



Dedicated to  
discovering the  
literary talent of  
Pike and Lincoln  
County residents.

# Raintree Arts Council

# LITERARY JOURNAL 2014

No Poetry  
No Fiction  
Short Fiction  
Adult  
Youth

Volume I

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### A Chance for Local Writers to Publish



The Raintree Arts Council continues to publish its literary journal to support the literary talent that is often undiscovered in rural communities. Via publication, it is the council's mission to promote the production of literary

works and to bring this work to the widest audience possible. As with most respected literary journals, the RAC journal seeks to uphold the fundamentals of conventional literary traditions while paving the way for work that speaks to a new and diverse audience.

To reach its goals, the RAC continues to invite Pike and Lincoln county writers to submit poetry, short fiction and nonfiction essays of general interest (no literary criticism) for potential publication. The judges review anonymously.

The 2014 Raintree Arts Council Literary Journal features works by all ages of authors, from as young as 11 to over 70, in categories of short fiction, poetry, and non - fiction writings. Enjoy the talent of these imaginative writers.

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Every effort has been made to ensure content accuracy of the journal, if any stories / text have been compromised the publishers offers their regrets.

## Silent Night

Mike Hayden

Grand Award Winner

Adult Non - Fiction

Christmas Eve, 1966, had not been the traditional quiet, meditative celebration of an approaching holy day. Being ten thousand miles from home in a combat zone and hearing the constant roar of large cannons did not evoke "...halls with boughs of holly." Dust offs, Huey helicopter ambulances, had been bringing in casualties to the MASH unit next door for several days from an operation north of us. We knew Christmas was nearby but this just didn't seem like the place for it. Everyone had been receiving Christmas cards for the past few weeks and often packages arrived with goodies that made the mind wander to Holidays previously celebrated and now longed for. I don't know where they came from, but a few small Christmas trees had appeared adding to the atmosphere. At the same time a bit of melancholy settled in the closer we got to the twenty-fifth. Evening conversations brought out details of past celebrations that now seemed so very far away. No one actually made an effort to get the blues, it just crept up on us because we missed being home at this special time of year. The only thing approaching traditional was the green of our clothing.

The cannon fire had ceased early Christmas Eve morning. Both sides, the U.S. and its allies with the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, had reached an agreement to observe a ceasefire for a time around the Christmas Holiday. Most of the GIs considered it folly. One side, or both, always seemed to break the agreement. It probably did reduce the amount of overall fighting for a short while, but most people saw it as an opportunity for the enemy to reposition and resupply. An awesome

display of artillery fire, powerful enough to shake the clouds, preceded the start of the ceasefire. All of our 8 inch and 175 mm cannons, along with some 105 and 155 mm guns of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry, kept up an almost continuous barrage for ten or fifteen minutes. I had busied myself in my abode, along with eight or ten other tent mates, getting ready to head to the mess hall for breakfast, talking about nothing in particular. When the fire missions started we ended the conversations because even screaming at each other was futile. Once a barrage like that starts the noise has an assaulting effect, to say nothing of what it must be like on the receiving end. The silence that comes after such an event is in itself almost deafening.

We usually worked six and a half days a week, getting off on Sunday afternoon. This year Christmas Eve fell on Saturday and our present was a release from duty on that afternoon. Combine that with a full day off on Christmas and it seemed like going on vacation. The camp inhabitants took advantage of the free time in different ways. Some guys simply crawled back in their bunks and caught up on sleep. Others took care of letter writing, maintaining that important connection with friends and loved ones. If you don't send mail, you probably don't get mail. Some of the fellows went into the village, Phuoc Vinh, and wiled away time in the bars or whorehouses. The only GIs not getting a break were those pulling guard duty.

After the evening meal things started cranking up at the enlisted men's club. Leisure time leads to leisure pursuits, and drinking was one of the more popular. There were very few guys in the compound who, given the choice, wouldn't rather have spent Christmas anywhere but here. Some of the career men were more used to this routine. They expected they would miss many important events, ranging from holidays to the birth of a child, as part of their job, even though they'd rather it happened otherwise. I was just a kid, as was a large part of this camp.

I don't think I had spent a major holiday, or any important family-gathering occasion, away from home. The Club provided a chance to share camaraderie and forget about where we were. I wasn't much for drowning my sorrows, but I knew as soon as I walked through the door of the club I was going to get hammered. A glance around the room showed that a lot of other guys had a big head start. Suffice it to say, by closing time we were no longer thirsty.

