The Sherwood Forest Art & Literary Review has been an important part of student culture at John Tyler for more than forty years. The annual competition encourages student artists and writers to create their best work, and the Review showcases the winning entries and presents them to the College community.

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Sherwood Forest
Art & Literary Review

Each spring, a new edition of the Sherwood Forest Art & Literary Review explores the world of words and artistic expression. First published in 1968, this publication gives student writers and artists an outlet to share their creativity and talent with the John Tyler Community College community.

For more than 40 years, the Review has found fresh voices in art and writing through an annual art and literary contest, and like the College, it has evolved over the years. What started as a black-and-white copy job has became a full-color, environmentally responsible print piece.

Today’s publication highlights the creativity and courage it takes to put pen to paper and create something new. This is an exciting challenge for students and the kind of learning experience John Tyler Community College works hard to create every day.

Inside these pages are portraits of self-expression, powerful personal experiences and moments from daily life. Congratulations to those whose creativity and hard work are honored in this publication. The results were worth the risk.
first place, art

First Teacher by Margaret A. Robinson
poetry

A Day in the Love by Zoe Davis ......................... 6

halifax by Dylan Lewis .................................. 8

Walking Through a Cemetery by Brandon Whited .... 9

Barista Queen by Heather Marie McIntosh ............ 12

data fiction

Lost and Found on Sesame Street: The Most Valuable
Lesson Ever Learned by Amy McVaugh ............ 14

Just Another Day in Baghdad by Phillip Trezza .... 21

Silence is Golden by Beata Czarniak-Cruz ........... 25

fiction

Sunset Man by James Moore ........................... 30

These Dreams From Me To You
by David Macfarlane ................................... 36

Entrusting Secrets by Lynsy Sprouse ................. 43

Lose a Friend and Gain a Son by Jeremy Da Costa ... 50

art

First Teacher by Margaret A. Robinson .......... 2, back cover

Notre-Dame de Paris by Robert Wynne ............. 5

Self Portrait by Tyler McCartt ......................... 13

Untitled by Mary Miller .................................. 29

about

Sherwood Forest Art & Literary Review 2013 ........ 56
second place, art

Notre-Dame de Paris by Robert Wynne
Here I am hunched over another stomachache, another mistake, and all I can do is watch the bruises form and darken.

The first time I met you was a corner table in a coffee shop with blackberry water and toes frozen solid. Mint chocolate chip nights, vandalizing desks, scrubbing grimy dance floors—it was my kind of falling in love. Less like falling, blushing, butterflies; more like a face plant onto the sidewalk (unexpected, clumsy, bleeding). But maybe love isn’t french kissing and slow songs. It’s forehead kisses, dreaming of Japan, listening to post-rock.

first place, poetry A Day in the Love by Zoe Davis
I think you knew, though,
that our ice cream would melt and our sparklers would die out.
Now I’m the beggar on the street corner:
“‘Scuse me sir, do you have any love to spare?”
Or change.
Pennies and dimes jingle in my cup holder,
but change is what cracked my plastic heart and ripped my paper skin.

I’m weaker now, but not poorly made;
There’s been no knock-out punch or final words.
Just bare-fist brawling, searing insults,
bruises,
bleeding.
second place, poetry  *halifax* by Dylan Lewis

long eyed and shifty-toed,
in stockinged feet,
a silence tripped into our lives
and with a doff of its cap,
left us slack-jawed
and sweating into our coffee cups.
Walking Through a Cemetery
by Brandon Whited

Straight through the iron gates of Laurel Grove,
memories of people I never knew confront me:
Birthday cards,
fodder for the caretaker’s lawnmower
Plastic helium balloons,
deflating, lightly bouncing in the breeze,
on fraying strings
I pull over to the curb,
so careful not to park on the grass
Before me are green, rolling hills,
dotted with markers
I’m looking for no one in particular,
which leaves my mind open to the muted stories of all
The lovely, black-and-white face of a young woman,
chipped and faded,
smiles eternally from a lop-sided granite obelisk
1911 through 1930
Only nineteen…
My mind begins to wonder:
What befell you, young Susan?
Was it influenza?
Typhoid fever?
Tuberculosis?
I’ll never know
Ever notice how, when you find one infant’s grave,
there always seems to be others close by?
1931 through 1932
1943 through 1943
1937 through 1939
Winkin’, Blinkin’, and Nod one night sailed away in a wooden shoe…
I leave these three slumbering sailors to their eternal voyage and walk on
The demise of the youthful Thomas Jones is easy enough to ascertain:
July 20, 1923 through July 14, 1944
PFC World War II
Just missed buying his first legal drink
…but of legal age to die amidst gunfire and bloodshed thousands of miles from
his hometown?
A small American flag sticking out of the ground is faded and askew
I straighten it,
and offer a quick salute
And how funny that we cannot seem to escape stereotyping, even in death:
My mind tries to tell me that those between sixteen and eighteen years of age
buried here all died in car accidents
All the elderly were frail; they died in nursing homes,
or in their own homes, in their sleep
My imagination spares the painful, tragic deaths for the younger lot
And suicide,
though my psychology class taught me is a predominant death amongst the elderly,
my brain places it within the group who are (at most) middle-aged
I shudder when a cool fall breeze sideswipes me
Someone just walked across my grave,
I tell myself,
and laugh aloud at the context of the thought
That breeze carries the fresh scent of rain
Thunder rumbles softly a few miles in the distance,
the clouds swelling and growing dark
I decide it’s time to bid farewell
The rain begins peppering my windshield as I descend the hill,
back to the iron gates
I drive through them,
leaving the residents of Laurel Grove to their infinite rest
Outside the gates,  
I will rejoin the living  
I know I’ll return, though,  
and I cannot help but feel that those in the  
graves,  
crypts,  
mausoleums,  
are in some way amongst the population *outside* the gates  
And visiting them ensures they remain so
Barista Queen
by Heather Marie McIntosh

I see you across the coffee house
Making coffee for a stern business man.
He thanks you when you hand him the cup
But he walks away without a second look
But I can’t help but to follow you with my eyes
Like a spotlight to a stage.
You are my barista queen,
My coffee angel,
My sugar and cream sweetheart.
You laugh with a fellow coworker and
Your laugh is the song in my heart,
It’s the melody that soothes me.
My love for you is just as deep
And wide as the ocean of your eyes.
Your aquamarine eyes turn to me and I sit there
Still not brave enough to talk to you
So I leave my coffee haven where
My sweet barista queen rules over
Her coffee beans and her milky creamers.
Again I will return to get my caffeine fix
And admire her silently, loving her from afar.
third place, art

Self Portrait by Tyler McCartt
Thanksgiving of 1991 brought some bad news. Mom was in the hospital with severe stomach pains and had turned orange. Not good. I immediately bundled up my daughter and started the eight hour trek to my parents’ home. The snowy drive seemed to take forever.

To occupy my mind during the long drive, I would often reflect upon my childhood. Going “home” brought memories of growing up with my family and of making coffee, a much needed skill for girls in this family. I had mastered coffee-making by the time I started kindergarten. This wasn’t the Mr. Coffee version of making coffee, either. There was no “fill the pot and push a button.” This was the real deal, the stuff that actually took time to brew, moistening the air with the thick and heavy aroma of coffee beans. I remember standing on the little red step stool with white letters, reaching for the faucet handle to fill the white ceramic pot and letting the cold water run until it was even with the second fill line, right below the spout. Put in three heaping spoonfuls of fresh Eight O’clock coffee grounds, and push the lid onto the brew basket. The next step took a little more effort for my small fingers and involved navigating the stem of the brew basket and lining it up with the hole in the bottom of the pot. This step was critical, because if the tube part wasn’t in the hole all the way, the water would
shoot out the spout as the water began to boil, ruining the entire pot of coffee. It took both hands to carry the pot from the sink to the stove. I would put it on the right front burner, turn the little black knob all the way, and listen for the “click, click, click” right before the blue flames would whoosh out of the burner, then quickly turn the knob back so the flames were smaller. If the flame was left too high, the coffee wouldn’t percolate properly and the end result would be what Dad called “colored water.” Dad did not like “colored water.” It always made me feel good to start coffee for my parents on the weekends, like some sort of major accomplishment that would thrill them.

When I arrived at the hospital, the nurses let me bend the rules and visit Mom after hours. I never understood why they kept her on the rehab unit since she obviously was going to need surgery. Mom told me it was because the hospital was full, so I just accepted that.

