

# The Magic River

Spring 2007 Edition



A Collection of Pearl River Community College Student art, poetry,  
essays, and short stories



# The Magic River

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Spring 2007 edition

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April Carter  
Editor



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## Editor's Foreword:

*You are a writer. You get this sudden urge deep within yourself that overtakes all of your senses and thoughts. You have this feeling that spreads inside of you, dying to get out; it is like the urge to tinkle, but you really don't have to tinkle. It is something else altogether with the same discomfort and urge to do some sort of action as you've gotten when you've had too much soda at a ballgame. Only this hits you always and at the oddest times.. Its the drive of the writer. It is the spirit of the muse. And its got something to say.*

I came upon this position quite unexpectedly. The first editor for this paper resigned; she had a lot going as it was and wanted to pass on the literary journal to someone who would have more time to dedicate to it. When it was offered to me, my first instinct was to run screaming the other way saying "I've never done it before and I'm sure I'll screw it up!" But before my feet were able to make their flight, my mouth was spouting "sure!" And I sure am glad for mouth overrun feet. It has been the greatest experience for me. The writer in me has enjoyed the challenge of the search for materials to include, the artist in me lavished in making semblance of the chaos of paperwork mounds and an empty screen, and the reader in me has enjoyed the intimate view into the thoughts and experiences in other people's lives.

I tried the best that I could to publish as many writers as I could find material from in a vast array of different subjects and styles. With the help of Ms. Ferguson, we went on material quests through the paperwork hills of her office. Despite it all, I still found that I have a special little place in my heart for the sweet southern style of Mississippi life literature. Dena Westmoreland's stories especially capture that essence of growing up in Mississippi in the warm and humorous ways to which most of us can relate.

Who knows? Maybe one of these writers will someday be the Faulker or the Willams or the Welty or even the Grisham of the future. At least I can say that I have had the honor to read and include the works of such talented and diverse southern writers in a collection for Pearl River Community College. We all start somewhere....

Sincerely,

*April Cindy Carter*

*"Perhaps it is the relentless heat and humidity, or perhaps it is simple proximity to the Bermuda triangle, but something in the air below the Mason-Dixon Line consistently produces characters outsiders consider bizarre or even a little twisted."*

-Kimberly Twomley, *A Magnolia for Faulkner*



## CONDITION PURPLE

Kim Twomley

*Friday night, my husband was in the living room, spending some quality time with his one-eyed mistress. She was up to her usual trick: toying with his emotions.*

Normally, she would dress in ESPN and use words like “golf” and “basketball.” This time, however, he was caught up in her newest ploy called “Weather Watch - Hurricane Dennis.” Her siren’s song now began with the words “The situation is rapidly deteriorating....” She would then cut coyly to a commercial. Frantic, he would race to the other room, where her equally evil, equally one-eyed younger sister, Mademoiselle Computer, awaited him. The sister, in her turn, was more brazen: she would slowly, again and again, trace a curving, erratic line up her screen. He was putty in her hands. (I’ve traced a line up his inner thigh and not gotten as much response.) Temptingly, she promised delights yet to come, flashing projected storm paths, colored in decadent red, calculated to make his blood boil. He was smitten. It was pathetic to watch. I headed for the bathroom to color my hair.

The sisters kept him busy while I was in the shower. Returning to the room an hour later, however, I suddenly had his complete and undivided attention. Dumbfounded, he could only stare. Clearly, he could see that I was upset but was a little slow on the uptake; he mistakenly attributed my distress to the hurricane. Blinking twice, he blurted out, “The situation is rapidly deteriorating!”

“Who cares?” I cried. “Look at my hair!” Blessedly, the cloud of

incomprehension lifted and he focused on the train wreck atop my head. He decided to proceed, if not cautiously, at least diplomatically. He began to laugh. “Like I said,” he replied, “the situation is rapidly deteriorating.” Holding me by the shoulders, he surveyed the damage. Finally, he shook his head and suggested that perhaps it was just the lighting and that things might actually look better in the morning. We went to bed.

In the morning, I heard him stir. Hours before, as dawn crept over the horizon, I had stared, transfixed with horror, at the unrecognizable creature staring back at me from the mirror. It was Halloween, Freak-show Barbie! Mattel would be calling for the photo shoot any minute. Suddenly, I had a new and tremendous empathy for Mary Magdalene, waiting with sorrow for the dawn, so she could embalm her Master’s body; for Francis Scott Key, sitting in darkness, waiting on the light of day to reveal what he would - or rather, feared he would not - see. These souls had become kindred spirits. My weak hope that daylight would improve the situation evaporated as fast as the pre-dawn fog. Salvation, in fact, was not coming. I looked over from my post in front of the mirror to see my husband staring out the window. “Lighting, it seems, was not the problem,” I informed him. Rolling to his side, he frowned and considered me critically. “The situation is rapidly deteriorating,” he replied in his croaky, morning voice. I wasn’t sure if he

was talking about me, or the weather. He got out of bed and trudged to the computer.

Now it was my turn to stare out the window. I struggled with the reality that, in a few hours, I was going to have to appear at church like this. My husband re-entered the bedroom. He looked a long time at my hair. “The situation is still deteriorating,” he reiterated. “Lighting was not the problem,” he added, unnecessarily. I wondered if the shock had been too much for him; perhaps he had now been rendered incapable of original thought and, heretofore, would only be able to mimic phrases he heard. Sighing, I followed him, and the smell of coffee, into the kitchen.

He turned on the TV just in time to hear Jim Cantore inform us that the situation was rapidly deteriorating. “You have no idea,” I mumbled back. I resigned myself to the fact that this was going to be a very long morning. Fear, Dread, and Anxiety, the three demonic imps from the 1980’s TV show *Thirty-Something*, followed me around the house as I tried to get dressed. I wondered aloud if I still owned a hat. The imps howled with delight. They knew I didn’t. A short time later, as I walked up the sidewalk in front of the church, I looked down to find they were still with me. “Hey, you can’t come in here!” I shouted at them. “You’re not allowed!” They just screamed with laughter and held the door. Inside, waiting to greet me, was June, the church secretary. I felt my face heat with mortification. “Hello!” June smiled

sweetly. Mute, I reached for the bulletin she offered. I couldn't look her in the eye. "You colored your hair," she prompted gently. I decided to get this over with. "June," I swallowed, looking up, "it's purple!" Her grin felt like a cool drink. "Honey," she laughed, "we have all done that to ourselves at one time or another."

And so it went. Each woman I met either commented or she didn't. The men, for their part, never uttered a peep. Apparently, they had all taken an unspoken vow of silence. After the closing hymn as we headed for the door, my husband showed some extremely bad judgment by actually stepping in front of me and then *slowing down* to speak to someone about the rapidly deteriorating conditions. Fear, Dread, Anxiety and I mowed him over in our haste to escape.

On the way home, I convinced Fear, Dread, and Anxiety to pipe down long enough to let me do some mulling. It was beginning to come to me how enlightening the whole gauntlet had actually been. As with any good disaster, there were lessons to be learned. That morning, three truths had come sharply into focus: First, I was reminded that my inner child was alive and well. She was the one who had summoned the fiends who were still mutely crowding around me. As a grown-up, I had enough experience to know the anticipation of an unpleasantness is almost always far worse than the reality. Yet emotionally, I had abdicated to her, even though I knew better. To have one's tenuous grasp on maturity thrown into such sharp relief is not especially comforting. Second, I realized, sadly, I no longer had any close male friends in my immediate circle. Polite and reserved, each of the men at church had emphatically reiterated this to me by their loud silence. The realization made me miss my male friends who loved me enough to tease me, but now lived far away. Third, I saw that each individual's response to my hair was, not so much an opinion on how it made *me* look, as it was an expression of *their* personality. They viewed *my* hair through *their* paradigm and commented accordingly. For instance: Kim, the school counselor, declared the girls at school would love it. Alissa - artistic, dramatic, and cultured - was the color's adamant fan.

Miss Doretta, sweet, gentle, and soft spoken, who has possibly never said an unkind word to anyone in her whole life, assured me it looked, "Lovely, my dear." Lisa, the busybody, immediately told me how to fix it. *Mrs.* To-be-in-her-presence-is-to-feel-reprimanded Shannon never breathed a word; she simply stared. Jessica, a high school student who loves to be dramatic (and has arranged her own look accordingly), stopped dead in her tracks and pronounced it, "Awesome!" Indeed, when she threw her arms around me in a hug, I doubt a bystander could have distinguished her head from mine since her hair is dyed exactly the same, hideous shade of purple. She saw my hair as a sign of solidarity. Her embrasure of its purpleness was really about her; it had nothing to do with me.

My teenaged sons had spent the previous night at a friend's house thus missing both church and all the Clairol-based drama. When they and their friend arrived at our house to "chow," I was finally able to get a small - although highly biased - sampling of male opinion. I found myself a lot more relaxed about their impending assessments, since I now understood the statements were going to be more about the person speaking than anything else. True to form, the reactions matched the personalities. First through the door was Tyler (my youngest) who has always possessed a highly developed sense of how things are supposed to be. His hair is kept short, spiked, and under control. The only exception to this is an annual anomaly when, prior to the basketball tournament, his hair is ritualistically grown out and braided into dread locks as homage to some unnamed, mystical basketball god. This is his only teenaged concession of any type to deviant behavior. Otherwise, he cleans his room, wears his retainer faithfully, and likes his girlfriends beautiful and quiet. He does not tolerate drama. He took one look at my hair and his greeting came to an abrupt halt. I assured him I knew it looked "like crap"

(a standard phrase taken from his vernacular) to which he replied, "Well, I wasn't going to *tell* you that." I noted, however, that he did not disagree. Second, came Geoffrey, my sons' friend, the human equivalent of a Jack Russell puppy and whose own hair stays streaked with chemically induced shades of yellow and white. As soon as he saw me, he threw up his hands in shock and immediately started bellowing "Awesome! Dude, come look at your Mom's hair! Mrs. Twomley, that is *SO* something *I* would do, but not you!" This pronouncement was sufficient to forestall the deforestation of the refrigerator by my oldest son, Jared. Coolly whipping around the end of the cabinets for a better look while never losing his grasp on the open refrigerator door, Jared simply shook his head and pronounced me "a nerd" before returning to his pillaging. (Anticipation over his imminent collegiate debut was at record levels, his departure pseudo-mourned by one and all. Until then, however, he was forced to associate with us mere mortals. Daily, he found this harder and harder to bear.)

Upon his arrival home, my husband opened the kitchen window above the sink, the better to fully appreciate the rapidly deteriorating conditions. Sure enough, the next big gust of wind rapidly deteriorated the condition of equilibrium enjoyed by one of the potted plants sitting on the window sill. The sound of it crashing into the drainer brought me flying in from the bedroom. Stems broken and dirt everywhere, it was plant pandemonium. He looked at me warily, trying to calculate exactly how much trouble he was in. "Uh-oh," he began. "Conditions have *REALLY* deteriorated. Look! The first plant casualty of Hurricane Dennis." He waited, hoping this would be classified as funny. He would have to keep waiting; the jury was still out. I would have to determine what plant had been broken before a verdict could be reached. As I righted the pot and saw what it had contained, the irony of Fate's choice struck me hard in the funny bone: of course, it was *purple* clover. I laughed. ☐

# Being Mommy

Shundra Lewis



**Y**our senior year in

college is supposed to be one of the most memorable in your college life. Mine most certainly was. That year, I rented my first house with some friends, partied, turned 21, had a child, and graduated, and all of that in that order. Becoming a mother has taught me a lot of things that a formal education never could. I've learned selflessness, patience, and the reason the parents keep those embarrassing photos. It is payback for all of the things that our children do to embarrass us.

The summer entering my senior year, I had it all planned out. However, it turned out that the good Lord had intended something much bigger than what I had in mind. You know how most people get sloppy drunk on their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday? I was drinking juice. I learned what a real friend was during that time. I also learned what it was like to lose someone you never knew you had. I couldn't let that bother me, though. I had something more important to accomplish; someone more important to think about. I could have sat out a year, but I pushed

through. A month after I had my son, I walked across the stage to get my diploma.

So what, I had a bachelors degree. I wanted more. I wasn't going to stop there. I started working on my masters. I drove four hours every Sunday and every Friday to go home to take care of my son. Some people may think that I was putting my son off on my folks. That's when I ask if they have ever had a baby and knew what it was like to have to leave every week without them with you. I also did something that I said I would never do. I joined the military. So when my son was a year and a half old, I was gone for 6 months doing training where I got to miss first words and other milestones. For those who have been in the military, they understand the lack of freedom you have during that time. Plus, considering that I joined after 9/11, I had a bigger chance of going off to war, but that didn't matter. The military gave me something that I couldn't get on my own. It gave me security. I had money to step out on my own for a while and get my life started so that I could be a provider for my son. For a while that worked out, but I still need more for him. That's why I'm back in school now.

I've moved back home with my folks. Now anyone who has lived on their own for a while understands what that means. Now that's giving up a freedom, but it's worth it for my son.

Have you ever had to sit up till one in the morning with a two month old who woke up at ten and isn't ready to go back to sleep? You, on the other hand have been up most of the day and are about to pass out. That is true patience. Believe me, it doesn't get that much better as they get older. What you will tolerate tends to change. You are busy trying to fold clothes while your child is playfully climbing all over your couch. Now, you are usually like "get down" or "stop that." At this point in time, you are like "whatever makes you happy and quiet while I get this done." That's when you know that you have become a parent. There are some things, however that you should not let slide. Now, I know you have seen the mothers in the grocery store with their children and they are running around like little devils. That's where my patience ends. I'm all for letting them have a little fun. I'm ok for a little playfulness on the aisles; however, when you see a child tearing down the aisle and mom is like "now stop that, please," I don't tolerate that. I think that is where the patience should end.

I'm standing in a store looking at some clothes. I turn around a little frightened at first, because my son is not standing where he was five minutes ago. I look behind me to see my son dancing in the mirror to his own music. Not like little small movements. I'm talking about arms flailing and body gyrating that could have put Elvis to shame. Needless to say I quickly grab him before anyone can really see him. He just gives me that "what did I do" look. I think to myself I bet the people who go over the security cameras are having a good laugh right about now. I didn't realize how much entertainment your children could be. That's when I start to realize how much fun it can be. I have someone full of energy to play with when I'm bored. When I am sad I have someone there always with a smile and love to pick me up. You can watch

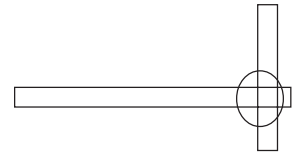
cartoons all day and blame it on the kid. Now he does have his moments when even I wonder what in the world is wrong with him, but I do

*“When I am sad, I have someone there always with a smile and loves to pick me up.”*



have to admit that when you look at his parents, most of it he got honest.

I never imagined that I would be a single mother trying to raise a son on my own, but it's an honor I will gladly accept. Some people my see it as a hurdle for a career or future. I see it as a blessing. Would I recommend people go out and start having kids? That is a resounding NO! I say have a stable household with two parents so that you will have someone to share all of those special moments with. Believe me, being mommy is an experience that, while on some days can be trying, is one that I will never regret. ☒



## My Loretta

Michelle Ransom Guzman

*I sat and looked out toward the street and beyond, off in the distance. The sky was a dark gray; there was almost no movement. It was as if the earth stood still at that moment. The breeze was eerily calm, neither too warm nor too cool on my skin. I sat and pondered about the activities that would get me through the next few days, once this storm passed. And as I day-dreamed, the rattle of old metal and the grind of gravel beneath wheels brought me from the depths of my thinking.*

It was my grandmother and grandfather in his little pickup truck—the same little pickup truck that my grandfather shined each day and loved no matter how many times he had to replace this or that.

My grandmother was old and grayed, her once raven-colored ringlets were but a shade of gray that hung loosely about her tired face. Her chest heaved with effort to breathe, but nevertheless, she took a long draw of her cigarette and turned to give me a smile. Behind the smile, I could see the worry that had taken place deep in her eyes. Her small home, my grandfather, and this little pickup truck were invaluable to her. How could she survive if these things got

destroyed? What would be her legacy if there was nothing left? The small trinkets and sentimental items that she'd gathered throughout her life and the tiny house that enclosed them were the only things she could call her own.

My grandfather was a sharp contrast to the seriousness of my grandmother. He laughed and talked about fishing stories, completely oblivious to the encroaching storm and destruction that would soon plague us all. We all huddled together in our living room and made small conversation to pass the time. Before long, night had fallen and passed.