Christmas morning came extremely early because someone shook me awake, and it was still dark. "Hey Hayden, wake up. Wake up! You signed up for the Bob Hope show. The mess hall opened early so you guys flying out to the show can eat. Get over there!" Who in hell was this guy shaking me and why couldn't I focus on his face, in fact, why couldn't I focus on anything? Why in the world had I signed up for this? Oh yeah, I was sober then. Right now my eyebrows hurt and my tongue felt thick enough to cut off my breathing.

After a bit of reflection I realized I had actually made it back to my bunk, however, I was still dressed, except for one boot. I must have given up after getting it off. I very slowly sat up on the edge of my bunk, uttering a low moan all the way. I needed a shower and clean clothes but there wasn't time for that. I settled for finding my boot, putting it on, then staggering to the mess hall. As I walked in I found myself looking at what appeared to be a zombie convention. About twenty people were scattered around the mess tables (appropriate description) poking at their breakfasts and sucking on coffee. A few of them actually had their heads down on the tables. That select group was really going to love the upcoming plane ride. You could easily pick out the guys who hadn't partied last night; they looked like human beings.

As I glanced around, it was as if there was an invisible four foot barrier between all the men. This was a case of misery **not** loving company. I grabbed a cup of coffee, some scrambled eggs and a couple

pieces of mystery meat, then picked out a seat where I could be alone. Conversation didn't really seem to be the thing for right now. The food, but mostly the coffee, made me feel somewhat better. As I choked down the feast, the mess sergeant yelled out, and way too loudly I might add, "Hey, you guys pick up a box of C-rations before you leave. That'll be your lunch today." Oh joy! Christmas dinner was going to rank up there with four-star dining at the Ritz.

Back at my tent, I grabbed my web belt with canteen and back pack. I had to have something in which to carry my lunch and something with which to wash it down. Our first sergeant told us ahead of time we wouldn't have to carry our rifles, a rare occasion. Once everything was in place, I walked toward the main gate where I heard a couple deuce-and-a-half trucks idling. We all climbed aboard, then endured lurching and bouncing to the airstrip where we joined men from other outfits in the Phuoc Vinh area.

After unloading, we all noticed the lack of airplanes, and it was apparent why. The sun had just cleared the horizon and had not yet baked off the heavy fog layer obscuring the runway from the air. We could hear a Hercules C-130 circling overhead waiting for an opening. The sound of the plane was distinctive. It had four turboprop engines that had a characteristic whistling whine to them. If you were close to them, it was a shriek. This was the heavy hauler of short field airstrips. They were capable of carrying amazing loads and lifting them from runways one might have thought too short. Most of the time we saw Caribou or C-123s, much smaller two engine craft, at our strip, but today, with 150 or so men to haul, something bigger was needed. The C-130 would fill the bill.

Ten or fifteen minutes passed, then the pilot apparently saw the runway through the thinning fog. He circled once more while descending, set up a short approach, then touch down on our humble

strip. The roar of the props, as the pilot reversed their pitch to slow the craft, announced that we weren't long from taking a plane ride. The shiny silver aircraft taxied up about fifty yards away and the tail gate/loading ramp slowly lowered. A crew member stepped off the ramp, turned toward the waiting group, stuck both hands out in front and flashed all ten fingers five times. A sergeant standing in front of our group barked, "Alright, fifty guys, let's go!" Already arranged in groups of twenty, it didn't require Calculus for us to start the process. Fifty men jogged out, climbed up the ramp and disappeared inside the plane. The load master peered inside, turned again and held up another count of fifty. Damn, that looked like a lot of guys to stuff in that aluminum can. Out they ran, climbed aboard, and the ramp started to rise. It hadn't completely closed when it started to lower again. They were probably going to let some of the men off. Hell no, the Air Force guy called for twenty more! Christ, where were they putting them? That was 120 men! Was this a double-decker? Had they made passenger stowage in the wings? God, I hoped they didn't call for any more. I would be in the next group. The ramp went up and stayed up. Whew!

