The Chestatee Review

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Welcome to the 2005 edition of Gainesville College’s award-winning magazine *The Chestatee Review*.

First off, I am glad I was given the opportunity to be editor of this year’s magazine. It was so much fun being able to brainstorm (not always peacefully) with my fellow English major compatriots and come up with a magazine I believe can be enjoyed by the critical eye as well as the passive reader. The amount of material submitted this year was overwhelming, so I am especially grateful to Daniel Elzey, Natalie Simmons, and Daniel McConnell for all their creative support on deciding what went into this year’s magazine.

I also want to thank Robert Zanin and Jessi Stone for all their help organizing the magazine. I believe the *Chestatee Review’s* literary content has never been stronger and is a testament to the school’s completely student-generated work. I am privileged to be a part of this publications legacy and look forward to future editions of *The Chestatee Review* as an evolving literary magazine. Thanks for everything, Professor Sauret.

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My Pen
Lydia Lively

It's a heartbreaker,
and a funeral march:
When a soldier dies,
my pen tells his mother.
It's a commander,
like General Patton
sending men off to die.
It's a lover;
It's Switzerland—
totally neutral.
It's a pen;
It merely does as it is told.
A Different Window
Graphic Art by Edgar Lituma
Windows
Carol Marlow

People say–never mind who “They” are,
(They don’t really matter)
That the eyes are windows to the soul.

If this is true, then yours have blue curtains.
I see them now, pulled back to let air into the room.
They remind me of the waters off of Daytona in August.

In the left eye, I see a table with a tattered tablecloth
Draped over its chipped, weathered legs.
The cloth looks old, but it is still whiter than fresh printer paper.

Next to the table are two wooden chair-stools
With frilly, flower print cushions tied on.
I hate those cushions; they never really make the chair softer.

As I look in the right eye, I can just see a teal recliner,
With a table and a lit lamp right next to it.
The lamp is small, and has a petal green shade.

Looks cozy. Can I come in?
Ode To Joy
Carol Marlow

April

“Mama, I lost 50 pounds already,” I said when I came out of the 
bathroom and into the kitchen. Hannah, my younger sister, looked 
bored as she tore at a chicken leg, and Mama smiled at me with her 
tobacco-stained teeth. “I told you low carb’s the way,” I continued. 
“Some carbs are good for you, Joy,” Mama said. She placed one 
of the muffins from our family bakery, Baked Greens, on my empty 
plate. 
“Mama, the school nurse and the news says they’re bad. Who 
should I believe?” I said, walking over to the fridge to get a Slimfast 
Meal bar. 
“All right, baby,” she said with a sigh, “What do I know? I’m only 
your mother.” She got out one of her Marlboros, picked up the mail 
on the table, and thumbed through it when she walked upstairs to her 
bedroom. While she was gone, I went towards my room, down the 
hall, passing the lethargic Hannah. After devouring her chicken and 
mashed potatoes, she’d moved to the big recliner Daddy used to sit 
in. She looked up at me with a critical blue eye. “Joy, why don’t you 
ever listen to Mama? She knows better than you.” 
“Can she spell plebian?” I asked Hannah. “Or can you, for that 
matter?” 
“Just shut up. Go read your stupid books,” Hannah said, turning 
back to the TV. She had a bag of Doritos in her lap. Hannah was a 
girl who could eat a whole ham and not gain an ounce; she was also 
a cheerleader. How I despised her. 
I locked my door and flopped down on my bed, the boards 
creaking under the weight. When you’re overweight, you get used to 
it. I reached over to my bedside table and opened up my latest book. 
I couldn’t believe that the library actually wanted to get rid of an 
original copy of Jane Eyre! It was as unbelievable as the time my 
grandfather found a copy of The Lord of the Rings for a dollar fifty 
at a yard sale. Then again, the old mining town of Copper Mill’s not 
too big on reading. My hometown sits in the mountains, between 
Pickens County and Dawsonville, Georgia. The copper mines were
created in 1845, and the old copper plant opened in 1905; both were shut down in the 1960s when everyone went in for environmental care. Ever since then, not one here has liked to work too hard, except some of the farmers, whose pot bellies poking out from their flannel shirts make them resemble some of their livestock. Everything is usually so boring; the biggest thing that ever happened was when the mayor invited some of the more prominent citizens to watch the world premiere of "The Blue Collar Comedy Tour" on TV. Then again, he was one of the few people who could afford cable.

I was a senior at Copper High. I would graduate in three months. And I longed to be gone from this stink hole.

A few minutes later, I heard the door slam shut and Mama yell, "Joy! Come in here!"
"Why?" I called back.
"You've got a letter!"
"Can't it wait?" I asked. I had gotten to the part where Jane received the fateful letter from dowdy Mrs. Fairfax of Thornfield Hall.

"Mama said get off your fat ass and in here now, Joy!" Hannah shouted through the wall as she banged on it with her fist. I am sure people in Atlanta heard her screaming. I sighed, saved my spot in the book, and (taking my sweet time getting up) went back into the living room.

Hannah had her arms crossed and her legs tucked up under her on Daddy's recliner. She looked like a starved hen. Mama had my letter ripped open and was reading it.

"It's a federal offense to read other people's mail," I said.
"This is a college acceptance letter," Mama said.
"What?"
"It's an acceptance letter to Brenau," she said. "When did you apply for college?"
"Last fall," I answered.
"Then explain the scholarship," Mama said. "This says you got a choral scholarship."
"Don't those require auditions?" Hannah asked. What she knew of auditions only pertained to American Idol or cheerleader tryouts.
"Remember the trip to Honors Chorus?" I asked, my hands on my fleshy hips.
"I thought you told Mama you were too busy practicing," Hannah asked. She'd just love it if I had skipped those all too important practices.

"For your information, Tinker Bell, I did it during lunch break. I asked the director to get me an audition."

"Well, Joy," Mama said. "This is just so... great." Her smile was a little too big across her pencil thin lips. "My little girl a college girl... I'm so proud," she said in a monotone. She suddenly clapped her knobby knuckled hands, her farsighted eyes lighting up, and said, "I'm gonna bake your favorite cake tomorrow at the bakery to celebrate!" She was already heading upstairs to her room, where the cookbooks and recipe cards were archived in shoe boxes and dresser drawers.

"Mama! You know I won't eat it! My diet!" I cried up.

Hannah jumped up and squeezed by me to the foot of the stairs to yell, "I'll eat it, Mama! I don't care 'bout some stupid diets or nothin!"

"Careful, Twinky, or you'll get too big for your pyramid," I said to her.

She whipped around, her long blond hair slapping me in the face, she said, "You know what? You're just as weird as Tommy."

Tommy's our older brother. He was a reader like me. He got a scholarship to UGA three years ago and hasn't been back since. We got letters and presents from him sometimes. He's sent me hundreds of classic music tapes and poetry books. He's my favorite sibling. Then again, anyone was better than Hannah.

"Do the math, Twinkie. That makes two Einsteins against one Barbie," I said as I turned around, grabbed my doorknob, and slammed them all out.

"See, Joy, what did I tell you?" Ms. Lynn, my chorus teacher, said. It was Tuesday, and I showed her my letter from Brenau. She was beaming. Besides the prima donna, Angela, I was her favorite student. I stood behind the other altos and sang the pitches on key. Though I was the only decent alto, Angela was considered the best singer of all. That's why she got all the solos. The rest of the girls are tone-deaf.

"My Mama flipped," I told her.

"So what?" She replied. "So did my mom. Parents never want to
see their babies grow up.”

“Oh, she wasn’t against it,” I said. “She just decided to have a huge promotional bake sale,” I said. Angela and her entourage kept staring at me. They’d heard. Damn it. It will be all over school. I even heard one of the girls in the soprano section say, “The fat nerd’s going to college.” My only consolation is that this time next year, those girls will be barefoot and pregnant with one of the football players’ babies while I’m singing Handel in Pierce Auditorium.