I awoke very early in the morning to the whistling wind outside

my bedroom window. It whipped about the house, threatening to take the walls down brick by brick. I peered out and faced the gloomy sky. It was rainy and the air felt thick with the pressure of the storm. Ominous clouds whispered of what was still to come.

The electricity had gone out since early in the morning. That meant no watching television, no air conditioning, and no flushing water. We had moved a mattress out into the living room for my grandparents. It had been a long and uncomfortable night for them sleeping on the hard ground with only a small mattress and bedding between them. For my grandmother, it had been worse. The small trip from the bed to the bathroom was a great struggle for her, zapping all the strength from her withered body. We had little or no food and absolutely no gas if we had to leave. Her breathing became difficult as the day went on. She sat quietly beside my grandfather and watched the storm devour us. The small fleck of worry in her eyes was now engulfing her. My grandfather began to worry that he may need to take her to the hospital.

The day passed slowly. We spent most of the time watching the storm as it raged around us, ripping roofs off of houses and flipping others. Later, as the storm neared its end, it seemed that we would be spared. We had very little damage and we had survived. My grandfather and my grandmother talked quietly; she was anxious to return to her home and see the damage. Darkness fell and we all prepared for a hot, sleepless night.

After midnight, a nervous knock came at my door. It was my grandfather. Through blurred vision, I could barely make out the shape of my

grandmother clutching her chest, the faint glow of a candle behind her. I could hear the worry constricting his voice as he told me that he was taking my grandmother to the hospital. I quickly rose from the bed and began putting my contacts in.

In the living room, my grandmother kept insisting that she did not need to go to the hospital, she only had to go to the restroom. I managed to put one contact lens in my eye, and opened the door in time to see my grandfather trying to pull my grandmother into a standing position. My grandfather's face strained with difficulty, my grandmother's chest heaved. Every muscle in her weakened body tensed with her attempt to stand. And, suddenly there was no more struggle. My grandmother fell backward and went limp.

The eyes that stared at me were no longer my grandmother's. They were the cold, accusing eyes of death. You allowed me to die! Why didn't you do something?! They bore through me, chilling my soul. I had failed her when she needed me most. For a moment, as the reality of the situation sank in, the world held its breath. And, as suddenly as time stopped, it began. In that instant, my world crumbled. I was running on the cold, wet ground. Please, Dear God, let someone have a cell phone! Screams erupted from my mouth and reverberated on the fiber of my being. My heart raced. I pounded on the large, white door that was before me. Silence answered. It seemed an eternity before the sleepy face of my sister-in-law appeared from the shadows. Words poured from my mouth in nonsensical sentences, followed by sobs and screams. There was no cell phone service. The towers had been knocked down in the storm!!

Behind me, I was faintly aware of my grandfather and husband trying to move my grandmother's lifeless

body. The next few hours were the most quickly paced hours in my entire life. I barely remember getting into my sister's car. I only remember the urgency that kept flashing in my mind. We had to hurry! The roads around us were blocked, overturned light poles and street signs intermingled with trees. We slowly made our way down the debris-laden road. My life was torn to pieces, lying amongst the piles of wood and twisted metal. I felt myself slipping away from reality into the depths of my mind, where the image of those empty eyes whispered to me.

When we finally made it into town, there was a police cruiser sitting in the middle of the intersection. My sister-in-law jumped from the car and pleaded for the officer's help. His cruel and uncaring attitude met her panicked cries. In an empty voice, he told her that there was no ambulance service, so we would have to escort my grandfather with my grandmother to the hospital.

My mind went blank, my body was numb. There was no way that we would arrive at the hospital in time. I stared blankly out the window, lost inside myself, as my husband quietly told me that my grandmother didn't make it. I could not even bear to imagine the sheer terror and agony that my grandfather had to be in, carrying the limp former shell of his beloved wife in his pickup truck behind us. I held out hope, maybe this would be a miracle and she would survive. Maybe.

As we finally arrived at the hospital, my grandmother was wheeled into the emergency room. I flinched as they flung her onto a gurney, the thud sickening me. My grandfather and I sat side by side in the small corridor not speaking. Questions and emotions swirled inside me, making me feel faint. I prayed, Dear God, let her be okay. Please.

In a way, a small weight had lifted from me. We had finally gotten her to a hospital; she would surely be okay. I prayed that in the next moment the doctor would emerge from the room and give us good news that my grandmother was going to be okay. And he did emerge, but he did not greet us with the happy demeanor of one with good news. Instead, we could see the answer in his eyes, even as the cold

words came from his mouth. He gave his apology and rose to leave.

It was as if the floodgates opened and the tears poured like rain. Every ounce of strength inside me crumbled and I cried. I cried for my grandmother, for the storm, for my grandfather who may not know how to make it alone. Everything else slipped away and I was alone in the darkness crying tears for the grandmother who

had taken care of me my entire life. I was never able to say goodbye and now I would never see her again.

In the dim light given off by the generator-powered lights, I could see that my grandfather aged a decade in a matter of hours. The woman he had loved for more than a quarter of a century was now gone.



## Is it a Religion or a Game?

Dena Westmoreland



**One thing** someone growing up in Ackerman, Mississippi learns quickly is that the biggest crowds are at the First Baptist Church on Sunday mornings. Unless of course, it is football season! All the locals gather, proudly wearing their blue and gold in support of the local hometown heroes. Even the school children have the same enthusiasm. The little girls are wearing miniature copies of the high school cheerleaders' outfits, while the little boys are dressed in their Ackerman Indians' football jerseys. Locally run Maw and Paw stores lock the doors two hours before the game's kick-off to ensure good seats at the stadium.

As the Sunday morning services begin, cars line all the surrounding streets; however, that is nothing compared to the congressional gathering of the Indian fans fellowship. If fans do not arrive at the game at least an hour before the start, they could be in for quite a little walk. Some have had to park over a mile away from the field, on several occasions. While you can always find a seat at the church, there are times when there is no place to stand, much less sit, in the bleachers. During football season, there is no talk of who was and was not in attendance Sunday morning for the sermon. All you hear about are the game's highlights and why you were not there to witness them yourself.

If the truth were known, there is probably more praying at a Friday night game than in Sunday morning worship service. The rivalries are so heated that fans pray throughout the whole game to "just let them win this one." I am sure a lot of them even try to bargain with the good Lord that they will stop some unsavory habit or deed if their team can pull off another astounding victory.

These are just a few examples of the spirit surrounding an ordinary game; then there is the "BIG GAME!" when the Ackerman Indians take on the notorious Eupora Eagles. The schools have been arch enemies for as long as anyone in either town can remember. This game puts families on separate sides of the field and friends against friends. This is sad but all so true. I think when most residents of Choctaw County are asked what denomination they are, the answer should not be the most commonly answered Southern Baptist, but football fanatic, although there are no quiet back seat Baptists sitting with their hands in their lap through these festive events.

*The Friday night sermon begins this week in Ackerman....*

# Bittersweet Recovery

April Carter



Here we are again, and it has been a while, I know, but after much ado, we find ourselves, full family now, arrived in Pasadena, Texas. Tonight is the first night in some time that I have not been too exhausted, or overwhelmed, and have had a private moment with my thoughts and emotions and both are in utter confusion and disarray:

*...bittersweet...*

Throughout the drive here to Pasadena with my Mother as my only passenger, this was the word she kept muttering time and time again through desperate sobs and pitiful tears. This, the only word to explain exactly what it feels like to face such a tragedy and homecoming at once. This, the only term she could use to explain her relief of being free from the hell of a hurricane battered region and the muck that became this region at Second Street Elementary Shelter, and yet her all encompassing grief that she, as his sister and caretaker, did not emerge from the shelter with my beloved and sickly uncle who wanted nothing more than to escape this hell himself. For lack of my own word and for as all-encompassing as it has been to explain the inexplicable, I find the term, "bittersweet," the most proper fitting term for the life I face after the storm.

Since coming to Texas, most assuredly, we have found a generous and healthy sum of welcoming and sympathetic townsfolk. And before I go further, let me do say, for those who have done these things, you are the guidepost for us to keep strong, and we appreciate your kindness. God Bless you all.

Yet, I find myself suffering from that caged-bird syndrome I once felt, and which nearly broke me when I first found myself in this Lone-Star State. I must admit, it is NOT the state itself, but a profound and severe form of unimaginable homesickness, a depth of loss now more raw and destructible than the one I had felt in my previous short stay in Austin. When the sadness had begun to tear at my core there in Austin, lonesome as I was, just I in the big city, I at least had the hope to sustain my spirit that I had family and a home on the coast that would welcome me always and at any moment I desperately needed them.

Now, there is no home to which, when lonesome and homesick, I may return. Metaphorically speaking, and a reminder I hear daily from my sister, home is where the heart makes it, and this time around, I am fortunate to have the surrounding comfort of my family, but there is little they can do to ease my burden, for their shoulders are heavy just as mine are heavy, and while they cry in the day on my shoulder, I cry in the dark on the shoulder of God.

I find myself half at courageous and partly at beaten. When things were the hardest, emotionally for the rest, I kept myself strongest, so that they may lean on my strength and cry on my shoulder. Still I am haunted by the nightmare-like image of my mother and sister: ever the strongest and most courageous people I know, the rocks I often lean on and the wisdom I always seek, miserably surviving with spirits nearly broken, shamelessly falling to pieces at my side. I wonder sometimes should my time come soon? The only-so-basic need to lose it all seems to fester close under my facade of courage and collection. I still have not let all my emotions come clean; it lies in waiting, tearing at me, creeping torturously over me, a little more each day, waiting for me to have to finally let loose and have my moment of weakness and despair.

Partly, yes, I feel I am broken. My spirit is at most crippled, at the least saddened. The person I once was, is now destroyed and left with the debris of my home. I find myself bare and naked, my soul stripped of the frivolity and complexity that used to be me. I picture myself as before She came and swept away my normality, pre-disaster and fancy-free, the days when I faced some of the greatest moments and personal triumphs, times I was so proud, full of the deepest faith for my future and myself.

*The era of a pink dress and silver sparkling slippers.....*

As I had fought Fate's push at my life plans time and time again, feeling smug that for once and for all, I had overcome her obstacles and was back head deep in college. I had just returned from Disneyworld, twenty-two and my first time, full of post-vacation refreshment and laughter still pink on my lips. There was my exotic blue dress with hibiscus and frills, and heels with flowers that made me feel happy. There were friends and phone calls; there was freedom and fun. But mostly, it was the pink dress and the silver slippers. It feels like midnight already and Cinderella has nothing but tears now; all that happiness has come crashing down. That girl? The once ever so glamorous and glitzy girl who loved to paint the town red in fabulous stilettos? The attitude, the feistiness, vivacity? Gone. I find myself struggling to walk straight with my shoulders back and my head held high as I once prided of myself - that strength of stride that pronounced my presence. I am now the survival me - the essential me - and I am not alone in suffering from the immense loss of person that results from a tragedy. I find that I am but the person eating each day and tasting nothing; waking up each day and expecting nothing, but resigned to accept the long process of rebuilding anything I've ever known. I am the person who sleeps each night, knowing

she is one day closer to someday being who she was before, living the life of normalcy she loved. Everyday it is something new; some imaginative innovation of life and her pride of the span and range of intricacies and insanity that she unseemly can reel at us without effort or without bias.

It is so easy to feel the emergence of the tears; I find myself fighting back that tightness and knot just before sobbing, triggered easily by reminders of what once was home. A walk at a thrift store is almost like a walk through a graveyard: there is always some small reminder lining my path. Do I buy things like a lampshade or a pillow cover because I once had almost that very one in my bedroom at home? Or do I bury that home and not torture myself with memoirs of what once was?

I secretly grieve for things irreplaceable. I know that it is wrong to grieve for material belongings, but how do I go about erasing the knowledge that somewhere along the way, Katrina stole my cap and my gown, my trophies and class ring, my mementos of a life that is now but a ghost? I understand now how easy it is to take for granted, things so simple and basic as calling a friend who lives nearby or visiting a relative in the neighborhood, or driving to a local restaurant and having the waitress place my order without even asking what I want. This is what community is and it is easy to mourn it once it is crushed.

I fear becoming despondent like the people who did not leave Mississippi during or after the storm. I fear breaking down and losing my grip on the family. I fear the future and breaking the fragile sense of will that my family has created. Most of all...I fear losing everything I ever knew in life and never knew was special...*will our hometown ever, EVER recover?*

I am so gracious for being blessed with my health, my life, and the health and life of those who most matter. I try and hold on, to this, the kindness and support of the people around us and in this accepting community; I indulge myself in gaining strength from the knowledge that people do care and that they pray for us and cry for us. I feel sheltered knowing that there is generosity and selflessness in the country I live in, knowing that there are people who do not know us, but care just the same....the essence of life, of feeling loved and knowing that there is still kindness to have faith in, and faith to be had. Yes Virginia, people still are kind.

So lonesome, but not alone; so lost, but not without guidance. It is bitter and sweet hell and tomorrow is another day. The Sun shall again rise and she shall shine and with every ounce of courage I have, so too will I rise and I will shine. ☒

....Bittersweet....



## Anirtak

---

Anthony Warren

“**B**ang! Bang! It sounded like TNT bombs, then water rushed in, I live on third floor of the projects and was at my window. It looked like a swamp.” Alligators chose human flesh for lunch, victims losing hope; murdered cops, cops in fear killed citizens that posed a threat; women. Women and children were brutally raped. Everybody became *Anirtak's* bait.

Friday before the storm reached land, I was packing a few items before I left to go to Baton Rouge, so my parents could sign my financial-aid papers. At the time, the storm was only a category-two storm, so no one was concerned. By the time I arrived in Baton Rouge, rumors of disaster were flying like eagles. Gas stations were packed, bread had run out; everyone was preparing for the raft of *Anirtak*.

Sunday, she hit land hard! No lights; no power; no bread. My relatives gathered at my grandparents' house as *Anirtak* did her damage. We all were in need of a hot meal. I sought and found coals and lighter fluid. My cousin seasoned the meat. I barbequed and we ate well.

The aftermath was terrible. The population of Baton Rouge doubled from 440,000 to 800,000. Store after store was raided for guns. Pawn shops, Wal-Mart, Old Navy; people were robbed and carjacked. The stores then started closing before dark. In Louisiana, everybody gets guns in an attempt to protect what's theirs. The evacuees have lost everything and feel obligated to do anything to survive. The city of Baton Rouge is in terror...

The traffic is unbelievable. A normal ten-minute ride has turned into a thirty-minute ride. Houses and apartments are being sold or rented as fast as one can blink. I turned the name Katrina backwards because that's what she did to the lives of her victims. “Bang! Bang!” Then water rushed into the dryland and turned it into a deadly island.☒

# Super-Burger

Steve-**Main character, 19 years old, fast food employee (Most lines)**  
 Mike-**Steve's Roommate, fast-food employee, redneck. (Some lines)**  
 Dave-**Steve's Roommate, video game tester, nerd (Some lines)**  
 Karen-**Restaurant Shift Manager (Few lines)**  
 Nancy-**Fast food employee (Very few lines)**  
 TV-**Female television announcer (Very few lines)**  
 Customer 1-**Female, lies (Very few lines)**  
 Customer 2-**Male (Very Few lines)**  
 Customer 3-**female (very few lines)**

*<Inside the Super-Burger Restaurant Meeting Room>*

Karen...and so all of the new bags will have playing cards on them. The customers try to get poker hands to win things. One customer will be able to get a royal flush and win a car.

Nancy: How will they make sure only one person gets a royal flush?

Karen: They only make one Queen of Diamonds. No one will know what store it goes to.

Mike: Didn't your friend win the last four contests like this that we had? If no one knows where these things are going...

Karen: Okay, time to get back to work.

*<Everyone goes to their stations. Steve works in the drive through and a customer sets off the drive through tone>*

Steve: Thank you for choosing Super-Burger.

Customer 1: Yeah, I saw on TV that you guys have a deal where I can get five burgers for six rubles.

Steve: Ma'am... rubles...? What... where did you see that at?

Customer 1: On television.

Steve: No you didn't. You...you just made that up.

Customer 1: No, I... well... uh... I have a coupon...

Steve: No, you don't.

Customer 1: Y...all right.

Steve: \$5.25 at the first window.

*<Another customer sets off the drive through tone>*

Steve: Thank you for choosing Super Burger.

Customer 2: Yeah, I'd like the number four...Double-super-sized... with extra, extra meat... one hundred and sixteen times extra cheese... with thirty... uh, fifty mayonnaise packets.

Steve: What size fries, super?

Customer 2: Uh, myriad, please.

Steve: What to drink?

Customer 2: I'll take a quadruple chocolate shake with

extra chocolate and some butter packets.

Steve: Anything else?

