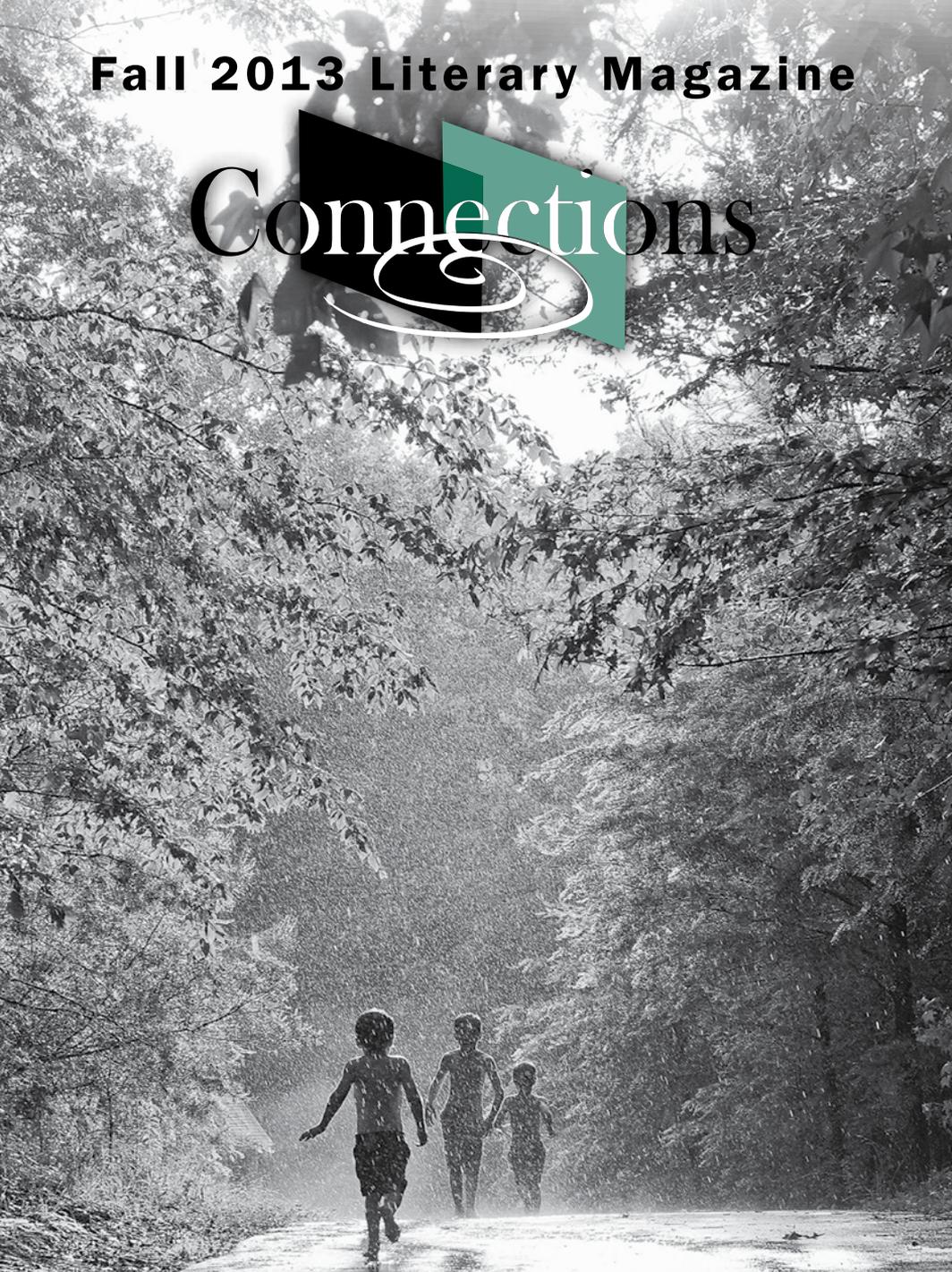


Fall 2013 Literary Magazine

Connections



COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND

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# Connections

COLLEGE *of* SOUTHERN MARYLAND  
**Spring 2013 Literary Magazine**

**volume 21      number 1**



**God Is in the Rain** *by Allison Burnett*

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The College of Southern Maryland,  
a designated Commemorative Partner of the  
United States of America  
Vietnam War  
50th Anniversary Commemoration,  
held a number of events centering on the Vietnam War,  
including speakers, panel discussions, seminars,  
films, and readings.  
The following Connections guest authors recently read  
from their works as part of this program.

DANA SACHS  
*If You Lived Here*  
October 11, 2013

ANDREW LAM  
*Birds of Paradise Lost and Perfume Dreams*  
November 15, 2013

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# Digging

*Dee Sydnor*

His boots solidly grip the ground as the spade jabs the soil like a knife, making the first cut. Russ scoops the clod with the end of the shovel and slings it to the side. The sun glints against the metal and strains his eyes. Dirt sprays over the ivy and brush, crumbs sticking to a tree's bark. It's about dinnertime, and the sun is just thinking about setting, getting lower in the sky, peeking its saffron farewells through the tree branches. Halloween was a few days ago, and yesterday, Lyndon Johnson won the election, but the firehouse is quiet tonight. There've been no calls, and Russ is doing an all-nighter. Two of the men have to be at the firehouse around the clock, and he's keeping his scheduled shift since Charlotte's still in the hospital. Charlie's watching the station, and he said he'd holler if he needed anything. The siren will call if there's a fire.

His boots reestablish the ground beneath them, and he prods the ground again with his shovel, his hand stinging from the grip he's got on the wooden handle. The steel hits the earth, and it sounds like a bat hitting a ball in a baseball game. Homerun. He slings the dirt again, tries to get a motion going. Dig, sling, dig, sling; never get this damned hole dug. The air's getting cooler as the sun goes down, and the breeze smells of autumn, dried leaves, and decay.

Behind him, a couple of yardsticks away, waits the box, the one they gave him at the hospital. Could have been a fruit crate, really. Oranges or apples, about that size. Do they keep a stack of crates there just for this kind of thing? Maybe there's a storage room full of these boxes, or had they found one just for him? Is this something other people do? No need to open it, his goodbyes have been said already.

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He's dug plenty of holes in his life. Put in fence posts, felt the hardness of the clay when the post-hole digger hit it, and felt the ground give like a woman as she's just giving in to a man. It kind of opens up, accepts the intrusion and softens, allows the invader to enter again and again. Deeper and deeper, forming a cavern that's ready to accept what it's made for. A planting. A seed. A post. A wooden box. A child that he loves already. A child that he never got to know.

Sweat and tears are wiped from his chin. That gets slung, too. Firmly, he grips the handle again and stabs at the ground with the point of the spade. Dig, sling, feels like a hundred times over. Finally, it looks like it might be deep enough. He looks over at the box, steps over toward it. After laying down the shovel, he picks up the little coffin, hands on each end. No heavier than a sack of flour. He sets the box in the cavity, but it's not deep enough yet, doesn't even cover half the side of the box. He clicks his tongue against his teeth, shakes his head. Sweat drips in his eyes, and he takes the back of his hand and wipes his forehead, puts his hands on the sides of the box again, picks it up, and sets it back behind him.

He gets into a motion then, with a fury that he's not had yet. He digs and slings, digs and slings until he's sure that hole is deep enough. He feels the soil under the shovel give way, little by little, as the cavity grows deeper and wider. He thinks about needing it to be deeper, only deeper. Don't cut more into the sides.

In the hospital, they'd told him they could take care of the body. They'd bury it in someone else's grave. He couldn't imagine laying his baby to rest with a stranger. Charlotte hadn't cared what they did. She'd said it wasn't a baby anymore. But he'd seen it. He'd seen his baby. Jacob was perfect. Ten fingers and toes. Small, like a baby monkey, almost. But, dead. Stillborn. A man shouldn't have to do this, shouldn't have to bury his son.