Ms. Lynn returned to her conducting podium and said in her singer’s voice, “Class, I have exciting news. To celebrate Joy getting accepted to Brenau, she’ll be singing the Alma Mater at this year’s graduation ceremony.”

“What?” I said.

“What!” Angela demanded. “Ma’am, I thought I was gonna sing the Alma Mater.”

“Joy has earned it.” Ms. Lynn said. She tapped her baton, and said, “Now rise, and let’s begin our exercises.” As I stood with the rest of the girls, I glanced over at Angela. She was still sitting down. Her usual pin straight back was hunched over, her green eyes stared ahead at nothing, and for a second her cheeks seemed sallow. At that moment, I knew what she would look like when she grew old.

May

After a month of practice, and Mama’s ceaseless baking, I leaned on the counter, reading the part in Jane Eyre when Jane was stuck with the snotty, fake upper aristocracy at Rochester’s party before the eccentric man came in disguised as a fortune teller. Then I heard the bell above the door go tingle jingle, and my sister giggling uncontrollably as she led a familiar, and most unwelcome, person towards me. Harper Bryant: a senior, a football player, a famed coon hunter, and a bane of my existence. He and every other jock in school had made fun of me ever since we were in third grade when they noticed I was bigger than everyone else. Fortunately for them, I was also a lot slower. The fact that he was dating Hannah made my skin crawl. The picture of Americana: the quarterback and the cheerleader. Good God!

“Hey, Almond Joy,” Harper said as he plunked down in front of me.
“Don’t call me that,” I droned. “You know I’m allergic to coconut.”

“Whatever,” he said. “I heard ‘bout the good news.”

“How nice,” I said, trying to get back to Jane’s plight.

“Harper, you want something to drink?” Hannah asked sweetly, leaning over so Harper could see how low her shirt went.

“Sure,” he said. “Sweet tea.”

“That’s two-forty-nine,” I said as Hannah went to the pitcher.

“She’s kidding,” she said to him as she handed him the plastic cup.

“He’s ordered,” I said. “He has to pay for the drink,” I told her.

“No tabs or credit.”

“He has a discount,” she snarled.


“Preferred customers discount, Joy,” she hissed through her teeth. Then she went back around to forage for day-old cookies and cupcakes. I was already trying to read again, when Harper, slurping his tea, leaned in towards me and said, “I wanted to ask you something.”

“If it’s the will-you-go-to-the-prom-with-my-friend question, forget it. I’ve heard that joke enough for one lifetime.”

“I’m serious.”

“Well, that’s a first,” I replied, saving my spot in my book. I leaned forward, looked him in the eye, and said, “Well? What is it?”

He didn’t say anything for a minute. Then, he scratched his head, adjusted his cap, and asked, “Um... What’s it like to be smart?”

“What?” I asked. This was totally unexpected. My mouth was hanging open like a carp caught on a hook. I was speechless for once in my whole life. I’d never been asked that before. Behind me, Hannah shot up, knocking her head on the edge of the counter. She cussed as she rubbed the back of her head, staring at us.

“What’s it like to actually know stuff?” he asked again. “You get every answer right on the tests and homework. I tried to cheat off you once, but I can’t read your handwriting.”

“It’s cursive,” I replied. “And I do get wrong answers sometimes.”

“You’re still goin’ to college, he said. “No one else here is.”

“Bull,” I said. “Dell’s the valedictorian of the class. She’s the one
with the perfect record."

"But she ain’t goin’ to college," Harper said. "She’s engaged to Blake."

"Blake?" I asked. "Blake Thomas? The farmer’s son?" I was shocked. Dell Brock was number one in our class, the class president, and the captain of the cheerleaders all four years. Her only saving grace was that she was the only other person besides me who had any brains or potential in this hick town.

By now, Hannah’s feeble brain was working again, and she ran around to Harper, grabbing his arm. She looked up at him with doe eyes and said, "I’m not hungry; let’s go to the dollar store."

"But you said you was starvin’," Harper said, looking confused.

"I changed my mind," she said, dragging him behind her. He looked back at me, threw up his hands, and called, "See ya, Almond Joy."

"I told you not to call me that!!" I screamed as the door closed. I huffed and went back to Jane in eighteenth-century England.

**June**

One month passed, and after all the hoopla about prom was over and done with, graduation was only a few days away. I could hardly contain my excitement. And my nervousness. To add to the flurry of preparations, the day I got my cap and gown, I returned home to a pleasant surprise.

"Tommy’s coming?" I exclaimed. I hugged my packs from school tight to my chest. I bugged them so tight the plastic wrapping popped.

Mama didn’t flinch. "Yeah, he’s comin’," she said as she tried to balance a cigarette in one hand and the vacuum cleaner handle in the other. "Now do something healthy; help me clean this place up."

"But I just got this from my English teacher as a gift," I said, holding up a new book. I had received it from Mrs. Smyth, a woman who looked like she’d been starched and ironed with her clothes. I passed her class with an A. Mama put the Marlboro between her lips and took my book in her free hand.

"Kafka?" she mumbled. "Sounds like something you cough up," she said, tossing my book on the couch. "Wish you cared as much about this house as you did about your books," Mama said as she exhaled toxin from her cracked mouth.
“I care, Mama,” Hannah said, sounding like one of the Chipettes as she carried in a basket of laundry.

“I know you do, baby girl,” Mama said sweetly. I put a hand on my churning stomach. This moment between them was so touching, I felt like I was going to heave my Slimfast Shake from lunch. I took my book, grabbed a bag of Tostitos, and slunk off to my room.

Tommy showed up Friday, on my last day. Saturday was graduation. As I emptied my backpack in my room, throwing out numerous football and basketball flyers, Mama yelled from the front room, “He’s a-comin’!” I jumped up (a little too quickly, I might add; I had to catch my breath) and thundered out of my room. I stood with Mama and Hannah as we waited. I could hear the wheels of Tommy’s old Ford crunching on the gravel, the old rusted metal door creaking open and slamming shut. Then the thump thump thump of his hiking boots on the wooden porch, harmonized by the squeek squeek squeek of the slowly decaying planks. Then, the door opened.

“Tommy!” I rushed forward to hug my long-lost brother.

“Hey there, Janice,” he drawled, laughing as he gave me a tight bear hug. My brother has always had the opinion that my mass of brown tangles were identical to those of Janice Joplin’s, so he’s called me Janice ever since I could remember.

“Welcome home, Son,” Mama said, smiling and making her wrinkled face distort; she looked like one of those pug dogs after the return of a master who’d been away on three weeks’ vacation. The top of her head could barely reach Tommy’s collar bone, but she hugged him anyway. Hannah, well, she just stared at all of us, resentment in her eyes at not being the one receiving attention.

“Hey, Hanner Nanner,” Tommy said, striding to Hannah and put her in a half-nelson.

“Put me down!” she screamed, flailing her arms. When she was down she scowled, making her pretty face look as wrinkled as Mama’s, and seethed, “You know I’ve always hated that name!”

“No, you didn’t,” Tommy laughed, “I called you Hanner Nanner ever since you was a baby. You begged me to call you Hanner Nanner.”

I thought, how can an English major talk like that? Yeesh!

“Sides,” Tommy continued, “I got gifts.”
“Gifts?” Hannah and I said in unison.

“Yup, come an’ get ‘em,” he answered, going back outside. We followed him to his truck, where he pulled out different items from his overnight bag.

“This is for you, Mama,” he said, giving her a Precious Moments statue. Mama had a fit over it; she loves knick-knacks. Hannah got a Discman.