Customer 2: Yeah, can you just go ahead and put some bacon grease on those fries? Oh, and I'll take a small Diet Coke.

Steve: That'll be five thirty-six...ninety-nine.

*<Customer 2 pulls to Steve's window>*

Customer 2: Do you take Confederate money?

Steve: Whatever.

Customer 2: <Cough> I'm sick, I've got the Ebola virus. The doctor says I need to start eating better, so I'm switching to diet soda.

Steve: <Sigh> Good move.

*<A third customer sets off the drive through tone>*

Steve: What?

Customer 3: I'd like a standard hamburger please.

Steve: That's it?

Customer 3: Yeah.

Steve: No special order?

Customer 3: Uh, no, not today.

Steve: Wow, cool. \$1.05 please.

*<Customer 3 pulls to Steve's window>*

Steve: Awesome, thanks.

Customer 3: Careful, I think I'm getting sick. I think I got the flu when I was in Manchuria.

Steve: Great... Thanks.

*<Customer 3 pulls to Nancy's window>*

Nancy: Hey, you got the Queen of Diamonds! Congratulations.

Customer 3: Yes. I understand.

*<Customer 3 rips the bag out of her hand and drives off>*

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Nancy: Jerk!

<The shift ends and everyone leaves. It's time for Steve to be at work.>

Karen: Where the heck is Steve?

<The phone rings>

Karen: Super-Burger!

Steve: I can't come in today. I think I'm sick.

Karen: What? You have to come in.

Steve: I Think I have the Man-bola Flu.

Karen: You can still come in! Johnson's here and he's got Salm-colli...

<Johnson pukes and collapses in the background>

Karen: Johnson! Not on the table! And that's what your break's for! Look, Steve, are you coming in or not? Remember what we told you when you took that day off because the CDC said you couldn't leave you house or whatever. NO more sick days this century.

Steve: It's 2001!

Karen: Not my fault. I'm taking you off the schedule.

Steve: Whatever.

<Steve hangs up and sits on the couch with Mike and Dave>

Steve: Well, I'm officially unemployed.

Mike: That sucks. At least you have the day off. What do you want to do?

Dave: Let's play Dungeons and Dragons!

Mike: Shut the hell up, you worthless dork! Don't you remember what happened the last time you made us play that crap?

<It's two weeks ago. Mike, Dave, and Steve are sitting around a table. Dave is wearing a wizard hat.>

Steve : (holding a book): Okay, Dave. It says here that we need to make characters. I guess I'll be a magician.

Dave: It's mage! Mike, what are you going to be?

Mike: I want to be whatever kind of thing that can f-ing stab your nerdy ass.

Dave: And I want to be a level nineteen dragon-riding necromancer with a Scythe of Doom plus fifteen, riding a large red dragon that's riding a robot that's in a Sphere of containment inside of a slightly larger robot that was summoned by the grand wizard of...

<Return to present time>

Steve: Mike's right. We shouldn't do that again. Ever. Let's watch TV.

<Steve turns the TV on>

TV: This is a Channel Five News Alert. At ten o'clock last night, Angela Lansbury, star of Murder She Wrote was shot at a political rally that she was attending. All that was found by her body was a bottle of Heinz 57 sauce and a Super Burger bag.

Steve: That's a shame. Let's see what else is on.

TV: Luxembourg has declared war on Belize, prompting Kim Jong II of North Korea to enter into a five-hour long tirade about South Korea looking at him funny.

Steve: This sucks. Time to fill out those applications I picked up at that job fair.

<Steve walks to a desk and looks at papers>

Steve: "Johnson Construction." Hmm... "Bridge Construction Foreman." Sounds promising... Let's see... Last job? Fast food... Uh...Rapid Cuisine Preparation Engineer. Yeah...

Mike: What are you doing?

Steve: Filling out applications. It says I need engineering experience.

Mike: Cool.

Dave: (Playing a video game): Yes! I've beaten the dark mage. Now all of the land of Canderia is mine! Resplendent!

Mike: I thought I told you to shut the hell up!

<Mike runs over to Dave and starts beating him up>

Dave: No, not my Counter-Strike finger!

Steve: Desired salary? Negotiable. Bridge experience? Lots!

Dave : My precious spine!

Steve: References?

<Steve looks over at Mike and Dave. Mike starts tearing apart Dave's computer>

Mike: Yeah, I'm going to cast the break spell on your little computer! Look, I rolled a one-thousand!

Dave: No! You leave her alone!

Steve:...none.

<Mike heads over to Steve. Dave sits in the middle of the remains of his computer, crying>

Mike: How's it going?

Steve: I think it's going to be okay. I don't think I can go anywhere else but u~ ☹



# **T**hief In The Night

By Elise Thornton



Richard-thief, about 20 years old, grungy handsome, multiple tattoos, multiple personalities  
 Claire-nineteen or twenty, very attractive  
 Alex-Claire's boyfriend, clean cut prep

## Act One, Scene One

Setting: Claire's bedroom in her apartment. Bed situated across the room from a big window. Her apartment is on the second story of her building. Claire is in bed alone. The lights are out and she appears to be sleeping.

*A silhouette is moving outside the window. A creaking noise is heard, obviously the sound of a crowbar being used to pry open the window. The window opens a couple of inches.*

**Claire:**

*Snoring lightly*

**Richard:**

(Speaking softly) Damn it!

Good work, idiot. Geez. You can't even pry open a window.

*A clanking sound is heard.*

**Richard:**

Shit! There you go, man. Just drop the crowbar, why don't you. I didn't need it or anything. What? Oh, I know you just didn't say that to me. Fine, if you can't respect me then you can do this on your own. Fine!

*Figure tugs window open. It creaks loudly.*

**Claire:**

(startled) What...

*Claire slides out of bed onto the floor, watching the figure at the window.*

**Richard:**

That should NOT have been that difficult. Don't even start with me. You could have helped a little bit.

What? Oh, whatever. Ouch! Watch my toe! Oh shit!

*Richard falls through the window.*

**Richard:**

Well, good work, turbo. This doesn't look like the right place. What? Of course it's the right place. It was the window with the white curtains. No, stupid, those

aren't white. Look at them, they just looked white in the moonlight. They're definitely blue. Holy mother of chicken noodle soup. You're right! Well, now what do we do?

**Claire:**

Who in the hell are you?!

*Claire swings a lamp at Richard.*

**Richard:**

Whoa! Easy there, killer! I mean I like my women feisty and all but...

**Claire:**

What are you doing in here? I demand that you get out this instant!

*Claire grabs a belt and begins cracking it at Richard.*

**Richard:**

Oh, baby, I like it dirty too but let's at least introduce ourselves first. Oh shut up, you idiot! I'm terribly sorry, ma'am. It seems that we've stumbled into the wrong apartment. We'll be on our way at once if you will excuse us.

**Claire:**

You stumbled into the wrong apartment! What is that supposed to mean? Whose apartment did you mean to break into?

**Richard:**

Well, we were simply trying to break into the apartment with the white curtains, and you see, yours are quite obviously blue. We were looking for the guitarist for that local band The Heartache of Passion. You see he has this.... Would you shut up you idiot? We aren't looking for any such thing, sweetheart, we broke into the right apartment. Well, actually we weren't breaking in. We were just... Oh, give me a break.

**Claire:**

Please! Why are you looking for him? And why are you here? And why do you keep contradicting yourself? And don't call me sweetheart!

**Richard:**

Now, see, you've upset her. I upset her! Well, aren't you just the good Samaritan! Why is everything always my fault? Oh, won't you just shut up so we can leave?

**Claire:**

Who's we!

*Claire is clearly becoming distraught.*

**Richard:**

We? Who said we? I didn't say we. I said me. It's just me. Right, yeah sure, pretend like I'm not even here.

Would you shut up? I'm trying to get us out of this!

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Oh, that's right. You were always the one that got us out of everything. Weren't you?

Well, you always make things worse! Oh, is that how it is? Okay fine, why don't you just go ahead and say Mama loved you more than me, too?

You were always the little troublemaker. Let's just remember who got laid first. How about that?

**Claire:**

Shut up, for God's sake! Now, who are you, and who are you talking to?

**Richard:**

I'm talking to you. Who me?

**Claire:**

Me?

**Richard:**

No, her, you idiot, shut up! There's no need to get an attitude.

**Claire:**

I don't have an attitude!

**Richard:**

You would be nothing without me, you pathetic little weasel. Oh now that is going too far, you bitch.

**Claire:**

I am not a bitch!

**Richard:**

Not you. Yeah stay out of this, sweetheart. It has nothing to do with you.

Would you can it! She's a nosy little wench. You gotta admit it.

**Claire:**

I am not nosy. I hate it when people say that. Who have you been talking to? That's what that snot nosed little Cindy Schaffer used to say to me. I hated her so much. She had all the girls calling me nosy posy my entire second grade year.

**Richard:**

Huh? What's she talking about?

**Claire:**

Who put you up to this?

*Claire and Richard are standing nose to nose. A key is heard rattling the doorknob. The door opens. Alex enters.*

**Alex:**

What in the hell is going on here!

*Alex runs over and yanks Claire behind him.*

**Alex:**

Don't worry, baby. I'll protect you! Get away you horrible thing!

*Alex points his cell phone at Richard.*

**Richard:**

Hey dude, look at that? He's going to call us to death. Personally, I'd prefer to be text messaged to death. Oh please.

**Alex:**

What? Who is he talking to?

**Claire:**

Himself.

**Richard:**

What are you, an idiot? Who the hell does it look like I'm talking to? He's not too sharp. Guys that wear shorts in November rarely are. Seriously. (*Whispers confidentially*) Baseball players....

**Alex:**

That's enough! You have exactly ten seconds to exit this room, or I'll make you very sorry!

**Claire:**

Oh, baby, I'm sure that strikes terror into their hearts.

**Alex:**

Hey! Don't be an ingrate I'm trying to protect you right now! I'm putting my life on the line! And why are you referring to him in the plural?

**Claire:**

Well, obviously this is a multiple personality issue.

**Richard:**

Dude, he said we're going to be sorry. We better get after it. I've been trying to leave!

I'm being sarcastic you dumb ass. I mean, are you honestly scared of him? That's not the point! We are in the wrong apartment! We have to go find the right one so we can break into it! We have to get home!

**Claire:**

Why?

**Alex:**

Why what?

**Richard:**

Dude, I think she's talking to us in like, a civil manner. Babe Ruth doesn't seem to like it though.

So? (*Whispers confidentially*) I think she likes me, dude.

**Alex:**

Hey!

**Claire:**

Why do you have to get home?

**Richard:**

Well, see, I have this cat, and he has to have this heartworm medicine every morning before I go to

work or he'll die. I just can't bear the thought of losing the old guy.

We seriously have to go. Dude, we can wait like, two more minutes, just chill.

No! We cannot chill! We have to go!

**Alex:**

I can't believe this.

**Claire:**

Why are you trying to break into that guitarist's apartment?

**Richard:**

Well, see, we think that the Heartache of Passion has an awesome sound and we're very supportive of their work. We wrote a song recorded it and we've tried to get the manager to let us send it in to them, but he's always an asshole to us on the phone. Yeah, he won't give us the time of day. So, we ran into this chick and she told us where we could find the guitarist and said that was the place to go. We're not exactly sure who he is, but she said to look for the white curtains on the second floor.

**Claire:**

I see. So you like their work? I kind of like it too. What kind of song did you write?

**Alex:**

Claire! I can't believe you're even having this conversation!

**Claire:**

I'll get to you in a second.

**Richard:**

We heard that they were looking for some outside influence for their band, and maybe even a new lead singer, so we figured we'd at least give it a try. I mean, we can't really sing that well but we can write awesome guitar riffs. Speak for yourself, bitch, I sing like a bird. Yeah, whatever.

**Claire:**

Well, guys, I would like to introduce you to the manager of Heartache of Passion.

*Claire pushes Alex forward.*

**Claire:**

And I would also like to introduce you to the lead guitarist for Heartache of Passion.

*Claire walks over and uncovers a huge portrait of herself holding a guitar.*

**Claire:**

This is my debut poster. What do you guys think of it?

**Alex:**

Claire! What are you doing?

**Richard:**

Whoa! Wait though! You're a chick! Duh, she's a chick. How about not stating the obvious? Oh shut up. You shut up.

**Claire:**

Both of you shut up. Alex, you're an asshole. By the way, you're fired.

**Alex:**

Oh, okay, I'm an asshole? Okay, if you're going to be that way....

**Richard:**

Ha ha! You are so busted, dude!

**Claire:**

How about you all get out of my apartment now? I'm about ready to go to sleep and I think you have all been very rude.

**Alex:**

Fine. Oh, and don't bother expecting me to call.

*Alex exits stage in a huff.*

**Richard:**

Wait, I have a question. Why are the curtains blue?

**Claire:**

They're called china blue, they present the illusion of white from one angle and blue from another. I got them in Europe. So do you guys have a tape for me or what?

**Richard:**

Yeah!!!

*Richard pulls out a tape and hands it to Claire.*

**Claire:**


All right, I'll give it a listen. Here's my card. Get in touch with me in a day or two...or sooner than that...if you want.

*Richard steps closer to Claire.*

**Richard:**

How about I give you a call right now? Dude, that is so pathetic. You can't just go for the goods right away like that. There are procedures! Hey, you be the sensitive one, and I'll be the man, how about that? Insults are uncalled for. *Claire leans in and kisses Richard abruptly.*

**Richard:**

Dude! We are so busted. 



## Variations of Sympathy Due to Contrasting Characterizations

Micah Bounds

In both “A Rose for Emily” and “Barn Burning,” William Faulkner uses characterization to distinguish the similarities and differences between Emily Grierson and Abner Snopes. In most cases, Faulkner captures an opinionated response from the reader by establishing different levels of sympathy toward each character. Even though both characters are guilty of terrible crimes, Faulkner is able to capture the levels of sympathy by using opposing stereotypes.

Faulkner’s characterizations of Emily Grierson in “A Rose for Emily” and Abner Snopes in “Barn Burning” are similar in several ways. Both characters participate in criminal activities. Abner Snopes takes revenge on the wealthy in society by burning their barns. He “executes his punishment against [the wealthy] by using the element of fire, not merely because that is the simplest way to destroy a barn, but because ‘the element of fire spoke to some deep mainspring of his... being’” (qtd. in Mitchell 188). He is a dysfunctional character whose problems result from the disapproval he receives from the people that he once sought respect from. This disapproval he experiences is present in every aspect of his life. As a result, “his is therefore the kind of envy that results in hatred and malicious deeds—all of them performed in the name of injured merit and a private sense of justice” (Bradford 336). Emily Grierson participates in a criminal activity when she kills her true love in an attempt to keep him forever.

Another way these characters are similar is that neither of them welcomes change. The cold-hearted, lawless, and violent roles Abner Snopes plays throughout the story show his resistance to change. The fact that he refuses to change his behavior and his character is evident in his “ferocious conviction of his own rightness” (qtd. in Bradford 336). Miss Emily, on the other hand, resists the occurring changes in her life that come with the passage of time. For example, Emily cannot face change and denies her father’s death. She later kills Homer Barron and attempts to hold on to him forever. She resists these changes because they always result in loss for her; therefore, she feels she must stop time to hold on to the things she treasures the most (Schwab 1). As proof that Miss Emily tries to keep time from passing, Faulkner reveals that she is reluctant to give up her father’s body for burial, and she even refuses to attach street numbers to her family home (Schwab 1). Miss Emily’s attempt to stop time is “doomed to failure and the thin gold chain attached to Emily’s [invisible] watch show[s] just how completely she is ‘chained’ to precisely that which she thinks she has controlled” (qtd. in Schwab 2).

Faulkner also displays differences between Emily Grierson and Abner Snopes. Abner Snopes is fueled by revenge and hatred

throughout the entire story. In contrast, Miss Emily’s violence is displayed not in her everyday life but in the one incident where she murders her intimate partner. Another difference between the two characters is that Abner lacks compassion for those around him. Faulkner characterizes Abner as inhuman with no feelings for anyone or anything (Bradford 337). He answers to no one, especially those who are superior to him (Mitchell 186). Pride prevents Abner from accepting the idea of social bonds (Bradford 338-39). He is not only a cold-hearted father and husband but also a lawless and violent man. For example, Abner strikes his son “with the flat of his hand on the side of the head, hard... exactly as he had the two mules” (Faulkner 485). Abner treats his family no better than he treats his animals. On the other hand, Miss Emily commits her crime from passion. She fears that Homer Barron may leave her and commits her crime accordingly.