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“Damn her,” he says to the dirt as he throws it. She was just being stubborn, standing on that chair. She was punishing him for being gone late, taking chances. He was out later than he should’ve been. He’d done things a man should only do with his wife. This was God’s punishment on him. Punishment from that night when Charlotte fell, his form still damp from another woman’s body.

“Oh, Lord, have pity on me, a sinner,” he says, just a whisper, little more than a breath on the wind, but he knows his words are heard, can see them getting carried away to the Lord. He finishes the digging, sets the box gently inside, centered to the pit, and begins filling in the areas around the box with the loam that’s to the sides. He scoops the softened clods of soil with the end of the spade, slides them into the gaps. Fills, tamps, until the sides are surrounded, packed. Planted, the box looks like an uncovered treasure chest instead of one he’s burying.

“Good-bye Jacob Allen. I will see you again, someday in the sky, and I aim to be there.” He scoops the soil over the box. Easier now, more like garden loam. He piles the earth on top of the box until the concave is flattened, until there’s almost no evidence of what he’s done. The soil’s softened where he’s dug. Maybe he should plant a rosebush on top. He shakes his head then, thinking about the roots, how they’d work their way right through the box, the way secrets and sins work their way through a heart. He pats it down some more with the back of the shovel and adds some fresh dirt on top. He’ll need to mark it somehow. A few days of leaves falling, and no one would know this is here. He picks up a few pinecones that he sees lying about on the ground, uses them to border the gravesite. He walks back deeper into the woods, worrying because the sun is setting deeper now. Before long, there won’t be any light left here. He finds the little creek bed that runs back there, leaves and pinecones crunching under his boots as he walks, trickling

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toward Breton Bay, probably. These smooth rocks mark what was probably a wetter creek bed at one time. Which one would be best?

He picks up one of the rocks, looks like a piece of slate. It's about the size of the box, come to think of it. But more like the weight of a box of nails. Heavy. He looks at the sides, looks at the top. Runs his hand over the top, feeling the natural indentations of the stone. He feels the smoothness of the top, where the water once ran over, made it level. He carries it then, and sets it at the bottom of the area he's marked with the pinecones. He wonders if this is the foot. He didn't think to check direction.

Back at the creekbed, he finds another rock. This one is taller, the height of the box. A bit narrower than the other one, but wide enough. He runs his hand on the front, turns it. It has a rounded top when he holds it that way, and he thinks it will do just fine. He brushes it off, holds it in his arms, and turns towards the light on the front of the firehouse. Not that far out of the woods, really, but far enough. He grabs the handle of the shovel that he'd leaned against a tree. Cradling the rock like an infant, he carries it down to his car, a '59 Ford Falcon, and sets it and the shovel on the ground behind the trunk. Fishing for the keys in the pocket of his dirty coveralls, he opens the trunk and places the items inside. He walks inside the firehouse then. Charlie doesn't ask what he's done or where he's been. He just says there's some chili on the stove.

Charlotte's spending the last night at the hospital. They wanted to keep an eye on her. He shuts his eyes for a little while that evening after he's showered. He'll have to go get Charlotte in the morning and pick up Katie at his in-laws'. Then they'll have to go home and pretend like everything is back to normal.

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After they're home and settled, and Charlotte seems to have more energy than she knows what to do with, things do feel almost normal. Katie sits on the floor, playing with her dolls, and Charlotte starts peeling potatoes in the kitchen for potato soup. She's put a ham bone from the freezer in the pot and covered it with water, salt, and pepper. She stands at the sink, a potato in her left hand, the knife in her right brazing the edge of the potato, just removing the skin. She turns the potato as she works, peeling away the outside. Working the hand with the potato, pushing it into the knife, letting the knife do the work. Russ comes up behind Charlotte, puts his arms around hers, kisses her neck tenderly.

"I love you, honey," he says.

"I love you too, Russ. It's just... just one of those things. We'll be all right."

"Yeah. I think I'll go work in the shed a little bit. Keep my hands busy, okay?"

"Sure, honey. I'll call you when supper is ready."

Squeezing her arms a little then, he turns to go out the back door. He passes by their kitchen table, the four chairs set around the little round surface. Not enough room for four plates. "The Lord's Supper" is the picture by their table; it catches his eye. It had been his mother's. She'd cross-stitched it, and she gave it to them for their home. He sees Jesus there with his apostles. Judas, the betrayer, is at the table looking just like the others, as though he's done nothing wrong. Russ opens the back door and walks out to his car, removing the stone and the shovel from the trunk. He carries them with him into the shed, and sets the stone on his workbench.

In his toolbox, he digs for a chisel and wonders if it will do. He has a red pencil stub on the workbench, shaped triangularly for marking the wood and whittling the point with a knife. He writes on the face of the stone the words, Jacob Allen Knight,

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trying to space the letters apart enough that he can carve them. Underneath he just writes the date 11-2-64. This isn't something he's ever done before, carving stone. It's the least he can do. This will help keep his hands busy. He sets the point of the chisel on the top of the letter "J." He holds his hand around it, the sting in his palm from the shovel reminding him, and picks up the hammer with his right hand. He hits the head of the chisel with the hammer, metal against rock, and sees bits of the slate separate from it. He pulls the chisel back, looks, and can see how the letters will form. He works his way down the pencil line, chiseling out a "J," and finds that this is helping, this carving. He almost feels a peace rising over him.

He stands there a while, has started on the "A" when he hears Charlotte call out the back door that supper is ready. He wipes his hand on a rag, lays the rag over the stone to cover his work, and closes the door to the shed, shoving the inverted U of the Master lock into the cylinder.



*Orchid by Kelsi Eiane*

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# The Great American Novel

*Sherbrooke Lea Carson*

Twenty years ago you told me that I would write  
“the Great American Novel” some day.

I did.

I wrote it in the smiles I’ve left on the faces of strangers.

I wrote it in the scars I carry on my arms.

I wrote it in fingerprints left on an NICU incubator.

I wrote it in tears that fell to meet an ocean of salt water.

I wrote it with my knees and forehead buried in the sand.

I wrote it in the soil of every garden I have planted.

I wrote it in the side-line hug offered on strike three.

I wrote it in dinner pots that burned as we danced in the  
kitchen.

I wrote it in finger-painted pictures proudly displayed on my  
refrigerator.

I wrote it in doggie kisses when I’ve been away too long.

I wrote it on the bridges I’ve burned and built along the way.

---

I wrote it in the capture-and-release of dreams and fireflies.

I wrote it in my heart that now travels the world in three  
smaller bodies.

I wrote it in the eyes of the one that I call Home.

This is the first opportunity I've had to reflect with pen in hand.

And yet, the language that you gifted us, has found me  
desperately wanting

For a vocabulary far greater than mine.

And so, I will collect my memories that never made it to a  
camera

Along with the untamed words that were never sheltered by  
leather binding

With blank paper and pen in hand—I carry the Great  
American Novel

inside of me.

And I will continue writing it

Because you told me that I could.

---

# Angels

*Rachel Heinhorst*

~for Michael Glaser~

He says he talks to angels,  
says they are here, all the time,  
all around him. I sit across from him  
at a small café table.

We've met for poetry and friendship,  
and today he says he can see in me  
that I need them both.

He says not to be afraid, to ask for what I want,  
that if I don't, no one will hear me, and I think of  
the people coming in and out of this place,  
the people in this place, with laptops open, newspapers open,  
and I think that maybe I am to look closer at these people,  
to think that they too must need angels sometimes,  
that because like me, they are human, and things happen that hurt,  
that make them feel stillness, a staleness, like nighttime  
in a scared child's bedroom, their peeking out from the covers  
into what seems like a forever darkness.

