteered at the library, Arc Bowling, R.I.D.E.S, and even worked at the care station to cook food for people who aren't as fortunate. I try to brighten people's day as the boy brightened mine.

After a long day as the store closes, I lock the door of the grocery and walk with my

parents to the house. While my grandmother is busy making Gow Gi, a Cantonese dumpling, for the family, I place the China plates on the dinner table. Soon, the whole family sits at a dinner table full of Asian cuisine with a Chinese show blaring on the TV. I must spend as much time as I can with my family before I go back to school, The Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science. It is a residential school with challenging classes, but I apply all that I've learned from the past and my family to it. I've been working hard at school and taking many math classes as another repayment to the family. Now I'm independent and have been paving my own road for life. Maybe the next month I'll return, find the standard deviation of all the prices in the store, and possibly even spot a boy with tattered clothing. I know for sure, though, I will be learning something new every day.

“...my shared  
*room* looks  
like a *herd of*  
*elephants* has  
*stampeded*  
through it.”

# Reveals and Reviews

stella nickerson

First Place — Essay Competition

*"You," said Marcie, "have betrayed me. You said you would do this with me and then you didn't."*

She was referring to our school's Beauty Review; I'd gone to the interest meeting with her and then decided to turn tail and back out. This was the second time I've gotten perilously close to competing in a beauty pageant. The first was in 10th grade, back at my old school when my teachers said, "You should do Beauty Review," and the other girls said, "You should do Beauty Review," and my dad said, "I've only ever regretted the things I didn't do."

I didn't want to ask a boy to escort me, but Amanda offered to share Patrick. Patrick was a fleshy, fish-faced boy, her escort because he didn't scare her parents. "I think you two look cute together," said Amanda. I spent that night staring at the mirror, trying to figure out what about me seemed to match Patrick.

For practices we went to the gym and arranged ourselves in a curving line underneath the bleachers, each girl waiting to burst through a set of red curtains and strut her stuff across the collapsible stage set up on the basketball court. We picked numbers out of a hat, and I was 31 out of 32. I stuffed a book into my purse so I could bring it out during practices and read, leaning against the concrete wall, shuffling forward in line only when number 32 poked my shoulder. Once I got to the front I linked arms

with Patrick and emerged through the curtains, climbed the metal stairs to the stage, strutted left, strutted right, climbed back down and exited. That was it, my entire performance.

In band girls passed dress catalogues around, hiding them behind their stands and thumbing through them when the band director wasn't looking. They circled and initialed their glitter-encrusted choices, or ripped out entire pages to slip into clarinet cases. I looked at no catalogues, but drove down to David's Bridal with my mother

and bought a melon-colored bridesmaid's dress without a speck of glitter, all Grecian-flowy and three inches too long for me.

The day before the Beauty Review some girls already had their hair done, sculpted into masterpieces of rhinestones and weave. The next day I couldn't stop sneezing, but I still went to Impressions to have my hair and makeup done by Vicki, who had gone to high school with my sister. I told her about Emily's husband and Emily's baby while she pressed and pinned

my hair into hairspray-sticky curls and streaked my upturned face with powder. While she did it I couldn't help thinking that maybe makeup does make you look as good as the commercials say, and my entrance at the Review would be a "My Fair Lady"-like reveal, an oh-she-does-clean-up-nice gasp moving through the audience.

"...some *girls*  
already had their  
*hair* done,  
sculpted into  
*masterpieces of*  
*rhinestones*  
and weave."

"There you go," said Vicki. She swung the chair around to face the mirror. Looking at my reflection, all I could think was that I didn't look human-colored anymore. She had turned my lips and cheeks the color of cranberry juice.

"Thanks," I said, paying her. At home I told Momma that I'd really rather not do Beauty Review.

"It would have cost fifteen dollars for tickets," she said. "We'll use that money to buy you a book instead."

I did put on the melon-colored dress. Daddy took my picture on our porch, and then I changed straight back into jeans and a t-shirt and the three of us drove forty minutes to the nearest town with a Books-a-Million. Before stopping at the bookstore,

though, we went to eat.

"Excuse me," said the waitress when she brought us our drinks. She wore a cowboy hat over her gray hair, the straw rim shadowing her wrinkled face. "Were you in a pageant or something? Your hair..."

"Oh, yes," I said, because it was easier not to explain. "Earlier today."

"Well, did you win?"

I looked at her round and smiling face, and thought that she must be interested in people, to start talking to us like this. She must make up stories about her customers; she must imagine fascinating things about them. "No," I said, "but I got in the top ten."



### *Bambi*

Photograph, Samantha Caldwell

# Not an Option

richard harvey

*Everybody's heard U.S. Marine recruiters declare, "Failure is not an option."* For me, failure is really not an option. Growing up in Mexico was not easy. No matter how successful a doctor or lawyer I aspired to become, if I did not have the connections, I would not be able to make any progress. My economic ceiling was already determined. Ever since I could remember, my parents had told me that I had to move to America, that I needed to get a better education, that I needed to learn to speak English, that I needed to succeed to help pull my family out of poverty, poverty compounded by medical expenses. My mother is on life-time medication which we can barely afford. The pressure has always been on me, and perhaps that is what pushes me over the top. I'm not the smartest student. Things don't often come naturally for me. Sometimes I don't feel like working hard. But then I remember the people counting on me to succeed. Failure is not an option.

Until the day I left Los Mochis, I never fully realized what was being asked of me. I never realized that I had to leave behind my country, my family, my friends, and everything that I loved. In Mexico, I was not a diligent student; I hardly ever applied myself, even with all the pressure from my parents. When I moved to Mississippi and began life with my adoptive parents, everything changed. I no longer had my parents to push me toward work and success; in fact, I was utterly alone. Unlike most immigrant children, I had moved to the United

States without parents or siblings. My family's sacrifice and my own started to sink in. I knew that this time, I had to apply myself. I found my new home, Noxubee County, Mississippi, a world away from Los Mochis.

The hardest thing for me to adjust to besides the language was the obvious racial division in my new home: Noxubee County is unofficially segregated. In fact, time has stopped in the 1950s as far as race relations stand. Where did I fit in this racial

divide? I was not white, but I also was not black. In Mexico, regardless of how dark a person's skin, that person is still Mexican. Schools are not separated by skin color. In Macon, Mississippi, though, I attended a private school because I was not African-American, and Noxubee County High School is one hundred percent African-American.

Adjusting to a new home was not easy; nothing in life seems easy. I had to start over. I missed my parents, sisters, friends, everything. Sometimes, I just wanted to quit and go back home. However, deep down, I knew that I couldn't. To go back would be to fail, and failure is not an option. I knew that I could never replace the precious time that I was losing with my family. I knew that I was growing up. Perhaps growing up differently than my parents would have raised me. I knew that the relationship that I had with my parents would never be the same. The older I became, the more their sacrifice became apparent. I had to succeed. I knew that one day, I was going

*“Adjusting  
to a new home  
was not easy;  
nothing in life  
seems easy.”*

## *Forbidden Eden*

Acrylic, Rhonda Daughdrill



to be responsible to help pay for my mother's life-time need for medication. Why was it me and not one of my sisters? I spent lots of nights fixed on this question. Perhaps, I told myself, it was because I was the oldest.

