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2000 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine

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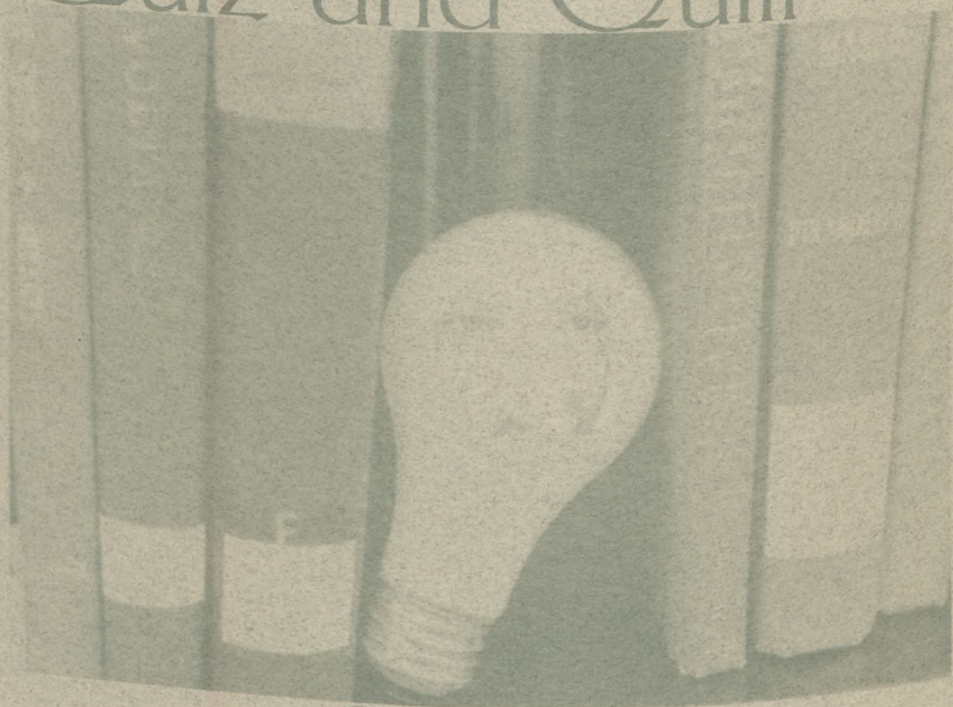
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Quiz and Quill



Spring 2000

Quiz and Quill

Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio

Spring 2000

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Editor's Note

You now hold in your hands the first *Quiz and Quill* of the twenty-first century. It's not very futuristic. It doesn't fly, shoot lasers, or talk in a scary robot voice like Robbie the Robot from *Lost in Space*. However, it does have great pieces of student literature.

We received over a hundred submissions this year, but the staff has persevered through it all to bring you some literary treats. We would like to thank the staff for their hard work throughout the year in creating and promoting the magazine. We would also like to thank Dr. Rittenhouse for taking over during the winter while Dr. Bailey was away.

Many thanks go to Dr. Bailey for organizing this whole thing. Without you, or the cookies you brought every week, it would have been total anarchy.

It's been a terrific year full of giant beef sticks, hooked on phonics, and ten thousand poems that will remain (or haunt) our dreams for many years to come. Thank you. See you all in the future.

2000 Quiz and Quill Writing Contest Winners

Poetry

- First Place: *And So Goes the Story of Love* by Ellen Beversluis
Second Place: *You Try Not To Think About Leaving* by Becky O'Neil
Third Place: *It's that time of year again* by Charles L. D'Itri

Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry

- First Place: *SWM* by Chris Smith
Second Place: *Forgiveness* by Becca Rossiter
Third Place: *Invocation* by Stacy Brannan

Short Story

- First Place: *Clair de Lune* by Stacy Campbell
Second Place: *Endings* by Tom Steckert
Third Place: *AWOL* by Katie Hertzfeld

Personal Essay

- First Place: *When We Were Young* by Jean Galleger
Second Place: *Brushing Memories* by Marian Webb
Third Place: *Breaking Out of My Shell* by Kathryn A. Kocias

The Walter L. Barnes Short Story Award

- First Place: *Mission: Bonfire* by Katie Hertzfeld
Second Place: *Jehovah Yireh* by Robin Seabaugh

Playwriting

- First Place: *Midst* by Chris Smith
Second Place: *The Last Supper* by Matt Glaviano
Third Place: *Rewind* by Micah Blaine Fitzgerald

Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

- First Place: Kristin Kauffman
Second Place: Amy Davis
Third Place: Jamie Bell

Writing Contest Judges

Poetry and Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry

Ed Karshner is a 1991 graduate of Otterbein College and a 1997 winner of the Academy of American Poets Prize. He will graduate from Bowling Green State University in August with a doctorate in rhetoric and writing.

Personal Essay Contest

Don Langford is a freelance writer and a lecturer in the English Department at Otterbein. He has won an American Academy of Poets award, and his poems have appeared in *The Lowell Review*, *petroglyph*, *Spring Street*, and other literary magazines.

Short Story Contest

Michael Olin-Hitt is an associate professor of English at Mount Union College and a member of Otterbein's class of 1986. He has published stories in *The Nebraska Review*, *The Georgetown Review* and *The West Wind Review*. He has received an Individual Artist's Fellowship from the Ohio Arts Council for 2000-2001.

Walter Lowrie Barnes Short Story Contest

Candyce Barnes has taught fiction writing at The Ohio State University. Her next publication will be in the anthology *21st Century Dog: A Visionary Compendium*, due this fall from Stewart Tabori & Chang.

Playwriting Contest

Johnrick Hole, general manager of the Contemporary American Theatre Company, Columbus, has had his plays *Queen of Satin* and *Nighthawks* produced by Red Herring Theatre Company. His one act *Mr. Peepers Goes to Hell* is in CATCO's Shorts Festival 2000.

Lousie Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

Patti Kennedy was a reporter for Suburban News Publications before coming to Otterbein as the assistant director of publications/news information in the Office of College Relations. Since leaving Otterbein, she has established her own desktop publishing firm, Simplicity Publications.

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rolling down shakedown

rolling down shakedown street with summer ale in
95.5 degree summer sun, glittered freaks are
bumming smokes in the dust and i am one of
them...woman sitting cross-legged in the shadow of
her van is selling quesadillas...dude with red
dreads brushes past us offering hash...they always
have dreads...we roll on through the gate...rain
clouds gather above as the music begins...searching
for water i pass a blonde in front of the
pavilion...she pinches my nipple and walks away...as
the sun sets we find toby and dan...the rain is
torrential...the music builds...we celebrate with
lightning, dance, rain...music peaks and we're cut
off...we find our way back to the yellow van and
tell stories till we're kicked out...maybe there is
hope for my generation...rolling back home satori
slips through wrinkled fingers

- J. L. Calaway

And So Goes the Story of Love
First Place, Poetry Contest

(For Aaron)

Prologue

I sit here thinking of you in your drinking shoes
and the smile you smiled
when the world had disappeared
and I was at the center of your attention.

Chapter One

Your eyes were twinkling in the streetlights
as you walked toward us.
A sight we must have been:
pulling glass bottles from the dumpster
for her mosaics,
leaving them in the backseat of the car
while the three of us drank coffee
in smoke rings.

(and you were so pretty)

Chapter Two

Your room doesn't fit your personality,
but your bed was soft
the night we deceived my mother.
And these thoughts can't reach you
through the telephone poles
along the highway
to your door.

And my words can't ever hope to find
those moments
alone—
with your eyes
and your hair
and you.

Chapter Three

The other girl is pretty,
so pretty,
but you say it's what's inside that counts.
(easy to say when she's that pretty.)

Chapter Four

Time holds stories that someday we may tell,
and emotions were born that night
that should have died the next morning.

(but your lips are so soft)

Epilogue

Forgetting is so long
even though I hardly knew you.
(didn't know you at all,
but wanted to.)

And there are stories to be told under starry temples
someday when she finishes those mosaics.
And all of the bottles will be smashed,
like you and me.

But still,
here I sit
thinking we were pretty,
so pretty
the night your lips met mine,
and the fire crackled on for hours.

- *Ellen Beversluis*

Angel

If the walls are bleeding,
does that mean we are not alone?

The incense and drugs are just a cover up because
nobody believes in free love and
disbanding the shackles of society anymore.

The stale air becomes
sweeter
as you exhale.

Pass the bowl and
I will listen to Morrison
tell me that
no one gets out alive.

Ain't that the truth.

No, wait.
I am not ready yet.
Just give me another minute.

Cornered, hovering, alone.
And you play the Angel,
a moth butting its head against
bleeding walls.

- *Katie Hertzfeld*

In Our Paperback Garden

by Becca Rossiter

On my brother's eighteenth birthday the stars had looked like bits and pieces of a fireworks display from some forgotten July, stuck forever in the midnight sky. I remember thinking this as I went to sit beside him on the decrepit picnic table overlooking the pool. It was a windy night. Paper cups and crumpled napkins were drifting in the turquoise water, abandoned vessels swaying in their chlorinated sea.

"Better clean this stuff up quick before Mom finds some other chore for us to do," I said wryly, nudging Barry on the shoulder. "It was a good party, though, wasn't it? How's it feel to be eighteen? An adult, I mean?" I roughed up Barry's hair and smiled. But Barry didn't budge. He just sat there with his eyes tightly closed, letting the breeze muss up his hair even more. It was as if he wanted the breeze to go on forever, to completely blow away whatever weight was on his shoulders. I noticed that his face was white in the starlight.

"If I keep my eyes closed long enough, it will be tomorrow. I won't be sitting here, I won't be eighteen." I stared at my big brother as he repeated these frenzied phrases. Was this the Barry that graduated with honors just a few weeks before and knew exactly what he wanted out of life?

"What, you don't want to be grown up?" I laughed when I said it because it sounded so ridiculous. But the look in Barry's eyes when he turned painfully to gaze at me told me it was the truth.

"I'm scared." These foreign words escaped from Barry's lips and I just stood there, curling my toes in the wet grass and listening to James Taylor hum softly in the background from the kitchen radio. "About college, about life, about everything. I'm just scared, Pete." My mind raced. Did Mom and Dad know Barry was thinking this way? They were sending him off to school in the fall, thinking their oldest son was capable of taking on the world. He was a rock in everybody's eyes. How odd to see the rock crumbling... I hoped the moment wouldn't last long.

"All my life, I've known what I wanted to be. Even everybody agrees I'd make a great doctor. But now I don't know... I mean, you've got to follow your dreams, right Petey?"

