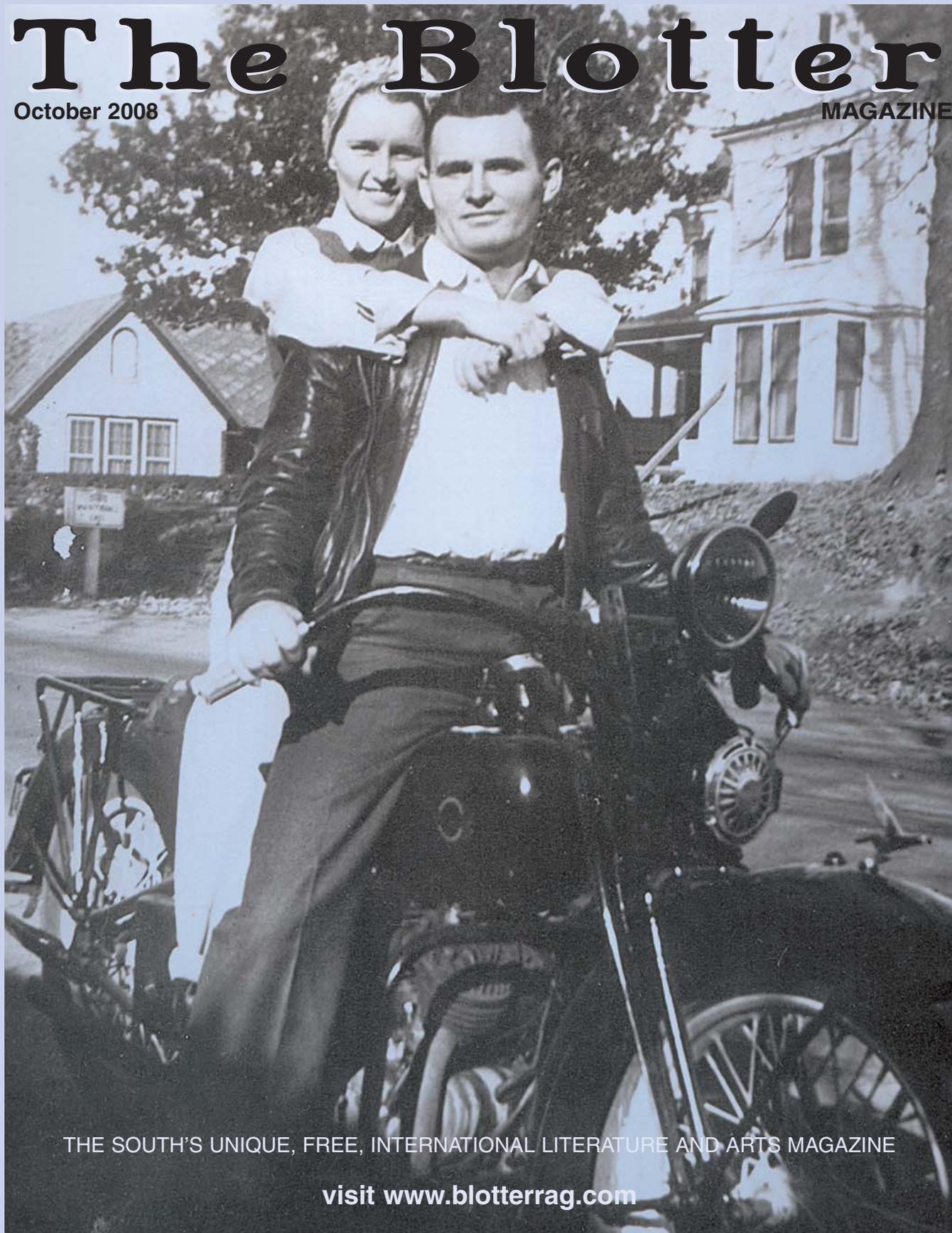


*So be cool, boy, real cool. Joel Sweeney, Rachael Strycharz, George Donald, Michael Dechane,
Andrew David King, Meredith Jenkins and John Ian Marshall got somethin' to say;
we got your Tall Hair; and The Dream Journal.*

The Blotter

October 2008

MAGAZINE



THE SOUTH'S UNIQUE, FREE, INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE AND ARTS MAGAZINE

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We're sorry, truly we are.

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"Play-doh – Do Not Eat"

The instruction is written with a sharpie on a hunk of masking tape attached to the Ziploc bag. Admittedly, it's pretty good advice. But isn't this what we would call in pick-up basketball a "gimme"? In this case, we made the Playdoh ourselves, out of flour, salt, water from the drinking fountain, some pumpkin extract (weird, but good) and a mix of red and yellow food coloring. What's not to eat? It may taste like crap, but kids should learn lousy from yummy:

"Dad, this is gross."