I embraced my challenge. I started working harder; soon, I was reaping the fruits of my labor. I made new friends, got involved in sports, and started developing a better relationship with my adoptive parents. In no way would they ever replace my real parents, but they didn't have to. Just when I was settling into my new home, making friends, and becoming popular, I took on another challenge: I applied to the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and was accepted. I once again gave up the chance to live a normal life. I was aware of the new challenge ahead: MSMS would not be easy. My experience at MSMS hasn't been the easiest. I find balancing advanced classes from eight to four everyday, while being active in clubs, teaching

Spanish to first graders once a week, and playing soccer very difficult. The increased workload is tiring. I stay up many nights finishing assignments. Eight hours of sleep nights are rare. Lots of times, I feel like procrastinating, or not doing a certain assignment that seems redundant. Then I remember that I can't, because failure is not an option.

The thought of home still brings tears to my eyes, but in time, I developed a way around this problem. I just stopped thinking of home. I shielded myself from everything that brought me sadness. I focused on my new life. Was I starting to forget my mission? No, I just stopped obsessing over it. When I don't feel like working hard and the cruise control starts kicking in, I only have to remind myself of the look on my mother's face or the tears in her eyes as I make my journey once more to my new home. No matter how hard things get and how much I want to quit, failure is not an option.

# The Jeep

## laney owings

*"Dammit, Laney, what are you waiting on?!* Give it some gas and let's go!" I can still hear Daddy telling me that while stranded at a stop sign, too afraid to commence. Learning to drive a standard car—stick-shift—was one of the hardest things I have ever done, and it indirectly taught me some of the most supreme lessons in life.

Daddy was the one in my family assigned the task of teaching me to drive. We both share the quick temper and short patience that have been passed down from many generations of Owings. This made learning to drive the Jeep an experience that never failed to get my blood boiling. I spent much time mapping the easiest routes in Columbus—those with the fewest stop signs and hills. I dreaded that big red octagon with that abominable four-letter word stamped across the center. It meant that, yet again, I had to figure out the seemingly impossible task of letting off the clutch and pressing on the gas at an exact rate in order to make the Jeep go forward.

The Jeep is almost as old as I am, but wears its years with grace and agility. I am told that its fire-engine red paint can be seen from anywhere across the Luxapalila. Its ripped, vinyl seats have faded to a light gray over the years, but are as inviting to me as a throne. The radio has been rained on countless times; it switches on and off without human touch, usually when I hit big bumps in the road. My passengers laugh at how the odometer, speedometer, and countless other dials

stretch all the way to their side of the car. Why do they need to see them? I have no idea what the majority of them signify; why do I need to see them? Some people might recoil from the thick layer of dust and dirt that coats the entire interior of the vehicle, but every speck of it reminds me of the adventures the Jeep and I have had together, usually speeding along back roads on lazy afternoon drives with my dogs sitting in the back, their ears flopping, wild and carefree in the wind.

Thanks to me, my poor red Jeep suffers cuts and bruises day after day. I have stalled out more times than I care to remember, rolled down many hills, and annoyed countless people behind me at stop signs when, after several attempts, I still have not succeeded in making the car move. On one such occasion, I was on Seventh Street, stopped at the peak of a hill, and could not get going again. The sky was heavy with big gray clouds—keeping the top on the Jeep is not a common practice of mine—and I did not fancy the idea of getting soaked.

The angry drivers behind me showed their annoyance with words and gestures that would make my grandmother cringe. I eventually got the Jeep moving, but I vowed to never drive again. On another occasion, I was coming back to the campus of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, my residential high school. I had almost gotten back to Goen Hall when the Jeep decided not to cooperate. It took me nearly twenty minutes

"The Jeep is  
*almost* as old as

I am, but wears its  
years with *grace*  
and *agility*."



to travel down one very short street. After stalling out for the umpteenth time, I stood up and cried for help to anyone who knew how to drive a stick-shift car. Luckily, a senior nearby did, and I happily jumped into the passenger seat and let Emily Mosow man the wheel.

The Jeep has taught me so many timeless lessons, the first being what I titled “The Seventh Street Experience.” I pondered my decision to never drive again, but I soon realized that I would just have to toughen up and try it again. The next day, I called my mom and explained my predicament. The strong pillar of sense and patience in my family, Mom came to the school and sat with me while I drove around the parking lot again and again. All through life and especially in school, I have encountered hard situations—organic chemistry and physics—where I just wanted to give up. The Jeep helped me to realize that in the end, giving up solves nothing. I knew that after that day, I only had one direction to go, and that was up.

The Jeep also had initially prompted a strong fear of the unknown in me. For a very long time, I never understood the relationship between the clutch and the brake. Because of this, I rarely moved out of second gear, which is not very fast, and I rounded corners at alarming speeds, afraid of what would happen if I pressed the brake. Being afraid of what you do not know is natural, but letting it dictate your life is a problem. Because of the Jeep, I now approach situations head on, even if I have no idea of the

outcome. The best learning is completely clear of inhibitions or cloudy judgments, only leaving room for experiment. In the beginning, I was afraid of doing things when I did not know what would happen. Whenever Daddy sensed this, he always said, “Laney, the car isn’t going to blow up if you do that!” So now whenever I am afraid to try something new, I always first remind myself that it will not blow up if I do.

When driving the Jeep, I always tended to pick the easy streets where I would not have to stop as much and always the streets with no hills. After

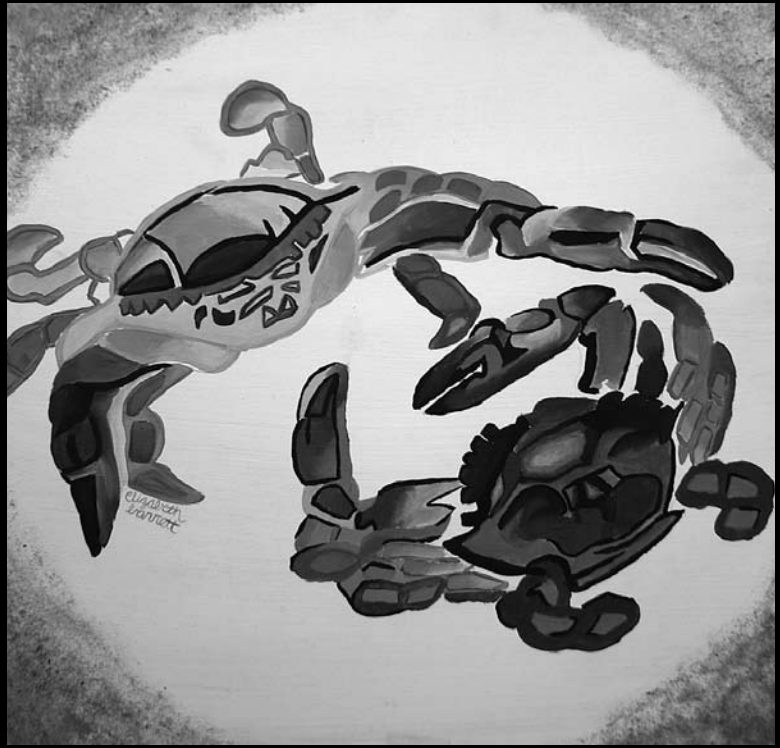
“I *dreaded* that  
big *red octagon*  
with that  
*abominable*  
four-letter word  
*stamped* across  
the center.”