I grew up with my immediate family in the Detroit, Michigan area. At age 18 I left home and enlisted in the Air Force. At age 25, I lived in the cold and snowy, but beautiful, upper peninsula of Michigan. The drive was just long enough that I could easily visit, but far enough away so I could avoid the dreaded “pop-in.” Back home, aunts, uncles and lifetime friends of my parents would pop-in constantly. When a pop-in occurred, all activity Mom had underway would immediately come to a screeching halt. Cooking, cleaning, painting, her after-hours work from the office or any of a multitude of tasks would immediately cease. My older sister and I were expected to make a pot of coffee, find some type of snack to offer, then scurry away to let the adults talk. I actually loved each one of the people who were pop-ins but hated how it meant I would be shooed away while they would sit for hours at the dining room table, talking and laughing. Kids were not allowed to interrupt either. If the living room was engulfed in flames and you intended on interrupting to alert your beloved family, you’d better think twice. On more than one occasion I can remember going into the dining room, quietly and patiently waiting next to my Mom to say something. My God, those adults would not acknowledge a kid! “Ahem.” A gentle
nudge to grab her attention wouldn’t hurt if they couldn’t see me, right? Wrong! Mom’s tongue could slice open an elephant’s butt if you acted like a rude, insolent child. Never, but never, embarrass your parents by acting like you grew up in a dumpster. Being unmannerly could result in a trial by jury with the death verdict a distinct possibility. Images of walking to the gallows, only to be met by the hooded axe man would run through my mind.

Yes, I learned to shut up, grab a book and endure boring afternoons while the adults yucked it up, devouring any little tidbit of goodies I might have had a chance to enjoy while I was expected to quietly entertain myself. Heaven knows I did not hang out with my older sister who took pleasure in seeking me out and torturing me every way possible for her own entertainment. This would also end up in a “whoopin” if Dad caught wind of those antics. I couldn’t understand why my sister, “the big mouth,” never figured out if you were quiet, you wouldn’t get in trouble. And she was supposed to be the smart one! Sometimes I think she secretly loved infuriating my parents, like some sort of control trip. I hated when she involved me in these dangerous games of “pissing off the parents.” “Stop it!” I would try to whisper. “Leave me alone!” I would mouth to her. Tickling, pinching, biting, it didn’t matter. By the time I was seven I knew my sister was what was referred to as “immature.” Five years my senior and picking on a little kid was ridiculous, I thought. As far as my little brother went, I would get yelled at for upsetting him if he didn’t get his way. Nothing should upset Mom’s darling little boy. Dumb little brat. Man, that stupid kid really screwed up my life when he came along. He was supposed to be a little girl named Sally and instead my parents brought home a yucky boy named Jason. I’d get yelled at even if I was just trying to play with the kid. Yep, much safer to grab a book and go read. Find that safe buffer zone so I didn’t run the risk of upsetting anyone.

With Mom in the hospital, I automatically went into my well-trained role of daughterly responsibility. I began preparing meals my father would like, getting him up for work and making sure there was always
coffee ready. I had perfected the coffee, eggs and toast he liked. The Tastee brand white bread toast needed to be extra crunchy but not burnt, with no blobs of butter but a smooth coating, equally saturating the bread. And don’t even think of substituting margarine, either. Dad hated margarine even more than cool coffee. It was important to keep calling up the stairs for him to get up so he wouldn’t be late for work. He was very tired, of course. His lunch was a rotation of tuna fish and ham salad. One morning I realized I had neglected to go purchase the lunch staples and sent a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in its place. Whoa, doggie, I wasn’t ever going to do that again! I felt bad that I had let Mom down. She always did things the right way and here I was screwing up something so simple.

I tried hard to stay prepared for the pop-ins with everything needed with the exception of conversation. Outside of the updates on Mom, I didn’t know what to say. If Dad wasn’t at the house, I felt very uncomfortable entertaining these people I had grown up with and loved dearly. It would be very rude to grab a book and sit stupidly across the dining room table from them. Mom always knew what to do. She was smart and in control of every situation. She was perfect.

After her surgery, Mom came home from the hospital. It was so strange to see my mother, the woman who could “bring home the bacon and fry it up in the pan” sitting helplessly in Dad’s recliner. Because I had been a medic in the Air Force, the hospital let me do the majority of my mother’s care, allowing her to stay home. My sister, the eternal negative pain in the butt would come over and criticize me at every turn, with sarcastic comments like, “I couldn’t stick MY mother with a needle!” to remind me I was a horrible daughter for inflicting pain on my mother. I would look at her and wonder silently why I didn’t just get up and jab her with the needle. That would certainly give her something to gripe about.

Day after day was the same. It became a bit of a blur between my baby daughter, who was really more of a toddler, Dad and Mom. Every day Mom would say, “What’s burning?” in reference to dinner. Honestly, I never knew if she was trying to joke or let me know my food was assaulting her
olfactory glands. Regardless, it annoyed me terribly. I stayed so busy that by the time my husband would call me from Saudi Arabia, I hardly had time to talk. I really missed him, though.

One day, while I was dusting the living room, the local news came on announcing some type of 20 year anniversary regarding the children’s show “Sesame Street.” I immediately said “Oh my gosh, I can’t believe Sesame Street has been around that long. I always loved watching that show!”

With a bit of a snort, Mom replied, “You never watched Sesame Street!”

Confused and a bit annoyed at once again being corrected, I replied, “Yes, I did. Gram always let me watch it at her house. ‘The Price is Right’ came on right after, and we watched that, too, then I’d go outside to play, right before lunch.” I knew darn well what I did and didn’t do at Gram’s house. Every weekday Gram and I would guess if Bob Barker would play the game with the little yodel guy or not. It was my favorite game and I loved watching that little German guy dressed in his hat, walking stick and suspenders go up the mountain, hoping he wouldn’t plunge to certain death if the contestant guessed the wrong price. Without further thought, I went back to dusting. I felt my mother staring at me. I looked up, only to see Mom with a look of pain twisting her face. Immediately I thought something was horribly wrong. My mind was racing with the decision to call the ambulance or try to drive her myself to the hospital.

“What is it, Mom?” I said, trying to stay calm. Tears poured from her eyes. Oh God, I thought, the only time I had ever seen my mother cry was when my 16-year-old cousin had died in a car accident 12 years earlier. Desperate to know where she was hurting, I asked again, “What is it, Mama?” feeling like a helpless child.

Her words confused me. “I never knew you watched Sesame Street,” was her reply.

Huh? I looked at her, trying to absorb her words. Even though she had said it clearly, it wasn’t making sense. “What?” I asked again.

She looked down and said, “I never knew that about you. That you watched Sesame Street.” The tears continued to flow down her thinning cheeks. Big, fat, sad tears glistened with
I sat up, looking at her, stunned. “Well, damn,” I thought at her sudden revelation. Truth was, I always assumed she knew she didn’t know me and didn’t really care. She did have the other two, after all. Oh sure, I was known as a decent cook, I made good coffee and I loved chocolate but that was it. “How the hell are you supposed to know anything about someone if you never included them in your life?” I felt like asking, but I didn’t. You would think I would have felt pity for her, but I didn’t. I felt something akin to appreciation mixed with sadness and regret. Her pain itself didn’t feel good to me but the fact that she saw me as a real person did. It was too late now, though. As we sat there, I offered no consolation. I actually didn’t know what to say, so I said the all too familiar nothing, got up, and went to get coffee.

When I returned, I gave her the coffee; black, no cream or sugar, just as she liked it. I then walked over and picked up my own daughter. As she wiggled and squiggled I suddenly felt an overwhelming sense of accomplishment. I knew my daughter loved “Barney.” Pineapple and apples were her favorite snack. She thought it was hilarious to fart in the bathtub and her favorite storybook was Doctor Dan the Bandage Man. We had read this story so often that she could even recite it with me. Her favorite hair ribbons were the blue and pink clip-ons. She was afraid of strangers and heights. She wanted to be a dentist when she grew up and loved doing summersaults. Her favorite game to play with her Daddy was “Here me Comes!” and she always squealed with delight as he snatched her up in his arms. She loved playing with worms and was kind and compassionate to all living things. She was way above average in her language skills but a little lacking in hand-eye coordination. Most of all, I knew my daughter as a person.

Mom passed away five months later. During that time, I drove her down to her beloved office to visit her co-workers and heard her laughingly call her boss a “shithead.” To say that this statement escaping her lips shocked me is an understatement. Mom was perfect, and perfect people don’t swear. They don’t gossip, either,
and here she was with her friends, talking and laughing about people I had never heard of. She reminded me of a high school girl, laughing to the point of tears. As I entertained my daughter, I was torn between laughing and being appalled at her sudden lovable, obnoxious change of behavior. She became very real that day, and it only made me wish that we could have found Sesame Street together a little earlier.
It was almost time to return to the forward operating base and I was standing in the back hatch of the vehicle. The opening of the hatch met just above my hips, and my upper body and my weapon bore the brunt of the unforgiving Iraqi sun, as my legs enjoyed the shade inside the vehicle. We were wrapping up a fairly routine mission, keeping an eye on a checkpoint we had established in a Baghdad neighborhood, and we were making sure that the Iraqi National Police were behaving themselves while they were manning the checkpoint.

The Iraqi police were not the most trustworthy of fellas. On many occasions we would come across bodies on the side of the road and it would seem pretty obvious to me that the police were the ones responsible for the deceased. My platoon sergeant would call on the radio, “Doc, we need you to check out a body again.” I guess in a platoon full of scouts and infantry men the medic is the closest thing to a coroner. Most of them were just shot once or twice. Some were not so lucky. The not so lucky ones were tortured, sometimes with drill holes in their legs. They were dropped by the side of the road, across the street from where kids played soccer. Every once in a while someone would throw a sheet or a blanket over them, but most of the time life went on without much acknowledgement of a dead person lying there. Many times we would find the dead people with handcuffs that looked oddly similar to the ones that the Iraqi Police used. Sometimes we would find shell casings that had markings that could only come from a Glock pistol, oddly similar to the ones the Iraqi police used. So after I had finished examining the dead people, who do you think I called to pick them up? You guessed it. I would help the Iraqi police put the body in a body bag and put the bag on the back of their pickup truck. Irony. So you can understand the need to keep an eye on them every once in a while.