“And this is for you, Janice,” He said, handing me a very large volume. I took it in both hands, and stared in awe at the book of Italian arias. I flipped to the front page: Copyright 1901.

“Oh my God,” I said, “Thank you!”

“Don’t take the Lord’s name in vain, Janice,” Tommy said. He put one of his massive hands on my flabby shoulder and squeezed as we smiled at each other. Then we all went inside to eat dinner.

Later, Harper showed up, as usual, to bum a meal off us. As we munched on Mama’s fried chicken, Tommy asked me about Brenau. I told him it was in the historic district of Gainesville, and that it started as an all girls’ school, but eventually went to co-ed. And that the music program was awesome.

“I’m real proud of her,” Mama said. “But, the truth is, Hall County’s so far, and she don’t have no place to live.”

“Mama, what are you talking about?” I asked. “They have student housing.”

“Well, but baby, you won’t be living with me no more,” she said. “And, to be honest, how are you gonna get all the way to Hall County? I’d drive you, but the hatchback can’t make it all the way across the bridge to Hall County. It barely makes it to the bakery.”

“What are you saying, Mama?” I asked.

“Uh-oh,” Hannah said, with a mouth full of peas.

“She can come stay with me,” Tommy suddenly said. I dropped my half-eaten wing.

“What?” Mama said, dropping her fork and wiping her mouth. “WHAT?”

“Uh-oh,” Hannah said. She grabbed her dish and made a run for the living room, grabbing Harper and pulling his long, lanky body out of the chair. His plate was still in his hands.

“Thomas,” Mama said. She gripped the table, took a breath, then said calmly, “Thomas, you had better not defy me.”
"Defy? mama, she’s eighteen," Tommy said, raising his voice. "She’s been accepted to a good school. If it’s a place to stay between semesters that’s got you worried, she can live with me. My apartment’s big enough, and it’s less than an hour from Brenau.”

"Tommy, it’s okay, I don’t need..." I started to say.

"No!" Mama insisted, slamming her hand on the table. "I spent eighteen years of my life takin’ care of her, and I’m not gonna let those years be wasted!" she suddenly shouted.

"Wasted?" I asked.

"Mama, what’s the deal?" Tommy asked. From the living room, Hannah was trying to coax Harper into going for a drive, but the confused boy was transfixed on what was going on in our kitchen. His eyes were like those of a deer in headlights as he continued to chew on his food.

"I fed’ an’ clothed’ you," Mama said, getting more agitated. "Now you're both talking about movin’ out? After all I done after your daddy died? After I even tried to get yuns a new daddy, and got left with another baby to take care of? Fine! You’re both spoiled brats, far as I’m concerned!" she yelled at me and Tommy. Then, she stomped and cursed her way upstairs.

"Mama!" Hannah cried, running up after her, pushing Harper on the couch as she ran by. "Mama! Don’t cry! I won’t leave, Mama!"

Harper sat in his seat, still chewing, looking just as bewildered as Tommy and me. Then, he swallowed, slowly put his fork and plate down on the coffee table, like it was going to explode, and said, "I’ll um... I’ll just, uh... go now."

Later that night, I woke up with my throat drier than the Arabian desert. On the way from the kitchen to my room, I saw Tommy leafing through our family album.

“What’s got you up so late?” I asked.

“I was thinking about Papee,” he said.

“Papee Green?” I asked, sitting beside him on the couch.

“Yup,” he said. I looked over his shoulder as pictures of us with
our Uncle Billy (he was a graduate from Tennessee State, and currently a lawyer) and of Aunt Lisa (who was in a rehab hospital in Atlanta.)

Then Tommy turned the page to a picture I’d never seen before. It was Tommy with Papee and me, when Tommy and I were little kids. We were in front of a huge bright sign. It was so blurred I couldn’t read the words behind us.

“When was this taken?” I asked him.

“When we went to New York,” Tommy replied. “You probly don’t member. You was just a little baby.”

“You’re right, man, I don’t” I said, studying the picture. Papee was holding me in his arms. I was dressed up in one of those frilly, bow-covered baby dresses. Tommy was wearing a little gray blazer and dark brown short pants, and Papee was dressed in a pinstriped suit and tie. “Where were we in this picture?” I asked.

“In front of the Broadway theatre,” Tommy said. My jaw dropped. Broadway? I went to Broadway?

“But... how...?”

“Papee won some tickets off the radio,” Tommy said, “Mama didn’t care to go, and Daddy was workin’ that weekend, and we were gonna spend the weekend at Papee’s anyway. So, he took us.

“I member how excited Papee was that he was gonna show us something he loved. He said that when he was younger, him and Granma went to the theatres all the time. Now, I didn’t really care for sittin’ through a long opera, but you...Sis, your face lit up! You was laughin and takin on like a monkey in a nanner tree. And Papee was a clappin’ and hootin’ right with ya.”

I could almost hear it. The delighted squeals of a baby girl as she clapped her hands together with her grandfather...my Papee...and his weathered, tired old face looking ten years younger...twenty years younger. And my big brother asleep, cause he didn’t understand the magic of what we were seeing.

“Papee saw your potential right then, Sis,” Tommy said. “He saw that you was different. Like I was different. Like he was different.”

“Different?” I asked.

“From the people here, and where he grew up. He grew up in a smaller place than this, Joy” (He hardly ever used my real name unless he was serious) “And he was growing up in the Depression
times. But he told me once that when he was about seven, he saved up money to go to a movie. He was changed, Sis. He spent all his money on movies, and when those weren’t enough, he spend every minute he could spare reading books at the library. Then, he finally made it to college.”

“Papee went to college?”

“Yeah. He loved readin’ more than anything else. If you will recall, he’s the one first got you so keen on them books Tolkien wrote.”

“I remember that,” I said, “When we’d go for summer, he’d read us a chapter from The Hobbit. And when we finished that, he started reading Chronicles of Narnia... But...” I felt a tightness in my chest. My nose filled up.

“He got the tumor,” Tommy said quietly.

The pain was still there. My Papee, brilliant, kind, and jolly, got a brain tumor that slowly took away his memory. He couldn’t afford to get surgery for it. Then he died in his sleep when I was nine. “Papee was the only person who ever understood our potential, Sis. He saw it in me when I was four. I was writin a story for my kindergarten class, and he read it. He said it was the best thing he’d ever read.”

“But...If he was so smart, and we were so smart... Why isn’t anyone else in this family? Why are we the outcasts?”

“Oh, sis,” Tommy said, putting an arm around me, “Something you got to understand is that there’s a difference between bein smart and bein intelligent. Daddy was intelligent.”

“Don’t remind me,” I said, trying not to cry. “I don’t want to remember the car wreck.”

“What are you doing up?” Hannah asked from the stairs. “You know Mama gets mad when she don’t get enough sleep.”

“We’re being quiet,” I said, “And why the heck are you up?”

“I wanted some water,” she said, standing up straight. As she passed by with her glass, she looked at the open album, pointed her finger at the page, and asked, “Who’s the ugly baby Papee’s holdin’?”

“Hanner,” Tommy asked.

“You know dang well it’s me” I glared at her.

“Well, excuse me,” she said backing off. She finally went back upstairs with her half-full glass.
“Sis,” Tommy said, shaking his head, “Let me tell you, I know Hannah’s got some potential somewhere, but she’s afraid of being rejected.”


“Sis,” he said, “no cussin.”

“Yeah, I know,” I said. I stared at my slippered feet. “I know you were trying to be nice earlier, offering me a place to stay. But I don’t need it. I’ll be okay.”

“I know, Janice,” he said, hugging me tight. “Now go to bed, you got a big thing to do tomorrow.”

“Yeah,” I said, getting up. “I do.”