"Why, yes it is. Should you eat it?"

"I don't think so, Dad."

"Good call. Now go read."

Although this line of thinking does not transfer well to indulging in, say, crack cocaine, or even a gin-rickey, it is a sound metaphor for many other instances of decision-making, and demonstrates the troubling tendency of ours to demand clarity where things are already crystal, while trying to make black-and-white out of those things permanently gray.

Certainly this has been covered before in other classes, but I believe we need to get the easy stuff on our own, and stop complaining and demanding assistance from the group for our individual shortcomings. That is, we need to grasp the logical on our own, without making up new rules. Stop being victims of the law of gravity, if you will. For example: where I live, and in other university towns in my experience, right-of-way is offered to pedestrians. Not the worst idea ever considered – it's good to remind drivers that there are lots of folks walking around – but I find the courtesy implied by the rule is abused by students, faculty and staff so that a driver must take care that he doesn't collide with individuals choosing to randomly cross a street at any given moment at any given place, rather than at sensibly marked crossings and intersections. How does that make sense? What started as reasonable traffic safety is now a gladiatorial event between automobile iron and the obstinate human who believes that the law was intended to give them total freedom of all pavement and the devil take the hindmost. In effect, a good idea has become a dumb one. Or we've become as dumb as the law (pedestrians have right of way) permitted.

Come on, you say? How bad can this become? Well, when I moved here in February of 1993, I was doing a tourist-drive-through Chapel Hill when I had to slam on my brakes to avoid hitting a rather large citizen who'd wandered out in front of my Cherokee. We made "hey, dumb-ass, I'm walking/driving here!" faces at each other. Later, while watching March Madness, I saw this same fellow working high-post for the Tarheels. Yes, while moving into Chapel Hill, I nearly ran over Eric Montross, mere weeks before he would have led UNC to the National Championship. That's how bad.

Now I know full well that hot coffee is hot. I use all of my senses to reach such conclusions. The data is retained in both short and long term memory. My six-year-old, on the other hand, must still be reminded not to chuck a spoonful of hot Italian-Wedding Soup down her gullet before blowing on it. I don't warn her that salt is salty, or that pestering her older sister might get her pinched. As daytime President, Chief Justice and local Congressional representative of my household (I am not, of course, the Empress of All Things – she comes home from work at 6:30PM), I can discern between what my children need to be told, and what they need to learn for themselves, what they should be protected from (boys) and what sharp edges they should learn on their own (dodgeball; poking at the cat with a pick-up-stick).

So what's up with belaboring the obvious and oversimplifying the complex? It's just bad thinking. Fools want simple answers, sound bites, and quick conclusions. But taxes are not simply a question of raising and lowering. Presidents need gravitas, not glibness. Abortion shouldn't be an "opinion" one has for cocktail hour, and immigration isn't a matter of clever-language games (are they "illegal" or "criminal" or something else altogether, tee-hee?).

I tell my girls to think about things, and to read a lot, and prove their points,

and double-check their work. I want them well-armed with good thinking habits when they go out into the world and I'm not there all of the time. They'll have some basic axioms: no one is going to cut you a break if you don't study enough; no means no; the big boat always wins in a collision; the opposite of love isn't hate, it's indifference; and don't eat mayonnaise that's been left out. I also expect them to use the good brains that God gave them.

What I want help with - from corporate and social leaders, from elected representatives and their hired hands, from the assigned interpreters of legal and cultural morasses - is a parting the societal mists; paring away the old dry layers of habit, good and bad, to find fairness and justice, which is the real meat of trouble whenever people gather in carload lots. See, certain things are easy to get. I tell my girls it's not right to lynch anyone. (For those of you who do not understand my current point, that means a person is innocent until proven guilty. And if they are indeed found innocent, they're not *guilty* anymore. No picking on them, or nudging them with pointed sticks. We seem to have lost that one, recently. Just let it fall onto the cutting room floor, partly because it makes good entertainment. It's as if we've forgotten that this is the cornerstone of our whole concept of civilization, the big-Kahuna idea.) I remind them not to find joy in anyone else's pain; to stop what you're doing when someone else is hurt, and help them; that greed is not good; and don't cheat, even if you won't get caught. Share. Be nice.

It's hard not to judge a person by what they think, say, tattoo or pierce. Harder still to not place blame randomly, call something you don't understand "ridiculous", or flip off someone walking out into traffic listening to an I-Pod or talking on their Razr. That takes something else altogether. Role models. Everyday leadership. A standard of behavior. Constancy of morality. Honor without feet of clay. Real saints, not plaster ones.

Without the world affirming those things I believe to be right, my girls may in the fullness of time begin to wonder if what I have taught them is so. Maybe old Dad sold them a bill of goods. What about their friends? And their friends' dads. And the dads in the news and on television. Am I happy that these folks are also influencing my daughters? Not so much. Am I hopeful that some of my lessons stick? You bet.

