Manuscripts and art for Lights and Shadows magazine are submitted by the English Club of the Department of English and art classes of the Department of Art of the University of North Alabama. These departments sponsor creative writing and art competitions annually. The 1981-82 contest winners are identified throughout this publication.

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“Light has need of darkness, for without the darkness, how should we ever know the light.”
— Carl Jung

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On Being A Virginian
Myralin Trayer
Essay
First Place

Could Heaven with its gold paved streets be more delightsome to the eye or the heart than the beautiful Virginia?

Feelings of nationalism have long been recognized as being strong moving forces in the behavior of human beings. Feelings of identity with a particular country have perhaps been the deciding factor in more than one battle, when feelings of soldiers for their native land would not permit them to be defeated. All nationalism, however, is not inspired by countries. In my case, at least, I was made to feel that feeling of pride for my native state. You see, I am a Virginian. No matter where I may live, no matter how long I am away, still I am forever a Virginian!

I was taught from infancy that there was no place on earth that could compare to Virginia. People who were not native to the state but who had moved there were looked upon with respect because of the good sense they had shown.

In my early school years all students studied Virginia History. It seems now that we studied it every year. This seemed right and proper. After all, there was so much to be learned about the state which was the site of the first American colony. I assumed that children in other states studied Virginia History too; and when I found out that they did not necessarily do so—that they in fact studied histories of their own states—I was full of wonder. I imagined that their history books could only be small pamphlets when compared to the healthy tomes containing the history of Virginia. What had actually happened in the other states, after all? To be perfectly fair, I supposed there must have been two or three things of note that occurred in a few other states. I remembered the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, and I knew that Philadelphia was not in Virginia (Although I guessed that the residents of Philadelphia secretly wished that it were.) I remembered stories about Lexington and Concord and the Battle of Bunker Hill in Massachusetts, but I knew they only happened there because that was where George Washington (a native Virginian) happened to be at the moment. I had been taught that gold was discovered in California, but to me that seemed so far away, so remote and wild, so barbaric, that it might have been a foreign country. All the states between Virginia and California I saw as merely filler: utilitarian, but uneventful.

As a young child I remember being told that Virginia was represented by the very first star on the flag. That seemed only logical to me. Jamestown in 1607 certainly preceded Plymouth in 1620. When I was older and someone else told me that Delaware was the first state in the newly formed Union, I was astonished. I was even appalled. Blasphemy! I had always been taught that ladies never fight, but I was ready at that point to abandon being a lady to defend the rightful place of my state as the FIRST!

What other state could claim a Jamestown? A Yorktown? A Williamsburg? A Pocahontas or Powhatan? A George Washington? A Thomas Jefferson? A Robert E. Lee? The list seemed endless, almost as if every important person who ever lived chose Virginia as the place he wanted to be born. I supposed there were important people and places in
other states, but to me they seemed a fluke, an accident of nature. Sometimes these unexplainable things happen: for instance, I once knew of a boy with one blue eye and one brown eye. Surely Andrew Jackson came from Tennessee just as accidentally as that boy's eyes got mixed up.

Could there be a state in the Union as beautiful as the Old Dominion? I was sure there could not be. In fact, to this day I hold that belief. The Shenandoah Valley is a masterpiece of God's artistry. The flowing rolling hills, rich with verdure, delight the beauty-hungry eye. The mountains are there, not the harsh, rocky outcroppings seen in the west, but majestic, imposing, and graceful. Rivers, green and alive with fish, are abundant. Could Heaven with its gold paved streets be more delightsome to the eye or the heart than the beautiful Virginia?

What is it in the human awareness that turns us back? Why do our hearts hearken to Home? Though not understood, yet it is so. Though I have been away from Virginia for many years now, still I am a Virginian! And I lift my voice and my heart in song: "Carry me back to old Virginny . . . to old Virginny, the place where I was born."
It was hard for her to concentrate on the magazine. Her eyes kept wandering to the large window where the gray, late-autumn countryside slowly passed by. It was funny. She used to think that riding in a train was like traveling in a bullet—flower-filled meadows, screened-in back porches, and sheets flapping on clotheslines; all whizzing by in a homogeneous blur. But when she began making regular trips to her grandfather’s small cottage in Greenport she discovered that the Long Island Railroad had few trains which could go faster than 35 miles per hour.

The train appeared ancient. She could imagine the compartment she was riding in once carrying frilly-bonneted ladies with parasols to the seashore at the turn of the century.

She stroked the hard, black upholstery of the empty seat beside her, returning her eyes to the window. But it was already so dark outside that all she could see was a yellowish reflection of herself staring out of the dimly-lit car.

As usual, for this time of year in New York, it began to rain. She listened to the wind pound the large drops against the glass. God, how she hated returning to the city. Manhattan—with its turd-filled gutters, its sidewalks dotted with green phlegm, and its garish store fronts beckoning to passersby to enter their darkened hallways for the fulfillment of unmentionable delights: it frightened her in the same way that walking down the sawdust-covered midway of the Southeastern State Fair used to terrify her when she was small. Short, stocky men in stained clothing who looked as if they barely missed being classified as freaks themselves, would call out to the crowd. “Come and see the women from the Amazon. Watch them do amazing things with amazing parts of their bodies.” They would intone the phrase over and over, like perverse monks chanting a strange liturgy.

She shuddered, remembering the nightmares that always followed her visits to the fair. And now, here she was living in the largest midway in the world, surrounded by freak sideshows wherever she went.

When she married James she knew that he hoped to get a job with a large advertising firm in New York City, but she just assumed they would always stay in Atlanta. He was doing well with his job at Lamar and Associates and she saw no reason to leave their comfortable, brick home in Marietta. But one evening he came home excited and out of breath, telling her that he had been offered a job with the home office in Manhattan. It was the first time she had ever seem him show so much emotion.

“Honey, just think,” he said, his face red with excitement. “Once I get my foot in the door at the home office I can go straight to the top. There’s no limit!”

Her tears and pleas only made him angry and accuse her of trying to stifle his career.

Her parents tried soothing her with reminders that she could visit her grandfather on Long Island if she got too homesick. At the airport, her
father with the same large, gray eyes as herself looked at her, trying not to show his concern. He smiled and stroked her thick, brown, shoulder-length hair. "Your mother and I will be up in a few months when you get settled in." Her tears fell on his white knit shirt. "Don’t worry Pumpkin, pretty soon you’ll think of it as your home."

Her mother stood behind him, not hiding her distress. She blew her nose with a pink Kleenex.

Alicyn sighed, listening to the rhythmic clacking of the tracks. She wiped her eyes. For once her father was wrong. After a year and a half, New York was still as foreign to her as on the day she first stepped off the plane at Kennedy International Airport.

Her frequent visits to her grandfather’s were her only solace. He usually left her alone to read and write or sail his small Sunfish in the choppy Sound.

He wasn’t an affectionate man but he loved his blood kin. With a proud, possessive smile he would remind her that she was a true Wakefield. "You’re just like your father," he said, as they walked alongside the bay. "There’s salt and sea air in your blood."

The train was slowing down as it approached the next station. Alicyn pressed her cupped hands to the cold glass and peered out. She was barely able to decipher the faded inscription “PATCHOGUE” on the metal sign, standing like a ghostly specter beneath a naked, blue lightbulb.

At least another 60 miles, she calculated, relieved that her confrontation with the city and her husband was at least two hours away.

The station was almost deserted, she noticed, except for a tall man leaning against the far wall of the platform. She watched him as her window came to stop directly in front of him. The brim of his tan fedora was pulled down low over his brow shielding him from the driving rain and hiding his face in shadow. Alicyn wiped her palms on her corduroy jeans.

No one left the train as the doors opened. The stranger stepped inside and looked around the car. He appeared not to notice its solitary occupant. Walking slowly to the rear of the compartment he took the seat directly across the aisle from her. The train jerked and began moving.

She watched him covertly from the corner of her eye, pretending to be engrossed in the Cosmopolitan she held on her lap. She had picked it up at the bathroom in the Greenport station where someone had left it behind. She wished now it had been a Scientific American. She casually tried to hide the bare-bosomed model on the cover with her hand.

He didn’t seem to notice. He removed his soggy hat and shook it out. His features stunned her. She couldn’t remember ever seeing a man who looked so perfect in all her life. Even living in Manhattan where gorgeous male models were as thick as flies in syrup she hadn’t seen anyone who caused her to stare openly. She forgot to feign interest in her magazine and stared unabashedly.
Damp, bluish-black hair clung to his forehead and the nape of his neck. She stared at his profile, reminded of a drawing which fascinated her as a child. It was a detailed illustration of the prince from her favorite fairy tale, “The Prince of Light Kingdom.” She used to believe that one day he would come to her from his faraway land, where magic hung in the air like dew-frosted spiderwebs, shrouding the land like morning mist. Those enchanted fantasies became an important part of her young world.

When she and her older sister played house, her sister always chose Ricky Ricardo as her pretend husband. While Alicyn, to the frustration of her sister, would always select her tall, dark-haired prince with the brilliant emerald eyes as her heroic breadwinner. “But Alicyn,” her sister protested. “He’s not real. You have to pick someone who’s real. Why not Luke McCoy?”

“No,” she answered defiantly, the only time she ever had the nerve to oppose her older sister. “Prince Hilbrund is as real as your ol’ Ricky Ricardo anyhow. You wait and see. You’re just jealous.” Her lower lip protruded into a pout.

She smiled at the memory. She hadn’t thought of her fairy prince in a number of years. In grade school, when she first realized that life was made up of thoughtless classmates who made cruel jokes about funny-looking bookworms, Alicyn only wrapped herself tighter in her fantasy realm of shimmering castles, woodsprites dancing on moonbeams, and of a brave, handsome prince who didn’t care that she wore glasses, was buck-toothed and skinny. “You’re special,” she imagined he told her. “One of these days you’ll be my queen. And we’ll share this beautiful kingdom.”

She looked about her cluttered bedroom—at the books scattered on the floor and the clothes lying across the unmade bed, but she saw instead a valley stretched out before her with a clear, blue river through it. His castle, set proudly amidst green rolling hills, looked very similar to the one she saw each Sunday night on the “Wonderful World of Disney.” Its slender turrets spiralled upwards and colorful banners flapped in the gentle breeze.

Because of her special friend Alicyn was able to ignore the teasing of her classmates. She was even able to feel a little sorry for them since they had no such marvelous future waiting for them. But gradually those romantic visions faded. By the time she was 13 they were no more than fuzzy recollections.

She looked at the man sitting across the aisle from her. She thought it was strange that he had not acknowledged her presence since entering the train. He just stared out his window into the inky darkness.

She shivered and pulled a cable-knit sweater out of her overnight bag. She put it on, drawing it tightly around her. The train whistle sounded, like a wailing tenor lamenting the loss of a beloved. The stranger flinched.

“IT really isn’t a night to be out,” she said, feeling her pulse race. She

Lights and Shadows 9
A Perfect Stranger (continued)

... she was angry at herself for being so affected by the stranger. But it was impossible for her to ignore him. All of her senses seemed abnormally acute.

watched his reflection in the dark glass and continued speaking, not really expecting a reply. "I believe it'll turn to snow by morning." She pressed her fingers against her window to feel the temperature.

He turned his attention away from his rain-spattered pane and took a pack of cigarettes from his jacket pocket. "Do you mind?" She was shaken as his brilliant green eyes looked directly at her for the first time. At her murmured consent he lit the cigarette and exhaled a white cloud of fragrant smoke into the gently-swaying car. "Yes, I suppose you're right. It does feel like nasty weather's afoot." He spoke with a soft burr she could barely detect. But she couldn't tell if it was Irish, Scottish, British, or what: she didn't have an ear for accents. Yet she was certain it wasn't Brooklyn. She had never heard a New Yorker or, for that matter, anyone speak about the "weather afoot."

She searched for something else to say, afraid to let the conversation die. And at the same time she was angry at herself for being so affected by the stranger. But it was impossible for her to ignore him. All of her senses seemed abnormally acute. She felt like she was waiting for something to happen—like when she used to lie outside on cold, winter nights and stare into the Milky Way. The stars would flicker and dance and she would hold her breath... waiting. But waiting for what she didn't know.

"Weather up here is so strange," she said finally. "Especially at this time of year. I'm never really sure how to dress. Like right now I'm freezing." She laughed nervously and briskly rubbed her hands back and forth.

