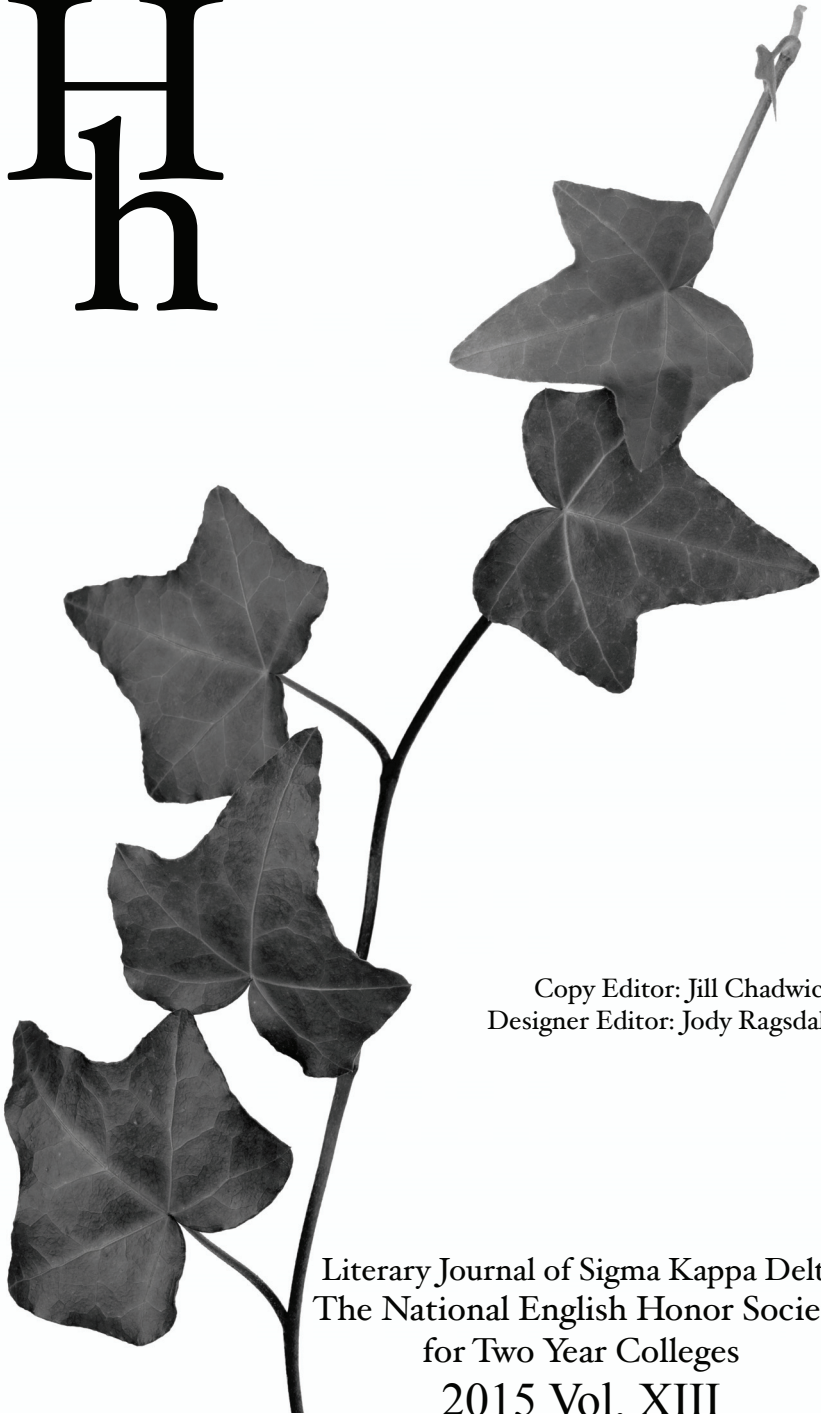


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Literary Journal of Sigma Kappa Delta
The National English Honor Society
for Two Year Colleges
2015 Vol. XIII

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Copy Editor: Jill Chadwick
Designer Editor: Jody Ragsdale

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The National English Honor Society
for Two Year Colleges
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Purpose of Sigma Kappa Delta

Sigma Kappa Delta serves two-year college students who achieve academic excellence in English. Members need not be English majors but must demonstrate an interest and proficiency in literature and writing. ΣΚΔ offers members opportunities for

- Scholarships
- Awards
- Leadership
- Competition
- Publication
- Travel
- National Conferences
- Networking

Visit www.english2.org for complete eligibility requirements.



Hedera helix—the scientific name for English Ivy and the national plant of ΣΚΔ, symbolizes resilience and individual growth. In keeping with the Greek spelling, we use the lower case “h” for helix.

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Designed by Jody Ragsdale, Northeast Alabama Community College, Epsilon Alpha Chapter co-sponsor.

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Editor's Note



Dear Sigma Kappa Delta Faculty, Students, and Alumni,

We have some very fine entries from our SKD students this year, and I am glad because this *Hedera helix* is 'my last hurrah.'

In the late 1990's, my friend and colleague Sheila Byrd asked me to co-sponsor a chapter of the English Honor society with her at Calhoun Community College. At that time, I was teaching five classes a term, raising three children, who attended three different schools, and my husband was frequently traveling for

his career. The very last thing I wanted was another unpaid volunteer responsibility. Why would I do that?

Shakespeare could have been describing Sheila when he says in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, "though she be but little, she is fierce." Sheila knew exactly how to persuade me: "You know that as English/Composition teachers we see every student attending community college, regardless of interest or writing skill; how would you like to be working with our best students, the ones who actually enjoy reading literature and writing for pleasure? That's who we will get in an SKD chapter."

Hmmm...

Then she added, "And we will take our students to the Sigma Tau Delta National Conventions all across the country, like Savannah, Boise, Daytona Beach, Minneapolis, St. Louis..."

Gotcha.

Sheila and I founded the Theta Beta chapter of SKD in 2001, thus initiating the best fifteen of my thirty years of teaching. Since then, I've served on the SKD National Board as Secretary, Vice President, and President before acting as Copy Editor. Dr. Sheila Byrd is now the Executive Director (or as she prefers to call it, The Illustrious Potentate!)

I am so proud of this organization — our students, our sponsors, and our board members. Bil Johnson, you've given us all great opportunities by creating Sigma Kappa Delta.

All the best to you in the years to come. Keep reading, writing, and presenting!

Many Thanks,

Jill May Chadwick
Copy Editor of Publications

* A special note of appreciation goes out to one of my former students and SKD alumnus Bailey Lovell, who acted as an assistant editor for me on this year's journal.