As I was waiting for the word to head back to base I continued to scan the area around me, the Iraqi police at the checkpoint, the open field that led to a mosque, and down the street to where the other three trucks in my platoon were parked. As I stared out into oblivion, the color of the trash-filled streets and the brown and
tan buildings seemed to all blend together as my vision blurred, as it does sometimes when you keep your eyes open for too long without blinking. And at that moment the area where my gaze just happened to be fixed, a bustling street corner a few blocks up where a family fixed the neighborhood cars, in an instant became a cloud of dust. The cloud of dust was instantly followed by what sounded like thunder, and the familiar concussion that always feels like someone punching you in the chest. Someone had set off a car bomb specifically targeting civilians, for reasons I’ll never truly know.

My first thought was, “This always happens right when we are about to go back to base,” and then was followed by, “That was a busy street corner, and we are the only platoon out here. That means I’m the only medic out here.”

The truck started rolling and I yelled to my squad leader, “I’m leaving my gun in the truck so watch my ass. I won’t have time for shooting.” I began to put my latex gloves on, because I figured it was about to be messy. I didn’t like these gloves either. They were purple and when they got wet they seemed too slippery. Who makes slippery latex gloves?

The trucks pulled up to the corner and everyone knew what they had to do. The platoon would set up a cordon and try to keep people calm and out of the area, and I would assess the situation and see who could be saved. When the trucks stopped, the back ramps dropped, and we all poured out of the back. We were poured out into instant chaos. Everyone was screaming and crying and yelling in Arabic. I remember one woman in a green dress was on her knees, pulling her hair out and throwing dirt on herself. I tried to stay focused and just make it to a patient, any patient. I started tying tourniquets on severed and snapped extremities and packing wounds with gauze. I tried to at least stop at everyone I could see just to find out who was dead and who was alive and who I could actually save. It seemed endless though. There were so many people. It had to be at least thirty. My back ached like it always did, as I bent over to treat patients. The body armor, medical supplies, two hundred and ten rounds...
of ammunition, and water tried hard to break my back as it had tried to do many times before.

People were everywhere and the injuries varied from bad to absolutely horrible. There was a guy who had been thrown onto a generator, upside down, bloody, and lifeless. There was another guy who was bleeding from a leg and I tried desperately to tie a tourniquet to it. His whole leg just fell apart. After finally getting the bleeding under control I try to do a quick assessment, only to find he was missing a piece of the back of his head. I had wasted a tourniquet. I had wasted time.

People began to yell at me to come over to where they were. One man was trying to speak to me in broken English. He was trying to ask me to take a look at a boy on the ground. I had the feeling that it was his son, and the lady next to the man who spoke in the broken English seemed to be his wife and the mother of the child. I made my way to the child, who was probably around ten years old. I took my first look at him, as he laid there without movement on the pavement. He was lying very near the point of impact. I looked at his face, and that’s all I really needed to see. His face told me his story. How he was just hanging out on the corner with his family when the turmoil of this God forsaken place stole his future. There was no life in his eyes. His soul had already left him and what remained was just a shell of what once was. I continued to assess him because I knew his parents were watching me. I started to go from head to toe seeing as I could not see any obvious life threatening injury. I think that he had most likely perished from the concussion alone. I saw no blood, just a small bit of charred skin on his face. After looking him over thoroughly, I checked his pulse, and I confirmed what I was already certain of, that he did not have a pulse, and that he was not alive. His parents had lost their son and I was going to be the one to tell them. I looked up at the man without speaking and he asked me in his broken English, “Finished, mista? Finished?” I nodded back at him without really knowing what to say. “Yes. Finished.”

After a while the Iraqi Police started loading up the wounded and the dead into the back of pickup trucks and I assume they took them to a
hospital. Other troops began to come into the area to help secure the area and more medics arrived to help me. The day began to wind down.

After days like this we would get back to base and usually end up on the roof of the building that we lived in and smoke cigarettes until our nerves calmed. “Crazy day, man,” someone would say. “Yeah man, did you see that one guy on the generator?” “At least we didn’t get shot or blown up today.”

Then we might get some sleep and do it all over again.
“Good morning, Beata, please come in.” I heard the invitation from an elderly man named Richard Sonnenfeldt on a sunny day in September 2006. When I entered the house, I felt a little anxious and my breathing was rapid, but at the same time I was confident of my skills as a home health aide. The house was very neat with an antique style. The smell of pancakes lingered in the house, and it reminded me of my house when I was a little girl. After I sat down on one of the antique chairs indicated by Mr. Sonnenfeldt, the interview began. My interview for the home health aide position went very smoothly. Mr. Sonnenfeldt asked precise questions, and my replies were the same. At the end of the interview, Mr. Sonnenfeldt weighed his words very carefully and said, “I like peace and people who respect that. Too much talking drives me crazy.” Luckily, I am not a very wordy person, and with English being my second language, I naturally thought this job is perfect for me. That afternoon, I received a phone call from Mr. Sonnenfeldt telling me that the position was mine.

Richard Sonnenfeldt lived in Port Washington, New York. Every day, I had to commute from Brooklyn to Long Island. It was nothing new or exciting working as a health aide because I have been working as an aide since I can remember. My first patient was my grandmother, and I started taking care of her when I was 13 years old—or maybe she took care of me? Well, we both had each other and did everything together. However, as she aged, her memory became poor, and she would forget simple tasks. I remember one incident when we went to see her physician because her condition had deteriorated. The nurse was trying to test her memory simply by asking questions like, “What day is today?” or “What did you have for breakfast?”

She couldn’t remember, so she would say, “I brought my assistant with me,” meaning me. “She can answer these questions. I need to speak with the doctor. Please do not waste my time.” I forgot to mention she had Alzheimer’s, and that was a way for her to misdirect them. Sure, it was sad and upsetting some days when she could not remember who her family was, but we all got used to it. Since then,
I knew I wanted to help people with their needs.

My first day at work was mostly to learn my responsibilities, which were preparing meals for Mr. Sonnenfeldt, driving to any destinations he desired, making sure he was taking his medications, and being responsible for his well being. He really enjoyed playing bridge with his friends every Thursday at the bridge club in Port Washington. My work for him took three hours a day; the rest of the time I spent in the room that Mr. Sonnenfeldt prepared for me on my first day of work.

The little room was very cozy and pleasant. I believe the little space given to me was arranged to entertain me when I had free time; many books were on the shelves, crossword puzzle games were available, and an old-fashioned RCA TV was plopped on top of a worn television stand, so I could watch anything I liked. On my first day of work, Mr. Sonnenfeldt said, “This is your room, make yourself at home, and help yourself,” which I did. However, not only did I have my entertainment room, Mr. Sonnenfeldt every day after breakfast spent time in his office, or as he humorously called it, “Mission control center.” I really did not know what he was doing during these days in his room. There were four computers on the desk, and he was surrounded by electronic equipment. The TV in his room was always on BBC channel news with the volume mute. As he said in the interview he liked peace and not much talking, I never asked about his life and the work in his office. I was very discreet, and I never started a conversation with him, except one day in my second week of working for him. He asked me, “Beata, I know that you’re Polish, so how was the relationship between Poland and Germany after World War II?” At first I was stunned, and I did not know what to answer and how, but I had a flashback memory, and I remembered a story told by my grandmother.

My grandmother, born in 1919 before World War II, often mentioned the story about the beginning of the war and how Polish people were fighting for freedom to the end. With pride, she told me that Poland was the first country to stand up to Hitler in spite of many lives lost, and how Poles after the cruel war got together to rebuild
their country. Although she survived the war, her generation has always had an aversion toward Germany.

I told Mr. Sonnenfeldt about my grandmother’s experience, and I added that my generation became more understanding because time healed some of the wounds. After I gave him my answer, he nodded his head and said, “I have a good book for you to read; I hope you will enjoy it.” I looked at the title Witness to Nuremberg, and I noticed that he was the author.

With surprise on my face, I said, “This is the first book in English that I will read. I can’t wait to read it.” Since English is my second language, I had difficulties reading it, but I translated every word that I did not understand, and I finished it in one week. It was unbelievable, not only because it was a book written about World War II, but also because it was written by my employer, a witness to the Nuremberg Trials. Before reading it, I had no idea who this 80-year-old man was and what he had to go through to stay alive. I understood his desire for solitude and privacy.

The book starts at the beginning of the war when Hitler takes power and continues to the end when Mr. Sonnenfeldt was interrogating some of the most dangerous Nazi criminals. When the war started, Mr. Sonnenfeldt’s parents, who were German Jews, considered family suicide, but fortunately, they did not go through with it. Instead, his parents sent him to a boarding school in England; thus his journey begun. Eventually, he fled to the United States where he joined the U.S. Army and became a chief interpreter on the U.S. prosecution team at the Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1945, helping to interrogate some of the top ranking leaders of Nazi Germany.