I couldn't find the right words to say exactly. I figured whatever slipped through my lips at that moment would seem ignorant or crude. And I'd never had real dreams. I didn't believe in destiny or any of that. Why was he asking me, anyway? Barry and I teased and wrestled like all the other brothers we knew. We'd even play a good prank or take turns tormenting Mrs. Nelson's cats next door. But never in my entire life had he opened his heart to me like this. I was three years younger and so incredibly different. I kept myself busy with sports while Barry stayed at home and studied or worked on his art. That was his secret passion. He'd made his own studio in the midst of all our antique junk in the attic. I used to go and watch him create. He was good at that. Somehow

everything he touched became art, not just a slab of molded clay or a canvas with a few bright splashes of color. He'd tried to explain to me why he was doing what he was doing, why he was painting this blossom purple, or why this girl's face had shadows to show that she was sad. But for the past two months no one had been allowed in the attic, not even Mom. It was Barry's Eden, his Narnia, I suppose you could call it.

A firefly landed nonchalantly next to me on the picnic table's surface. Ashamed because I couldn't think of anything to say, I engulfed its tiny body in my fist, then squinted at its greenish-gold light through the opening between my thumb and index finger.

"The stars are bright tonight," Barry said. He seemed to catch on that I really was lost for words. He sighed and stood, running his fingers through his hair and stretching his arms to the sky, higher, higher, higher. He could reach those stars if he really wanted to, I thought, aching to reassure him.

We cleaned up the yard in silence, and I knew Barry was sorry he had revealed that new side of him. But as we opened the back door to go in, he nudged me and said, "Don't tell Mom or Dad what I said, OK? They have enough on their minds." I nodded methodically. It was the least I could do. Barry left me standing there, still digesting that my brother wasn't as happy as he pretended to be. I listened to his footsteps fade, all the way up the attic stairs.

For the rest of July, I looked at my brother differently. I wasn't surprised when he suddenly wanted to be involved in midnight soccer games or swimming all day until our skin was so red it hurt to sit down. Barry knew time was running out. He still had a few precious weeks before college to indulge in being reckless and being young. We both knew our parents expected him to succeed in his studies. They wanted him to prosper just as much as Barry did. But for what seemed like a brief shining moment, we cherished the stargazing and picnics at the lake with lettuce and peanut butter sandwiches; the time we snuck beers from the fridge and drank them under the Olde River Bridge; the ghost stories in the local cemetery and burning incense on the roof while we made up poems and stories. For a while, our summer was eternal. For awhile, we were friends before we were brothers.

When August came, so did reality. As Barry packed for college, I sat on his bed and watched. He put things in his suitcases, and I thought about how each piece of clothing or framed picture represented a little piece of him. Barry smiled as he packed, though, and babbled on about his classes and his roommate from Idaho. I wanted so badly to go in his place, to step into his shoes so he'd have a little more time to think, to laugh, to dream.

The morning of Barry's departure I woke to find plump raindrops splattering on my face. I got up to shut the screens and noticed another summer thunderstorm was on its way.

I heard and smelled bacon frying, so it wasn't so bad getting up, knowing a good breakfast was waiting for me. Barry was already sitting at the table, dressed and ready to go. He glanced up at me as I entered.

"Hey, sleepy head," he said, but didn't quite smile. Mom put another

helping of omelet on his plate and so he directed all his attention to finishing his meal. Dad and Barry were scheduled to leave at nine o'clock. That didn't leave much time for me to tell him how much fun I'd had this summer. I was still trying to figure out what to say as we stood by the car and watched as Dad lugged the overstuffed baggage into our Ford.

"Well," I finally blurted out, "this is it."

Barry's eyes smiled. "Yeah, kiddo. Don't get into too much trouble while your big brother's away, all right?" Mom chuckled and kissed his cheek. Barry got into the car and rolled down his window. I stepped up to him and said quickly, "I had a real good time this summer." He just looked at his new shoes and then up at the car ceiling.

"I know ya did. So did I." That made my heart feel warm and proud. "Pete, I left you something. I want you to take care of it." I knew just by the way he said it what it was.

"The attic?" I almost whispered in disbelief.

"Hey, you know me better than I thought," Barry said as the car motor growled to life and the Ford plunged forward. I stood there realizing I'd never faced the fact that I'd eventually be left behind.

The rain fell in huge, shimmering droplets and Mom guided me into the house, sniffing a little herself. But I didn't cry. I wouldn't for Barry's sake. I knew what I had to do right then and there, and as lightning pierced the clouds, I climbed the narrow steps to the attic. Yes, the door was open. Holding my breath, I turned the knob, entering the forbidden land of Barry's daydreams. It was only after I'd stood there in awe for a few seconds that the tears came.

Hundreds of paper flowers adorned the room, each one a different hue and shape. There were paper ivy vines climbing up the walls, paper water lilies floating in a painted pond, even origami dandelions blooming on the emerald floorboards. It was a blast of color to my eyes. It was our summer, captured in my brother's mind and brought to life through this art, this masterpiece. And suddenly I knew what Barry wanted to be, what he had to be. An artist had been hidden in my brother all this time.

The window suddenly rattled open and a breeze swept through the attic, dragging a few unlucky paper buds with it. I watched them zigzag back and forth and then land on the pool, creating tiny ripples. In silence, I walked through my brother's paperback garden. Wiping the drying tears from my face, I lay down in the middle of the floor to stare at the ceiling. There a million stars met my gaze, painted on a sea of azure—stars that looked like bits and pieces of a fireworks display from some forgotten July, stuck forever in the midnight sky.

Proofreading

The battlefield lies before me
Mined with misspellings and typos.
The words are newly recruited soldiers
Bold but bare, untouched, untried
Their sparse lines framed by naked gaps of white
Crouching before me, awaiting judgment

I strike.
My red pen sings across their ranks
As they bravely make their stand.
Arrows, strikes, dashes, circles
Mark the fallen troops,
Symbols of a last stand here,
A new regiment added there.
My assault leaves in its wake
The decimated, red-stained plain of white page.

In no time, the army is readjusted and rebuilt
To face the next round of assaults.
Each word-soldier chosen to be perfect
In its place and for its duty.
This time, my victory won't come so easily.

- *Kristin Kauffman*

Clair de Lune
First Place, Short Story Contest
 by Stacy Campbell

"You never lose by loving. You always lose by holding back."
 - Barbara De Angelis

Clair sat in the warm sun with her eyes closed and her head tilted backward, emphasizing her swan-like neck as she arched her back. She had only been in the new house for a couple of hours, yet already she felt at home. All she needed was the hammock that her mother had brought home when Clair was only five, her newest journal, and the family's dog curled at her feet. Those were the only things that she really considered hers. Or maybe they were the only things that really mattered.

She relaxed to the rocking of the hammock and the occasional snores that escaped the dog, as a slight wind kissed her sun-splashed cheeks. Inside, coming from beyond the screen door that led to the kitchen, Clair could hear the banging of boxes, the rustle of newspaper being carelessly discarded onto the floor after such careful packaging, and her father screaming questions regarding lost items.

"Clair!" he yelled.

Nothing.

"Clair?" he screamed again, but this time more a question than an order.

Clair slowed the swinging of the hammock and gently helped her dog off of her lap. She sluggishly walked the twenty feet to the kitchen door, dragging her feet as though it were twenty miles. As she pushed open the screen door her shoulder bent to the wood frame as if it were her crutch, and her right leg seemed to give out as she asked, "What in God's name do you want now?"

"It would be nice if you would help me in here," her father shot back sarcastically. "Look at me, Clair. I'm up to my neck in boxes. I have no idea where to put all this junk! Didn't we have a yard sale before we left to get rid of all this crap that we don't need? I mean, come on, when was the last time we used this thing, this...what do you call this thing?"

"That's an orange juice squeezer, Dad. You put half an orange on there and twist, and then you have fresh orange juice. I'm pretty sure they had those in your time," Clair replied, emphasizing the importance of the last two words.

"I know what it's used for, but when is the last time we've actually used it?"

"We've never used that Dad. We always buy our orange juice at

the store."

"Exactly," he screamed back. "So why in the hell do we still have it?"

"Because Mom bought it. Or can't you remember?" Clair replied coldly.

"Yeah, your mother always did have such good intentions of using all that crap she bought. I remember one time she ordered a waffle iron from one of those home shopping networks. She kept saying we would get such enjoyment out of that as a family. She thought it would be so nice if she could make us a big, homemade breakfast every Saturday. We never did use it. Speaking of which, how much did we get for that at the yard sale?"

"Nothing. It should be in one of the boxes in the garage. But before you go nuts on me for keeping all of Mom's junk, as you like to call it, or you make me sit down so we can reminisce about the good old days, I'm leaving." On the last words Clair turned from her father and stormed back to her refuge.

On the following morning Clair awoke early to escape facing her father. She knew he hadn't meant any harm, but today she just did not feel like dealing with him. After all, she only had one more week to savor until she started classes at Lincoln High, and she planned on taking full advantage of it.

After an unusually short shower, so as not to wake her father, she pulled back her wet hair into a loosely knotted twist. Clair had already washed her face when she first awoke and, unlike most girls, that was the only "make-up" that she required. After throwing on a pair of fraying jean shorts and her favorite black thrift store tank, she threw a few items into her backpack, picked up her sandals, and tiptoed downstairs.

In the kitchen, Clair tossed an apple, a strawberry Pop-Tart, and a bottle of water into her bag. Seconds later, she was outside and on her way to a day of solitude. Only having arrived in Jacksonville the previous night, Clair had not yet had a chance to discover what the town was like.

In fact, besides the block that she lived on, Clair had no idea what wonderful treasures or disasters that this town may have there, just waiting for her discovery. Clair had slept through the majority of the six-hour car ride from her old hometown of Eastmore, and she had decided not to come with her father when he was looking for their house. So, this was the first time that she had really seen Jacksonville.

After walking several blocks past a small café, a few shops, and what Clair assumed would be her new school, she finally noticed a park that looked peaceful and seemed to fulfill all of her requirements. It was outdoors; she would be surrounded by trees, and no one else seemed to be occupying it.

She found a small place near a stream where a large patch of dan-

delions was living. Unlike most people, Clair loved the bright golden yellow and the soft, unrefined manner of the weeds. She felt so inspired by them that she decided to write a short poem in their honor.

Clair had written only a few lines when she was torn from her work by the presence of another person.

"Hey there."