Even though both characters are guilty of terrible crimes, Faulkner manages to generate sympathy for each of them. In a sense Faulkner relates to the reader that Abner is simply behaving the only way he knows. He is a product of the environment in which he was raised; however, Faulkner is not completely successful in generating genuine sympathy for this character. Faulkner’s success is incomplete because he uses Sarty to eliminate sympathy for Abner because he, unlike his father, redevelops parts of his heritage that are degrading (Bradford 339). Sarty battles in his mind between justice and loyalty to his father because he knows his father expects him to lie; therefore, he is left in anguish. Faulkner creates more sympathy for Emily because he conveys her as an average “Confederate woman...[produced by] the old south—a civilization whose exquisite but fallen fabric now belongs to the Dust of Dreams” (qtd. in Roberts 1). Sarty’s knowledge of a decent life takes sympathy away from his father. Therefore, the reader is able to assume Sarty is blessed with qualities such as integrity and discernment from birth (Skei 67). “Sarty is tempted in his ambivalence and fright to accept his society’s compulsive resolutions of that fearful ambivalence” (Moreland 58); however, he conquers this fear and makes the moral decision.

Faulkner purposefully uses “chronology” as a tool to produce sympathy for Miss Emily (Dilworth 2). More sympathy is generated toward Miss Emily because her crime is not revealed until the end of the story; therefore, the reader has no reaction from Miss Emily. On the contrary, the reader knows Abner has no remorse for his crime, eliminating all sympathy

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toward him. In addition, Miss Emily's recognition that Homer does not intend to marry is the factor that destroys her "fragile emotional equilibrium" (qtd. in Kurtz 40). As a result, she is presented as a scapegoat for murdering and concealing Homer's body because the blame is placed on her madness (Dilworth 2).

Emily is the sympathetic character because she is a typical old woman who is not generally thought of as a murderer. She commits her crime not from revenge or hatred, like Abner, but from love for someone close to her heart.

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## A Magnolia for Faulkner

Kimberly Twomley



Perhaps it is the relentless heat and humidity, or perhaps it is simple proximity to the Bermuda triangle, but something in the air below the Mason-Dixon Line consistently produces characters outsiders consider bizarre or even a little twisted.

When her father died, . . . all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom. Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly. (Faulkner 75)

Consider, though, a second school of thought: What if the bizarre course some stories take is simply because the writer is from the South, any South? Does being Southern, in and of itself, automatically make one twisted? Charles Dickens, another teller of tales, writes a similar story of an old woman in the classic novel *Great Expectations*. "Charles Dickens was born at Landport, a suburb of Portsea. . . ." (Wagenknecht, *The Man* 3) Portsea is a sea port town on the Southern coast of England. Like Faulkner, many of the harsh experiences of his early life found their way into his later writing. "[. . .] *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, and *Esther Summerson's* part of *Bleak House* are autobiographical narratives. . . ." (Wagenknecht, *The Man* 16) Parallels between the men's early lives may account for the creation of such analogous women in their later collective imagination.

Born into an old Mississippi family that had lost its influence and wealth during the Civil War, William Faulkner lived nearly all his life in the South writing about

Yaknapatawpha County, an imagined Mississippi county similar to his home in Oxford." (Meyer 72) Dickens also grew up in reduced circumstances.

Both his father's parents were servants. His maternal grandfather . . . did not help the social standing of the family when, in 1810, he was found to have embezzled nearly 6,000 pounds, after which he fled from England and spent the rest of his life in exile. (Wagenknecht, *The Man* 3).

In London, Dickens's father was put into debtors' prison and Dickens spent a portion of his childhood pasting labels on bottles in a blacking warehouse. The net result of this sameness in experience and circumstance for both men was imagined women and even architecture that bore a striking resemblance to each other. Dickens conceived Miss Havisham "... an immensely rich and grim lady who lived in a large and dismal house barricaded against robbers and who led a life of seclusion" (Dickens 50). Faulkner created Ms. Emily with a corresponding big house.



It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street.... [It had a] door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten

or twenty will do.) The spring is prettier, the summer hotter and happier, the fall longer and sadder, the winter shorter than elsewhere on the continent. This is a different place.

years earlier. (Faulkner 72)

Our way of thinking is different, as are our ways of seeing, laughing, singing, eating,

Southerners are accustomed to extraordinary personality quirks. If pressed, a Southerner might allow that the person in question is a little eccentric, but warrants no more than a passing thought; the quirk regarded more quaint than aberrant. To most Southerners, life anywhere but in the south is almost unthinkable. Those of us raised "down" here seem to suffer from Southernness: an inability or unwillingness to focus on life and people through the same paradigm the rest of the world uses. Why should we? Non-southern lives (which include, but are not limited to, the subspecies "Yankees") appear pale and colorless by comparison, sometimes downright dull. Charles Kuralt, a widely traveled Southerner, has great affection for certain aspects of every compass point. He writes:

meeting and parting. Our walk is different, as the old song goes, our talk and our names. Nothing about us is quite the same as in the country to the north and west.

I love the flinty hills of old New England and those angular, laconic, economic people, who never use two words when one will do, or spend two dollars for a thing worth fifty cents....

What we carry in our memories is different, too, and that may explain everything else. (Kuralt Forward)

In the South, the breeze blows softer than elsewhere through the pine trees, and accents fall softer on the ear. Neighbors are friendlier, and nosier, and more talkative. (By contrast with the Yankee, the Southerner never uses one word when ten

"The tendency of the South to live in the past and to be preoccupied with family and tradition may have predisposed Faulkner to feel that no man is himself, he is the sum of his past. There is no such thing really as was because the past is." (Hines 4) If this affinity for all things Southern holds true for our population in general, what then, sets a Southern writer apart from his cohorts? If all see the same vivid tapestry, what enables a Southern writer to discern so clearly an individual strand from the grand scheme of its fellows, to see it more? "Like all good novels, Great Expectations is a story about people, and Dickens saw people.... {emphasis mine}" (Wagenknecht, Scandal 136). Perhaps some deeply recessive gene comes into play, causing the writer to develop a kind of sixth sense which focuses more sharply, intuitively inner drama, detects a story. Perhaps

witnessing the spectacle is what drives a writer to put pen to paper; bearing witness becomes the tool they use to emancipate themselves from the struggle of reconciling the irreconcilable. Whatever forces come to bear, writers feel deeply, empathize too much and, therefore, must purge their inner selves by recording for us the sights and stories they have seen. Most people don't bother seeing the world in more than soft focus, a living Monet; writers liberate themselves by redrawing the scene and coloring in the blanks until it becomes a Georgia O'Keefe.

Southern writers explore nuances of personality found in both genders. In *A Rose for Emily*, Faulkner tells us that everyone, both men and women, went to Emily Grierson's funeral, but for different reasons: "...the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house..." (Faulkner 72). With a regularity that borders on insulting, writers of this genre tend to make female characters the primary focus of their narratives. Whether or not this inequity in attention is indicative of an actual feminine genetic predisposition for aberrant behavior remains unclear. However, no one "raised right", Mr. Faulkner included, would exhibit the extreme bad manners to address such a "delicate" matter head on. To point out such a disparity or to portray the gentler gender in harsh, unflattering terms would be a terrible breach of Southern chivalry. All well-bred Southern gentlemen know this.

'Dammit, sir,' Judge Stevens said, 'will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?'

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings.... They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that

lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away. (Faulkner 74) Mr. Faulkner wrote from a long tradition of approaching touchy matters with careful circumspection and tact. In his story, Miss Emily had been "a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town" (Faulkner 73) for the last thirty-seven years. Back in 1894, after the death of her father, Miss Emily was told by Colonel Sartoris, the mayor, that she would no longer be obliged to pay any taxes. A Grierson would never have accepted any form of charity, but the Colonel manufactured some tale involving Miss Emily's father and money loaned to the town as justification for this easement. "Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it" (Faulkner 73). While Faulkner practices polite dissection on both characters, his female subject emerges looking more like the victim of a genteel evisceration. This struggle for balance between a writer and his or her characters of the opposite sex is longstanding. "Women novelists were often accused of being unable to draw a man successfully. Men had precisely the same difficulty with women; 'Their good woman is a queer thing, half-angel, half-doll,' Charlotte Bronte complained" (Williams 119).

Perhaps the most intense sexual energy, in Dickens's novels, is expressed through the fraught struggles for power between adult men and adult women; and these power struggles frequently take a sado-masochistic form. Of course, Dickens's 'good' heroines too, like the heroines of stage melodrama, are the ultimate masochists and suffer interminably at the hands of sadistic men.... What distinguishes the power

relations involving Dickens's deviant women, however is that these women refuse to surrender power completely; indeed, they crave power for themselves. The resulting friction is the most intense and disturbing glimpse of adult sex that the novels have to offer. (John 230-231)

...Dickens realized that cruelty by men to women was more usual and took pains to account for his characters' behavior.... Miss Havisham hates men because one of

*"Perhaps it is the relentless heat and humidity, or perhaps it is simple proximity to the Bermuda triangle, but something in the air below the Mason-Dixon Line consistently produces characters outsiders consider bizarre or even a little twisted."*

them has jilted her (although Dickens makes it clear that she over-reacted) (Williams 87)

Sound familiar?

That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart – the one we believed would marry her – had deserted her.... When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, 'She will marry him.'...Homer himself had remarked ... that he was not a marrying man. (Faulkner 74 & 76)

Had Dickens been around to read Faulkner, he probably would have classified Ms. Emily as guilty of a serious over-reaction also. "'I want some poison,' she said to the druggist.... 'I want arsenic'" (Faulkner 76). Similarities great and small are seen consistently enough that one cannot read Faulkner's story without being reminded of Dickens', or vice-versa. Dickens:

I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its luster, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, had no brightness left .... I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose had shrunk to skin and bone....her watch had stopped at twenty minutes to nine, and that a clock in the room had stopped at twenty minutes to nine....It was then I began to understand that everything in the

room had stopped, like the watch and the clock, a long time ago. I noticed that Miss

Havisham put down the jewel exactly on the spot from which she had taken it up....

the shoe [on the dressing-table], once white, now yellow, had never been worn. I

glanced down at the foot from which the shoe was absent, and saw that the silk

stocking on it, once white, now yellow, had been trodden ragged. Without this arrest of everything, this standing still of all the pale decayed objects, not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud. (Dickens 56-58)

Faulkner:

A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded;

beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks. The man himself lay in the bed ... What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust. (Faulkner 78)

Bizarre women with bizarre stories to be sure, but most disturbing are the writers who created them. Dickens and Faulkner didn't exactly lead parallel lives since they were, literally, a century and an ocean apart. Yet there is no denying that many circumstances were eerily the same. Is that what constitutes making them both Southern? It's almost like finding two people with the same fingerprint, as in Pudd'nhead Wilson by Mark Twain. Wait! Isn't Twain considered a Southern writer too....?



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## In Spades

ZACKARY BRIGGS

A king sits next to his queen  
 His bride  
 The knave sits with perfect ten at  
 his side  
 And number one has made his  
 way inside  
 And all are dressed in black.

## Foot

Amanda Lovelace

I saw your foot once  
 I thought it looked honest  
 Masculine and strong  
 Like a distinguished man  
 A knotty man ankle  
 Connected it to your leg  
 It was hairy and you told me  
 You wanted to shave it  
 That ruined it really

MCCCWA POETRY HONORABLE MENTION

## Mississippi Moon

so big, bold, yellow, and bright  
it is such an art

haiku  
April Carter

in the crashing waves  
 a small clam hits the cement  
 slowly it breaks open

Inside of a cloud  
 hides the rain for the seasons  
 that refresh our souls

# Parachuting

Beverly Brooks

*-Dedicated to Ben Brooks., my greatest inspiration on earth.*

Falling through space, my 'chute on my back  
 Arched to the utmost, counting down from five  
 Arch! Reach! Pull! A jerk... my 'chute opens up  
 I did it! I'm free! Free falling is over  
 It always makes me sick, anyway  
 My friends love it, somehow  
 I just "Hop and Pop,"  
 And take forever to reach the ground...  
 Drifting, drifting, the world below is so small  
 And the cowponds look like little silver dots...  
 A friend once landed in one...  
 A cloud is below... I can't see through it...  
 I can see the plane land down below... it beat me down  
 It's time to check the wind direction...  
 Turn my 'chute into the wind...  
 Set my brakes... pull... pull... pull...  
 Touch the ground with my toe, run a few steps,  
 Turn, watch my 'chute collapse behind me on the  
 ground

Gather it in my arms , just to repack it and dive again.

MCCCWA POETRY HONORABLE MENTION

## Mail

Amanda Lovelace

I need a stamp to mail my life away  
 The envelope will read, "photos: do not bend"  
 For the memories in my mind  
 The postmaster will stamp me fragile  
 Because the emotions packed inside can break  
 I pray something about me is worth first class  
 But no air mail please, I am afraid of heights

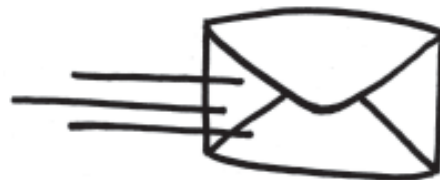
MCCCWA POETRY SECOND PLACE

## E.R.

Beverly Brooks

"Unit 196 to Forrest General, come in"  
 Elderly code, cardiac arrest, arrives at ER  
 No respiration, pt must be intubated  
 Pulse is dropping, medicines are pushed  
 Pt responsive to pain, hope flares and fades  
 Pt failing, pulse drops, compressions renew  
 Doctor groans, "Come on, dude, come on..."  
 Time drags, hope fades, pt unresponsive  
 "Hold off compressions; any pulse?"  
 No pulse no respiration no anything  
 Surgery is useless would life be worth it  
 Two hours are past all hope is gone  
 We've done our best, it's not enough  
 "Chart it" "cease compressions" "what time"  
 The room is silent, no sounds of activity  
 No family around to say good-bye  
 All are weary, some are silent, some are not  
 Some crack jokes and some just smile  
 Some return to their other patients  
 Some we win some we lose; life goes on in ER

MCCCWA POETRY FIRST PLACE



# The Tube

Blake Hendrix



POETRY

The tube clicks on and glistens and glows,  
And HGTV is telling how monkey grass grows.  
I watch the celebrities in their big, fancy cars,  
And Fox News says there's an outbreak of SARS!  
Never mind; never mind, it was a prank by some kid,  
Who will surely be grounded for what he just did.  
I'll just watch the cartoon mouse run from the cat,  
Or maybe watch Sammy Sosa as he steps up to bat.  
I want that Delorean, I want it so bad,  
It would definitely be the coolest thing that I've had.  
I'd hit eighty-eight and travel through time,  
Then stomp on my brakes and stop on a dime.  
But wait, that Batmobile is so very fine,  
I would give anything if that car could be mind.  
I'd cruise right through town; it would be so groovy,  
Then pick up Mandy Moore for dinner and a movie.  
Maybe I'll watch Smallville, While Clark saves the day,  
Conveniently in time to bale all of that hay.  
Or drool over Lana; but who can blame the guy,  
I sure wish that I could go to Smallville High.  
I'll watch the O.C.; I miss Mischa so much,  
Why didn't she stay or at least stay in touch?

"I can't stand it!" screams old Charlie Brown,  
Just do us a favor and kick Lucy out of town!  
There's just too much sex and not enough city,  
And Sarah Jessica Parker's not even that pretty.  
She's married to Ferris Bueller and I can't believe it,  
Oh, wait, Night Rider's on and I love to watch Kit.  
I'm sick with Discovery trying to teach evolution,  
Spreading that disgusting brain pollution.  
Come on, I wanna watch Mythbusters already,  
And see if you can kill a man with lethal spaghetti.  
Optimus Prime is my hero, and Transformers rock,  
But first I'll watch Godzilla clean Gigan's clock.  
Yep, there are some pretty neat things on TV,  
I don't even want to get up, and I have to wee!  
So I'll watch Seinfeld for the millionth time,  
And remember to help take a bite out of crime.  
I am so scared, please don't turn out that light,  
Cause Freddy Kreuger sure gives me a terrible fright.  
I laugh at Emeril's jokes as he continues to bake,  
And the killer's in that room, for heaven's sake!  
And so ends another day in front of the TV,  
Now, if you'll excuse me, I really must wee. ☒

## You're Kinda Like a Brown Wave

Seth Lee

You're brown  
Mississippi's water is brown  
You go away and come back  
I dry off, warm up, and wait for another  
wave  
But it's just you coming back again  
Carrying your baggage like a little piece  
Of garbage on Mississippi's brown water  
Sometimes you kinda smell weird  
Like a dead turtle or gasoline fumes  
Everybody's embarrassed to swim in you  
But we still do  
Cuz just like that brown wave  
We can't see inside you.