The day after graduation, one of the basketball players threw a tailgate party at his place. All graduates and anybody else was invited, provided they kept the river of illegal liquor flowing. That evening, as I neared the end of *The Metamorphosis*, Hannah came bounding down the stairs, her pompons shaking above her head.

“Aren’t you a little young for the party?” I asked her, not even bothering to glance up.

“I’m mature for my age,” she retorted.

“Does Mama know you’re going?” I asked.

“No, and you better not say nothing, Cow Queen,” she hissed.

“Besides,” she said, smoothing out her petal pink crop top, “I’ll be with Harper.”

“Heaven help us,” I muttered. Then, we heard the sound of big wheels tearing up the gravel road. No doubt it was Harper’s mud-covered, once-white, Chevy. A door slammed, and the *du-thump du-thump* of Harper’s stride came to the door. He slowly pushed it open, and asked Hannah, “Ready?”

“You bet, Sugar,” she said with delight.

“Hey, Almond Joy, ain’t you comin?” Harper asked me out of the blue.


“It’s a goodbye party,” he said, “Ain’t you gonna show up? Say good bye?”

“Nope,” I said, picking my book up and finding the page again.
“But you were so great at graduation,” he said.
“I’d rather not,” I insisted.
“Why do you want her to come anyway?” Hannah asked him, not even trying to hide her anger. “She’ll spoil the party. She always does.”
“I just thought she’d wanna say goodbye to everybody,” he said quietly. This was a new thing for Harper. He was never quiet.
“I have no one to say goodbye to,” I said. “Besides, no one else is going anywhere. Just make sure you don’t flip that hunk of garbage in the driveway.”
“Okay,” he said. A glance up told me he was hanging his head, obviously disappointed. “C’mon Han,” he said.
As they left, Hannah skipping and once again waving her pompons, I sat back, and returned to Gregor’s ever-growing dilemma. Unfortunately, that’s when Mama came downstairs.
“Was that Hannah and her boyfriend?” she asked.
“Oh, they’re so cute,” she said, “They always remind me of a couple off a romantic movie on TV.”
“More like the first two to get disemboweled in a horror movie,” I said under my breath.
“When are you going to get a boyfriend?” she asked me.
“What?” I asked.
“You’re a very pretty girl, Joy,” Mama said, “If you wore some makeup and stopped acting so...unfeminine, you’d get a lot of boys. Why can’t you be more...more...what’s the word? Not down?”
“Perky?” I asked, disgusted and annoyed. “Mama, I’m not perky. I don’t do perky, I hate everyone who is. Hannah is perky.”
“And she’s got a boyfriend,” she said, still trying to make her point.
“Besides, I tried that in middle school,” I said. “The only boy who paid attention was a creepy-pervert, stalker who got expelled for downloading porn in the library.”
“That wasn’t the right time,” she said. “Now is.”
“Are you insane?” I demanded. “I just graduated! I’m moving to another county. A boyfriend now is pointless! I’d have to dump him in two months!” I was getting louder with each argument.
“Not if you don’t go!” she yelled right back.

“What?” I asked, my voice growling with the vehemence of a pit bull.

“Not if you don’t go,” she repeated, her small frame shaking with rage. Suddenly, she started crying. “Don’t go to college Joy,” she said. “Stay here. You can work full-time at the bakery. I’ll even let you cook! And then you can meet someone, get married, and I’ll be a phone call away.”

“What the heck?” I screamed. Then, it clicked. “You…you saboteur! This whole frickin time! You! Why are you trying to keep me in this piece of crap town?”

“Because it’s not fair that you get to go when I didn’t!” she bawled. “I had to stay with Daddy cause he needed me. My big brother and little sister just up and left, and I stayed. I took care of Daddy – your sick Papee – when they abandoned him. And now I need you to take care of me!”

“How?” I asked. “By stuffing me with food? By telling me to shack up with someone and never leave? I deserve better! You deserved better, you were just too scared to try!”

“I was helping my Daddy!” she screamed.

“He was strong enough to make it!” I argued, “And he would have wanted you to show some potential! You wasted your life here! I won’t waste mine.” I stomped out, and slammed my door shut. I flopped on the bed, got out my headphones and radio, and turned it on. A classical station. Ode to Joy was playing.

August

On Monday, I was at the counter of the bakery again. One last week to get paid and save some money. That next week Tommy would be coming back to help me load up his truck with my things. I was moving to Gainesville. I would live at Brenau.

As people came in and out, saying congratulations and goodbye, buying Mama’s newest concoction, chocolate chip lemon poppy seed muffins, Harper walked in.

“Ice Tea,” he said.

“No specials today,” I informed him. “Hannah’s in the back on
"I didn’t wanna see her," he said. "I wanna see you."

"Well, you see me, now get going," I said. "Don’t hold up the line." He was the only person standing at the counter. Everyone else was either sitting at the two tables, or eating outside.

"I want to ask you to go to Canton," he said. "See a movie."

"Harper," I said, "don’t do this. You know better. Besides, I can’t hurt my baby sister. I may hate her guts, but I still love her."

"It’s not that," he said. "It’s one of those independent movies. She wouldn’t get it."

"Maybe," I said, "But she’s still my sister. Stay here, I’ll go get her." He stuck his hands in his pockets and looked at the floor as I walked to the back room.

I opened the door a crack, but didn’t go in. I quickly held my breath and peered through the small opening. I couldn’t believe it.

My sister was reading a book, and not just some Harlequin! This was a real hardbound book! I smiled. Potential indeed. Then, I took a breath, opened the door and walked in, saying, "Whatcha doing?"

Hannah nearly jumped out of her skin. She grabbed a copy of Seventeen magazine, and covered the book with it. "Jesus! Don’t scare me like that!"

"You shouldn’t be back here anyway, trainee," I said. "You have to take my place next week."

"Whatever," she said, glancing from me to the magazine. "Could you go?"

"What are you reading?" I asked, my cheeks starting to hurt from the smile on my face.

"Nothin," she said, looking down.

"Liar."

"It’s a book, okay?" she said, tossing the magazine away, and showing me the book, "A poetry book."

"Poetry?" I asked, crossing my arms. "Sis, I’ve never known you to be tolerant of poetry."

"I know," she said. She looked at an open page, and started fidgeting with a dog-eared corner. Then, she smiled, and said, "I really like this one: ‘If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not
have lived in vain: If I can ease one life the aching, or cool one
pain..."

"Emily Dickinson," I said. "Not a favorite of mine. But perfect for
you, Sis."

"Really?" she asked.

"Yup," I said. "Harper’s outside. He wants to go to a movie."

"Oh," she said, looking down.

"Why don’t you go?" I asked her.

"He likes you better," she said, picking at a loose string on her
apron.

Sitting down beside her, I said, "No, he only thinks he does. He
just hasn’t seen your potential. Now go on. I’ll cover for you."

"Damn..." she said, standing up and taking off her apron.

"Thanks, Joy."

"Don’t mention it," I said. "Really. Don’t. It’ll ruin our
reputations."

"Seriously," she said, imitating a Valley girl.

"And take the book," I said, handing it to her. "Show him you
have something besides big boobs."

She stuck her tongue out at me and flounced out the door. I soon
returned to the cash register and the counter. I looked at the basket of
new muffins. After Mama and I had fought in June, we hadn’t
exchanged words. I didn’t know if she still didn’t want me to go. We
hadn’t really spoken. I took a muffin, and examined it. I looked
around. No one here. One won’t hurt. I’d already lost another 20
pounds anyway.
Like the Magnolia that stands outside my window,  
I tower above the other singers.  
Miniature suns shine above us.  
They make me more nervous...  

My glasses fog,  
The salty sweat stings worse than soap.  

The buzz of eager patrons deafens the black room,  
The conductor nods to us,  
She is ready to begin.  
I take a breath.  