Every human being loves something deeply.

I love my daughter's face. She loves  
her best blanket dryer warmed, thrown over her  
like a parachute before I kiss her goodnight.  
My father loved the way his left bicep pronounced  
his *Jimmy* tattoo.

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It is being alive,

and here, these people around me are no different.  
Perhaps we are all angels.  
We feel, we cry, we search  
for answers, come to help a friend,

and maybe I've been someone at a distance,  
someone who gave a smile, held open a door,  
gave small talk about sun  
or rain on a day it was needed.

I needed this day with a friend,  
needed to know I was being thought of, cared about.

My daughter will feel a warm blanket tonight,  
and the next time I see my father,  
I'll ask him for the story of his tattoo.



*Beauty Within* by Joseph Poulin

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# Becoming an Adult at 40

*Michelle Brosco Christian*

I became an adult at age 40. Yes, I know, nearly all the rights and responsibilities of adulthood are granted by law at age 18, but I carried on for years without fully embracing my grown-up status. Perhaps I didn't want to admit to growing up. Perhaps I was afraid of losing my youthful ways and having to take on boring or frightful adult responsibilities.

However, I can clearly place the exact moment when I accepted my adulthood and my mortality and I was 40 years and 8 months old. What made me finally succumb to life's realities? It was a split-second action that seems innocuous enough, but that held the power to knock down 40-plus years of denial that I was growing older and that I was, in fact, a responsible adult who would one day die.

That moment was in the early morning of April 25 when I threw my older brother's toothbrush in the trash can—quickly, as to not be seen or found out. The simple action, so quick, but so powerful, nearly brought me to my knees in real physical pain.

Of course, this moment with the toothbrush had been building for the previous four months as my brother quickly, yet in slow motion, got weaker and weaker from lung cancer. We found out roughly one week before Christmas that he had this difficult-to-treat disease, with survival statistics so dismal I immediately felt the beginning of adulthood rattling the bars around my brain.

My relationship with my brother had always been a difficult one. I adored him (and often hated him), but he didn't know how to return or deal with those, or many other, emotions. He was a man's man and he rarely let his guard down—even on his

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death bed. I had the romantic image that he would “suddenly see the light” and would make amends with his family—pouring out his inner thoughts and emotions like a dam breaking. It never happened.

And still, there were moments during that difficult four months that I saw a softer, more vulnerable side of my brother. At first, he seemed to deny the severity of a stage IV diagnosis and he flip-flopped between that and anger, often lashing out at my parents, who were there caring for him every moment of his illness. Toward the end, all one could really do is sit quietly and be with him. There was no reading or watching television while there—I was mesmerized by this grown man, once so strong and brave, growing thinner and thinner by the day.

The moments of a terminal cancer patient and his or her family’s life tick by slowly and yet quicker than the speed of light. It’s an odd phenomenon you have to live through to understand. You want more time, and yet, you pray for a quick and painless passing. You don’t know what to say, even to a brother. How do you ask one, “How does it feel to know your body will slowly deteriorate and you will then die at age 43?” How does one live even four months with that knowledge?

A terminal cancer patient’s family is in constant pain too—but without the comfort of morphine. In our case, we whispered upstairs about our loved one’s growing weakness, his labored breathing, but down stairs we chatted about what we were doing that day, about anything other than that damn disease. On our own, and often together, we had “crying fests” as I came to jokingly refer to them—the joke was the only way to cope with the reality of the sadness and helplessness we all felt.

Tossing the toothbrush was the final, crystal-clear moment I realized my adulthood was upon me. It happened on the day my brother died. He had been living in my parent’s lower level for those four months and on the early morning when he finally

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let go and the undertakers took his body away, I went to his downstairs bathroom, looked in the mirror at my tear-worn face and then noticed his toothbrush on the sink. Like lightening, my mind told me, “Get rid of that; don’t let Mom have to do it.”

How simple an item is a toothbrush? A piece of molded plastic with nylon bristles. Yet in that moment, it was the most powerful object on Earth. It symbolized mortality—mine and my brother’s. A toothbrush is so personal, so completely a part of one’s everyday life. And in that moment of stress I saw it as not only my brother’s final breath but as the beginning of my own struggle.

It’s a struggle some people face at very young ages. Perhaps someone’s parent dies as they are barely exiting elementary school, or maybe someone’s sibling dies in a car crash while still in high school. Whatever the tragedy, it is often the moment that adulthood is placed upon us, when we realize we may play at being a child, but we now know the ultimate truth. Perhaps I was lucky to make it to 40 before my tragedy struck. Or, maybe those who face tragedy early in life and grow up quickly are the blessed ones.

I was always amazed by people who survived tragedy and came out of it still able to smile, to laugh and to do the things I often thought were reserved only for children. I read survivor stories voraciously, secretly knowing my own ball was about to drop but not knowing when or how on earth I’d ever deal with it. But after facing my first real, intimate tragedy at age 40, I felt initiated into that long-elusive club of survivors, and a huge weight seemed to lift from my life.

From that moment on, I knowingly and openly accepted my adult responsibilities. Even after 20-plus years in my profession and after giving birth to two children, I had never really felt like an adult. “How can they trust me with these responsibilities?” I’d often wonder about my employers. “Can’t they see I’m still just a kid?” I’d think.

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Now I can answer my own, long-standing question, “How do people survive those kinds of things?” You simply have to, and so you do. You keep the image of the toothbrush in your head forever, the memory of it all emerging into consciousness on a daily basis, but you realize you will, eventually, continue to smile and giggle at silly little things. You will, eventually, still revel in the beauty of the sun setting on a lake, or the smell of the dirt after a hard rain. And, you learn you will survive.



**The Keys to Unlocking Knowledge** *by Anna Readen*



**Untitled** by *Annabel Lee Russell*

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# underneath

*Joanne Van Wie*

The grass was a soft green expanse  
when I started this                    poem  
and I smiled into it with all six years of my life.  
Translucent and weightless    I began intermingling  
shyly with the open                    fields.  
Every year I added new            words into me  
like pallid and empty and            why.  
And I kept reading the lines over  
and over                                  without crying.  
But when I touched twelve  
I turned pages which                    understood.

Like an oracle I continued the poem of my life  
sowing without punctuation or spaces  
and I began to cut through the neighbor's field    diagonally  
without stopping to repeat the words.  
There seemed to be so little to            say  
that I decided to                    breath more slowly and exhale myself.  
With dull, fumbling hands I worked—  
collecting geometric memories  
into a graceful epitaph—            waiting  
and wanting                            my insides began now to look  
a lot like a cornfield    well-aligned and well-fed  
but there was no sky                    or horizon line.  
I was dipping just below the lower left corner dipping  
below the yellow-gold  
and drowning—                    under this blossoming poem.

---

# Lila

*Jordan Kron*

Lila always smiled when she danced, and she danced often. She danced in the kitchen while the water boiled for tea, or after a shower, naked and perfect, spinning water from her pale skin like a white rose in the morning dew. She danced at church when the spirit took her. With arms raised above her head and bent so elegantly, in front of God and congregation, she twirled about, always smiling, and they saw that it was good.

In the night Lila visited me in my dreams, a dusk-born nymph who smiled when she danced. She fluttered in a red dress that flowed with silk and brushed off her legs like feathers. A ruby-throated wonder, scarlet bird of paradise, but the boys chased her. Her rare beauty on display, to be desired, envied, remembered. A beauty that never lingered. It appeared only to evanesce and leave behind a faint shadow of memory to dance circles around me, still smiling.

She asked me, “Do you think I dance for you?”