Mr. Sonnenfeldt, before and during the trials, spent hundreds of hours with Hitler’s henchmen and concentration camp commandants. After leaving Nuremberg, Mr. Sonnenfeldt returned to the United States and studied Electrical Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Then he joined the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), where he worked on the development of color television, which explains the old-fashioned television in my cozy room. He also was responsible for computers used in NASA’s lunar landings, and
later he became a dean of the Graduate School of Management at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute.

I was greatly impressed by his book and his interesting life. When I finished reading it, I went to him to share my opinion, and I said, “Your book is very fascinating, and I’m so stunned by your life.”

He looked at me and said, “I’m glad you like the book. Can you bring me a cup of tea?” Although we never talked about his life and his book again, I understood he wanted peace in his life, and he did not want to be bothered. It was out of the ordinary to meet someone like Mr. Sonnenfeldt, a historic individual, especially with me being a regular employee and working as a home health aide. I worked three years for him with peace and a lot of respect. Although we barely talked except polite words like thank you, good morning, have a good night and of course asking him what he desired for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, I knew him like nobody else.

On October 9, 2009, all his family arrived to be with Mr. Sonnenfeldt. He was lying in his bed with oxygen applied in his nose, and he was sleeping. The atmosphere at home was heavy; everyone sensed what was happening. I felt simply helpless, and I could not find my place in the home. When the day came to an end, he waved his hand at me because he was too weak from his sickness to say goodbye, and it was the last night that he finally rested in peace. Silence.
honorable mention, art

Untitled by Mary Miller
I sped along Highway 288 in a beat-up Oldsmobile with the rain falling down on the windshield, making me start to think that there were angels up in the sky somewhere that didn’t like me too much. I kept smoking until there was an inch-deep pile of ash accumulating on the floorboard, ash I’d managed to kick around for the last hour with little interest. This evening looked just about as good a time to die as any, I figured.

We’d divorced shortly after the kid got killed in the accident. He shot himself in the face trying to clean some dirt off the barrel, something I’d told him a thousand times was a dumbass thing to do. It’s a hard thing for a man and wife to recover from a thing like that.

The facts didn’t much matter to my ex-wife—she told me I won’t worth a damn as a father to let it happen in the first place. She’d never wanted her son to go out there in the smack-deep of the woods, brandishing guns and risking all kinds of danger. When he died, she started drinking heavy. In the courtroom each week, she would walk through them doors even drunker than the time before, and the judge, another woman, kept looking at her like she could smack the piss-drunk off her each and every time. I’d been holding off the beer in the weeks consumed by court procedures, and only when the divorce was final
did I start getting drunk most nights. I’d named him Daniel, after the one in the Bible who’d been rescued from the Lion’s Den. Now that I think of it, it’s a shitty thing to name one’s son.

Driving way too fast, clipping it pretty damn good along down the slippery highway—I could see myself crash and burn right there under the marble sheets of the pouring rain. I’d half-expected it to do so. Every mile I’d covered and it didn’t happen only served to make me madder and madder. I was well into my second pack of cheap cigarettes, and I was considering attacking the third when I’d finish this one off. I felt sick and disgusted with myself.

Mama had called me just about every day while the divorce was still being finalized—she had nothing else to do in between days of caring for Derrick, the new man in her life after daddy had died—and tried to comfort her baby boy, in her own weird way. *She was just a bitch*, she would often say, over and over again.

*I know Ma*, I always responded. The woman had far more disgusting things to say about my ex-wife besides that. One day, after taking in an ample earful of this shit, I just up and snapped at her.

_Hell man, can’t you just learn to leave me alone! I’m over here tryin’ to get on with things, and besides don’t you have a boyfriend you can yap to?*_

I hung up on her, and hadn’t heard from her since. It didn’t matter much to me to be honest with you. Hell, she’d been the one calling me every day, just to bitch and complain—just like a woman to do that to a man.

I’d been looking out of the side window every five seconds, cussing rain out just for being there. The more I’d thought about it, the more it came to me that I didn’t really want to die in the middle of a rainstorm. When I’d first left the house and the clouds had first wrung out their couple drops of piss-water, I’d thought that maybe it wouldn’t much matter in the end—but then the floods let loose, and now I could risk losing control of the car and running off the side of the highway.

This craziness made me feel more than a little uneasy—there was too much not in my favor. At this point, I wanted to have the last option to just
pull back on the reins and slow that bitch down to a crawl, if I so wanted. But of course now, in the rain, I wasn’t getting any of that control. It was all just chaos. A drunken sky was up and about, ruining what little shit I’d managed to pull together.

My ex-wife told me the day the divorce was final that she’d gone down to our old drinking hole and done found herself a new boyfriend. He’s a real man, he was there for me when you weren’t.

I was there, I was grieving too.
Heh, whatever.

Yeah, whatever is right. Never mind the fact that I’d found myself grieving, too, in those days—the fact that I’d been grieving had been buried by the fact I was supposed to just let her come first.

Of course I hadn’t been doing that. Not for her, and not for myself either. Not for anyone but the kid that won’t even there anymore to appreciate it. Damn cruel irony.

What she’d found in the punk-ass little weasel she was now hitting the sack with, I didn’t know. Hell, it just hurt that I won’t be getting it from her anymore. I hated to think that I’d go out now without much of a bang, without having gotten any for so damn long. One night a couple weeks ago, down in some bar somewhere, I’d caught myself considering picking up one of these women from across the room, right as she made her way to my barstool—I’d actually had her in the back seat of the car soon enough, had her right there underneath me. With her legs open for me and me alone, I was ready to hit it all the way out of the park.

But then I got to thinking of the day I buried my son, a kid who died at only fifteen years and eight months, who hadn’t had a chance to drive a car out on his own yet, who just up and died while doing the thing with his dad that we’d been doing for years. Finally, I figured that I couldn’t do this with her. Not with anyone. From then on, I did all of my drinking in the privacy of my own home. I cried myself to sleep that night.

All the windows in the car were fogging up pretty bad, filling up from the rain on the outside and from the smoke on the inside. As much as I was starting to hate this gradual theft of my control, I sure as hell didn’t take many
steps towards doing a damn thing about it. There come those times in a man’s life, when so many piles of shit begin to build up around him, and he no longer even cares about the stench that’s around him. For me, for this man, on this day, this was one of those times. The disconnection was already well into place, and I was just smoking and driving.

Setting on my nightstand was the little suicide note I’d written out just before I took this drive. All I could write on the matter was this:

*Picked up two stray dogs off the side of Hull Street yesterday—they both looked scared as hell, they looked angry at the world, and they just looked all teary-eyed to be honest with you. I took them on back to the pound, and within the hour they’d been put to sleep, because they were apparently that sick. I just rinsed out the cages on the back of the truck and went home early. Today I quit. Life’s too short.*

Life really was too short. And I didn’t want any damn part of it anymore, not with my son dead and my ex-wife gone off to some other old bastard for comfort. The wipers on my car offered no hypnotic relief as they swiped away the rain; it had gone dark on me before I even knew it.

I’d thought about what I might miss once I was gone, and if anybody would miss me in the end. Probably my mama would—I figured I might as well call her back and apologize for mouthing off to her like I did. I was already taking enough guilt to the grave, and I sure as hell didn’t need anymore. That would be a crazy thing to do.

I hadn’t seen any of my friends since the day of the funeral. After the divorce they’d all used to call me up, and invite me out to every single bar and dive—but of course I wouldn’t budge not one step, not one damn iota. I had enough beer stashed in the fridge back home to last me through all those lonely times, and the TV gave me more entertainment than my friends could provide. It was all part of the same lame excuse I gave them over and over, and after a while my friends just stopped trying.

They’d gotten tired, just like I had. The kid was born with whisks of black hair on top of his head. He kept closing and opening his eyes, so for a good while nobody got a real
good look at the deep brown of his eyes behind those little lids—but the nurses all said that they just adored his long lashes. I had held him up close in my arms, and the general feelings associated with fatherhood all just flooded down upon me like the happy tears flooded down from my eyes. Time at this point was just an illusion, and this made the cycle of manhood complete, for everyone in the whole wide world to see. As I later watched him grow up, watched him begin his rise and fall and rise again into adolescence, and later in his teenage years, I kept picturing the kid in his state of infancy, and now in his death, I would cry for never having that again.

I’d named him Daniel, after the one in the Bible who’d been rescued from the Lion’s Den. Now that I think of it, it’s a shitty thing to name one’s son.

It was all so long ago in the past, and yet, it seemed like it was all only half a second ago.

I checked my fuel gauge—I had less than a quarter tank of gas left, and I wasn’t even sure how far I’d be driving till the inevitable was to occur. I cussed myself out and eyed hard for exit signs and gas stations. I still had cobwebs to clear out of my head, and that meant more gas and a hell of a lot more driving. The sun had finally set completely as I pulled off the highway and eased over to the Sunoco station down the road a piece.