Clair turned around to find the bright blue eyes of a boy staring over her shoulder. She quickly shut her journal so as not to allow this rude intruder another glimpse at her personal thoughts.

"Do you want something?" she questioned callously, in hopes that this boy would take the hint.

"I just thought..." he answered back nervously, his eyes now unable to make contact with hers. He had never felt so nervous, so awkward around a girl before. These new feelings of inadequacy seemed to anger him and he began to regain his usual confidence. "I liked what you wrote."

"How dare you read my poem without my permission! What is wrong with you? I can't believe that you would have the audacity to do something so mean, so dishonest as to read another person's works without their permission. You realize that that is like trespassing on my personal, private property," Clair rattled off all of the wrongs that this strange boy had committed against her, never once stopping for a breath, or to consider what she was saying.

"I'm sorry, it's just that...I just, I had no idea that you were going to get so upset. I mean, I saw you over here by the water and you looked so content, I guess I just wanted to see what was making you so happy."

"That's no excuse," Clair shot back, still angry.

"Haven't you ever seen anyone that looked so happy that you wish you could switch places, switch lives with them? Well, that's what I thought when I looked at you. You were over here completely absorbed and content with what you were doing, so I just wanted to see what it was. I'm really sorry, I didn't mean to..." but Clair cut him off before he had a chance to finish his explanation.

"Dandelions," she replied.

"What?"

"I said dandelions. I was writing about the dandelions."

"Yeah, I kinda guessed from your poem," he answered back, a little more sure of himself, but still aware that this girl could explode again at any minute.

"So, you liked it?"

"Sure. I mean, I think the part about dandelions being proud amidst even the most elegant of flowers was really great. I also really liked how you said that dandelions are like our own little piece of the sun here on earth."

"Well, I'm glad that you liked it. But I still think it was wrong of you to read it in the first place," Clair said, somewhat toying with this

stranger. She didn't want him to feel too comfortable.

"I think that dandelions are really underrated. After all, what other flower can you use to blow white fluffy seeds onto other people or make their skin turn yellow?" the boy smiled, pleased with his own observation of the graceless weed.

For the first time Clair really noticed him. His blue eyes had a little bit of gray swirling around his pupils. She liked his smile, how the top row of teeth lay perfectly on top of the bottom rather than slightly overlapping, which was cute and awkward just like the boy. His dark hair was covered with what Clair assumed was his favorite hat. The baseball cap was somewhere between a sage green and a pale gray, and a navy emblem covered most of the front. Its black plastic bill had torn through the grayish-green, whose ends curled in small fraying threads. Clair liked his careless disregard of the worn hat. She smiled back at him, forgetting his crimes and that moments earlier she had decided not to become too friendly with the boy.

"Hello, again. I'm Jackson. Jackson Greene," he said, flashing his toothy smile again.

"I'm Mildred," Clair replied, remembering her promise to herself.

"Mildred, that's a pretty name," Jackson replied, obviously trying too hard to achieve Clair's acceptance.

"No, it's not. You and I both know it's an ugly name. But that's why I like it, because nobody else does," Clair stated frankly, trying to be difficult in hopes that the boy would leave her so that she could return to her work.

"So it's not the prettiest name in the world. Who cares? The name doesn't make the person, the person makes the name."

Clair tried to cover her laughter that arose from Jackson's final attempt to win her over, but it was too late. He had discovered her.

"So, you do know how to laugh," he said. "I was beginning to think that there was no hope of us having a happy relationship."

Jackson's mentioning of him and Clair ever having a relationship made Clair once again retreat. She sat silently for a minute, but then realizing that Jackson was not about to leave, Clair changed the subject.

"So, Jackson. That is your name, right?"

He nodded just once, somewhat hurt by the fact that she was unsure about his name. However, the challenge that she presented was exciting, so he was not about to give up the chase.

"Well Jackson, suppose you tell me why this wonderful town was named after you. I mean, come on, Jackson from Jacksonville. Is that a little ironic or what?"

"I suppose it is," Jackson responded, excited that Clair had taken an interest in his background, but still upset that she had ignored his idea of a future between the two of them. "The town wasn't actually named after me, but I do like the idea of it. Actually, I was named after my grand-

father. And this place, well, it came a little before both of our times."

"Thanks for the history lesson, but I gotta go. I haven't had lunch yet and my father's probably pacing the house wondering where I'm at." She picked up her journal and the half-empty bottle of water and dropped both into her bag. She smoothed back the small strands of hair that had escaped and gave Jackson a last smile as she turned to walk away.

Jackson ran after her and spun her around.

"Wait a minute," he argued. "When will I see you again?"

Clair remained silent. She gave him one last look and then she walked off.

Clair had been in school for four weeks before she ran into Jackson again. There were a few times when she saw him in the hall between classes, but she had always managed to dash into the girls' restroom or stand in a large group of people, so he never saw her. However, one day after school, Jackson noticed Clair at her locker and he hurried after her as she left the building.

"Mildred!" he yelled after her. "Hey, Mildred!"

Finally Jackson caught up to her and spun her around as he had done when she tried to leave him the first day that they had met. "Hi Mildred," he said, flashing her another of his funny, wide-mouthed grins.

"What?" Clair questioned, forgetting that she had given Jackson a phony name.

"What do you mean 'what'? All I said was 'Hi Mildred,'" Jackson returned, puzzled at Clair's response.

"Oh yeah," she laughed, remembering the day at the park.

"Hello to you too."

"You're name isn't Mildred, is it?"

"What tipped you off?" Clair returned sarcastically, amused that it had taken Jackson four weeks to learn her real name.

"So what is it then?" Jackson questioned, not about to be fooled by this girl again. "And this time I want your real name."

"It's Stephanie. Stephanie Starr," Clair replied, giving Jackson her best phony smile and trying to pretend that she was a Valley girl.

"Come on."

"Geraldine?" Clair offered, wondering if he would buy it.

Jackson made no response. He was sick of her games. If this girl didn't want anything to do with him, he was not about to force her. Jackson forced a weak grin, waved, and began to walk in the opposite direction.

"Okay. You win," Clair explained, starting to feel remorse for the way that she had been treating Jackson. "My name is Clair."

Jackson stopped and turned around, but he made no effort to walk back towards her. He still was unsure if he should believe her.

"I swear it really is. Clair Elisabeth Christianson."

Jackson laughed. "Well, hello Clair Elisabeth Christianson."

"Oh, so you think my name is funny, do you?" Clair said, pretending to be offended by his mockery..

"Yes, I do," Jackson snarled playfully. "As a matter of fact, I think I quite preferred Mildred."

"Well, that's just too bad isn't it, because it looks like you're stuck with Clair."

"Oh, so you think I'm stuck with you, do you?" Jackson questioned mischievously, aroused that she had finally admitted that they would have a relationship.

"That's not...I mean that isn't at all what I was inferring. I just meant that, well, that..." Clair tried to explain, but was too flustered to finish.

Jackson decided to take advantage of her lack of words. He grabbed her slender waist and tried gently to pull her forward to him, but Clair lost her balance and they both fell to the ground, Jackson landing heavily on top of her. Clair tried to gather her composure and push Jackson off of her.

"Jackson, please. We're in front of the school. Everyone's watching us."

"I don't care who's watching."

Jackson remained firmly on top of her. He laughed at their behavior as Clair tried to discover what it was that he wanted from her. But before she had a chance to come to a resolution about his actions, Jackson leaned down and kissed her.

Clair pushed her way up and started to stride briskly away from him. However, this time Jackson was not about to let her get away.

"Listen Clair, do you want to come over? I mean, to my house? We can just hang out in my room."

"If you think that just because you kissed me that I'll just go over to your house now and make out, then you're even crazier than I thought."

"Why do you always have to be so damn difficult? I just wanted to talk, that's all."

A long, cold silence separated the two as they decided what to do or say next.

"You know what Clair? Just forget it. I gotta go." And with that Jackson turned to leave.

Clair stood impatiently, fidgeting with the silver ring on her finger as if trying to make some great decision. Finally, she ran after him.

"Jackson. Wait a minute...please!"

Stopping, Jackson waited for Clair but still did not turn to look at her.

"What?" he questioned coldly.

"I just...I, um...I guess I just wanted to say that I'm sorry." Still refusing to look at her, "Don't worry about it."

"So, does that mean I can come over?"

Jackson turned toward her, a huge grin on his face. Then, playfully, "Sure. If you can find it."

And with that Jackson ran off. Clair watched for a minute, thinking about the way that he had just smiled at her and watching his long, muscular stride. Then, as if coming back to life, she took off as fast as she could run.

Halfway toward their destination, Jackson and Clair passed the park where they had first met. With a mischievous grin Jackson stopped, looked at Clair and then took off in the opposite direction, dodging a few bushes as he entered the park, leaving Clair with no choice but to chase after him.

Jackson paused at the stream where he had first seen Clair, but as she approached he took off again. However, this time, Jackson ran backwards in small circles while chanting playfully, "Come on! Come on! You can't catch me."

Clair hesitated, but with a look of determination she took off in the direction of Jackson, bending her shoulders toward his waist and practicing her best football tackle imitation. Clair and Jackson thudded to the ground and immediately both broke out into laughter.

"Where in the hell did you learn to play football?"

"Are you insinuating that just because I'm a girl I shouldn't be able to know how to tackle someone?"

"No, I'm just insinuating that was pretty impressive."

"Oh, well, thank you. But, to set the record straight, I don't really know how to play football."

Clair, starting to feel awkward, sat up on Jackson's stomach; however, she did not make any attempt to remove herself from being in control. She had Jackson pinned down, exactly where she wanted him, ready to start some heavy questioning.

"What is it that you want from me?"

"What? What is this, Clair, some kinda interrogation or something?"

"No. I just wanted to know why you're trying to get close to me, that's all."

"Well, if you must know, I like you," Jackson replied with a toothy grin.

"And?"

"And what?"

"And is there anything else?" Clair pressed.

"No. That's it. I like you." Jackson paused for a moment to consider Clair's sudden firing of questions. "So why is it that you keep

asking me all these questions?"

"I just wanted to know."

"Well, then. It looks like it's my turn. What is it that you want from me?"

Clair paused to take a deep breath and push a strand of hair out of her eyes. She grinned wildly.

"I just wanted to be on top this time."