Shortly, the aircraft began to taxi toward the west end of the runway. While this plane slowly headed down the taxiway, another C-130 landed. Only about thirty of us remained for loading. Why had they jammed up the first load so much? Just to see if they could? As the second plane taxied toward us, the first moved into take off position and stopped. It sat there for about a minute screaming, then the pilot threw pitch into the props and there was a resounding roar as the blades began taking large bites of air in an attempt to accelerate. Man, it seemed to move so slowly at first, gradually gaining momentum, but slowly was the key word. By the time it got half way down the runway, about even with our group, it just didn't look like it could possibly lift off before the end of the runway. And it didn't. To keep the runway level and as long

as possible when it was constructed, the engineers built up the east end with fill material extending out over some lower ground. When the plane reached the end of the strip, the pilot simply flew straight off the end and finally climbed above some rubber trees about a quarter mile further on. I don't know if that pilot was good or just damn lucky. There was a collective exhale from our waiting group. I was now completely sober.

Our plane stood ready so we climbed aboard. Compared to the first group, we were so few it almost seemed absurd. All of us could have stretched out flat on the floor and left room for many more. As soon as the ramp was up we taxied into take off position and immediately began the charge down the runway. With the much lighter load we lifted off well before the end of the strip and climbed quickly to altitude. I didn't time it but the flight couldn't have been more than fifteen or twenty minutes. We descended to the Cu Chi airstrip and quickly deplaned.

The Bob Hope show traveled and entertained under high security. Location announcements to the general population didn't happen until the last minute. We knew we were going to the show but didn't know it was in Cu Chi until Christmas day. The logistics of such an operation had to be phenomenal.

Two-and-a-half and five-ton trucks, along with a few buses, were waiting at the edge of the field. I crammed myself into the back of a five-ton and withstood the dribbling and bouncing to the location of the show. Once we arrived, I stood a bit slack jawed. Several thousand GIs crowded into a large area that was specially set up for the show. Up front stood the stage and immediately behind it was the area for the band, the Les Brown Orchestra. PA speakers were plentifully scattered throughout the area to ensure that no one missed any of Hope's one-liners. Down in front of the stage was reserved seating, and lying, for the wounded that were well enough to make it to the show. Behind all this, and for a long way back, was seating for the rest of us. This would have been an

excellent spot for Charlie to mortar or hit with rockets. Almost all of us were sitting on the ground. Fortunately, it hadn't rained recently. I was impressed that they had saved a small area, about half way back, for the guys in our group. It might have been the end of December but it was still plenty warm, not like July, but sitting in the center of this mass of people, it was easy to sweat.

There was strong appreciation among the soldiers for what Hope was doing. This entertaining of the troops started during WW II. Every year he put on shows, either in the U.S. or, if a conflict was in progress, in the war zone, with the primary purpose of making the life of the GI a little lighter at a time of year when it was tough to be away from home and family. Yes, there ensued a lot of schmaltz and buffoonery, but it usually accomplished the goal of taking one's mind off the present condition. He went to Korea during that conflict, then started coming to Vietnam in 1964.

Les Brown and His Band of Renown struck up a few musical numbers to prep the crowd for the upcoming show. Hope finally came on stage and began tying one liners together to the delight of the crowd. Vic Damone crooned a couple numbers, then the always lovely Phyllis Diller took over where Hope left off. The contrasting and scantily clad Joey Heatherton came out next and danced her ass off in a testosterone stirring rendition of something or other. What a way to treat thousands of horny GIs ten thousand miles from home. However, we all loved it. All the way through the show Bob stitched the acts together with his patter and observations. There were a few other acts I was unfamiliar with, but they were just as entertaining as the bigger names.

Toward the end of the show, Anita Bryant sang a couple songs. Her final song sneaked up on me. She asked everyone to stand and sing along with her. As we started into Silent Night, it was just a song, a song I had sung many times at this time of year. Very quickly it became

something different. It was home and hearth. It was parents, brothers and sisters, friends and loved ones, snowy settings and past Christmas memories. I could feel the tears welling up in my eyes. I glanced around and saw I wasn't the only one affected. Soon the tears rolled down my cheeks and I could no longer sing. The last few lines of the song left Anita almost singing by herself due to many of the fellows having as much difficulty as I. The end of the song brought a brief silence, but finally Bob and the entire cast came back on stage. There were no more jokes, just wishes for a safe Holiday and return to the States, along with thanks for what we were doing. We in turn thanked him with a roar of applause and shouts that amply expressed our feelings and thanks.

I felt tired and wondered if the decision to come to the show today had been the right one. In some ways I felt better, in other ways, not so. I almost regretted dredging up all these emotions, but finally accepted that having wonderful memories and knowing people that I loved and missed made me much richer than I otherwise would be.