The rain was beating down heavy on the overhang as I climbed out of the car and went over to pick the economy grade of gas and swipe my card. I picked up the nozzle, placed it into the fuel tank and began pumping. I lit up another cigarette and looked around uneasy-like, to see if anybody was watching me.

I knew that it was dangerous to smoke so close to the pump, but did it really matter in the end, with the rain coming down so damn hard, and with me planning to die?

The kid never got the chance to drive out on his own. I wished I could’ve seen him do that. I’d been saving money up since the day he was born, getting ready to buy him that black Corvette on the day he turned sixteen. I wanted desperately to buy that car for him, even now in death I wanted to give him the keys to that shiny black Stingray. Watch him gas up the engine, look back in the mirror
and wave out to me, smiling and laughing and learning how to be a man.

After the kid died, I wrote up a new will and left that fifteen grand to the ex-wife—she could use it on her new man if she wanted to, the unhappy bitch. I didn’t need anything where I was going, didn’t need anybody either.

As a father, I’d often wondered about how old men sat around, worrying about the little things they’d wished they had passed down to the future generations. Not big things like in the movies, but all the little things: things like how to treat a woman or how to properly wax a car or even how to get dressed right for church on Sunday morning. Those kinds of little things. I’d wondered if they ever had the urge to keep on living once the kids died off in wars or got killed in car accidents or even being born without a breath. I’d wondered if they had all wanted to just say screw it and finish their existence but were too scared to go there.

I’d wondered how long they’d drive down the highway, before they finally decided that love was too much a perishable gift for them to care for, once the ones who gave it to them had passed on.

I wondered about those things as I finished fueling, put the nozzle back, closed up the tank, and got in the car. I took my time sitting there before I cranked her up again, and then it took me a while to back her up and turn around.
Jazz sat at the computer desk staring blankly into the screen waiting for that moment to come: he was absolute it would never come again. He took the bottle to his right and wickedly drank his fill of the bitter, overpowering liquid inside. An eruption of sweetness soon followed, it came over him like a heavy hand, forcing his head to fall back onto the head of the chair. He looked again to the screen: it read 2:30 a.m. For some time he had been sitting there in a depressed fixation, his mind reveling with the ambitious dreams and lost causes that had once filled his heart. Now he was realizing they were fading away with time and overwhelming failure.

No. That is a lie; believing that this was a sudden epiphany that arrived with no fair warning; a blitzkrieg.

No, he told himself once again; he had known this day would come when there would be no escape, no second chances to be had.

Sudden heat swept over him and he took off his shirt, examining his once chiseled body, a relic of the abstract life he had led, proof of his survival against all odds. But that too seemed to slowly be dissipating. His face sagged from lost energy; it looked as if a syringe had been injected, draining him of all his positivity, all his self-worth. He quickly swiveled in a 180 degree fashion so he wouldn’t have to stare at the blank screen. It filled him with despair and nameless dread. He was deeply depressed; he felt like denying it no further. But it was like no other depression he had experienced before, and he had experienced countless types that he had always overcome, but this one was so…final.

This could be the end, should it be the end? he asked himself.

His hand, a mind of its own, operating without his conscious consent, reached under the desk and stroked the six, smoothly and delicately feeling the contours of the polished revolver.

After waiting some more time he dispatched a filter from his pocket and retrieved a cigarette from a badly worn golden case. It had once gleamed bright and brilliant, just as he had. A lighter revealed itself on the ground beneath him. He picked it up and sparked it to life making his eyes glisten in the dimly lit room. His hand made sure the lighter found second place, fiction

These Dreams From Me To You
by David Macfarlane
its way back to its home on the floor where he knew it would be once more if need be. Head hung low, he let his mind wander to the space between the known and the unknown, where all things are possible. A creak in the door let him know he was not alone. He didn’t lift his head; he just took another drag. He knew who it was. He had been hoping and groping for a reason that she might come back.

“Why are you here?” he asked with chilly indifference, still not raising his head.

“I wanted to see you…I mean…I needed to,” she said, ashamed.

“I see you still invite yourself where you aren’t invited, especially when it’s someone else’s home.” She remained silent.” I suppose you’re still burning bridges, still returning to the burnt out remains.”

“Oh, don’t be so bitter now, his mother is out of town and everyone in the house is dead asleep—except for you,” she added tersely, “and I won’t be the one to wake them.”

He sat unmoved and silent for some time and she stood silent waiting for him to speak. She knew him so well or at least used to. He took two drags as the time passed and crushed the cigarette’s filter. His locks of dark hair hung loose and long and covered his eyes. He let the filter hang at his lips with the smoke drifting and rifting around him, dancing in little wisps.

He thought of where she might have been and where he had looked: Everywhere. He had looked everywhere. He had traversed city limits looking for her, knowing she would not allow herself to be found, not that she could help it; it was in her nature. She was invisible to him. She was the wind whipping at his back as he roamed the streets in his heavy coat with a cigarette in hand to warm his heart and body.

The darkest corners of the metropolis and suburbs had lured him and called his name, like sirens of mythology taunting him, wanting him to make his way to them only to capture his weak, searching soul. But he could not be captured. He would not allow it. She would not allow it. He listened to the reverberating sounds of dark pop echo their way across the city to his location. Like a sleuth he had listened intently, feeling his way along every crevice in the
roadway, he followed the path that was paved by a symphony of sounds and screaming fans, and it led him to the dark punk rock clubs with crowds inside. He wandered and searched the upstairs and downstairs for her. He had climbed to the stage unmoved and unaware of the flammable sounds that were all around him, igniting the crowd into an uproar that was sure to burn the city black. But she could not be found.

He cringed at the memories that came back to him, of his naivety, of his foolishness, of his belief she would be hiding out in the very underworld he climbed out of. Damn me, he thought as the memories continued to haunt him.

He had staked out the theater when the show came to town to see if she would make an appearance with a fellow performer onstage, but she never arrived. He would not stop. He could not stop. She wouldn’t allow it. He continued his search across the states in vain, traveling to night clubs with the hustlers and the gangsters who had been forged in the howling blackness of night, doing various drugs to see if she would walk in with an entrepreneurial man and a clever story in hand to trick his trusting heart. He tumbled down the slope that some pretentious scholars would argue as life, with its forever changing truths and morals that society holds so dear to their bleeding heart. He lost himself along the way and thought he found himself again, only to be back on the street with nothing to show from his perilous journey except scars on his arms from saloon fights and backroom specials.

All that was left to him was an icy stare that could kill. It was all that remained when she had vanished without a word.

He had done anything, everything, to take off the edge so he could forget her, forget the time they had shared together. He had traveled so many roads taking as many turns as he could to get away from himself, but they always led right back to the same place. He snapped back to reality at hand, the gloomy memories ceasing momentarily.

“I looked for you, ya know…”
“I know, babe, I know.”
“Where have…,” he took a deep breath and tried to control his
voice that was beginning to shake. “Where have you been?” He felt the slipping of his tongue and the throttle of his throat.

She spoke in a song of sincerity. “You know I can’t tell you that.” She sighed knowing he was just looking for something, some form of reassurance. “I don’t…I can’t explain.” A deep breath filled her lungs.

His face tightened to a cringe and he shed a tear; he removed his cigarette from the filter and flicked it away, as he did he slyly moved his hand up across his cheek through his long hair so to disguise the tear.

“Don’t dwell on,” she said. “I didn’t come back to make you sad or for you to dwell on my departure, because when you finally come to your senses,” she paused dramatically, “I’ll be gone. So, please, let me do what I came here to do. Don’t fight it. Please, I hate to see you this way,” she was pleading with him now.

“YOU MADE ME THIS WAY!” He was shaking uncontrollably now, standing tall, muscles clenched and swells of anger crashing inside him. Immediately, regret grew inside his mangled, confused heart and he sat back down ashamed at his unnecessary outburst.

“I’m so…,” his breathing was heavy, he was having trouble dealing with his emotions, he was not sure of them anymore; their deception was unnerving. “I’m sorry,” he said softly. “You just don’t understand, I don’t always know you’re gonna come back…And when,” he paused and thought about what he wanted to say, “I mean, I have no say in it. I don’t know what would compel you to stay, but I just wish you would.” he said in a pathetic, pleading tone. “I need you like you don’t even know…I can’t function. I’m not the same when you leave; I become bitter, cynical, dimwitted and dull minded. A man condescended to me the other day and I couldn’t fend him off with my words or my sharp thoughts, but only my fists because I knew you weren’t here and that my armor was gone with you. I feel like nothing. I feel like I lost my soul. I doubt myself all the time now and nothing anyone says or does changes my mind because…because I know it’s not coming from you.”

“When you speak it’s pure and when you act, you act on spontaneity,
and when you tell me the truth…” his voice trailed and cracked. He swallowed to get the emotion down but it bubbled right back up, but he wouldn’t be faltered because this is what he wanted to say to her, to his muse, to his Inspiration, to the only thing that ever gave a damn about his dreams. He finally lifted his head to meet her eyes, “I can’t help but think it’s real.”