My heart ceases to exist.
Angel
Lis Havey

A puffy teddy-bear stomach,
Stitched up in the middle.

Sterile sheets underneath.
Three meals a day, each with a flower.

A floral dress.
Misty Mauve covering her tips.

Intensity dancing on all of our heads.
Eyes bleeding, phones screaming.

She’s leaving, they said.
But I’ll see her again.
Still Life Composition
Graphic Art by Tam Cao
Waking Up at Sweetwater Coffeehouse
Jessi Stone

In the depths of the Sautee-Nacoochee Valley,
Linger ing aroma of shade-grown espresso beans
breathes life into my sleepy Monday morning.
A gentle nudge of wind
cools my cup just enough.
As the sun peaks over the mountains
I become more aware of my surroundings.
Long weekends full of plowing, waiting tables, and hangovers
Bring us to our retreat once again.
Trees tuck us away like leaves in the snow.
Such a small porch for so many interesting conversations.
An old friend in overalls and mud tells his story:
“I was up to my knees in concrete. Doctor said he oughta amputate,
but I told ‘em I heal purdy quick.”
Hippies lost in the wrong generation protest:
“Those damn Floridian tubers are polluting the river
and we gotta do something about it.”
Bittersweet fumes of caffeine and tobacco seep into my lungs.
Tie-dyed shirts and Birkenstocks hum along as
familiar melodies from a six string-play in the corner.
“No woman, No cry.”
My favorite.
I return to my organic tea,
Savoring the thick honey as it coats my throat
Making the day seem easy.
Psychedelic Art
Graphic Art by Kostadin Kostov
Go Lights
Jesse Turcotte

“yeah, I’ll take you to the airport” she says
And shoom,
So fast that a million multi-colored lights stream past
In the heavy darkness
And the girl driving is a vibrating blur
Of reflected headlights, taillights, stoplights,
Go lights.

As the girl is hugged and abandoned at the terminal,
   She still shudders and vibrates
   In a million rich colors
   So distinctions in her features
   vanish
And the sadness must be faked

Line break

Just as the jet engines quiver and thrust
The light of the sun slaps over the horizon
like a fast fist of bleach on half-closed eyes
And whitens your thoughts
And every this and that, and
even the water on your eyes and cheeks is filtered,
   purified,
   blown away
Fire in the Sky

Daniel Elzey

I am driving home from the mountains.
Camping is my escape.
There, I briefly rejoin nature.
But I must return.
As I drive, I look up into the night sky.
I watch as the night sky disappears.

Orion is swallowed by Fire.
Next is Cassiopeia.
As I approach home, all I see is Man’s Fire.
The atmosphere is ablaze.
I look farther down the road,
And see the mountain that stands
Between my escape and home.

When I round that mountain,
I will be in the Fire. How long
Will the mountain hold back the fire?
A Journey Before Dinner
J. Daniel McConnell

As I set the table for dinner,
My hand chanced upon a fork.
A single silver river flowing down,
To break into four lesser branches.

It brought to mind a Frost’s cold work,
And a path diverging in a wood.
Each tine a single journey,
Stretching across the table’s cloth.

It fell down mountains,
Careening through air never tasted,
Past wild, sharp peaks and stunted trees.
Tickled by feral gusts.

It strolled through the valley,
A slow winding course,
Caressed by a gentle breeze,
Feeding the emerald hue of its borders.

It slunk through the desert,
Hiding behind sick green growth,
Retreating from the barren landscape,
Boiling away under the naked light.

It was beaten in the city.
Subverted with channels and piers,
Strapped down by steel and concrete,
Cut through by boats and barges.

Yet each branch flows on,
Merging again to a single silver river
Stretching to the sea.
Mantis
Photograph by Robert Zanin
What Swept Gold

Jesse Turcotte

What swept gold across
pearly white peaks and shadow valleys
of good grades, bad
of have money, have not,
of good blank
and bad
was eight buttery brush fingers
like golden American wheat
like October paper wings in heaven’s golden porch light
and two supple mankind thumbs
that bent with a smile and wrapped and
curled me tight in the fetal position
and then unbound and slipped away to rocket men to the moon.
But the next day,
as I climbed up peaks and fell down valleys,
I saw a new kid in class,
scrambling from the inky shadows,
head high,
mine.
On the Blocks
Daniel Elzey

I stand on my starting block and watch the water
Make reflections shimmer on the walls.
They dance before me like infinite possibilities.

I watch the crowd and see
A glistening reflection flits around my parents.
My mother jumps and shouts, "That's my boy!"
While my father's icy gaze awaits my performance.

I watch the swimmers
Move with seeming effortlessness.
Through the water,
They glide in their lanes.

I take my mark on the block
And gaze into the dark abyss
As they swim toward me with robotic precision.

As I ready myself to continue the course,
I can't help but wonder:
Can I reach out and grab my fate
Or do I simply swim in my lane?
Apple
Graphic Art by Tracy Clinton
I smell you sometimes when
I am drying my hair.
I remember before there were boys.
Long before ridiculous curfews,
There were only sleep-overs and teddy bears.

One restless July,
The sun touched down upon our pale bodies.
Your skin turned a beautiful golden brown.
My freckles darkened and ran into each other.
We squeezed fresh lemon juice
In our hair to be blondes
And it stung as it leaked into my eyes.

Once we snuck out past my father snoring
And ran until our lungs were frozen,
full of October air.
Lying in the dead grass
That felt like knives
piercing into our backs.
We struggled to keep our eyes open
to witness every shooting star,
moving fast through the sky and
then slowly fading like your favorite blue jeans.
I didn’t think that was our fate.
Twisted Flowers
Graphic Art by Edgar Lituma
Simone sank down on her porch swing and heard its rusty chains groan. She threw back her head and rubbed a cut lemon on her hair to bleach it a little in the sun. The childhood golden blond had faded into a auburn. Simone closed her eyes and ran her fingers through her wet hair. She had just washed it and hoped that letting it dry out in what passed for a breeze would bring some relief.

“A lady must look her best while she’s still young enough to get looks,” a familiar voice spoke.

“Grandmother, what are you doing out in this heat?” Simone answered with eyes still closed.

“Look what I got.” Grandmother held a chemistry set with a bright red bow adorning the top. “I bought this for Chip. It’ll keep him in the house where he belongs.”

“Oh, crazy ol’ Martha Ruth wasn’t too upset about that window. She was just happy that it wasn’t Satan after her again. We paid her and that’s that. Now please, I have work to do.”

Simone stood and pointed to the porch columns. The honeysuckle growing wild along one of the six square columns that held up the porch roof was making an assault on the house. Strands of the vine trespassed through the cracks in the warped planks under the swing. “I’m going to have to crawl under the porch and do something about it,” Simone added.

“Leave that vine be. Sugar, when you get to be a certain age, you realize that the only thing you do have time for is doing exactly what you want. Let’s talk.”

Lighting a cigarette, Simone inhaled deeply and returned to the swing. Her grandmother sat beside her. “Hunter is back in town,” Simone puffed out with disappointment. “He hasn’t even called. Not that I would want to see him anyways. He’s probably fat and full of himself now.”

The old woman snatched the half-smoked cigarette from her granddaughter and took a drag. “Sugar, let a man out of your sight for fourteen years and you’ll never know what he’ll turn into.”
A telephone truck stopped across the street in front of the Methodist church. A lineman stepped out. Simone didn’t get a good look at his face, but he was big like Hunter. That boy sure had been traipsing through her mind today. If she went into town, she would probably see his likeness in half the men who turned a corner or walked in front of her on the street.

As the lineman worked his way up the pole, both ladies stared with awestruck gawks on their faces. The lineman’s sun-stained arms glistened with sweat. “Look at his pants.” Grandmother spoke in her church gossip tone. “His jeans have shrunk just right.”