I wiped my face and began shuffling back to catch a ride to the airstrip. The trucks quickly filled with the first arrivals so I sat down and waited my turn for a later string of departures. It wasn't a long wait since the trucks didn't have far to go. In no time we offloaded back at the airfield and I looked around for someone who might know something about the plane schedules. I found an Air Force sergeant with a clipboard, a good place to start. He informed me the first round of shuttles had just left and there wouldn't be anymore C-130s out today. Wonderful! However, he knew of a Caribou headed for Phuoc Vinh in a couple hours. Beat hitch hiking.

It was well after lunch time and my stomach was starting to send signals. I looked around but there wasn't much choice for sitting except on the ground. However, about seventy-five yards away I saw a pallet of something that looked like it had possibilities. As I walked toward it I

## The Forgotten Constitutionalist

Brent Engel

Division Award Winner

Adult Non-Fiction

could see it was a stack of eight inch howitzer shells strapped down to the pallet. I climbed up, planted my butt on one shell and placed my feet on another. Not exactly an Ethan Allen dining room set but I had eaten on worse furniture.

I dug the cardboard box of C-rations out of my pack and set my canteen beside me. The rations offered several entrees and the one I had picked up at our mess hall had canned beef with a few pieces of potato, a can with a roll or biscuit in it, and a can of peaches. Man, this was living right. I opened the accessory pack and dug out the plastic spoon and a P-38, a small but quite effective can opener, and began peeling open the tins. C-rations, while not haute cuisine, were filling and nutritious. They took care of that role when standard meals weren't available, but I wouldn't want to live off them for an extended period. I finished the beef and roll, wiped my mouth on my sleeve, the sleeve I should have changed that morning, and headed for the peaches after a big pull on the canteen. The sliced peaches were sweet, refreshing, and slid down easily. The accessory package also had a small pack of four cigarettes and matches. I fired up one of these, took a long drag, and gazed around the area and down at the artillery shells on which I perched. I could use this rather sorry situation as another occasion for tears or enjoy it as something unique I could look back on years later as an experience few people have. It wasn't about Silent Night. It was about the wonderful memories and places it brought to mind. I knew, without a doubt, next Christmas I would be with the people and places that I loved and missed, and all this would be behind me. Carpe diem. I leaned back, waiting for my plane, took another drag off my cigarette, and started singing Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer.

• • •

Few people have had such a lasting and profound impact on American freedom than John Brooks Henderson while receiving such scant praise.

Henderson came to Missouri from Virginia and served in the U.S. Senate for just seven years. Nevertheless, his reach was extensive and his legacy lives on.

Orphaned at age 10, Henderson grew up in Lincoln County and called Pike County home for the early part of his life. He became a teacher and then a lawyer before entering politics.

Within weeks of being appointed to the U.S. Senate in 1862, Henderson was invited to the White House. It was the first of many meetings with President Abraham Lincoln, who was in the early stages of reviewing options to free the slaves and end the Civil War.

Lincoln found Henderson to be loyal to the Union while sharing his vision of reuniting North and South. As attorneys, both respected the rule of law, but weren't afraid to bend it a little.

In the end, Henderson was able to legally achieve with the 13th Amendment what Lincoln could not through his Emancipation Proclamation.

"This proposition is to mark an epoch in the history of our country if it shall be adopted, and I take occasion now to express my sincere wish that it may become a part of the Constitution of the United States," Henderson said of the amendment he introduced and co-authored on April 7, 1864.

For Henderson, the law was something as natural as eating or breathing. And he warned of the consequences if anarchy prevailed.

"One violation of law leads to another; the people soon become subservient to military rule; the land becomes filled with spies and informers; where the cowardly become the executioners of vengeance, to save the useless," he said.

Henderson viewed the Constitution as the only guide for a government that drew its power from the blessing of the people. However, his words sometimes fell upon closed ears. One occasion was the Civil War debate over confiscating the property of Confederates.

"There must be some limit to the powers of our Government, even in the midst of hostilities, when zeal and anger too often disregard the means used in the accomplishment of a desired end," Henderson said, adding that the Constitution "must be the limit of congressional power."

"In my judgment, the Constitution is the limit," he continued. "I believe not only that all can be done that is necessary to crush out the rebellion in strict accordance with that instrument, but I honestly believe that the Union cannot be maintained except in obedience to its provisions."

Even after the war, Henderson never let his guard down. In February 1866, he moved to block efforts to legally keep blacks from taking part in American society.

