Lights and Shadows 1977

University of North Alabama
Florence, Alabama
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1977
Lights and Shadows 1977
Light has need of darkness, for without the darkness, how should we ever know the light.

Carl Jung

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Mary Timmons

Along the ditchbanks overgrown with elder bushes and the field roads and terrace rows reclaimed by sassafras sprouts, I've seen nature and man in an endless conflict. I've watched hackberry hedge rows encroach on old cotton fields, where the black top soil had bleached to a pallid pink from overcropping. I've seen bitterweeds cover bottom pastures and gullies, when the thin cows succumbed to the cold March winds. And I've seen farmland, sucked of every nutrient until all that remained of life on the soil was stunted and distorted, gradually, but so slowly, regain its green cover when the despairing owner stopped farming to do day labor in the nearby Blue Bell factory.

Observation has taught me that once the hill farmer relaxes his efforts in the struggle with an encroaching nature, for whatever reason, nature soon obliterates his labors, leaving only dim scars to show for a lifetime of work.

Sometimes with conscious effort, man has struggled his life through to dominate the insistent force always in contention with him. One cold, green spring, Isaac from the farm down the creek came to our house, walking with a long stooping stride, to explain to my father that he had just burned over his pasture to kill the insect eggs that had survived a mild winter. In his hasty exultation over the cleansing fire, he allowed it "to get out" on the land belonging to a farmer named Cherry Jones. Isaac's voice quavered with indignation as he explained to my father how he was willing to burn off Cherry-lad's woods for him but Cherry-lad got plain mad when the fire burned across part of his land. Isaac had told Cherry-lad how a burnt-off woods always brings tender grass and fewer ticks come summer. Afterwards I saw the scourged black land Isaac had burned over for both himself and Cherry-lad. Though my father (and Cherry-lad) cursed Isaac's foolish old ways, by late summer, sage grass and sourwood sprouts again turned the land green. The pine tree bark, blackened by the fire higher than a tall man could reach, disappeared to the inner circles of the tree where other such scars from other spring fires became the hieroglyphics of man's struggle to subdue nature.

Late in June one year Sheriff Jody made his round through the countryside, more prompted by the warm fragrant day than by any desire to snatch-up wrong doers. When he stopped by our farm, he sat in the old white rocker on the front porch and as he rocked slowly, he told us about the favor he had done for us. He had killed all the young hawks and knocked feathers out of the old hawks that nested in the red oak beside the big road across the bottom. He was pleased at his ability to so favor us; we were depleted at our loss. I remember how we had watched the hawks circle the bottoms and how we had listened to their squeals, piercing and clear from heights almost impossible for the eye to see. We sneaked looks at the nests while the young were being fed and waited to see the parents push the young from their nests when they were mature enough to go forth into the world. Now there were no more red-tailed hawks to sit like majesty on the very tops of long slender pine saplings, swaying in the wind. After the carnage that littered the gravel road for weeks with blood and feathers, we never expected to see the hawks again. But last spring, from some mysterious region, the hawks returned. Once again we see them circling above the old Willis House pasture and hear their squeals from high above us and know that nature has again rejuvenated.

One September afternoon I sat astride my horse on the bluff above Cummings Creek, listening to the rude sounds of a low flying airplane. Almost simultaneously with the engine sounds came another noise—the deadly rattle among the leaves as grains of Mirex fell. That year whatever powers that be proclaimed the obliteration of the fire ants living in very scattered crumbly sand mounds about the hills of North Mississippi. In the farm literature, the presence of fire ants was treated with sudden, epidemic fierceness. They were as much a scourge as bubonic plague or Attila's huns. They had to be stomped out immediately
and decisively by inundating the entire countryside with Mirex, without regard to whatever else might be destroyed. My family protested, but were soothed by the county agricultural aristocracy housed at the courthouse, and our land was sprayed anyway. That one man with a small bag of the chemical could have dropped a few poisonous grains on each mound on his land in two hours’ time, but that solution to the problem was too easy to be considered.

As I felt the grains bounce off of my skin that day I watched a brown thrasher chase a katydid into the wild honeysuckle. Next spring when I rode through the woods, I did not see the brown thrasher, nor did I see many other birds. That spring and summer and for several after, I saw few birds, few insects, and only an occasional gray stripped salamander. The woods were strangely silent except for the coarse scraping of sawyer worms underneath the dead pine bark. But by last year, the creatures of the woods had returned—and so had the fire ants. No longer are the woods silent. Nature replenished the land.

Not long ago the Viking space craft landed on Mars. The view of Martian terrain transmitted earthward was of a wasteland, barren and bleak. What I wonder about is this: Is there a time when nature no longer en­croaches and replenishes?

First Place Essay
The Party Line
Anna Chism

Marge had walked all the way down to the pond to tell me, even though it was the very hottest part of the day in the hottest part of the year. We (the dogs and I) were down there trying to cool off, but that wasn't too easy. You couldn't hardly swim in the pond that time of year—the mud was almost as deep as the water. But I'd put on an old swimsuit I'd had since the fifth grade (and Margie had worn before that) so I could sit down, if I wanted to.

I was sitting right out in the middle of the pond, with the water up to my chin, when Margie came puffing up. She was red as a beet; and I thought at first she'd come down to cool off, too; but she didn't get in the water. She just plopped down in the grass.

"We've got to keep the stupid party line," she said. That's when I saw her face wasn't just red from the heat. She was mad, too.

"Who said?" I asked, although I really didn't care.

"The telephone office, of course. Daddy went into Pendleton to ask them this morning." She said it like I should have known already. "They said he has to have a real good reason to get a private line out here. He'd have to be a doctor or lawyer or politician or something. Just a preacher isn't enough."

"Oh," I said indifferently. "I don't see why it matters much anyway." Twenty party lines wouldn't have bothered me right then, I was in hog heaven. I'd dreamed of living in the country—with room for all the dogs and cats and white mice I wanted—all my life. One little party line wouldn't ruin my new home for me.

It was already ruined for Margie, though; the party line was just the last straw. She was already living on a gravel road, thirty miles from the nearest real town (Pendleton, where Margie and I would start to school in the fall, was only six miles away; but it didn't count.), and eighty miles from anybody she'd known for longer than a few days. But I didn't see why she was so upset over the silly telephone.