## Ode to Dirt

I feel sorry for dirt  
It just lies on the ground  
And never makes a sound  
It stays under our feet  
Suffocated by the streets  
Or baked by the sun's  
heat  
I feel sorry for dirt  
It never gets its dues  
Trampled on by our shoes  
It gets wet, turns to slush  
Cars get stuck in the  
mush  
It never makes a fuss  
Seth Lee

## I Am Not a Bo-Bo Doll....

April Carter

I am not a **bo-bo doll**.  
 You cannot push me  
 and expect me to pop right back  
 like nothing ever happened  
 waiting for you to do your bid.  
 I am not a bo-bo doll.  
 I am more substance than air  
 and am not without my feelings.  
 I am not a bo-bo doll;  
 You can't just abuse  
 that I give myself to you  
 You can't just assume  
 I will always come back  
 while you put me to the rear  
 of your thoughts and your mind  
 without asking how it feels  
 to be tossed aside  
 because you're not sure  
 It appeases you.

No, I am not a bo-bo doll.  
 If you keep hurting me,  
 It will eventually show  
 In the form of emotions  
 like sadness and anger.  
 I have not the patience  
 of the smiling creation  
 because, I am not a bo-bo doll.

You can't just believe  
 that I have a spring  
 that will not break —

you take advantage of me  
 when you say you know  
 that I'll come back.

There comes a time  
 When even a bo-bo doll  
 will burst at its seams from the pressure.  
 I don't care that I may seem impervious.  
 I don't care that you can make excuses  
 for your fears...  
 No, take responsibility in your actions.  
 Because you push and you push and you push and  
 you push and you push and you push;  
 But I am not a bo-bo doll!

You can push the bo-bo clown  
 and it never feels the pain;  
 It does not feel the rejection  
 the way that I do in my heart.  
 It does not wonder, to itself  
 late in the night  
 "what have I done wrong  
 to suffer this plight?"  
 It will not ask itself  
 "where did I go wrong  
 when things were finally going right?"  
 It will not cry and wait up for you.  
 It will not hug you and attempt to be patient.  
 It will not look at you  
 with admiration in its eyes.

No, it won't you see,  
*Because I am not a Bo-bo doll.*

## Strange Day

Ben Breland

Everything never goes great  
 My car refused to start  
 Several taxis that were too late  
 What a strange day

Lost all my memory of such  
 Details and thoughts  
 Forgot and Forgive  
 Was a motto for today

Although the memory fades  
 Like a lion's mane  
 in a plain  
 I'm still Leo enough.

Struggling for what remains  
 of what piece that makes sense  
 I'll just approve of such  
 A strange day as this.

## Cold Weather

Shundra Lewis



*As the weather turns colder  
So does my heart  
Those that I loved  
And claimed to have loved me  
Have now turned a cold shoulder  
I am left all alone  
Stuck to face a mistake that is unforgiven by myself  
No one to hold me  
No one to comfort me and tell me things will get better  
I'm just left out in the cold.*

*As the weather turns colder  
So does my heart  
Because I know how the outcome is going to be  
I know what will happen  
When they see the eyes of my mistake  
Touch his little hands  
Feel his warm body next to theirs  
They will claim forgiveness  
But by then the cold will have claimed my heart  
And the summer's heat  
Nor fires of Hell  
Could ever thaw it  
Because as the weather grows colder  
So does my heart.*

## no more

Zackary Briggs

---

**I** am no more;  
No more a man of solemn virtue  
No more a boy of constant sinning  
No more a man of never losing  
No more a boy of forever winning  
No more a man of worthless  
grieving  
No more a boy of endless crying  
No more a man afraid of living  
No more a boy afraid of dying  
I am no more. ☒

---

## I Blew Away

Angelique Shelnick

I saw a rose  
And wanted more.  
I decided to touch it,  
And the petals tore.

They fell to the ground,  
Turned dark gray;  
Then shriveled up,  
And blew away.

I watched them float  
And swirl in the air.  
They blew so nice and free,  
Like they didn't have a care.

It was at that point I realized  
My life was through.  
It was at that point I realized  
What I had to do.

I went to my house,  
Ran up the stairs,  
Flung open the drawer,  
And began to stare.

I reached for the revolver,  
Grabbed the bullets, too.  
Put the gun to my head,  
And I *blew* away, too.

## *Summer on the Porch*

Kelly Hinds

The intensity of heat fills the air  
 But there's a hint of freshness in the breeze  
 My skin is covered by the sun's glare  
 It helps to put me at ease  
 A drink satisfies my thirst  
 With a rush of comfort and relief  
 Ideas of the summer just burst  
 But relaxation always end up brief

I would fall asleep on a hammock all day  
 With of course some help from the wind  
 I hear the sounds of the bay  
 And my face lights up with a grin  
 When night falls, I light up a torch  
 And enjoy the rest of summer on the porch

## Cigarettes and Dreams

Delsey Ford

Wondering why I bother  
 Thinking this more and more fickle  
 The lovely scent of ashes,  
 Freshly burned nicotine;  
 Was it me, that he has seen?  
 Still wondering if this is a dream,  
 The lovely shade of blue  
 I so easily drew...  
 Out of my mind you must stay  
 Unfortunately, there is no other way.  
 I'm afraid; I'm scared  
 But don't think me impaired.  
 The ashes have been burned  
 But is this such a difficult turn?  
 In my heart, it seems easier;  
 My mind complicates and deceives  
 When it is only your love I wish to receive...

## **Crow's Neck: a surprise thrill**

Margo Porter



Along the trail we went  
 down the hill, up the hill  
*stop, be still, be quiet;*  
 it was just an armadillo going by.

Walked a little further  
 it's just around the bend.  
*stop, be still, be quiet;*  
 it was just an armadillo going by.

My breathing is getting short now,  
 I need to stop and rest  
*stop, be still, be quiet;*  
 it was just an armadillo going by.

Where is that Crow's Neck canoe?  
 I don't think I'm going to make it  
*stop, be still, be quiet;*  
 Oh, we're here, I see the landing!

The canoes land with the first group  
 now its my turn...am I crazy!?  
*stop, be still, Mrs. Hubble*  
 Please don't make me!

Oh my gosh, how can this be?  
 what is that pounding noise I heard!?  
*stop, be still, be quiet;*  
 It's just my heart beating faster.

Now I'm in that blamed canoe;  
 my stomach churning, my pulse is rising  
*stop, be still, be quiet!*  
 I think I'm getting seasick!

Oh please, *stop!* I want out of this darned canoe!  
 I can't believe I'm not turning blue!  
 Don't stop now, I have to keep rowing;  
 Soon this ride will be all over.

Oh my gosh...  
 I'm enjoying this Crow's Neck canoe ride!  
*stop, be still my heart;*  
 Crow's Neck has been such a surprise!



## Rebellion

Blake Hendrix

Mom, Dad, I want a tattoo,  
 And I want to move in with my girlfriend, too.  
 I don't want you to lecture, or want you to preach,  
 And harp on those scriptures that you love to teach.  
 I want to drink and I want to get high,  
 And have lots of sex before I die.  
 I want to rebel and I hate all of your rules,  
 I want to use people like you would use tools.  
 I want to watch porn and go break the law,  
 And act like I'm innocent in spite of it all.  
 I want to live my life as I see it fit,  
 And let others work while I just go sit.  
 I want to be lazy, no matter the cost,  
 And sit in denial and claim I'm not lost.  
 I want to deny Christ and ignore all of His love,  
 And forget those promises I could be part of.  
 Forget His kingdom and the price that He paid,  
 I'll get to Heaven with none of His aid.  
 And then, when I die, I'll remember my crime,  
 Looking at nothing except my hard time.  
 He'll say, "I never knew you," and send me into  
 fire,  
 Where the worm never dies and the flames never  
 tire.  
 And when I'm in torment, in pain and in strife,  
 I'll say, "What a fool I was to say no to Life!"

## Awaiting The Call

Allison Carr

I'm awaiting the call  
 it's been four days  
 I should have received this info by now.  
 They say my patience is a virtue  
 but my virtue is wearing thin;  
 just one more day and I'm sure they will call...  
 Oh no! My phone!  
 What does this mean?  
 It's searching the signal that cannot be seen  
 Anxiety kicks in  
 I'm gasping for breath  
 My poor phone is dead  
 and there aren't any outlets left!  
 Searching and searching in other rooms  
 I've found one that is unused!  
 Waiting and waiting for the battery to charge  
 I finally check my messages  
 and no one has called...

## The Broken Prayer

Shundra Lewis

Now lay me down to sleep  
 I know there were some promises I didn't keep  
 Some simple request I didn't fill  
 Maybe I should end it all with this pill  
 Things seem all wrong and I don't know why  
 Maybe it would be better if I just die  
 No one to miss me, but the child I love  
 But I would be watching him, just not from above  
 I know he would receive the most excellent care  
 Even if I wasn't there  
 So if I go to sleep tonight  
 If I don't wake it will be alright  
 Because if I 'm gone everything will be ok  
 No one cares that much anyway.

## Tea & the Grand Scheme...



April Carter

You and me and the har  
 Alice and the Mad Hatter  
 The rabbit will be here shortly  
 you see, he's running late today;  
 Tea and crumpets in the garden  
 with the wind blowing  
 the butterflies stopping by for breakfast  
 while the ants do sample our courses.

So the Queen, my friend  
 she must decline  
 she's on a diet today  
 and the biscuits aren't her style,  
 but the King is bringing  
 a Deck of Cards  
 and we can laugh like do-do birds,  
 knowing the Hatter is cheating  
 all the while...

But we're okay with this pretty day  
 because life can be too hectic  
 So sit a while with the King and I  
 Bluff your cards and throw your die  
 While the Hatter plays uncorrected.

## FOR ALL THE SAND IN THE WORLD

Ben Breland



They teach us and reach us  
A method so precise  
That they have to lie  
To all the sand in the world

Cement and many a tile  
Compliment with the artificial light  
As each is scorned in a file  
Along with all the sand in the world

So many pressing issues  
And many more “problem” children  
Never ceases the demand for tissues  
Shirts, pants, and shoes

Finally the collapse from the pressure of a  
peer  
Lets all open our mouths without our ear  
Rumors of fire, steel, and drought  
Bring answers with an out

The more rules that are made  
Designed to cause that bad grade  
Thus a never ending parade  
Of shame and fade

When things go wrong  
Have a scapegoat to pass  
A decoy for the mass  
So your ass is grass

All the angles are covered  
I can see all 360 degrees  
Even every grain  
Of all the sand in the world.



## Absentee Fathers

Kenneth Smith II

Where is the absentee father  
Gone like running water  
Always, away, and always downward

His children are a broken anchor  
His wife, the object of his anger  
But it is himself he really hates,  
and it keeps him from moving forward.

Why does society breed them  
Knowing they’ll leave those who need them?  
We should look ahead into our young men’s lives.

Show them the truth and wisdom from above  
To live in unity and abide in love  
And that men should be men,  
Who love and support their children and wives.

Who are we as examples  
We can see the future in ourselves.



### *He was Like no Other*

Dena Westmoreland

*From the night I was born;  
To the day he died.  
I had his heart;  
And he had mine.  
We could talk like no other;  
He was my shoulder to cry on;  
My friend to laugh with.  
My protector from all harm  
He taught me to be  
the person I became.  
He loved the simple things in life.  
We had the relationship that most just wish for;  
But now that he is gone;  
I must carry on.  
He always called em his precious angel  
Well, now he is mine!*

# You

Pamela Denise Barkley



**Y**ou loved him with all your heart  
And in a way you still do  
And even though he doesn't act like it  
You know he loves you, too.

You once could trust in him  
And you would believe everything he would say  
But now you are scared of him  
And at night before you sleep, you pray.

You never really know what it is he is  
And isn't supposed to do,  
But it just doesn't seem right  
For him to allow himself to hit you.

You know in in the beginning  
A father figure was he,  
And even though he'd try hard not to  
He'd always leave a mark for everyone to see.

You realize how hard it is  
To live up to what he tells you to,  
And it is because of this you figure  
It really doesn't matter what you do.

You never could ask him  
"Daddy, how was your day?"  
Instead you found yourself screaming,  
"God, get me out, somehow, someway."

You can't really blame your mom  
For who was the man she knew  
And even though you'd try hard to tell her  
She seemed to love that man, too.

However, you and mom move away  
To start all over again,  
But you will never know what its like  
To have your father as your friend.



## Forever Phobia

Leah Conerly  
for My Uncle Bennie

Irrational fear  
of driving places,  
And seeing faces.

Misery, day to day  
Trying to make my way.  
Living my life without a say.

Rapid heartbeat, panic, and sweat,  
Dread and fear; trying not to fret  
Of living my life full of regret.

Western doctors fill me with medication,  
Eastern ways show me meditation,  
And family advises a long vacation.

If only my life were that easy,  
To get up everyday and live so freely  
My life drags on never ceasing.

## NO RIOT HERE...

He stares hard, cold at us.  
His eyes bear no readable intentions  
but we know...  
I feel my throat knot  
chest tighten, heart flutter...  
Clad mostly in black  
day in, day out-  
those are the regular suspects  
but the one I see  
wears blue and green  
and doesn't wear trenchcoats  
or watch bad movies or listen to marilyn manson.  
He closes his eyes, aims, and pulls the trigger.  
When it is over, his shirt is red.  
At his funeral,  
His father perseveres to love him  
His mother just tries to make sense of it.  
His brother cries and screams in sheer dismay  
And I just sit here, thanking God that I've been spared.  
There is no school today,  
or of the morrow or any day this week.  
The teacher counsels us;  
the principal assures our security  
and I just sit in my desk  
crying, wishing....  
He would have missed my sister, too.

## Finally I see

Kyti Bass



Finally I see  
When I'm deep inside my soul  
All that is in me  
All I truly know  
and I am disappointed.

We all think oursevles so great  
We are all the little heroes  
Even murderers are "right"  
When it comes to their own judgement  
It is necessary for our own survival and it is  
pathetic.

We have to be "good"  
Or we cannot live with ourselves  
The atrocities we cause would make us mad  
But aren't we already?  
We do so much, we weep for the past, and then  
we turn around and do it again.



# Anxiety

Angela Tynes

April Carter

It's her  
 He cannot stop thinking  
 of her; she's so beautiful  
 she makes him feel so alive  
 God, when she touches him  
 he feels the rush  
 the way she heats his body  
 It's her  
 When he thinks of her  
 he is giddy like a schoolboy  
 Her whim takes over him  
 He's Flying tonight  
 because she is with him  
 It's her  
 When he and his wife are out  
 he will feed her drinks  
 until she is quiet and sleepy  
 Oh his wife is pretty, sure enough  
 but she's not *her*  
 He can't wait to get back to her;  
 His friends say she is bad for him  
 so good that she is bad  
 But he needs the way she kisses him  
 needs the way she makes love to his body  
 needs the way she makes him starve for more  
 Needs him in a way that drives him mad  
 She makes him mad  
 She's a nasty girl;  
 she makes him sick with desire  
 God, he must just one more time  
 let her slide over him  
 Euphoria like ecstasy  
 Oh God, it's her:  
 Cocaine.

Body trammeled  
 Thoughts are tangled  
 In this mind;  
 I'm torn and mangled.  
 No where to run  
 No where to hide  
 No where to find  
 peace of mind.  
 Bitter and confused  
 I wonder if I'll lose  
 all control.  
 Sitting, waiting  
 contemplating my escape.  
 Searching, lurking, all eyes on me,  
 Or could it be  
 Am I my own worst enemy?  
 Blood rushing through my veins;  
 my head's getting dizzy.  
 Try to distract my thoughts but my mind is too  
 busy;  
 Physical symptoms now, my mind is a machine  
 I cant take this anymore  
*SOMEbody FIX ME!*  
 Tear-stained face runs through the crowd  
 Surely everyone is talking about me now.  
 Safe at home, I pop a pill  
 I sit and I chill, and I pray to God  
 To fix these ill-fated thoughts that take me over;  
 I just want peace of mind, God;  
 Make me over.

Interested in seeing your  
 work in the 2008 edition of  
 The Magic River? Submit  
 your manuscripts to Ms.  
 Julia Ferguson or Ms. Martha  
 Willoughby In the  
 English Department!

# The Altruist

Allison Saucier

“Big O, go find my reading glasses.”

“Yes ma’am, I’ll try.” It was the third time she’d lost them today, and it was only seven o’clock in the morning.

“Here they are, Aunt Vera. They were on the coffee table right in front of you.”