"That which is right will succeed," he said. "It is bound to succeed. It may not succeed today; it may not succeed tomorrow; but I have an abiding confidence that justice will soon or late triumph."

Henderson played a major role in dealing with Native Americans on the Plains by forming the Indian Peace Commission of 1867. As usual, he overlooked the immediate battles between white settlers and native tribes to see the big picture.

"It is useless for me to say who is in fault," Henderson said. "I shall not pretend to enter into that discussion for the reason that it will not facilitate passage of this measure to bring about peace."

Henderson was one of seven Republicans who voted to acquit Democrat

President Andrew Johnson of impeachment charges in 1868. A year later, Henderson paid a steep political price for his action when he was not reappointed to the Senate, but he had no regrets.

"I am not now and never expect to be ashamed of anything connected with this purpose of mine," he said.

Henderson drew the wrath of his Republican friends again in 1875, when he served as a special prosecutor appointed by President Ulysses S. Grant to go after Whiskey Ring conspirators who had allegedly cheated the federal government out of millions of dollars in liquor taxes.

Grant eventually fired Henderson after the former senator grilled a suspect about the federal government's and the administration's role in the conspiracy. Henderson had gotten a little too close to the White House, but he stuck by the law.

"I said nothing beyond what my sworn duty required, and for that I have no apology to make," he said.

Another setback paved the way for an expansion of voting rights for women. In 1875, Henderson helped write the brief in a Supreme Court case in which Virginia Minor argued that she had the right to cast a ballot.

The brief said the Constitution should be the only source for limitations on people's political rights, and that no lower court could take away the rights guaranteed at the federal level.

"A limitation not found (in the Constitution), or authorized by that instrument, cannot be legally exercised by any lesser or inferior jurisdiction," it read.

Minor lost the case, but it was another milestone on the way to the 19th Amendment that was ratified in 1920.

There are theories about why Henderson has been so overlooked by history.

It could have been that others captured the acclaim. It may have been that he moved, for the most part, outside of the traditional circles in a time

## **Hoard**

Abbey Meers

**Division Award Winner**

**Adult Poetry**

of machine politics.

The most likely explanation is that he didn't seek the limelight. Still, his life and his work are worthy of study, especially in the modern era of questionable executive actions, bitter partisan wrangling and public disengagement.

"If you commit errors, or outrage public sentiment, I want no other revolution than the right of the ballot box," Henderson said. "With the Constitution unimpaired, we may yet appeal to the popular heart for the approval of right and the redress of wrong."

• • •

I refuse to ever step foot into my aunt's house again.

She keeps oodles of useless things she cherishes as a friend.

With belongings piled hige and in corners stuffed deep,

As I glance around, I wonder if there is even room to sleep.

Random junk ranging from stuffed bunnies with floppy ears

To bulky bronze colored Roman statues with painted on tears.

She has mounds of jackets and shoes out the wazoo

I am deeply scared to see what is stored in the Lou.

Tip toeing around the garbage, I catch a whiff of a stinky sock

But low and behold, it is just the heaps of dead flowers resting in their pots.

Why, OH! Why must she keep useless things for herself?

For example, the rotting birdcage she has sitting on her shelf.

She declares behind each element is a treasure she holds dear.

Thankfully, it isn't my house, so I will not interfere.

• • •

## **Dear Dolly**

Pat Radford

**Division Award Winner**

**Adult Fiction**

One Day Old: Gee, here I am just a few hours old and look at all this attention I'm getting from the nurses. All those people staring through the nursery windows seem to like me, too –especially that man making silly faces at me (they told me his name was "Daddy"). The very best time is when the nurses roll my cart to my mommy's room and she holds and loves me. I think I'm going to like this world!

One Month Old: "Boy, am I lucky! Not only do I have my very own room and my very own bed, but I have my very own rag dolly, too. I think someone called "grammaw" gave it to me. I get held and loved a lot and Mommy sure keeps me clean and my tummy full. Life sure is great, Dolly!"

Six Months Old: "Dolly and I sure are having fun exploring our house. Mommy seems to be worried about something, though. I heard her and Daddy talking about something called "bills" and she might have to get a "job". Wonder what's goin' on, Dolly?"