But I also think that as a society we're adrift, like characters in that lifeboat movie with Tallulah Bankhead and William Bendix. Right and wrong? Please! We're so not getting it that we no longer know what it looks like. The fifth estate doesn't help much. Most discussion points aren't the point, and problems, as presented in the news, are just sound bites circling around the actual problem. People are too tired just trying to make heads or tails of the daily crap to drill down through what they're being told to get to what is so. So they leave such things up to our "leaders". And more frequently our leaders and role models fail us, sadly, consistently and miserably. They *are* crooks and they *did* have sex with that woman, and they *did* steal the money, and they *are* shallow and pointless, and their record is *indeed* tainted.

I wonder about it a lot, and I guess that honesty and morality and fair-play are gone the way of the dodo-bird. You can't trust anyone under 100. I don't want to think this way, and we don't want to teach it to our young ones, but we've been burned too many times. My sister, who we call Pollyanna because she always seems to see the good in people, has even grown tired of it. I find that I'm more troubled that my sister is depressed about such things than I am about her discovering this truth - that our leaders should probably be considered guilty until proven innocent. When we talk on the phone and I tell her to hang in there, look for the good, keep on the sunny side, always on the sunny side, she smiles - I can hear it in her voice - but it's bittersweet. She gives that laugh, that sentence-ending laugh she uses when things are going wrong, like, "Hey, do you believe that he was having an affair? I guess you never can tell about someone, heh-heh." It's a laugh as bittersweet as pumpkin-flavored play-doh.

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CAUTION

It's better that we all sit down, have some sweet tea, and whenever we feel like getting angry, just say, "Bless his heart" instead of what we really feel like saying. It's a method that's worked for five generations of Southern women.

“Song for the Doorman”

This place is empty
It's early
Just me and the office after hours
You with the flame sleeves and a black t-shirt
Check our IDs, and let us in.

These people I am with they order water
And I feel so ashamed.
I miss my previous life.

Why do I feel the need for health insurance and air conditioning?
I should only need music and whiskey,
but that life is all duct tape bandages, and Lucky Strike ash,
I am much too suburban for that.

I'm sure you used to see me at the indie shows
With my short sleeves, and tattoos out.
But with these khakis pants, and button up shirt,
You don't recognize.

I did date a bass player, she was in that band,
She had a lip ring, and a distaste for chain restaurants.
They sang a song about heartache and oil, and I would stand
Front row and kiss her between sets. Those were the days
When I drank my liquor straight.

Do you remember me? What will jog your memory?
I believe there is a Black Flag album on the Jukebox.



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GONNA HAVE **BIG FUN** ON THE BAYOU!

Three by Joel Sweeney

“What I Will Do for You”

I will a seek a woman
With a high metabolism.
That is what I will do for you.

My blood constricts
My stomach fills with acid,
And after accomplished nights of drinking
My right foot swells.

You will arrive to this world broken
And overstuffed.
The rest of your life you will fight against it
Only to have the doctor say,
At the age of thirty,
“Your heart is tired.”

If you are to ever take your shirt off during the summer
I will need to find a balance:
A vegetarian, with a smooth stomach,
And arches in her feet.

It matters not if she loves me.
Being born from love won't keep your arteries clean
And the hair on your head.

Even if she's perfect there is always risk
By giving you life I've committed you to death.
I will spare you my every embarrassment.
This is what I will do for you.

“Blood and Drywall”

I ice my hand with the bottle of vodka
That rarely leaves
My freezer.

I was so unprepared
Not expecting the need for
Bandages and aspirin so soon.

My hand is bloody
I laugh,
I didn't even know your bra size
Yet I act like as if I've seen
Another man's boxers on my couch

These emotions are ill managed
And must be contained more effectively
Sad songs and alcohol can only help so much
Before they turn

For now, though, there are bigger concerns
My knowledge of drywall is lacking and there
Is a whole that must be covered.

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"You Won't Find Me On e-Bay"
by Rachael Strycharz

He sold me for a bike
The \$2,000 kind
With a 58" frame stock
And a carbon frame to tame the shock.

I lack the words to find expression
for a sense of being abandoned,
left out, cold, suspended,
above a cushionless landing.

All the while he smiles, his heart wholly undemanding.

Over your hanging, his chiding down,
trekking away from your needs, your wants, your how.

Spewing while consuming what substance might have been,
he halts your need for closure:
"Will you be *this* kind of friend?"

So much grace and love to overcome what might be hatred,
from wounds of ambivalent proposal, and
promises unplanted.