weeks of doing this, my progress in driving plateaued. While taking the easy way out, I was learning nothing. I eventually accepted this, and realized that I would have to challenge myself to get better. I began to look for hills and stop signs, and I did not zoom through yellow lights anymore. I did get much better with time and practice, and now I go certain speeds and whip around corners in a manner that, if he ever found out, Daddy would surely prohibit me from driving the Jeep.

Despite all of my mistakes and mishaps, the Jeep has stayed with me. It did not give up on me when I accidentally tried to start it without my foot on the clutch, and it stuck with me when I tried to start in third gear after stopping and not shifting back into first. It made plenty of loud noises to show me the error of my ways, but it kept going time after time. Now, whenever I want to give up, I always tell myself, “Dammit, Laney, what are you waiting on?! Give it some gas, and let’s go!”

## *On the Coast*

Acrylic and Sand,  
Elizabeth Barrett



## *Those Hands*

*tiffany croft*

*Honorable Mention — Poetry Competition*

Those hands. The ones that broke coffee cups, flower-patterned plates, and innocence. Big and calloused; a shell of time made them hard and rough. Once, they crushed a butterfly. Cracked the crisp, colorful flake edges trimmed with gold foil, lined with lace. Murdered the magenta pattern that swirled up from a gray-blue center. I never asked why.

The eyes. Blue—a clouds-on-sea shade. Glassy and cold steel orbs. Sharp narrowed disks that cut hopes and sliced through happiness. Glazed over with years of odium and sorrow. Once, they stopped a child dead in her tracks. Pulled her from bliss and dunked her into their dark depths. A forced frenzy of wild rage. I never asked why.

A voice. Two extremes. A sickening-sweet whisper-hush that silenced all with its softness. Then, the gravely echo of booming anger. Roaring, bearing down until more silence. Once, it rattled off wretched words to a pure cherub. Broke a spirit with an explosion of quiet fury. I never asked why.

Then again. Sometimes, the hands were warm, cradling comfort that wrapped all in soothing shades of calm. The eyes were kind—spider web of laughter coming from the edges and stretching to the temples. And the voice was a smooth, fear diminishing, hum that erased all panic. I never looked back.

# Esperanza's Song

elizabeth seratt

Second Place — Short Story Competition

*Pops and hisses came from the vat of grease, and a gurgle bubbled from under the lid of the pot, whose contents were always precariously close to boiling over. The oven was loaded to maximum capacity, and heat radiated from the ancient metal of the windowless door. There was no ceiling fan in Esperanza's kitchen; years ago, a previous tenant took a particular liking to the slow-moving elegance of the white-washed wicker fan and relocated it when he relocated himself. The window above the oven cast a dingy light on the ghosts of markings that remained from the fan, under which were the cheerful hand-me-down dishes Esperanza had received on her wedding day. Esperanza's kitchen was at its busiest—and hottest—during the picking season: breakfast, lunch, dinner for the day workers, and a meal at midnight for the nocturnal workers. She took it upon herself to recreate the foods of their childhoods—chiles relenos, arroz con pollo, tostadas, enchiladas verdes, carne asada—*

*in the thick humidity of the Mississippi Delta. Her duty required long hours in an undersized, oppressively warm kitchen. The other residents of the home had jobs outside of the house, so for twelve hours a day, she was in the house with the peeling wallpaper, alone.*

Esperanza sat in a turquoise and orange chair, pulled as close to the fire engine red table as her rotund figure allowed; she absentmindedly chopped cilantro and chili picantes. Her eyes wandered from her busy hands to the dust-covered photograph of

her parents on the refrigerator. Sighing, she rose and waddled to the kitchen door, the only functioning portal to the outside world in the four-room house she shared with her husband, her husband's young brother, and his equally young wife. The early July morning yielded not even a breath of a breeze to stir the hair that fell past her waist. She stood, thick arms crossed, at the top of the concrete stairs for a moment to observe the scene of a hamlet of about ten houses, if they could even be called houses.

“...she could just  
see *caramel-  
skinned*  
children...  
*playing* hide  
and seek in the  
*intense* heat.”

The Place, as it was referred to in those days, sat on a patch of bleached dirt in the middle of a cotton field, and was home to over twenty workers and their families.

From her perspective, she could just see caramel-skinned children, too young for school, playing hide and seek in the intense heat that fried the cotton. A girl, who looked to be the oldest, started to count and the other children scurried. Various yellow dogs, which the tenants fed table scraps, ran

alongside them, tongues flapping to the rhythm set by their paws.

“Uno!” A rotund child leaped over the low fence, causing commotion in the confined community of egg-laying chickens, then scurried to hide in the shadows behind the chicken coop.

“Dos!” A child known throughout The Place for her tree-climbing ability scaled one of the few oaks until she was well past the point of visibility.

“Tres!” The *abuelitas* chuckled at the sight of the children scrambling for hiding places.

"*Quatro!*" Only one child was left in the open area: the boy of four, the boy who was not quite right. He looked helplessly, hopelessly toward the adults for ideas of hiding places. They seemed not to notice, but Esperanza knew they did not care. He started towards Esperanza.

"*Cinco! Listos o no, yo vengo!*" The child gathered speed, raced past Esperanza into the heat of her kitchen, his hand-me-down T-shirt billowing behind him like a super hero's cape. For a moment he stood, confused, until he settled to duck under the table. Somehow, he had made it past the threshold before the seeker detected him.

Esperanza looked down at the boy, his face round like hers and most everyone else's in their community. His eyes, light as honey and just as sweet, met hers, the color of mourning. He drew his arms and legs into the large green shirt, rolling his back onto the floor slowly.

"*Ay, Dios Mio,*" she said, under her breath.