2015 ΣΚΑ Scholarship/Award Winners

Scholarships

Dr. William Johnson Transfer Scholarship

Samantha F. Babcock
University of Wisconsin—Rock County
Gamma Delta

Dr. Don Perkins Service Scholarship

Samantha F. Babcock
University of Wisconsin—Rock County
Gamma Delta

Dr. Susan LeJuene Service Scholarship

Karen Meacham
Tarrant County College, Southeast Campus
Omega Delta

Dr. Sheila H. Byrd Service Scholarship

Stephen Sheffield
Calhoun Community College
Theta Beta

Ms. Joan S. Reeves Service Scholarship

Jessica Cook
Bevill State Community College
Phi Alpha

Chapter Awards

Literary Magazine/Journal

The Muse
Theta Beta
Calhoun Community College

Chapter Activity

Résumé Writing Workshop
Theta Beta
Calhoun Community College

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First Place Essay

Rogues of Ross Street

Marnie Tabor

I don't really remember how I came to know about my neighbor's treasure hold, but at some point I became aware and so began the notion. No significant plan had evolved for the idea brewing in my six-year-old mind, but I knew I had to be sneaky. My neighbor's house was located up the hill directly behind mine with no dividing fence to keep out juvenile delinquents. Our small, shingle-sided house located on Ross Street was situated on a dead end. A wooded area, which we dubbed Sherwood Forrest, lay beyond where my friends and I spent many days exploring its borderlands and enchantments. This environment was rich for discovery with its tall trees, hanging vines, and winding paths that led into the great unknown. It provided the perfect background for re-enacting our favorite childhood stories. Perhaps our vivid imaginations were hyper-stimulated the day we played Robin Hood, pretending to "rob the rich to feed the poor," for the event that follows would have made ole' Rob proud.

The warm, summer day was perfect when I donned my feather hat and led my company of thieves on an adventure to plunder the neighbor's carport. I assembled my posse of two other six-year-olds and headed out. We became enthralled in our mischievousness with no regard for the consequence that lay ahead. As I recall, our wily band of robbers made off with a croquet set, hula-a-hoop, basketball, wagon, badminton set, folding ladder, Frisbee, various buckets, and an ashtray on a pedestal. Without being detected, we made multiple trips from the neighbor's house to mine, transporting our booty in broad daylight. We were lucky the Sheriff of Nottingham wasn't on duty that day.

After the deed was done, one accomplice questioned, "So now what are we going to do with it?" As the leader of this reprobate group, I decided for the time being we should conceal our goods. I selected a huge evergreen bush positioned at the end of the driveway. My partners in crime helped me cram all the items as far under the limbs as possible, but to no avail. The evidence remained visible from any direction. We soon grew weary of trying to solve this issue and hung up our hats. Racing Big Wheels up and down the street became our new focus. All memories of our ill-gotten gain were put on hold as we resumed the virtuous play of childhood.

However, my attention was quickly alerted when my dad's car approached the driveway. As I remembered the loot stashed away, the overwhelming need to hide washed over me. I sprang from my Big Wheel, dashed to my room, and crawled under the bed. In a few minutes, I heard my father enter the house and call out to my mom, "Hon, where did all that stuff under the hedge out front come from?" After she expressed no knowledge of the "stuff," I was called out of my hiding place. My parents wanted to know if I knew anything about it. Since I was caught, I thought I might as well confess. "Yes, I know where it came from. I found it in the woods." Knowing this was a plausible answer, I was shocked when my dad said he didn't believe me. I felt confident that my story was legitimate, so I stuck with it. Nevertheless, I was sent to my room to "think about it." Our small, two bedroom, wood floor house made it very easy for me to hear my parents discussing the issue in the next room. To my horror, I heard my dad say, "I guess we need to call the police and find out where these things

belong.” Well, that was it! The fear of God grabbed hold of me and flung me into the hall. I ran into my parents’ room screaming, “NO! NO! Don’t call the police! I don’t want to go to jail! I took it from the man’s house out back.” I cried and cried repeating, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry.” Then my dad scooped me in his arms and reassured me everything would be all right. He accompanied me as my sentence was carried out: a face-to-face confrontation with my victim. I was terrified, but at the same time comforted with my father at my side. I tapped on the door with my little girl hand and waited. My heart was pounding with dread as the door opened, revealing a skinny man with wire-rimmed glasses. I was surprised that he didn’t look like the menacing Prince John I had imagined. With chagrin and tears on my cheek, I confessed in a shaky voice, “I’m so sorry I stole your things.” My neighbor responded by asking, “What things?” As my father relayed what I had done, a gradual smile spread across my neighbor’s face. Apparently, the items I had taken were irrelevant because he was not even aware anything was missing from his carport. He assured my father the police need not be involved and accepted my apology. After I returned his belongings, the neighbor patted my head and sent me on my way.

The real meaning of this encounter did not surface for years to come. Right then, I was content the event was over, and I had been pardoned. As an adult, I realized this had been a pivotal point from my infancy to childhood. For the first time, I understood right from wrong. From that day forward, I thought about consequences on a regular basis, which gradually became an influential factor in future decisions. More significantly and perhaps most

importantly, I had my first encounter with grace and was exhilarated to be forgiven.

Second Place Essay

Why Write?

Samantha Nagy

At a time in our country when most high-demanding jobs require a math or science degree, many people disregard the importance of majoring in the field of humanities. They say the big bucks are earned in careers such as engineering and pre-med, and a degree in English is pointless. I, however, am one of the few people who continue to believe writing and communication techniques are essential in not only every job, but also in society. Whether one is typing up a cover letter or delivering a company presentation, he must display efficient writing and communication skills in order to be successful. Writing plays a significant role in the job market and humanity and should not be overlooked while educating students.

My favorite subject in school has always been English because I love the freedom of expressing myself through my writings. I believe writing has much to do with one's personality including how he thinks, analyzes, and defends his point. Writing allows people to collect their thoughts and record them at ease. It encourages them to expand their knowledge on a particular subject. The most important thing I have learned about writing, however, is that it helps improve communication skills. Writing and speaking clearly go hand in hand – it is impossible to do one without the other. When employers look to hire people for job openings, they want someone who can communicate effectively with others. This is where the importance of writing comes into play. If people cannot write or communicate effectively, then they may have less of a chance finding a stable job than those who can. Even if one chooses to become a doctor or lawyer, he still must be familiar with the importance of communicating with

patients and clients.

My future career consists of writing. I hope to major in journalism because of my drive and passion for writing and communicating with others. In order to be successful in my future, I will need to build upon my current writing and communication skills so that I will stand out among other potential employees. I know that my future career will consist of writing, revising, and editing on a day-to-day basis, but I am up to the challenge of pursuing something that I love.

In my future courses, I will be writing without a shadow of doubt. My future English and journalism courses will shower me with essays and research papers to write, and even my science and history courses may, too. I will also use my writing skills to take notes throughout my textbook chapters to grasp a better understanding of the content. I hope that teachers will assign more writing assignments to improve the abilities of students as a way to prepare them for the real world. Too much writing cannot be a bad thing.