He let his eyes down real slow to take in all the beauty she had to offer his pale blues and electric whites. He was astonished to see she was sevenfold as beautiful since their paths last intertwined. She wore a sleek black dress, like one you would wear to a party where everyone lived and breathed high society, and her supernova red pumps added to the devastation that was already taking effect on him. He wished he could have her. It didn’t work that way. He wished he could tell her she looked beautiful. It didn’t work that way either. It never had and never would, and now more than ever, staring into this beautiful woman’s eyes, he actually realized the enormity of his circumstances with this woman who would forever evade his life. His eyes had been glazed for months with sadness so deep and so heavy that he feared to look anyone in the eye for too long, fearing his eyes would forfeit his feelings of defeat that he had desperately been trying to conceal from the world. But, instantly after seeing the life in her eyes he felt like a switch on his heart had been flicked, and the glaze fell away from his eyes and life returned to them, filled with passion and ambition.

Euphoria consumed him and the doubt which had been long instilled and secured in his troubled heart dissipated and drifted, and he began to feel again. He could smell again. He could smell her and the sweet potent odor of her perfume. Everything that had looked so gray and fabricated before in the world surrounding him flooded with vivid color, and energy took place of the fabrication.

He could see the lava red of her heels and the midnight black of her dress and the porcelain, delicate, fragile skin that lay beneath. His mind sharpened and the flow of rhythm came back to life in his hands. Everything came into focus, and all
his ideas and dreams he had left to
die, lonely in their graves, came back
from the depths of the Richmond
underground, clear and clarified like a
surging epiphany.

The expressions on his face told
the story of his vain journey to find
his lost Inspiration. It showed his deep
pain, the finished canvas that depicted
all the sins and temptations he had
been indulging in relentlessly since
being released. Her forgiving face eased
his guilt and he let it all just drip away
from him; he had been drenched in it.

“I guess I’m already having an
effect,” she said with a smile.

The momentum of the events
unfolding in his mind was unbearable
and incomprehensible and he snapped
back to reality. “Shit I...I...I need
something,” he said quickly, almost as
if he were in a panic. He reached for
the bottle with intentions to drink its
dark tranquility and end the positive
energy growing inside him.

Her hand reached out and just
gently touched his arm sending a
tingle up his spine. He couldn’t move
his hand any farther than if there had
been a brick wall. She stopped his
senses short, leaving him to just feel
everything she had to offer, waiting for
him to unlock.

To feel life, that is what she has
to offer to me, he thought. He had
wanted to wildly grab the bottle and
self-destruct, but her touch offered
him opium so much greater than that
of alcohol or the most elegant cocaine
that they both were aware that he
could never refuse.

“No,” she demanded. “You don’t
need that anymore.” He turned his
head to object to her but she gracefully
and ever so lightly, swept her hand,
fingertips barely touching, across his
arm all the way up to his jaw, and
lifted it slightly so he was looking her
in the eyes again.

Her touch was his Achilles heel
and he let his body go limp with
a relaxation he couldn’t fight. She
was his opium, he could never have
enough and he would deny it no
further. Before his dream could come
to an end he took one last smell of her
sweet odor as she enveloped around
him and he was finally submerged
in it. In the last few moments before
Jazz was stripped of consciousness,
he recognized the intoxicating smell.
It was the smell of hope. The type of
hope that can only be associated with knowing that everything would be okay for him, and after accepting that and letting it fill the space where the doubt had resided, he let the darkness creep right in.

When early morning arrived, the rooster’s call had been replaced by a crackling thunder rolling through his head, but it made no matter to him because he was alive again. She was gone but he remained, and so he swiveled to face his foe head on, and he began to write…
Leaning out of the window, Rose breathed in the sharp, cold air to clear her head.

“Don’t you have a paper to write?”

“Shut up, Cathy,” Rose said to her roommate and jerked the old window shut.

She fell face first onto her bed. The paper was due in two days and she had nothing. There was no way she was going to finish it in time—she might not even start it at this rate.

“I can’t do this,” she mumbled into her pillow.

Cathy looked up from her drawing. “Well, we could always sneak out.”

Rose lifted her head. “No thanks. You know we can’t go out at night. It’s against the rules.”

“Sometimes we can.”

“Not alone,” Rose sat up and pulled her dark hair out of her face, tying it back into a ponytail.

“Oh, come on. We won’t be alone. We’ll be together.”

Rose shook her head at Cathy, who was still wearing her school uniform long after they were supposed to have been in bed. “You know what I mean. It’s amazing you’re still here after three years.”

“They just know how special I am.”

“Yeah. I’m sure that’s it.”

Cathy sat up. “Hey! What if I make you go?”

“You can try, but you won’t be successful.” She looked at her laptop, its screen taunting her with its bright white sheet and blinking I-beam.

She turned to Cathy. “Why am I your roommate, again?”

“They thought you’d be a good influence on me.”

“That’s what I thought. Maybe you should think about that before—Is that a cigarette?”

“Issue it is,” Cathy said, reaching for the lighter she had taped to the back of her headboard.

“If Ms. Hamilton finds out—”

“If she finds out, she’ll also find out about that boy you’ve been seeing on the weekends, Miss I-follow-all-the-rules-except-for-this-one-that-obviously-doesn’t-apply-to-me.”

Rose blushed and glared at her. “You wouldn’t do that.”

Cathy placed her notebook and pencils aside. “Try me. You know, I think I just might tell her. She’ll be making her rounds soon, won’t she?”

Rose checked the clock. “In...
five minutes."

“Interesting. We’ll see how that goes.”

“I’m going to have to sneak out with you, aren’t I? Or else you’ll tell her.”

“I hadn’t thought of that, but it’s a great idea. Thanks. Now put some clothes on.”

Rose looked down at her purple-striped pajamas. “Now?”

“Trust me.”

“No.”

“Okay, then listen to me. I’m going to show you something in the woods.”

“There is no way I’m going into the woods this late.”

“Hmm. Remind me, what’s the penalty for dating here?”

Rose sighed. “Expulsion.” She pulled on some sweatpants, her gym shoes, and a school hoodie.

Without ever touching it to her lips, Cathy dropped her cigarette in a soda can and sprayed air freshener around the room, making Rose cough.

“I think I hear her coming,” Rose said, adjusting her hair in the mirror on her desk. Soon, heavy footsteps approached their room, followed by a curt knock on the door. Cathy jumped up to answer it.

“Good evening, Ms. Hamilton,” she said cheerfully.

“Yes.” She looked up and down Cathy and asked, “And where do you think you’re going at this hour, Miss Bailey? I noticed that your light was still on. It is nearly midnight.”

“Is it, really? Huh.” Cathy looked down at her sweater then back up at the stern face of Ms. Hamilton, an old spinster who had taken it upon herself to watch over the girls of Rollins Academy. Hers was never a pleasant face to see. “Rose and I were just so caught up in studying that we forgot to change. We hadn’t even noticed the time.”

“Well, I might suspect that to be true of Miss Gallagher, but I highly doubt the same applies to you. Remember, there is absolutely no need for you to vacate your room at any time until first thing in the morning, unless you need to use the facilities,” she said with an arched eyebrow.

“Of course. Why would I think otherwise? Them’s the rules.”

“Those are, please, Miss Bailey. Someone else may think that’s cute,
but it is most certainly not I.” Ms. Hamilton leaned into the room and sniffed the air, her nose twitching. She glanced suspiciously at Cathy then continued down the hall, evidently unable to rightfully accuse her of anything.

After closing their door, Cathy said, “And not even a ‘Goodnight.’ How rude.” She jumped on her bed and crossed her legs, elbows on her knees. “I want to show you something. Keep in mind, I didn’t tell her.”

“But what if I don’t want to be shown? Can’t it wait until tomorrow, when it’s light out?”

“No.” Cathy hunched over and blew her bangs out of her eyes. “All right, I’ve got it. I won’t say anything about your little secret if you just climb down the wall and stand on the ground. Deal?”

“Ugh. Fine.”

After fifteen minutes, Cathy checked the hall to make sure no one was there to catch them. “You gotten anywhere on that paper, Rosie-pooh?”

“Two words.”

“Is it your name? Astounding.” She shut the door and moved to their single window that overlooked the hockey field. “Let’s go.”

“We really shouldn’t be doing this,” Rose said, as she watched Cathy pull out a loose screw from the window bars, sending them swinging to the side, creating an easy passage through the window.

“You’ve watched me do it before, yet you haven’t said anything. I think you like this idea.” She swung her leg, then the rest of herself, through the window and carefully but quickly scaled down the uneven brick wall. With a thump she jumped the last three feet to the ground.

Rose poked her head out of the two-story window. She had always been afraid of heights, so this wasn’t going to be easy. She wasn’t even sure why she was doing this. Logic told her she should just lock Cathy out and let her get caught. But she only selectively listened to logic.

Cathy sensed her reluctance and called out, “Come on! You said you would do it. Now get on with it!”

Rose guiltily looked back at her door. “Shh. We’ll get caught.”

“Because you’re so slow. Now hurry up.”