The child seemed content, so Esperanza went back to her forgotten chopping. For a few minutes, they sat in the silent heat separated only by the thick wood of the scarlet table, until the silence was suddenly shattered by an eerie keening. A quick peek under the table told Esperanza that the boy was trying his best to sing. She thought that he had not seen her, but, as a hand timidly clasped her ankle, she knew the opposite to be true. Faintly, she recognized the tune he intoned as the lullaby of her childhood and began to hum, then sing. They sat there, surrounded by a content, warm bubble, until a teenage face appeared in the doorway, a sight that made Esperanza end mid-song. The child's singing became little more than a whimper, and his grip tightened around her ankle. The boy closed his eyes tightly as he pulled his legs deeper into his bony chest as the unwelcome visitor sighed, came in, and snatched him up roughly by the arm. His mother, muttering curses and threats in both English and Spanish, pulled him from Esperanza's kitchen in a violent haze of dust from the floor, dust that stirred only under the most aggressively quick-moving feet.

This scene played out in slow motion to Esperanza, who could do nothing. She sat in her turquoise chair and watched the dust settle lazily. The frantic sound of water boiling over on the stove top jerked her back to reality, and she hurried to the stove and busied herself with the noon meal.

Esperanza's days continued as they had before the scrawny-legged boy had appeared, but with a certain sorrow that had never before been present in her life. Yellow dogs came and went, as did the truck that brought groceries from the distant mountains of Mexico. Under dark thunderclouds that brought only humidity, she cooked four meals a day, for men who all had stories they would never tell, wives and children in the homeland they never spoke of, and pasts they thought of all together too much, while the almost-antique A.M. radio promised the desperately needed rain that never came. She didn't see the boy's round face for nearly two weeks after their shared song, when he emerged from the house he shared with his mother, her four siblings, and her mother and father. Esperanza's breath hooked her chest when she saw him: a discolored shadow, the width of a belt, formed a slightly diagonal line on the soft skin of the back of his thighs. Her feet thudded the talcum powder dust as she rushed to take him up in her arms. His body initially tensed at the contact, but, as her grip tightened and enveloped him, and the clouds gave way to rain, they began to sing.



*Henna*

Photograph, Wrijoya Roy

# Rest

tiffany croft

Third Place — Short Story Competition

*Golden Orchard Rehabilitation Clinic for Young Women*—a name as long as the winding path that led to its stony front gates. Rocks cracked and gravel popped beneath the tires of the hundred-thousand dollar cars that dropped off ailing daughters and sisters. The road was thin, too small for more than one car at a time. That wasn't a problem, though. Most people didn't leave for a while.

Tawny had traveled that path many times over the past couple of years, ever since the summer after her sophomore year in high school. Edna Foster (who was not only the founder of the organization, but her own mother) had hired her to file paperwork in the beginning. Now, Tawny delivered meals to the patients and spoke to them regularly as well as doing the occasional filing.

Tawny caught a glimpse of the ancient stone building through the trees. Its walls were smothered by creeping ivy that wound its way in front of windows and onto the roof. The building used to be a school—a woman's college—before society decided men and women could be educated in the same place. Edna and her partners in psychology purchased the building for next to nothing and transformed it into the clinic.

Before she had joined on at Golden Orchard, Tawny half-believed the stories about the "crazies" who lived there. Children's shirt-necks would be pulled out of shape by their mothers if they stopped to gawk at the building for a second too long.

"Don't get too close, Billy, that's where the sick girls live."

Now, Tawny didn't believe the rumors. The girls weren't crazy. Some of them were sad. Others were angry. Most of them were both. All of them had one problem or another that had landed them at Golden Orchard. And sometimes, Tawny wondered if she was more like them than she thought.

Tawny stopped to speak to Freddie the Gatekeeper, parked her car out back, and walked

inside. She ignored the tugging sensation in her stomach every time she walked through the front door. Tawny felt the need for something. She just didn't know what.

She didn't have a uniform. Instead, she wore a nametag clipped to the front of her shirt that read "Assistant Patient Caretaker." That was her official title. Today, she stopped by the nurse's station to pick up her

nametag and was greeted by smiles. Her mother leaned over the nurses' station, refilling a cup of coffee. She glanced up at her daughter. "What have I told you about sleeping so much," asked Edna, checking her watch. "You were supposed to be in an hour ago. Too much sleep ages you." Tawny didn't let her mother's words affect her. Not anymore. That's the way Edna had always been.

Even though she was still a teenager and the Boss's Kid, Tawny had been received warmly when she first started working at Golden Orchard, and her connection to the rest of the staff had only gotten stronger over the past couple of years.

"I'm going to visit Lucy," said Tawny, breaking free of her mother's gaze. She always visited Lucy first.

“Tawny had  
gotten good at  
*helping* around  
the clinic, bringing  
the girls *pillows*.”

Lucy—the quiet girl who hummed “Hey, Jude” when she was nervous. Lucy had taken up the habit of not eating a year earlier and had been placed in Golden Orchard by her uber-rich parents. Tawny always felt like she and Lucy had a lot in common, minus the eating disorder.

“How are you feeling today?” asked Tawny, entering the room that Lucy shared with another girl named Bret. The room was small, two beds with pull-out drawers beneath them. No dressers or anything else that vaguely resembled normalcy. The walls were almost spotless off-white. Sort of like the girls who lived there. Normal, except for that small thing that made them different.

Tawny would have knocked had there been a door. Doors weren’t allowed at Golden Orchard, along with razors, pens, pencils, any medications that weren’t prescribed, nail files, spiral-bound notebooks, electronic devices, or any other item that could transform into a weapon. The list of non-allowed items applied to the first rule at Golden Orchard: no harm to others or self.

Tawny repeated her question to Lucy, who was lost in thought. “How are you feeling today?”

“I’m fine. Today, at least,” replied Lucy. That was always her response. And every day, Tawny would smile and pat Lucy on the hand or shoulder. That’s how it always worked.

If anyone was quieter than Lucy, it was Bret. No one knew much about the girl. She always sat, empty-eyed, jaw clenched shut. Tawny knew something not-so-nice had happened to Bret when she was younger. Something she had never managed to let go. Sometimes, Bret would lie for hours, curled up on her side, staring at the egg-shell wall. Then, when she did sleep, she cried, always silently. Tawny didn’t pat her hand or shoulder, though. Bret hated to be touched.

Tawny left the girls in their rooms for the brighter and less hospitalized feeling of the lobby. She felt the softness of the magenta carpet even through her thick-soled shoes. Tawny stopped to glance at herself in the floor-length mirror on the wall of the lobby. She’d grown thinner over the past two years working at the clinic, even that much she could admit to herself. Her eyes were brighter and more pronounced, despite the dark circles that lay beneath them. A sign beneath the mirror read, “Is this who you want to be?” It was some sort of motivational device used on the patients. It was supposed to make them feel good about themselves. Tawny just felt tired and sort of sad.

That was hard for her to admit to herself. The fact that she felt that way a lot. It wasn’t just the atmosphere of the clinic. She loved spending time with the girls, talking to them. Sometimes, it was just too much. Tawny couldn’t tell her mother that, though. What would she say? “There’s nothing wrong with you, Tawny, there are some girls here who would love to be in your shoes. Think about them.” That’s exactly what Edna would say. So, some days, Tawny would be as quiet as Bret.