He stood up and reached into the overhead carrier. "Here," he said, handing her his tan overcoat. "Why don't you put this on. It'll be too big for you but it may keep you warmer."

She returned his smile and stammered her thanks. Taking the coat, she wrapped it around her like a large cape. It smelled like a combination of cigarette smoke and sandalwood. She hugged it to her feeling lulled by the security and warmth the jacket provided and by the easy motion of the coach.

"Do you live in the city?" he asked. She nodded her head and began telling him all about Atlanta and how she had been jarred out of her comfortable life because of her husband's burgeoning career.

"You're not happy here, then?"

"Oh, I guess in a way I am," she answered without commitment. "It's just that the people up here seem so cold. Everything moves at a frightening pace. I believe if I were to collapse in the middle of the sidewalk in downtown Manhattan during rush hour, people would only step around me. Tsk-tsinking, they'd say, 'Too bad, she'll probably miss her train.' "

He studied her silently. "I'm sorry," she said. "I know that sounds cynical, but being from the South I'm used to genteel hypocrisy—where people smile and speak politely to you whether you've just given them a
$100 bill or just stabbed their mother in the back. I've got to admit,” she said, tracing an imaginary pattern on her pants leg, “I like the pretense. It's comfortable.”

He laughed softly. “So you prefer the games. As long as the surface is smooth don’t bother to look underneath, correct?”

“No,” she replied quickly, her large eyes pleading. “I’d like to see some human compassion. But if there isn’t any, why flaunt it? If you pretend long enough, you may find yourself really caring.”

A light from a passing farmhouse briefly illuminated the raindrops racing frantically down her window. “That’s an unusual philosophy,” he said eventually. “I’m not sure if I agree with it but,” he shrugged, “that’s not important. If it helps you, then that’s good.” He took another cigarette from the pocket of his tweed jacket.

“That’s interesting,” she said, leaning over the aisle to get a closer look at his cigarette lighter. He flicked open the gold object. A silver ram’s head was embossed on each side. He quickly lit his smoke and returned the lighter to his pocket.

“It was my father’s. He gave it to me before I came over here. I think it’s supposed to remind me to keep out of trouble,” he laughed. His eyes were the color of the Long Island Sound just following a storm.
“Where are you from?” she asked, finally posing the question she had been wondering about ever since he first entered the coach with the rain dripping off his limp hat.

“My parents live in Northumberland, a county in the north of England,” he said hesitantly. She remained silent hoping he would continue. “I grew up around Warkworth, a small fishing village on the verge of falling into the North Sea.” He put out the half-smoked cigarette. “Whenever a large storm would come blustering off from the coast we’d all hold our breaths and pray the town was still there in the morning. Some folks who came passing through from the South would swear the whole county was damned, which may be true. The countryside is stark and the winters are bitter, but the true Warkworthman wouldn’t trade one day of it for a thousand in King’s Lynn.” He looked at her and grinned. “I can remember some of the villagers say ‘any mon who got a itch for the South ought to move to Birmingham and earn his livin’ making lace hankies.’ ” For a brief moment he was far away from the rocking train. He smiled. “But now, that’s a while back. I’ve been living here for a good many years.”

She looked at his coal-black hair and his finely chiseled features. This stranger didn’t belong in “The Rotten Apple,” as she had sometimes heard it referred to. It was like a meeting between St. George and the dragon. Yet, she felt confident that St. George would win, that he wouldn’t become tainted by the city’s iniquity—the ubiquitous billboards graphically advertising triple-X movies; the block upon block of store-window displays exhibiting everything from leather manacles, to glow-in-the-dark slime, to numerous odd-shaped devices whose purposes are left to the imagination of the purchaser; and the pitiful, clownish women standing in the open doorways performing their pantomimes. She could imagine his green eyes looking past these displays as if he didn’t see them. He would refuse to be touched by them.

“You must miss your home,” she said quietly.

“You must miss your home,” she said quietly.

“Sometimes. But I have a place hidden away in the Catskills where I go when the city’s pace becomes too much. It overlooks the Hudson and at times it’s almost like being back in Warkworth.”

“You know, I feel strange,” Alicyn said. “Here I am asking you all sorts of questions, I’m wearing your coat, and I don’t even know your name.” She held out her hand, “I’m Alicyn Prague.”

He looked at her quizzically for a moment, then he took her hand and shook it. “I’m Richard Gareth.”

Alicyn smiled, “Pleased to meet you, Richard.”

As they neared Grand Central Station, just before going underground, Alicyn took a deep breath, preparing for the welcome.

“Congratulations, Miss Prague, your prediction was correct.” Alicyn looked over at her companion.
“It’s beginning to snow,” he said.

The train came to a stop in the bright, fluorescent station. Movement could suddenly be heard coming from within the other cars. The train doors whisked open.

A tinny, nasal voice came over the intercom. “Everyone exit. This is our final destination. Everyone must get off.”

Alicyn slowly stood up. She unwrapped the large coat from around her and handed it back to its owner. “Thank you. I really appreciate you letting me borrow it.”

He looked undecided for a moment, then he asked, “Is your husband going to meet you here?” His sharp eyes moved quickly across her face, searching for her reaction.

“Yes, I believe so,” she noticed for the first time a small scar on his jaw. “I’m supposed to meet him by the card shop. But . . . he’s usually late.” She stopped, embarrassed. She didn’t know what she meant by that last statement. “It’s just that he’s usually so tied up in his work that he forgets the time.”

“Maybe I should wait with you then,” he offered. “I hate for you to have to hang around here by yourself.”

Alicyn picked up her overnight bag and her Cosmopolitan and followed the man in the tan fedora off the train. “There’s really no need to stay. I’ll be all right.” They stepped into the smoke-filled station.

“Look Alicyn, I know this will probably sound bold, but I really want to see you again. But I’ll leave it up to you.” He handed her a neat, white card. “I’m here if you need me.” He walked to the escalators and was quickly out of sight.

She stared down at the card he had given her—Sir Richard Gareth—Dealer in Fine Antiques. Two phone numbers followed and the top of the card was embossed with a ram’s head. She delicately ran her finger over the raised emblem.

“Hi Hon. Sorry I’m late. But I had to finish outlining that new ad campaign.” The sandy-haired man placed a quick kiss on her forehead. “How was old Grandpop?” She looked up at him smiling. She felt lightheaded.

“Just superb, he couldn’t have been better.” They walked to the escalators. She paid no attention to the NO SPITTING sign.

“James,” she asked, slightly out of breath. “Would it be all right if I called my sister tonight?”
SAGANOMICS
John Masterson
Poetry
First Place

Never confuse
cosmic with cosmetic
Avon and Revlon may dominate our
society.
But, they are less than
NOTHING—
Under the total domination
of
the cosmos.

Don’t I know you?
Jo Ann Turner
Poetry
Second Place

Don’t I know you? We’ve passed in the hall.
You use my deodorant, I use your razor.
You make a ring in the tub, I scrub it off.
You leave your clothes on the floor, I pick them up.
There’s a picture of you on my desk.
Don’t I know you? Weren’t we married once?

Sunrise
Jo Ann Turner
Poetry
Second Place

Grand prelude to day
Played to a sleeping audience—
Sunrise.

Raindrop
Jo Ann Turner
Poetry
Second Place

Fresh, cool, wet
Bit of heaven on my lip—
A raindrop.

No Call
John Masterson
Poetry
Third Place

Discipline is a force
Needed to control an unwillingness
to perform,
and yet—let us not be fooled
That it will create dedication
for with dedication there is
No call
for discipline.
Kim's Dream
Catherine Goode
Mitchell
Print
Honorable Mention
I was thrilled when my brother Steve told me we were going snipe hunting that night. For years I had heard the men on the bench in front of my parent's fish camp speak of snipe hunting and then burst out laughing. They were commercial fishermen and smelled of cut bait and catfish, but still they commanded a boy's respect. I always laughed with them, but only so I wouldn't seem ignorant.

Chandler came to pick us up just before dark. At nine years old, I was easily impressed by big people, but he was big enough to impress adults. He always said that chocolate pie and milk would make me stout. He put away his fair share of it. I had no reason to doubt him, having once seen him lift the front end of a small tractor. He was about thirty and had the uncanny ability to laugh and say "Shit!" at the same time. He said "Shit!" quite a lot.

Steve hopped in the truck as soon as Chandler drove up. "Come on, and bring the Tree Dog," he shouted. "And go find a burlap sack."

I got the Tree Dog and put him in the truck with us. We once had a name for the beagle, before he went blind with cataracts. He had a good sense of direction, having returned home several times after being dumped off at someone else's house. His habit of running into trees and falling into ditches earned him his new title, the Tree Dog. Chandler swore that he was a natural born snipe hound.

I was on my best behavior as we drove from the fish camp. Best behavior around Chandler wasn't the ordinary best behavior. I could hear disgusting jokes, spit, and forget to wipe my nose. The only thing I couldn't do was whine. If I whined, Chandler would set me out of the truck, no matter where we were. I didn't whine.
The field Chandler selected was about half a mile from our trailer, behind a bootlegger's house. It was overgrown with small trees, monstrous bushes, and innumerable briar patches. An old graveyard at the north end of the field didn’t do much for the atmosphere of the place.

"Do you know how to hunt snipe?" Chandler asked.

“Well, not really. I'm not even sure what a snipe is.”

Chandler turned to my brother. “Shit, I knew he couldn’t do anything. I don't know why I let you talk me into bringing him. He couldn’t even be the bag man.”

“Sure I can," I said. I shifted into a pathetic whine and begged, “Come on, let me.”

Chandler just stood there looking at me, as if he were deciding the fate of all mankind. “Okay, just stand in that ditch over there, with your back to the drainage pipes. We'll drive the snipes along the ditch and you bag 'em up. And don’t fall asleep!”

Sleep was the last thing on my mind as I stood there alone in the ditch in pitch darkness. The first thing on my mind was the list of creatures, real or otherwise, that would possibly have a reason for mauling a young boy.

I was in the ditch for what seemed an eternity. I expected to see the sun rise just any minute. The massive drainage pipes behind me stood ready to pour out all manner of horrors, as did the graveyard. I just stood there in the dark holding my burlap sack, knees knocking, waiting for a herd of snipes to come charging down the ditch. Chandler never did tell me what a snipe looked like.

I began to experience the crushing loneliness that only a nine-year-old can feel. I wondered what tragedy had caused Steve and Chandler to abandon me. I also wondered how Mom and Dad were taking my disappearance, if they were heartbroken or if they were already shopping for another kid. I wondered what would happen to my room.

A muffled sound to my left brought me back to reality. Something was out there. That something was also moving toward me. In seconds, my vision of a snipe grew from a small furry creature to an enormous, hate-filled predator, lusting for the taste of my blood. Since my knees had long since turned to Jello and my feet to cement, my only alternative to being eaten was to bag the snipe. As the sound moved closer to the edge of the ditch, I held the bag open and began to remember the lyrics to "Amazing Grace." The creature hesitated at the rim of the ditch and tumbled end over end into my bag. It was the Tree Dog.

Steve and Chandler were laughing when they drove up. They laughed even harder when they saw me standing in the ditch holding my bag, with the Tree Dog at my side.

"Why'd ya leave me out here all night for," I shouted. I was relieved to see them, but also mad.

_Lights and Shadows 17_
The Snipe Hunt (continued)

"It's only been thirty minutes. I'll bet you were scared to death, weren't you?" Steve said.

"No, I ain't scared. But I am telling Dad when I get home."

"Stop whining, kid," said Chandler. "It was just a joke. Get in the truck."

When we got to the trailer, I stormed in to tell on Steve. I expected Mom and Dad to sweep me up in their arms with tears of relief. Instead, Dad looked up from his paper with a stupid grin on his face. "Get any snipes?" my other brother asked, sporting the same stupid grin. I was crushed.