The role of writing may sound silly or insignificant to those who have no interest in it or do not enjoy it. However, writing is incredibly important to anybody who intends to have a successful career or make a difference in society. After all, writing is the basis for democracy. Looking back on important writings in history, one will see America was founded on writing from the Declaration of Independence; it gave us a voice and allowed us to write down beliefs relating to freedom. It provided checks and balances on authority and still does to this very day. By writing and articulating thoroughly to present debates, people use these skills to communicate for a democracy. Even on social media, people log on

every day to share what is happening, as well as their own experiences. Writing is what makes up Facebook and Twitter.

The First Amendment, which calls for freedom of speech and also freedom of press, is essential to writing. As mentioned earlier, everyone has a voice because of this. It provides people with a way to prevent government overreach by communicating more effectively. The power of journalism played a massive role in the Watergate Scandal when two reporters forced President Nixon to resign. This is just one example of how big of an impact writing has on society to this day.

Writing is an essential skill needed in every field of study. Whether one plans to be a mathematician or a microbiologist, he or she will need to know how to write and communicate with others. Even bigger than the impact writing has on jobs is the impact it has on society. Going back to the beginning of America, one can see where writing has gotten us today. The question “why write?” has an easy answer – to communicate for democracy and show how powerful written words can be.

Third Place Essay

Jefferson County Funeral Services

Karjiana Cadet

In January 2013, my grandmother passed away after suffering from a mysterious disease. I am writing this essay to object to the manner in which her funeral was conducted.

I felt disbelief with the manners of the cemetery staff and how the “funeral” was conducted. While I was attending my grandmother’s funeral, there were three other families grieving the loss of their loved ones. My grandmother’s body was placed in a plastic box instead of a coffin. The grave diggers dug a hole to place her “coffin” into during the funeral, but they had no intentions of adding a tombstone or any other form of identification to her grave.

In addition to grieving the loss of a loved one, people have to go through the grueling process of arranging a funeral for their loved one. My mother informed me that soon after my grandmother’s death, the city offered to help cover the cost of the funeral, which was an enormous relief. But as the day of the funeral came closer, the city told her that my grandmother would be buried naked unless my mother was willing to clothe her body before the funeral.

As a child of a low-income family, I definitely feel as though my family has been mistreated because we could not afford to pay for my grandmother’s funeral without the financial assistance of the city. I understand the saying “beggars can’t be choosers” applies to this situation. However, I do feel as though it is in human decency to at least clothe the deceased person’s body, place a form of identification on the grave and choose an aesthetically decent cemetery to lay their bodies to rest. If the appearance of the cemetery is decent, the deceased’s loved ones will feel like their loved one has been buried with dignity and respect.

My family received financial assistance to cover the cost of my grandmother’s funeral from Jefferson County. Thanks to their aid, we were no longer concerned with paying to have my grandmother buried. Jefferson County contains the City of Hoover which is one of the wealthiest cities in Alabama. With houses costing from \$200,000s and up to \$500,000s, it’s also home to the Hoover Buccaneers, a high school football team featured on an MTV series, and where brand new economy cars and luxury cars outnumber older cars (2009 and older) on the road. Suffice it to say, Jefferson County should be able to comfortably spend money to bury their deceased citizens in respectable conditions. The *cemetery*—I use this term loosely—my grandmother’s body is buried in is a dreadful location. It is incredibly impersonal because none of the “graves” have tombstones or forms of identification. The actual cemetery looks like an abandoned soccer field that has not been maintained in years. I find it especially upsetting because my grandmother was a human being, and the city treated her burial as if she were an animal one would bury in the backyard after its death.

In the future, I hope Jefferson County will treat low-income grieving families with more respect and dignity when arranging a funeral for their loved ones. It is all right to bury an animal on any land, but a human being should be buried with dignity and respect, somewhere they can later be revisited by their loved ones.

A Contrasting Relationship

Brooke Pinyan

In “Everyday Use,” Alice Walker presents a stark contrast between two African American sisters living in the era of civil rights activism. Dee, the eldest girl, depicts an independent young woman who seeks a grand life in the city and desires to bring about respect for her race. Maggie, on the other hand, remains content with her situation and intends to continue her hard-working life in the country. The sisters’ differing ideas about their heritage, furthermore, demonstrate the divide between them as Dee represents a revolutionary viewpoint and Maggie a traditional one. “Everyday Use” offers a look at two contrasting personalities and mindsets during this transformative period for the African American race.

Dee displays a strong disposition full of confidence while Maggie struggles with insecurity. Evidence of Dee’s boldness is clearly seen in the way she dresses with bright colors, large pieces of jewelry, and exotic hair. Maggie, however, prefers to dress in plain clothing so that she will go unnoticed. Indeed, Maggie often hides behind objects such as a door or her mother to escape from view. Mama claims that “Maggie will stand hopelessly in corners, homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs” (155). Their differences are not only found in the way they dress but also in the way they carry themselves. Mama describes Dee as “gliding” (158) across the yard but compares Maggie to a run over dog, “chin on chest, eyes on ground, feet in shuffle” (156). Years earlier, Dee’s assertiveness led her to earn an education and move to the city while Maggie remained living at home with minimal education. Mama explains that Maggie “[k]nows she is not bright. Like good looks and money, quickness passed her by” (157). The two sisters exemplify

opposing characteristics, one who asserts self-confidence and another who conveys timidity.

Dee’s strong personality and Maggie’s quiet one lead to further differences as Dee thinks only of herself but Maggie places others’ needs before her own. From the time Dee was a child, she desired an education and “nice things” (157); she did not care who she hurt as long as she got her way. Mama recalls how Dee forced her and Maggie to listen to book-reading, only “to shove us away” (156) when Dee raised enough money to leave home. Maggie, on the contrary, stayed with Mama, helping her with the strenuous chores of everyday country life. Even years later, when the question arises of Dee taking Mama and Maggie’s special personal items, Dee does not think about her family’s feelings but only about what she desires. Maggie, instead, offers to relinquish her quilts to Dee even though the quilts rightfully belong to her. Maggie resigns herself to the fact that “‘no’ is a word the world never learned to say to [Dee]” (155) and that humbling herself is her own “portion” (160).

The greatest divide between the sisters, though, is seen by their differing views on their heritage. Dee prides herself in her African heritage, dressing in African clothes and changing her name to Wangero. She wants to break away from the uneducated, hard-working country life of her family, claiming that “[i]t’s really a new day for us” (161). When Dee requests to take items such as the dasher and the quilts, she does not care about the memories the familial items hold but only that they can be used for pretty decorations. Maggie, too, values the family items. Unlike Dee, though, Maggie loves the items for the people who made them and the memories surrounding them.