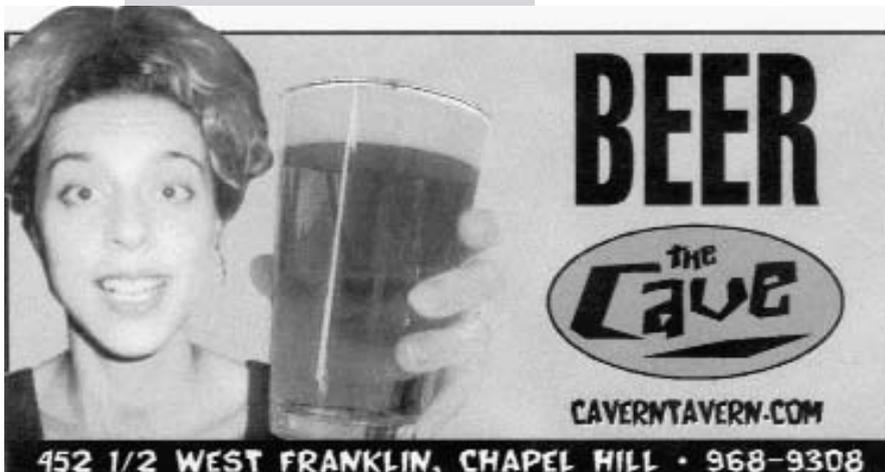
Life, while stopping, leaves you numb yet afflicted;
your soul trusts merely in the harvest of conviction.

A desire to persevere, prevail and so do unconditionally,
appears not so appealing, in this moment, simply.

Cling as you might to faith, the salty tears are speaking,
wilted in half, now, and fragile, weakening.

Though isn't that life, how we know things to be, uncertainly certain,
wearily sneaking refuge behind a translucent curtain?

Variegated...fading...cries less steady...lights dim
I open my heart and arms, in this moment, enters Him.



“Outside the Terminal” by Michael Dechane

They march off of their planes,
these that have been belted into
cramped seats for hours.
They stride forth from the confines
of coach with confidence.

This is what it looks like to arrive.

Some of them have connections
to make, so they hustle for those.
But most of them have nowhere
to be in such a hurry.
They're only walking this way
because they can, finally.

We won't be kept too still for long.

It's champagne bursting out
after the bottlenecking and
maddening center aisle shuffle:
racing out and running off,

frothy with phones in hand,
another spilled load.

Except for the old and the crippled.
They're in the way,
but shuffle on with what they've got.

The rest, though, feel like their lives
are somehow back in their own hands.
These modern men and women,
suited, all of them, for business.
These that have bested gravity,
that have come so far, so fast
in such an unlikely bird,
as if it were everyday,
as though humans and their souls
fly all the time, and always have.

“Reflection” by Andrew David King

I want to write
as many poems
as I can
before I am old,
before the glorious
opening
in my mind
is closed
with the stitches
of society,
sewn
so tightly
shut.



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Intent To Distribute

by George Donald

No two ways about it -
it started out good.
We ate the blotter
coming back
but most of it saved
in waxpaper
in the glovebox
with town dropping behind
us we crossed the causeway later
the tires hitting the spacers
in the road -
takka takka doom
takka takka doom.
And everything seemed
to lift –and the
wine in the dixie cups
and the hash too.
Dane was driving Candee's
sister's car and Candee
was in front and
me in the back and
I started to think
and Candee threw the warm wine
out the window only the window was
rolled up and Dane
says Goddam Candee
and I laughed quiet like because
Dane has a temper and Candee's
his girl not mine I don't have a
girl but I don't know why he brought
Candee this trip and she
didn't eat any blotter
just me and Dane and she
starts to wipe and says God I'm
sorry Dane and he doesn't say much
just makes a noise kind of.
Dane's kinda edgy too, 'cause
when we went to sell plasma for
the trip he got so bored sitting
in one of the old barcaloungers
those ones they have in rows at the
Plasma Center with the poles next to
each one that when the gal came out
and said sir you're a slow bleeder
he got mad and said
Fuck It and pulled the whole thing
out of his arm and it made a huge
mess on the floor and the
guy came out of the cubicle
and said quiet but angry like
Get out and don't come
back you're
barred from here.
So he asks me right after
hey Clay that's
twice in one month
for you how much

is that? And I say
I got twenty dollars left and
Dane says that should about
do it when we leave the place.
I don't really know about
money worries 'cause
I was sure Dane was still
peddling those
Home Fire Alarm Systems
that month and
Candee had helped
him practice the
Big Pitch when
he pulled the alarms
in sale demonstrations to say
loud and convincingly
like on the radio
This Is The Sound
That Could Save Your Life!!
Too bad Big William couldn't
come he says too as we get
to the car and
I didn't have an answer but
Dane knows
Full Well what
happened to Big William when
Big William made that
trip with Royce
and Big William waited
to take the blotter
for the first time
and Royce waited too
till they got back
because the Fair was
on and Big William
had a plan, and
Royce asked him twice
before he told him
it was to save the
blotter and go to
the Fair and wrestle
the Caged Bear.
Royce told me what
came of it. So anyhow
since it was near
Halloween Big William
went to the Fair dressed
as a scarecrow and
he swallows the blotter
at the gates of the Fair says
Royce who didn't at the last
minute, and Big William
got Rubberlegs in the line
at the Bearcage
and it got to be
his turn and the
Bear was muzzled