Several days later, I was sitting on the bench with the commercial fishermen when the subject of hunting came up. Eventually they worked their way around to snipe hunting. The men were all smiles, probably remembering when they left some frightened kid standing in a dark field for a few hours. This time when they laughed, I laughed, not because I was trying to fit in, but at the thought of my eight-year-old cousin standing alone in a dark field. I was definitely going to show him how to snipe hunt.

insight surfing on hindsight
Bill Tilman
Poetry

LOOK AT ME
I'M RIDING THE BIGGEST WAVE OF MY LIFE
I'VE NEVER FELT ANY BETTER
ON TOP OF THE WORLD
YUP, OVER THE MOON
I COMMAND MORE ATTENTION
I SPEAK WITH AN ACCENT
MANAGE TO MEND
I NOTICE THE TREND
GOT ME MORE MONEY
I CAN EVER HOPE TO SPEND
BEEN ON A HONEYMOON WEEKEND
MET ME MORE PEOPLE
MADE ME MORE FRIENDS
YUP, OVER THE MOON
I'M THE BEST I'VE EVER BEEN
CAN'T PUT A FOOT WRONG
SOMETHING BOUND TO GIVE IN
BELT TO BREAK LOOSE
SOMEHOW THE RIDE WILL END
THIS WAVE WILL WASH UP
AND I'LL SURELY REMEMBER WHEN
I WAS RIDING ON THE BIGGEST WAVE OF MY LIFE
AND HOW IT DIDN'T SCARE ME THEN.
Colorwheels
Phillip Dobbs
Mixed Media Relief
Sculpture
3-D Winner

Lights and Shadows 19
Strange Comforts
Great Summerville
Short Story

It was one of those hot nights in July: Southern-hot, Alabama humid-hot. I was lying under the cool cotton sheets waiting for a breeze to stir the yellowed lace curtains at the open window. The crickets and the dry-flies were raising a racket outside. From a couple of miles away I could hear old man Douglas' dog barking like he had something treed.

I tossed and turned and prayed for a breeze but I wouldn't go to sleep. Sleep meant nightmares and I would fight to stay awake until that first light before sunrise. When I saw that night was over and a new day was to follow as usual I could sleep until Mama called me to breakfast. This lack of sleep was taking its toll. I heard Mama remark to Aunt Geneva that I sure looked peaked for a six-year-old girl.

The nightmares had just started that summer. Poor old Mama didn't know how to handle a child, especially one that woke up screaming every night. All she knew how to do was pray so that's what she did. She would come to bed, hold my hand, and tell me to pray with her. I didn't believe in praying. I would close my eyes and bow my head, but when she got started I would sneak open my eyes and watch her mumbling in the darkness. She would say memorized things like the Lord's Prayer or the Twenty-Third Psalm. It was a strange comfort and sometimes I could sleep after that.

After my mother died I went to live in Mama and Dad's big old farmhouse. My daddy was Mama and Dad's oldest son. He was a traveling ironworker who only made it home on Christmas and the Fourth of July.

I didn't mind too much living with Mama and Dad. Mama taught me to help her in the kitchen and the garden. She would dress me up and take me visiting with her. I did not like the visiting. Mama would lecture me before we got there.

"Now you sit still and don't fidget. Mind your manners and don't forget children should be seen and not heard."

I would just say "Yes ma'am, Mama." It wouldn't have done any good to say anything else because Mama was determined that I was going to be a proper young lady even though I didn't have a mother. Oh, how I hated those long afternoons, sitting in some old lady's dark parlor listening to the neighborhood women gossip and squawk. I'd just sit there smiling in my too tight patent leather shoes and my over-starched dress. All the time I'd be wishing we could go home so I could put on my overalls and go fishing.

Going to church wasn't much better. Sitting on those hard wood pews, listening to the preacher talking fire and brimstone wasn't my favorite way to spend a summer day. That old church was always hot, even in the winter. Everyone would be fanning with those cardboard fans that had a picture of Jesus and an advertisement for the funeral home printed on them.

After church everyone would stand outside and talk for a while before going home to Sunday dinner. Mama would hold my hand and
make me stand still right beside her. It was one Sunday after church when I first heard that Aunt Geneva was coming home. I had heard Mama and Dad talk about Aunt Geneva and sometimes Mama got letters in large pink envelopes from St. Louis. I was sure surprised and curious when old nosy Mrs. Scandlyn came over to Mama and asked,

"Is it true that your daughter’s moving back here?"

Mama answered her tensely, "That's right."

"Well, I guess she’s bringing her husband home with her?"

Mama glared at her and said, "No, she isn’t."

Old Mrs. Scandlyn just clicked her tongue and shook her head before she changed the subject.

I remember the day Aunt Geneva came home. I was so excited. Mama got me up extra early and dressed me in one of my visiting dresses. It was green with kittens playing with a ball of yarn printed all over it and it tied behind with a big bow. We all got in Dad’s car for the ride to the train station in town. When we got there Mama made me sit on a bench while Dad went to check on when the train would be coming in. I watched the people in the station. A colored shoeshine boy was shining this big, red-faced man’s wingtip shoes. The red-faced man was puffing a cigar. I was fascinated. Mama gave me an elbow nudge and snapped, "Young ladies shouldn’t stare so." I quickly bowed my head to hide my blush and mumbled "Yes Ma’m."

Just then Dad came back and presented me with a peppermint stick he had bought me from a vendor. He announced that Aunt Geneva’s train would be arriving in a half-hour or so. He sat down beside me on the bench. I sucked on the sugary candy and felt it melt in my mouth. Dad put his arm around me and whispered, "Look-a-there, little Margie. That man with the cigar looks just like an old pot-belly stove, red hot and smoking." We both laughed out loud and Mama glared at us and went, "Tsk Tsk," under her breath.

Under Mama’s glare Dad got real quiet and serious and sat up straight. I did the same. I looked up at Mama’s stern face and wondered what she was thinking. Her face was all squinched up tight like she was fixing to jump into cold water. I guess she was just excited about seeing Aunt Geneva again.

Mama and Dad never told me much about Aunt Geneva but I remembered hearing Mama tell old Mrs. Mosely that Geneva was coming home. Mrs. Mosely just said, “Well, you sure have my sympathy, Martha.”

That kind of puzzled me but I didn’t dare ask Mama about it. I knew she would say I was a nosy little girl and had no business listening in on grown-up conversation so I just pushed it to the back of my mind with all the other things that didn’t make sense.

Dad took out his pocket watch and said it was almost time for the train. He took my hand and we all walked out to the platform. Mama wiped
my face with her handkerchief to get the candy off my mouth.

I got this queasy feeling in my stomach. I didn't know if it was the candy or just excitement. The train finally came rumbling and squeaking to a stop. The door opened and people started coming down the steps. I didn't know who or what to look for so I kept tugging at Dad's hand and asking "Is that her? Is that her? Where is she, Dad?" Finally he let go of my hand and walked down the platform a few steps into the arms of a beautiful woman. Mama led me toward them and said, "Margie, say hello to your Aunt Geneva."

I was speechless. I just stood there with my mouth hanging open. She was so pretty. She had long black hair and she favored my daddy in the face. She was wearing high heeled shoes and a skirt with red and white flowers on it. She even had on red nail polish and she was wearing earrings and bracelets. She bent down, scooped me up, and gave me a red lipstick kiss. She smelled of tobacco and strong perfume. She swung me around and said, "My pretty little niece. Oh, we're going to be good friends."

Having Aunt Geneva come home was the best thing that had ever happened to me. Sometimes she treated me like a little sister, other times she called me her "own baby girl." She would braid my long blonde hair.
into pigtails every morning.

I loved to watch Aunt Geneva get dressed and fix her face. She wore pretty dresses every day, with high heels and real silk stockings. She sat in front of the dresser mirror and smoked a cigarette while she put on rouge and lipstick. I would put on her high heels and clomp back and forth across the room while she got ready.

She gave me a little bottle of perfume to keep for myself. Once she even let me try her lipstick, but I had to wash it off before Mama saw me. When I told Aunt Geneva that I wanted to grow up to be just like her she laughed and said, "I hope you'll be twice as pretty and five times as smart as me."

Mama didn't seem to like Aunt Geneva spending so much time with me. One morning she marched into Aunt Geneva's room while I was watching her get dressed. I was sitting in the middle of the bed trying on Aunt Geneva's stockings. Mama glared at both of us.

"Margie, go get on your overalls so you can help me in the garden." Her tone was as angry as her face so I didn't argue.

After I walked out of the room I heard her start in on Aunt Geneva. "Geneva, I don't want you putting ideas in Margie's head. It's hard enough for your daddy and me trying to raise that little girl up right and her without a mother."

Aunt Geneva wasn't afraid to talk back, "Now Mama, I ain't doing Margie no harm. She just needs to be a kid and have some fun. You and Daddy are too protective of her. You want her to be some perfect little lady and she's just a kid."

"I just want to do a better job of raising her than I did with you and I think she can do without your high-falutin' ideas."

I went outside and waited at the garden for Mama. In a few minutes she came out the door with her sunbonnet in her hands. She grabbed a hoe and began chopping weeds with a vengeance. I went quietly to work beside her.

Sometimes Aunt Geneva could get Dad to let her drive his car to Mr. Heupul's store. She always took me along. Aunt Geneva drove, with her cat-eye sunglasses, all the windows down, and the radio blaring. Her long black hair blew in the wind and the smoke from her cigarette trailed out the window. If Dad could have seen how fast she drove that old Plymouth he would have screamed, but I loved it. I would hang out the window and try to catch the passing tree limbs or bounce up and down in the front seat and sing along with the radio.

One day I told Aunt Geneva, "I wish we could just keep on riding forever and never come back."

She laughed her funny little laugh and said, "Baby doll, sometimes I wish that, too."

That summer was one of the longest and hottest I can remember.
Strange Comforts (continued)

The best time of day was after supper when we would all sit on the porch. Dad would whittle with his pocket knife while Mama and I shelled peas, broke beans, or did some other garden work. Aunt Geneva sulked in the porch swing and smoked one cigarette after another. Mama would roll her eyes and say that old line, “Tobacco is a poison weed because the devil sowed the seed.” That just made Aunt Geneva laugh and light up another Chesterfield.

Dad believed in early to bed so Mama usually hustled me off while the chickens were still clucking and fussing on their roosts. I would lie awake for a long time, listening to Dad, Mama, and Aunt Geneva get ready for bed. When the house got quiet I would listen to the crickets talk and the cows moo. I would stare straight up into the darkness until I saw colored spots dance across the ceiling. Sometimes I would pretend that I was a beautiful princess trapped in a dark dungeon, waiting for my fairy godmother to rescue me.

I would slip into sleep in the middle of my imaginings and more often than not the nightmares would wake me. Twice I awoke to find a ghostly apparition standing by my window. It turned out to be Aunt Geneva. She shushed me and told me that she had stepped outside for some fresh air and for me to go right back to sleep. She tucked me back in bed and kissed me. Her breath smelled like Chesterfields and the whiskey Dad made me take when I had a cold.

But, even Aunt Geneva couldn’t make the nightmares go away. In fact they had been worse since she came. Now, I tried not to scream out because I knew that Mama got upset when she had to get up and calm me down.

I was outside by myself. It was pitch dark. I knew they had my mother and they were waiting to get me. I screamed for my father, “Daddy, Daddy, help me!”

Then I woke up. I realized that I was in Mama’s house in my own bed. It was still pitch dark and I was going to scream for Mama to come and turn on the light when I heard voices and a car door slam. The front door squeeked slowly open. I heard Dad’s footsteps heavy in the front parlor. He must have met Aunt Geneva at the door. I had never heard his voice so angry and deep.

My heart was still pounding from the nightmare. The sheets were damp with my sweat. I was afraid to move and afraid not to. Finally, I crept down the hall to see what was going on.

I heard Dad’s voice booming, “Dammit girl, I’m just about tired of this. Do you know what people are saying about you?”

I peeked around the corner and saw Aunt Geneva stagger. She grabbed the door facing to hold herself up. “That’s all the hell people around here can do. They poke their noses where it don’t belong and then if the gossip ain’t juicy enough they add to it.”
The front door slammed and the voices were slightly muffled. They were on the front porch. I couldn't make out what they were saying, but Dad's voice was as heavy as his footsteps and Aunt Geneva was screeching like a banshee.

I was terrified. I had never seen two people so mad. I sat on the floor in the hallway contemplating the picture on the feedstore calendar that hung there. When I crawled back into bed the voices were still rising and falling in a crazy sing-song. I squashed my old feather pillow over my head to drown out the noise. I thought it was time to do some praying of my own. I prayed that Dad wouldn't hurt Aunt Geneva. I prayed that Dad would never be as
... all nightmares get hazy and not so scary after a while.