She explicitly recalls that “Aunt Dee’s first husband whittled the dash” (159) and declares that she “can ‘member Grandma Dee without the quilts” (160). Maggie understands that the purpose of the household items, namely the quilts, are for “everyday use” (160), not simply artistic endeavors. Dee views her heritage as a style, but Maggie cherishes it for her family and their history.

Alice Walker’s “Everyday Use” illustrates the differences between two sisters who were raised as poor African American children in the mid-twentieth century. Dee’s selfishness leads her to desert her home and family, only returning to her special familial heritage to enhance her stylish life. In contrast, the meek and shy Maggie unashamedly embraces her heritage because of the love she has for her family, eventually finding her self-confidence in that heritage. Dee urges Maggie “to try to make something of yourself, too” (161) by pursuing the African heritage, not realizing that her selfishness blinds her from knowing her own.

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Chains of Duty

Brooke Pinyan

In his short story "Eveline," James Joyce explores the plight of a young Irish girl who must choose between what she desires and what she knows to be right. The title character, Eveline, lives in the early twentieth century, a time when young women were beginning to blossom outside of their homes with the rise of women's rights activists and a break-away from traditional morals. All girls, however, were not at liberty to live as they wished. For instance, Eveline represents a girl who is raised traditionally with high moral standards and whose family has high expectations for her. Feeling bound by responsibility, Eveline chooses to remain in Ireland with her family rather than to pursue a new life with Frank.

Running away from home does not seem acceptable to Eveline when she thinks of her father who has no caretaker but herself. Her father, Eveline points out, "was becoming old lately" (5) and "he would miss her" (5). Eveline might escape her home if the circumstances were different, but as it stands, her aging father has too much experience with loss. She recalls a time when he "was not so bad," (3) but after losing his wife and eldest son, his violence grew worse. His violence also pairs with drinking, "for he was usually fairly bad on Saturday night" (4). Eveline knows, however, that deep down her father is soft; she remembers a picnic where he put on "her mother's bonnet to make the children laugh" (5) and the day she was sick when "he had read her out a ghost story and made toast for her at the fire" (5). His softness, though, has been hardened by grief and loneliness. Eveline's departure may push him to his breaking point, a thought which Eveline would have a difficult time bearing.

Eveline not only has the responsibility to care for her father but also the two young children left in her charge. With no mother to look after their well-being, Eveline has taken over the function of a mother. She ensures that they "went to school regularly" (4) and "got their meals regularly" (4). Moreover, Eveline may be their protection from her violent father. During Eveline's childhood, he "had never gone for her, like he used to go for Harry and Ernest, because she was a girl" (4), but now with her older siblings gone, "he had begun to threaten her" (4). As Harry and Ernest were her protection, Eveline may serve as protection to the children. Eveline understands that if she departs from her home, the children will no longer have the motherly care that they need, leaving them to flounder in the world alone.

Though the responsibilities to her father and the children evoke doubts in Eveline, the promise to her dying mother to remain in Ireland pesters Eveline even more. Eveline understands that she has fully kept her promise to "keep the home together" (5). She provides most of the income; she cooks and cleans; she offers womanly care to the home. Eveline knows, furthermore, that her promise to hold the home together stood only for "as long as she could" (5). She has every right to leave her home with her head held high because she fulfilled her promise. As she thinks of her mother's life, a "life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness," (5) she does not desire the same fate. Yet, she is capable of continuing her household duties, and, therefore, she must stay true to her promise. As the mother served her family until her death, Eveline knows that she must do likewise.

James Joyce portrays a nineteen year old girl who feels the full weight of her duty to her family and, therefore, struggles with running away to the life she dreams of obtaining. In the final moment of decision, blinded by confusion and desperate for direction, Eveline prays that God will “show her what was her duty” (6). She may be able to leave Ireland physically, but her mind and heart cannot break away from the home with “all its familiar objects” (3) and “those whom she had known all her life” (3). With a family that would fall apart without her and a promise that binds her to them, Eveline chooses to remain faithful to her duties and not pursue a new, adventurous life. Eveline’s decision does not merely illustrate the difficulties of a girl in the early twentieth century; it illustrates the crucial decision of all those who desire a better life but whose sense of duty tugs their heart toward home.

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Morality: An Issue in All Ages

Shelly Brooks

After one of the most publicized trials of recent years, the verdict in the case against Casey Anthony was released in July of 2011. Anthony, on trial for the murder of her three year old daughter, was determined not guilty. Multiple instances of lies, deceit, and irresponsible behavior both leading up to and during the trial left the American public in uproar over the verdict. Throughout the world, court cases close with verdicts that often appear to individuals as morally wrong. Though the laws in the United States are generally considered fair and just, individual morals and opinions are at odds in every courtroom. Such imbalances between what is legal and what is morally acceptable have been discussed in literature for hundreds of years. Both Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* create situations that lead the reader to identify with the idea that the law is often morally incorrect.

First of all, both texts portray the idea that crimes are not punishable if the criminal is ignorant of his or her unlawfulness. For example, Oedipus, the protagonist of *Oedipus the King*, appears to be a righteous king; he fulfills his duties as king and cares for his people. However, Oedipus unknowingly takes part in an incestuous relationship when he marries his own mother. When Oedipus discovers the true identity of his wife, he is horrified. Oedipus' ignorance of the situation and attitude upon discovering the truth compel the reader to feel a deep sense of pity towards the protagonist. Because Oedipus did not know that he was marrying his mother, the reader is led to believe that, while technically Oedipus committed a crime, he is morally exempt from punishment.

The play *Trifles* also promotes the belief that crimes committed in ignorance are not morally binding. The author goes to great lengths to convince the reader that the presumed murderer, Minnie Wright, was placed under an extremely controlling situation. Such a situation would be both physically and mentally straining—the reader is led to believe that, in addition to her outward personality change, Mrs. Wright's mental health is affected by her relationship with Mr. Wright. If Minnie Wright is mentally unstable, she cannot be held fully accountable for her actions.

By placing characters in situations seemingly out of their control, the authors of both *Trifles* and *Oedipus the King* lead the reader to feel as if the law is unjust. The reader is left with the feeling that his or her individual conscience is a higher authority than laws created by others.

Continuing this theme, *Oedipus the King* and *Trifles* promote the idea that the immorality of crime is circumstantial. During the first part of Sophocles' work, Oedipus devotes all of his time and effort into bringing justice upon the murderer of a man named Laius. Oedipus is concerned with this particular crime because his city faces the gods' wrath until the murderer is punished. Ironically, Oedipus discovers that "[he] is the curse, the corruption of the land" (Sophocles 474). Oedipus continues in the investigation, only to discover that the man whom he killed was his father. The author leads the reader to believe that Oedipus' crime is somehow worse because Laius was his father. It is interesting to note that before discovering the identity of his victim, Oedipus did not show signs of guilt or shame. The circumstances of

the crime completely change Oedipus' moral convictions.