The lineman pulled himself onto the top crossbar and bent forward to cut the wisteria vines that had twisted around the wires. Then he bent backward under the wires. He hung upside down by his knees and leaned way out. Both women held their breath.

Reaching his arms above his head, he sheared away the vines. Clumps of wisteria blooms fell through the damp air. He suddenly tossed his clippers, jack-knifed up, grabbed hold of the crossbar, and waved.

Simone reached over and grabbed her grandmother’s hand. Of course that man reminded her of Hunter Daniels. That was Hunter Daniels. He was showing off just like he’d done in high school.

Simone stood and waved back. “Why does he have to see me today of all days? I look like a drowned cat.” She turned to her grandmother for comfort, but the old woman slipped into the house.

“A smart girl makes a man sweat.” Grandmother’s voice came from the kitchen window.

Hunter strolled up the walkway with his tool belt slung on his hips like a holster. One of the afternoon freight trains blew its warning whistle.

“Steal any police cars lately?” he asked.

Simone shook her head and blushed. “Crime just hasn’t been the same without you, Hunter.”

She replayed the scene when Hunter had scored five touchdowns against Folkston’s biggest rivals, the Chatham County Wildcats, and she and Hunter stole the sheriff’s car and rode all over town with the sirens on in celebration. That is, until they were arrested. The sheriff had chased them halfway to St. Mary’s in a confiscated pickup.
Her parents had been upset. Hunter’s had been beside themselves. “We have a business to run in this town,” Mr. Daniels yelled out when he had Hunter by the arm and was heading out of the police station. But the Daniels didn’t have to worry. They had the only taxidermy in town. The nearest one was in Waycross, but their prices kept the locals away. Besides nobody blamed Folkston’s star football player. The teachers, the coach, the other kids; nobody blamed him at all. They blamed Simone. Her mom had caused quite a ruckus in her high school years as well. Simone became the only Miss Okefenokee in Charlton County history forced to relinquish her crown due to unladylike behavior. Grandmother was more upset over the crown than conviction.

“No matter what happens, they always blame the girl,” Simone said.

Hunter took the stairs two at a time. Simone started to speak but took out a cigarette instead. He leaned forward and cupped his hand to light it for her. “Sammy showed me some of the postcards you sent.”

Hunter hadn’t sent many, but the ones she saw had pictures of Buddhas, elephants, and Chinese temples.

“Did you really see all of that stuff?”

She knew he would be flattered by her interest, for men find themselves the most fascinating subject of any conversation. When in doubt, let him talk about himself.

“You’d loved it, Simone. Temples a thousand years old right next to skyscrapers.”

He told her of how he had sailed the South China Sea, trekked through the mountains of Thailand on elephants, swum in the Bay of Bengal.

“It must have been something to be wild and free,” she said.

“It’s something, all right.”

When she was in high school, Simone had plans of writing a Southern guide to life inspired by her grandmother’s wisdom. She never expected to spend the rest of her life trapped in little Folkston while Hunter roamed the world.

“Do you still have family here?” Simone asked.

Hunter shook his head. “You know my father died.”

“While you were in Burma?”

“Mynamar. It’s not called Burma anymore.”
"Oh, she nodded. "I always wondered why you didn’t come back for the funeral."

"I was in the jungles. By the time I found out, my mother had already moved to Florida. Mom visited me in Bangkok that Christmas, but she didn’t like it. No English, no ice."

The two stared at each other.

"Well, I better get back to work. Have to clean the vine away from the lines before it takes out the power," Hunter backed off the porch and noticed the honeysuckle on the square column. "Would you like me to take care of that for you?"

"Oh, no. That vine adds subtle charm to this old house," Simone smiled to cover up her lie.

"Tell Russell that I’m sorry that I missed him. See y’all around, Simone."

Hunter walked back across the street toward the Methodist church. He picked up his clippers and loaded up the utility truck, then drove away.

Hunter had ignited a spark in Simone that she wasn’t sure she could snuff out. She wasn’t sure she wanted to.

"Grandmother, you’re right. A smart girl can’t just sit on a porch swing and wait for her life to start." Simone said as she entered the kitchen.

Simone stood in the bathroom window. She heard the voices of Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers floating down the empty street singing "Why Do Fools Fall in Love." Good question, she thought as she saw the second wave of high school kids round the corner under the streetlight.

She remembered what it was like when she was in high school looking for trouble on a hot summer night and her biggest problem was she might not find any. A storm had blown over, leaving the swampy town breathless and muggy. She pulled the shade down and
hung her green chenille robe on the hook in back of the door. The wet clothes everyone had thrown into a heap and left for her were lying in a puddle on the black-and-white tiles.

Balancing an ashtray on the edge of the old, claw-footed tub, she sank wearily into the water. It was barely tepid now that she’d gotten the rest of her family bathed. She closed her eyes, too tired even to pick up the soap.

After a while she sat up and took a drag on her cigarette. As the nicotine curled through her system, the vision of Hunter came back to taunt her. Guilt crawled up and down her stomach and right there she decided to remain a good and faithful wife just as she always been.

Feeling a little energized by her profound declaration, she ran the pink bar soap along her arms and around the back of her neck where her hair was more or less pinned up. No yielding to temptation, she swore to herself. What does it get you anyway? A different man. Big deal.

Ashes fell into her bath. She tried to grind out the butt, only to knock the ashtray into the floor. Love is like cigarettes, Simone thought as she leaned over the edge of the tub and shovelled up the dead butts. It gives you a little pleasure while you’re at it, but it leaves you with a bad taste in your mouth and a pain in your chest.

She picked up the still burning butt and tried to take one last drag, but it fell apart in her ash-wet hand. She stretched her chin to her chest, working the kinks out in her neck, and wondered what she was going to do when she saw Hunter again. Nothing, she assured herself, wallowing in the soapy water. She was finished with love.

Suddenly, loud laughter came from the boy’s room. How many boys were in there? She checked the clock above the medicine cabinet. Nine forty-five.

“Already? The children should be asleep,” Simone thought as she ascended from the comfort of her bath.

She went into the hall outside the boys’ room and smelled something sweet. She pushed on the door, but it was blocked. She started to knock and then changed her mind.

Quietly and barefooted, Simone slipped around the veranda and caught a neighborhood boy a little older than Chip sliding the window open. When he saw her, he lit out across the street and down the block.
“What’s wrong with you?” she yelled after him.

Simone hurried up to the long window. The shade was pulled down. She carefully slipped through the window. The room was stifling. Chip, her oldest, was bending over the gas heater pouring some powders into a bubbling beaker. Marilee and Billy Joe were sprawled out facedown on the bed. An unknown boy was facedown on the floor and a second was bending over the beaker inhaling the sweet gas through a straw up his nose.

Simone ran to the bed and shook her twins. Billy Joe opened his eyes and braced for trouble. Marilee giggled and lay down again. Simone didn’t know much about drugs, but she did know what alcohol could do.

“Our great-grandmother didn’t buy you that chemistry set so you could drug the neighborhood!” Simone yelled.

“It’s just nitrous oxide,” Chip cried.

Simone didn’t know what that was and she didn’t care. She could see the effect it had on the twins. With her hair wild and snaky from her bath, Simone turned to the drugged neighborhood boys and shouted, “Now get.”

The two boys fell all over each other pushing the dresser away from the bedroom door. Then she turned to her own children, “Go down out on the porch and breathe some fresh air, you hear?”

Marilee and Billy Joe nodded and lit out just like the other children.

“I’d advise you to go with them,” Simone told her oldest.

Chip held his ground. Then turning to the desk where the chemicals were carefully laid out, Simone grabbed the children’s baseball bat and swung.