She climbed out and turned around to face the wall without looking down. Her foot slipped and
she gasped, holding back a scream and tightening her grip. She closed her eyes and repositioned her foot. Breathing heavily, she felt her way gradually, meticulously down until she touched the hard ground with her feet.

“There—you did it. Now you’re a delinquent. Come on.”

“Very funny.” Rose turned to climb up again, but Cathy grabbed her wrist.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“I’m going back up—that was our deal.”

“I didn’t say I’d let you go back up right away, did I?”

“You’ve got to be kidding me. No, you didn’t.” Rose pulled her wrist out of Cathy’s hand. “But that doesn’t mean I’m not going back up.”

“Okay. How about this? I’ll convince you to come with me.”

Rose crossed her arms. “To the woods? Sure. Good luck with that.”

“Man, I’m really not good at this sort of thing. Okay. Just watch this.” Cathy took a few steps back and raised her hand.

“I can’t—it’s too dark. I can barely see a thing.” She shivered and wrapped her arms around herself.

“I’m going to fix that, but please don’t scream. Please.”

“Why would I…”

Cathy’s eyes grew wide and bright as she looked into her palm, which began to faintly glow. Speechless and forgetting to breathe, Rose stared unblinking at Cathy’s hand, which grew brighter. She thought she was going to faint. *This can’t be real*, she thought. *I’m just dreaming. Just dreaming.*

The light made Cathy’s light hair glow—or maybe it was glowing, too—and cast eerie shadows across her face. Not looking away, Rose stumbled back, reaching for the wall so that she could climb back to their room and lock Cathy out. She was no longer worried about heights or getting caught. She just wanted to get away.

“Don’t freak out.” Cathy walked toward Rose with her hand stretched out in front of her. “See, it’s okay.”

Rose screamed, banging her head on the wall, searching frantically for anything she could use to defend herself, but there was nothing there but cold brick.

Her voice unsteady, Cathy said, “Please. Calm down.” and stepped closer, her eyes intent on Rose’s face.
The light wavered with every step she took. Rose lost control of her breathing and could feel her palms getting sweaty, even though she was cold. Cathy pressed her palm to Rose’s chest, and Rose’s vision began to blur.

But nothing happened. She could feel only Cathy’s hand, which was as cold as anyone’s would be. The look on Cathy’s face wasn’t even menacing; if anything, it was apprehensive.

“Wh—what are you doing?” Rose sank to her knees, scraping her back on the wall.

Cathy curled her fingers in, one by one, putting out the strange light. “I’m sorry,” she said weakly, offering her hand, but Rose smacked it aside and looked away.

“Get away from me,” she whispered.

Cathy opened her mouth to say something, but stopped and dropped her hand to her side. She stepped back to let Rose stand up on her own. Without looking at her, Rose turned around and started climbing.

“I’m—I’m really sorry,” Cathy said, and Rose stopped, a few feet above the ground. “It’s just that I wanted to show you what I could do, but if you don’t want to be near me—if I scare you—it’s fine. I understand. I’m used to it. I’ll leave you alone; I’ll even leave the school, if it bothers you that much. I’ve done it before. I only showed you because I trust you. I like you. All my life I’ve wanted to have a friend I could be honest with, and I want that friend to be you. But you can just ignore me, if that’s what you want. I know I can be a pain, so I’ll get out of your hair.”

Rose turned and looked into Cathy’s eyes—she had never seen them so blue. Cathy was crying, but only barely; she was trying to hold it back.

She jumped down. “It doesn’t bother me. You just scared me. Next time you want to show me something like that, be a little more gentle about it, okay?” She patted Cathy on the shoulder and tried to keep her voice steady. “So, is the flashlight in your hand all you wanted to show me, or is there more?”

“Really? You want to come with me?”

Rose took a moment before she answered, “Yes. As long as it isn’t scary.”

“I don’t think it is.”

“Okay. Can you do anything else?”
“Yeah, but…I’ll show you later,” Cathy said, scratching the back of her head.

They walked deep into the woods, Cathy leading the way with an outstretched hand. After several minutes she stopped. She motioned for Rose to stay back as she crept around a large tree trunk, then smiled and waved her over, squatting and petting something.

Rose peered around the tree and saw what it was. It was familiar—but impossible, she thought. “Is that a…” She couldn’t bring herself to say the word.

“A dragon? Yeah. I call him Frank.”
“Well, I suppose that’s as good a name as any for a dragon.”
“Do you want to pet him?”
Rose hesitated before she awkwardly bent over and patted the dragon’s head. About three feet tall, it was light brown with short spikes running down its back. Its thin, webbed wings fluttered as Cathy rubbed its snout.
“This is strange for you,” Cathy said.
“I’m trying. So, you’re sure it’s a boy?”

“Nope.”
She saw a bandage around his leg. “Is he hurt?”
“I found him two days ago just over there,” Cathy said, pointing into the darkness. “I think his leg is broken.” She reached around him and pulled out a backpack. “Look in there for some gauze. I need to change it, I think.”
“Oh, yeah. Be careful. There’s a knife in there.”
Rose sighed and went back to searching for the gauze, which she found after placing the knife on the ground and finding a flashlight.
“Cut off a strip.”
As Rose sawed at the gauze she asked, “So, how—why—is there a dragon in the woods in twenty-first century America?”
“Just don’t apply logic to this kind of thing. You’ll only hurt your brain.” Cathy took the gauze and wrapped it around the dragon’s leg.
Putting the roll back in the bag,
Rose heard a loud whipping noise. Cathy jolted up and caught her balance on the tree, searching the night sky with her eyes. “Oh, no. I am so sorry, Rose. I didn’t think this would happen.”

“You didn’t think what would happen?” The sound came closer. Frank fidgeted, but he didn’t try to fly away. “Cathy, what is it?”

“Another dragon. I don’t think it understands that we’re trying to help Frank. It might think we’re hurting him.”

“Oh…” Rose was suddenly aware that she had impulsively picked up the knife. It was a hunting knife, not nearly big enough to ward off a dragon. She was terrified but readied herself, trying to ignore her frantic heartbeat.

Abruptly, a dark dragon, not much larger than Frank, swooped down through the trees and clawed at Cathy, who screamed. While the beast was within reach, Rose frantically slashed at its flesh, causing little damage.

“Are you all right?” she shouted at Cathy, who had been knocked down, blood staining her sleeve.

Cathy shook her head and answered, “Yeah, I—I think so.” She waited for the beast to return, and when it did she squeezed her eyes shut and clenched her hands at her sides. Just before it reared back to claw at her again, she whispered something Rose couldn’t understand and threw her arms out, fire blazing from her palms. The dragon cried and pulled back as she fell.

Adrenaline racing, Rose thrust the knife into its chest before it got away, hoping to hit its heart. She had never killed anything before and didn’t want to now, but it seemed to be her best option. She must have missed, though, because the dragon flew away, the knife’s hilt protruding from its chest. At least it was leaving—for now.

Cathy smiled at her. “Look at you.”

“Look at you.” Rose stroked Frank’s head with a bloody hand. “So, dragons, huh? What else is out there?”

“Lots.”
Amos made his way across the snow-covered walkway and entered the house through the back door. Theresa was waiting over by the stove and smiled gently to show her pleasure with his arrival.

“How was work?” she asked, while turning up the burner to bring a kettle of water to a boil.

Amos hardly noticed her question as he removed his heavy winter coat and hung it on the hook by the door. “This damn snow has the water levels on the river rising fast,” he finally responded. “We had to work straight through lunch to make sure the water didn’t rise above the levees and flood the roadway.”

“I am glad you’re hungry,” Theresa replied with a smile. “There is some chicken and a baked potato warming in the oven for you.”

Jimmy came running into the kitchen and gave his dad a bear hug. As he stepped back Amos could see an anxious look on his son’s face.

“Oh, I almost forgot that James told me he has something very important to tell you. He’s been in a panic since he got home from school,” Theresa said while retying her apron. “Now, James,” she continued, “You know your father doesn’t like to be bothered right after he gets home from work. Let him finish his supper and then you can tell him your big news.”

Amos looked at Jimmy intently as Theresa removed his dinner plate from the oven and placed it on the table. “If a man has something important to say, it’s best to let him say it,” he said while sitting down to eat. “What’s this big news you have for me, James?”

“He’s dying! They don’t have any food and—and the electricity—and their clothes. They’re going to die!” Jimmy spoke frantically as he gasped for air.

“Who’s dying, James?” Amos asked with a coy smile as he glanced over at Theresa. “Catch your breath and tell me who is about to die.”

“Beeman is dying.”

“I am sure your friend Beeman is fine,” Amos reassured Jimmy.

Jimmy gathered his thoughts for a moment and answered his father, speaking more slowly this time. “Beeman’s dad is sick. He’s been coming to school for weeks wearing the same clothes. He doesn’t bring in a lunch box anymore and I can hear his stomach grumbling during class.”

Jimmy’s plea had grabbed his
parents’ attention and Amos noticed a growing look of concern on Theresa’s face. He made one last attempt to de-
fuse the situation so that he could eat his dinner in peace. “I’ve known Bee-
man’s dad for thirty years, James. Your mother and I spoke with him every day at the hospital when his wife and your big sister were sick.”