Strange Comforts (continued)

mad at me as he was then. I prayed that Aunt Geneva wouldn't go away. I prayed for sleep and I slept.

The next day Aunt Geneva was gone. Dad walked around the house all day looking somber and thoughtful. He didn't offer to take me fishing or for a walk. Mama busied around nervously in the kitchen. She didn't sing her hymns like she usually did when she worked in the kitchen. Everything felt quiet and heavy, like the air right before a thunderstorm. I was terrified of breaking the silence. I tried to stay outside and out of the way.

For two nights I didn't sleep at all. I had plenty to think about. That third night at supper I worked up enough courage to ask meekly, between forkfuls of peas, "Where's Aunt Geneva been these past few days?" You would thought from the looks on their faces, that Preacher Jackson had just announced that the second coming would definitely be next Sunday. Mama tensed up and gave a shiver. Dad stared straight at me wide-eyed and open-mouthed. After an eternity of silence, Dad said, "She's gone back to St. Louis, to her husband. Now finish your supper before it gets cold." I finished my peas and cornbread in silence, not daring to ask all the other questions in my mind.

About a week had passed since that night and all nightmares get hazy and not so scary after a while. Mama had packed me off to my third cousin's house for a two-day visit. My third cousin, Howard Theophilus Barnett, was two years older and fifty times tougher than me. We wrestled and raced and I always ended up with skinned knees, bruises, and a feeling of never being able to measure up. In spite of that, Howard Theophilus, "H.T.," was a true friend. He was my only childhood playmate.

On that particular day we were playing in the treehouse. I was pretending that I was a movie star actress in my penthouse. I puffed on a twig I had picked, held my head back, and blew pretend smoke rings the way I'd seen Aunt Geneva do. H.T. told me I would burn in hell because Preacher Jackson said smoking is a sin. He couldn't scare me with his outlandish lies. "Well," I said. I was naughty even then. "My Aunt Geneva smokes and I don't think she's going to hell."

H.T. just gave me a big crude guffaw of a laugh. "Don't you know nothing, Margie? Don't you know where your Aunt Geneva is?"

"Sure I do," I asserted firmly, defensively. "She's gone back to her husband in St. Louis."

"Well, everybody around here is saying that Geneva Barnett took up with old man Douglas' nigger farm hand. My daddy said that they're living over by the railroad crossing and she's gonna have a nigger baby." He laughed like he had just won a footrace by pushing me down and trampling all over me.

I caught him with a left hook he never knew I had. Even then the full implication of what he said didn't hit me. "Liar! Stupid liar!" I screamed.

I ran all the way home, almost two miles. I fought tears all the way.
When I reached the edge of Mama's garden I dropped to my knees and crawled back into the grape arbor. I collapsed, sobbing, on the ground.

Later Dad came walking through the garden calling like the voice of God. I don't know how he found my hiding place or how he knew to come looking for me. I crawled out of the grape vines still sniffing. He said, "I thought you might like to ride to the store, Margie girl." I nodded and took his hand.

All the way to the store Dad didn't ask anything about why I'd run home from H.T.'s house. I stared out the window and didn't volunteer any information.

At the store Mr. Heupul handed me what was usually my favorite treat, a Chocolate Soldier and a box of animal crackers. I accepted this offering glumly and went back to the shining Plymouth to wait for Dad.

When we started back home I remembered—the railroad crossing. We had crossed it on the way to the store but I hadn't looked. I hadn't looked to see just in case, what I knew I wouldn't see, couldn't see. (She's gone back to St. Louis, to her husband.)

Before we got to the railroad crossing I closed my eyes. (I won't look. I just won't look.) As we passed that tarpaper shack I opened my eyes and looked back. Aunt Geneva's red and white flowered skirt was flapping on the clothesline like a big guffawing laugh in the wind.

You agree
No, angry me
Go ahead
Point your finger
To my empty index
I'm pissed at you, too
stepping on these toes
of mine, now
it isn't at all fair
with your over-sized grind,
Why don't you look
Where I'm going
At my way and mend
The wound so deep
With your crossed arm cynicism
Make up your god's mind
open the blind palms
that never touch the light;
you only grit and shove
show so brightly
irascible teeth of drudgery
LEAVE ME OUT OF IT, PLEASE.

What'd I Do
Bill Tilman
Poetry
Extra

Lights and Shadows 27
**frostbite**
Suzanne Tidwell
Poetry
*Extra*

yes, *me* down,
  me depressed,
  me sad,
  me alone,
no, *me* lonely.

me, sitting,
  wrapped in the emptiness of another friday night.
i get so hot, wrapped in something that heavy—I'm almost
  suffocating in nothing.

and yet, unless I wrap myself in something (even emptiness) I'm cold,
  like a child with no skin, caught in a blizzard,
  freezing, ice-and-death-cold,
  yet so fragile, delicate, accessible,
  open,
  the wrong touch could kill.

**Doggy**
Jo Ann Turner
Poetry
*Second Place*

I never meant to harm you when I pulled into the drive.
I didn't get to tell you, you just wagged your tail and died.
I held you in my arms, my face was buried in your fur.
Till the neighbors came outside and said, wonder what's wrong with her.
we walked hand in hand through the snow that evening,
decorated by sifted-sugar flakes, laughing,
me smiling up to your endless brown eyes.
we would catch the lace-snow candies in our mouths,
surprised each time by the cold-sweet melting nothing taste.
then we would kiss, a cold-warm melting sweet taste and
feeling,
the white snow-down on your brown curls, on my blue scarf—
we were a cat stevens song.
are you still singing?

I WANT YOU TO KNOW
WHAT A WONDERFUL TIME I HAD
LAST NIGHT
STILL NOT CERTAIN WHAT
THE ULTIMATE DECISION WAS
WE CAME TO
SURE OUR METHOD OF REACHING
THAT DECISION WAS UNFAIR
TO US BOTH,
GOVERNED NEITHER BY REASONABLE
WAYS NOR TRUE INTENT
EVEN THOUGH I DID
AS I SAY HAVE A BALL
I FEEL STUPID AND
SELF-INDULGENT YET STRANGELY
EXHILARATED AND WORSE
I HAVE NO IDEA
HOW YOU FEEL;
IT DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT TO ME
TO ALTER THIS SITUATION
SO RADICALLY
WITHOUT GIVING
IT SOME SENSIBLE IMPROVISATION
THOUGH I FOR ONE
AM READY FOR MORE
"I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING"
IS NEVER AN EXCUSE BUT
OFTEN A FACT AND I'D LIKE THE CHANCE
TO SAY IT SO NOT ONLY YOU'LL KNOW
BUT SO WILL I,
THANKS AGAIN FOR THE EVENING
IT WAS SOME FUN.
Everyone in Brewster Pike knew what the doctor had told Vera last Monday morning. Something about a blood disease. Nothing could be done. The news spread fast. The 77-year-old great grandmother-of-two had, if she was lucky, four months to live. Folks around were sorry, no question, but it wasn’t like she was 29. It was figured that she could easily die of natural causes in four months.

Vera sat in the front seat of her daughter’s parked ’78 Skylark picking the clear polish off her fingernails and watching Will Myers through the Rexall window. Who would’ve ever dreamed he would turn out looking like he did—flaky, bald head; red, pockmarked nose; and size 48 britches. She chuckled to herself: the best looking and most popular athlete at Brewster Pike High. Although he was 10 years younger than she, she remembered him well. It seemed like only yesterday that he was strutting down the street with bouncy Lorna Crump on one arm and a red basketball letter on the sleeve of the other. She just might’ve gone out with him if he’d ever thought to ask, even though the town busybodies would’ve had a heyday. “Wonder how long it’s been since a girl’s even looked his way,” she thought with a good amount of pleasure.

A tall, brittle-haired woman opened the car door and folded herself in behind the steering wheel. She smelled of air-conditioning and eucalyptus. “Here Mother, you need to take two of these now and another one in four hours.”

“I tol’ you Gracie there ain’t no need for me to be takin’ any stuff. Silly as all get out.”

The druggist pulled down the green transparent shade over the storefront window to keep out the glare. It was hot in the north Georgia mountains: the slowly-revolving sign over the People’s Trust Bank claimed it was 88 degrees at 10:27.

“Mother, I know I can’t force you to take your medicine, but show a little sense. If Dr. Brueber wanted you to take this stuff it must be for a reason. I don’t want you feeling uncomfortable or nothing.” She opened up the white drug-store bag and pulled out a brown, plastic bottle with opening instructions written all over the cap. “Here, I got you a Mountain Dew to take them with.”

Vera watched her tall, boney daughter pull out into the Brewster Pike traffic, chewing the inside of her cheeks. She always did that whenever she was nervous or angry. Vera thought she looked like a riled-up wasp.

“I need to stop by Piggly Wiggly and pick up some apples for a fruit salad tonight. Can you think of anything else we need, Mother?”
Vera smiled at her daughter's attempt to include her in on the decision making. Gracie had never asked for her opinion or advice on anything as long as she could remember. When she decided it was time to marry Thomas she showed her mother the exact pattern of the dress she would wear and also the material she had already picked out at Shelia's Fabric Mart. It was never "Mother, which do you like best" or "Should I carry orange blossoms or pink roses?" Even when Sybil was born Gracie never needed to ask the typical new-mother questions like, how warm should you make the baby's bath water or how do you get them to stop crying all night. The possibility that she may need someone's assistance never crossed her mind. Four years ago, when Vera tripped and broke her hip going out to the mailbox, Gracie didn't ask anyone what would be best for her mother. It was obvious, the old woman needed to be put in Oakwood Nursing Home.
Vera looked over at her daughter. "If you can find some of them canned blueberries I'll whip us up some hot muffins to go with our supper. And get some real butter too. I've a hankerin' lately for some real butter."

"Now, Mother," Gracie gave her a stern glance. "I'm not going to have you making muffins. If we have them, I'll get Sybil to make them. You're just to take it easy."

It was almost noon when they pulled into the driveway of the large, white two-story frame house. They parked in the shade of the blooming mimosa tree and when she got out Vera reached up and picked one of the silky pink flowers. They always smelled like watermelon to her but she could never find anyone else who thought so. Two blonde, pig-tailed girls rushed out from the back yard. "Nama! Nama!" They grabbed her around the legs. "Come see the tree house we built."

"Beverly. Beth. You girls go on back and play and leave big grandma alone. She needs to rest."

Vera hiked up the elastic waistband of her yellow polyester slacks. "Gracie!" Her large gray eyes looked soft and moist. "If I can't be treated like normal people and be allowed to play with my own granddaughter's children then I'd just as soon die right here and now, right here on the driveway. And then you'd really have a pretty mess."

The front screen door slammed, marking the arrival of another tall, brittle-haired woman. She wore a sleeveless cotton shirt exposing white, freckled arms to the hot sun. "Hi, Grandmother. You look so pretty." She placed a cool, tight-lipped kiss on Vera's soft, wrinkled skin. "Let's go in and get out of this heat. I'll get grandma's suitcase."

Inside, the house looked like a tomb after the bright sunshine. Vera stretched her eyes open wide and still couldn't see. Being that it was lunchtime she tried feeling her way to the kitchen like a blind woman, her arms stretched out going over the walls and furniture like bug feelers.

"My God, Mother! What on earth are you doing?" Grade's voice shot through darkness like a siren entering a tunnel.

"Well, Girl, if I could see I'd probably have some idea. Where the hell do you keep the winders in this place?"

"Grandma, it's not really that dark in here." Sybil gave her mother a suffering look. "It's just bright outside. And we've got to keep the curtains pulled for now because Mama just bought a new living room suite and doesn't want it to fade."

"Well, hell, who cares if'n it fades or not. No one can see it no how."

"Mother, I don't know where you learned to use that kind of language but you're going to have to control it. We've got young ears around here. Sybil, get that light switch and let's start lunch. Mother, you rest on the couch . . . well, maybe you'd be more comfortable in the La-Z-Boy. I thought it was best to keep it even if it doesn't go with the new stuff."
Vera looked at the brown plastic chair and clicked her teeth. She always had to have such a fight with those reclining chairs before they learned who was boss.