“What’s wrong, hon?” asked Jetta, a youngish nurse. She cocked her head at Tawny, who just realized she’d been standing with her eyes glued to the mirror, a pained expression on her face.

“Nothing.” Her response was mechanic as if that word had been programmed into her for such occasions. “I’m fine.”

Soon Jetta left Tawny alone with her reflection. Tawny was hit with a sudden wave of nausea and a massive headache. She’d been getting them a lot lately. Her mother said it was because she slept too much. Maybe Edna was right.

Tawny headed for the bathroom. Once inside, she flung water on her face, trying to wash away the

“She felt the  
*softness* of the  
*magenta* carpet  
even through her  
thick-soled *shoes*.”



feeling crawling under her skin. Sometimes, it just came to her, in bursts. That dark, tingling sensation that blocked out everything. Eventually, it would pass and she would feel almost-normal again.

This time, though, the feeling stayed. She sat down on the bathroom floor, leaning her back against the cool brick wall. Usually it helped. Now, it didn't.

Soon, Tawny was overcome with exhaustion. She was sleepy and her body ached for a warm bed to sleep in. Just to rest for a little while. She only wanted to rest. The floor looked comfortable, the clean part at least. It wouldn't kill her to take a short nap. She needed to rest.

Tawny lay on the floor. She thought about how, sometimes, she envied the girls here. She wondered how it would feel to recover, to heal, in the hands of others. Tawny had gotten good at helping around the clinic, bringing the girls pillows. She smiled at the thought of someone doing that for her. Just once. To be helped and rid of whatever the dark pulsing sensations were that had taken over her body. That would be nice.

So, she slept, curled against the wall.

Tawny opened her eyes. She saw her mother first, bent over her with a hand resting on Tawny's arm. She was surrounded by several staff members that had become her friends. The look in their eyes wasn't that of complete friendship, though. They gazed at Tawny in that careful way they looked at patients, usually punctuated with a high pitched, "We're not going to hurt you. We only want to help."

"I'm sorry, Mom," said Tawny, sitting up, "I'll get back to work. Lucy needs her pillows."

Edna didn't say anything for a moment. Instead, she just looked at her daughter, her eyes, and wondered why she hadn't seen it before.

"It's okay, Tawny," she said, holding out her hand, "You should take a break."

Lucy was moving out and she was moving in. Lucy's weight had leveled out, finally, and she wasn't appalled at the mention of food. Graduation

was a small affair, with only three girls leaving this time.

Tawny's things were moved in, placed in the drawer beneath the bed. She hadn't spoken since the day they found her in the bathroom. Not that she didn't have anything to say. She just didn't know how to say it. But, that was why she was here.

The former-employee of Golden Orchard Rehabilitation Clinic for Young Women sat on her bed, knees pulled to her chest, head resting on her arms. She glanced at Bret, her roommate, and at the gaping expanse of the non-existent door. She would get Bret to talk. Though Tawny was a patient now, she still felt the need to help. And maybe Bret *would* talk to her now. But first, Tawny needed to rest.



*Lunch is Ready!*

Photograph, Misty White

# The Pool Table

joel huber

*When I was a kid, we lived in the Delta, and I occasionally had to stay with people I didn't know and didn't like. I probably didn't like them because I didn't know them, but I don't let the possibility of them actually being dislikable people slip out of the realm of possibility. I usually had to stay with these people when my mom and dad were through with me. In general, being through with me meant that they were "going to work."*

I never really understood what my dad did for a living. When he wasn't at home, he was working. When he was at home, he wasn't working. I guess I was lucky in that respect. Some kids have dads that work at home and abroad. I never understood my mom's job either. I did, however, understand having to stay with strange people. It was never very fun unless they gave me an infinite supply of candy. There is only one exception in my memory, and that's when I stayed at Mr. Jeffy's Hardware Store.

Mr. Bill Jeffy was a nice old man who, as you probably realize by now, owned a hardware store. He was very prominent in the town, not because of his political or financial position but because he knew everyone. At some point before I was born, a man asked Mr. Jeffy to build him a pool table. Mr. Jeffy liked the challenge of the idea and spent weeks working away in the back room of his store. When he was done, Mr. Jeffy realized he had a new side business that could only make him money.

I guess in my young mind a hardware store shouldn't be a fun place to hang out. But I liked

pool (probably because my brothers liked pool), so Mr. Jeffy's Hardware Store was alright despite Mr. Jeffy only having a finite supply of candy in his office. I recall perfectly the day I stayed there. I was sitting on the counter babbling about something or rather to Matthew the cashier who was quite bored (he kept saying "uh huh," though, so I thought he was paying attention. I was young and stupid then). At some point, probably around noon because Mr. Jeffy was out to lunch, an odd-looking man walked in. He was pretty tall and had on the strangest clothes. Most everyone wore jeans

and t-shirt. This fellow didn't. He had on a full suit from the shoes to the tie, and to top off his appearance, the man was wearing a Homburg hat.

"May I help you?" droned Matthew.

"Yes, I was wondering if you could make a special pool table. I have plenty of dough, and I'll pick it up in two weeks," replied the man.

"Alright." Matthew grabbed his pen and pad. He sniffed. It was allergy season.

"It must be different. I want it round."

"Round?" protested Matthew. "Round?"

"Pool tables aren't round," I interjected helpfully.

"Yes, round."

"Uh, I'm going to have to check your credit."

"Certainly. Call my bank. Ask them about my credit." The man handed Matthew a card.

Matthew disappeared into the back for a few minutes. I felt it my personal duty to entertain our

“Mr. Jeffy”  
slaved away on  
the *pool table*,  
occasionally telling  
my *parents* how  
he was never going  
to *finish* it.”

guest. "Mister, what do you want a round pool table for?" You see, I was a very polite child even in my probing questions.

The man chuckled, but he didn't answer me.

"Mister, are you ever weird."

The man chuckled again. I decided I did my duty and that this was not a likable man. So I was quiet for a while. Fortunately, Matthew came back.

"The bank said your credit is as good as gold." Matthew scribbled down the order.

"Excellent. Now, as I was saying, I also want it one foot high."

"One foot high?" repeated Matthew slowly. "You realize this is going to cost quite a bit upfront?"

"Oh, yes, I'm prepared to pay any price," the man eagerly said. "And before I forget, it must be covered in a leopard skin."

"Alright, sir." The man handed Matthew a check for a large amount.

I felt the need to interject again. "Pool tables aren't round."

"Cute youngster. Here," the man handed me a piece of candy. "Take this."

"Thank you," and I shut up for good.

"I'll return in two months to pick it up. Have a good day." The man finally left.

"Matthew, pool tables aren't round."