"What are you so mad about?" I asked.

"What am I so mad about?" she repeated, glaring at me like I was a two-headed cat or something. "Are you dense, Katie? We'll never be able to use the phone anymore, not with seven other families trying to use the same line!"

"Well, you don't have to be so hateful, Margie," I pouted. At thirteen, my feelings were very fragile.

"Well, you don't have to be so dumb!" she laughed, and started toward the house.

I couldn't think of a thing to say back to her, so I just started to get out of the pond and follow her back to the house. But by the time I waded through all the mud and got out on the grass, I saw I wasn't going to catch up before she got inside. So just as she reached the carport, I shouted back to her:

"Who do you think is going to call you out here, anyway?"

Margie pretended not to hear; she just kept walking. But she fumbled with the back door latch for a long time before she finally got it open; and I knew she was crying.

It wasn't odd for her to be crying. Margie cried a lot that first summer after we moved—mostly at night after we were in bed. I didn't cry much; but I did do a lot of pretending. I'd pretend I was fixing to call one of my friends; and I'd go pick up the phone to dial. Of course, somebody else was always talking; so I'd stand there and listen, pretending I was just waiting on them to get off.

I had a hard time explaining what I was doing, though, when Mom caught me standing in the hall, not saying a word, with the phone at my ear—that is, until school started that fall; then, I had a whole gang of reasons. I had twice as many friends at Pendleton High School than I'd ever had at the city school I went to before.

"Katie, don't be listening in on someone's private conservation," Mom would say when she caught me silently holding the phone to my ear.

"The Family Forms the Foundation in a Free Society"
Gerald Cannon
14"x10½"
Honorable Mention—Printmaking
“Oh, I’m not,” I’d answer innocently. “I’m just waiting for Mrs. McGuire to hush talking so I can call Rhonda.”

“Well, okay.” Mom would smile indulgently. She was glad I’d made plenty of friends at the new school. I know she wished Margie had done the same.

Margie didn’t have any friends at P.H.S.—not any girlfriends, anyway. She did have a boyfriend named Mitch, but Mom and Dad weren’t too happy about him. I wasn’t either, I didn’t see how Margie could stand him.

For one thing, he wouldn’t even talk to us—not me, or Mom or Dad, either. When he and Margie went out on a date, he just appeared at the front door. Margie would always be waiting, and they’d be gone before Mom could even tell them to “be careful.”

Margie would always look so pretty—her hair long and shiny and turned up just enough on her shoulders; and Mitch always looked so black—that’s the only way I can describe him. He had black hair and he always wore a black leather jacket. He was almost invisible at night!

I don’t know why Mitch never said anything to us. I know he could talk, because he used to keep Margie on the phone half the time. It got to be a real sore spot with my parents, too. Finally, Dad made a rule that we could only use the phone for ten minutes at a time; and even then, we had to have a good reason for calling. It didn’t seem fair to me at all.

Darlene Starkey didn’t think it was fair, either. I’d ridden my bicycle down to her house (She lived just down the road from us.) to see if I could ride home with her after the show that night (It was Friday; and everybody at Pendleton went to the show on Friday nights.).

“Why didn’t you call and ask me?” Darlene had asked.

“You’ve got to have a writ of habeas corpus to use the phone at our house,” I told her. I wasn’t sure she knew what a writ of habeas corpus was, though; so that’s when I explained about Mitch and all.

Actually, I could have used the phone if I’d asked; but I thought Darlene’s brother might be home. Darlene might be a little dumb, but she sure did have a cute brother.

I didn’t really think I’d be needing a ride home, either. Margie was supposed to go to a party for all the seniors, after she let me off at the Ritz theatre; and all the senior girls were invited to spend the night at Janet Tarpley’s house on the lake and go swimming all day Saturday; but I was pretty sure Margie wouldn’t stay. However, I had offered graciously to ride down to Darlene’s and see if I could come home with her and her brother.

“I’m sure David Starkey would be just thrilled to have another giggling eighth-grader in his car all the way home,” Margie had said. But for once, I’d ignored her sarcasm.

I’d been disappointed to find Darlene alone. But when I told her what I wanted, she’d said she was spending the night with Relda Tippet; but she knew David wouldn’t mind me riding back with him. I could meet him at the Tasty-freeze after the show.

“Are you sure David won’t mind?” I asked, for about the tenth time.

“No, it’s okay,” Darlene assured me.

The real question was how I was going to get Margie to stay at the Tarpley’s. That was going to take some doing.

Do you watch the stories?” asked Darlene.

“Huh?” I’d been so busy conspiring with myself, I’d forgotten about her. “Oh . . . the stories? No, not very often. They’re nothing compared to the party line, anyway.”

“The party line?”

“Yea, you ought to hear Arvel Turner courting Mrs. Ballard over the phone. And you know when Nadine Jeffries was expecting her baby? She called up Linda Fay Murphy every afternoon; and they talked about having babies and stuff for a while.”
“Really?” asked Darlene, her eyes widening. “That does sound better than the stories. I don’t guess you get to listen to them anymore, though, do you?”

“No, I don’t—thanks to Mitch. It’s been a month or more since I heard them. I wouldn’t even know what was happening now.”

“You reckon not?” asked Darlene. There was a funny gleam in her eyes. “I don’t know—it might be just like the stories. You can miss them for a whole year and then come right back and pick up where you left off.”

“Oh, I don’t think it would be like that, Darlene.” I tried to sound discouraging.

“We could try,” she said excitedly. “Come on—the phone’s in here.” She started toward the kitchen.

“Uh . . . we better not, Darlene, your momma might get mad.” I was stalling. I knew her mother was at work. But I just didn’t feel right. I’d always told myself, like I told my mother, that I really was going to call Rhonda (or whoever). I never just picked up the phone intending to listen in.

“She won’t know. She don’t get home from Sherman’s ‘til 5:30. Come on.” Darlene picked the receiver up gently and held her hand over the mouthpiece. She listened intently for a minute, a slight frown between her eyes.

“Who is it?” I mouthed the words at her. She shook her head and listened for another moment. Finally she held the receiver out to me, her hand still over the mouthpiece.