Similarly, in *Trifles*, crime is deemed acceptable due to circumstance. In this text, Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters are guilty of obstructing justice. After discovering the murder of Mr. John Wright, the two ladies accompany an investigating team from the small town. As the investigation takes place, the ladies describe John Wright as "a cold man" who treated his wife poorly (Glaspell 451). The ladies' investigation proves Mrs. Wright as the guilty party, but Mrs. Hale and Mrs. Peters agree that Mrs. Wright does not deserve to face the full punishment for her actions. Unbeknownst to the official investigators, the ladies destroy evidence against Mrs. Wright. The reader is led to believe that Mrs. Wright suffered under her husband's authority, thus creating the idea that both the murder and the cover-up are morally just.

Furthermore, both plays incorporate the idea that fate controls a person's actions, rather than free will. As predicted by the prophet Tiresias, Oedipus is his own downfall (Sophocles 475). The fact that the gods even allowed Oedipus to exist sealed his fate from the very beginning. Despite his best intentions to remain loyal to his country and morally upright, Oedipus

commits both the murder of his father and incest with his mother. Regardless of Oedipus' intentions, he was bound to fulfill the prophecy set out for him by the gods.

Glaspell also portrays Mrs. Wright as merely a victim of her era. Because of the time and culture in which she lives (early to mid-twentieth century), Mrs. Wright is trapped in a perpetual cycle of shame and unhappiness. During this historical period, women were generally treated with very little respect in society. Mrs. Wright was married to a very controlling, rough man, but leaving the relationship would exile her to a life of public shame and disgrace. The play presents the murder of John Wright as Mrs. Wright's only option. The reader is forced to either accept Mrs. Wright's actions as just or condone her unhealthy marriage to Mr. Wright.

Both Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* and Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* create situations that promote the idea that the law is often morally incorrect. As portrayed in these dramas, individuals tend to base their morals on personal opinions and beliefs. While reading, it is important to recognize that authors express personal opinions in their work. Writers intend to convey a message to their reader; as a reader, one must possess the ability to think critically before accepting an author's message as absolute truth.

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Jan I. Anderson Black and White *Photography Awards*





First Place Short Fiction

It's Up to You
Hillary Kirking

Rita woke up to gray light seeping into her closed eyes. She kicked the red comforter off her right leg and turned onto her left side with the blanket sandwiched between her knees. In January, her apartment felt like 80 degrees. The old Victorian was subdivided, and her flat used to be the attic. The building's only thermostat was in the first floor unit where plastic covered the large, poorly insulated windows. Her near windowless apartment in the house's peak absorbed the rising heat, and here Rita wore shorts and a tank top while outside the wind chill was -5 degrees.

She tried to sleep to forget the hazy details. But his distress burned through her eyelids, and she saw his brown eyes pleading for her reassurance. She saw his inverted mouth pulling down the outer corners of his eyes, his dimples erased by the tension in his skin. Then his lips cracked as he yawned.

She rolled onto her back and pulled the comforter over her head. The blanket stretched between her forehead and the tip of her nose creating a small, red-tinted hollow above her eyes. She imagined the blanket turning to lead, pressing her into the mattress and trapping her as the cool metal sealed off her sight. She sighed. Her warm breath rippled the fabric, and the fabric deflected damp air onto her face.

Rita wandered in and out of forced sleep for several more hours, but eventually a combination of restlessness and the pressure in her bladder made her get up. Her apartment was dark again.

His toys were still scattered across the living room floor among the baskets of clean laundry that she hadn't gotten around to folding and the empty pop bottles that he used as drums. His Superman shirt was on top of one pile. It was his favorite shirt, the one she had to

wash three times a week once when she did all their laundry at the laundromat a few blocks away and two times in the sink at home when there weren't enough dirty clothes or quarters to make the trip. Rita sat on the couch and held his shirt to her face. It smelled like the acrylic paint from his last art project at school. The S was peeling in a few small places, showing the blue cotton beneath the red print. He would miss it.

Goosebumps sprang up on her skin. At first the raised follicles roughened her skin but then they pushed deeper, plunging through each layer of tissue like twisted acupuncture needles. She put his folded shirt on the coffee table, and she wrapped herself in a blanket. She leaned forward and put her face in her hands. She tried to cry, hoping for a release, but she was empty. She had been cut open and scraped clean, her insides pried out in messy chunks and flung into the street.

She looked at her cell phone. One missed call and one new voicemail. The number was a general one. The last four digits were 1000 but the call's actual extension didn't show up on her caller ID. She couldn't listen to the message. Not yet.

Rita wasn't sure what to do. Normally, she would have met him at the bus a few hours ago and they would play before dinner. Monday was their spaghetti night. Sometimes they would spend the evening at her sister's house a few streets over. Her friends laughed whenever his Tonka truck crashed into their feet and smiled at his apology: "I'm thorry." The space in between his front teeth and the empty gaps on the bottom enhanced his charm, even though the dentist on the other side of town, the one who accepted Medicaid, said his crooked teeth would need a lot of work and braces when he was older.

Rita wondered if he was in school today. The social worker had written down the name and address of the family with whom he was placed. They lived in that bedroom community 20 minutes away and had the type of last name that came with a pool and two golden retrievers. She hoped they drove him into school this morning. He clicked with his teacher, and this was the second week of percussion in music class. He just found out that he would play the tambourine in the next concert, and she made him one out of a paper plate, yarn, and small bells like the kind on cat collars so he could practice. Imagining him in a familiar place slightly eased the tension in her gut, but then she wondered what they told the school.

Thoughts of the police barged in like they had barged into her sister's living room. Black uniforms with shiny buckles and buttons and bulges on each hip, bellies draped over their duty belts. All towered over her. Their deep baritones reverberated in her feet and up her legs, and they yelled, not giving a damn who heard them. And then they stuck around waiting for the social worker. That lady was softer but her sing-songy voice seemed canned and fake. At least Rita could figure out which side the police were on.

The paperwork told her to be in court at 8:45 Tuesday morning. Rita had only been to the courthouse once before and then only to fill out child support paperwork. She was supposed to work at 10:00 a.m. the same day. Her manager didn't care if the bus ran late or if the bus didn't come at all, and she better be there on time to run the fryer. She didn't like her boss but she didn't want to leave the rest of the crew shorthanded. Rita texted her sister asking for a ride to work after the hearing.

Rita huddled on her couch and slept. She woke up at 6:30 a.m., showered, dressed in her nicest jeans and black sweater, and dried her hair. Her sister pulled up at 8:15 a.m. and asked Rita if she had talked to him. She hadn't. Hopefully, it would all end today.