“Nooooo!” Chip shrieked, knocking her against the wall. Suddenly Simone was in a swamp of pain.

A smile formed on Chip’s lips. He grabbed at the bat and kicked at her legs, trying to trip her, but Simone held on. He yelled and sluggéd his mother twice in the stomach. Simone folded again in pain. Billy Joe vaulted back into the room and smashed into his older brother; “You gone crazy, that’s our mamma!”

Chip howled like a wild animal, and rolled onto the floor under his brother’s pummeling. Simone choked down her pain and swung the bat again. A jumble of colored chemicals streaked the wall. Acid
ate into the linoleum as the record changer dropped a new record on the turntable and Dean Martin crooned “Memories are Made of This.”

“What is going on here?” Russell stood in the doorway with Marilee crying on his hip.

“World War III,” Simone answered, not taking her eyes off Chip and with bat still in hand.

“Simone Bradford, you calm down and hand me that bat, this instant,” Russell commanded. Simone obeyed and turned down the hall back to her bedroom. “They’re your problem now.”

Simone lay in bed paralyzed by the day’s events. Hunter would be horrified if he had seen the way she had behaved and how her children disrespected her.

“My life with Hunter would never have been like this. We’d be trekking through the jungles of Burma on the backs of elephants,” Simone whispered.

Russell slipped through the darkness and entered their bed.

“Don’t worry. I understand how they can get to you.”

“You don’t understand anything,” Simone said.

“It’s ok, I forgive you,” Russell put his arm around her waist.

“Don’t. My sides are stinging from your son.”

Simone closed her eyes and was sailing with Hunter on the South China Sea. She grew still and waited for her husband to fall asleep. He always crashed quickly. Soon the loud rhythm of his breathing filled the room.

Simone eased out from under her husband’s heavy arm and stood by the bed with satisfaction at having escaped.

Simone always thought that Russell looked like an innocent little puppy when he slept. Tip-toeing into the bathroom, the frosty black-and-white tile seemed to stick to her feet like the muddy Okefenokee.
“Even this old house tries to trap me,” Simone said while lifting her cold feet from the tiles. Reaching for her chenille robe, Simone noticed that in all that uproar she forgot to drain the bath tub.

Wrapping the worn robe around her Simone continued out of the room, careful to miss the creaky board in front of her bedroom door. Opening Marilee’s door, she spied Marilee and Billy Joe snuggled tightly under the pink quilt their great-grandmother had crafted. Chip was nestled against the wall with the Lone Ranger covers from his room. “Sleep sound, little addicts, for tomorrow is a busy day of cleaning,” she said.

Simone eased down the stairs and into the kitchen. Fumbling through drawers, she found a blank card and her favorite writing pen. Sitting down at the small wooden table, she began to write.

“Hunter, we are destined for each other. I felt it today as if no time has passed. Fourteen years may have made us wiser but it has also made our feelings stronger. Why wait? Meet me at the train depot tomorrow night and we’ll continue what we started fourteen years ago. Always yours, Simone Taylor.”

She had always been very fond of her maiden name. It just sounded right, she thought.

Grandmother’s voice rang loud and clear in that moment: You can’t change the past, but a smart girl won’t let that stop her.” Grabbing her husband’s truck keys, Simone headed out of the kitchen to the porch. Standing on the steps where Hunter had stood a few hours earlier, Simone looked at the invading vine.

“I should have let Hunter chop it down,” she thought.

Turning the ignition in the rusty blue Ford sparked a flame of excitement that Simone hadn’t felt since high school. Simone eased down the driveway onto Magnolia Lane. She drove past the high school, turned down Hope Street, and past Johnson Brothers hardware store.

“Just calm down, take deep breaths,” Simone coached herself as she approached Hunter’s street. The silent houses and carefully groomed gardens made dark silhouettes against the star-deprived sky. Here and there a porch lamp shone upon rosebushes, a child’s tricycle parked in the yard, a pink wrought-iron flamingo.
Simone parked the truck at the curb of a small but quaint yellow house with a green tin roof. The shutters and the front door were painted an odd eggplant color that seemed to almost battle with the bright cheerfulness of the rest of the house.

Simone switched off the engine. Fireflies flickered and danced in front of her windshield. The chirping of the crickets filled the night. When she was a child she thought their sharp song was the stars singing. She took a deep breath. With the note clenched in one hand and the other on the door, she stepped out of the truck. She paused and drummed her long fingers on the hood.

An old Chevy with Brook’s Drugs hand-painted on the door wheezed around the corner under the street light.

“Great, that’s all I need. Someone to see me standing here on Hunter’s lawn like some hormone-crazed teenager.”

Simone ducked down behind the truck just in time for the Chevy to drive by. She started to stand up when a nearby porch light came on.

“Hello? Who’s there?”

Martha Ruth Bodine stumbled onto her front porch with a fuzzy robe and pink curlers hanging in her hair.

“Get away from me, you hear?” Her words were slurred.

Simone remembered how Martha Ruth loved her whiskey in high school, but she had taken the pledge when she married Brother Junior Bodine. Brother Junior was dead set against drinking, smoking, and dancing. However, Amy Lou Harper who worked at her father’s drug store had let it be known that Mrs. Bodine was partial to the calming effects of this new pill prescribed for anxiety attacks.

“Get out of here. Get going, you hear.”

Martha Ruth held on to the porch rail with both hands. Simone didn’t know what was worse: she could stand up and identify herself and kiss goodbye to any shred of dignity she had left, or she could stay crouched down next to the truck and risk Martha Ruth confusing her with a prowler and calling the sheriff.

According to town rumors, it wasn’t prowlers that scared Martha Ruth; It was Satan. She worried about him ever since Brother Junior led her down to the river to save her immortal soul. Martha Ruth was uncertain that baptism had really taken place.
Martha Ruth blinked and the right side of her mouth twitched. She needed more and more of those bitter white pills to fend them off. For Martha Ruth the price of eternal caution had become exhausting.

Suddenly she dropped to her knees, “Lord have mercy on me!” she cried out into the night. Then she started singing, “Onward Christian Soldiers.”

Simone knew this was her chance to make a run for it. Standing up, she flung herself into the truck and drove out of sight.

The next morning, Amy Lou Harper called early and talked with Russell about poor Mrs. Bodine. She apparently stormed the drug store before opening time demanding more “miracle pills” because last night she had another personal encounter with Satan. She had called out the Lord’s name and that sent him scurrying in a lightning truck from Hell.

“It was true that she hadn’t gotten a good look at him, but she distinctly heard his cloven hooves going clickety click against the pavement,” confirmed Amy Lou.

Simone was just glad to have survived the night. Back under her sheets, listening to Russell’s heavy breathing, Simone realized she had dropped the note during the getaway. She had tossed and turned all night about whether Hunter would find the note or the possibility that someone else could. Around three in the morning, Simone concluded that what was meant to be would be.

Russell had felt so bad that Simone hadn’t slept well because of her fight with Chip that he made breakfast and took the children to school so she could rest. “Boys are easy,” Simone thought.

After Russell and the children had left, Simone surveyed the damage left by the chemistry set. The wall paper in the boy’s room was ruined, but luckily she hated that pattern.

“I guess I’ll have to go to Johnson Brothers and pick a new, modern design,” she decided.

Simone skulked downstairs in search of some Advil. Chip had not only aided in creating a mess, but he also inflicted a bruised stomach
on his mother. A train whistle blew from the station; Simone knew that was a cargo train by the whistle tone. Tonight there would be a passenger train expected to stop at eight. That would be her ticket to Burma and Thailand.

It was nearly noon; there was much preparation before tonight. Grabbing her favorite note-taking pen, Simone quoted her grandmother, “A smart girl always makes a list. Number one, buy groceries. Number two, buy wallpaper. Number three, laundry. Number four, pack. Number five, say goodbye to Grandmother.”