“No,” I said, “I don’t know.” She laughed and continued her dance.

She danced in spite of me. My awestruck gaze could never stall her movements. She danced like a meteor on a fiery route, unaware of gravity’s pull. I stood by her, stiff and constant, hoping to catch glimpse of her smile or feel the pulse of her eyelashes, long and heavy, almost strong enough to carry me away on a breeze. She fanned the crowds that always found us. A mob, speaking scrutiny in one collected voice, in envy of what they could not understand.

---

My Lila. I felt she kept a secret sadness. A source of dread buried in plumage, insulated deep in the warmth of her chest but apparent to me in a subtle step or behind the gleam of her eyes. A creature from a place beyond could not live indefinitely in a world like ours. She was a hungry beast with an appetite that went unsatisfied. She danced over the crust of a withered earth, breathing life through her smile into its half-shed skin, aged like autumn leaves and marbled gray in passing time. And time took its toll on Lila.

By and by she stopped dancing. I don't know why but something left her, and something left me as well. Things lost in life cannot always be replaced. As a snuffed ember is unable to rekindle, Lila was a great flame, unsustainable, melting down the candle to be drowned in wax, leaving me to wander around, my milky eyes sunken low, searching for something else to watch, and thinking *where did all the voices go? Where the flowers, birds, and breeze?* My Lila left me, and when she stopped dancing in life, she stopped dancing in my dreams.

---

# The Good Lord Bird

*Patrick Allen*

a meditation on John Brown  
~to James McBride~

Faith can only push but so far

At some time you just have to have it

Deep in the marrow of your bones

Like John Brown knew.

*You got to walk  
That lonesome valley  
You got to walk it by yourself  
Oh nobody else  
Can walk it for you  
You got to walk it by yourself*

Moon mad fool for Justice

Beyond hope or care

Beyond anything this flesh is heir to

He carried The Word into Bloody Kansas.

---

*Them bones them bones*  
*Them dry bones*  
*Them bone them bones*  
*Them dry bones*  
*Them bones them bones*  
*Them dry bones*

As Icarus soared on the rising thermals

Possessed by timeless Ecstasy

So the leader of the Osawatomie Rifles

Rode his army of Glory toward Harper's Ferry.

---

# 1XD (1 Chicken Dinner)

*Ed Moroney*

He was just an old man. Another amongst many we all come across in our lives. They are there, we just don't see them. He was to touch my life though and his loss would become more acute as my years passed, as I was also being absorbed into that transparent aspect of our population.

There was nothing especially remarkable about him. He was of average height, slightly stooped, a fringe of white hair at the outer edges of a bald pate, and always wore the same black horn rimmed glasses ever since I knew him. He could be cantankerous and often times he was just plain grouchy. Other times he just seemed to be lost in thought. He smoked too much.

I worked for him for many years as a store clerk in his private chicken “take home” restaurant business called Mister Chicken. He was Mister Chicken. I worked for him while I was in high school and when I came home from the Marines after a tour in Vietnam. The government told him that he had to give me my old job back of a dollar and a quarter an hour. He served broasted...not fried... chicken. It was a “take home” restaurant and not a “carry out” restaurant. He often emphasized to me this distinct characteristic of his business. I didn't see any difference, but neither did I understand many such subtle distinctions while my personality was still forming.

His real name was John, but he went by Jack. Why...I have no idea. I and the other clerks just called him “Boss” and would do so all of our lives.

I do remember that chicken though. It did not taste like “fried” chicken. Fresh from the broaster it was crispy and had a golden color and it was moist to the bone. It was delicious and I would eat way too much of it over the years. He said the taste was because the chicken was cooked under pressure and not just dropped into a fryer. Oh yeah, there was a secret recipe too. All

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I knew was that I took boxes and boxes of chicken, threw some sort of special flour all over the pieces, and put everything into a manually cranked device to ensure the chicken pieces were thoroughly dusted. When people ordered a dinner, or called in a “take home” order, I would enter the order as “1XD” on the ticket, the “X” representing the chicken part of the order. That was the only shorthand we had for any item on the menu. I always thought the “X” was a reference to the poor chicken no longer being of this world.

He was often short and temperamental with customers. He did not accept complaints well. When a customer would come in and ask for all white meat or dark meat, or they did not want any wings, I would just stand back and watch occur the subtle humiliation of the customer. You see, God made chickens a certain way and each has two breasts, thighs, legs, and wings. A four piece dinner comes with a breast, thigh, leg and wing. That is the way he served his meals and he was not going to change it based upon a customer’s request. Of course we served three piece dinners too but he never explained to me how he decided what pieces went into that meal. Well, regardless, his product was just so good that he could get away with upsetting the occasional customer. In town they talked about what a contrary bastard he was but that his chicken was some kind of good. I had seen some customers depart the store muttering about how they were going to come back and burn the place down.

To me he was a contrary sonofabitch at times! He was also one of the great men I would admire in my life. I learned much from him and although it took a while I also learned he had a great sense of humor and liked to play practical jokes. I and other clerks liked to occasionally call the store, or another clerk, and when he, or the other clerk answered, “Mister Chicken!” we always asked is this “Mister Chicken?” Invariably the answer was always a subtly irritated response of “yes,” which set up the moment and we responded, “Well, this is Mrs. Chicken get

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your ass home!” and hang up. Okay, so you had to be there. We thought it was funny. Still do now that I think about it.

One time, when he had expanded his menu to include hamburgers, he liked to slip a plastic cup cover under the patty and then studiously watch you take your first bite. He loved the puzzled expression that would invariably appear on your face while questioningly looking at your hamburger. It would be many years before I could trust a cheeseburger again.

When business was slow we would talk about many things. He would sit in the back of the store, invariably smoking, while telling me about his youth. He grew up in Michigan and in his first business he owned a drive-in hamburger restaurant, which he lost to his first wife in a divorce. He never had a kind word for that woman. In my limited and developing cognition abilities I could tell he had been deeply hurt. During World War II he worked in a bomber aircraft factory. He was a critical skilled laborer and therefore was exempt from the draft. He moved to Maryland to start his chicken restaurant but mostly to escape his ex-wife. He was married again by the time he moved to Maryland but she was twenty years his junior in age, which I thought was pretty cool and gave me great hope for my old age someday. She was Italian and he said they were the best women to marry. So later I married an Italian too, but I am not so sure his advice was as insightful on that occasion.

Once when I was in the car with him when he was backing his Buick out of his driveway he stopped suddenly and said, “Look at that rock.” There was a large rock about the size of a football at the edge of the curb next to his driveway. It was multifaceted and reflected earthy pink and beige hues in the sunlight. He said it was a rock whose consistency was of quartz. He thought it was interesting, and remarked the way the sun played across the varied surfaces. I thought it was just a rock and never gave it another thought. Why would anyone take out time to look at a rock?

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Many years later I would remember such a seemingly irrelevant event in any one person's life while in Colorado exploring an old gold mining site. I found a large gray rock, about half the size of a football, and it was completely freckled with gold flecks. Gold...maybe? The one last remaining piece that some miner had overlooked? In my hands it was heavy and dense and in the sunlight it sparkled magnificently. My brother who was with me at the time was thoroughly impressed with my find. Yet, in those few seconds, my memory forced to the forefront my thoughts, so many years ago, of an old man admiring a quartz rock. In that minor and inconsequential epiphany I had become a little bit wiser as inadvertently induced by that old man from so many years ago.

He would live to the ripe old age of eighty-eight. I would go over to his house to visit him in my encroaching old age. Although I never visited him as often as I should have before he died. He always appreciated my visits and we would sit together in the living room, he invariably smoking, with an oxygen machine beside his chair to assist him in breathing as a result of a diagnosis of emphysema. I would chide him for his smoking habit and he would just laugh and ask me if I really thought stopping would make a difference in his life now. I have to confess he really did have a valid argument.