They drove passed the neighborhood park. Recent snow cushioned the benches and covered the dead grass. Layers of snow and ice clung to the westward side of the jungle-gym. The tunnel was bright blue on one side and blurred blue, white, and green on the other as if Monet had painted it. The usual size 12 footprints were gone, but Rita could already hear the crunch of steps later in the day. The park looked better in winter. The white was peaceful, quietly smoothing the broken concrete and disguising the rusted trash cans that looked like oil drums. When he wanted to play outside, Rita took him to the playground at the school. There a chain link fence kept the real world further away, but through the fence the kids could still see the street.

They arrived at the courthouse five minutes later. They walked across the parking lot and entered the building. While passing through security, Rita asked for directions to the courtroom. The guard set his cowboy novel on top of the scanner, slightly straightened his bowed back, and focused on her through his bifocals. In a full up-down-up body scan he looked her over, and she felt like she was already in front of the judge.

He watched her as she walked through the metal detector. As a girl when she walked through the house, her grandfather had watched her, and his stares lingered. He was fixated by her bony ankles and would watch them rotate and move until she kneeled and sat on her feet. Then his eyes moved slowly up her back, rounded her

shoulders and rested on her collarbone, caressing the notch at the base of her neck where her sternum and collarbone met. She pressed her eyes shut and sank into the gap between the couch cushions. The leather upholstery stuck to her shins as clammy hands unfolded her legs.

The guard returned her purse, and his old hand accidentally brushed against hers. Rita shivered and pulled away from both of them.

Third floor, second courtroom on the right. A sign at the door said to wait in the hallway until the appropriate case was called. Four other sets of dazed parents and families sat in the padded chairs, faces down and hands in their laps. Detention for mommies and daddies. The bailiff called out kids' initials like a twisted Bingo game. Rita kept track of the letters, filling in the squares around her free space. J. H.-- her card filled fast.

Rita plodded through the outer door alone, anticipating the dark *Law and Order* scene she was about to star in. She pushed open the second set of doors and blinked. Ahead of her the fluorescent lights beamed down on rows of church pews facing two tables at the front of the courtroom. From her right, a man in a suit pointed to the table on the left. She sat, hands trembling as she rested them on the sterile surface. She glanced up at the bench. Only gray carpet filled the space between where she sat and the man who looked down at her.

"This hearing is for case JC-14306 on the temporary protective custody of Jasper Higbee. What is the petition?" The judge spoke slowly in a midrange register that was higher than Rita expected. The court reporter watched him, and her fingers tapped the keyboard faster than his words came out.

The suited man on her right spoke next. "The police found the six-year-old child walking alone on Saturday morning. The child directed the police to his aunt's home, where the mother

and several other individuals were intoxicated. The mother's PBT was .16, she was unable to care for herself, and she was taken to emergency detox for 24 hours. The child was taken into temporary protective custody and placed at the licensed foster home of Theresa and Robert Princeton. The mother has a past DUI. Continued placement is requested."

Rita looked around expecting to see the matronly woman and indelible child sitting in the jury box. It was empty.

She stared at her hands. They had been at her sister's house on Friday night. The downstairs neighbor sat with Jasper while Rita and a few others locked themselves in the bedroom to smoke. When the high wore off, her sister passed around vodka Red Bulls. Rita remembered drinking four and feeling a jittery rush from the caffeine. Some people traveled to get away. She got away how she could. When Jasper fell asleep on the couch, she covered him with a blanket.

She figured the police came sometime around 2:00 a.m. They had found him wandering outside, and he had directed them back to the house to find her. Jasper always remembered how to get to the pink house with the Marine Corps flag in front. He gave Rita directions when they walked there; she didn't need them but she liked seeing his excitement at finding the right street. Jasper had told the police he was walking home so he could get ready for school.

Rita heard her name and looked up. The judge asked again if she wanted to say something. She felt like a fist was stuffed down her throat. The hand opened and pushed outward, crushing her windpipe from the inside out. Rita shook her head.

"The court orders continued placement at the Princeton foster home. Plea hearing set for two weeks from

today. Counsel will be appointed for the mother.”

It was over. The suited man motioned towards the hallway, and the bailiff held the door open as Rita left. An attorney followed her out, gave her a business card with a date and time written on it, and re-entered the courtroom. As she wandered towards the chairs in a detached daze, she heard that I’m-auditioning-for-the-choir voice. The social worker asked about her work schedule and home visits and who lives with her.

The questions washed over Rita. The social worker kept talking, but Rita could only picture Jasper walking away from her three days ago. As he approached the waiting car, his red coat swished and his arms stuck out at 45 degrees. She told herself that he was just going to the bus stop.

While shopping months earlier, she had narrowed down two final coat options: blue plaid with brown buttons and puffy red with black darts beneath the armpits. The red coat inflated him and made his arms protrude. The plaid coat looked expensive, and she almost bought it for him. But he insisted on the marshmallow jacket because her parka used to be the same shade of red.

Rita glanced at the parents still sitting in the hallway.

How long until Jasper comes home?

“I don’t know. It’s up to you,” the social worker said.

Justice

by Ann Phillips

It was early morning on the backstretch of the Red Mile harness racing track in Lexington, Kentucky. The barns were full of horses and training was beginning. Horses were hooked to jog carts for exercise and sulkies for training. The track buzzed with activity as horses leisurely trotted and paced clockwise, while others trained speedily counter clock-wise. The horses getting light exercise were continually meeting horses flying down the track in the opposite direction with lathered harness and a rhythmic urgency in their gaits. Drivers were not dressed in racing silks, but rather, ordinary work clothes and were calling greetings to one another as they passed and met each other. In their hands they held their whips and stop watches, as well as the long lines controlling their horses.

The air was still crisp on this early April morning, and one could see the vapor from the horses' noses as their warm breath met the cool air. The sounds of horses neighing, men joking, and tractors pulling harrows filled the air. Harness horses are not as flighty as their thoroughbred counterparts. The horses simply trained or jogged around the big tractors smoothing the track.

The track comes to life in the mornings. It is a completely different atmosphere from the night time tenseness when racing and competition rule. The mornings are full of work as grooms feed, clean, and ready horses for training. It is both a busy and a relaxed time without the deadlines of getting to the paddock for the races. Afternoons offer time to graze horses, visit, and pull pranks on other grooms. It was also the perfect opportunity to tell tales. The best teller of tales was Head.

Head worked for Mr. Martin. Head was tall, lean and had a smile one tooth short of beautiful. He was the perfect

example of looking as if he had been "rode hard and put up wet." His face was lined from hard work and hard drinking. Head was an excellent groom, quiet with horses and made good money; but he was always broke. After payday on Friday, he spent the weekend in backstretch poker games and drinking cheap bourbon. By Monday morning, he was back in the barn with no money in his pockets. On the week day afternoons, it was not unusual to find him holding court while sitting on an upside down water bucket in front of the shed row stable. This was one of those days. The men gathered around, and Head began his latest tale.