She sat down, grabbed a hold of the slightly-oily arms and pushed hard with her fanny. It was tougher than birthing Gracie on that four-poster bed in that house over on Horn Street. Poor old KayKay. She had grabbed the colored maid's arms so tight that she left white stripes on her wrists. She was groaning and gritting her teeth when the maid hollered out in a desperate high-pitched voice, "Now Missy, you try an' hol' on 'til the doctuh git heah. I ain't nevah done this a 'fore."

Of course Gracie came when she was ready—screaming and bossy right from the start. Weren't southern mothers and daughters supposed to have some sort of special bond? It seemed like she had just read somewhere, in some ladies magazine or the Sunday Parade, about how mothers in the south seemed to have a unique, understanding relationship with their daughters, a mutual respect for each other. She figured it was probably because she was born in North Carolina. Maybe that wasn't considered the south. Maybe she wasn't a southern mother after all.

She grunted as she clutched the chair arms and pushed. The feet prop came up but she couldn't get the La-Z-Boy to lay back. "Lazy, my foot. You're just plain ol' ornery. Ornery as a jackass in warm mud."

She heard the violin music come from the TV set, introducing her favorite soap opera. She stopped struggling momentarily. At least here were some folks who seemed to have as much trouble with their kids as she did. She didn't know what Julie was going to do about David. He was a real trial. But then Gracie seemed to cause her nearly as much grief—coming to visit her at the old people's home every Sunday after church, as regular as clockwork, bringing either pound cake (how she hated pound cake) or raisin oatmeal cookies (nearly as bad) and some sort of toiletry thing: one week it was Prell, the next Secret antiperspirant, and the following Polident. What she really wanted was a bottle of Dubonet and that Helena Rubenstein eye kit with the eye shadow, mascara, liner and eyelash curler all in one box. But a great grandmother of two only need to concern herself with keeping her false teeth clean and eating her pound cake with a carton of milk.

Yep, she thought, even though Julie's son was probably strangling every young girl in Salem, you won't see him bringing his mom oatmeal cookies with each visit. And you can be sure that when he does sneak by at night (the authorities would catch him in the daytime) he won't be chatting about Vancy Jones's gallbladder operation or revealing in horror that Kate Bennett, the church organist, wore a spaghetti-stringed sundress right in front of the congregation and wondering how on God's green earth could she have been wearing a bra. Strapless bra? Why, that's just nearly as sinful.

David was telling Julie that he was innocent, that he wasn't the Salem strangler. Julie wept and said she knew it all along.
"There could be worse things," Vera mumbled to herself.

She watched Smiley Smith parade his line of "like-new, cleaner'n ant's ear, barely-used, low-mileage cars" across her TV set. And for only $1785 she herself could drive away with "this here Buick you see a shinin' and a gleamin' like the day it rolled outta' the factory. It's a deal Folks and it won't be here long. Come by today and see Smiley for deals that'll leave ya' grinning'" (cut to the gleaming, shining Buick—fade).

Old Smiley, or Chester Winfield as Vera had always known him, had been stealing folks blind for years in Brewster Pike and pretty much everyone knew it. It's just that he was one of them, and they'd rather lose $125 to Smiley than drive over to Ellijay and slap down their hard-earned cash to some outsider who probably got his schooling in Atlanta. And you can't even consider that the south.

It was late afternoon when Vera woke up from her nap feeling damp. Beads of perspiration stood out on her upper lip and her neck and underarms were wet. She could hear Gracie and Sybil downstairs snapping beans for supper with the TV going.

After "Days of Our Lives" had gone off Gracie had shuffled her mother off to a nap along with Beth and Beverly. Vera didn't put up much of an argument because she had a lot of things to think about. It must have been the dream that woke her. Fred was wearing his Saturday-night blue trousers with his red and blue striped suspenders. His white shirt was starched so stiff the collar kept scraping his jawbone. On those nights when he was dressed like that all the women would cluster around him and he'd come away smelling like their perfume—like magnolia blossoms. He was leaning against one of the white pillars at the dance pavilion, his hands thrust deep in his pockets stretching his suspenders to dead yet. His voice seemed to be coming from a well.

"Why ain't ya' a dancin'?" All of a sudden she could hear fiddling and banjo music coming from the distance. "Well, hell, Sweetie pie, I done been gone for nigh on nine years now and I'm having a swell ol' time. Ye' ain't even dead yet. Now why ain't ya' a dancin'?"

She tried to explain that she had to look after Gracie, do the house cleaning, start the garden, and canning...

It was all real amusing to him. He threw back his head and laughed and laughed - his adam's apple keeping time with the fiddles and banjos. His laughter was out of control. She wanted him to stop.

Suddenly the bedroom was quiet and she could hear Gilligan and the Captain downstairs on TV shouting back and forth followed by that unnatural canned laughter. Gracie and Sybil were snapping beans.

Her door creaked open very slowly and she watched as two large blue eyes peeked around the corner. "Nama, are you asleep?"

"Come on in, Sugar, I'm 'wake." Vera sat up in bed and the little girl crawled in next to her.
"Nama, I'm scared. Mama told me you may be going away soon where we won't even be able to visit you on Sundays. Are you going where daddy went?"

A warm breeze stirred the yellow curtains, carrying the scent of the watermelon mimosa. "No, Sweetheart, you pa's in Dahlonega." Her large calloused hands caressed the young girl's silky hair. "You remember, your ma tol' you that your daddy loves you and Beth very much but he needed a new life."

"Do you need a new life too, Nama? Are you leaving Brewster Pike like Daddy?"

Vera looked at her five-year-old great granddaughter and tried to figure some way to answer without getting those two women downstairs all riled up.

"Well, Honey, to tell you the truth, when a person, like myself for instance, who's been living in one bitty town all her life, 77 years mind you, doing always what's right so's not to be a stirrin' up any horns' nests, visiting the old folks when you're young so's the young will visit you when you're old, goin' to church each'n every Sunday shakin' those dry hands, those dusty hands, and smilin' into their blessed faces—why Sugar, when a
person gets to be my age—some people'll say I've lived to a ripe, old age and should be a thankin' the Lord, and I am mind you, I am. Well you know Honey, you know, no one's can live forever—you even learn that in Sunday school."

She took out a yellowing handkerchief that had been stuffed in the pocket of her cotton blouse and dabbed the corners of her mouth. "But who's to tell," she continued. "Sometimes even old folks are left with a few choices. All their life they been travelin' down one little path and then when they see it's about to dead end they get scairt—'cause they ain't seen nothing. Some might even consider turnin' off and trying them other trails that jut off'n the side and goes Lord knows where, but that takes a load of nerve."

The little girl looked thoughtful, sucking on a strand of blonde hair. "Are me and Beth not going to see you anymore? You're not going to die, are you? Beth says you are, she says you got something wrong with you and you're going to die real soon."

The words landed on Vera like a falling oak limb on a dry blade of grass. They settled in her chest making it hard for her to breathe. She knew she needed to get outside—it was safe outside; an old woman couldn't die
outside where the sun was blinding bright, and bluejays were screeching at
the gray squirrels, stealing into their territory. Her dark, wood-panelled
room was suffocating. She took a big swallow and a long, deep breath so
she would stay sitting on the soft mattress that was sucking to her form like
quicksand—holding her so she couldn't go anyway.

"I'm an old woman, Beverly, and old women just don't last forever.
But don't you go a worrying none. I'm not going to up and die tomorrow.
You better run along back to your own room 'til your mama calls you. We'll
both get a whooping if they catch us socializin' during naptime."

She winked a thin, wrinkled eyelid at the girl and gave her a playful
pop on the behind. The little girl wrapped her soft, plump arms around
Vera's neck and snuggled into the old woman's neck. "You're different than
Mama and Grandma, Nama. I love you."

Vera dropped the bomb at suppertime. She was dishing string beans
into her plate, making sure not to look at her daughter when she spoke. "I
want to go into town tomorrow, Gracie, and look at a car." She could hear
the electric clock over the kitchen sink buzzing away the seconds.

"What are you talking about, Mother?" She had finished chewing the
fried steak she had in her mouth, carefully wiped her lips with a paper
napkin, folded it deliberately and laid it by her plate, and then turned a cold
stare on Vera before she asked the question.

Vera felt like a caterpillar that was about to be trapped. She could
see the glass jar coming down over her closer and closer but she didn't think
she could move fast enough.

"I dreamt about your daddy this afternoon and I must tell you he was
mighty disappointed with me. He said I should quit lettin' other folks take
care of me and get out and see some of the world a 'fore I die." She didn't
figure it'd hurt to explain the vision as she saw fit. "You know you pa was
always a man to get the mosi out of livin'."

"Yes, and he never amounted to anything either," Gracie spat out
the words.

Sybil dropped her fork and quickly pushed back her chair. She
nearly ran around the table gathering up Beverly and Beth. The three
disappeared out the kitchen door then Vera heard the TV set come on extra
loud.

"Gracie, I'll not let you talk about your father like that," her voice,
low and dignified with hurt, shook slightly. "He loved us and took care of
us, and I'll not have you degratin' his name. He was you father and you
outta be ashamed."

She stood up and started scraping leftovers into one dish, stacking
up the emptied plates.

"Now you just listen, Mother. I'd love to sit here and discuss Daddy
with you but I'll not do it. Right now, I'm telling you you're not getting a car.
You're too old, you're sick and anything could happen to you while you're

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Everyday (continued)

...behind the wheel. You might black out and kill somebody's child. I'm sure
God would judge harshly somebody who selfishly thought of her own
pleasure before considering the safety of others.”

She reached for Vera's hand, patted it several times and then placed
it back on the tablecloth. “Now, let's forget this discussion and go outside
and sit on the front porch awhile.” She smiled and behind her thick glasses
her small eyes looked relieved.

The next morning Gracie left the house early. It was her day to help
with the cooking at the church for the Wednesday night dinner. She came
up to Vera's room before she left, her hair pulled back into a starched bun.
She gave instructions for her mother to relax and enjoy herself. And if she
needed anything she could always reach her at the church basement or if it
was real important, like she needed somebody quick (at this point she gave
Vera a sad, knowing look), she could always call Mrs. Tiddle next door.
Vera listened silently, her eyes peering out from the fat, soft feather pillows.

Sybil was the next to leave. She stood at the bedroom doorway and
explained that she had to go in half a day to Sam Preachers, the CPA over
in the professional complex, and do a little filing and typing. She was going
to drop Beth off at Sylvester Elementary School and Beverly was going to
playschool for the morning. Sybil knew that the last thing her grandmother
needed was a rambunctious 5-year-old running around, tiring her out.

When the house was quiet, Vera threw the sheets off her and lay
listening to the morning sounds out her window. Dogs were barking at the
garbage truck the next block over and the squealing brakes of a school bus
signalled each stop to pick up a child.

She was tense and excited as she got off the bed, slipping her feet
into her pink terry cloth mules. She creamed her face and set her dentures
in a glass of blue water to clean. She took out her vinyl Samsonite suitcase
from beneath the bed and set it on the dresser top. She had decided last
night not to unpack. She put on clean underwear and stood in front of the
oval mirror trying to decide what to wear. Something special. But most of
the clothes were special, even though they were old and shapeless. They
were as much a part of her as her false teeth and auburn hair tint, probably
more so. That faded, paisley-print shirtdress, for instance, seemed to have
more of her spirit in it than she herself had standing there in her bra,
derpants, and pantyhose. It sometimes scared her to think that when she
took off her clothes at night her personality lay in a heap on the floor, that
she wasn't anybody until the next morning when she slipped back into one
of those shapeless, well-worn garments.

She decided on the brown paisley dress and then, because the day
was special, she put on her light blue, polyester blazer over it. She hadn't
tried that before but it looked pretty good. She almost could pass for a
saleslady at one of those tiny boutiques in Ellijay.

She looked at the clock. She had to hurry. She tissued off her face
and put her teeth in. On Sybil’s dressing table she found what she needed—mascara, rouge and lipstick. She spread the bright purple lip color heavily on her mouth, trying to keep it out of her creases, rubbing her thick index finger around the edge of her lips. When she put on the thick black mascara her bottom and upper lashes kept sticking together but when they dried she was able to pry them apart. But it was the rouge that made the real difference. It wasn’t that greasy stuff in a pot like she used to wear a long time ago but a soft powder that you put on with a long-handled brush. It made her seem young and breathless. She looked at herself in the full-length mirror on the closet door in Sybil’s room. She was pleased with the way she looked. Fred would be proud of her. She was sure he was somewhere back there watching her, making sure she got her last chance.