"This one will be." And the weeks went by. Mr. Jeffy slaved away on the pool table, occasionally telling my parents how he was never going to finish it. It was different, that was for sure. Pool tables weren't supposed to be one-foot high. Despite the difficulties, though, Mr. Jeffy didn't stop working. Finding the leopard skin was even more difficult than he imagined (and he has a good imagination). Even though Mr. Jeffy didn't understand why round and one-foot high and a leopard skin were important, he didn't give up.

I asked my dad one evening why in the world

someone would want a round pool table. He started, "Well," and continued with an answer that would induce boredom which was intended to pacifying me. Finally, he concluded, "Better things are seen by the farsighted." That counted my oldest brother out; he had glasses to fix his nearsightedness. And I knew I wasn't farsighted because I didn't see the round pool table as better; a round pool table was stupid.

We all anxiously awaited that strange man's return to ask him all the questions we could. Mr. Jeffy had finally finished the pool table; he even found the leopard skin. As the weeks turned to months, the gossip column switched topics, but Mr.

Jeffy merely waited. The man had sailed to England. It had been long beyond two months, but Mr. Jeffy said a customer was a customer, and an order was an order. After about six months, Mr. Jeffy did receive word that the man was returning. A small group of older men waited in Mr. Jeffy's store for a week. Mother liked to say they were "camping out." She said I

could camp out with them as long as I was home by seven.

Finally, the day arrived. I was sitting in Mr. Jeffy's office perusing the wares of candy. A commotion started outside. I peeked through the door ever so carefully. The man had returned in his full suit, and this time he had a boutonniere! The old men pestered him constantly with questions. Matthew quieted them down just enough to converse.

"It's been more than two months. I assume you're here for the pool table." Matthew was rather rude sometimes. Of course, after babysitting a bunch of old men for a week, I'd be rude too.

"Yes, I realize I'm later than expected." At least the man could admit when he was in the wrong. "That is of least importance. Where is Mr. Jeffy?"

"He's out back. Why?"

"The *man* had  
*returned* in  
his full *suit*, and  
this time he had a  
*boutonniere!*"

"I must speak to him..." the man looked around at all the old men, "...in private."

"I'll fetch him for you." I slammed the office door closed as Matthew passed. He stepped out the back door and I knew I hadn't been caught eavesdropping. I pushed the door open again. The old men were talking amongst themselves about the stranger with him standing right there! I smiled with pleasure. No one knew my prying ears were present.

I slammed the door closed. Mr. Jeffy and Matthew were walking to the front! My cover was nearly blown. My heart beat rapidly. Thinking quickly, I ran around the office to the candy and looked innocent. Twenty seconds passed; it seemed like an hour. Slowly, I crawled over to the door. I reached for the handle. The door burst open. I was caught. My heart sank. I was about to be punished.

Mr. Jeffy picked me up. I struggled. "Hush, son, hush. You're not in trouble." He set me down in his big chair and spun it for me. "Wheeee!" he cried. I didn't have nearly as much fun as Mr. Jeffy was having. The stranger closed the office door. "Please, take a seat."

"Thank you."

"Mr. Jeffy," I asked, "what's he doing here?"

"Well, son," I wasn't really his son, "this is a very old friend of mine and a very special customer. We're just going to talk a little bit. Now, if you need anything, just politely interrupt, okay son?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good boy." He rubbed my head. "Now then," Mr. Jeffy said to the stranger, "what's your excuse?"

"Excuse? Bill, you prejudice me."

"I did my own investigating. Matthew cleared you, as he should have. You have every appearance of being legit, as you always do, but you and I both know you aren't."

The stranger sighed. "I had every intention of paying you. Honestly, I did. This pool table was going to be a gift, and I had a great job all lined up in England. If that hadn't fell through, I could pay for the table, but as it is, I'm jobless and I'll need some more time. Really, just give me some more time and you'll have the money."

Mr. Jeffy shook his head. "Just a little more time?"

"Yes, just a little." The two locked eyes for a minute maybe. I couldn't really tell time back then. "Look, if you didn't think I could pay for it, why'd you even build it in the first place?"

"Because a customer is a customer, and I hoped that you would hold better ideals now. I suppose I was far too high in my hopes." Mr. Jeffy and the stranger glanced at the floor. It was more than a glance, I guess. They stared at it for a long time. I leaned over the desk to see what was on the floor of interest. Wouldn't you know it? There was nothing! "You didn't go to England."

The man popped out of his seat. "Yes I did! How dare you..." Mr. Jeffy handed the stranger a paper with a lot of columns on it. "Where did you get this?" he muttered. He sat down again and pulled out some glasses.

"Mister?" I interrupted. Both men were startled. "My daddy says you're farsighted. Are you farsighted?"

"No," he answered. "I'm nearsighted." Dad

"You, in your  
nearsightedness,  
ordered a *luxury*  
you *couldn't*  
*afford*. And I'm  
probably being  
*foolish*, but I'm not  
going to make  
your hard times  
*worse*."

didn't have all the facts sometimes.

"Bill, I really did have a job lined up. It wasn't in England, and it wasn't fancy, but I did have a job lined up." Mr. Jeffy was quiet. I was too. "Are you going to sue me or something?"

"No." Another silence followed.

"Is that it then? You aren't going to say anything else? You're not going to tell me that you're angry or hurt? You're not going to kick me out? Nothing?"

"What can I say? I was a fool. I saw better things, risked my livelihood on it, and my hopes were dashed. You, in your nearsightedness, ordered a luxury you couldn't afford. And I'm probably being foolish, but I'm not going to make your hard times worse."

The stranger stood up as he placed the paper in his jacket. He and Mr. Jeffy shook hands. "Thank you, Bill. I'm going to pay for that pool table. That's a promise."

"Sure," muttered Mr. Jeffy.

The stranger opened the office door to leave. He hesitated long enough to look back. "What a cute youngster." The stranger gave me a piece of candy and departed. Mr. Jeffy withdrew a rectangular piece of paper from his jacket and stared at it before ripping it to pieces.

Until the day we moved away, a certain sign hung in the front window of Mr. Jeffy's Hardware Store. The sign simply read: "Round pool table, one-foot high, covered in a leopard skin, marked way down. It's a beauty."



## *A Thing of Beauty*

*Second Place Drawing, Art Competition*

Charcoal, JaAnna McKinney

## *Apples and Music*

*boram lee*

My world is an image of innocence  
and of natural beauty; the way things  
were meant to be:

All mothers have time to sit,  
peeling and cutting fruit  
patiently, carefully, and lovingly,  
for the eager hands of their waiting children.

But sometimes, when it rains,  
the world is still, and reveals the way  
things truly are:

All musicians who can play  
such beautiful and poignant music,  
evoking tears and elation both,  
do not have beautiful hearts.