Nine Months Old: "Whatever a job is, I don't like it, Dolly. It keeps my mommy and me apart too much. It makes my mommy too tired to hug me as much as she used to. I have to stay with this lady I don't know, and she doesn't treat me very nice after my mommy leaves. How can I tell Mommy and Daddy? I can't talk yet. I try crying, being fussy, and not eating, but they think I'm just being bad and put me in my bed. I'm scared, aren't you, Dolly?"

Five Years Old: "Well, I'm able to talk now but it doesn't seem to do much good. Mommy still works and I have had seven different

baby-sitters in the last year. Dad, do we really need another new car? Mom, couldn't you make do with the furniture we got last year, and do you really need more new clothes? Maybe we could make it with only one T.V. instead of four and who needs two computers, three VCR's, and six cameras, anyway"? Dolly, don't they know I need their time more than all this stuff they buy?"

Twelve Years Old: "I'm really so tired of coming home from school to an empty house. No one is ever there to share the events of my day. Why can't Mom just work part-time?:? Why doesn't she want to be home with me? I guess with Dad being so busy with all his meetings and trips, she gets lonely. Wonder if they really know how very lonely I am, Dolly? Do you suppose they just don't realize how important it is for me to be heard during this time in my life. Oh, well, guess we'd better get supper started, Dolly."

Sixteen Years Old: " Well, Dolly, guess I'll have to put you on the shelf for a while. I'm going to have a real baby of my own. Mom and Dad just couldn't understand how this could happen after all the hard work they had done "for me". I don't mean to be ungrateful, Dolly; I just need someone to love me and now maybe I'll have that someone. Now don't think I'll forget you. After all, who but you has been here for me all these years. Of course, you know, I'll have to get a job after the baby is born to help pay for the bills and buy things for him or her, but don't you worry, dear Dolly....

• • •

# All I got for Christmas was my Cadaver

Gwendolyn Reid

**Division Award Winner**  
**Youth Fiction**

The bells rang loud and clear through the halls and rooms. My peers jumped, raced, and tackled each other in a mad rush to get to the door. After a long dragging week, Christmas vacation had finally begun.

My name is Rita Corleone. Unlike my classmates, I was not as eager to leave. My parents were in Mississippi for the winter. My grandmother's lungs were giving her trouble again, (she smokes). I, on the other hand, was stuck at home with my Aunt Leona.

I gently pulled my red and white cap over my long curly, black hair. Standing, I collected my books.

"Goodbye, Mrs.Parrisse. Have nice vacation." I called to my teacher, who was hunched at her desk, grading last minute papers.

"Oh, goodbye Rita. Enjoy your vacation as well." She said, raising her head to smile at me. I smiled back, and then left. I walked down the halls, book in hand, thinking about what I might do over break. I could go skate boarding at the rink with Kat. Or I could make a snow fort and write a book report. I liked the first one better.

As I stepped out onto the pad at the front of the two story brick building that was my school, I got a cold chill. I don't know if it was from the wind, or just my self-conscious, but I did not like that feeling. Not at all.

I began to walk along the sidewalk, in the direction of my house. I don't live too far from the school, but far enough that with the bitter cold that was in the air as of now, it was a misery trip. I began to walk in silence as I thought about all the things I'd rather do than stay with my aunt for two weeks.

I was so caught up in my thoughts that I almost missed the driveway to my home. I turned down the dirt path, scolding myself for not paying attention. I stepped through the front door in the first hall of my house, and my aunt Leona came around the corner to greet me.

"Hi hon. How are you?" She asked with a white toothed smile.

"I'm doing great, thanks for asking" I replied. I didn't necessarily like my aunt Leona, too many fond memories of her pinching my cheeks. But I respect her nonetheless. I may not like her, but she's still my elder.

She reached out and took my books, so I could take off my scarf and coat. She took them into the kitchen with her.

"What's for dinner?" I hollered.

"Pasta." She called back. I grimaced. My aunt was tolerable, but her cooking was not. She saw my face and laughed. "Don't worry. It's from a can."

"It's okay. I'm not that hungry."

"Suit yourself. I think it tastes great."

"Your taste buds are six feet under." I muttered. "I'm gonna go read." I reached out and hugged her. I didn't care for her, but I still loved her. I picked up my books off the counter and went to my room. I kicked off my shoes and flopped on my bed. I pulled out Frankenstein and started to read.

I opened my eyes and looked around. My clock said 11:04PM. I must've dozed off while I was reading. I closed my book and sat up. Hopping off my bed, I shed my shirt and changed into my pajamas.