"I been working for Mr. Martin 'bout ten years. He pays good money, but I blow it on poker and booze. One day I was broke again and Mr. Smith in the next barn say he give me fifty dollars to clean up all his harness. Mr. Smith so cheap he cain't keep good grooms. Them leather harness was covered in mud and dried horse sweat. They was stiff as a board cause it'd been so long since they been cleaned. I washed, oiled and rubbed them harness till they soften and shine. He got ten horses so I clean ten sets of harness and I go to git my money. I cain't find Mr. Smith nowhere. Every time I try to find him he gone. I know he dodging me and he ain't never going to give me my money.

Next week Mr. Martin got two horses to race at the fairgrounds and he tells me to drive one. That horse ain't much, but once in a while he show a little fire, so I'm willing to give it a go.

All ten horses line up behind the starter's car with the starting gate on the back of the car. The horses line up behind the numbers on the gate and commence pacing to keep up with the car. The car speeds away, the starting gate's wings fold up as the car pulls away

from the horses and off we go! My horse and Mr. Martin's horse pace to the top of the pack. The dust is flying and them sulky wheels humming. I look around and I see Mr. Smith trailing my horse.

Them horses start to spread across the track and Mr. Smith is boxed in behind me with a horse on his outside and the rail on the inside. He cain't go nowhere! We come the first half too fast for my horse and he ain't got much left. My horse start to lose ground. Mr. Smith know my horse 'bout done and he yells at Mr. Martin. 'Mr. Martin make Head get out of my way. My horse got plenty left and I can git some money in this race!'

Mr. Martin hollers over to me, 'Head, pull that horse over and let Mr. Smith go.' I think about that fifty dollars Mr. Smith owes me and I think about the fact I'm working for Mr. Martin and I have to do what he tells me. Now the horses are snorting, their hooves pounding, them drivers yelling and the crowd roaring. So I yell 'Mr. Martin, I cain't hear you!' Mr. Martin hollers back louder 'Head, get that horse out of the way and let Mr. Smith go!'

I look at my horse and his ears done come up telling me he's tired. So here's what I do. I loosen them lines and relax my horse so he thinks he can slow down; then I hit the metal shaft of the sulky with my whip like I'm urging him forward. I click my tongue on the roof of my mouth and I barely munch to him. I cain't hear myself so I know my horse don't hear me. Then in the midst of all that noise I whispers real low to my horse: 'whoa hoss, c'mon hoss' My horse, he don't speed up or slow down cause he don't understand what I want him to do. He just stay where he is.

My horse finish ninth. Mr. Smith, he finish last. He's red face mad and tell

Mr. Martin I done cost him the race. I look at Mr. Martin and I say 'Mr. Martin, I swear to God, I done everything I know how to git that horse out of Mr. Smith's way. That horse so damn dumb he cain't understand whoa or giddiup.'"

Third Place Short Fiction

Rally for Reilly

Hillary Kirking

My brother-in-law once said that Edgerton reminds him of Hobbiton. Like Bilbo and Frodo's Brandywine, Saunders Creek meanders across town through backyards and past swing sets and charcoal grills. The 'crick' curves around the high school baseball and football fields. The banks are rimmed with hardwood trees, and both hedge in the adjacent elementary school playground. School traffic is heavy on the small footbridge over the water; students linger looking at lily pads and drop pebbles and sticks into their version of the mighty Nile. Cars line up on the street side of the bridge, and the kids emerge in a haze from their childhood oasis. The crossing guard returns them to their waiting, time-crunched parents. A few streets over on a shaded corner is a tiny brick house with Underhill stenciled on the letterbox.

As a child, Brent left home whenever he crossed the bridge. But with every new school year he traveled less until the rickety planks and old logs became solid, sturdy concrete bordered by cold metal railings. He no longer lingered but hurried across after his baseball games upstream. On the day we met, he told me about the bridge and his hometown. I was an energetic college graduate six months into a position with child protective services, and my job led to a joint case with the Sheriff's Office. That day I strode into the building intent on making an impression and controlling the twist in my stomach. Despite my anxiety, I noticed the detective-in-training also assigned to the case. At a later meeting when his partner-turned-wingman asked for my number on his behalf, I happily gave it out.

One night when we were newly dating, I parked my truck at Brent's house about half a block from the

bridge. Early in the evening in between flips of hibachi paddles, he received a text from his teenage brother—"Looks like your girlfriend is over :-)." The next morning, shaded in sun glasses and my head wrapped in a wool scarf, I shuffled through the snow, conscious that my orange Ford Ranger stood out like a hunter in November. I fumbled with my keys. Across the street, the large picture window in his parents' living room peered like a telescope, tearing through the walls into the private moments of the prior evening. I glanced up at the second floor of Brent's house, panicked there was a gap in the curtains. Slightly reassured, I looked back across the street, terrified that the front door would open and I would be invited in for breakfast.

A week later I met his parents. I was over again, this time for a lazy afternoon watching movies and vegging out on the couch. Brent received a text: his family--parents, brothers, and sister-- wanted to meet me. Cautiously, he asked if they could stop over. He glanced optimistically through his front window to theirs and back to me. I said yes.

Eight months later, I moved in.

Quickly, I learned that Edgerton is a place where you not only know your neighbors' names but their dogs' names, too. Small chat on the street starts with how much your puppy has grown and transitions to updates on family, home improvement projects, and recent crimes that are uncharacteristic of the town. Conversations start and end several times before someone finally has to go home to check on the pizza.

Deep roots and shared lifetimes make everyone genealogists who can name their third cousins and yours, too. Brent's parents were in high school when they had him; people still tell him the date they guessed he would be born

and who won the money from his baby pool. People are categorized by family and high school graduation year. Adults recognize the composite faces of classmates and know by sight who children's parents are. Local bartenders ask for my ID not because I look underage but because my face does not trigger a flicker of recognition.

Sometimes Brent is mistaken for his father. Both are a slender 5'9". Closely trimmed beards cover their angular jaws, and they both rib friends good-naturedly. It is toughest to distinguish them from a distance, but David moves slower and with more effort. Twenty years after he survived cancer, David copes with a left ventricle irrevocably damaged by lifesaving chemotherapy, and he waits for a new heart. Now at 46 with congestive heart failure, he is weak and unable to work. Over the summer, family and friends approached him about organizing a fundraiser on his family's behalf. A private person, he initially opposed the idea. But the would-be planners persisted, and a September date was set.