I used to take him for walks in the neighborhood. Not far for he did not have much energy. I watched him closely as he shuffled along ready for any moment in which he might stumble and fall, while wondering how much longer it would be before I needed someone to similarly watch me. It was one of those occasions when he suddenly said to me that he felt very lucky to have me for a friend. I was slightly taken aback because I had never had anyone say that to me before. I just patted him on that shoulder and said thanks. I should have told him that he was one of the great men in my life. I did not.

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He died suddenly shortly after that time. In the middle of the night he had awakened and gotten up to use the bathroom. An urge in my encroaching old age I know so very well. I assumed through a combination of old age and grogginess and the discomfort of a treacherous and likely only partially filled bladder, which would surely require a concentration and an exertion to void the small amount of pressing urine, he had lost his balance and struck his head. He survived in a coma for only two days.

I presented the eulogy the day of his funeral. He was cremated. I wrote a poem entitled "1XD" and told everyone it was written by a famous poet. Of course I was not famous, maybe not even a poet either. It was a febrile attempt at humor at the time. Nobody asked who the famous poet was. I have been to many funerals and I have heard many eulogies, as has each of us. I do not think eulogies ever do credit to a person. I do not think I did well that day in my ten or so minutes of the summation of my friend's life. I told of how cranky he could get and of the occasions when he was mad at me, because it was humorous. One should always bring a little levity to death. I also told of how he never held his anger against me or any other clerk. He was one of the hardest of working men I had ever known, a man who continued to work long days in his restaurant well into his eighties. I did not adequately convey, whether due to an inability to do so, or I just forgot, or did not see it at the time, a realization of this man's influence in my life. I am sorry.

I think of the Boss on occasions and always when there is something to do with chicken. I and fellow clerks all readily agree that we have never had chicken since that was as good as when we worked at Mister Chicken. Oddly I sometimes think of him too when I have the urge in the middle of the night. Thanks to my friend I take those few extra seconds to insure I have my balance before I confront both my treacherous bladder and my just before ripe old age...every night.



**Sunset Solomons Bridge** by *Tasnim McWilliams*

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# Unrequited Love

*William Poe*

When will you requite my love  
When I am in a pine box looking up  
When it is suitable for you to cry your tears and say  
“I, too, loved him”  
By then it will not be necessary  
For I will have moved on and will not require nor desire  
This need of love that you wish to express  
For the need will be lost and its meaning will be meaningless  
Requite my love now while my heart still beats  
And my flesh still tingles when it hears the words  
I love you

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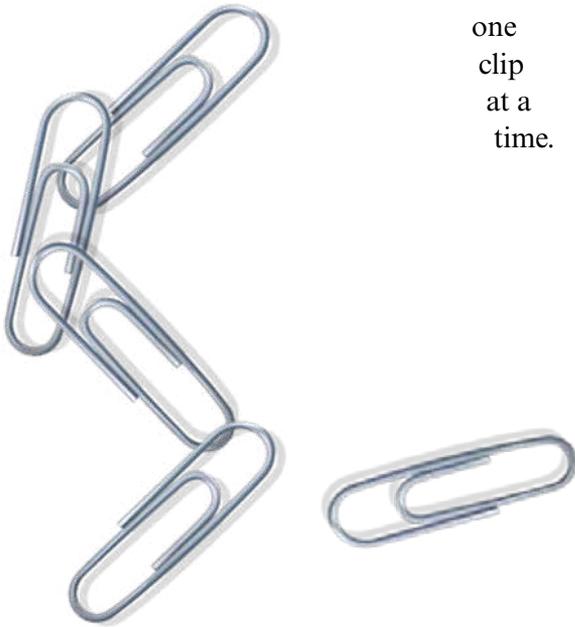
# Found Poetry

## Paper Clips

*Judith Allen-Leventhal*

Like words,  
“little audible links. . .  
chaining together  
great inaudible feelings  
and purposes,”

(Theodore Dreiser *Sister Carrie*)



one  
clip  
at a  
time.

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# Just a Coffee, Please

*Livia Miranda*

A bell tinkled when I pushed the door. The cold and furious wind continued to blow outside, so I was even more tempted to go inside. It was cozy, warm and smelled like coffee. It calmed me. I sat at the very last table and was contemplating the busy street through the window when an excited voice pulled me to reality.

“Hi!” It was the waitress. “Are you ready to order, sir?”

She was nothing more than a girl, probably in her early twenties. Her brown hair was tied in a messy bun and kept falling in her also brown and bright eyes. She smiled at me, holding a pad with her tiny hands. Her fingernails were painted with orange nail polish, showing how young she was. How innocent she was.

What was wrong with me?

“Sir, are you ready to order?” she repeated.

I looked away from her hands and focused on her face. She looked anxious, trying to get a piece of her hair out of her eyes.

A coffee was a good idea. She smelled like coffee.

“Just a coffee, please,” I said.

She wrote the order on her pad and smiled.

“Right away, sir,” she said, walking away from me.

I forced myself to not look at her. She was new there and just a girl. A girl I had just met. That was not right. Angry with myself, I looked around. That cafeteria was a nice place, always warm and full of people. It was filled with laughter and cozy smiles. It was my small piece of heaven, where I could run away from real life. That, itself, was already a very good reason for me to go there.

The coffee was taking too long.

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I looked over to the counter and saw the girl trying to operate the machine. There was coffee all over the place and she had this angry expression on her face. I heard her curse several times, but didn't move a finger to help her. I knew she just needed to press a button and could've told her that, but I was hypnotized by how her face changed from angry to frustration and then to relief when she finally found it. Nobody was paying attention to her, just me. Maybe I had another good reason to go to that cafeteria.

"Here is your coffee, sir," she said, handing me the cup. Our hands touched and we both smiled with embarrassment. "Sorry for the wait."

"It's okay. First day?" I asked.

"Is it that obvious?" she said, giving me a frustrated smile.

"No, you did good."

Relieved, she smiled an even bigger smile and thanked me.

Where I work, everybody hates their jobs and I never see a smile. And there was this girl, probably working for the first time in her life, actually enjoying what she was doing. She looked happy and gave me hope that I could still find joy in small things.

I asked for the check, but kept sitting there, watching her. The real world could wait a little longer. I still go there, every day, and ask for a coffee. That's all I need. Just a coffee and her beautiful smile.



**Capitol Reflection** by *Paul Toscano*

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# The Haunting

*Chad Collins*

Mary-Anne was seated alone at her kitchen table, her eyes swollen with a wistful veracity that she had experienced many times before. The cup of coffee had been there since seven that morning. It was now eleven. Since Chris's death, the tendency for her to be awoken before dawn was eerily maintained. He'd always wake her before leaving for work. The ill-mannered means of his ways were never acknowledged as disruptive or discourteous. Be it the mortgage, or any other piece of foolishness, Chris always figured it best to unload his litany before dawn. And now, even in his absence, something always succeeded in waking her prematurely.

As she sat at the table, her eyes drifted over towards the pantry. Even if she were hungry, there was hardly a thing in the house for her to eat. Chris had never seen the point of additional "snack food." Even if he had, the meager grocery budget that he asserted for Mary-Anne would hardly have been able to cover it. For eighteen years, he disregarded inflation, the grocery budget remaining a stagnant \$100 a week.

She began to grow sore, though, so she rose from her seat and padded dolefully to the linen-closet, where she removed a cumbersome vacuum cleaner. Like the grocery-budget, the vacuum cleaner was almost archaic, for Chris had never given her supplemental money for a new one. She troublesomely lugged it to the living room and plugged its battered cord into the socket. "Chris," she thought, "will hate coming home to a dirty house." So she vacuumed the entire first floor, ignoring the second one because Chris was invariably more lenient in allowing it to go ignored.