I went and sat down in front of my mirror. I picked up my hairbrush and began to pull it through my tangled hair. One of the worst things about curls? They get knotted up real easy. I sat there for a good ten minutes fighting with them. When I was finished, I climbed under the covers of my bed. I closed my eyes, and in moments I was asleep.

Scratch, scratch. I opened my eyes. Scratch, scratch. I sat up and looked around. When I saw nothing, I laid back down. I looked over at my clock, or at least, where my clock should've been. I sat up again and gazed about the room. I stopped when I saw my clock by the door. It was moving back and forth, as if something behind the door was pulling at the cord. The vibrant glow from the monitor was gone, leaving the screen dark.

I slipped out from beneath my covers and padded to the door. Bracing

myself, I pulled the door. I sighed at what I saw. It was not a monster waiting to drag me to my death, but my cat, Milo, was pulling and swatting at the plug in.

"You stupid cat. Almost gave me a heart attack." I scolded, picking him up. I lifted my alarm clock off of the carpet, and put it on my desk. I took Milo downstairs and locked him in the basement.

"Dumb cat." I said, kicking the door. I went back upstairs. Walking back, I thought about the cold. Then I remembered the furnace. He would go under there if he got there if he got chilled.

I stepped into my room and closed the door behind me. I picked up my clock and plugged it back in. The red, fluorescent glow restarted on the monitor. It said it was 12:32AM. Great. Just great. Nothing like starting your vacation with a sleepless night. Whatever. I'd sleep in about a dozen times before the end of break.

I gently lifted my covers off of the floor. I'd thrown them off when I got out of bed, to go get that stupid feline. I settled back into bed. I wondered how Milo had managed to pull my clock off my desk, out into the hallway, and close the door behind him. I sighed and closed my eyes; I could figure it out in the morning. Gosh, I was tired. I closed my eyes and slipped into a quiet sleep.

I woke up the next morning covered in snow. Of course, I didn't notice this until I rolled face first into it. I gasped as the wet substance coated my skin. Startled by the sudden freezing sensation in my face, I jumped. Right out of my bed and onto the floor. I hit the wood based carpet with a thud. My hairbrush fell off of the desk and onto my head.

"Rita?" My aunt yelled up the stairs, "What's going on up there?"  
"Nothing!" I yelled back, "I'll be down in a minute!" My blankets had come with me when I fell off my bed. I pulled my cover off me and yelped as frost fell onto my bare legs. Rolling my eyes I stood up, threw my blanket back onto my bed and frowned. How did snow get in my room? As this thought came to me, a cold breeze flowed up my arm. I

looked over at my window, which was wide open. I leaned over and shut it. Who opened my window? I didn't do it. Maybe my aunt came up and opened it? I would ask her. But not now. I went into the bathroom, pulled a towel out of the cabinet, and took a long, hot shower.

When I got out, I changed into sweat pants, and a baggy grey T-shirt. I went downstairs to find my aunt Leona in the kitchen. There were pancakes on the table and bacon on the countertop.

"Um....." I couldn't decide whether or not I should eat it. My aunt looked up and, sensing my discomfort, said to me, "They were both pre-cooked. I only heated them up."

Sighing with relief, I took a piece of bacon and stuck it in my mouth. Looking out the window, I saw that freezing rain and sleet was coming in a downpour. I sighed, so much for skating.

"Hey, why don't you come shopping with me?" My aunt offered, "You can't skate today."

"Yeah, um, no thanks." I said. I turned and went into the living room. I sat down on the couch and clicked on the TV. I changed the channel to history, and was lost in an interesting speech about The Civil War.

"Rita, I'll be back later okay?" My aunt was stuffing her wallet in her purse.

"Hmm?" I mumbled

"I said I will be back later. Okay?"

"Yeah sure. What time is it?"

"3 o'clock."

"No it can't be that late."

"It is honey."

"Time flies when you watch history."

"Yep. Bye."

"See ya'." My aunt walked out the door. How that woman could survive in the cold I do not know.

I turned my attention back to the television. It had switched to a documentary about Pearl Harbor. I watched for a moment, then I heard it. A growl. A very strange growl. I looked around. It wasn't coming from inside the house, so I turned to look out the window. As soon as my eye caught the oak tree in the backyard, the growling stopped. I held my vision on the back tree. Something was behind it. A black shape, almost like a dog, darted out from behind the tree and out of sight. I continued to stare out into the yard. I resisted the urge to go get the Winchester out of the cellar and looked back at the TV. What was that thing? Whatever, I probably wouldn't go outside until break was over. I turned back to the TV. Picking up the remote, I clicked off the television, and turned to look at the rest of the house. It was a mess. Shoes were strewn throughout the hallway, food was still on the table, and I was scared to look upstairs. I stood and folded the blanket I had been using. I needed something to occupy my mind. Taking a deep breath, I started to clean.