Vera slid her glasses on with the comment “Yeah, well, did you read this story in the newspaper about the Bridgewater community fire?”

“No, ma’am, I can’t read, remember?”

“That’s right, and that’s a shame. You incite me with all these excuses of the teacher ‘not making sense,’ and the matter is simply that you are too lazy. Anyway, it really is sad: you know that old house where Norman used to live burned slam to the ground. The Reed family all escaped except for the little

one - she’s at the burn center; they say not much hope is left for her.” Vera had just polished off a powdered doughnut, as she rose and said, “I reckon I’m going to my Ladies Auxiliary Club meeting. The dues aren’t being too friendly with my bank account, but sometimes, some things are worth sacrificing for. This outfit was about as unfriendly with my account as the dues were, but I do look nice in it.”

“But Aunt Vera, do you think if you got out of the club we could—”

“Hush, Big O! I don’t want to hear you whining about clothes like those that the other kids at school have, or wanting more toys. You’ll be grateful for what you have and silent about what you have to do without.” Vera left on that reply, while Big O sat on the old orange sofa with his mouth ready to catch anything that perchance would fly into it, all the while blankly staring to watch as it happened.

Before a fly could maneuver in, though, the front door opened more than ungracefully, and Vera reappeared. “Why are you sitting there like a guest? Get up and do the wash, as it is your duty.” Vera then reacquainted herself with the walkway outside

the house.

•••••

“Vera just makes this club happen.”

“Oh, I know, Lougenia,” said Betty Rose.

“If it wasn’t for Vera, us old girls would never rise off our humps and do anything worth telling the preacher about at a Wednesday night prayer meeting. Well, Where is Vera?”

“I don’t know, as she might have something to do for Big O, bless her heart,” answered Betty Rose. “I remember when she took Big O in, right after the accident, when her sister disappeared. The whole thing was covered in mystery. I remember Vera being scared to no end, worried that what happened to her sister might happen to her. Big O, I believe was about one month shy of a year old when that ordeal took place.”

“Yeah, I believe so, Lougenia, and Big O has about as much sense now as he did then. He probably will never get all that’s coming to him. And poor Vera just does her best with what she has with him; its as if he’s her own son. Every time a tragedy occurs, Vera seems to know how to turn it around into good.”

“She sure does, Betty Rose, and two years ago, when almost the entire community on Rural Road burned to the ground, Vera was just the bright spot in that time of darkness. The word of the tragedy spread almost as quickly as the fire, and once Vera received word, she got herself to work.

“And us, too, Lougenia. Before we knew it, she had us wearing our stoves out and running clothes drives. When the families started rebuilding, Vera was right there beside them, doing as much as her health would allow. What she couldn’t do, she racked up volunteers who could. It’s always been the same story of her altruism with all the strange fires that have happened.”

“You know, it’s so funny, since her last name is Alloewe. The way it’s listed in the phone book is ‘Alloewe, Vera.’ Of course, it sounds like the plant that you use on burns. The whole town thinks the name fits her real nice, since after these tragic fires, she really seems to be the one

to soothe the ‘burn victims.’”

Lougenia said, “Yes, and it certainly is fitting that this afternoon, the mayor is presenting Vera with the Key to the City for all her extensive community service.”

“And about time, too. Not all the citizens thought her name honored her, though Lougenia. This summer, Vera told me she got prank phone calls from some awful high school boys. Would you believe they called her and asked her if she could help them with their sunburn, or if she sold sunscreen? Vera was just appalled.”

“You are kidding, Betty Rose!”

“I tell no lie, Lougenia.”

“What did she do?”

“Well, she said she slammed the phone down a number of times before she got a clever idea. Vera bought a whistle, and that was her answer next time. She thinks she knows who it is, since the sports section in the *Everette Post* had a coach’s commentary and prognostication for the upcoming football season. The coach from Everette High said the team was looking good except for a hearing problem with the star quarterback. The coach said the boy couldn’t hear thunder out of his left ear, as a result of some freak accident.”

Hardly had Lougenia and Betty Rose ended their lauding dialogue of Vera, when Vera and many of the other club members arrived.

“How are you, Vera?”

“I’ve never been better, Lougenia, except that I’m worried senseless about this apparent arsonist who is still on the loose. What about you?”

“I’m about exactly the same as you, Vera. I just hope the arsonist can be found out, and these tragedies would stop.”

“Me, too, but I guess the only thing we can do is what we’ve done before. One thing working out nice is that we are having our regularly scheduled monthly meeting on the morning after the fire.”

“That’s true, Vera. With you as our president, I know we’ll get a lot of help to them.”



The only sound coming from the little, dingy yellow house on 909 Front Street was the Saturday morning cartoons. Big O was slouched down in the old orange couch, enamored by the conflict of Tom and Jerry. His attention was broken by a thought that passed through his head. He thought of his Aunt Vera, and yesterday when he got a whooping from her. His behind was still smarting; maybe that was what grabbed his attention. He had just gotten off the bus the day before with a dollar store sale paper in tow. He ran inside and found his Aunt Vera, which wasn’t very hard, since in the house, there were

few places to hunt her.

“What are you doing running in this house, Big O? You know I hate that! Looks like I don’t know how to raise a boy right.”

“I’m sorry, Aunt Vera. Look what I found; they have blue jeans on sale at the dollar store. I know you usually cut off my pant’s legs to make shorts for the summer, and then sew ‘em back on for the winter. None of the other kids at school have pants like that, and I was wondering if I could get a pair of regular pants, like the other kids have?”

“That is purely ridiculous Big O; you know I don’t have money to waste on your frivolities. I cannot believe how ungrateful you are for what you have. After all I do for you, and this, this calls for a spanking.”

Big O winced at remembering the next part of that fresh memory. Vera’s displeasure was an avoidance at all costs, and Big O knew there was the Mayor’s Key ceremony for his aunt this morning. He realized ragged pajamas might not work for such an event of importance to his aunt. He finally drug himself up off the couch, and slowly walked to his room. Over in the corner, where the meager chest of drawers was, was his destination. All his clothes were in there, and he dug around until he came upon his Sunday best: stained khaki pants, a shirt, and tie. The tie lent its length only far enough to make Big O look very overgrown. Never mind the pants, which tried eagerly to reach the top of his shoes, but couldn’t quite make it.

After he put on his clothes, he was thinking again—a very rare occasion for Big O. Last night, very late, he heard a noise. It sounded like a car door shut, and then a car was cranked. He went to Aunt Vera’s room because he was scared, but it was so strange, Big O thought. “Aunt Vera wasn’t in her bed, and wasn’t anywhere in the house. Maybe it was a strange dream,” Big O muttered to himself. And then he thought about Vera making him do the wash this morning, and his aunt’s clothes smelled like smoke and there was a box of matches in her pocket. “But Aunt Vera doesn’t smoke,” he thought. Big O just couldn’t figure that out.

# Bully Trouble

Blake Hendrix

*The south is a very hot place. It is humid beyond belief and very oppressive. The heat down here is a different kind of heat that crawls all over you and makes you sweat like a murderer in church. Rain is sometimes scarce, but sometimes in abundance in the summer months. But on the first day of school, it was the latter. The sun beat down on the children mercilessly and made the black pavement hot underfoot. The absence of clouds – rain clouds or not – made the heat ever so worse. Nothing would stand between the sun and her victims on this day in August. But for one little boy, the heat did not even faze him. He sweated from every pore of his body, but he was oblivious to it all.*

**T**his little boy's name was Oliver. He was nine years old with dirty brown hair, big blue eyes and a heart of gold. He didn't care about the sun beating down on him. In actuality, he liked it. Ollie sweated all the time, so it didn't matter to him. The sun could make it a hundred plus and he still wouldn't feel a thing. Oliver carried his backpack around the campus unfazed. His trusty Braves ball cap was soaked with sweat as he trudged through the heat and into the building, feeling the cold, wonderful air hit him as he entered Poplarville Elementary School. The tan walls and green floor made Ollie cringe as memories of detentions and noses in corners flooded back to him. He stomped down the hall, indignant that he had to be there. He fumed at the very thought of returning to this place – this nightmare. Suddenly, a wailing sound startled him and he leapt against the wall. He had set off one of the metal detectors in the hallway.

Ever since Columbine, schools around the country had bumped up security and annoyed students with the metal detectors and bag searches. The school Ollie attended had a security guard, along with all of the other safety measures. He strolled towards Oliver with his authority he really took too seriously.

“Open your bag!” He commanded.

“Why?” Ollie said, annoyed.

“You set off my alarm.” The guard growled.

The guard was Mitch, a black man in his thirties with a barrel chest and a gut to match. He went really gung ho when he got “promoted.” His wife worked on the school board, so naturally, he got the job. The kids had to suffer Mitch making them “obey the law!” He was really a nut about his job and everything else he did. There was a rumor he hung a kid by his underwear because he didn't obey. No one doubted it; he was crazy enough to do it.

Oliver pulled his cap down in embarrassment. He looked at the faces peeking around doors and stopped in their tracks in the hallway, watching him get grilled. Of course everyone watched. They watched because they were glad it didn't happen to them. Ollie cringed as he took off his backpack and set it down with a THUNK! Everyone was going to see it. Everyone was going to see his-

“It's not a gun, Mitch!” He said as the guard tore into his bag. “It's a-“

“Shovel!” Mitch said.

Mitch held the shovel up like a sword so that everyone could see it.

“Why are you bringing this in here, kid?” Mitch growled.

Oliver blushed in embarrassment. Ever since he was little, he had been obsessed with digging. It was what he did. He loved it because it was somehow therapeutic to him. He relieved a lot of stress when he dug. He almost quit once, but then he found her...

“What am I gonna do, Mitch? Take the school hostage with a shovel?” Oliver steamed.

“Just keep it in your bag.” Mitch said. “Crazy kids.”

Mitch walked away. He sped down the hallway with his authority and was too far away to hear Ollie now.

“Rent-a-cop.” Ollie fumed.

A few of the kids were giggling and pointing at him, but he didn't care.

Despite his run in with Mitch, the rest of the day went rather smoothly. He liked all of his teachers and all of his classes, but he still couldn't wait to get home. Dad was there, and so was Brian, his brother. But most of all, he wanted to get home so he could see her. He ran all the way home, despite the heat. He passed some nice fields and made mental notes about the great-

looking soil. He'd come back with his shovel another day, but concentrated on the way home.



Brian got home from school around four and had been piled up on the couch ever since. He'd had a pretty lousy day. He hated his classes and his Biology teacher was rude to him. But the worse thing was the bully.

A big, burly, black-headed thug named Ricky. He'd slammed Brian against the wall and humiliated him in front of his friends. Brian cringed as he went over the details of the day.

Brian was fourteen with big, grown eyes the girls loved and curly dark, almost black, hair. He wasn't a wimpy kid and he didn't exactly run away from Ricky. He'd stood up to him when he threatened to clobber one of his friends. In the end, he was humiliated and walked home with his friend, Nathan.

"I can't believe that happened." Brian groaned.

"Don't worry about it. What's done is done." Nathan said.

Nathan was thirteen with a pudgy, sunken in face. He had green eyes

and dark, mid-length hair that reminded people of the eighties. He smacked on

a Snickers bar and drained his Coke. Nathan was a sugar addict and ate it all day long. He had paid for it, too. He was thirteen and two-hundred-and-twenty pounds. He was a real porker. Nathan had been cowering under the table when the conflict between Brian and Ricky started.

"Billy, don't be a hero." He'd said after all was said and done.

"Why don't we just beat him up next week?" Nathan said in between bites. "Maybe we can gang up on him with our friends. Or maybe."

Nathan was pointing to the back of the house. Brian knew what he was suggesting immediately.

"No!" Brian said, shaking his head. "We're not getting her involved."

"Why not?" Nathan insisted. "Like anyone would believe him even if he told somebody. Just get her to give Ricky the old one, two."

"No." Brian said. "It's just too dangerous to get her involved."

"All right." Nathan said, clearly disappointed.

Just then, she came in. She stood



about six feet tall with a long snout full of sharp teeth, a brown dog collar, huge green eyes and...ray bans.

"Hey, Dee. What's happenin'?" Nathan said.

Dee was a Deinoneichus – a dinosaur. Oliver had found her when he was digging in an abandoned field about six months before. She had been encased in black, volcanic glass. They all figured that there had at one time been a volcano in the Gulf or something. It was the only explanation.

She had been perfectly preserved, almost cryogenically frozen. When Ollie found and excavated her "tomb," it fell apart from exposure to the air. They called her 'Dee' because only Ollie could pronounce Deinoneichus.

Dee gave a peace sign and grinned. She was a real trip.

There wasn't anything she wouldn't try. She was also extremely intelligent. She understood what people were saying to her, but she could never speak back and couldn't write. She understood and that was enough for her. She was very good at conveying meaning with a look.

"What are you doing today, Dee?" Brian asked.

She pulled out an ESP guitar and a speaker. She cranked it all the way up before anyone could stop her. She tried a windmill like Pete Townsend, but it didn't work. She fell over from the PANG of the Guitar.

"Dee!" Brian yelled.

Dee stumbled around with her eyes crossed. She hadn't expected such a blast.

"You are nuts!" Brian yelled.

Dee grinned and moved what stood for her eyebrows like Groucho Marx.

"Dee?" Nathan asked.

She signaled he had her attention. She stood there twitching her tail like a cat.

"Will you go with us Monday to put a bully in his place?" He asked quickly.

"Nate!" Brian yelled.

Dee nodded and started hitting her palm with her other fist.

"No, Dee. That won't be necessary." Brian said.

Dee looked disappointed. She stuck out her lip in a pout.

"He's been beating up on Brian." Nathan said as he stood up for dramatic effect.

Dee got her angry look on. These people were her family, and you don't

mess with Dee's family. The four feathery "hairs" on her head which formed a small, symmetrical Mohawk on her head stood straight up as her rage grew

at the thoughts of Brian being beaten up. She raced to the door and ripped it open. She frantically pointed out, signaling that they should go now.

“No.” Brian said. “Thanks a lot, but I’ll handle it.” He held up his hand as he spoke.

Dee was still pretty mad about the whole thing. Then Ollie came in. Her whole demeanor changed from rage to delight. She loved that child like her own. She protected him as much as she could. The last Halloween, she had followed him to make sure he didn’t get hurt. Soon, she was getting candy, too. All of the people kept asking “Where did you get that costume? It’s amazing!” She just smiled and took the candy. Ollie had to stop her at one point. She was on a sugar rush and was eating other children’s candy. He had to drag her home.

“Dee!” Ollie yelled. “I’ve had the best day!”

Dee just smiled and listened. That was one thing that was so amazing about her. She wasn’t a bloodthirsty animal like scientists claimed. She wasn’t even wild. She was so relaxed and her eyes slightly drooped when she was listening to people. It gave her a look of kindness.

Dee pushed Ollie over to Brian and signaled for him to tell Ollie what happened. He reluctantly told the story.

“Dee’s gonna go beat him up!” Nathan exclaimed.

“Are you really?” Ollie asked.

Dee crossed her arms and shook her head up and down, making her dog collar tinkle like a small bell.

“No, she’s not.” Brian said.

Dee looked unabashedly disappointed. Her arms dropped and she hunched.

“I will deal with Ricky on Monday. But right now, I’m gonna beat Dee’s butt at Playstation.” Brian said.

Dee clapped her hands like a

happy child and raced into the back room.

“I’m coming, too!” Ollie yelled.

Nathan mumbled something through his Snickers filled teeth, but it was impossible to understand. He followed Brian back to the room.



The weekend passed by quickly. Brian counted the moments until he would have to return to face “the jerk” as he referred to him. He cautiously cruised the white-washed halls and green, shiny floors of his high school. He peeked around every corner and avoided his locker at all costs. He had acted brave about the whole situation, but the truth was, he was terrified. Someone slapped him on the

*Just then, she came in. She stood about six feet tall with a long snout full of sharp teeth, a brown dog collar, huge green eyes and...ray bans.*

back and he jumped three inches in the air and shrieked.

“DON’T KILL ME!” He said as he hit the floor. Then he shouted “Nathan!”

Nathan giggled as he munched his Rice Krispies treat.

“Hey, hero.” He said.

“Nathan! Don’t do that!” Brian yelled.

“Hey,” Nathan raised his hands apologetically. “I brought back-up just in case.”

“You didn’t!” Brian yelled. “Where is she?”

Just then, the janitor’s door flew open and Dee fell out amongst brooms, mops and dirty clothes. She struggled to close the door and sighed as she sunk to the floor, eyes wide with terror.

“Smell bad?” Nathan asked.

Dee waved her hand in front of her face and stuck out her tongue.