but it threw and swatted
Big William
all against the chain link
barrier every time he tried to stand
until he yelled
to stop it now. The
crowd hawed and laughed so
and Royce had to get
another ride home
because Big William took off
soon as they let him out of the pen.
and Royce told me later
that Big William
wrecked his 66 Impala
on the center guardrail
of the highway going
north and when the
Troopers came they
asked him what was
up and he says I'm
Tripping Hard and so
they take him to the
Tank on Leeds Avenue.
his one phone call
was to his mom
who called her
Prayer group
Each Member
One by One about
Another Boy on
the Wrong Path
this time it was
Her Boy and
they came and
stood around him in
the Tank and
prayed over him
until he yelled and
shook less. Me and
Dane never
saw him after that and
I think that's all
Royce ever heard too.
It made me start to
think how this
whole thing would agree
with Dane
him being so
Touchy and all,
he even brags about
it like the time
he went to ask
Old Man Kyle about a
job at the Mill
and Old Man Kyle
said no way 'cause
he hired
Dane's cousin Dean
who walked off
the job three days
later – don't know why

I'll have to ask-
 but Dane got pissed
 and didn't say
 anything when Old
 Man Kyle said
 Why should I give
 you a chance
 when your cousin was
 a Dud? But Dane
 just grit his jaw and
 says Thank You
 Anyway, Sir, and
 walked out but
 when Old Man Kyle's
 son Billy Kyle
 started in on him about
 it at softball practice
 Dane whaled him
 but good. Then Dane
 says that a coupla days
 later Old Man Kyle
 sees him at the store
 while he's walking
 to his car and
 says Stay away from
 my boy or I'll make
 you sorry and Dane
 didn't say Sir this time but
 says You will
 will you? You
 want a piece of
 me too just
 try it and Old Man
 Kyle just walks off
 and walks a little
 faster when he sees Dane
 half following him to
 his car. I sure
 don't have that kind
 of nerve at all.
 well, while I'm
 at it what else can
 I say about
 Dane? His
 hands are always messy
 and his breath smells
 like the
 Bad Air out of an
 old tire but
 the grapefruit shoulders
 and his hair is perfect and
 he checks it all the time
 in the store windows on
 King street and in the
 rearview mirror
 and the perfect
 teeth except the front one
 chipped in a
 fight and I guess
 Candee noticed all this
 from the start and plus
 other things about

him she saw
 later. And what about Candee?
 Dane noticed her right off
 when he had a beer and chips at the
 Picadilly and she was the waitress
 he saw her helping herself to the
 tip jar money and he knew
 Full Well
 it wasn't just to
 make change. Anyhow,
 these are my friends and
 Dean said once when
 he was drunk that
 all I had was
 Pity Friends but
 then said Aww
 Just Kidding but
 sometimes you
 can't tell.
 Anyhow, I guess
 I should say more about
 Me, Myself. I
 am like This
 because my
 Blessings are
 small, because I
 jump at every
 chance to go and
 see and go
 feel the air
 move and even sting
 my one blind eye

through the window I
 rolled down as
 life pours -
 and I begin to know about the
 cells that shine in the
 dark of my lungs
 I am almost
 complete it could always be like
 this when suddenly not like you
 expect you get
 Lifted, and I'm straining to
 hear. I lean
 back in the back
 seat and
 take a pull
 a drag or
 maybe three and
 I'm feeling
 good no
 pain at all. All
 of a sudden I
 feel heat a
 memory of a
 day like the
 first hot day it's
 hot inside nothing but
 the electric fan on
 a stool by the front door and
 I go out to gas and oil
 the mower and it's
 like the summer breathes on
 me the haaaa of almost no sound