She was sitting in the kitchen writing a short note to Gracie when the taxi honked outside. She hurriedly scribbled the remainder—“I’ll give you a call when I get to where I’m going. Don’t worry. Kiss the little girls for me. Yours, Vera.”

The driver came around the side of the car to help with the suitcase.
“Well, hello Vera. Where can I take you today? Looks like you’re going on a vacation.”

She picked a mimosa blossom and pinned it to the lapel of her jacket.

“Kinda’ Jeff. But first I wants to go to the People’s Bank and then I want you to take me to Smiley’s.”

She was quite pleased with the way she’d dickered old Chester down on that light blue Bel Air. Although it was a ’65 model it sure looked clean and even underneath the hood everything looked spotless. He wanted $550 but she wasn’t born yesterday. He took $475 after she pretended like she was going to leave—twice. Even the radio still worked.

She was bursting with excitement. She had never been on her own heading somewhere with a suitcase in the backseat. Matter-of-fact she’d never driven a car without someone else being in it—Fred telling her to look out for every car that came within eyeshot of her, and Gracie catching her breath at every intersection and putting on imaginary brakes.

She had thought about it awhile last night and decided that the best thing to do was to head down to Valdosta and see if her cousin June was still living. And if not, well she was practically on the Florida border. She’d go on down to Orlando and see what all the hoopla was about. Mrs. Beecher at the nursing home said she’d never seen the likes of that amusement park they had down there.

She had the first day all planned out (of course she was going to be flexible): She’d stop for lunch in Jasper, eat a sandwich or something but not a hamburger. Then she’d take her time and look at the sights. She probably wouldn’t make Atlanta before dark so she’d stop and get supper and a room around Marietta. Looking at the map, she noted she wouldn’t have to go through Atlanta unless of course she took a fancy to.

She saw a little vegetable stand on the road up ahead and decided to stop and stretch her legs and buy some peaches. She could eat them on the way. It was a good thing she thought to bring some Kleenexes with her.

An old man and woman sat in lawn chairs underneath the metal-roofed lean-to. They both nodded in greeting as she got out of her car. She stepped carefully over the loose gravel which only served to stir up the red dust underneath.

“How much your peaches?” Vera asked, studying a basket of plump, fuzzy fruit.

“$4.75 for a basket. $3.25 for a sack.” The old man spat out of the side of his mouth, then wiped the brown juice off his gray, stubbled-chin with the back of his hand.

“Well how many do I get in a sack?” Vera was disgusted with the man’s lack of manners. He hadn’t even bothered to get up and at least pretend like he was interested in having her business. His wife just sat there hump-shouldered, chewing on a snap bean and staring down the road.
“‘Bout six in a sack.” He spat again.
“I think I’ll wait. I’m headin’ down towards Jasper. I’ll just get ’em later on.”
“Suit yourself.”

She carefully picked her way back to her blue car. Things were different now. She could do anything she wanted and she didn’t have to do anything she didn’t want to do. She could stop and buy peaches if she wanted them, but she didn’t have to buy peaches from a filthy old man just because they try and make you feel obligated. In Brewster Pike she might have bought a sack almost like she was paying a toll, just for stopping, but not anymore. She was doing things her way now. She didn’t owe anyone.

A brown and silver state patrol car pulled alongside the vegetable stand and two beefy officers got out strutting towards the couple.

“Hey, Sam. Ruth. Gonna be ‘nother hot ‘un.”

Vera closed her car door quickly, feeling nervous and uneasy. She adjusted the rear-view mirror before starting the engine. She wanted to look calm, unconcerned.

“Howdy, ma’am.” She felt the large, uniformed-man’s weight rock the car as he propped his hands on her window ledge. Her face looked old and gray in the reflection of his mirrored sunglasses.

“Mind if I see your driver’s license?”

He took the plastic card from her trembling hand.

“Vera, did you know your license expired four years ago? Also, you got a daughter back at Brewster Pike that’s worried sick ‘bout you. I’m sure you’re anxious to go back and put her mind to ease. Why don’t you let Belvin here drive you back home so’s you can just sit back and take it easy. I’ll be followin’ right behind you.”

Vera leaned slumped against the car door and picked the clear polish off her nails. She watched the officer lazily eating a plump, fuzzy peach while drops of juice bounced on to his stretched, button-tugging tan shirt.

They seemed to fall in slow motion—one drop. And then another.

One thou-sand . . . two thou-sand . . .

She could almost hear Fred laughing.
**Water Dreams**

Greta Summerville
Poetry

I awoke from warm dreams
Before I was born,
Swimming.

Birth thrust me
Into a cold dry world,
Screaming.

All my life
A desert wanderer,
Searching.

I dream of water
Where there is none.
I dream of drowning,
Diving into that deep sleep.

When death comes,
I know
It will be darkness warm,
And water closing in.

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**Raindrop Love**

John H. Masterson
Poetry

Living separate dreams you’ll never
Become a flowing River; for
one of you will evaporate into
the clouds
While the other disperses
in the crack of a sidewalk to
be the drink of a wild weed
There.

Live the same dream and
you both shall flow
down the river together
To live in the endless sea
—forever.
Rosemary could not scream. Not that there was any immediate reason why she should be screaming. She wasn’t in any danger. She wasn’t frightened. In fact, she was washing dishes, which certainly made her want to scream, but it wasn’t your average goose-flesh causing, hair-on-end, breath-quickening situation. The fact was, she decided, she didn’t have the vital part of the body necessary to produce a really blood-curdling scream. Was there such a thing as a scream bone? A scream muscle? Whatever it took, Rosemary decided she didn’t have it. All she could produce was a sort of “Yuuuuuh!” in a tight unkeyed monotone.

Rosemary couldn’t understand why life had cheated her so singularly. Her mother could scream. She could emit sounds reminiscent of a Wagnerian heroine at the blink of an eye. Her father had cauliflower ears like an old boxer from the steady assault of sound. He sometimes had a slightly punch-drunk look in his eyes too, like he heard bells where no bells were. Rosemary knew, though, that it wasn’t bells her father heard. It was screaming.

Melody, her sister, could scream like a firetruck. She had been born screaming and had hardly stopped in all the years since. Any excitement was enough to send her voice ascending the scale to pitches past the human ear’s ability to hear. She had quite a following among the dogs of the neighborhood though.

“I will learn to scream!” Rosemary told herself with feeling. “I am a reasonably intelligent, fairly competent woman, and if life has shortchanged me, it is up to me to do something about it! If I had been born with only one arm, I wouldn’t have waited this long to have a prosthesis made! If my vision were poor, I would certainly have glasses made to help me see! Having a scream is no different. I’ll do it!”

Rosemary looked through the Yellow Pages in vain for Screaming Aids, Screaming Teachers, Help for the Screaming Impaired, Screamers’ Anonymous, Screams for Rent. There was nothing. Could it be that no one was concerned with those poor underprivileged souls who were unable to produce even a peep of a scream?

Rosemary’s husband, Gordon, was sympathetic, and offered consoling clucks and understanding pats on the forehead. Rosemary hated to be patted on the forehead. Gordon assured Rosemary that her deficiency (as she was beginning to think of it) didn’t matter to him at all. “I didn’t marry a coloratura. So what? You’ll never have to scream as long as I’m around.”

That sounded good. In theory. But in practice it was another story. The day when another car dashed heedlessly across three lanes of traffic and forced Rosemary and Gordon off the road, all she could do was clutch the seat with her fingernails and rumble like an orgasmic cow: “Oopf! Oopf! Oopf!” Gordon had to admit that, somehow, it would have been more psyche-satisfying to have heard a shriek of panic. Panic, Rosemary had. Shriek, she had not.

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Screaming
Norman Hollis
Photograph
Honorable Mention
The next week when Rosemary found herself jammed in the front seat of the car between her mother and Melody on their way to a bridge game, she became intensely aware of how different she was from the other two. Her mother and sister had twin red heads of high-piled jiggling curls which bounced like metronomes marking the tempo of their two-of-a-kind larger-than-life voices. Their bodies were matched dumplings of soft pink flesh, and even their choice of clothes ran to the same silky flowing gowns that made them appear to float several inches above the ground. No red curls for Rosemary. Plain straight brown hair hung down on her skinny neck. Her small-bosomed, thin body made her feel like a dun colored wren perched between two magnificent cardinals. Then there was the matter of her voice. No dulcet tones. No heroic volume. No screams.

Rosemary's neck ached from turning from first one to the other as their conversation played around her. It was like listening to a tennis match. Near the presto movement of their bravura discussion, Rosemary heard one sentence separate itself from the others. Melody was speaking:

"I have decided to give Celeste voice lessons. She is ten now, and old enough to..."

Voice lessons! Of course! That could be the answer for her too. Surely once she had learned to use her voice to achieve those liquid golden tones in lilting melody she could reproduce those same sounds in heartfelt screams.

"I've been thinking about voice lessons too," she inched herself into the conversation for the first time.

"Voice lessons? Really? You? Why? I mean, at your age!" Her mother arched her neck to one side and peered at her as if she didn't recognize this strange person who impersonated her daughter.

Rosemary felt several more years settle themselves upon her shoulders. "What do you mean, at my age? Besides, it's not my age that's an issue. It's my voice."

"I can't think why you would want to take voice lessons either," chimed in Melody, her voice rising to claim the attention of the neighborhood. "Why, my Gerald was just saying the other day that he believed every woman should take up estate planning as a sideline. But voice? Everyone has a voice. Just use what you've got!"

"Don't be silly, Melody!" caroled Rosemary's mother as her voice climbed the octave so that its timbre peaked over Melody's volume. "Rosemary isn't interested in estate planning. What is estate planning anyway? Sounds like you are planning your poor husband's demise or something. French cooking lessons are the thing for our Rosemary."

"Mama, I know your generation thinks anything to do with being a better wife and homemaker is good for all women, but I happen to know—Gerald told me himself—that if a woman is smart today, she will..."
"Melody, will you keep Gerald out of this argument? This is just for the women of the family, and, heaven knows, Gerald isn't even in the family if you get right down to it . . ."

Rosemary leaned back into the thick upholstery of the car and released her mind from the captivity of voices while the splendidly noisy verbiage flowed around her. She imagined the words taking form and piling up in the car around them. Soon their legs and feet were covered with words, then their bodies, and finally all that could be seen were two red heads, curls shaking and reverberating to the sympathetic sound waves that bounced around the car. They seemed unaware of the crush of words, unaware of Rosemary's silence; and, for the rest of the ride, continued to spar in elegant counterpoint.

Rosemary began her voice lessons with Madame Maria Frelinghuysen that very week. She spent the first lesson repeating scales and arpeggios sung first by the piano, then by Madame Frelinghuysen. Rosemary lent her whole mind and throat to the task, and felt that she carried it off fairly successfully until Madame Frelinghuysen told her that she was too tense, too tight.

"It's all in the loose throat, my dear," she informed Rosemary with somber nods of her aristocratic head. "Loosen! Loosen!"

Rosemary loosened and loosened. She felt so loose that her knees couldn't agree which one would bear her weight at the moment, so neither of them did, and she sat down suddenly on a small stool in front of the piano.

"Up! Up!" commanded the venerable Madame. "Bend over from the waist, like so. Let the arms and shoulders droop forward. Shake the head back and forth to free up the muscles in the neck and shoulders." She demonstrated the posture with such energy that Rosemary giggled in spite of herself. Madame looked like the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Rosemary cleared her throat and quickly assumed the position. She shook her head and dangled her arms with dedication. She felt decidedly loose.

"This week one must practice, practice, practice! To achieve the tonal quality, one must open the throat. Relax the muscles. Don’t forget!" Madame Frelinghuysen made it sound like a matter of national security that she not forget to practice her scales.