“It’s some man,” she whispered, “but it don’t sound like Arvel Turner. See if you know who it is.”

I felt just a twinge of conscience as I put the receiver to my ear.

“Well, don’t you like my idea?” asked an unfamiliar male voice. It was so demanding that I almost answered him myself. But the other party made no reply, and the ominous male voice continued:

“I’m not going to stand here all day while you make up your mind. If you’re going with me, I’ll have to make a few arrangements.”

Still no reply. Darlene asked me what was going on, but I motioned her to silence. The owner of the only voice I’d heard sighed deeply. He was obviously becoming impatient.

“Margie!” said the voice. I almost dropped the phone. It was so loud, I don’t know how Darlene kept from hearing it.

“I just don’t know, Mitch,” replied my sister’s familiar voice. It was tight and strained-sounding, but still recognizable; and it sent a chill down my spine.

“Why not?”

“What would I tell my parents?”

“What you just told me, of course, that you had decided to spend the night at the Tarpley’s and go swimming all day Saturday.”

“But I really haven’t made up my mind, yet.”

“Listen, Margie, if you don’t want to go with me, just say so. I can find somebody else who does.”

“It’s not that, Mitch,” Margie said quickly. “It’s just that . . . ”

“Just that what?”

“Well . . . , where would I stay?”

“I told you I’d make arrangements.”

“I don’t know . . . I’m afraid my parents wouldn’t like this idea at all.”

“So? What they don’t know don’t hurt them.”

There was another long pause. Darlene was sitting at the table, staring at me. She’s already asked several times to have the phone, but I acted like I didn’t see her. I had no idea what I am going to tell her when I got off the phone.

“Margie!” Mitch’s voice boomed out impatiently. I felt sure Darlene heard it that time.

“I just don’t know, Mitch.” Margie sounded like she was fixing to cry. “But don’t be mad at me,” she pleaded. “Please?”

All of a sudden, I saw Darlene jump up and whirl around like she’d sat down on a bee. I’d already noticed that her eyes weren’t boring holes through me anymore—she’s been training them instead on some unlucky something she saw out the kitchen window. I
wasn't sure what had her so excited, but the next thing I knew, she'd rushed over and grabbed the phone out of my hands.

At first I thought she was mad because I had hogged the phone; but she just put the receiver back real easy and motioned me to follow her into the living room.

"Sorry about that," said Darlene, as she closed the door to the kitchen, "but I had to. Momma just drove up in the carport." She listened at the door for a second, and then turned around.

I held my breath. I knew what she was going to say next, and I should have headed her off in another direction, but my mind was blank.

"Who were you listening to?" she said, her eyes glittering with excitement. It was impossible for me to think with her staring at me.

"Huh?" I said finally.

"Who was it on the phone?" she repeated urgently. A car door slammed outside.

"Oh, uh . . . did you say your mother's home?" I said weakly. She nodded; and I thought of telling her she'd better go help her mother fix supper. Then a thought finally struck me.

"Oh, no," I said, looking frantically around the room. "What time is it?"

"I don't know," said Darlene. Her face had returned to its normal blank. I guess it's about 5:30—that's when Momma usually gets home."

"5:30? Oh, no." I turned toward the door. "I've got to go—I'm late for supper."

"But who was it on the phone?" persisted Darlene.

"Oh, uh." I heard Mrs. Starkey coming in the back door. "I'd better tell you later. See ya, Darlene!"

I let the screen door bang behind me, and took off running across the field, intending to cut through the woods between our houses. Then I remembered my bicycle, sitting in the Starkey's front yard; so I had to go back and get it. By the time I got home, Mom, Dad, and Margie were already eating.

"Well, did you find yourself a ride home?" asked Mom.

I didn't know what she meant for a minute. Then I remembered why I'd been at Darlene's in the first place.

"Oh, yea—David Starkey's going to be at the Tasty-freeze after the show—I can ride back with him." I paused and looked at Margie, but I couldn't tell a thing from her face. "If I need to," I added softly."

"Well, then, Margie," said Mom, "there's no reason why you can't spend the night at the Tarpley's."

Margie didn't answer. She didn't even look up. She just stared at her plate and pretended to be eating. She was only messing her food around, though. I didn't see her eat a bite the whole meal.

The food didn't have much taste for me either. I couldn't stop thinking about Mitch long enough to think about food. I kept trying to figure out where he could be going that he wanted Margie to go, too. I don't know why that bothered me so much.

I must have been eating as fast as I was thinking, though. I consumed three helpings of butterbeans, two pieces of cornbread, all that was left of the meatloaf, and half an apple pie before Mom finally stopped me.

"Why, Katie! You'd better stop," she warned. "You won't have room for a sundae after the show." I said I wasn't full, but I pushed my plate away.

"I might not be going to the Tasty-freeze, anyway," I said. "Sometimes Margie wants to come straight home after the show."

"But she's spending the night at the Tarpley's. Aren't you, Margie?"

I held my breath; but Margie didn't answer. She got up from the table and scraped the food on her plate onto the pile of scraps we saved for the dogs. I felt that last piece of cornbread move sluggishly in my stomach.

"I guess so," she said finally, with a heavy sigh; and I realized I was still holding my breath. As she
walked out the door, I heard the meat loaf in my stomach growling at the apple pie.

Margie didn’t say a word as she drove me into town. Once or twice, I started to bring up the subject of Mitch; but I knew she’d guess I knew something, because we never talked about him. The last few miles, I just sat and listened to my stomach growl.

By the time Margie dropped me off at the Ritz, I had a whopper of a stomach ache. I got so sick smelling the popcorn the other kids were eating, that I had to go out before the show was half over. I got a wet towel from the bathroom, but I couldn’t stand the smell in there either. So I went and stood inside the door of the lobby, where the breeze would hit me.

I was feeling a little better when I saw a puff of smoke go by the door, and I realized someone was standing outside, smoking. That was all I needed to make me throw up!

But as I started to move back inside, I heard a voice. The smoker was obviously not alone. As usual, I couldn’t resist the urge to eavesdrop, even if I was getting a headache from the smoke.

“You still going to the races at Jackson tomorrow?” asked an unfamiliar male voice.