# Texaco

elizabeth seratt

Second Place — Essay Competition

*"I want some boiled peanuts."*

Lenoir has reiterated this sentiment for the past half hour. We are stuck in the Texaco station just on the Natchez side of Vicksburg, waiting for the tornado siren's screech to silence. It has been a long day, spent in Natchez, hostessing at the Daughters of the American Revolution's antebellum home Rosalie. My mother, Miss Kim, Lenoir, Sarah, Mary and I have gone every spring for the past five years. This is the first year for Anne, who is almost two, to be included. As we left, it started to sprinkle. That sprinkle rapidly grew to a thunderstorm, complete with hail and tornado warnings. That is why we are in the Texaco station. Well, that, and the fact that Lenoir will not shut up about boiled peanuts.

We came into the Texaco to wait out the worst of the storm, as had many others.

In the corner farthest from me, a tall, golden haired woman, whose face is covered in bandages which I assume are not hiding battle scars, sits perched on top of a small suitcase, eyes closed. The woman's daughter is stroking her hair and humming a soft lullaby. Directly opposite them is a shriveled old man, lounging atop a stack of 24 packs of Budweiser and Bud Light. Even though I am only nine, I know that this man has had far too much to drink. You can smell it on him. He hasn't moved in a long time. I think he is dead, until he lifts his head and hollers, "We all gone die in this damned tornado! It's gone come and kill us all till we all good 'n dead!"

A rotund Hispanic woman with a gaggle of Spanish-speaking children all younger than I am quickly brings out her rosary. She begins to pray, dark eyes toward the equally dark heavens, when she stops to scold an impish-looking boy. He isn't doing anything, but he has that look, and she has that mother's intuition. Now, back to her prayer.

The raven-haired boy, who looks to be almost my age and the oldest of the throng of children, takes this opportunity to investigate the Hairless Chinese Crested, whose owner has fallen asleep, bejeweled leash in hand. The dog shivers at its own shadow; needless to say, it is terrified when the boy with hair and eyes the color of shadows comes to call.

*"¡Ay, perrito, está bien, no voy a lastimarte!"*

The boy tries to appease the dog, but it convulses violently (and loudly) enough to silence its ancient master's soft snores. The master's eyes, beady, like those of a snake, dart from dog to boy. The master tries to reprimand the boy, only to find that she has misplaced her dentures. The boy takes this opportunity to run to his mother, whose fingers are still tracing the familiar wooden lines of her worn rosary. She pauses for a moment when she feels his warmth, and she returns to her prayer with a smile.

The two gas station employees huddle together behind the counter. One is crying: she is afraid. The other gently strokes her back and tells her it will all be okay, and not to worry about him. I wonder who "him" is, but my thought is interrupted

"We are *stuck* in  
the *Texaco*  
*station* just on the  
*Natchez* side  
of Vicksburg..."

by the old drunk man. He is still convinced that we are going to die, although he doesn't seem to be very worried about it, as he goes right back to sleep after reminding us of our inevitable death by tornado. His cry seems to strengthen the timid Chinese Crested, who barks a high-pitched reply. The bandaged woman opens her eyes and smiles at her daughter, who has joined her on the suitcase. The dark-haired boy is holding a frightened sibling as the mother looks on, proud and loving.

At this, the room is doused in the blinding brightness of fluorescent lighting, and the refrigerators resume their rumbling. The employees unlock the door, and we all make our purchases. As we climb back into the Suburban, I hear Lenoir whisper, "I am so glad they had boiled peanuts."



## *Morning Ride*

*Honorable Mention Drawing, Art Competition*

Charcoal, Kali Falnes

## *Prayer Requests in a Mormon Community, 1858*

(After Todd Davis)

*stella nickerson*

*First Place — Poetry Competition*

Pray for Sister Sorenson. She weeps at night  
and thinks only of her home in Sweden,  
of tea, lace curtains, and pale porcelain.  
May she see the loveliness of Zion.  
May this be her home and her children's.

Pray for Brother Paul's young wife.  
He tried to tell the Texans of the Gospel.  
A group of men, their wide eyes liquor bright,  
said, "He won't have *our* women for his wives,"  
and left him swinging like a pendulum.

Pray for the Sisters Blackley. Their husband  
preaches in England, calling to cold streets  
and black buildings, soot-streaked London faces  
that turn sunflower-like to the light of Christ.  
Pray his youngest son remembers him.

Pray for the rainclouds we can see  
so tauntingly spread over the mountains.  
Pray they sweep down to the Valley, open  
over the salt lake and hard-packed brown dirt,  
and the desert shall blossom like a rose.

Pray for the Temple. We build it to be  
the house of the Lord, a choir room for angels.  
We have found a crack in the foundation  
and must begin again. Pray the new walls hold,  
that grey spires watch this New Jerusalem.

Pray for the Prophet. He has so much to bear.  
Pray for Deseret, and peace for us.

# Contributors' Notes

**Elizabeth Barrett (Biloxi)** Elizabeth's favorite artist is Walter Anderson. Her defining quotation is "If it makes you happy, it can't be that bad." She says that art is an escape from her responsibilities. She plans to attend Ole Miss Pharmacy School.

**Brittany Bell (Woodville)** Brittany feels that her motto is "Shoot for the moon, and if you don't make it you'll land among the stars." Her favorite writer is Langston Hughes.

**John Bradley (Ocean Springs)** John's defining quotation is "We are here for no purpose, unless we can invent one" by Kurt Vonnegut. His favorite artist is MC Escher. He plans to attend Mississippi State University and major in computer engineering.

**Samantha Caldwell (Silver Creek)** Sam's favorite artist is Frank Lloyd Wright, and her defining quotation is "Don't Panic!" by Douglas Adams. She feels that "art is a lovely thing." She will attend Pratt Institute and study architecture and, later, take over the world.

**Cecily Carlisle (New Albany)** Cecily believes that "art is all of the concepts of life made physical," and her defining quotation is "Let us read and let us dance—two amusements that will never do any harm to the world" by Voltaire. Her favorite writer is Fannie Flagg. Her future plans are to live.

**Madeline Carter (Pass Christian)** Madeline's defining quotation is "Let the world change you before you change the world" by Che Guevara. Her favorite writer is Aldous Huxley, and she plans to go to college, join the Peace Corps, and never come back to the United States.

**Katie Caves (Bogue Chitto)** Katie will attend Mississippi College and major in biology and medical science. Her favorite artist is Thomas Kinkadee, and, in her words: "Everyone has the imagination for art, some just do not have the confidence."

**DeAnza Collins (Waynesboro)** DeAnza's favorite writer is Agatha Christie, and her motto in life is "I shall prevail." She feels that art, mainly music, sets her free.

**Tiffany Jade Croft (Baldwin)** Tiffany feels that "if you are a writer, or artist, it comes naturally. It's not something that can be learned." She wishes it would be realistically possible to earn a career as a creative writer, but—not being so naïve—plans to work as a clinical social worker.

**Elizabeth Crowder (Columbus)** Elizabeth plans to attend Davidson College and major in biology with a minor in music. Her favorite writer is Dan Brown, and she thinks that "a piece of writing or art is something that measures your state of mind in life."