Rosemary practiced her scales the next morning while she drove the kindergarten carpool. She felt pretty good about the sounds she was beginning to produce. When they reached the school, Rob, her five-year-old son, lingered behind the other four kids when they scrambled from the car. When they were out of sight he implored earnestly. "Mom, wouldn't you make those noises in the car with my friends anymore? They think you're wacko." Rob gave her a quick hug and started to leave the car. As a second thought he looked back at her and asked, "Is it your sinuses again?" and ran into the school without waiting to hear her reply.
That afternoon Rosemary was a leader for a nature walk with the Brownie troop of which her eight-year-old daughter, Anabel, was a member. The freedom and openness of the woods seemed like an ideal place to practice her vocal exercises. Since Rosemary was basically a rather shy person, she tried to hum the scales quietly under her breath, but the inattentive chatter of the girls gave her heart, and soon, to her amazement, she heard herself answering the songs of the birds with scales and trills of her own. Just as she felt she was really getting some heart into the thing, Mildred Forbisher, the other leader of the troop, asked her to wait until they were off the trail to yodel because the noise was scaring the birds and squirrels away. After all, that was what they wanted the girls to see, wasn’t it?

Practicing at home was no better. The dog howled dismally, and the cat laid his ears back until he looked like an angered wasp and fled hastily from the room. Once her struggling scales caused a soufflé to fall. It was not a good week for Rosemary.

When she had her next lesson, Madame Frelinghuysen announced to the world at large that Rosemary had been a slacker about her practicing. “Unless we practice, even Madame cannot help one. One should save one’s money and buy instead a wok. It would do one more good.”

Rosemary left the studio in humiliation. She needed bolstering up. She needed approval. She needed pity. She needed . . . Mama!

When she arrived at the address the apartment was so silent that Rosemary checked the number on the doorframe to see if she had made a mistake. No mistake, that was it. But quiet. She let herself into the apartment and stood for a moment just looking. It seemed that the absence of sound changed the physical appearance of the room also. Edges of furniture seemed to stand out in clear relief against definite colored walls and carpets. Walls, corners, windows and doors were crisp in their right angle assignations. The room seemed airless, almost a vacuum, without the tide of sound that was its normal decoration.

Just as Rosemary was about to leave she heard a small gurgling sound from the direction of the bedroom. She hurried down the hall. Another sound, similar to the first, caught her ear. The bedroom was empty; there was just her father lying across the queen sized bed reading an old copy of Gentleman Farmer.

Just then Mama emerged from the bathroom trailing a mauve silk peignoir behind her. One plump pink hand was clasped at her breast as if she were about to declaim in grandiloquent manner. With the other hand she patted the air in Rosemary’s direction as if to calm the gathering storm of worry she could see in her daughter’s eyes.

“Mama, are you okay? What’s the matter? Why aren’t you talking to me?”

Rosemary’s mother mouthed a single word, “Laryngitis,” but there
was no sound to accompany it. “Laryngitis!” exclaimed Rosemary, and noticed that her own voice had assumed a whispery quality in sympathetic tonality. “Have you seen a doctor?”

Mama shook her head, and the red curls jiggled around her ears. She picked up a pad of paper and wrote a note to Rosemary. It said: “Must rest my voice for a few days. Gargling with hot salt water. Works every time.”

“Oh,” said a relieved Rosemary, and felt guilty for speaking. She felt like she should be writing notes back to her mother so she wouldn’t feel so bad for not being able to speak. “Can I do anything to help?”

Her mother waved aside the offer and wrote her another note. “Have you talked to Melody?”

Rosemary shook her head.

Another note. Conversation took longer this way. “Gerald is moving the whole family to Tampa. The beast.” (The word ‘beast’ had been underlined savagely.)

“Tampa! Why?” Rosemary was staggered. She couldn’t imagine her mother without her alter ego, Melody. Nor Melody without her mother’s staunch support. Rosemary wondered if her mother would love her more if Melody were in Tampa.

“Some silliness about his job,” was the hastily written reply.
Rosemary's thoughts claimed her attention that evening as she performed her evening rituals. As soon as she could escape, she went into the bathroom and gargled with hot salt water. Softly, softly she began to gargle her way up the scale. One more octave, and she could hear a bubbly pure soprano pitch that was the stuff of which real screams were made. The tone wasn't bad. Power was missing of course. And emotion. No scream worth its blood-curdle was without its emotion. She took another big mouthful of hot salt water and again pulled her voice up from the depths of her diaphragm. It seemed to soar above her in the fluorescent lighted bathroom. Just as it reached the edge of the glass-breaking range, she pushed her voice forth to produce the volume of a real, bona-fide scream. The tone began to slip. Before it was gone altogether, she gave it one mighty thrust which should have produced a high keening siren of silver sound.

It didn't happen. She choked on the salt water. It erupted from her mouth in a stinging spout of salty fire, dripped from her chin, spattered on the wall and mirror, and ran burning from her nose. All voice had stopped with a hoarse "Ruughh!" No scream. No gargle. Just chokes and gasps and sniffs.

Rosemary wiped her teary eyes and streaming nose. She coughed and pushed her hair out of her eyes. Gordon opened the bathroom door.

"Are you all right? I thought I heard you vomiting." He looked concerned.

"I'm okay," she assured him, but suddenly found that she was crying. "Oh Gordon, it's so terrible!" Without warning, she heard words pouring from her mouth that she hadn't planned to put there. "Mama has laryngitis. Laryngitis, Gordon! I'm so miserable! Laryngitis! She can't scream or anything!"

"Scream?"

"Scream? I mean speak. She can't speak."

"I still don't understand. Your mother is sick, so you were vomiting for her? What's really the matter, Rosemary?"

"I can't scream either!" she wailed.

"You don't have laryngitis."

"I never could scream. You know."

"It doesn't matter."

He patted her forehead. She hated to be patted on the forehead.

"Melody is moving to Tampa, eh? Well, I knew Gerald wanted to get away."

"And Madame Frelinghuysen said I shouldn't waste my money—your money—on voice lessons."

"It's okay. I understand."

"But laryngitis, Gordon. Isn't it awful?"

"Come on, Rosemary, it's not like she has cancer or something. It's just laryngitis. She'll be over it in a day or so."

"She can't even talk!"
“Your dad needs the rest. Do them both a world of good. Cheer up.”

There was a timid knock on the bathroom door. Anabel peeped in shyly, an anxious look on her face. “Mama?”
Rosemary wiped her eyes. “Hi, Baby.”
“You crying, Mama?”
“I just got choked, that’s all.”
“Were you trying to yodel again like Mrs. Forbisher said?”
“Yodel? Oh, yodel. Well, sort of. I was gargling.”
“That’s why you sounded so funny.” Anabel nodded her small head and looked wise beyond her years. “Did you remember the cupcakes that I need for tomorrow?”

“CUPCAKES! I forgot! But don’t worry, you’ll have them in the morning.” Rosemary sighed a small sigh. She had been so preoccupied with this screaming thing that she had forgotten her daughter’s needs.

Just as she closed the oven door on the cupcakes she heard Rob start to cry in his room. Another nightmare? She hurried to his room where she found him sitting up in his bed, sobbing and rubbing his eyes.

“Robby? What’s the matter, Robby? Oh, Robby! Not again! Did you forget to go to the bathroom before you got in bed again? Poor Robby.” Rosemary began to pull the wet pajamas from her son’s sleep-warm body. “You run to the bathroom now while I change your bed.” It occurred to her that she was a living example of locking the stable after the horse had been stolen.

Rosemary put the sheets in the washer, took the cupcakes from the oven and began to think of bed herself.

Just then: “Rosemary, I don’t have a shirt for tomorrow.”
“Sure you do. I saw one in your closet.” She turned a black look on him.

“I can’t wear that one, Honey. It’s the one your mother gave me—the one that is too tight in the collar. It cuts off the circulation to my brain.”

“Gordon . . . !” Rosemary’s voice inched upward in exasperation, grew louder and bolder. “Then why don’t you get rid of it? Cupcakes and wet beds and shirts that don’t fit are too much . . . .”

Suddenly she stopped. That had sounded like something Mama would say. Sort of. She tried again: “Ironing shirts is not what I . . . .”

No use. It was gone. Her voice sounded quiet and conversational. Not piercing. “Never mind.” She sighed in defeat. “I’ll iron one for you as soon as I’ve iced Anabel’s cupcakes.”

It was quite late. Rosemary wondered why she didn’t feel more tired. She smiled at Gordon, across the room, ironing his own shirt for the next day, as she applied thick pink icing to the cupcakes. The washer tumbled and sounded like it was saying over and over, “Warm and full, warm and
full, warm and full."

"You're so understanding and helpful!" she told him with real feeling in her voice.

"Moms have no monopoly on helpfulness, you know. Besides, I wanted to talk to you. This business about screaming . . ."

"Why do you suppose I can't?"

"I don't know. Maybe you really can. But why should you? Do you want to scream at the children? At me?"

"No, of course not!" She waved the thought aside impatiently. "But suppose . . . well, suppose someone broke in the house . . ."

"I'd protect you."

"No, now wait." Rosemary insisted, "this is my suppose. Someone broke in, and you weren't here. I could scream for help."

"Use the telephone. It's surer."

"Gordon! Be reasonable!"

"The telephone is unreasonable?"

"Gordon, stop! Maybe I could scare him away with a scream."

"Get a burglar alarm. Now there's a sound that would frighten your intruder away."

Suddenly Gordon set the iron down and snapped his fingers. "Hey! Got a terrific idea! Be right back. Don't go away!"

"What . . .?" Rosemary started, but she was talking to an empty room. She could hear him rummaging through the junk closet. When he returned he was smiling triumphantly, like a little boy on Christmas morning.

"Here you are. This is Rosemary's scream. Guaranteed louder, higher, sharper, better than anything your mother or sister could ever scream!" He reverently hung a braided plastic thong around her neck and showed her the shiny silver whistle which was attached. "Boy Scout!" he told her proudly. "Just blow, and listen to that beautiful sound!"

Rosemary looked at her husband in open-mouthed disbelief. This whole day had just been too much! How could he be so logical? How could he think that she . . .? Rosemary could have screamed. If she could have screamed.

She looked at Gordon, eye to eye, solemnly, and raised the whistle to her lips.□

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Old Wounds
Greta Summerville
Poetry

Why do we do it?
reopening old wounds
for the sake of nostalgia
or unfinished business
Just a little jab
to show you
I'm almost healed

Twist the knife
Sink it to the hilt
See—
No Blood
Go ahead
Rub in the salt
I'll cherish the pain.

Present
David Ross
Poetry

Between the future and the past lies the present.
He's bald and not too tall.
Wears a red tie, green pants and drives a Nash-Rambler.
Has a video tape of every Lawrence Welk show ever made.
Loves to wear Disco clothes when he is alone.
The only problem is,
he might be wrong.
And there isn't anything his wife can do about it.
And I wonder why.

the lower you duck, the slower you turtle
Bill Tillman
Poetry

BALL CHANGE
STEP
BALL CHANGE
HINGES ON THE EDGE
OF MY TIMING
WITHIN THE BEAT YOU ARE
IT'S YOUR CUE
LISTEN
COUNT THE VOICE CHANGE
SURE, YOU'RE NERVOUS,
BUT THE MOMENT
NEVER WAITS
FOR THE NEXT ONE,
DOES IT?
Robert supposed that his dream could be the natural result of Lucy's startling decision. Freud or Jung would probably say that his male image was threatened by her desire to take a job outside the home, therefore he had masculinized her in the dream. In it he had returned home after a grueling day in which he had been mugged and robbed of several hundred dollars. In the dream the mugger had even pried the wedding ring from his finger and made off with it. When he had come home, there had been Lucy—dear, sweet, gentle Lucy—standing before the hall mirror. When she had turned to greet him, he had been horrified to see that her once-smooth face was covered by a full beard.

"Your face!" he had gasped. "You have a beard!"

"Rather nice, don't you think?" Her hand had stroked it lovingly. The thing had no redeeming qualities that he could see. It wasn't soft and silky like her hair, but was wiry and rough. In color it resembled wet cement, and it badly needed trimming.

"When did . . . ? Why . . . ?" He was unable to look at anything but the beard.

"I just decided this morning I wanted a beard. It seems to go with my new job. So I grew one today. Isn't it lovely?"

"New job? What job? You were able to get a job already? Doing what?"

"Yes," (her hand continually caressed the rough gray matted beard that obstructed her face.) "I will be teaching English at the University. With my beard I should fit right in at good old Academe. Don't you think so?"

"But Lucy, you're not qualified to teach. English, did you say? You, who can't even conjugate a verb? You can't teach English."

She smiled a complacent smile. "I know, but I won't be teaching grammar. I will be teaching poetry, concentrating on the religious poetry of Chef Boy-Ardee."