“Dee-sgusting,” she said wordlessly.

“What are you doing here!” Brian

said angrily. “Take her home, now!”

Nathan was pointing down the hall as Ricky approached, punching his palm.

“Give me money!” He said to Brian.

“No!” Brian said, bravely.

Ricky picked him up by his shirt collar.

“What did you say?” He said through gritted teeth.

Ricky turned around when someone was tapping him on the shoulder. It was Dee.

“Dee, NO!” Brian yelled.

It was too late. Dee had pimp slapped Ricky and he dropped Brian. Ricky did a one-eighty before he hit the floor, unconscious.

The boys did what any other red-blooded American would have done. They ran. They sprinted for the door and ripped it open with Dee on their heels. She zoomed past them, giggling in her throat. They ran all the way home.



Brian would have to face the music sooner or later about what happened

and he knew it.

“I don’t think we’ll have to worry about him, anymore.” Said Nathan.

“He could have been hurt, badly.” Brian said.

Dee gurgled, obviously proud and thrilled from her encounter with Ricky. She air boxed like Mohammed Ali as Nathan made Coke floats for everyone.

Oliver walked in, filthy.

“WHAT?” He said after Nathan told him what happened.

“You KILLED somebody?” He asked Dee, terrified.

Dee shook her head no.

“He wasn’t dead.” Brian said. “But I will be when I go back tomorrow.”

Dee put her arm around Brian’s shoulder and shook him, encouragingly.

“No, you won’t.” Nathan said.

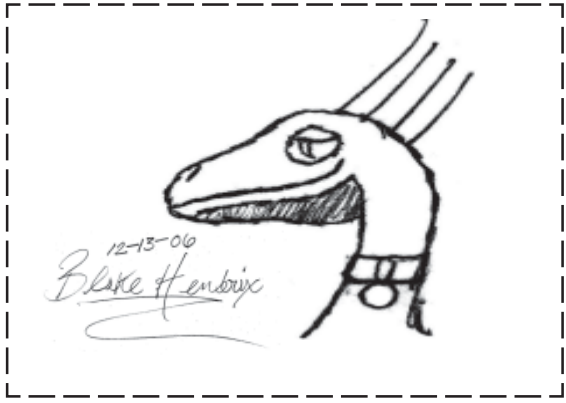
Dee was slurping her Coke float as fast as she could. She got brain freeze and fell over, howling.

“Dee!” Oliver said. “I told you not to drink it so fast!”

Dee got her composure and stood up with her clawed hand against the side of her head.

“I am so dead.” Brian said.

Dee shrugged and nodded her head. “Yeah, you are.” She said wordlessly.



Oliver glanced at Dee.  
“Bob Dylan.” Olive said.  
“Oh.” Brian said. He rubbed his eyes.

Brian didn't eat because his stomach was in knots. He walked out into the oppressive Mississippi heat and walked to school. Even the wonderful blast of cold air conditioning as he entered the school didn't make him smile.

“Why smile when your death is inevitable?” Brian thought. Then he saw Ricky.

Ricky started shaking like a Chihuahua as Brian approached.

“Don't sick it on me, man!” Ricky said, terrified.

“What?” Brian said. “She's not here.”

“She isn't?” Ricky asked. “Yes, she is! I can feel it! Just stay away from

The rapid motion of her head made it hurt worse and she winced in pain.

“I'm going to bed.” Brian said.

He walked into the hall and closed his bedroom door.

“He is so dead.” Nathan said.

Everyone nodded.

Brian slept hard that night and had nightmares about wedgies and other WME (Weapons of Mass Embarrassment). He woke up sweating a few times, but each time he went back to sleep and slept deeper each time.

The next morning, Brian's dad had left early. He had heard him yelling at Dee for messing up the kitchen earlier. He had learned a long time ago that he wanted no part in the morning family argument.

He walked in and Oliver was eating Cheerios in his pajamas while Dee was picking at the guitar. She had the Ray Bans on and her mouth hung limp as she picked at the chords. She had a big, curly black wig on.

“Ollie?” Brian asked.

“What?” Oliver didn't even look up from the TV

“What the heck is she doing?”

me!”

Ricky ran down the hall, telling everyone to watch out for Brian's dino-

-saur. All Brian could do was laugh as the other kids did when they saw Ricky running down the hall yelling. Brian smiled and went through the rest of his

day without a hitch. He had a great lunch and even got a girl's number. When he got home, he told his dad and brother what happened. He thought his dad would have a cow that Dee went out of the house, but all he did was laugh.

He laughed so hard.

“Where is our hero, anyway?” Brian said, looking around.

“She's in my room.” Oliver said. “She watching 'Grease.' I think she's learning how to do the hand jive.”

Just then Dee came out dancing to her own music.

Brian put his arm around Dee's neck and hugged her.

“You saved my butt.” He told her.

Dee blushed and waved her hand dismissively.

“How can I ever repay you?” Brian asked.

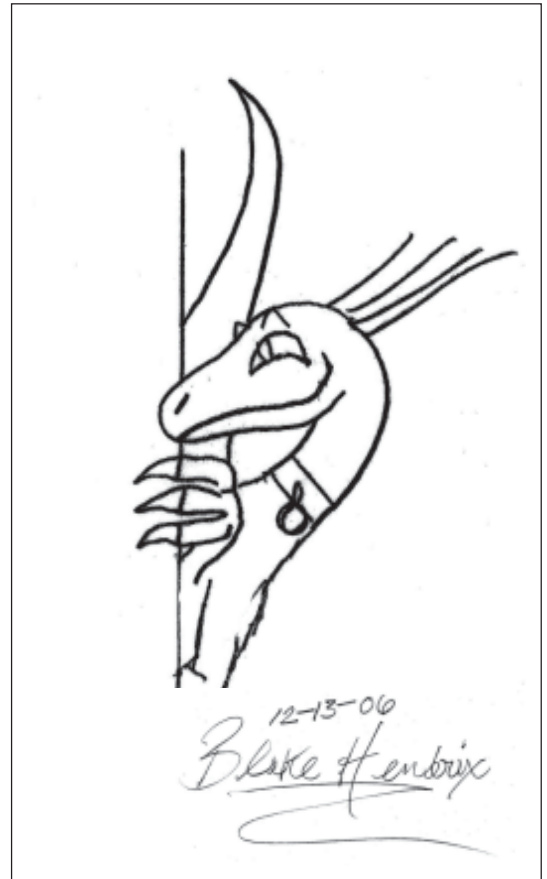
Dee moved her hands like she was playing Playstation, suggestively.

“You got it.” Brian said.

Dee started clapping her claws and ran to the back.

“I'm coming, too!” Ollie yelled. He followed behind.

All in all, it was a pretty good day. Dee howled as she whipped Brian at “Grand Turismo.” Brian knew, at that moment, that it was a day he would never forget. It was an unusual day, but when isn't it when you live in the house where a dinosaur lives.



# Girls Ain't Always Sugar and Spice

the chronicles of Teeny and Sis

Dena Westmoreland

*"A man is only worth what he is willing to work for in life , boys...."*

*...why look at me, I am over seventy years old, and I still tend the cows, feed the chickens, water the hogs, put hay out for the horses, plus all the other things I gotta do to keep this farm up and running everyday."* Big Daddy told his grandsons in his deep raspy voice, as they sat eating the fine breakfast Big Mama had gotten up and cooked for the kids.

"I know you youngins' would like to be out in the field playing ball but you know idle hands are the devils workshop" Big Mama told the children in that sweet, delicate loving tone of a grandmother. "Speaking of idle hands," she turned her focus to her two troublesome grand daughters. "We got to get you two gals a hobby where we do not experience the raucous of years gone by."

"Aw, Big Mama, We ain't done nothing that no other girls wouldn't have done." spat out Teeny, the oldest grand daughter.

"WE haven't, but you have," retorted Sis.

Teeny was the first born grand daughter to Big Daddy; after all, he and Big Mama raised four of the toughest, meanest little boys in the county. On top of that, she had two older brothers who took the blame for a lot of her escapades. Two years after Big Daddy's little Teeny came along, they welcomed her cousin that was better known as "Sis" into the family. Sis herself became the big sister to three brothers. So, the positions in life was then set in motion. Big Daddy loved all his grand babies, but those little girls had him wrapped around their little fingers. They did not have to spend the summers working as the boys did.

"Well, whose idea was it for me to use Big Mamas' pillow case and parachute out of the barn loft, and whose idea was it to play hop scotch on Big Daddy's round bales of hay, and what about the time the hog ole' Fred was let out and rooted up all Big Mama's glads in the flower bed?" snapped Sis with quite the look of satisfaction in herself.

"Weellll... you did not break any bones did you?" popped off Teeny looking like a deer caught in the head lights. The silence afterwards was broke, with a rumble of laughter from Big Daddy.

"We fellows have got a lot work to get done girls, so just behave for your Big Mama." Big Daddy said in such a manner that would have made most children think twice, but not these fearless two chaps.

It was a hot, humid Mississippi summer day. Teeny and Sis were bored out of their little minds. Sis knew there was trouble a-brewing in Teeny's mind when she looked over as they sat quietly, and Teeny got that sneaky grin on her little tanned face.

"What are you plotting on over there, grinning like a opossum?" Sis asked Teeny in a leery voice.

"Well... Sis, you know that new gelding, Red? Big Daddy bought it at the horse sale last month."

"Yeah, but that thing is scared of his own shadow and throws any fellow that tries to touch him, Teeny."

"He has only thrown the men folk, Sis, You know Big Daddy said the two of us can handle a horse better than any fellow that has ever stepped foot on his farm."

"That is true..." Sis calmly replied as she started liking where this was headed.

"I was thinking we could go and just see if we can get a halter and a lead rope on him, and if he'll let us get that much then we may be able to manage to saddle him on up," Teeny said ever so calmly.

She continued to fill Sis in on the details of how they would manage to sneak all this by Big Mama's watchful eye. As usual, all it would take is being able to get her attention on the boys. That is where Sis came up with her part of the plan; she took one of Big Mama's good serving bowls out and watered the chickens in it. Well, since that was the one of the boys chores , all they had left to do was make sure Big Mama saw it.

"Big Mama, Big Mama, you ain't gonna believe what one of them boys done now!" the girls ran in to the house yelling.

"Aw honey it can't be nuttin' that bad," the gentle old woman replied in the loving voice of a grandmother.

Teeny being so coy said, "Wanna bet Big Mama,? Them boys done watered those chickens with your good serving bowl!"

"Oh, heavens sake girls, I'll get their bottoms" Big Mama yelled sliding her shoes on, running out the door to the field. "You

boys done it now!” she was saying as she rounded the corner, leaving the two scheming girls unattended .

They made a run for it as soon as soon as she was out of sight. When they reached the stables, there stood the most glorious sight ever; so tall, both girls stood, jaws dropped, heads held all the way back, looking up at his beautiful red face with the solid white blaze going down the center.

“ Now what?” asked Sis in shock at the magnitude of this giants size.

“ Ok put the halter on him.” Teeny said like this was going to go off with out a snag.

“Um, you’re older and a bit taller. You do it,” snapped Sis.

After finding one of the old feed buckets, the mischievous girls took it over to Red’s stable door.

“ Alrighty ole boy,” said Teeny thinking talking to the horse would make this task much easier. Red didn’t even flinch as the girls slide the halter over his head. They then snapped the lead rope on to it and gave a gentle tug. He slowly stepped one foot at a time over the threshold of his little one room home there in the barn. Teeny and Sis led him to the saddle room and with out a doubt in their minds that this was going to be easier than at first thought.

“Well looky here, Teeny, he did not give us the first minutes trouble saddling him up,” Sis said as pride over powered her voice.

“ Now the fun begins,” laughed Teeny.

Teeny was the first one the climb on to Red’s back. With all the nerves of steel Teeny had, she felt as nervous as a long tail cat in a room full of rocking chairs for the first time in her life. Next, Sis climbed and maneuvered her way up behind Teeny.

“ Well, well,” in a cocky voice piped up Teeny, “ looks like all these fellows round here just ain’t got the magic Teeny touch,” she cackled, and laughed. Sis was really in shock that this all had gone so smoothly, but feeling a little cocky in herself as well. The feeling did not last long for either girl. As they rode Red out of the barn.

“Where to, my dear cousin?” gleamed the confidant Teeny.

“ Oh let’s just take the old riding trail that circles back by the ole Ader house.”replied Sis.

About that time it all hit the fan. Red saw the opened gate and headed for it-against Teeny’s best efforts to pull the reins back towards the trail.

When Red hit to opposite side of the gate, he was in the wide open. After that, it only got worse for the girls. They were holding on for dear life, bobbing from side to side in the saddle, screaming at the top of their lungs.

“ You’ve done it this time!” screamed a hysterical Sis.

“ Me!? Don’t you mean us?” retorted Teeny back at her.

Big Mama had gotten back from fussing at the boys, the whole while, they were denying that they touched that serving bowl. After giving them a good lashing, she headed back to the house to hang the laundry out back on the line. Big Mama had always seemed to enjoy her wifely duties around the house. Thinking the girls must have gone for a walk to bask in the beautiful sunny day, she went on with the laundry. She heaved the basket of wet clothes out to the clothes line. Just as she got a good start on getting them all hung out, she heard the most awful racket on earth. It was galloping hooves, and blood hurling squeals from the girls.

About that time, she heard Sis say, “ Outta the way, Big Mama; we are coming through!”

The girls and Red ducked in time not to get knocked off by the clothes line, but still snatched Big Mama’s good sheet off the line.

“ Have ya’ll lost your minds, and what are you doing on that crazy ole thing?” Big Mama’s voice lost that loving tone it generally carried so well, but by the time she got it out, the girls and the horse were out of sight.

Then Red took off right in the middle of the chickens. There were birds and feathers flying everywhere.

“ I am never listening to you again!” Sis yelled as she fought to keep her grip on her older cousin.

“ Yeah, you will, now shut up and help me yell for Big Daddy!” Teeny popped off back at her.

Next, Red took a sharp left turn causing Teeny to lose all grip on the reins. Now, all she had to wrap her little arms around was Red’s neck. The next destination on Red’s agenda was the field.

“Oh no, we are heading for the field, Sis!” screamed Teeny.

Big Daddy and all the boys had been working for the past three days tilling, rowing and sowing all the seeds for the crops.

“Big Daddy, help us!” screamed both the girls.

As Red rounded the bend to the field, Big Daddy was propped up on his walking stick, supervising the boys’ hard work. Red took off through the middle of the field dirt flying, knocking down all the rows , and kicking up the seeds.

“ It’s the boys’ fault.” screamed Teeny when she saw the shade of red that Big Daddy’s face had turned.

“Whoa, boy!” hollered Big Daddy in a stern voice. Just as suddenly as Red had lost his mind and set out to tear up the farm, he stopped, square in the middle of the field that was already a lost cause. Big Daddy calmly walked over to the horse where Teeny still had a death grip around his neck and Sis with a death grip around Teeny. He held the horse while the girls climbed down.

“Boys, get this here fellow put up and give him some fresh hay and water while me and these two gals have us a sit down,” Big Daddy barked at the boys.

“ First of all, are ya’ll all right?” he asked.

“Yes Sir.” they both replied.

Then with a tender smile and chuckle he said “ I only have one question, and if you can answer it there will be no consequences to this little stunt.”

“Are you for real?” questioned Sis.

Teeny mumbled, “Put a sock in it,” as she elbowed Sis in the side.

“Here we go girls and think about this before you answer my question,” Big Daddy slyly grinned. “How is this the boys fault?”

Teeny being the one with the over active imagination said, "That is easy. They told me to do this where they could get out of the field for a little while," and she cocked that sly grin back at Big Daddy.  
 He just chuckled and told the girls they were full of it and to go help Big Mama get dinner ready for everybody tonight. This was lesson learned for the girls...until tomorrow! ■

# County Fair

Dena Westmoreland

the chronicles of Teeny and Sis



"Come on, girls, we gonna be too late to register Bessie in the Pretty Cow contest at the fair."

"We are coming, Big Mama, you know what a perfectionist Sis is. That heifer ain't got a speck of dirt on her."

"It is not being a perfectionist if you are doing it right the first time, Teeny, something you could learn from."

"Ok, girls, Big Daddy and the boys got Bessie ready to go and they hollerin for us. Now, I want you gals to be on your best behavior tonight, and no fussing with Martha and Maggie."

"Big Mama, they always start it with us; we really do try to be nice, but they are big brats."

"Now, Tenny, that is not a very Christian attitude. We do unto others as we would have them do unto us."

"Is that why you always talking about their Grammy Wilma and what a jezebel she is!"