Jackson made no reply. He just looked into her eyes, trying to read her, to find some way of knowing how she was really feeling. Clair turned her head so that he could not stare into her eyes. She knew that if she looked into his wide, hopeful eyes for much longer she would lose herself, she would forget that she did not want Jackson, did not need him. However, Jackson did not allow her to look away. He wanted her to have to face him. If Clair did not want a relationship with him he would understand, but she would have to look him in the face and tell him. He ran his hand across her soft cheek. This time he did not have to persuade her to look at him; his touch was all the persuading she had needed. Jackson leaned down toward Clair, staring into her large, almond-shaped eyes and kissed her. This time Clair kissed him back.

Clair rolled off of him and they both lay back with their heads tilted into the sun. For a few moments they just lay there silently, allowing their surroundings to overpower them.

"Do you wanna know what I was named after, Mr. Jackson of Jacksonville?" Clair questioned him playfully, with her widest grin.

Jackson smiled back, almost in disbelief at Clair's first voluntary attempt to reveal herself.

"My mom was in an orchestra before she died. She played the violin. I remember when I was little she used to play it to me. She would always play the same song. It was called 'Clair de Lune.' It was her favorite. It's a really beautiful song," Clair explained with a sad smile as she remembered her mother.

"What does it mean?"

"Moonlight."

Jackson hugged her. He loved how Clair's slender body could be completely engulfed by his. As he kissed her on the forehead he knew exactly what he wanted to say.

"I think I love you, Clair."

Clair looked up at him, startled by Jackson's confession, but trying not to let it show.

"What do you mean you love me? You don't even know me," stated Clair defiantly as though there was no way that Jackson could ever know the real her.

"Well I'd like to."

"Like to what?"

"Know you better," beamed Jackson.

"Oh," Clair replied, letting disappointment seep through her clenched teeth.

"And I think I really could."

"Really could what?" she questioned.

Jackson just smiled.

Frustrated, Clair questioned him more forcefully.

"Jackson! You think you really could what?"

"I think I really could learn to love you, Mildred."

GO home HILLERS.

In high school
some people were Cougars,
Tigers, or even Wolverines,

but me, I was a Hiller.

See, some genius decided
that since Trinity High School
was on a hill, why not call us
the Hillers.

It's clever until you see
some lanky kid
under a pile of brown fabric
dressed as a hill.

He looks like a clump of poop
jiggling around the crowded gym
during a pep rally.

In the bleachers the guy next to me
is hunched over pissing
in a Mountain Dew can,
which he tells me he'll throw at the hill.
He zips up and offers me the can
so I can contribute to his rebellion.

But, I didn't have to go,
and hey, you can't force
something like that.

Besides, my school had enough
to be ashamed about already.

- *Anthony Fulton*

You Try Not To Think About Leaving

Second Place, Poetry Contest

You try not to think about leaving;
instead, you tiptoe to the kitchen
and take out your bowl and spoon.
You grip the hard curves of the bowl,
almost believing the strength of your fingers
could change its shape, turn it inside out;
you could raise your arms and smash it
to the ground, not in slow motion but
in one grand explosion of shards,

like the glass in the gutter that sparkled
in the headlights of the passing cars
as you crouched behind the dusky front bushes
hidden, listening, listening:
"ready or not, here I come!"
and heart hammering, fingers crossed,
you tried to think like a statue,
breathless;

and later, you slept, sweaty and aching,
on the floor under a tent of sheets and clothespins;
in the morning there were carpet prints
down the length of your body,
even under your pajamas;
and you had to laugh at the fuzz stuck to your elbows
where the watermelon juice had dripped off
and into the grass
in yesterday's afternoon sun.

And you think, now,
that you must have broken the bowl after all;
its pieces are stuck in your windpipe;
somehow you breathe,
breathe past them,
and somehow your spine stays rigid
and you hold your ribs carefully,
so carefully,
to keep all the emptiness from falling loose,

and when your mother says, "time to go,"
 you drop the spoon,
 or maybe you swallow it,
 for as you watch it fall,
 you feel it clatter down the
 hard, curved walls
 of your insides.

- *Becky O'Neil*

Just Add Jesus

Take one doomed sinner.
 Add copious guilt.
 A dash of remorse.
 Sift in profound fear.
 Strain out tolerance; throw away.
 Stir occasionally with sermons on hellfire
 Fold in Scripture randomly to taste.
 Pinch mind firmly closed.

Yield: one born-again Christian.

Warning: enjoy while fresh, spoils quickly.

- *Kristin Kauffman*

The Last Supper
Second Place, Playwriting Contest
 by Matt Glaviano

Characters:

MILES is twenty. He is just home from a long day of work, and sitting down to eat his dinner. He wears a shirt and tie, collar loose, and is obviously trying to relax.

J. SEUSS is of indeterminate age. He wears a pink bathrobe.

Time: Just after five p.m. The present.

Setting: MILES' apartment. There is a table at center, with three chairs center stage.

(As the lights come up, MILES is on a portable phone. On the table is his dinner, a sandwich of some sort. He paces as he speaks.)

MILES: It was just work, mom. It went fine. I just want to sit back, relax, and eat my sandwich. No. Yes. It went - Yes. (Pauses) Sort of. It went - Everything went - Yes. (Pause) Sort of. It went - Mom... No. Yes. Maybe. Probably. Certainly. No. Yes. No. Maybe. Sort of. It went - Everything was - (Pause) MOM! IT WAS JUST WORK! IT WENT FINE! I JUST WANT TO EAT MY DINNER!

(MILES throws phone across the room)

GOOD BYE!

(MILES sits down at the table and begins to eat, reading the paper while he does so. He faces the audience. While he is eating, stage lights lower as a spotlight rises up center stage. J. SEUSS is lowered into the spot from above, arms outstretched. As his bare feet touch the stage, the lights return to normal.)

SEUSS (Advancing towards the table): My son!

(Miles, scared shitless, jumps out of his chair and drops his sandwich and paper to the floor. He looks back and sees J. SEUSS, then down at the sandwich on the floor.)

MILES: Dad! You better have a damn good reason for sneaking up on me like that. Shit! All I wanted to do is eat a sandwich and relax! What do you want?

SEUSS: I've come to save you, my son.

MILES: For the love of God, dad, I just got off the phone with mom! I told her work was fine! All I did all day is teach eighth graders simple algebra equations! It's the same thing I do everyday, and it went fine! She calls and interrogates me everyday! I just want some peace!

SEUSS: I can give you eternal peace, son. Take my hand.

(Pause)

MILES: Dad, we haven't touched in fifteen years. And then it was

because I was in pain. I fell off a swing, scraped my knee pretty good. You came over, picked me up, said, "Never do that again," and walked away. That was it. It hurt like hell, too.

SEUSS: I can heal your pain, son.

MILES: What...? Does mom know you're here?

SEUSS: I've come to... Mom? My son, I am not your mortal father; I am the divine Lord, here to save your soul. Heal your pain. Come with me, son. I can bring these long, painful days to a close.

(SEUSS begins to advance towards MILES, who backs away warily.)

MILES: Dad, what are you talking about? Work went OK, dad, I swear.

SEUSS: (Frustrated) OK. Here's the deal, son. We have to go. I'm on a tight schedule.

MILES: Schedule...

SEUSS: So, you've got a choice. Heaven or hell, now or never. Are you coming or not? My son.

MILES: You think you're Jesus?

SEUSS: For Christ sake, what do I look like! I descended from heaven!

MILES: You used your name in vain!

SEUSS: I can use my own name in vain! It's my name! (Looking to heaven) Do you see what I put up with?

(Pause)

MILES: You ruined my sandwich. Jesus would never do that.

SEUSS: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you. Now are you coming or not?

MILES: Make me a new one.

SEUSS: What?

MILES: Make me a new sandwich.

SEUSS: I can't do that.

MILES: I want a sandwich.

SEUSS: And I want to save your soul and get the hell out of here! Apparently, we can't all get what we want.

MILES: YOU ARE JESUS CHRIST! YOU TURNED WATER TO WINE, MADE THE BLIND MAN WALK! MAKE ME A SANDWICH! WITH TURKEY AND CHEESE AND LOTS OF MAYONNAISE!

(Pause)

SEUSS: If I make you a sandwich, will you come to heaven with me?

MILES: You really believe this, don't you, dad?

SEUSS: Humor me.

MILES: Yes. If you are Jesus Christ, and want to take me to heaven, I will gladly follow you to the eternal afterlife - or mom's house - if you fix me a sandwich.

(Pause. They stare at each other.)

SEUSS: What kind of bread do you want? Leavened or unleavened?

(Lights down)

Waiting for Rain

I haven't written in so long
(months)
and it's not raining,
no moon.
It's cold in here,
which is good,
but so is my tea
(cold)
and too much light,
no music.

A man all in khaki
and a safari hat walked in.
and lots of curly hair
and glasses – too big,
no socks,
coffee to go,
he's gone.

It just doesn't feel right
to write.
my pen's too scratchy
and the girl at the counter looks too much like
my ex-boyfriend's
ex-girlfriend.

There's a guy I watch,
in the other corner,
in a wheelchair.
green baseball cap
hooded sweatshirt
white mug just like mine.
cold tea too?
he reads.
he's cute.
he looks this way sometimes
when he yawns.

I stare out the window.
can't write if I stare.
can't see the paper out there,
only my face.
(reflection)
cut my hair today
short,
and first-time glasses
violet tinted

like Lestat's.
 I don't feel like me.
 This is not my writing pen.
 I hate new journals.
 this is not my table
 too close to the neon sign
 and there's no music.
 There's a guy
 with slicked hair,
 leather coat,
 sitting with his mom.
 wonder if it's real
 (the coat)
 you use a lighter to tell.
 have a friend
 put a hole in his
 (coat).

It's cold in here
 tea's gone.
 the two student teachers
 making up games for their second graders
 just left.
 they won't like them
 (the games)
 I know
 I've tried.

Last call was called
 by the man in the red ponytail.
 I like him.
 he smiles
 tries to get me to buy a scone
 when I order
 I don't.

Staring out the window
 again
 at people walking
 a man I don't know see me
 and waves.
 I laugh
 and wave,
 take off my glasses
 and return my mug
 to the counter.
 maybe the guy
 in the wheelchair
 will watch me leave.

pOOlside PoemS

swimming in the pool
i become cool with the thought
of you, us two, then
weightless in perfect bliss I steal
a kiss from beneath the
glassy surface of the
wildlywetwater
and your
wildlywetlips.
i feel love lost
down the whirlpool drain
which represents the
strain this relationship
has placed on my placid
heart and I realize,
lip-locked under water
makes mad passion
an excuse for passing
on and I drown away
in the pool today.