Robert knew nothing about the religious poetry of Chef Boy-Ardee, but he could hear echoes of the poems ringing through his mind.

Lucy had started walking toward him, smiling and rubbing her beard. Then he had been running away from her, down long flights of stone steps whose shape and form were blurred by a thick covering of matted gray moss. He stumbled, tripped, and went sprawling through slow time and vast space. Landing, he found himself bound and unable to move, ensnared by the clinging tentacles of gray moss. Lucy had stood above him and laughed at him through her thick gray beard. He awakened panting and covered with sweat. He felt haunted by the images, and he was unable to get back to sleep.

When the coming of dawn began to paint the edges of the windows with gray fur, he had slipped from the bed while Lucy still slept, and had crept silently from the house without breakfast. He kept seeing her, behind
Dream Wife

(continued)

his eyes, laughing at him through that awful mass of beard.

His day was a busy one, and he was finally able to put the memory away. By the time he returned home in the evening it was forgotten. He thought. When he went in, there was Lucy, back to him, facing the hall mirror. She turned slowly. He stood transfixed. The dream was before him again in all its terribleness.

Sweet gentle Lucy lifted her lips to his, her face smooth and glowing. Robert quickly kissed her on the forehead as the memory of the dream grew in his mind. He couldn't look at her. He couldn't bear to kiss her. He wiped sweat from his forehead and ducked his head as if he were looking for his handkerchief. The dream was erecting a wall between them.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing at all," he assured her. "How long till dinner?"

"Well . . . ," she turned away from him. He stared at her back covertly, trying to visualize her face without the beard. "Actually, it's up to you. Right away if you'd like to take me out. Longer if we stay here. I've been out all afternoon looking for a job."

"You didn't go to the university, did you?" As he looked at her the beard was there. He dropped his eyes to the newspaper that he held in his hands. That beard! It had looked like masses of Spanish moss, he thought, completely enveloping the lower part of her face.

"No, I didn't think of going to the university. Do you think they would have anything I could do?" She looked at him with her head cocked to one side. "Are you sure there is nothing wrong? You look like you just saw a ghost."

"It's nothing," he insisted, "at least it's nothing important." Then he told her about the dream.

"A beard! Honestly, Robert, couldn't you be more creative than that?"

"I hadn't realized that dreams were creative efforts," he replied stiffly. He felt unimaginative. "I have heard some fairly creative interpretations though. Care to try your hand?"

"At interpreting the dream? Okay. Ummm, let's see. A bearded woman. That which is unnatural. A covering for my face, a mask, a disguise. Robert, don't you like my face?"

"Is that what you think it means? I guess that would be a feminine interpretation."

"Feminine interpretation? Do you mean to say that the interpretations of dreams, like beards, are determined by sex?" The lower half of her face was in shadow. She looked like she needed a shave. He reached out tentatively and touched her cheek. It was soft and smooth. Of course it was soft and smooth!

"Maybe so, but that's not what I meant." A change of subject seemed to be the safest course for the moment. "Get your coat. I would like to take
my lovely wife to dinner. Then you can tell me all about your job hunting.

In the car she chattered brightly about her attempts at finding a job. Robert grunted a few 'Um-hms' and a few 'Hmms' when there was a pause in the conversation that seemed to call on him for a response, but mostly he was silent. He almost felt claustrophobic in the closed car. He wanted to roll down his window, but he knew it would blow her hair and her beard . . . Now stop this right now! he told himself sternly. He parked the car and forced himself to take her arm and help her from the car.

In the restaurant Lucy ordered lobster, saying gleefully, "Maybe I should wait until I have something to celebrate, you know, like when I get a job or something, but I really feel like this is a celebration too. Is that okay with you? What are you having?"

"I guess I'll just have the superburger," he said, knowing he sounded like a cardboard martyr.

"Oh. If that's all you're having, maybe I should . . . ."

"No, you go ahead. I'm just not very hungry. But you . . . by all means . . . ." Robert was immediately seized by the mental image of Lucy, smilingly chewing a large bite of lobster while melted butter glistened and dripped from the web of her grizzled beard. All his muscles seemed to be in tension. He felt as if he had been trying to make fists of his feet. His calves
He remembered wanting to take his place in the world of men, to battle the world and subdue it... When he married Lucy he felt the job trap had tightened even more securely around him.

ached. His chest felt tight. He forced himself to breathe deeply and try to relax.

Lucy ate her lobster with pleasure and didn’t seem to notice that Robert wasn’t eating with the same enjoyment. She regaled him with her stories of prospective bosses, men, who wanted “experienced” women. “Why do you suppose men want to marry virgins and hire divorcees? Speaking figuratively, of course.”

Robert smiled. He could imagine her standing before a class of avid students, spouting her metaphors and symbols and philosophies. But bearded? “Maybe you could find something you could do at home,” he suggested.

“Like stuffing envelopes? No, thank you. I want a real job, complete with office and commuting and the whole bit!”

Robert remembered the feeling. He remembered wanting to take his place in the world of men, to battle the world and subdue it. Juvenile dreams, he realized now, but those were proud days. He remembered the momentary feelings of something close to panic when he realized, perhaps for the first time, that he would probably spend the rest of his life doing nearly the same thing. How could he be certain that he would want to be doing that thing in twenty or thirty years? When he married Lucy he felt the job trap had tightened even more securely around him. Now he was also responsible for her support as well as his own. Any thoughts he may have entertained of chucking the whole system and becoming a beachcomber were effectively squelched. Gradually he had gained confidence. He was becoming successful in his profession. He was the head of his family. Why should he be so threatened by Lucy’s job plans? Would he be diminished as a man or as a wage-earner?

“Robert? Are you still with me?”

Robert snapped back to the present. “Of course. You were saying...” Strangely, he found he was able to recite back to her the list of job-hunting problems she had enumerated.

“Amazing!” She smiled at him warmly.

Robert had seen that smile often before. He loved Lucy’s smile, but the only way he could see it in his mind now was surrounded by a scraggly gray beard. He blinked, but the image remained. “Are you finished?” he rose, and she quickly balled her napkin and followed him, a question in her eyes.

Robert acknowledged that the beard existed only in his mind, but it began to be a real problem between them. He could never kiss Lucy without expecting to feel the scratch of a beard on his own face. He didn’t kiss her very much anymore, and when he did it was mostly on the forehead. Lucy wore a hurt, worried look most of the time now. Robert knew his reaction was irrational. Maybe he needed to see a psychiatrist. Maybe the problem would just disappear when Lucy gave up on the job idea. After all, it had
been three weeks, and she had been to almost every store and office in
town and had found nothing.

The next day when Robert came home he was surprised to see a
chair in the middle of the room, and there was a towel draped across its
back. On a table beside the chair was a basin of water, soap and a large
mirror.

"What's all this?" he asked suspiciously.
"Well, Robert, I've decided to give up. No more holding out. You
win."
"What do you mean?"
"My beard is causing all sorts of problems between us. Right?"
"What?"
"My beard. The one you see every time you look at me. The one
that is between us every time we're together. So I have decided to get rid of
it. I'm shaving it off. Would you like to do it for me?" Lucy draped the towel
across her shoulders and began to lather her face as she had seen him do.
"Are you crazy? Or more to the point, do you think I'm crazy?"
"Of course not! I never dreamed of shaving in my life, and I would
only do it for someone I loved very much, never for someone I thought was
crazy."
"Lucy, honey, this is silly. You don't need to . . . hey! There's no
blade in this razor!"
"Yeah, I know. But it'll do fine for my beard. Are you sure you don't
want to do it for me?"
"No." Robert was unexplainably moved—aroused—by the thought
of seeing Lucy all lathered and pulling a razor over her face. "You do it."
Lucy's eyes glowed above her lather-smeared cheeks. She seized the
razor, tipped up her chin, and began to draw the razor up over her face,
from her jaw toward her hairline.
"Not that way!" He grabbed her wrist. "Shave down, not up. You'll
ruin your face that way!"
"Oh. Okay." Obediently she turned the razor over and started the
other way. "But I always pull the razor up when I shave my legs," she
reminded him. "Why is my face different?"
"The hair on your legs isn't as thick or as long as your beard." He
trembled when he visualized the razor pulling through her beard. It
reminded him of hanging his fishing line in thick underwater grasses.
He watched closely as she continued to scrape the soapy
lather from her face. He felt his excitement build with every stroke of the
razor. He imagined he could hear the coarse
hairs being sliced and chopped away. His throat felt tight, and he had
trouble getting his breath.

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Lucy rinsed her face and pulled the towel from her shoulders. She turned to him. “Better now? See? No beard!”

“Much better,” said Robert hoarsely. He kissed her without restraint for the first time in several weeks.

The evening was all Robert could have hoped for. All the barriers which Robert had felt between them were swept away. There were no bearded snakes in his Paradise. Robert felt as if he were acting out one of his fantasies in which he made love to a strange woman, a mysterious beauty whom he may never see again.

Yet there was the wondrous being of Lucy, the dear, the familiar, his own wife. It was an unbelievable, a totally new excitement which he felt. The feeling of excitement and euphoria carried him through to the next morning, and he spent the day smiling at the world. His boss complimented him on the quality of his work and spoke of “things getting better for you around here, young man!” Robert interpreted that to mean more money, and decided to phone Lucy and ask her out to dinner to celebrate. There
was no answer, but that couldn't dampen his elation. He would surprise her at home. When he entered the house, there was dear, sweet, gentle Lucy waiting for him. He kissed her and never thought of the dream. It was marvelous.

"Let's go out to dinner. We need to celebrate," he told her as he squeezed her close.

"To celebrate? How did you know? Who told you?"

"Who told me what?"

"Who told you about my new job?"

"Job?" he squeaked. "What job?"

"Well, really, I have you to thank for it. You were the one who suggested that I go to the university for a job, and you were the one who taught me to shave down instead of up. You taught me all I know about it!"

"What are you talking about?"

"My new job! I am now a barber at the university barber shop!" Her face was shining so brightly he couldn't dampen her happiness with his own lack of enthusiasm.

She chattered all through dinner, and he tried to be happily responsive to her. He didn't tell her about the anticipated raise. Let her think it was her evening. Let her enjoy herself tonight; for, heaven knows, she wouldn't have the time or energy to do this sort of thing after she started to work. He sighed.

That night the dream came again. There was Lucy, just like the last time, covered with a ragged Spanish moss beard. It reached nearly to her waist now. She laughed at him and tickled his ear with the tip of her beard. He felt her warm breath on his neck, filtered as it was through the matted gray mass. She massaged his cheeks with it, and he felt it snag on the stubbles of his own beard. She wrapped it around his head and tied him to her with its hairy strength. He realized that he didn't feel revulsion this time; in fact, he was subtly intrigued and pleased. His bonds of captivity had become a bond of desire, and they had made love with her beard binding them together.

The next morning as they ate breakfast, Robert watched Lucy through half-closed eyes. Her face was smooth and glowing with excitement.

"I'm so glad it isn't raining today," she said. "That makes it sort of symbolic for my first day of work. You know, sunshine and all . . . ."

Her hair swung as she moved her head. It was soft and silky.

". . . sort of like a blessing on the first day or something."

She smiled a dreamy smile.

"Lucy," he began tentatively. "You couldn't grow a beard if you wanted to, could you?"
Cubist
Observation of Impending Farewell
Greta Summerville
Poetry

Shifting planes
Take you out of my life
leaving negative spaces

Reflected fragments
From a broken mirror—
Memory,
Fading to shades
Of ochre and gray.

weak moment
Bill Tilman
Poetry

GET LOST
SHE SAID
I WAS
I CANNOT ALWAYS BE HANDSOME.
YOU CANNOT ALWAYS BE
TRY ME ON
SHE IMPLIED
OR SO I INFERRED.
I HAVE NEVER TRIED TO MAKE ANY SENSE BUT I KNOW A FINE TOOTH COMB
WHEN I FEEL ONE GET BUSY SHE MOTIONED.
I WAS
I AM NOT ALWAYS CLUMSY BUT WITH HER IT WAS A PLEASURE ONCE MORE SHE THOUGHT I TRIED BUT I COULD TELL I WAS GETTING OLD AS FAR AS SHE WAS CONCERNED GET EXCITED OR GET UP SHE PRODDED MY WAY SUDDENLY I WAS BOTH.