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Around eleven-thirty, having finished her morning chores, she thought it due time for a shower. She washed and shampooed herself with the store-brand because it was “just as good as the more expensive brands.” When she finished, she reached her hand out from the frosted-glass door and clutched her towel. She dried off in the shower; otherwise, as Chris had said, she’d soak the bath mat and pave the way for mold, or even more insidious bacterium.

It was now almost one, her free time. She could read, or perhaps even watch some television. However, she conceded to fatigue and lay down on the sofa, for what she thought was going to be a brief nap.

The sound of school children arriving home woke her. The faint glow from her cable-box read 4:15. “I’ve overslept!” she thought. It was imperative that dinner be ready by five. She hastily lifted herself from the sofa and rushed to the kitchen. Luckily, she had a pot-roast from the day before that only needed to be reheated. She flicked the burner on and gently placed the pot on it. When it was finished, she made herself a plate, careful not to spill it on the stove. Chris hated when she spilt things on the stove. After she had finished eating, she placed her dish in the sink and went about making an additional plate. Turning the oven to its warm setting, she opened it and removed a plate of spoiled dinner, depositing the fresh dish in its place. Afterwards, she washed the dishes, plaintively humming as she went about scrubbing away grime. Next to her was a pitifully neglected dishwasher, but Chris had said ad-nauseum that it was too expensive to run, so she never used it.

Like she had done in the morning, Mary-Anne rested at the kitchen table until seven-thirty. It was now bedtime. Chris had always diligently maintained a strict sleep-regimen. He had to be up for work in the morning, and the last thing he wanted was for Mary-Anne to be awake disturbing his sleep, so he always

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ensured that she retired to bed at the same time as him. As she brushed her hair in the mirror, she recalled her vivacious youth. She had such pretty hair then, but now, it was wilted and dry. It was these moments in the day that she looked forward to; the times when—even if just for an instant—she could nostalgically remember her youth. It was the one thing—the only thing—that Chris couldn't take away from her.

She tucked her pallid frame under the comforter as slivers of moonlight rested gracefully upon her blanket. It was heart-rending to see, really, because—although she'd never realize it—just as Chris had haunted her in life, for the few years that she had left on earth, he would continue to haunt her in death.



**Cotton Field** by *Kelsi Eiane*

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## The Tools

*Michele Kraft*

Mr. Bear,  
some call him Jim,  
doesn't change clothes  
before embarking on manual labor,  
the gritty, smart work  
of making.  
Bear doesn't think in terms  
of ruined plumage.  
Caught up in the doing,  
never sees the most important tool  
for the task:  
his dear, wiry self.



**Vacant** by *Paul Toscano*

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# Little Willie

*Mikaela Pollard*

The hot Louisiana sun bears down on me, and as hard as I try to focus on working, I feel like just giving up. But God knows I ain't gonna do that. If my aunt so much as sees me stop for second, she's sure to whip me good. More than likely she'll just yell at me. Lord, sometimes I swear that woman was a slave. Well, her momma and daddy were. They had lots of children, including my aunt. Her name is Lila, and she's actually my great-aunt. I call her Aint. She was the oldest of thirteen children. She raised all of them after her momma died, and she raised my momma too. Raising all those children must have really worn her, because she sure don't seem to take a liking to me. I try to picture my aunt in her younger years, happy, smiling. But every time my mind just switches back to how she is now: old and mean. Sometimes I wonder if she was old and mean all her life. Then I tell myself no, she couldn't have. She was once a child like me, who laughed and cried, and skinned her knees. Only difference between her and me is that she had to become a woman much faster. My aunt always told me she never wanted to go to school. She wanted to work. Well, I see what work has done for my aunt. Sometimes I wonder if she's proud of the farm she and Uncle Geese work together. If she's proud, she don't show it. She just keeps working. Lots of kids at my school work in the cotton fields and pick pecans to help their families. Sometimes I go with them, but I know I don't have to. My aunt and uncle own 90 acres of land. I don't know how much 90 acres is, but when I sit on the back porch and look at our land, I know 90 acres must go on forever. We always have plenty of food, and in the summertime, we eat the best fruits and vegetables. The summer days usually just stretch on and on, unless one of my cousins, Bobby Lee or Jean Alice, comes to

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visit me. They're actually my double second cousins, but don't ask me what that means. When they come, my work gets done a lot quicker, and it's a lot more fun. For some reason, my aunt likes Bobby Lee and Jean Alice a lot more than she does me. Especially Bay. But that's okay, because Bobby Lee and I can always find something fun to do around the farm. Sometimes when we're out to feed the cows, he'll say something funny and I'll just crack up laughing. One time last summer we were out to feed the chickens, and Bobby told me a joke. I laughed so hard I almost stepped in chicken mess. When the weather is nice during the summer, Bobby and I, and sometimes Bert, like to go fishing at the bayou. But now, neither Bobby nor Jean Alice is here to keep me company. I'm just here by myself. All of it isn't so bad. Sometimes when I'm through with all my work, I like to read. Sometimes I look up at the sky, and wonder what God is doing up there in Heaven. I wonder why He left me here with an aunt who doesn't love me. If she loves me, she has a strange way of showing it. She feeds me, and makes sure I have clothes to wear, and that I go to school. But she has never been kind to me. She would just as soon whip me than hug me and tell me she loves me. I guess she just ain't the loving type. I don't hate her. I love her like a mother. My own mother made me stay with her. I think about my mother every day, especially when my aunt is mean to me. Sometimes, I think she gave me away because she didn't love me. When I have better sense, I will know it was because she was trying to take care of my two sisters and my brother. Sometimes, I cry myself to sleep, thinking how much I want to be home with my momma. One day I know I will be. Late at night, when everybody is in bed fast asleep, I can hear the trains in the distance. I wonder who is in those trains, and where they're going. I wonder what their stories are. I imagine being on one of those trains, traveling off far away to places I've never seen before. I dream about being a singer, or maybe a

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dancer, sometime long from now. Now I'm just plain old Willie Lee. I ain't nobody special. But that will all change. You'll see. I wipe a bead of sweat off my forehead, and steal a glance at my aunt, who is working in the fields, far off in the distance. She is so far away, I can only see her back, bent over in the sun. I imagine her taking her breaths, slow and easy in this heat. I take a breath myself and get back to work. I don't want her to see me looking at her, or she'll find more work for me to do. My stomach growls, hungry for food, but dinner is a long way away. I know full well that that many hours will pass before I eat, and I'll just have to make do. I pick up my hoe and keep working. A whole list of chores awaits me, and the day has barely begun.

The first day of school, and I'm not even dressed. My aunt woke me up before the sun to do work, and I knew better than to argue with her. In her mind, work comes before school or even sleep. A thousand protests scream in my mind, but I am wise in keeping my mouth shut. I'm barely up five minutes before I meet Aint's sharp displeasure. "Lil' Gal," she scolds. "You best hurry and milk them cows. Walkin' like you got molasses in your legs." So what do I do? I hurry and milk the cows. Bessie is first, and she puts up a fuss. She grunts and kicks her legs, like I ain't done this a million times before. So I talk to her, like she understands. "Look Bessie," I say. "School starts in two hours and I got a whole lot more to do. So you just sit still and cooperate, okay?" Maybe it is my tone of voice, maybe it is my words, but Bessie cooperates. She sits still, and lets me put the pail underneath her utter. I squeeze, and watch as the foamy white liquid falls into the bucket. Fifteen minutes later, the bucket is halfway full, and I move on to May, our other cow. May is a few years older than Bessie, and has big brown spots all over her back. Thankfully, she is much easier to work with.