"I am teaching you to be a better person than I am. Now, shut up."



"Well, the judges sure were glad to see us back this year, Sis."

"Yeah, they said they bet Bessie would be a shoe-in again this year."

"Oh for lands sake, Sis, look at Bessie!"

"Who would cover her in mud while we were registering her, Teeny?"

"I know. I am going to knock their lights out right now for it!"

"No, Teeny! We cannot get disqualified for fighting. You know Reverend Flake don't take to kindly to such behavior, and he is the head judge."

"So you just want to let those two hussies by with it?"

"I got an idea. Where is your brother, James?"

"He is right over yonder. Why? What can we do?"

"Well, Teeny, ya know that all the girls are always kinda sweet on him because of his eyes. We just get them to come over here and distract them for a few."

"...and we can sabotage their precious Gertrude. Sis, I really like the way you are starting to think these days."



"Hey, Martha! Hey, Maggie! How you gals doing today?"

"Oh, my! Hello James. Don't you look nice tonight?"

"Thank you, Martha. Would you girls like to walk over and get some cotton candy?"

"Sure we would, James. Come on, Maggie."



"Why, thank you so much for the cotton candy, James. We sure do appreciate it. Oh, my sweet Gertrude! What happened to you? Maggie, who do you think would do something like this?"

"I have an idea! Follow me!"

"Teeny! Sis! What have you done to Gertrude?"

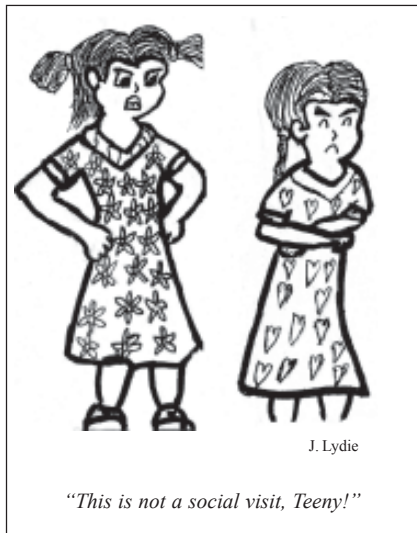
"Why, hello to you girls, too."

"This is not a social visit, Teeny! Now, we want to know who put lard in Gertrude's hair and gave it that spikey-up look and who put that dog collar looking thing with the studs on it around her neck and took her bell, and shredded her bow that was on her tail?"

"Martha, are you saying there is a cow vandal on the loose at the fair this year?"

"This is not a joke, Sis."

"All I can say is 'Prove it, Martha.' Now, you need to get out of here and leave me and Sis alone before you wish you ha—"



"This is not a social visit, Teeny!"

SPLAT!!

"I am going to pull every blonde curl in your head out if you hit me with more mud, so take this!"

There was mud and ponytails flying everywhere.

"STOP IT, GIRLS!"

Everything fell silent, almost instantly.

"Well, Mrs. Big Mama, your two delinquent grand-daughters punked out our cow. They even put lard all over her head. Tell her, Maggie."

"No, Ma'am, we did not touch that, heifer Gertrude yours. Why, my bucket of lard is still full, and I think Reverend Flake is wanting to have a talk with you two, right now."



"Well, Goodnight, my little angels. I am so proud of ya'll and Bessie. Another first place ribbon for the wall."

"Goodnight, Big Mama and thank you for your help with Mrs. Wilma's brats tonight."

"Aw, Teeny, it was no problem. Just remember that when you're dealing with folks like that, the apple don't fall far from the tree."

"Well, thanks, Big Mama. Teeny really did not start anything this time."

"I know you didn't start it, but you gals got to get up early and help pay back that half a bucket of lard you used on Gertrude!"

## A Glass of Milk for the Vagabond

April Carter

**H**e wiped the last of the dribble of the icy cold water from his chin and waited until she finished her beverage before acknowledging her presence next to him on the front porch. He walked a bit serenely to a spot not quite in the shade, not quite in the sun, and settled down to spread his legs. Encouraged by the first day that he has seemed content in the days that he's spent here, she ambled on over beside him and sat in much the same position of ease that he himself was sitting. Spread out in the afternoon sunshine, the newest member of Greenwich was finally feeling comfortable enough to get himself more personally acquainted to his newly acquired co-worker, the one with the soft and the naive voice.

"My early childhood wasn't the easiest, as I'm sure you may have heard," he said, with his features twisted into a paradoxically serious sort of storyteller's style, dispassionately emotional, as if the tale had nothing to do with him. His eyes were far set, his face was large and angular, much larger than the one of his female counterpart sitting at his side. His features reminded her of a wild and adventurous rogue, sort of a tomcat who has had to employ things that she sure she would never understand in order to maintain his survival, and he carried with him a darkened display, far too mature and knowledgeable for his exceptionally youthful countenance to have to bear.

"Yes, so they have said. They have asked us to be gentle with you. But without their asking, I hope that you understand, my new brother, that we have all here meant nothing but joyful welcome and acceptance for our newest arrival. We are a loving and accepting family here."

"Yes, so they have said," he countered with the same sober thoughtfulness that her welcome was meant to convey. "I do apologize

if I have come off as a bit aloof and unfriendly these days, you'll have to understand that it is not easy for me in my position to shrug off a lifestyle that has come to be survival. Its disconcerting to adapt to such a lenient work environment..." He stared ahead lost somewhat in thought, somewhat in reflection, and somewhat uncomfortable in this sudden need he'd never had to attempt to share his life's events. He never needed anything or anyone. Anything that he should have needed, he had found a way to seize it. But here, in this oversized yard of this oversized home sitting next to an oversized meadow of butterflies and buttercups that rolled through the fields all the way to the oversized red barn, he suddenly felt an oversized hole inside of himself brought about by the desperate attempts of the others to make him feel accepted. Attempts that he evaded, ignored, or even discounted on the idea that they would never understand and therefore never accept him. Never accept him as lovingly as he never knew that he needed.

"My mother was a hussy, you see. She was not the stay around type; she would charm her way from place to place, just long enough to find herself another drifter who would chase her in the dark. Oh we made do, though we were barely fed, and with only the loss of one of our five, we managed to tag along with her, waiting until she decided that she could spare some time for a meal.

"Well, there now, I was what you would call the runt of sorts; I was the sickliest one in my toddlerhood and all of the others came to resent my ever slowing presence. For you see, following Mother was like a mission that came only to the strongest of the fit. There, I remember, was a time or two, that my sicklier days had cost us a well-needed meal that night. My brothers and sister had all waited as patiently as they could with their stomachs rumbly and full of

harsh hunger for the day that I would no longer hobble beside them. Oh, the anguish of knowing that they lay in wait for the day that I was no longer their problem. I vowed from the littlest age that I knew how to vow that I would grow up someday and be the strongest of the strong, the fittest of the fit, and I would need no one else, you see?"

"Oh, but that is so terrible, Oliver, terrible indeed that you should ever have to feel that way! Your mother was certainly a horrible creature, Oliver; she certainly was!"

"Water under the bridge, my new sister; it's all water under the bridge," he said, unsure if he was even ready to believe such a thing himself.

"Oh, please say that you do believe, Oliver, that we are not that way here! We will never wish you to die when you are ill, or starve you to madness amongst our family! We are all a motley bunch, but pitiful we are not, because we are a family here, we all love one another, and

we all have our place in the business. Yes, sir, Brother, I too was wan and poorly once. But these people here, they took me in as one of their own, never questioning that I belonged to the family. I was but a wee thing, I was left upon the doorstep here at Greenwich Farm. You will be happy here, Oliver, I promise. They will give you a place in the workings here at the Farm and sense of family and food and love and all of the things that are so important to us all."

"Oh Allison, I have yet to make it to the worst of the story, you see; my mother finally decreed that she was through with we heathens for she had no more time for our pitiful cries and always hungry mouths. Oh, it was hard, out there for four little lost babes to make it on our own. We made do for dinner with dumpster fare - No - please do not cry at our plight, my dear Alley; we were better fed then than we were with our half-hearted mother. We frequented an alley with all choices of scrap, and feasted rather fairly every night before bed.

"But the stories we heard out there in the darkness, dear Sis, they scared me into stupidity. The bums of the alley — who amused themselves at telling us those stories, the kind of stories that gave us nightmares and shivers — would taunt us so terribly when they found the chance to corner us. They would say to us, 'you dirty, dirty heathens, what say you to helping yourself to our dinner? Just that you are younger should not make you better suited to my dinner this night. But you are too bold, too young and too bold and they will get you yet....you simply can't trust the institution, kiddie. They will get to you yet...and when they do I will laugh and eat your dinner.'

"And I, but a fool, a young and angry fool, decided to be tough! There were three of us by now, for my sister had gone astray to some place we did not know; they say she was lured away by a woman with a sack of fresh and still warm french fries, and I couldn't help but miss her despite our early circumstance, and felt it to be the work of the fearsomeness of the bums who had sent her on her way. Herein, I became a punk who had had enough and decided to take them on, all of this homeless mangy street filth, anxious to prove my worth, anxious to prove that no institution could take on a punk like I had become. It was a huge fray, loud and outrageous, and it drew a hefty crowd. Oh, those bums were nothing more than

smoke when it came to the skinny. A one and a two — but they would all slither back into the shadows, with glittery eyes that said that they were giving up, but never giving in. The business people had tried to scare us off, and by now my inclination towards rumbling had found such a reason for them to do away with the street rubbish.

"A few days later, my new working sister, whispers of the coming of the institution began to surface for the fray had caught their attention, and the men began to slither around our alley. 'Impeding doom,' the bums said, 'it will be the end of us all.' The institution, you see, they do not like the homeless. We are the mud slung, pest-ridden, underside of society. They say we bring malady and anarchy. So I have always been this outcast amongst the outcasts, you see, never fathoming a time that there would be peace and contentment, never fathoming ever being....wanted by anyone, not even the institution...." She watched as his eyes turned from the dispassionate eyes of a narrative story man to the stormy eyes of a creature both hardened by survival and damaged by the success of the hardening.

"Oh, Oliver, the institution, could it have been so bad for you?"

The sweet sound of her voice snapped him back to reality and as quickly as the clouds descended over his eyes is as quickly as they returned to the serene appearance of a storyteller, not quite attached to the story, but knowledgeable in what it means to tell it.

He rose to his feet and waited as she rose, and led them both to a comfortable place deep within the foliage of the house garden, on a bench between the thorny red and yellow roses.

"No, you see. It could not have been that bad because it was worse. They drug us in kicking and screaming like the darkest criminal, and without a trial, they locked us in these cages. For our safety. For the safety of others. They say that we are supposed to have a family and a home. But I hear them quietly whisper that many of us will die here in the coldness of this institution. They say that the 'lost souls,' like, you see, they labeled me, will be killed in an effort to stave the fittest. 'More than ever,' I said, 'I will not let them have me. I will always go kicking and screaming. I will not make it easy for them to do away with the outcast among outcasts.'" Oliver paused in mid-thought, and just before opening his next notion, a whooping decree came walking over from the sidewalk beside them.

"G'day ma new charge, 'allo and welcome to Greenwich. I'm Daisy Mae, and I am the protector and the sheep-herder of dear Greenwich, sir, so anything you may need in your newest assignment, feel free to find me, and I will gladly assist! I am sure you should find things to your taste, 'ere, good sir. How take you to your new accommodations?" a burly curly haired character bellowed from the walkway.

"Nice to meet you, Miss Mae. I am adjusting, of course. I do apologize for my cloisterous ways of this past week. You are all a fine bunch thus far. And the loft above the barn is plenty enough for me. I enjoy the privacy, for you see I am still a bit solitary, and the work in the barn is ample for me to pass the days with. Miss Alley here has been generous with her efforts at making me feel more at ease with my position at Greenwich Farm."

"Oh so good to 'ear ma good sir! If you should need anything, need not fear to give me a yell, dear friend! Miss Alley is a fine one if you should need anythin' else from us, Mista Oliver be not

afraid, you've but to ask!" He watched the walking mop of curls as it sauntered off leisurely towards the meadows at their left.

"Now where was I at? Oh yes, yes. The institution. They do some terrible things to us there, the underlings of society. The orphaned and the abandoned, and they do so in the name of humanity, as they preach to us over and over again. There were eight of us that early morning who were ambushed in our sleep. Four were those nasty bums who taunted us so terribly, three were my brothers and I, and one was a stranger none of us had ever seen. Oh, they said that our youth, that is my brothers and I, that it would be our advantage and our the saving grace; they can market the youth. The old toothless bums slept one night in the confines beside me, never to be seen again.

"I watched as one by one, my brothers were plucked from the enclosures beside me by greedy little hands with who knows what kind of intentions upon the ownership of another. I was so afraid! Afraid to hope that I should escape with those who would buy us for their personal pleasure, afraid to hope that I should get as old as those bums and never be seen again.

"There was this odd character there, not quite an inmate like us, but belonging at the instituion nonetheless. Her formal name was Sarah Belle, but most of them called her the Fury because she ranted with a bitterness so few could understand. 'You all complain of your cages and your infirmities, your wretched living behind those bars, but you have all of your appendages still attached to your body. I am a gimp, a gimp who is unloved. They always overlook me for the healthy ones, but here I am the gimp that no one will accept. So I am the foster charge of this facility, here to remind you of your own humility! Beg, Beg, and leave while you can!' she would scream at the oddest of times such as when we'd gathered for meals or right before lights out. Not very long from the time I'd first heard her, I realized she had not come again to another dinner with us."

"Oh but Ollie, do you mean to say —" Allie broke in only to be hushed as he continued his story.

"Let me continue, dear Sis. They would take us to these rooms, these overly sterile, frightening rooms, where they would 'cure our infirmaries' with whatever tool available to cause us pain enough to exorcise our demons. That is when I decided that my only chance at escape was to see what went on beyond the selling of our souls. But they all whispered that my aggression would never have me sold, that the people were wont for a more genteel type." He shrugged his shoulders and again stretched his body. "Genteel I am not," he continued after pausing for a yawn, "but the slavery is not so bad here on the Farm, and though I admit that at first my intentions were to take leave from my charges as soon as I arrived, I am finding the conditions more suitable than I'd expected."

Slavery. Alley winced at his despicable reference to the life he was now a part of, a life she appreciated down through her bones, but she felt it impolite to correct his choice of connotation. Impolite after he sat with her now for the better of part an afternoon, explaining to her what she was sure he never thought he'd care to tell.

"The farm is exquisite, and our new family are good to let us live on it and work here. Our jobs aren't so tough, and we earn great rewards," she beamed, half hoping he would catch on to her enthusiasm.

They sat in silence as he contemplated her approach to the

life he has now lived for six full days. Without another word, they relaxed themselves in the garden on the east side of the Greenwich Home. The morning sun was beating its way through the foliage and the flowers, warming the skin of their outstretched bodies. The emotional sharing of the story had taken its toll on them both and with the lay back of Sunday afternoons, they napped for the better part of the remainder of the day.

Alley awoke first to the resounding salute of the dinner-time bell. Unaware of the meaning, for she noticed that he'd missed some meals, Oliver still lay sleeping sprawled on the bench, as the sun wore its way down to the ends of the clouds.

"Oh, Oliver, Oliver!! It's our Sunday dinner. Ollie, oh dear brother awake and let's have us a treat!" She lively pounced around his lithe, relaxed frame, waiting impatiently for him to get to his senses and join her.

"Oh Oliver, Oliver, it's fresh fish on Sunday!! We get fresh fish and a pan of warm milk, and toys, and praise from all of the household for all of our good deeds!"

The sheer size of his head and long, sinewy frame, far outsized his new comrade's by another quarter of a body; his mere size and stature and roguish countenance aside, the kitten at heart she'd seen from the start emerged with a bound from the overly matured body. "Did you say fish?? Fresh Fish?? And warm pans of milk?" He asked interrogatively repeating her with an octave voice raise, leading to incredulity.

"Come, my friend, you've been an excellent mouser! I am sure that they will have ample amounts of love for a tomcat! They always congratulate me on keeping the birds out of the garden, and you've done so well at keeping the mice from the oats, I'm so sure that you will love it!"

"You mean, they really care about us, here at Greenwich Farm!??"

"Oh Ollie, you'll see, they really really LOVE us!"

And the two jumped for joy and bounded towards the warmly lit farmhouse, excitedly awaiting the fish and the milk and the love and acceptance of the Greeniches, followed by Miss Daisy Maye, the shepherd-spaniel mix whose heart was singing on her journey for a Sunday boiled ham bone, and with Sarah Belle, the Fury, who seemed to look much less furious today, waiting for them all on her very own spot on the rug beside the hearth.



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