- Micah Blaine Fitzgerald

The Secret

He almost died, my father,
His habit staging a drunken coup
 against its slender supervisor —
A rubbed worker with passion for
Learning and regret for the past.
I have heard stories of
 wild, throw-it-off days,
A second life lived, told;
Concern running thick in his voice.

There was a child, unborn,
Who made him love us more —
Carried now inside his heart, like
 dust in the center of the pearl.
A woman, sent away,
Remaining in the jealousy that
 still rises to my mother's tongue
When I remind her of that which
 I am not supposed to know.

- Stacy L. Brannan

-Beauty-

She is beautiful, brutally
 The blue confidence cooling in her eyes
 is hotter than the teases she has mastered
 The perfect naughtiness
 is a squid's appendage
 pulling me in
 pulling me under to drown

One could discuss her kaleidoscope hair
 or polished white curves that could
 do more to sensibilities than Salome's
 or those lips...
 I must linger a moment on those lips

But more than her looks
 are her "looks"
 She has the grace and gregariousness
 the artistry and bewitching power
 and then she laughs
 and I realize she is not afraid
 to use them

She woos the camera as
 A mariachi band moonlight serenade
 so too the audience as they sit
 enraptured, they truly believe her this time
 Nothing so pure or so practiced
 as she, can cause their eyes to round
 as they all at once willingly drown
 in themselves

So here the question lies
 what is my fascination?
 Am I so torn by her kinetic-performance
 that I now need wither sensuality, soft
 as some lover's breath, or sexuality,
 rough as some lover's goodbye?

Or has the real reason broken the surface
Do I more want to be with her
or to be her?
Shall I festoon my walls with her image
and hold her up goddess-like with
my loving idolatry or
pout my lips with gloss and attempt to be
beautiful too?

- *Tajia Rose Bucci*

Gina Thinks I'm Ugly

Gina was the hottest girl
in my fourth grade class.
She had long dark hair
and wore spandex pants.

Gina made me forget my fractions,
and made my crayons melt
when she walked by.

On Valentine's Day
I found out how
she felt about me.

She slid a Valentine on my desk.
Catwoman was on it.
"You're my perrrr-fect Valentine,"
the pink letters said.

On the back Gina wrote,
"P.S. You are ugly!"
sucking back tears
I wrote her back and said,
"I know you are but what am I?"

But, I already knew what I was,
I was going to be Gina's husband
by at least the eighth grade.

- *Anthony Fulton*

When We Were Young
First Place, Personal Essay Contest
by Jean Galleger

My early childhood in Sunbury, a small town in central Ohio, seems so carefree and simple when compared to the pressures children face growing up in today's society. We had no television filling our minds with violent and sexual images for hours on end, and the only drugs we knew about were those prescribed by our local physician, Dr. Livingston, for our everyday aches and pains. Our lives were safe, secure and tranquil. My best friends during those years were Shirley Livingston, the doctor's daughter, and Carol Southworth, whose father was our town's only celebrity. He was manager of major league baseball's St. Louis Browns, which eventually became the Baltimore Orioles, and before retiring spent a few years with the Boston Braves. The entire town celebrated with a parade and street fair each year his team won the league championship, with even bigger celebrations taking place when they became World Series champions in 1942 and 1944.

With a population of only a few hundred, we either knew, or knew about, almost everyone in town, and a sense of friendliness and security surrounded us. People cared about their neighbors. If our mother was sick, we knew someone from the neighborhood would bring hot food for our supper. If she wasn't at home when we arrived from school, we knew which of our neighbors would gladly watch us until she came back. Children were allowed to come and go in town without fear of danger. We walked to school and roller skated up and down the streets in our leisure time. Doors were rarely locked and the town constable had little more to do than break up an occasional Saturday night fight at the local saloon or issue a speeding ticket to a driver going more than 25 miles an hour around the town square.

Dad was a mechanic and truck driver for a local dairy farm and our home was modest compared to the homes of my two best friends. Shirley lived in a large old English Tudor style house with many rooms. Her father's medical offices were located in the basement. Carol's home was new, very modern and unconventional in design. Despite the differences in our social status, the three of us were constant companions. We were all honor students in the same class at school and enjoyed doing homework together. Shirley and I lived on the same block, and Carol lived about a mile out of town. When the weather was nice, we would walk to her house and at other times one of our parents drove us there.

When we played at Shirley's house, we would sometimes put on her ballet slippers and tutus and she would teach us the new steps she had learned in dance class. In our minds we were all prima ballerinas. We

were good kids, but our curiosity did get us into trouble now and then. One afternoon we grew tired of our usual activities and began looking for something different to pass the time. The doctor was out of his office, and even though we knew this area of the house was strictly off limits to us, we went in there to look around. He had an extensive medical library and we began looking at some of the books, becoming fascinated by illustrations of some of the body parts we were just beginning to become aware of. We found some paper and pencils and made our own drawings of some of the more intriguing pictures. We made our escape from the office with no difficulty, but the problems arose when we took the pictures to school the next day to share with some of our classmates. As we giggled over our artwork, we were caught red-handed by a stern-looking teacher. Being an extremely shy youngster, it was dreadfully painful for me to go through the ordeal of explaining our actions not just once, but three times. First to the principal, again to the doctor, and finally to my parents. Dr. Livingston was very angry and grew red in the face as he screamed at us, warning us in no uncertain terms that we must never again go into his office. My parents also issued a stern lecture about disobeying rules. The three of us were not allowed to play together for a week. Never again did I go into that office unless I was sick and it was a professional visit.

We were all somewhat reluctant to go back to the Livingston home after being so harshly reprimanded by the doctor, so for several weeks we spent more of our leisure time at Carol's house. Her home in the country had stables with horses and ponies which we enjoyed grooming and riding. We brushed them until their coats glistened, then brought them corn and apples as a special treat before we rode. Over time, I gained some confidence in handling one of the gentler horses, a brown mare that was so tall I had to climb up on a tree stump in order to get into the saddle. We rode cautiously in a large fence field, usually under the watchful eye of one of the farm hands, and fortunately never had any mishaps.

But of all our games and pastimes, playing dress-up was our favorite. The magic of wearing our mothers' clothes, shoes and make-up transformed us into the glamorous adult women we someday hoped to be. Both Carol and Shirley's mothers were very fashion conscious and had the financial means to buy the latest styles. They had shoes with very thin high heels and open toes considered to be very sexy. My mother, on the other hand, was much more conservative and wore shoes with thicker heels designed more for comfort than fashion. Wanting to be as well dressed as my friends when we played, I sneaked a pair of Mom's shoes from her room and, with a very sharp knife, cut out the toes. Now, I was fashionable too. We played all afternoon, having tea and cookies in the breakfast room and attending an imaginary party in the library until the Livingston's housekeeper told us it was time to go home. As I

put on my own clothes, I felt a sudden sense of panic when I realized I had mutilated Mom's shoes. What to do? I couldn't put them back in her room in that condition; she just wouldn't understand. As I walked slowly toward home, my mind was racing as I tried to come up with a plan to save myself from a serious lecture or worse. I imagined my mother saying, "You know we don't have much money to spend for clothes and you've destroyed a perfectly good pair of shoes." I was devastated by the knowledge that my vanity would cause a financial burden on my family. As I neared home, I had an inspiration. Under the house was a cellar where coal was kept for winter heating, and where shelves provided storage for canned good and vegetables. Across the front of the cellar under the living room area was a crawl space about two feet high. I hid the shoes as far back in that space as I could reach, dusted myself off and went upstairs for supper. My stomach was tied up in knots. I ate very little that evening and went to bed early. For months afterward I tensed and became quite anxious each time my mother dressed up, or went into that cellar. Fortunately for me she never looked for, nor gave any indication, that she missed that particular pair of shoes. Though never forgotten, the incident faded into memory and even as an adult, I never told Mom what had happened to her shoes.

Reflecting on my childhood evokes pleasant memories of my two special friends and our exciting adventures together. Even though they always treated me as an equal, on some level I was aware of the differences in our social standing. In autumn they helped their mothers put away their summer clothes and bring out their winter things. Except for a coat and mittens, I wore the same clothes year around. Pink ballet shoes and dance classes would not be part of my life, and I would never own a horse. But even as a child, I realized the special love and respect of true friends was far more important than material possessions.

Forgiveness

Second Place, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

flows like gemmed honey
through and through
He is there, as I breathe again
He is with me as I romp in daisies
being baptized all over again
the spear-it, the spirit, The Spirit
is waking up
do people know
how easy it is to Unchain?
it took putting myself on the line
to reach this flooded moment
i want to run,
spin in circles like a child in love
with being a child, shouting:
 "No, Moses! Don't part those waters —
 She's walking on them now!"

- Becca Rossiter

The Field

She reached the field
 and lay down on her back
 like she'd always wanted to,
 twining her outstretched fingers
 into the toasting grass.
 The sun shone brilliantly against
 the slate-gray sky,
 and the trees glistened
 like wet paint on a canvas.
 She felt her spine arch over
 the curve of the earth
 and thought that
 if she weren't careful
 she might just slide backwards and
 headfirst
 into the next day.

- *Becky O'Neil*

It's that time of year again *Third Place, Poetry Contest*

it's that time of year again
 when even though it gets dark
 earlier than usual, we seem
 reluctant to turn the lights on
 and are content to live in the
 darkness
 transition turmoil tremendously
 rotating pillowcases in a vain
 attempt to escape this

- *Charles L. D'Itri*

The Pugilist at Rest

Greek boxers
fought tied to thick, gray
slabs of stone.

Face to face –
smelling rotten flesh and blood
on the other's breath;
staring at hard granite pupils
in their adversary's eyes;
unable to
scratch an itch or
reposition a numb leg –

They lashed out,
claws ripping skin
slick with blood,
with mouths clenched
savagely around sandpapered fangs,
until one became still –
his fetid breath released, and
dark crimson life smeared on
cold, immobile stone.

The sculpture
"The Pugilist at Rest"
depicts a marble man slouching.

His face –
a mass of creases and tears
that his map-like hands may have
folded from a blank page,
hides sunken limestone eyes, that,
among the Trojan wars and assorted massacres,
become suddenly alert to a
deep voice echoing in his solid head
intoning, "It's time to go, champ,
one more round for immortality!"

Raising a
scarred eyebrow sagely – looking older than
stone – the pugilist
shifts his oak-like, stylized legs,
knowing they will soon be numb,
abandoned to the
lashing of map-like hands and
new wounds that heal too slowly.