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and no real wind
the heat is heavy in
my skin and out of
my skin and beneath my
skin and the heat
shimmered around and behind
my eyes and also the flame of the
sun on my bad eye
and the creeeeee creee of the
crickets and summer bugs in the
trees and the smell of the
grass drying out in the
sun needing cut and
heat lightning far off and the
bawcock of the neighbors chickens
and pigeons in the coop and
not much going by only a
truck maybe now and
then, and the weight of the
air like now.
It was like that what
I was having at that minute.
Anyhow, when I
was thinking about all
that, the bursting
rocket in my gut in
my mind Dane starts
talking about monsters
and laughing
funny like I never
heard him before and
says he read the real Count
Dracula had people
impaired for showing
up in public with their
underwear sticking out
with holes and all in them
and their wives too, for
not taking care of the wash better.
Candee says God stop it
Dane and she shakes a
little and says Don't
say things like
that because she heard
somewhere that when
the people got sent to the
Guillotine that the head the eyes
could see itself flop into the
basket and I said that's
Really Too Much for me
right now and Dane just
cackles again funny sort of.
I don't know what Candee was
getting worked up
about since she wasn't in near the
state Dane or I was. She just
was having some wine and that was
it – all gone warm in the
car but she drank it anyhow plus
chain smoking, said her
sister did too, and didn't give a
rats ass what the car

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smelled like and I
said That's for sure, and said the
backseat smelled like Diet
Tab and stale Cheetos and
she just looks at me like
she doesn't know me,
like I just suddenly
Piped Up
and then she looks at
Dane as if he's gonna tell me
Watch It, but he doesn't. He
just says mm and
Candee looks at him
again and says Dane I
could really use something to
eat right now and he says
What? and she says it
again, plus says Dukes BBQ is a
couple of miles up so
nobody says anything for
a few minutes till we
pull in at the sign. So we
go in and we see
from the menu board that
you can order by the pound
or by the plate or sandwich
and that either way it comes with
Ice Tea and dill slices
and coleslaw and you also get white
bread. We can see the old guy in the
back putting the meat in containers
and slicing dill pickles and there were
bags of Wonderbread and another
younger guy just like him by the
cash register, both of them in paper
butcher hats. Candee stares a
minute and fingers this mole on
her face and says you got any
Whole Wheat bread? The guy just
stares at her his fuzzy jaw drops and
he says Whole Wheat?! The old
guy in the back says Whole Wheat!!?
and comes closer and says hippies
damn freaks git outa here and the
younger guy just laughs and it
shows his Bad Teeth and
I say Let's just go now
and Dane doesn't put up any
fuss but turns after me and
Candee says god I'm
Hungry, Dane but he says
Come On and he's got
this weird look in
his eye and as we leave I see
our reflections in the glass window
and I see myself hair sticking out
all wild and ratty looking as my aunt
might've said about me and
we go back to the
car. Dane says to Candee
I don't think I can drive, Clay
you're gonna have to take

over. Where we gonna eat?
Candee says. Hush says
Dane I can't think about food
anymore, and I couldn't
either because I was worried all of a
sudden about driving. Bunch of
griddlespitters says Candee, and
Dane just gets in the back. The weird
thing
was that I wanted to keep on
talking and running my
mouth about anything and
everything but at the
same time wanted to be
quiet and not say anything.
Candee talking was kinda much.
So I drive out and head back
on the highway, with Candee
still in front. It seems like we
went another twenty miles or
so when I looked at the sun in the
rear-view mirror setting behind
us. I blinked and looked away.
For a second there suddenly
was another sun right next
to it. I blinked again and
there was another sun there and
Dane just says something like
Gaw, man and keeps staring.
and every time I blinked
more and more suns until
the whole rear window was
Full of Suns and I was just
Dumbstruck I guess. I saw
that the road seemed kind of
snaky and the guardrails were
Like, like whipping, pouring
metal. I put up with about
thirty minutes of this plus
Candee griping about
everything and I
looked back at Dane
and he was in no
shape at all eyes like basketballs
mine were too I guess
I was getting rolls of
light off of everything
even though it was starting to
get dark. So I said to
Dane I can't do this at all.
While I was looking at the
white and yellow lines in the
road coming at me like they were
darts or missiles or something
I say again to the backseat
I can't do this and after a minute
Dane says Candee you
gotta drive and she says OK.
By then we were already on the
Interstate. I pull over and
Candee gets in front and
I get in back with Dane.

I sit there clinging to the seat as she takes off weaving into the lanes. It was a relief only for just a little while until she turns around and says Hey Dane I'm still really hungry and when she turns to talk the steering wheel pulls to the right and the car starts running onto the gravel on the shoulder and Dane says Damn, Candee stay on the road and she says I'm trying and the car pulls to the left lane Dane yells again because there're trucks coming behind us eighteen wheelers and they're blaring horns and Candee says Goddam Dane I'm trying and Dane says Holy Shit, Candee. I couldn't really say anything at all because my mouth was really dry and by then my heart was pounding but the trucks passed and I got my breath a little and for a minute or so it was just cars passing all of them staring at us going down the road. Candee's still weaving a lot I notice and Dane's got his face in his hands I notice. Candee, just try to slow down a little I say so she does to about fifty and Dane just starts to kinda howl for a minute and I say What? and Dane says to Candee You never finished Driving School, did you Candee? Candee doesn't say anything and Dane says All the time I was working at UPS in Atlanta you didn't finish Driving School? Well I did finish some of it she says. And I said Whoa! You mean you don't even have a license? You don't even know how to drive? Dane howls again and Candee just starts to whimper a little and its getting a lot