“Um-hum,” answered the smoker. He stretched out a black leather arm and flicked the ash off his cigarette. His voice sounded faintly familiar.

“When ya leaving? In the morning?”

“Tonight.”


“I’ve got my reasons.” The smoker’s voice really rang a bell this time.

“Hey, you taking somebody with you?”

“Might be.”

“Might that somebody be female, by any chance?”

“Maybe.”

The owner of Voice 1 snorted loudly at this reply; and my stomach lurchched as I realized where I’d heard the voice of the smoker. I put the wet towel to my throat and leaned back against the wall. “I must be delirious,” I thought. “This couldn’t be happening twice in one day.”

“What time is it?” asked the smoker. There was a brief silence.

“Eight forty-five.”

“I gotta go,” said the smoker, dropping his cigarette and grinding it into the sidewalk with the toe of his boot. “I’m picking her up at 9:00.”

“Don’t you get in any trouble, now, you hear?” warned Voice 1, with a nauseating laugh. I moved into the shadow as Mitch walked by the door.

I felt like I might faint if I didn’t sit down pretty quick; but I couldn’t make myself go back in there where John Wayne was fighting it out. I knew I’d throw up the first time anybody got shot. Finally, I heard the owner of Voice 1 walk off down the street; so I went outside. The jewelry store next door was locked up tight, and the display case was bare. I stood next to the window, leaning my face against the cool glass.

Finally, the movie was over, and everybody came pouring out. Only a few little kids walked by the jewelry store. The rest turned up the street toward the Tasty-freeze. I heard Rhonda ask if anybody knew where I was. Somebody said my sister had probably wanted to leave early. Eventually, they all wandered off, and the street was deserted.

All of a sudden, out of the blue, I started crying; and I couldn’t stop. I was glad no one was watching. I hated for people to see me cry, because I always looked so terrible.

Between sobs, I heard the motor of a car down the street; so I backed into the shadows and tried to stop jerking. Finally, the lights came over the hill, and the car started to slow down. It had almost stopped when it reached the jewelry store; and then it pulled over to the curb.

“Katie!” said a voice from inside the car. “What are you doing still here?” Margie stuck her head out
the car window. "I thought you’d be at the Tasty-freeze!"

I didn’t answer at first; I had to find out if it was really her, or if I was dreaming or if I’d died and gone to heaven, or what. I ran up to the car, and almost touched her to see if she was real, before I stopped myself.

"Get in, dummy," she said, and I knew it was Margie.

"I almost didn’t come by here," she said, as I climbed into the front seat. "Why didn’t you go to the Tasty-freeze?"

"I wasn’t too hungry," I told her. "I thought I’d wait and see if you didn’t come back."

"Is something wrong?" she asked, peering at me through the semi-darkness. I looked away.

"No. It’s just that... I didn’t feel too hot."

"Well, no wonder—after all the supper you ate! But I’m about to starve. I sure would like a hot fudge sundae right now. Do you feel like you ought to go home?"

I couldn’t believe it. Margie really wanted to go to the Tasty-freeze.

"I don’t know... I probably ought to tell David Starkey that I don’t need a ride." Just then I caught my tear-stained reflection in the window. "But I guess I could call the Tasty-freeze from home and ask them to tell him."

"Yes," she agreed, "you could; but, you’d probably never be able to get the party line at home. Besides," she smiled, "I’ll let you borrow my compact before you see David."

"Okay," I said. I couldn’t help smiling back as I met her eyes; and we giggled like two eighth-graders as Margie turned the car around in the street.

The dew was still on the grass and Grandmama wouldn’t let me play in it. I knew my feet would get all wet and that little pieces of grass would stick to my feet, but it was so boring and made me so restless to know that I had to stay on the porch or on the sidewalk. So I sat on the steps and peeled paint off the handrails while I listened to Grandmama talk to Grandmama Mary.

"Has Mr. James left yet?"

"If he has, I haven’t seen him," said Grandmama Mary.

Mr. James lived upstairs in one of the rooms. It was a big house and Grandmama Mary lived downstairs and had a whole bunch of rooms. But Grandmama and Grandad lived upstairs and only had two rooms. A lot of people lived upstairs, but they were all old.

I watched a roly-poly bug crawl along the edge of the steps. He rolled into a little ball when I picked him up so I threw him in the grass which was still wet. Then I thought of something I could do.

"Grandmama, can I blow bubbles?"

"I reckon so; but you better not spill them. Wipe your feet before you go in."

I took my flip-flops off at the door and ran up the stairs and into the room where Grandmama lived. The bottle was on the window sill and as I grabbed it I looked out the window at the school down the block. Then I ran out into the hall and as I started to run past Mr. James’ door, I looked around and then tiptoed to his door. I peeped through the keyhole and saw Mr. James sitting in his rocking chair smoking his pipe. He doesn’t look like he’s going anywhere, I said to myself.

Outside on the porch, I began blowing bubbles. The sunlight made little pink and blue and yellow streaks on the bubbles. I liked to make two bubbles stick together. I decided to try to get as many bubbles in the air as I could, but before I got very many, I knocked the bottle over. The liquid spread over most of the porch and started dripping off onto the steps. I
looked up at Grandmama who hadn’t seen the mess yet.

“Grandmama,” I said in a low voice.
“What,” she asked. Then she saw.
“I told you to be careful. I’m not going to buy you any more.” She went into the house for a wet towel. She came back out and while she washed my hands, Grandmama Mary cleaned the porch and steps.
“I’m sorry, Grandmama,” I tried not to let my voice quiver but I didn’t want her to be mad at me.
“Don’t cry, hon. It’s all right. I think the grass is dry enough for you to play in now, if you want to.” She kissed my cheek and I felt much better.

I played in the grass for just a few minutes. Then a woman pushing a baby carriage walked past. Seeing the baby made me think of my own little brother at home. Mother had gone to the hospital for a lot of days and came home with him. I wondered if he would grow much before I went back home.

“Come on in now,” Grandmama had stood up to wait on me.