Like this morning, I
awoke to the
angry hornet stings of my alarm, with
sun biting my blurred eyes.

Outside my winter's den
a low voice whispered to me.
Suddenly alert, glancing to the
scarred slab of my door,
a chill bristled my skin –
I could smell
rotten apples and car exhaust. Sighing –
merely to lay my head down again! – but
bound
to place my feet
on the ground,
shifting from left to right,
attempting to regain a
concrete sense of
my task.

- Matt Glaviano

Recovery

Flushed spot on each hollow cheek
eyes two stars in black pits—
guilty as a schoolgirl caught in a tryst.
Licking Ben & Jerry's dripping
down skeletal fingers
taste exploding on craving tongue
like long-forgotten fireworks.
Body wasted frail by willful denial
tensing in cathartic ecstasy.
She would say it but
the ice cream coats her throat.
She has chosen to live.

- *Kristin Kauffman*

Mapping Me

I know now.

You are the legend to the map of my life!

You Lin, you Hattie, you Martha, you Melinda

and you the names I do not know.

Each story that buries itself deep in
every wrinkle and crevice on your body.

Each pain that tip-toes like a child

into a secret hiding place, not meant to be found.

The many lessons learned and seared into your brain.

All the children born and raised in love and marriage,

all the babies who slipped away into the land of Canaan,

not meant to live in our world, but remaining a point on your map.

I know some of the chronicles in your life.

The soft breezy ones that make me smile as I do in the summer sun and

the hard frozen ones that pierce my heart like a sliver of ice.

All of this screams in many voices to be part of my map,

to create my life in the path of yours.

I do not have a choice,

you told me before, I know.

I must confess to you.

I am thankful for the wrinkles, the smiles,

the shapes of your body that creep into mine.

The living and the dead,

the born and unborn.

The worn bodies of suffering and joy,

who answer and create questions in my ripening mind.

I am thankful for you.

For you, my private cartographer.

- Angela Grandstaff

Lingering

She sits
alone,
cross-legged on a bench
sucking her cigarette as though it were a lover's lips,
inhaling a bit of Heaven's memory
and then reluctantly exhaling him
into the twilight.

The cigarette lingers
between her fingers and her mouth,
as she loses herself in memories
of his lips,
his breath,
his tongue.

She closes her eyes,
until her ex-lover's lips are replaced
by the scorching heat of her spent cigarette,
which,
never knowing his gentle kiss,
keeps track of time,
and drags her back into the present.

- Ellen Beversluis

SWM*First Place, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest*

SWM: Sensitive yet wrathful omnipotent being seeks all for worship.
Prior relationships can complicate, but can be overcome. Will answer all
serious inquiries and appear in parking lot puddles at random.

- *Chris Smith*

Meat on Bones

by Anthony Fulton

I have the body of a twelve-year-old boy. I do. If I suck in my breath you can count my ribs. I have a friend who jokes that I could have been an extra in *Schindler's List*. That's the type of ridicule I've endured over the past twenty years. Being skinny in high school had kids introducing my face to more lockers than I care to remember. Sophomore year ended with three football players throwing me down the stairs. "He's lighter than the ball, coach should let us play with him," one stuttered through the gap in his teeth. Well, that's what I think he said. After all, I was plummeting through the air at the moment.

I landed okay — nothing two stitches to the forehead couldn't handle. My doctor, a nice Puerto Rican man, suggested an additional prescription. "Get meat on bones," he said, showing his gold tooth. As that summer began, the summer of 1994 that is, I decided to follow his advice. It wasn't because he was my doctor, but I didn't want my ass kicked as a junior. I vowed to myself that night that I would "get meat on bones" before school started in September. Determined to put so much meat on my bones that my bones would turn to meat, my summer of potential obesity began.

I daydreamed what the first day of junior year would be like. The walls would shake; lockers would bend like spoons, as my 500 pound self thundered down the halls. My peers would be in terror of my identity. I would throw freshmen down steps like apples and oranges. I knew it was my destiny to become obese.

First of all I have a heavy older brother. When we were younger I called him "Chubby, or "Tubby." When he became a teenager and grew long hair and a beard I called him, "Fat Jesus." Anyway, my mother always told me not to make fun of him, because kids who are skinny at a young age grow up fat. She also said kids, like my brother, who are fat, grow up to slim down. With my mother's advice I knew Mother Nature would swing down and slap some lard on me.

The second reason I knew of my fat destiny, was my last name, Fulton. It's a good fat name. All fat kids have to have a fat name, like "lard ass," or "chunk monster," or "blubber cakes." All famous fat people have fat names too, like Fat Albert, William "Refrigerator" Perry, and Chunk, the fat kid from the movie, *The Goonies*. My name, Fulton could be changed many ways to give me a famous fat name. Anthony the Ful-Ton, or Anthony weighs a Ful-Ton, are both very good. My favorite is still, Anthony "The full ton of fun" Fulton.

One could say I was trying to live up to the family name. My parents weren't very proud of all this. Actually, they were frightened more than anything. They didn't approve of my plan to lie around the house eating

nothing but fattening Hostess products all summer. When I did leave the house it was to buy oversized T-shirts of The Beatles, Pearl Jam, and Nirvana. I was going to be fat, but that didn't mean I couldn't be hip.

If you're skinny and ever shop in the "plus sizes section" of department stores, I have to warn you, you won't get a warm welcome. While I shopped for XXXL flannel shirts and size 42 jeans other hefty customers gave me dirty looks. One guy even shoved me out of the way as I was looking at a flower speckled muumuu. I got the vibe that they thought I was mocking them. But, under my exposed ribcage I was a porker with several rolls of fat. The store clerk didn't quite take to me buying all these big clothes either. He scratched his head as my size 28 waist swam in a sea of size 40 jeans. He only sighed a few times as I asked him if he wanted to watch me eat twenty Cinnabuns in the mall's food court.

By the middle of June I had the clothes, the name, and the drive to be fat, but one thing was missing. That was the weight itself. Upon stepping on the bathroom scale I was a feathery 126 pounds. Needless to say I was a little shocked. I figured I'd just have to eat more while I still had two months left. That's when I broke out the big guns. Salad dressings! I found that most salad dressings are very high in fat, particularly Ranch. In my mother's kitchen I concocted high fat treats for my now eight meals a day. I combined my steady diet of Hostess cakes with salad dressings. The recipe is easy.

Take 1 Hostess cake, Twinkie, Snowballs (doesn't matter). Put the cake in a bowl. Take a bottle of salad dressing and pour in bowl until cake is submerged. Put a cherry on top (optional). Get a spoon and enjoy.

Here are some of my favorites: Buttermilk Ranch, Twinkies Blue Cheese Snowballs, Thousand Island Cupcakes, Sweet and Sour Zingers.

After eating one of these delectable treats make sure not to do anything physical, like football. I found it best to do nothing for at least two hours. While these cakes may be tasty they'll leave you feeling like you're about to give birth to a small automobile. It's also not best to lie down in bed or on a couch. What I usually did was sit in a recliner; it's half bed, half chair. This is good because your head should be slightly elevated. You don't want to choke on your own vomit like Jimi Hendrix did. Sit in a recliner, and watch reruns of *Cheers* and *Who's the Boss*. This will keep you up and laughing so you won't get bored and doze off. Don't laugh too hard though, because that burns a lot of calories.

Some people will admire you for this type of diet, while some will be scared for your life. In my instance, my friends thought it was cool, while my parents feared for my health. It was now the first week of July and I was about 132 pounds. My diet was starting to work, plus the big 4th of July family picnic helped too. It was around this time my parents

decided to get me out of the house. I was fifteen, too young to get a job, but not too old for summer camp. My parents informed me I was already signed up, and I was to leave that following Sunday. I panicked.

"Fat camp!" I screamed, "You're sending me to fat camp?"

"No," my mom replied, "we're not sending you to any fat camp, it's just regular camp. You have to be fat to go to a fat camp."

Fat camp or no fat camp, it was still camp. That was bad news. I would be taken from my diet and my days of sleeping until two in the afternoon. I would now be subjected to three skimpy meals a day, and afternoons of soccer and fun in the sun. As a consolation my parents convinced my best friend Lance, to go with me. I was happy to hear this, but warned Lance he might witness his friend crumble like a dainty little cookie.

On that following Sunday morning Lance and I piled into my parents' gold Buick. My dad drove about thirty-five miles an hour on the Pennsylvania turnpike all the way to Camp Allegheny. (It was torture.) I thought my parents would at least stop at McDonald's and treat us to a last meal, but that didn't happen. We stopped at what I believe to be the dirtiest eating establishment in the world. It was called Ruthie's Diner. It's tucked away in small hole on the side of the turnpike in western Pennsylvania. At Ruthie's my parents got some sort of meat product smothered in puke green gravy. Lance and I got hamburgers, which were bloody. We didn't even look at them, let alone eat them. We asked our waitress, Billie, for Pepsi, but she said they didn't have it. Instead, Billie brought us Ruthie's own soda called Popsi Pop. Popsi Pop is like Pepsi, with a backbone. Popsi Pop tastes like a hearty combination of A1 Steak Sauce and battery acid. It was strong stuff. It didn't put any pounds on me, but put hair on my chest, so much that now I'm a damn gorilla.

Lance and I spent the remainder of our Ruthie's stay in the restroom buying condoms from the machine. We filled them up with water in the sink. They didn't break so well, which is probably good for someone who wants to have sex with them. But they made lousy water balloons, so we left. Camp was our next stop. Camp Allegheny sits on top of a mountain surrounded by farms and one adult bookshop called "Naughty Pleasures." It's your typical camp with tennis courts, gift shop, and cabins named Pine, Oak, and Cedar. The cafeteria is neat because there is a huge tree growing right through the center of it. The food, however, is not neat. The first night they served us pizza, or as I like to say, cinder blocks. Our counselor's name was Noah. He was your typical college pretty boy who was a born again Christian. He sucked up to all the old people. He always sat at the head of our table with his legs crossed, sipping coffee.

"Eat your pizza, guys. God made that for you," Noah scolded.

The only guys at our table who would eat the pizza were these two

brothers, Norm and Alan. These rednecks were possibly the largest humans I've ever seen. They were both fifteen, but must have weighed 300 pounds each. Alan told me they both just finished the eighth grade. You could say they were products of inbreeding. As my stomach growled I watched them gleefully consume those cinder blocks. I felt ashamed that I couldn't be like them. All the guys admired Alan because he looked like a pregnant man. Norm was feared because it was only Sunday night, and he had already beaten one kid up and broken a tetherball and a swing.