**Hannah Rebekah Cunningham (Pascagoula)** Hannah's favorite writer is Terry Pratchett, and she believes in the sentiment that "art is not finished, it is only abandoned," as expressed by Oscar Wilde. She plans to major in animation at the Memphis College of Art.

**Donald Conn Daniel (Saltillo)** Donald will go on to study philosophy or English at Hendrix College. Donald feels that his defining quotation is "We want to be poets of our life—first of all in the smallest most everyday matters" by Friedrich Nietzsche, who is one of Donald's favorite writers.

**Leslie Datsis (Iuka)** Leslie's defining quotation is "Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind" by Doctor Seuss. She plans to attend the University of Southern Mississippi and major in theatre.

**Rhonda Daughdrill (Wiggins)** Rhonda feels that "Art has a way of turning thoughts into images that provoke the imagination and captivate the soul." Her future plans are to major in biological engineering at Mississippi State and attend medical school.

**Parker Dendy (Southaven)** Parker's defining quotation is "The enemy's gate is down." His favorite artist is Monet. His future plans include being a film major, and becoming a director/filmmaker.

**Sweta Desai (Jackson)** Sweta's favorite artist is Vincent van Gogh. Her defining quotation is "Freedom is not worth having if it does not include the freedom to make mistakes," by Gandhi. Her future plans include majoring in architecture/interior design, or becoming a graphic designer.

**Ryan B. Deschamp (Vancleave)** Ryan's favorite writer is the songwriter Dianne Warren. He plans to attend Louisiana State University, majoring in economics, and then either pursue a master's degree in empirical economic analysis or attend law school for corporate law.

**Kali Falnes (Long Beach)** Kali's artistic philosophy is that "creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep." Her favorite artist is Salvador Dali.

**Jonathan N. Feng (Starkville)** Jonathan believes that "art is a way to escape from (often harsh) reality." He plans to major in biomedical engineering, attend UAB's EMSAP program, and minor in piano performance.

**Richard Harvey (Macon)** Richard's defining quotation is "I have failed over and over in my life. And that is why I succeed" by Michael Jordan. His favorite writer is J.K. Rowling, and he plans to attend law school.

**Evan Howlett (Horn Lake)** Evan's life motto is "Never give up." He thinks that "although not always immediately apparent, art can be seen in everything." He plans to get a degree in... something.

**Joel Huber (Starkville)** Joel feels that "art is like a great sports play. You can't just rush into the scorezone; you'll get clobbered! You have to zig and zag, confuse the defense, then go in for the points." He plans to major in chemical engineering.

**Boram Lee (Purvis)** Boram's motto is "Life is so unlike theory" as spoken by Anthony Trollope. She believes that "art teaches passion and the need for creativity." Boram plans to major in microbiology, with hopes of working at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

**Haoran "Jack" Li (Starkville)** Hoaran feels that "art is the window to the soul's expression." His favorite artist is Vincent van Gogh, and he plans to become a stock broker on the New York Wall Street and to live life as it comes.

**Aisha Lyons (Southaven)** Aisha's favorite artist is MC Escher, and her motto is "Life's too short to be normal." She also believes that "art speaks for itself." She would like to go to Washington University, major in chemistry, and minor in drawing.

**JaAnna McKinney (Rienzi)** JaAnna plans to attend MSU and pursue a career in architectural engineering. Her favorite artist is Salvador Dali, and he also supplies JaAnna's defining quotation: "Have no fear of perfection; you'll never reach it."

**Christina Moore (Gulfport)** Christina's defining quotation is "Forgiveness is not an attribute of the weak, only strong can forgive" by Gandhi. She says, "Art gives our lives color and texture. It opens our perceptions of things around us." She wants to become a neurosurgeon.

**Stella Nickerson (Aberdeen)** For the moment, Stella's favorite poet is Edna St. Vincent Millay, and her favorite fiction writer is Connie Willis. This is always subject to change. She plans to attend BYU and major in chemical engineering.

**Aldon O'Bryant (Greenwood)** Aldon's favorite writer is Langston Hughes. His defining quotation is "only you can decide what you can or can't do" by his mother. He would like to create his own video game.

**Stephanie Osbrin (Hattiesburg)** Stephanie plans to live life, be happy, and make a few memories along the way. Her favorite writer is Allen Ginsberg, and she feels that art is "all therapy and sensation; we create art to live."

**Laney Owings (Columbus)** Laney's favorite writer is Margaret Mitchell, and her life's motto is "Dammit, Laney, give it some gas and let's go!" She believes "when words fail, art speaks" and plans to go to Ole Miss, become a pharmacist, and love life.

**Miguel Rodriguez (Starkville)** Miguel feels that "it's the little things in life that make all the difference" and his favorite writer is Augustine "Og" Mandino. He hopes to get his undergraduate degree in biological sciences and then go to medical school.

**Wrijoya Roy (Columbus)** Wrijoya's future plans include being happy. Her favorite artist is Claude Monet, and the quotation which defines her is "Dance like nobody's watching; love like you've never been hurt. Sing like nobody's listening; live like it's heaven on earth."

**Hannah Ryan (Diamondhead)** Hannah's favorite writers are Flannery O'Connor and Haruki Murakami. She plans to attend USM to major in peace and love.

**Elizabeth Seratt (Greenville)** Elizabeth's defining quotation is "Love all, trust few, do wrong to no one" from Shakespeare. She plans to major in a foreign language and minor in English, preferably with a creative writing concentration. Her life's goal is to stand on every continent.

**Dong K. Song (Oxford)** Dong's favorite artist is Gary Chapman, and he feels that "It's not having what you want, it's about wanting what you have" defines his life.

**Shelby Steelhammer (Gulfport)** Shelby's favorite artists are Andy Warhol and the photographer Henk van Rensbergen.

**Chioma Udemgba (Natchez)** Chioma want to major in some physical science pre-med as an undergrad at Ole Miss. Her favorite poets are the songwriters India Arie and Jill Scott, and she feels that "art is and will always be a spontaneous overflow of feelings."

**Misty White (Brandon)** Misty's favorite artist is Margaret Bourke-White, and this artist also supplies Misty's favorite quotation: "Work is something you can count on, a trusted, lifelong friend who never deserts you." She plans to go into pharmacy and obtain a Ph.D. from Ole Miss.

**Brianna "Skye" Williams (Pass Christian)** Brianna's favorite writers are Tracey Hickman and Margaret Weiss, the authors of the Dragon Lance series. Her future plans include sky-diving, mountain-climbing, jet-skiing, flying, and living.

**Nickie Wu (Clarksdale)** Nickie believes that "it is hard to have failed, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed." She feels that she has too many favorite writers and artists to choose one. She hopes to find a major she's passionate about, find a job that she loves, and take care of her family.

## *Southern Voices*

is a magazine of creative works by the students at  
the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science.

*It is available*

to read on the Internet at <http://www.msms.k12.ms.us>

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