Grandmama shelled peas for supper and I played with Grandmama Mary’s bird. She kept him in a cage on the back porch. The bird was green and yellow and he would let me rub him but if I tried to hold him he always bit me. I was running my finger along the top of his head when I heard children’s voices from the school. I looked across the space between the yard and the school. I saw a little girl in a bright yellow dress run to a swing. There were a lot of things to play on like the swings and some sliding boards and I thought that they would be fun but school always scared me. There was a big fence all the way around the school and Grandmama said that Mothers took their little boys and girls there every day and left them. I sure was glad my Mother never left me somewhere like that all day. I thought it was like jail.

“Are you hungry yet,” asked Grandmama. I looked at the school and then at Grandmama and hugged her.

“A little bit.”

I had some cherry Kool-Aid and a banana sandwich for lunch. If I drank the Kool-Aid just right, I could make it stain my lips red to look like lipstick.

Grandmama wiped the Kool-Aid lipstick off and said, “It’s time for you to take a nap now.”

“Will you rock me to sleep, Grandmama?”

“All right.”

We sat in a big old rocking chair and she hummed a little and I eventually went to sleep.

When I awoke, I was in the upstairs room by myself. The house was quiet and I thought that maybe I had been left all by myself. I ran down the long hall with all those doors and down the stairs. Grandmama was in the kitchen washing potatoes.

I sniffed and grandmama turned around.

“Well, hi. You took a long nap. Did you sleep good?”

“Yes. Where is Grandmama Mary?”

“She’s gone to buy a few groceries.”

“Oh. Do we have any ice cream?”

“Well, I think I may be able to find you some.”

She opened the freezer and got a carton of ice cream. She picked me up and sat me on the counter so I could watch her spoon it out. I looked in the carton and saw that it was three kinds—chocolate, strawberry, and vanilla.

“Oh, it’s Napoleon.”

“Yes, it’s Neapolitan,” said Grandmama and she smiled. “But don’t worry, I’ll be careful and not give you any strawberry.”

I sure was glad she remembered. I hated strawberry ice cream. It always felt gritty in my mouth.

“Here you are,” said Grandmama after she had spooned the creamy dessert.

I went into the den to watch the afternoon cartoon program. When a commercial came on, I glanced at the mantle above the fireplace. The mantle was covered with all kinds of little figures—animals and people. One little cat had a tape measure that came out of its
mouth. Its tongue was the end of the tape. But my favorite was the one of a pretty woman in a green dress with a wide hooped skirt. She wore a green hat to match. Her tiny hand clasped a gold leash and a little dog was on the end of it. Beside her was a little girl dressed like the lady. I liked to think about where they were going and pretend that they were my mother and I.

"Bluto, let me go. Popeye, help." Olive Oyl's voice made me aware that cartoons were still on.

Grandad came home from work just as Popeye whistled with his pipe. We went for a quick walk to the store and to the park before supper. When we got home, Grandmama Mary said that we would be eating a little late so I decided to surprise Grandmama with a picture. My paper was upstairs so I went up there and started to draw. I drew some flowers, all colors, and a house with a chimney. I ran out of the room to give Grandmama the picture. I didn't know it was so dark and I had to turn a light on in the hall.

All the lights were off downstairs except for one in the den. I didn't know why because the kitchen was not even near the den and we were supposed to eat.

"I think it's a heart attack." I could hear Grandmama Mary on the phone and she was crying.

I walked into the den and so many people were there, even Mr. James. Grandad was saying, "It'll be all right. Just be still." He was leaning over the sofa.

Everybody was lined alongside the sofa. I peeked around Grandad and there was Grandmama lying there. Her eyes were closed and she was breathing hard. She moaned a little, too.

"Prop her feet up."

"Keep fanning her. She's too hot."

I could feel a lump inside myself, not in my throat, but further down. Everybody was fanning Grandmama and not knowing anything else to do, I found a section of the afternoon paper and began to fan her feet. That was the closest I could get.

"Be still. The ambulance will be here in just a little bit."

The siren seemed to come from the walls of the den, they were so loud. I saw the ambulance outside. It was green with white stripes and a flashing red light on top. Two men ran up the steps with a stretcher. They were so far away; I never realized how many steps led up to the porch.

They eased Grandmama onto the stretcher and as they were leaving the room, she saw me for the first time. She tried to smile but her face wrinkled in pain and they rushed away with her.

I just sat down for a long time. I was alone in the den. Only one lamp was on and the rest of the house was totally dark.

Grandmama Mary and Mr. James finally came and Mr. James picked me up.

"You need to call this baby's parents," he told Grandmama Mary.

"I'll call them now."

I knew it would take a long time before Mother could get there. I was dressed in my pajamas when I asked for some ice cream.

Grandmama Mary got me some. I looked at the bowl and there was strawberry ice cream all mixed in with the chocolate and vanilla.

The picture I had drawn Grandmama was on the floor. I looked at it and tried not to cry.

Third Place Fiction
"Grandmother"
Gerald Cannon
10½"x14½"
"Wishful Thinking"
Nick Nichols
Honorable Mention—Illustration
Wishful Thinking

I wish it wasn’t,
But it is;
And the more I try
To make it not,
The more it is.

So shouldn’t I
Just let it be
What it is?

But I can’t!
The more I try,
The more I don’t.

So shouldn’t I
Just let me be
Who I am?

I wish I wasn’t,
But I am;
And the more I try
To make me not,
The more I am.

So shouldn’t I
Just let Him be
Who He is—in me?

Anna Chism
First Place Poetry

Crimson Sumac

Crimson sumac
Clenched in beaded fists
Bleeds blood red autumn
On a black roadside.

Edward Garner
Second Place Poetry

Untitled

Greg Brough
Photography Award
A Common Error

Lust
Death
Assassination
Each of these is
A type of passion
Now then
If passion is purple
(And jealously is green, and black is beautiful),
Most people
Should also be purple
(because of the passion
bottled up within them).
But
When I look at people
they don't seem purple.
Nor does my reflection appear purple.
Using these ideas,
a conclusion may be reached;
Also, a question
may be asked—
I do wonder
How many people
besides myself
are
colorblind?

Fragments

It was a spring of dandelion wishes
which almost always came true—
I found you, didn't I?
Somewhere between violets crushed in books
and within bamboo wind-chime songs, I found you.