For two months every Wednesday, the crew-- David's siblings, in-laws, nieces and nephews, and life-long friends-- converged at his sister's home to strategize and divide tasks. Cars overflowed from the driveway into the street, and from outside it looked like a mid-week house party. Inside people filled every chair and stool, and the rest stood. Meeting agendas and Excel spreadsheets covered the kitchen table, and the living room became a temporary playpen and changing station. The attendees varied slightly from week to week, but David's three sisters were constants at every meeting. Two were always there in person. A handwritten message on the chalkboard overlooking

the kitchen read: "Through the hands of my sisters, I will always be present."

A game plan emerged, and a strategy of divide and conquer developed. The to-do lists were long, but for every assignment five cousins stepped up. A banker and an accountant handled the finances, and a cancer advocate and agribusiness rep managed the marketing. Regardless of what was needed, someone knew someone. Soon a billboard sprang up along the highway, staff at the Piggly Wiggly stuffed fliers into grocery bags, an article appeared in the local newspaper, and businesses and strangers donated auction items. After a fire destroyed the original venue, a golf resort volunteered the use of its newly constructed pavilion. RSVPs and donations flooded in.

The day of the benefit, the pavilion filled with tables, chairs, and auction items in one morning like a fair appears overnight, the Ferris wheel and merry-go-round rising with the sun. The bare expanse of concrete transformed into a precisely organized midway and flea market. Ten numbered tables, heavy with raffle and silent auction items, stretched in parallel rows across the width of the building. Facing inward from opposite sides, the bar and registration area ran along the sides of the pavilion. The organ donor registration and payment tables filled the back wall, and the band and live auction items sprawled across the front third of the pavilion.

Edgerton mobilized. At first a few and then hundreds of familiar faces cycled through the aisles past vintage duck decoys; a Keurig coffee maker; antique John Wayne dolls; gift certificates for photography sessions, tax preparation, and tree cutting; a tree stand; an iPad Mini; golf and football memorabilia signed by home-town athletes Steve

Stricker and Derek Carrier; local art; and a Badger tailgate basket. People camped out near their chosen items and pounced each time someone upped their bids. Dots of orange, volunteers hustling to hand out bid numbers and make change, weaved in and out of the crowd and tables. The lines at the bar were four deep, and college kids in golf carts shuttled replacement cases of beer from the main building. Conversation and general bustle drowned out the band. Brent's parents, overwhelmed by the outpouring of support, stood in the center surrounded by their neighbors, acquaintances, and people they did not know. When it was too loud to yell, their hugs said thank you.

After the band played and the silent auction closed, Brent's uncle Danny, a farmer by day and a musician and entertainer by night, took over the microphone. His verbal machine gun fire pelted the crowd and bounced off the wooden trusses. The crowd's energy surged forward in response, and the bidding erupted.

A signed Reggie White football, Badger and Packer football tickets, 100 bales of alfalfa, emerald earrings, and a golf club membership flew off the auction block. Good-natured bidding wars erupted; a guided hunting package and a toddler-sized John Deere Gator stirred drama in the crowd. A volunteer caught in the spirit of the night spontaneously donated an entire processed pig (for delivery at a later date), and it was auctioned off on the spot. Near the end of the evening, unsuccessful buyers went head-to-head with a mix of resolve and generosity, determined not to leave empty-handed, and a basket of pumpkins sold for \$200.

Late in the night, two volunteers walked across the staging area stretching a red quilt between them. The knotted fringe fluttered and waved at the crowd. From the warm fleece

Bucky searched for a home, ready to spend game days and chilly nights with a special someone. His eyes followed each person like a woman's stare from a Renaissance painting.

Danny cleared his throat.

"Now folks, this here is a limited edition item-- made by my 90-year-old mother. Now, I hope she makes many more but she might not. Let's make her day and start it at \$200!"

Numbers flashed. At every "YEP!" from the auctioneer, arms reached high and bids went higher: In lightning increments of \$10 and \$25, the going price past \$350. The dispersing crowd condensed and formed a tight ring around the auction floor. At \$400 a few would-be buyers dropped out. The price crept up to \$500 and then \$550. Onlookers stood shoulder to shoulder, breath bated in suspense. The quilt remained raised, and it rippled like a flag calling each spectator home.

From the front row, a woman in her mid-thirties wearing jeans, a black sweatshirt, and worn tennis shoes watched the scene. Her sunglasses were pushed up into her hair, and her earlobes were double pierced with pearl studs and silver hoops. She glanced sideways at her remaining three competitors. One raised his number out of his breast pocket and nodded at the auctioneer. \$600. The woman extended her arm to its full height, held her number high, and never lowered it.

"Last call for \$750! Last call for \$750? SOLD!"

The woman approached the stage, collected her quilt, and laid it over her arm. She turned around and scanned the crowd. She found David and walked towards him, picking her way past chairs and people and stepping on crushed soda cans. No one knew her name, but her broad nose and high cheekbones were familiar. When she hugged him, her arms reached all the

way around his thin frame, and for a second he was draped in the soft red fabric.

First Place Poetry

Perhaps

Samantha Babcock

You are rarely definite,
You thrive on the word maybe,
And you relax languidly,
Surrounded in perhaps,
You do not say "I will,"
You say "I might,"
And from your mouth,
This phrase should be taken,
As a declaration of ambiguity

Your tongue does not spew
Foolish little nothings
That are just that:
Nothing

Your professions of love
Have all the marks
Of an intelligent mind that knows
Full well that this world
Is not written in stone,
But rather sand,
That is constantly brushed,
And marred, and shaped
By the ever changing sea

So Darling, do not promise me!
Maintain your verbal habits,
Let me know that you see our future,
But it is not a fine, clear portrait on the wall,
But rather a blurred photograph
That has not yet finished developing

Do not fill my head with phrases,
Of "We will," and do not set dates
Or allow me to indulge in silly dreams
Of rings, and dresses, and homes,
Oh Darling, keep me in reality,
Keep me in your world of maybe,
Keep me in perhaps

Second Place Poetry

Ghost of Mine

Ian Kewish

You might recall the time that
I looked so far into your eyes I cringed
from my irrational fear
of drowning.

You may have thought I looked disgusted.
But, there is a difference there
between you and the ocean –
it's that the water's only roughly
70% of the world to me.

And water only goes as deep as
the skin over this planet,
but oh, your words, they weigh me down,
and seep deep down into my center
scalding from the inside out.

And water, it fits any form
but you, how were you wrought?
An apparition formed its own mold
saying, "this is who I am."

And water, oh, it's all so real,
and painfully and slowly it can steal a life,
and turn right round and give it back.

But you, imagined in perfection,
are not and never will be
even real at all.

A figment of my mind.

And that's the biggest difference.

Third Place Poetry

Banana

Toby Camp

Who would think
That a simple object like a banana
Would be the fruit of another man's labor,
And yet we take it for granted.
The way we eat it fast,
Gaining the nutrients and potassium.
Then when we are through with it,
We discard the carcass
Not even acknowledging the men that picked it,
The men that work hard
As we go on with our day jobs.