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I finish in five minutes, and move on to my next chores. I sweep the back porch, and feed the chickens and pigs. I step into the darkness, the sun barely peeking in the sky. I wonder if God is even up. Fighting sleep, I trudge along to the chickens. As soon as they see me, they start squawking. I feed them some corn from the burlap sack around my shoulder. The pigs are next, and the adult pigs fight the baby pigs for food, and make a lot of noise. By the time I get back to the house, the sun is just starting to come up. I know I will have to hurry and get dressed, because the school bus is coming in an hour. I boil some hot water, and sit in the tub, in the back of the kitchen. When, I'm done, I pour the water on the back porch. I put on the clothes I ironed last night, sitting on my dresser. Uncle Geese got me new clothes for the school year and new shoes. I stand in front of the mirror in my room, in my nice white sweater, and black skirt, and shiny Oxford shoes, imagining all the compliments I will get. As I look at my own reflection, I realize, there is one more thing I need to do. I need to braid my hair. My aunt used to always braid my hair until about a year ago. I guess she thinks I'm old enough to do it myself, and besides, I'm not a little girl anymore. I'm nine years old. I'm going to be in the fourth grade, and I'm so excited. My teacher this year will be Ms. Nelson. Last year I had Mrs. Patterson, and she was mean. She'll whip you if you drop a pencil. She had her favorites, though. I part my hair, and put it in French braids. I make sure I have all the books I need. I have my folders, notebook, pencil, and paper. My aunt left me some food in a paper bag last night, and told me to get it in the morning. I already know what is inside. Two biscuits, a piece of chicken, and a slice of sweet potato pie she made on Sunday. I can't wait until lunch so I can eat it. As I head out the door, I wonder what the school year will be like, and all the things, I will learn. It takes me about fifteen minutes to reach the bottom of Rock Hill. Rock Hill is where we live. At the end of

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Rock Hill is the highway. Addie Mae, who lives at the bottom of Rock Hill, soon greets me. Addie Mae is as country as they come. Once, my aunt invited her to come along with us to one of her friend's house. They served fish, and Addie Mae all but ate the entire plate. We all sat and watched in amazement, and when the last fish was up, Addie Mae didn't hold back. "Here go the last go round," she said, and dug right in. My aunt was clearly embarrassed. "I ain't never going to invite that girl again." Of course, I never told her that. Addie must have seen me a mile away, because she runs right up to me. "How ya doin, Willie?" I barely have a chance to answer before she yammers off. Her daddy got a new job. Her daddy got a new car. Her momma bought her new shoes. Did I know who my teacher was? She talks so fast and so much I barely get a word in edgewise. By the time the bus came, she is boasting about the Platters record she got over the summer. I just nod my head and say good for her. Mr. T-man is our bus driver. He and his wife, Ms. Ella are our neighbors. Ms. Ella is nice, but she has a very blunt way of talking. She will say anything and not apologize. She watches me when Aint is not around. If it weren't enough to just have Aint, Ms. Ella would tell her everything she saw me do, so it is best not to misbehave when she is around. Mr. T-Man tips his hat to me as I get on the bus. I like Mr. T-Man. He always tells funny stories. One time he told a story about the fly that ate the cat. I sit in my seat at the front of the bus. I like sitting up front so I can get up first. Plus all the troublemaking kids are in the back. They throw paper out the windows and make a lot of noise. I sit back in my seat and go to sleep.

I strain in my seat, trying to listen to Ms. Nelson, but Leroy keeps tapping me on my shoulder. I ignore him knowing what he wants. He won't let up. "Willie," he whispers, "You got some

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candy? I know you got some candy.” This boy is always asking me for candy. All last year he asked me for the peppermint candy and candy bars I bought at lunchtime. It got so bad, I had to hide the candy from him. Now, here he is bothering me on the first day of school. Well, I’m not giving in to him. “Ask your momma for candy. I don’t got any.” Of course I’m lying. I just bought a whole bunch of peppermint candy at lunchtime. Leroy knows I’m lying. “You a liar,” he says. Ms. Nelson looks right at us. “Ms. Hampton, do I need to whip you, or are you going to pay attention?” Why is she getting on me? I give Leroy a dirty look. “Class, we are going on a field trip to Baton Rouge.” I instantly perk up. Baton Rouge! I’ve heard a lot about Baton Rouge, but the most exciting thing is the fair. Ms. Nelson continues. “Children, make sure you ask you parents for money. Baton Rouge is a long way, and there is a lot to do.” My heart sinks. I know Aint would never give me money for the field trip. She barely gives me money to eat lunch at school. If I want to eat at school, I normally have to spend all day picking cotton or pecans. Asking Aint to give me money is like asking the sun not to shine. I head out to recess disheartened. My friend Eloise and my cousin Jean Alice walk up beside me. I can tell from their expressions that they are excited about the field trip. “I can’t wait.” Eloise says. “It might be even more fun than Honolulu.” Jean Alice gives her a look. “Girl you know you ain’t been to no Honolulu.” Eloise’s face grows red. “I have too been to Honolulu!” I decide to be the peace maker before an argument starts. Bert will just call it like it is, and Eloise will cry at the drop of a hat. One time last year we stole her paper as a joke. She knew it was us by the smiles on our faces, a dead-giveaway. If that girl cried over paper, I know she will cry over this. We all know Eloise has never been to Honolulu. She just likes to pretend she has because her daddy always talks about it. Her daddy was in the war “Ya’ll stop,” I say. I’m still thinking about

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how I won't be able to go. Jean Alice tells me how she is going to ask her momma and daddy for money. Jean Alice's momma and my momma are cousins. I just nod to let her know I'm listening. The whole time I'm thinking about Aint and how she will respond to the field trip. I have to come up with a plan.

Recess is over, and we are all back at our desks. Ms. Nelson is having us read books from the school library. When it's Jean Alice's turn I think, Oh Lord. Jean Alice is always goofing off. She reads about a puppy that didn't have food. "I am hungry," Bert reads. "I want to eat. Oh howl, oh howl," singing the last part. The classroom erupts in laughter. Ms. Nelson is not impressed. "Jean Alice Talbert," she says, "you pick up that book and show me where the puppy says, 'I am hungry, I want to eat. Oh how oh how.'" Lord, does she whip her good! My mind is temporarily off Aint. The rest of the day goes by smoothly. We read, and work on multiplication. Later, on the ride home, Jean Alice talks to me about Ms. Nelson. "Willie, you know Ms. Nelson ain't right. That dog did say oh how oh how." I just smile and shake my head. Better her than me. Getting whipped by Aint is enough. Thinking of Aint reminds me of the field trip. I almost dread going home to face her, knowing she isn't going to give me any money. Then I have a brilliant idea. I couldn't persuade my aunt to let me go to Baton Rouge, but my teacher could. And since Aint couldn't read or write, she wouldn't be able to tell that such a note had actually been written by me. I tear out a piece of paper from my notebook, explaining to Aint that I was Willie's teacher and that she needed to go on the field trip to Baton Rouge or she would fail. I am certain my plan would work, even though I feel a little guilty. How many trips to Baton Rouge would there be? As I walk up the dirt road my house, I see Ms. Ella out on her porch, with

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a tub full of green beans at her feet, and an apron on. When she sees, me she waved, and I wave back. “Willie Lee, you ain’t messing with them boys are you?” I wonder why she would ask such a question, but then, she was Ms. Ella. The only boys I knew were the boys at school, and I didn’t like any of them. “No ma’am,” I answer. She nods, my answer having met her approval. “You stay out of trouble now.” She looks over at our house as if to imply that if I were to get in any trouble, it would be well informed. I walk on passed the front gate through the yard, knowing that Uncle Geese and Aint weren’t home, and what my chores were. I start in the kitchen cleaning the dishes, then did my outdoor chores, feeding the cows and chickens, and cutting the stove wood. All the while, I rehearse what I would say to my aunt and uncle. My aunt would be home first, and I would show her the note my “teacher” had written. She would see how important the field trip was since I got a note from a teacher, and would give me money for it. I could almost taste the corn dogs and cotton candy, and feel the thrill of the Ferris wheel.