Where, amid the folds
of security softly closed around
a heart that long had waited for them;
when, during the hours that from
sunrise to sunrise could not contain
all of the joy;
why, when everything was new—
Did I grow tired of you?

I would not tread so softly in my way
if you had not shown how hard some feet can fall—
But after all, I was the fool who chose to be
the victim of your catchpenny parade.

Angela Lawson
Honorable Mention Poetry

Timothy Kelly
"Split Fountain in Blue and Black"
Laura Tinsley
9"x12"
Honorable Mention—Design
Mystical Female
(For A Special Lady)

Transcendent as Love
Alluring as Art.

Eternal as the music
Playing within the spheres.

As difficult to capture and hold
As a vanishing dream.

Insightful
Intuitive
Reclusive
Beautiful.

She sees the aura
That surrounds the soul of man.

She feels the unfelt feelings
Of her lover.

She divided herself within herself
Constantly seeking a unit
With her Eternal Self.

Soft as a single drop of rain
Frightening as a sudden clap of thunder
She knows
   No space
   No Time
   No Boundaries.

John Lee
Why I Love You

I can't understand why it is that you love me. There are so many reasons not to.
You knew the past yet never let it affect the present and since we began you have always accepted and tried to understand.
I don't believe you've ever hated me, even though I think you've hated some things I've done.

You're not held responsible to love me by blood, or law, or social obligation. Indeed, the rules say you shouldn't but, still, you do.

I know—
you have given me the most valuable gift one can give, your love, without reason but for the fact that I am me.
I can't understand, (it makes me cry) why you would give me such a treasure. I surely don't deserve it.

I give it back.

Annette Jordan

“He Waits In Stillness”

In silent, shrouded stillness he waits
Patiently, never hurrying
Gently murmuring quiet sounds
Of yearning love and longing.
She reaches out inquisitive fingers
To touch, explore and caress
And gently wraps them around
The stern, furrowed face of her careworn lover.
And her touch, calm and gentle,
Soothes the troubled countenance
With which he looks out upon the world.
He rises steadily to meet her—
She takes him into a warm embrace Where he may lay his weary head
And rest, reassured in the knowledge That when he needs her, she will be always there.

Sandra Stevenson
Pool

Smooth—
glide forward o’er the velvet sheet of
greenery

Slide—
until you reach the destination of your
thought

Slip—
into the cavernous orb of quiet solitude
you seek

Resound—
the echoes over and over of a smooth, perfect shot
to the corner pocket.

Freida McIntyre Wallace
Third Place Poetry

Nickel Roll

Swiftly moving through a cold damp Alabama night
A silhouette before me recalls a day I’d rather forget.
it’s his cigarette glowing smoke scent
a drug I know far too well,
one of pleasure and promise
distorts the seeing eye of God,
the seeing eye of what?
how many mountains make a mole-hill?
how many rays in the sun?
how many notes the musicians play
float up from the depths of Hell?
how close to the fetus
before losing one’s soul,
to the Casino poker game, demons and angels play?
how far till you reach the spiritual sky?
God must live on the moon
The Moon?
As He gazed on the earth from
the heavens below
watching full color video screens
He said a prayer for humanity
then left his heavenly home,
to return to a race of men, hate, war
with youth in a mind of stone,
Nickel Rolling

Bill Orton
Three Cats

We cast lots together—
I needed the parking space.
We glued scenes from hotel windows on the back of
the closet door
and opened it on Friday nights with a cheap bottle
of beer.

Don’t get me wrong
we cut loose with jack when the vices came to town
and macaroni dinners went on special at the store.
Fashion trends set themselves around our wardrobe
FRUIT OF THE LOOM sent us free catalogs through
the mail.
It was heaven on fourteenth street
the only way to go.

Somewhere in L.A. he has an office building
to hide from things he cannot face.
His wife drives the carpool every other Monday
the new Mercedes shines a metallic green.

green for the life he threw away
metallic from his change in attitude.
the time he threw away
the people
a person.

I dwell in a brownstone on the upper east side
a cathedral window frames my outlook on the situation.
Three cats purr me in and out of dreams and deep
sleep.

Some joker on tenth filled his pockets one broken
down day
and told him of his place on the map.
He brought home ideas, formations in his eyes
twisted paper words.

Winter passed, he tore dreams from walls
Fourteenth street began a bleak spring.
rent’s too high, the tape on the windows curled in
the rain
and that was reason enough to leave.
I began to take it personally when he rolled his jeans
and split.

I finished school
thirty, a doctor, a mismatched fool . . .
I picked up the wandering jews and left no forwarding
address
Manhattan doesn’t know my name, Atlanta never did.
busfare was cheap in the sixties.

You can’t save old beer bottles forever
I pitched them out last week.
Somewhere I read stale booze drove bugs away
nothing said about the memories.

Silence sets my mind in thoughtful degrees I’d rather
not discuss.
Carpools aren’t so bad, so don’t get it wrong—
I just think I’d switch the days
Sunday seems appropriate.

Laura Tarbox
Belsura

Ah, Belsura, pretty sister,  
Crossing fields of wheat, of clover,  
Through the wooded hills  
And over forest streams,  
Crossing meadows bright with flowers  
By a river, to an island  
Glazed with sparkling sand,  
You rest upon the moist brown earth,  
You glide into a breeze.  
Ah, Belsura, gentle lover,  
Dancing through the dandelions,  
Pausing, will you taste their fragrance,  
Light upon soft yellow petals,  
Warm and tender, bathed with sunshine,  
Lounging in menagerie,  
How I love your gentle magic,  
Will you ever take me with you?  
Ah, Belsura, fragile spinster,  
Floating through a life of beauty,  
Sparkling with your wings of wonder,  
Sipping nectar, sailing high,  
Sweetly so you pass the hours  
In my dreams I see you fly.

Edward Garner  
Second Place Poetry

Lori Ann

She speaks in soft whispers,  
(In fear of rejection?)  
Each word she breathes falls  
Gently to each ear, and none  
Have yet known her to moulder.  

The thoughts themselves flow to reach  
An audience of all mortality blent,  
(A borrowed word; one should repent.)  
To catch her thoughts in form of speech,  
Subtle glimpses of a spoken word.