darker and the headlights and the taillights ahead of us and behind us is all this unbelievable mix of waves and lines and curls and rainbows and colors like you couldn't even imagine and I can't describe. I swear to God I could even hear it too. Candee kept wobbling in the lanes a little and a little more and the shapes just were moving and most of them I could only make out as we got closer to them and Dane stops howling and starts laughing and Candee looks around to see why and she's like O God Dane O God Dane and he just yells Keep looking at the road and it's all so like it took an hour to happen but I guess it was just seconds and the shape I saw was the St. George exit overpass I guess and I jabbed a reach best I could for the wheel over the seat 'cause it seemed like Candee was letting go but she had just enough sense to hit the brakes but still went through the shoulder and we hit on the driver's side. I had nothing no breath or even sight for awhile and it was like I forgot where I was and then nothing again and then there were all these people around and I was lying on the ground and I heard somebody say Hold on sport we're gonna get you on the stretcher here and I heard Dane off nearby saying Don't call me sport, asshole and I couldn't see or hear Candee anywhere, There still was all this ripping light reds and blues and sirens and I could see the sound of it and I was tasting blood and I seemed to be moving and somebody stuck a mask on me and somebody else

was sticking something in my arm and they were saying things I didn't quite get. Then I was in this room with lots of white light incredibly white and that's when You came in and I don't know who you are and I was pretty sure it seemed like you wanted to ask me lots of questions and so long as you're still here, now that they've done patching me up and brought me out I've gotta tell you: Listen, it was like this - I was rolling towards the big double doors and as they waited for them to open the brightest light I had seen all day or ever appeared over the door and there he was the Angel Michael I couldn't take my eyes off of him even though the glare was melting everything around me - how nobody else saw him I can't imagine- he had wings of the same light and had armor like round plates of chrome glittering beveled brighter than any hubcap I ever stole and he pointed his golden trumpet at me and said in this Voice like a thousand roaring engines This Hour Will Decide If I Take You Or Not. Then it all was blank till I wound up Back Here. So I guess he didn't carry me off after all, so that's all I'm saying 'till the Cops get here, or maybe not even then.



Do you remember that night, when we dug out our veins
to feed the sky? scrawled lazily on our backs
in the grass, swallowing stretched time, cracks
of moonlight tugging the very grains
of us across ourselves, souls reigned
in only by skin. I remember. the slow black
line of your body a coil of snakes, slackened,
air thick in our mouths with the coming rain.

I am still drunk off the flowers
you gave me, falling red snow
on the carpet, thorned stems reach
up towards no one, straining to grow
in the lamplight, shedding the hours
since you left, a petal dropped for each.

Two Sonnets by Meredith Jenkins

i still pick the threads
of you from my clothing, peel
the stubborn scent from skin. I'll reel
in this hunger and tie it up as love- rip
kisses out of storybooks and stitch
them fast to our lips, dig hearts
from fingertips with effort, the blood starts
and stops on our tongues as we wake the dead.

know the reason for the smile
slipping up your neck, cards
falling off the table where you lay
me down (too careful), biting- pile
of want scratching at the scarred
center of your back, a history of prey.



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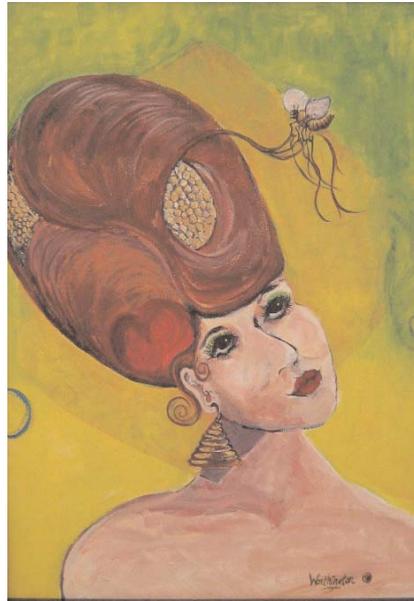
5th Place...Amelia K. Roberts



1st Place...Holly C. Wright



3rd Place...Vicki Rhine



6th Place...Nathalie Worthington



4th Place...Jamie Mcphail



7th Place...Herb Bresky

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Two by
John Ian Marshall

"Insomnie"

I like the emptiness of night:
the deserted streets, thoughts of
all the people laying curled up, creating
their own headlines, with no boundaries or rules.
I like the silence and cold of it, the
strong wind rattling the spiral sun-catc her up
against my old peeling back door.
Sometimes, i even like that desolate loneliness
which descends,—it's dark masks,—they comfort and
call out to me through the clatter of branches.