“Well, I guess you can mark that one off your list,” Grandmother’s voice spoke through the screen door. “So thoughtful of you to think of me,” she let the screen door slam behind her.

“I’ve had a revelation. Hunter and I are—”

“No, no, no, you can’t abandon your family.” It had been years since Simone had heard that tone, years since she felt the stinging of her grandmother’s disappointment.

“What about a smart girl makes her life happen? What about a smart girl has to find out life before death?” Simone shouted.

“Don’t be a fool, every child needs a mother,” grandmother rebutted.

“A real smart woman only dreams, not acts.”

Simone was fighting back tears.

The old woman approached her granddaughter: “Sugar, sometimes you can’t trust your heart.” Grabbing Simone by the elbow, she led her granddaughter out on the porch on to the swing.

“I guess now is the right time that we have this talk.”

Simone lifted her face in question. Her eyes were full and her bottom lip quivered.

“What talk?” Simone’s voice cracked.

“I know we don’t talk about her much, but you are so much like your mother. She was the kind of woman that made other women spy in jealousy. Her presence demanded attention. Just like you.”
Simone patted her skirt pockets and found her cigarettes. She pulled out two and lit them both. Passing one to her grandmother, she inhaled deeply, hoping to tame the snarling feeling in her stomach.

“Your mother left you, Simone,” her grandmother said.

“Like you she married right out of school and after your birth she gained the attention of an older gentleman in town. You know how the rest goes. Adventure and excitement can lead even the most established people astray.”

With her hand on her granddaughter’s knee, Grandmother Taylor rocked the swing in the summer’s breeze. The gardenia bush seemed to bloom over night and that fragrance pooled together with the invading honeysuckle blooms.

“A man always wants another man’s girl,” Simone whispered.

Taking the last two cigarettes from the pack, both women rocked slowly. “Letting go is the best cure. It frees your heart for much more satisfying pursuits,” Grandmother recited.

“How is it that you know so much?”

The old woman smiled and took one last puff on her dwindling cigarette, “You forget, I had a grandmother too.”

A departing whistle blew from town. The two rocked as the train left the station.

“Maybe it’s time I chop down that vine.”
Tallulah Falls
Photo by Erin Armstrong
Do You Hear That Train?

Jesse Turcotte

Do you hear that train?
She said yes
by a tree on a grassy hill,
thrust her pale head forward,
pulled her dark thin hair down,
jerked it back up,
straightened her bangs
and smiled at me

and I said,
Do you know what it means?
She said no.
I said, neither do I.
And it was all right,
because when it got dark and rained,
and she forced her tongue in my mouth,
we heard it, again,
far away,
permanent
Inside Looking Out
Graphic Art by Joe Taylor
Clocks Are Not Noticed By Most

Lisa Smith

Clocks are not noticed by most.

Only those who are unfamiliar with the gong are surprised.

Tick Tock.

Time passes.

Sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly.

Only the ticking of the clock stays the same.

The rising and setting of the sun never noticed until it is wanted.

Even then the cycle is passed off as Unimportant,

Unwanted,

Tick Tock.
Norton Jester Keeps his Receipts

Robert Zanin

If it’s possible to die of boredom,
truly you’ll be the first to go;
and when you do,
only the things you own will state on in disbelief.

If you have teacups,
they will blink with saucers’ eyes
perversely shaken
like a whirling-dervish kissing the mouths
of soggy post-its
which all say, “No Driving” between moldy repetitions.

Repeatedly
defining where the brilliant sea meets
the grimy shore (.)
-ness
of forthcoming fun
sinks slow like skipped stones.

And somewhere in secret,
between the sighs and sounds
of learning to drum fingers,
you lean against a depth charge of sea monkeys,
locating the silliest of readers
by pings from divine radar;
and maybe together,
we might wink at the intangible clerk
in the checkout aisle of this moment.
Why I Keep a Strawberry Shortcake Calendar

Jessi Stone

Between makeup and the morning caffeine fix,
I pause to recall today’s date.
Prismatic colors hang from a tack in the wall.
Nostalgic cartoons count down my days
with simple but truthful messages.
“Life is Delicious!”

Remembrance of a time
When life was nothing but
soft voices and dreams of escaping.
When Ginger Snap and Angel Cake were
All the motivation I needed
to awake before the sun.
Wasting my hours with perfect ease
like the pink cat in May.
I cross through the days
of the months of the years.
Butterflies in March,
flawless snowflakes in December.
Still longing for those days.

Now I wonder what was lost,
still hungry for strawberries and smiles.
Contributors

**Erin Armstrong** is a film addict and an aspiring artist. Erin hopes to be an illustrator or graphic designer when she grows up.

**Tam Cao** is currently an Art major at Gainesville College. Tam loves art and feels that a career in art would best suit his gifted talent.

**Daniel Elzey**, an avid mountain biker, is finishing up a degree in English. Daniel plans to transfer to UGA to pursue a career as a lawyer. Daniel does not fancy himself as a writer; however, he hopes that his Gainesville College education will pay off on the LSTAT's.

**Lis Havey** is a General Studies major with an interest in creative writing.
Contributors

Kostadin Dimtchev Kostov graduated from the Professional School of Arts in Bulgaria. Kostadin is majoring in Visual Arts and Computer Graphics. Kostadin has also won several awards such as the Coca Cola award for outstanding abstract art in 2001 and was nominated for the Georgia State Court Artist in 2002.

Edgar Lituma was born in Ecuador and raised in New York. Edgar’s ideal lifestyle would be to create art for a living.

Lydia Lively is a student at Gainesville College, and will graduate in May 2005 with a degree in Early Childhood Education. She enjoys writing, photography, and working with the children at her church in Maysville.

Carol Marlow is a sophomore at Gainesville College and sings second soprano in the College Choral. Carol is a member of the Anime Club and BSU and can always be seen doodling manga and anime style art in her notebooks. Carol’s favorite books of all time are *The Lord of The Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien, *Sunshine* by Robin McKinley, and *The Rope maker* by Peter Dickinson.
Contributors

**J. Daniel McConnell** is currently a student at Gainesville College working on his associate degree in English. He hopes to transfer to the University of Georgia after the completion of his studies at Gainesville to continue to study English and Psychology. He plans to continue writing and to pursue a career in education.

**Natalie Simmons** is graduating from Gainesville College in May 2005 with her associate's in Journalism. She will continue her education at the University of Georgia where she plans to pursue a degree in Nonprofit Organizational Public Relations.

**Lisa Smith** is currently a Political Science major at Gainesville College.

**Jessi Stone** is a journalism major and will be graduating from GC this fall. She plans on furthering her education at Georgia State University. Her favorite authors are Alice Walker, Hunter Thompson, and Joyce Carol Oates. Jessi has enjoyed working with all these talented writers and wishes them all the best in the future.
Contributors

Joe Taylor is an Art major and hopes to pursue a career in sequential art.

J. Turcotte is the author of this year’s first place poetry award.

Robert Zanin is an English major from New York; fascinated by erratic punctuation and non sequiturs; he is presently writing his biography in the third person.
Gainesville College Writing Contest Winners 2004-2005

Short Story

1st place: “Ode To Joy” by Carol Marlow
2nd place: “To Go To Burma” by Natalie Simmons
3rd place: “Scattered Lights” by Supanra Nahar

Poetry

1st place: Jesse Turcotte
2nd place: Jessi Stone
3rd place: Lydia Lively
Awards Received by the Chestatee Review

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Honorable Mention
2004

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Third Place
2000

The Southern Literary Festival

Second Place
1999

Community College Humanities Association
Literary Magazine Competition

Second Place
1997