Timothy Powell

“Belsura”  
Jane Armstrong  
17”x23”  
Illustration Award
White and Black Night

Clock in the hallway
A ghostly shape.
Leaves beneath the gray moon
Flutter in the breeze
Pressed as black on walls of white.
My shadow extends across the floor—
Black on the gray wooden floor.

The clock ticks my life away
In the silence
Of a narrow dark hallway.
I wait
For the coming chimes
Of morning and color and life,
But the moments float
In gray smoky, swirling webs around me.

I become entangled in the webs
I get trapped and I get nowhere
But older and grayer
In the blackness of night
And the deepening hallway.
Chimes of the violet morning
Ring ringing,
Shattering the glassy silence
Into a thousand splintering pieces.
Then,
Ticking away,
Ring, Rang
And blackness, whiteness
Grays of night return
And my shadow lingers in the hallway.

Lesa Dill
“Dance—Until It’s Over”
Dan Taylor
15½"x18"
Drawing Award
"Self-Portrait"

Dan Taylor

Honorable Mention—Photography
Nothing to hold to but the seat of your...

Jeans.
slipped warm inside
of
flesh caressed by denim's blue tubing
—something to hold to
when the rain falls,
and no car will stop;
due to a (some) shell-watcher
who
hates unshaven shells
—well...
If a man in the possession of
two young daughters saw:
a huddled figure, (in the drizzle
resembling some stray dog)
leaned against a stop sign
in a quite vain attempt
to avoid rain;
He, (since men be possessive),
would only stop to lock the doors,
(preservation of one's own flesh,
procreation result,
would be the utmost thought.)

And as the sad figure shrank
to but a silhouette blocked from view
by cascades of tormenting torrents,
he'd dust the uncreased dashboard bible,
and mutter: "Bastard!" under tainted breath.

Jeans.
with hand warmer pockets
of
soft white cotton,
worn till they're rotten,
helpmeet, lover, mother, friend
world without end
Amen.

Sometimes

Sometimes
When you curl your hair
You curl your personality.

And sometimes
When you take one step,
It leads to three or four.

And sometimes
When you grow,
Your limbs branch out in funny places.

But my hand is,
As you left it,
Always open, still outstretched.

Anna Chism
First Place Poetry

Timothy Powell
Der Fluss am Spätadend

So schwarz und flach liegt nun der Fluss,
Dass ich zum Strand hinuntergehen muss.
Das Wasser fliesst so still und tief,
Und ich aus meiner Seele rief:

Man kann nur Oberflache sehen,
Und weiss nicht, was unten soll geschenhen.
Man kann nicht wissen, was ist darin;
So ist es mit Weltall, Gott und Sinn!

Monty Shelton

Soneto al ontono

El ontono entro’en las calles
Cambiando tan brusco los follajes
Del color de verde monótono
Al Naranja, amarillo, rojo.

Escondido en el viento frio
El llego’como un fuerte rio
Por su lecho corriendo impetuoso
Y pintó’todo majestuoso.

Satisfecho muy do sus labores
El echo’su cajón do colores
Y puso en marcha la symfonía
De alegria y melancolia.

¡Ay, ontono, que breve la hermosura!
Y por eso me queda la amargura.

Maria del Mar

“Stoneware”
Mary Shanks
9” in diameter
Honorable Mention—Ceramics
"Lidded Bowl"
Mary Shanks
7" in diameter
Ceramics Award
Three Fables
Edward Garner

**Palu the Pine Tree**

Palu was a pine tree. He lived in the midst of a vast pine forest with lots of other pines. Now, Palu was straight, tall, and had strong branches that held up strong pine cones. He was a proud tree and rightly so. It was well known in the forest that Palu would be Chief Pine one day. He often swayed in the wind to show off his fine, long pine needles. One evening as he swayed, he felt a sharp pain in his trunk.

"Mighty straight pine here, Wally!" (Those boy scouts at it again.) Palu began to throw pine cones at them but was soon chopped down. With his trunk broken he could not get up and he lay helplessly on the ground. The scouts began to cut off his branches. Soon Palu was naked except for his fine bark. The scout master had a power saw and Palu was cut into logs. Then, piece by piece, he was carried to the scout camp, where he was placed in a pile. Palu was in shock. Almost a chief an hour earlier, and now, logs for a bonfire. He was exhausted, time was surely running out. But Palu, proud as he was, gathered strength; he was ready to go up in smoke. Palu was burned at the bonfire by the Boy Scouts of America.

**Shamwaa the Songbird**

Shamwaa built her nest from fallen twigs and long, soft pine needles. She shaped it like a lotus bowl in the fork of three branches of an apple tree. Shamwaa loved the orchard, she loved her nest, and, oh, how beautiful the apple blossoms were. She was getting ready for summer when she would raise her babies 'midst the orchard. She was happy; the apple trees were happy, too. They would say

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One day a great flock of birds visited the apple
orchard. They stayed at the orchard for six days, eating, flying and singing. Shamwaa taught them many songs; she was a gracious hostess. On the evening of the sixth day, while Shamwaa sang, a great cloud of sticky liquid fell upon the orchard from a great silver bird that made a loud noise like thunder. Shamwaa only felt wet at first but when she ruffled her feathers they didn't dry. Her skin began to burn and her feathers matted. The other birds felt ill, too. Soon, one bird dropped from an apple tree, then another, and then another. Shamwaa felt very sick, so she snuggled down into her nest and dreamed that all the trees in the orchard were singing to her. They sang Shamwaa

Songbird

Singing

Sweetly

Shamwaa

Nesting

flying

o'er the apple orchard

and then Shamwaa died.

Chunk Chunk Chunky

Chunk Chunk Chunky was a groundhog. He crunched around the ground all day long. He wandered in the field by the daisies, going crunch, crunch, crunch. He scurried down the creek bank, looking at the turtles and the ducks. Chunk Chunk Chunky was so, so happy eating roots and shoots and vegetables that grew around the field. Chunk Chunk Chunky had a den he spent the night in. It was like a little house and Chunky built it 'neath the ground. Chunk Chunk Chunky got a lot of sun while he munched on those tender roots that grew around the field. He was fluffy, he was fat, and Chunky liked it like that. One day while Chunk Chunk Chunky was eating on a root, a giant animal spotted him from three-hundred yards away and without so much as walking any closer, the big animal went bang-zip-splat and Chunk Chunk Chunky died just like that.