Amos thought back to the last tuberculosis outbreak that struck in the fall of ’41. It had taken away both his firstborn daughter and Beeman’s mother. The story had been front-page news in all the big city papers. Pearl Harbor was attacked just as the epidemic had ended and few people outside of the rural townships southwest of Chicago where it had been centered remembered it now.

“Don’t you think I would know if Craig was sick?” Amos finally asked Jimmy.

Jimmy quietly replied, “Yes sir,” while looking down at his shoes and made his way back out of the kitchen.

“What if James is right?” Theresa asked. “He certainly has no reason to lie.”

Amos knew from Theresa’s expression that this was a fight not worth having and placed his dinner plate back in the oven. “I guess I can ride over to Craig’s house and check things out,” he said while grabbing his coat back off the hook by the rear door. “I am sure this is just a false alarm or misunderstanding. Once we get back I can finally have some of that delicious baked chicken.” Amos walked into the front parlor and called Jimmy down from his room.

The old Buick slid slightly sideways as Amos pulled out of the driveway onto Washington Street. He drove slowly along the icy road and turned left onto Main Street. The pharmacy and most of the other stores were all closed for the night and the only lights visible were on the signs blinking in front of the Five-Deuce bar.

Jimmy sat quietly in the passenger seat with his mind running a mile per minute. He hoped he was doing the right thing. His father had a rule about minding one’s own business when it came to other people’s family affairs. The tires lost traction and slipped momentarily as the car rode onto the tiny bridge that crossed the Illinois River. Jimmy’s heart began to race as they neared Beeman’s house.

They drove past the bend in the
road and Amos nearly missed Craig’s driveway. The snow in the driveway was deep and the Buick struggled to keep rolling as they neared the house. Through the flurries Amos could barely make out Craig’s car almost completely covered in snow. A single dim light was visible in one of the front rooms of the small brick house.

Amos left the car running with the headlights on as he got out of the car. Just before he closed the door he turned back toward Jimmy and asked, “Well! Aren’t you coming?” Amos was surprised to see that the snow on the walkways had not been shoveled.

Jimmy had not expected to be invited in and struggled through the knee-deep snow to his father’s side. He imagined Beeman’s father answering the door and laughing with his dad upon hearing about his tall tale. As they walked up onto the darkened porch Amos stomped his feet loudly to remove the caked on snow.

The wind grabbed the storm door as Amos opened it, and it swung open quickly slamming into the side of the house with a loud crash. “I guess they know we’re here now,” Amos laughed. He then threw on his most serious face and knocked three times on the wooden door. At first there was no sound from within the house, but after a few moments the light inside could be seen moving toward the entrance. The latch could be heard unlocking and the door slowly opened.

A young girl, no more than seven or eight years old, peeked through the barely opened door. “How’s it going, Beth?” Jimmy blurted out upon seeing her. Amos peered through the crack in the door attempting to discern what was going on inside.

“Miss Beth,” Amos said sternly. “Is your father home?” Beth nodded still looking over at Jimmy. “Can you let him know Amos Jackson is here to see him?”

Beth turned her head and said, “Daddy, Daddy, Amos Jackson is at the door.”

“Then let him in, damn it. And shut the door before we all freeze to death!”

She opened the door so that their unexpected guests could enter the house. The room was dim and neither could really see. Beth placed the kerosene lamp on the end table. Dirty dishes lay all about and Craig sat trembling under several blankets on the couch.
“Kind of cold in here, Craig, don’t you think?” Amos asked.

Craig sat up slightly, clearly upset at the insinuation. He let out a loud cough followed by a few moments of wheezing. “Not so cold once you get used to it. What brings you out this way?” He glanced over at Jimmy and his daughter who had now been joined by Beeman standing in a pack near to the door. “It’s nice to see you, James.”

“It’s good to see you too, sir.”

“James, why don’t you take Beth and Beeman out front to play?” Amos proposed.

“Daddy, I can’t find my shoes,” Beth replied, too embarrassed to admit the hole in one shoe’s sole made walking in the snow unbearable.

Craig motioned with his arm toward the back of the house. “You kids can go play in Beeman’s room.” He waited for the children to make their way down the hall, listening for the bedroom door to shut. “Now that we have some privacy Amos, why are you here?”

Amos’ father made him promise to find a job above ground when he was a young man and stay out of the coal mines. One look at Craig had told him all he needed to know; it was black lung. From the looks of Craig it was bad, Amos figured he had only a few months left.

“Craig, I am going to get straight to the point. James tells me that Beeman is not being taken care of.”

“Not being taken care of?” Craig sat up straight, “Why there is nothing wrong with these kids!” Craig rose quickly to confront his old friend. “Amos Jackson, you get the hell out of my house!” He pointed toward the door, only to withdraw his hand and cover his mouth as he once again began to cough. Slumping back down to the couch Craig gasped for air, but each breath seemed inadequate.

Amos moved quickly into the kitchen and searched the cupboards for a glass. Unable to find a clean glass he grabbed a dirty coffee mug from the table and filled it half way at the sink. He returned to the front room and held the cup to Craig’s mouth. Craig drank down the water, swallowing hard with each gulp. Amos helped Craig to sit up straight on the couch
before returning to his original spot by the door. A long silence fell over the room with each man deep in thought. Amos finally broke the silence.

“Craig, why don’t you let me bring Beeman and Beth to my house while you get back on your feet?”

“I know this isn’t exactly high society living, but me and the kids are doing just fine, Amos.” Amos walked over to the couch and sat next to Craig.

“And besides it’s not like you and Theresa can afford to have a couple of more children in your house.”

“It’ll just be until you can get back on your feet, Craig. Theresa and I wouldn’t mind watching them at all. Once you start feeling better, and start working again at the mine, you can come pick them up.”

“The mine, I don’t think I can go back to working in that mine. Things weren’t going that great between me and Mr. Wilson when I got this damn cold. I doubt he wants to see my face again.”

“I am sure Wilson will be happy to see you back. You’ve been working there for most of your life.”

“I’m not so sure about that, Amos. Things were fine until all these young fellas started coming back after the war.” Craig’s voice cracked as the wheezing started coming back. “I spent over half my life below ground in old number two. Half my life’s been spent sweating and slaving. I’d been asking Wilson for years to bring me back above ground and finally he gave me a job in the cashier’s office. Last spring one of them fly boys gets out of the Air corps and comes by looking for a job. And what does Mr. Wilson do? I’ll tell you what he did; he gave that son of a bitch my job in the cashier’s office!”

Craig leaned forward and started coughing even harder than before. His eyes bulged with each forceful spasm like they were about to pop out of his head. Amos grabbed the coffee mug and ran back to the sink to refill it. He returned and held it out once again for Craig to drink.

“Thank you.” Craig’s voice was almost inaudible as he mumbled. “Over half my life in those mines and after I finally get out he sends me right back.” He turned to face Amos and grabbed him hard by the hand. “You take them while I regain my strength. Once I feel better I’ll go talk with Mr. Wilson and get back to work. I’m going to come by your house every weekend
to check on them.” Amos nodded in agreement and stood up with Craig still tightly holding his hand.

“We’ll be waiting for you, Craig.” Amos called for Jimmy and the three children came running around the corner into the front room. “James, help Beeman and Beth grab some clothes. They are going to spend the night at our house.” The kids ran back down the hall with all the excitement of being invited to a sleepover. Amos walked back over to the couch and pulled the stack of blankets over to cover Craig’s feet.

“Dad I still can’t find my shoes!” Beth shouted as the kids returned with a few small bags of clothing.

“That’s OK.” Amos assured her and picked her up to carry her to the car. In all the excitement Beth and Beeman forgot to say good bye to their dad as they walked out of the front door. Beeman climbed into the backseat with Jimmy following right behind. Amos softly sat Beth down on the front seat and shut the door. He walked around the car, in front of the headlights, and entered on the driver’s side.

The car’s transmission made a loud grinding noise when Amos put it in reverse. They started moving slowly backward down the driveway and soon were on Route 30 heading toward the bridge. They made their way back into town and the snow seemed to be ending as Amos pulled back onto Washington Street.

The back door of the house burst open and Jimmy ran in laughing followed by Beeman, wildly swinging his bag of clothes. Theresa had been waiting at the kitchen table and rose to meet Amos at the doorway. He walked in holding a sleeping Beth in one arm and her bag in the other. He handed Beth over to her and asked if she could run a bath for the kids. He sat quietly into the chair by the dinner table still wearing his coat.

When Theresa returned to the kitchen he sat motionless in the chair with his head held down, eyes fixed on the table. “In the morning call Pastor Phillips and let him know I said to go visit Craig.” He stood up and walked over to the oven and removed his dinner. Grabbing a second plate from the rack by the sink he divided the food into two small portions. “When they get out of the bath tell them that there is some food for them in the kitchen.”
This journal contains the winning student submissions in the 2013 Sherwood Forest Art & Literary Review contest. This annual competition is sponsored by the Office of Student Activities at John Tyler Community College. For additional information, contact Helen McKann at 804-594-1523 or hmckann@jtcc.edu.

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