Sometime i will finally sleep, enclosed by my own
thought's night, and try to dream of endless
beautiful faces, and elaborate patterned places
and the simple, quiet, unknown pull of your eyes.

All the poems I never wrote,

about the steam rising
from the lips of cedar shingles after
a cruel day of rain.
Or the way
the leaves of Rhododendron droop,
in perfect saddened symmetry

all winter, waiting for
just the right mixture of
sun and darkness
to explode,
in one sudden,
violet moment.

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When I was laid off by _____ I went to the beach, out on the Outer Banks, to try and regain my bearings. I dreamt last night that I was out there again, renting one of the houses in Buxton or Hatteras, I'm unable to tell which. There are other cars in the driveway, and I sense that this is a good thing. I am walking down the pathway through the dunes, carrying a surf-rod and a picnic basket. There on the sand by the breakers are my friends from work. "What are you doing here?" I ask. "You need to be..." but I can't think of the name of our company. I can't think of where they need to be, other than right here. I don't ask, but I know that some of them have also just been laid off. Nobody is sad or mad about it. My picnic basket is enough food for everyone, like the loaves and fishes, although I am certainly nothing like Jesus and my message is nothing beyond taking a well-deserved break.

R.M. - M-ville, NC

CONTRIBUTORS

Joel Sweeney recently moved to the Bay Area in California where he works as an Admissions Officer for an area college. He did his undergraduate work at the College of Santa Fe and one day hopes to live in a gated community.

Ed. note: He found us at the Pour House in Raleigh. I don't know how, but he found us.

Rachael Strycharz has published works in Bloomsburg University's Warren Literary/Art Journal. Taking advantage of her post-college/pre-family transition phase of life, she continues to engage her interests of writing, drawing, painting, reading, leading young women, remaining connected with her church, and seeking out volunteer opportunities in her community. Rachael currently lives in Raleigh, NC, where she landed after taking a leap of faith into uncharted territory in December 2007.

George Donald writes, "I am a 1980 graduate of the College of Charleston with a degree in Political Science and Languages and subsequently studied at the Monterey Institute in Monterey, CA. I work as an interpreter but have continued to write and be involved in music my writing has appeared in the Monterey Review of Poetry, the Cherry Blossom Review, and in the Anthology of Monterey Bay Poets."

Ed. note: George - what I liked best in your poem was line 3.

Michael Dechane is convinced there is an important connection between all that's best in life: faith, friends, women and waffles. He's still trying to work out what that connection might be. He works in the Communication Department at Montreat College outside of Asheville, NC.

Ed. note: He's right and deserving of grant money to pursue his research. Women-waffles. Yes...

Andrew David King is a writer from Fremont, California, where he was born in 1992. His work has recently been, or is set to be, published alongside such authors as Stephen King, Neil LaBute, Luis J. Rodriguez, Jimmy Santiago Baca, and Ursula K. Le Guin, amongst others. His first collection of poetry, *Chasing the Illusion*, is forthcoming sometime in the next year or so. He is the editor of *Wings of Icarus*, an online literary journal.

Meredith Jenkins writes, "As for my biography...there is not a lot to say, I grew up in the tiny town of Bryson City, NC. I'm 21 and have been going to UNCA for 3 years...majoring in Psychology. If you need more than that just let me know."

Ed. note: Nope. That's about perfect.

The Beehive Art Challenge was issued by The Beehive Salon in Carrboro, NC - any medium, any style, any size. We kind of liked that, so we are showing you the winners.

Ed. note: I'm from New Jersey, and beehives make me think of Jeanette _____, out by the pool in a chartreuse one-piece, drinking Martini & Rossi out of a Jetson's jelly glass, chain-smoking Tarytons. You just can't beat old school.

John Ian Marshall's poetry has appeared in The University of Maine's *Binnacle*, *Apollo's Lyre*, *Sidereality*, *Poetry Magazine*, *The Lightning Bell Poetry Journal*, *The Idea Museum*, *Voices Literary Magazine*, *The Deep Cleveland Oracle*, *Gin Bender Poetry Review*, *The Lummo Journal*, and several other venues.

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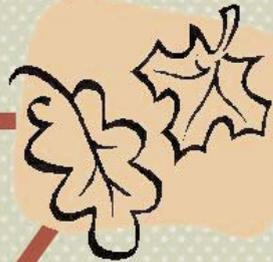
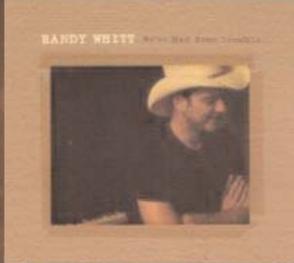
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