This is what the big animal said when he walked up to Chunky and saw that he was dead: “damned Varmint.”

“Kneely’s Branch”
Chuck Craig
10”x10”
"Stained-Glass Window"
Glenn Cavadel
17"x23"
Honorable Mention—Crafts
Tale of Three Mirrors

walking into a room
new to me
like a cat in play with a string
alone
fascination has captured the soul

like Venus and Jupiter in the autumn sign
two mirrors capture time
one’s hanging on the closest door
one on the wall

I became the actor’s audience
in profiles I have never seen
I gaze intensely in the face
I call my own

show me anger, peace, love, old age
crystal clear infancy
remember the smile in the family portrait at age ten
man in the mirror, reveal it again

as I watch in amusement and awe
lost in time
how much has passed, I need not know
I love the image I see
all alone I leave the room
in disgust and hate . . . it was only me

Weird Animal

You fascinate me!
I never saw an animal like you.

Your teeth are soft;
And your fur is sharp.

You’ve learned to speak and fetch and beg,
But can’t wag your tail.

You tell the truth with your forked tongue,
But lie with your eyes.

I’d like to hold you in my lap
And stroke your ears—
But it hurts to pet you.

I wish I could take you home with me,
But my mother would never understand.

Anna Chism
First Place Poetry

Bill Orton
We're Even

You could have heard me—
but you wouldn't listen.
You could have talked to me—
but you wouldn't speak.
You could have seen my heart—
but you wouldn't look.
You could have touched my soul—
but you wouldn't reach out.
You could have made me yours—
but you wouldn't try.
You could have loved me—
but you wouldn't give.
I could have saved you—
but I didn't care.

Freida McIntyre Wallace
Third Place Poetry

Despondent Apes

He sat in the park
waiting for dark,
watching the naked apes
pick despondent flies off themselves—
and yet another milestone
nails a hole around its
own stone heart.

He played his part
an actor on a tremendous stage
Passing amongst them—
ones of his own kind;
Wondering when the end
will lash his back,
in nowhere near fifty years,

Set apart
like bad fiction.
Life: A seemingly useless bit
of other fool's knowledge—
it hides truths in riddles
too hard to decipher.

Timothy Powell

“There is a Certain Sorrow”
Dan Taylor
11"x14"
Printmaking Award
Circular Reasons

Wet
  Cold
    In love.

Dry
  Warm
    Out of love.

Moon
  Insanity
    Insanely together.

Sun
  Normality
    Abnormally distant.

Spring
  Creation
    Height of Creativity.

Winter
  Destruction
    Destructively creative.

I Love You.
  I Hate You.
  Circular Reasoning.

John Lee

"Geometric Valentines"
Joan Neidert
2'x3'
Design Award

Miracle Mile

Woke up last Saturday morning
And walked off down the street.
I kicked the leaves of yesterday
And sank my feet in deep.

I stood there on the avenue
And saw a beautiful sight.
I touched the trees and felt the breeze
And kissed the morning light.

Our roads are sometimes lonely
And always seem too long.
But feel your mind in nature
You'll always get along.

It takes a man of wonder
To see what nature's got.
But use your mind to understand
I've found mine has alot.

Come walk with me my brother
And stay with me awhile.
To touch the stars of heaven
And walk that miracle mile.

Darrell Glover
A Magic Night

Twilight filters through the sky,
The sun bids me a fond good-bye,
Twinkling stars in heaven high,
Are telling me that God is nigh.

Under massive Oak at night,
Awed by nature’s wondrous might,
Evening sounds of owl and peep,
Woo the woods to silent sleep.

Perched atop my hillside pew,
Night as bright as morning dew,
The coo-coo-cooing of a dove,
Brings to mind my special love.

Peace is what my love brings me,
A peace to last eternally,
Were man to hear his special dove,
He’d know the joy of peace and love.

Randy Scott
“Mildred”
Laura Tinsley
1\(\frac{1}{2}\)’x4’
Crafts Award
**Brushing Her Hair**

Brushing her hair with an air
that tells you
she doesn't really care;
She looks at you
her eyes wet with dew
from a previous day.
What can you do?
What can you say?
It's too late to change her way
or to show her your love.

The paint drips on your ripped
and torn
jacket. "I understand
you're a lady with taste,"
you improvise, trying to
impress her. What a waste
And such a pity—
you'll never know her
you'll never find her
She's lost.
You see her from a distance, one day,
walking with a stranger.
Your heart is put to trial
You delayed too long
And she chose someone else. Meanwhile
you wave at them, attempting to smile
and without warning
Without the decency of a warning
You realize she's not lost.
You are.

**Costume Jewelry**

This morning
When you strung your pretty pastel words
On wires
And wrapped them 'round my wrists,
I wept with joy to wear your wisdom,
And my heart has sung all day;

Until just now,
When I looked down
And noticed
That my wrists are turning green.

Anna Chism
First Place Poetry
"The Pinup"
Nick Nichols
First Overall Award
"The times they are a-changin"  
Eddie Haygood  
10"x24"  
Lettering Award

The times they are a-changin'  

Come gather 'round people wherever you roam  
and admit that the waters around you have grown  
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone.  
if your time to you is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone  
for the times they are a-changin'.

Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pen  
and keep your eyes wide the chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon for the wheel's still in spin  
and there's no tellin' who that it's namin'.  
For the loser now will be later to win  
for the times they are a-changin'.

Come senators, congressmen please heed the call  
don't stand in the doorway don't block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt will be he who has stalled  
there's a battle outside and it is ragin'.  
'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls  
for the times they are a-changin'.

Come mothers and fathers throughout the land  
and don't criticize what you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command  
your old road is rapidly agin'.  
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand  
for the times they are a-changin'.

The line it is drawn the curse it is cast  
the slow one now will later be fast  
As the present now will later be past  
the order is rapidly fading.  
And the first one now will later be last  
for the times they are a-changin'.

Bob Dylan