Back at the cabin Noah searched all of our suitcases looking for contraband such as candy and soda. He took my stash of Twizzlers and said, "God doesn't approve of you having Twizzlers." I bet that son of bitch ate them, I swear. I sat on my bunk in my size 40 pants thinking about the small disgusting portions they gave us in the cafeteria. With soccer and all the other activities between meals I was bound to lose weight. Goodbye Hostess salad dressing cakes, hello scurvy.

The next day at swim time I got more and more depressed watching Norm and Alan trying to drown little kids. I burned in the grass beside the pool in my XXXL flannel shirt. Lance and I really didn't know how to dress back then. It was July and we're sitting by the pool in long sleeves, and black baseball hats. But if it weren't for those clothes we wouldn't have become the most envied kids at camp. I say this because at that moment we were approached by curves, I mean girls. Two bikini clad girls plopped down in the grass in front of us. They were both tan, and glistening in the sun. One had curly black hair and big pools for eyes. I was drawn to them. The other had straight brown hair and wet pouty lips. She had the longest legs I've ever seen. I swear to this day that those two girls are the most beautiful girls in the world.

"I'm Jamie, this is Merideth," the curly haired one said. She seemed to like to talk.

"I'm...I'm...I'm...Anthony, I think. This is Lance or something, I'm not sure."

It took me almost five minutes to form that sentence. At least I talked to them. Lance just stared at their boobs. We were both like cartoon characters whose eyes bulge out, and have smoke puffing out of their collars when they see a pretty girl. Jamie and Merideth were very talkative, which was good, because our speech patterns regressed to that of two four-year-olds.

"Take off your hat," Merideth said, slapping Lance on the knee, "I wanna see your hair."

"Okay," Lance said, peeling off his Metallica hat.

His long blond hair flopped out and swung down in its place over the left side of his face. Lance had shoulder length hair on the left side, while his right side was completely bald. It sounds dumb, and it was, but somehow Lance pulled it off.

"Wow! Your hair is weird, but cool," Merideth said. She scooted over to sit by Lance and play with it.

"Your turn," Jamie said to me.

"Sure," I said, slowly taking off my STP hat. My hair blew all around obscuring my vision and sticking to my wet lips. My hair was long by this time. This is what happens when you sit on the couch for months on end trying to get fat.

"Ooh, your hair is long on both sides, you're cute," Jamie said, as she got up to braid my hair.

With that bizarre ritual, Lance and I had secured what is called a "camp fling." Other guys were jealous, including Norm and Alan. They were puzzled how we got girls by just sitting by the pool, while they unsuccessfully tried to impress girls by stepping on little kids. Even Noah secretly uttered to me "God would approve of those hot chicks." During meals little kids fought each other just to take up our trays. They worshipped us. I always broke up the fights, letting them all have a turn at the privilege. The best benefits were holding hands outside the camp store, kissing late nights in the woods, and just hanging out with girls with nice smelling hair and lip gloss.

"How the hell did we do this?" Lance asked me once in the bunk.

"I have no idea, but I'm not asking questions. Jamie was my first kiss if you exclude the time in kindergarten me and Jill Kowalsic touched tongues to see what would happen," I said.

My theory is that these preppy stylish girls, who were probably popular in high school, decided to cross the tracks with two long haired musicians just for kicks. But, we actually talked with them around campfires and ended up friends.

"Why did you come to camp?" Jamie asked me, around the campfire on the last night of camp.

"My parents made me," I said, "I was sitting around the house trying to get fat, so they sent me here, I'm glad though."

"Fat!" She had a weird look on her face. "You don't need to be fat, I like how you look. That's why I came over to you by the pool."

I looked at Lance who was kissing Merideth. Because of her long legs she was taller, so he was standing on a log to reach her lips. Jamie and I laughed, threw some twigs at them, and then kissed for what seemed hours.

Our goodbye was pretty tearful the next day. Jamie slipped her address into my pocket as we shared a light kiss while my mom packed the car. When I got home I taped that scrap of an envelope with her address on it to my wall. It was the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes in the morning. Strangely, I never sent letters to her, and she never sent any to me. I think those weeks at camp were just too perfect that I didn't want to screw them up by writing a bunch of sappy letters. I bet she felt the same way. Lance and I lost all contact with our camp girls.

The day after I got home from camp I took a walk. I was restless, because school would start the very next day. It was a dreary wet Sunday. It was the sign of my impending doom. I was still skinny. I was going to get beat on bad by the seniors. They didn't care if I hooked up with a hot girl over the summer. They didn't know her. It started to rain so I trudged up the hill to the mall.

My shoes squeaked on the marble floors past the dollar store and the religious gift shop. I decided to kill some time in the record store. There was a hoard of teens hanging out in front. I almost turned away until one yelled, "Dude! Come here." It was this long haired kid named Phill who rode my bus. I wondered why he wanted to talk to me, but then I realized when I looked at my reflection in the store window. I had long hair, big pants, and a Beatles shirt on. I looked just like him. I unconsciously became part of the grunge, or alternative fad of the mid-nineties. Bands like Pearl Jam and Nirvana were worshipped by disgruntled teens everywhere. Phill shook my hand and looked me up and down when I walked over. The others he was with did the same thing. They were all in flannels, ripped jeans, and dyed scruffy hair, even the girls.

They gave me the nod of approval, almost as if they said, "We got a new member to the freak club."

"See ya tomorrow in school, man," Phill said.

Through another bizarre ritual I found myself inducted into a whole different group of friends. Lance and I fell in nicely. When school started the next day I was skinny, but trotted through the halls with Phill and the grunge gang. People just suddenly left me alone, I think because they were scared. Occasionally, I'd hear jocks whisper behind my back how weird they thought I looked. I didn't mind that, because it's a hell of a lot better than being thrown down steps. I was happy looking like that too. It was better than the dress clothes my mom set out for me every morning all the years before.

I never wanted to be fat anymore after that. I'm still skinny. In fact, at the beginning of my last year at college my left lung collapsed. The doctor said the spontaneous collapse is typical in very skinny guys. It hurt, sure, but my lung rose back up on its own a few weeks later. I went home to rest, even though my parents were moving to a new house on the other side of Pennsylvania. During the move they convinced me to gain weight so my lung wouldn't collapse again.

I agreed with them until I saw my new next door neighbors walking up the driveway. A short fat woman with streaks of gray in her hair rang the doorbell. She was carrying a Jell-O tray. Behind her stood her thick khaki-wearing husband. Standing a few feet behind them both was an unbelievable sight. It was Jamie, my camp girl, who I haven't seen in five years. I knew it was her when I saw those deep eyes. I think she got prettier, if that's possible. Her pale hands held back those restless curly locks. I bet both of my lungs deflated at that moment. Sometimes, skinny guys can get all the luck.

A Courthouse Affair

Having been unsure of exactly how
these things were supposed to work,
John called down to the courthouse
regarding the plans.

Can you tell me the cost, ma'am?

The secretary, being forty five and
surviving her own divorce,
was roughly flat-toned.

Sixty-four dollars and twenty-six cents, with tax.

Tax? Tax for a wedding?

John, in his love-filled delirium,
was surprised to have reality smack
his brain again.

Would you rather pay a couple-a-thousand, sir?
For a big wedding?

The secretary was bitter, recalling her own
blossom-strewn affair, considering that
money wasted now.

Sixty-four definitely sounds a lot better.

John chuckled and imagined telling Susan
that evening, proud to have saved
them so much trouble.

Will that be all, sir?

The secretary no longer wished to
suffer the delighted tones of his voice
or the fierce memories he loosened.

Yes, ma'am. Thank you very much.

Mmm. G'dbye.

John smiled to himself.
The secretary reached for her lighter.

Carousel Horses

Their reddened lips curled back
 in mock fun
 They glide in circles,
 in three-four time
 Creaking a bit, and painfully slow
 enough for pictures.

Ridiculous
 as dulled, glazed paint chips fall,
 plastic rumps split,
 bleed dust
 And candied eyes cloud over
 with glaucoma
 from a century of sticky fingers.
 painted lashes weary
 of being pretty,
 dumb—

In circles they go,
 Equine mannequins in
 marchless, chuffless
 parade
 Lifted, dropped, still
 Shocked
 to find themselves straddling
 metal poles.

And the drum pulse slows,
 as this riding generation giggles for
 MORE!
 and cackles
 Still spanking the load-bearers on,

"Who won?"

- Sara Sowers

Happenstance

Within the confides
of my mind's walls,
a sometimes inhospitable
asylum,
I've known stranger things
than these
occurrences.
We write them off to fate
and pass ourselves along
to the next taker.

Dead set in our ways
we disregard the bizarre
and put to bed the idea
that things outside our box
can take place.

And as much as we hope
we dream
And as much as we dream
we pray
that someday soon
we will wake up and find
ourselves
lying next to someone
whose limbs
aren't quite as cold as ours.
Whose problems are just
a little worse
which in turn diminishes our
own sense
of instability.

And this is what gets us by.
The idea that one day
we will find
that one person
that takes control
yet still
lets us feel victorious.

And we cling to that,
our knuckles bloody,
teeth gritted.

Sometimes we jump
sometimes we fall
but somehow we always end up
where we wanted to be.

-Beth Gartland

A Dream Washed Ashore

A dream washed ashore with me today;
I feel its pull, soft but constant.
A waterlogged swimmer,
I drip with sleep.

My hair brushes my cheek,
seaweed-light,
and a half-remembered sensation
trickles along my bones.
My ears whisper with my ocean pulse;
I think how hard the moon must pull
on blood.

Pink and scalloped,
I rested on the sand;
a stranger came
and placed his ear against my seashell heart.
My breath came in waves;
I heard my own dim echoes,
and woke tasting salt.

From an unlit shore,
a guitar played,
music floating across rippled water;
the sound of changing chords was
a dreamless sigh,
a weightless
kiss.

- *Becky O'Neil*

Endings

Second Place, Short Story Contest

by Tom Steckert

The faded sign over the door said, "John Penfold & Sons, Booksellers." Situated in the oldest part of downtown Brookston, it appeared to be exactly the kind of place I'd been looking for. Some might have called it quaint; I considered it promising.

Inside, behind an ancient oaken desk, was a not-quite-elderly man who looked up from the book he was reading and smiled warmly at me as I crossed his threshold. "Good afternoon," he greeted me.

"Good afternoon," I replied. "Have I the privilege of addressing Mr. Penfold or one of his sons?" Somehow the setting seemed to call for the more formal speech of a bygone era.