My plan didn’t exactly work the way I wanted to. My aunt took one look at the note and shook her head. “Don’t no teacher write like that.” I shouldn’t have underestimated her. My aunt cant read, but she certainly isn’t dumb. All my hopes of eating cotton candy and riding Ferris wheels fade away. I will be the only student in the whole school to stay back, while everyone else has fun. I probably will have to clean chalkboards, or wash dishes in the cafeteria. I know I can’t argue with my aunt. Whatever she says is the law. I’m afraid if I do talk back to her I’ll get struck by lightning; I don’t know which would be scarier, getting whipped by Aint, or getting struck by lightning. In my mind, they’re about equal. Aint is almost like God, only I can see her every day.

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Uncle Geese finally comes in around 6 o'clock. He works in Alexandria, building houses. When he comes home, he and I like to watch the Grand Ole Opry, but Aint doesn't approve. She thinks it's heathen. We like to listen to the radio, also. Today when he comes in, he's all sweaty, and tells Aint he's ready for a good meal. "Lil Gal say she need money for Baton Rouge," Aint says. Uncle Geese looks at me. Uncle Geese is a little over six feet with reddish skin and graying hair. "Frog, when you goin to Baton Rouge?" Uncle Geese calls me Frog even though I hate them. One summer, a frog jumped on me and I just about died. I tell them I need money for a field trip our class is taking in October, a month away. Uncle Geese frowns. "Spose I got some money." He reaches into his pocket and gets out his brown wallet, handing me three dollars. I can barely contain my excitement, thanking him. "Ya'll better get your grub if you want it, 'fore it get cold," Aint says. We have ham, cornbread, greens, and sweet potatoes for dinner. Later, Uncle Geese and I listen to the radio.

Tonight, I say my prayers, thanking God for all His blessings. I lay in my bed and listen to the trains far away in the distance, and I think about the people on the trains. As I drift into sleep, I think about all I want to do in my life. Some day I'll travel the world, singing on stages in front of millions of people. Or maybe I'll be a dancer, wearing beautiful outfits. For now, I'm just little Willie.

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# Red Canary

*Ethan Fugate*

If only I  
Could rejoice  
With loud  
Thunderous  
Booms of  
Internal combustion  
Engines backfiring—  
The brave, the naïve,  
Still lying adjacent  
To colonnades of  
Brunette pillars  
Wishing fingers  
To gently caress  
Them timidly.



**Window Into the Past** by *Anna Readen*

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## Contributor Notes

**PATRICK ALLEN** is the division chair of the Social Sciences and Public Services Division at CSM. “I write poetry that seeks to understand how we are driven by the force of our belief into action,” says Patrick.

**JUDITH ALLEN-LEVENTHAL** teaches writing and literature at CSM’s La Plata Campus.

**ALLISON BURNETT** is a 32-year-old mother of three boys, an Army vet, and happily married to my Army man. She moved to the Southern Maryland area after three years in Madrid, Spain. Her photo is titled “God Is in the Rain.” These are her three boys playing in the rain on the driveway one spring afternoon. She happened to have her camera and the sun happened to shine down on them, but the rain didn’t stop. She was so taken aback by the beauty, and so thankful that she had her camera with her.

**SHERBROOKE LEA CARSON** is a communications major, enrolled full time at CSM, and a proud mother of three beautiful children. She says that she has been richly blessed beyond what she could ever hope to deserve.

**MICHELLE BROSCO CHRISTIAN** is an assistant professor of communication at CSM and a freelance writer in Maryland.

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**CHAD COLLINS** is a freshman at CSM, currently enrolled in the General Studies program. Although still unsure about what he'd like to do when he's older, writing has always been something that he's been passionate about. A few of his pieces have been published online, and more recently, an editorial of his appeared in *The Maryland Independent*. He hopes to pursue a career wherein writing is a major component.

**KELSI EIANE** moved to Southern Maryland three years ago after graduating from college in Maine and is currently working at the Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant.

**ETHAN FUGATE** is a 24-year-old working-class poet from La Plata, Maryland. For the past five years, he has been living in Baltimore finding a unique voice for his pieces. He often cuts up traditional cadences and makes allusions to the great poets that came before him. This style creates a modern feel, but showcases the many millennia old art of poetry itself.

**RACHEL HEINHORST** teaches English courses at CSM's LaPlata Campus. She believes poetry screams loud and clear, pure examples of human experience.

**MICHELE KRAFT** is an artist, writer, and a former student of Charles County Community College. Raised in Southern Maryland, she attained her BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and is currently working at the master's level at the Maryland Institute College of Art. She lives with her husband and two dogs in Baltimore.

**JORDAN KRON** is a student at CSM and plans to transfer to the University of Maryland in the spring and major in English. His poetry has been featured in *Metazen Magazine*.

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**TASNIM McWILLIAMS** is originally from Bombay, India. Besides photography, her interests are tennis, horseback riding, volleyball, and theatre.

**LIVIA MIRANDA** is a 21-year-old girl from Brazil who just wants to spend her life writing.

**ED MORONEY** is a professor for the Social Sciences and Public Services Division at CSM.

**WILLIAM POE** is the author of *African-Americans of Calvert County*. His photography exhibition, “My African-American Community: A Collection of Photographs and Stories 2000-2010,” just completed a one-year exhibit tour. He is a contributing writer for the *Chesapeake Current*.

**MIKAELA POLLARD** is a freshman and an English major at CSM. Her passion has always been to write, and her desire is to be a writer for a career. She based the story of *Little Willie* on her grandmother’s childhood.

**JOSEPH POULIN** has been taking pictures since he was a child. He recently started pursuing his passion and is trying to start his own business in photography. He says that while he may lack technical skills, he excels in passion and the desire to shoot unique photos. He loves black-and-white photos because they allow him to focus on the actual idea of what he’s shooting without the distractions of color.

**ANNA READEN** is a student at CSM majoring in business administration. She has an interest in various styles of photography and has been taking photos since she was fourteen. She says that now that she is in her early 20s, her interest in photography has not changed.

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**ANNABEL LEE RUSSELL** is a 19-year-old sophomore at CSM. She graduated from Westlake High School. Annabel is very involved around campus, but mainly in the arts. She is a hard worker who loves the theater, videography, and taking photos. She has had multiple photos shown around the county, including photos in the county fair, the Waldorf West Library, and Mattawoman Creek Art Center. Directing television is her main goal, but if that doesn't work out, she would love to be involved in any form of the media field.

**DEE SYDNOR** is an MFA student entering her final semester at West Virginia Wesleyan College and is currently working on a novel in stories for her thesis. She is a CSM alumni and adjunct instructor. She is the wife of Dave, the mother of four children, and is immensely proud of her two grandchildren. Dee lives in Hollywood and works as a document librarian for a local contractor.

**PAUL TOSCANO** has been on the staff of CSM since 1980. As a professional counselor, he looks for the human element and emotion in his photography. His photographs have been published in *Southern Maryland: This is Living, Agora, The Washington Post Magazine* and previous editions of *Connections*.

**JOANNE VAN WIE** is a homeschooling mother of seven children in Mechanicsville, Maryland. Along with her husband of 18 years, she has lived in St. Mary's County for most of that time and hopes to remain here for many more years.

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# Connections



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