"Since it's only me here these days, you're correct either way. John Penfold was my father," he said amiably. "Thomas Penfold at your service. What can I do for you?"

"Well, for now I think I'd just like to look around. I'm a bibliophile of sorts, and I enjoy browsing through old books like you have here. I'm new to town, and I was hoping to find a shop something like this."

As I spoke, my gaze wandered around the premises. Near the front were some recent publications – best sellers, mass market paperbacks, the odd reference book – but the majority of the shop held nothing but stacks and stacks and stacks of old books. No magazines, no calendars, no CD's, no coffee shop. Just books. I felt like I'd died and gone to literary heaven; it wouldn't have surprised me to see Poe, Twain or Dickens pop out from behind a row of shelves.

"You're most certainly welcome to browse. Just give me a yell if you need some help." He smiled again – the kind of smile that made me feel like I'd known him all my life – and went back to his reading. At second glance, I decided that he was older than I had originally supposed; he appeared to be around eighty, but with a clarity of eye and a briskness of manner that made him seem twenty or thirty years younger. I liked Mr. Thomas Penfold at once.

I began a slow meander around the shop, hardly knowing where to begin. There seemed to be neither rhyme nor reason to the stacks of books, but that was fine with me; if you have a map, it's no fun being an explorer.

Telling Penfold I was a bibliophile was a bit of an exaggeration. While I do love books – the literal meaning of bibliophile – I'm not especially interested in first editions, even though I could well afford to collect them; the condition of a book doesn't much matter to me so long as it's readable; I'm not particularly well-versed in literature, having opted for the business world over liberal arts; and I'm not at all fussy about what kinds of books I read. What I was looking for in Penfold's

establishment was the different, the obscure, the unusual. His shop, with piles upon piles of old, dusty volumes, was a kind of dream store for me. I had all afternoon; I browsed, fascinated.

I emerged about two hours later, dust all over me, having barely scratched the surface of Thomas Penfold's stock-in-trade, and clutching a tattered copy of a book entitled *The House on Goodwin Street* by one Julia Randall. I presented it to Thomas Penfold, who thought for a few moments, stroking his snow-white hair, and finally charged me a small fraction of what I had expected to pay.

"I'll be back," I called to him as I reluctantly took my leave.

"I expect you will," he said prophetically as he smiled me out the door.

I had only very recently moved my business to Brookston, having concluded that in this day of computer networks, there was no need for a mid-Manhattan address. In consequence, I had not yet acquired suitable permanent lodgings. That evening, upon returning to the apartment I had leased as a temporary residence, I retired to an armchair, a snifter of old brandy at my side, and began reading my latest acquisition.

Being rather tired – unaccustomed surroundings, such as the apartment, make me a very light sleeper – I told myself that I'd stop after, say, fifty pages, but I quickly found the book drawing me in completely. It was a psychological thriller, something on the order of Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*, and very nearly as well-written, about a woman who slowly but surely goes mad with thinking that the house she and her husband have moved into is out to kill her. The descriptive passages where the house "comes alive" were mesmerizing, and before I knew it, the clock had long since passed midnight. No matter; I wasn't about to put the book down. I was hooked, and I'd see it through to the end. I continued reading, completely engrossed and oblivious to my surroundings, turning pages like a man possessed.

The story built steadily to a heart-pounding climax, where the woman teeters on a window ledge, threatening to throw herself out of a high attic window; I expectantly looked to the next page and found... nothing.

There were no more pages; they had apparently been lost. Without them, I'd never get to finish the story, never know what happened. I felt empty, beyond mere disappointment. Disgusted, I threw the book down and went to bed, but being all worked up over the story, I tossed and turned for what seemed like most of what night remained; the little sleep I did get was disturbed by uneasy dreams, punctuated by the all-too-real shrill of the alarm clock.

The next day, feeling upset with the world, very short on sleep, and generally ill-tempered, I instructed my secretary not to disturb me – no problem, she told me; given my mood, no one, including her, would

want to be around me. I closed my office door, fired up my computer, consulted the web and searched all of the usual used book databases, and every other reference I could find, to no avail. No *House on Goodwin Street*, no Julia Randall. The book itself had been no help; there was no publisher's imprint, no copyright or date. It had apparently been a vanity edition of some sort. I could think of no other way of tracing it.

My mood not much improved, I stormed out of the office – my staff could run the business better without me around, anyway – and headed straight for Thomas Penfold's shop as speedily as my Beemer and local law enforcement would permit. I found Penfold seated at the same desk, in the same position, as I had originally found him; had he not been wearing a different shirt I might have suspected he'd spent the entire night there.

He smiled that smile. "Back so soon?"

"Yes, but not for the reason you may think." I went on to describe my predicament.

"I am most sorry to hear that! I do apologize. I shall, of course, be happy to refund your money."

"Hang it all, Mr. Penfold, that's not it at all. I don't care about the money! I've got to finish reading this story! Isn't there anything you can do?"

He seemed genuinely distressed. "I don't really know what else I can do, Mr. ..."

"Perkins. Gilman Perkins. Please call me Gil." Finally bringing my irritation under control, I offered my hand, which he shook firmly. I added somewhat sheepishly, "And I should apologize to you for the way I barged in here just now."

"Not at all, not at all! I just wish there was something I could do. But you've stated the problem most clearly; there just isn't anything to go on. Let me think for a few moments."

Penfold sat back down in his chair, rubbing his white mustache in reflection. After several minutes, he said, "There's only one possibility I can think of. About five years ago, I bought a bunch of books at an estate sale – an auction. Picked them up for a song. Your book might have been in that lot. If so, and if it really was a vanity publication, the author might have been local. Other than that, though, I just can't think of anything that would help. I am sorry." He shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

Penfold offered me a refund once again, but I smiled and declined. I wanted to finish reading the damned book, not get rid of it! I left after telling him not to worry, that I'd be back.

Since it was a beautiful autumn day, I decided to take a drive around town, do a little exploring, try to improve my state of mind a bit. What with getting the offices set up, I'd been too busy to acquaint myself with my new surroundings. Brookston was a typical small Midwestern city, which of course was why I'd chosen it; I was tired of big cities, and so were my staff. I started the car and soon found myself in a fascinating

part of town.

I drove down a tree-lined boulevard. The houses here were old, dating back to when houses were built to last a hundred years or more. Most were well kept, and of a size to indicate families with money, but a few were beginning to appear run-down. Then I saw something that made me stop right in the middle of the road.

A street sign.

Goodwin Street.

I couldn't resist; I turned at once onto Goodwin Street and began a slow drive. I was on the outskirts of town now, and the houses were situated farther and farther apart. They also seemed to become older and older. All in all, a gloomy sort of place, but at the same time rather spell-binding. For the second time in as many days, I felt as if I'd stepped back in time; first Penfold's shop, now this.

It appeared that I had just about run out of town to explore, and I was ready to turn back, when I saw it. I didn't need to look at the address; I'd spent enough time reading about it the night before. This was the house on Goodwin Street. There could be no mistake; I'd have recognized it anywhere.

The house was surrounded by a rather intimidating fence, but in the front yard was a "for sale" sign from a local real estate agency. I leapt back in my car and headed directly for it.

The agency turned out to have a staff of one – owner, agent and secretary – named Jenny Armistead. She was an attractive woman, who appeared to be in her early thirties, in the midst of a small, cluttered office. I took all that in with the back of my mind, as the front part was preoccupied with other matters.

"Good morning. Is there something I can help you with?" she said with a pleasant smile.

"Yes, indeed. I'm new to town, happened to be driving around and saw a property you have listed – 1268 Goodwin Street. What can you tell me about it?"

She chuckled and said, "Oh, that old place! There isn't much to tell. It's been vacant for quite a while – at least five years. The owner passed away and left it to his son, who lives in London. The son doesn't want it, and asked me to list it, but I can't imagine anyone buying it with the restrictions in the deed."

"What sort of restrictions?"

"Well, they stipulate that the house must not be torn down, and that the grounds must remain essentially undisturbed. As you probably noticed, the house is rather old, and would need a lot of renovation just to be livable."

I said, with more than a little truth, "I'm somewhat interested in the house, and I wouldn't have a problem with renovating it. Would you like to show it to me?"

"Certainly. When would be convenient?" She pulled out an appointment book.

"Today, if at all possible." That house was dominating my thoughts; I didn't want to have to wait any longer than absolutely necessary.

"I'm sorry, I have a closing shortly that will probably last the rest of the day. How about tomorrow?"

"I'd rather not wait, if it can be avoided."

She looked at me curiously – not without cause – and considered for just a moment. "Well, I don't see why I can't just loan you the key, if you're willing to look it over by yourself. It's not like there are any valuables inside." I must have looked like a respectable sort.

"That would be more than satisfactory, thank you."

I accepted the key from Jenny Armistead; filed away, for future reference, the thought that I ought to invite her out for dinner; and fled back to Goodwin Street.

The house looked even more massive, dark and ominous from inside the gate. I walked slowly up the flagstone path, overgrown just a bit, although someone had obviously performed minimal maintenance on the grounds. The house loomed above me; I felt strangely like I knew it. After all, I'd spent the night before reading all about it. Now the house seemed to come to life.

I put the key to use and entered, closing behind me the large, oaken door that the book's protagonist had said "sounded like a dungeon door slamming" behind her. Entered the foyer where she had said that the staircase "looked as if about to topple" onto her. Saw the now-faded wallpaper in the parlor that "seemed to reach out to strangle" her. The dining room with the serving hatch that she saw as "a guillotine."

I climbed the stairs, where she had imagined "a trapdoor opening to a bottomless abyss." Entered the bedroom with more wallpaper that here had seemed to her "like prison bars." At every turn, my footsteps echoed throughout the barren house, seeming to reverberate from every wall.

Everything was exactly as described in the book. Every last detail. The effect was quite haunting.

I climbed the narrow flight of stairs to the attic. There I looked out on what had once been the garden, that seemed to invite her "like paradise beckoning to the condemned." In the midst of long-neglected flower beds beneath the window, I saw a small stone.

Descending to the ground floor, I exited the house and walked around to the erstwhile garden. What had appeared from the attic window, far above, to be simply a decorative stone now was identifiable as a grave marker. Feeling a vague chill, perhaps a premonition – I'll never be truly certain – I walked up to the stone and knelt on one knee before it. At once I knew that my book wasn't incomplete, it was unfinished; I wasn't really surprised to see that the old, weathered grave marker bore the name of Julia Randall.