I settled down into a chair in the kitchen. I had just spent four hours scrubbing, scouring, and holding my breath as the noxious cleaning chemicals came from the spray bottle. But, alas, the counters were clean, the dishes were done and you could quite possibly eat off of the floor. In the living room, animal hair had been removed from the couches, the carpet was scrubbed, the knick knacks were dusted, and Milo the cat licked his paws with a clean kitty bed, a fresh litter box and a full food bowl. Upstairs I'd made beds, vacuumed floors, picked up clothes, done laundry, and cleaned out under the magazine rack in the bathroom (it surprised me how much junk could get shoved under there). The trash had been taken out as well and the bags replaced. The house was now sparkling clean and smelled like roses (not really, it smelled like bleach). My aunt had not yet returned from her little shopping spree, leaving me alone at the house.

I sat in silence. I could not stop thinking about what I saw in the yard.

It was too big to be the Gunderson's beagle, too small to be the Kechers Irish wolfhound. So what was it? The thought hovered in my head until I heard the door open.

My aunt came around the corner with a smile, "Well, this place is just shining isn't it?"

I smiled at her, "I got bored."

"I can see that. I'm sorry I took so long, the roads were blocked off. You want some dinner?"

"Sure."

"What do you want?"

"Anything with bacon."

"We had bacon for breakfast."

"Bacon is meat candy. It never gets old."

"Alright, help me will you."

"Yes ma'am." Me and my aunt set to work on cooking. The house wasn't clean for very long, but it was fun making a mess with my aunt. Before too long we had produced bacon, eggs, and cheese all in one platter. I sat down and ate a nice dinner with my family member, and actually enjoyed a conversation. We talked about school, grades, and embarrassingly, boys. When we were finished, she helped me return the house to the masterpiece it was before we ate. After we cleaned up my aunt looked at me, "I got some movies at the store. You wanna watch one?"

"What movies?" I asked. She went and picked through her purse, which was big enough to fit an entire computer set.

No literally, that thing was huge. I could only stare as she pulled various items and necessities out of it and set them on the floor. A comb, three books, a soda, a sub sandwich, Chap Stick, a makeup bag, a can of Lysol, feminine products, hair bands, her wallet, glasses case, a pair of flats, a tank top, and a freaking wig. My aunt wasn't even bald and she had a wig in her purse. That's not creepy at all. At last she produced the movies Jennifer's Body, Splice, and The Exorcist. I picked The Exorcist, and

before too long we were curled up on the couch scaring the crap out of ourselves. When the movie was over my aunt tucked me into bed, which was strange since I was fourteen. She said some nice things, and then I fell asleep.

I gasped and sat up. A large crash came from downstairs. I stared at my door, my heart pounding. Should I go downstairs? Were we being robbed? Without a second thought I leaped from my bed and rushed downstairs. Halfway down the steps, I turned and went to my aunt's room. I crept up beside the bed and spoke in my most demanding whisper.

"Aunt Leona! Leona!" I reached for the lamp and turned on the light. I threw my hand over my mouth and muffled a sob at what I saw. Blood stained the white, satin sheets. My aunt had been drug from her bed. I turned and went back out to the hall and down the steps. This time, as I ran down the steps, I noticed dark stains on the caramel colored carpet. I came to a stop at the bottom of the stairs and was hit by a rush of cold air. I had not realized I was crying until the wind nearly froze my soggy cheeks. I didn't care though, what I cared about was the fact that the kitchen was a bloody mess. A dark red trail glided across the floor, through an array of broken dishes and overturned chairs. I stared where the blood trail ended, my breath caught in my throat. On the front porch steps was a body. I didn't need to look at it to know who it was. I knew. It was my aunt. Instead of rushing to her side and checking her pulse I jumped over a chair and grabbed the phone from the floor, where it had been thrown.

I dialed the number I wanted and got an immediate answer, "Marin County Police Department, how may I help you?"

"M-m-my aunt," I stuttered over the words, "I-I think some ones in my house."

"Is anyone there with you?"

"No, well, my aunt, but she's dead."

"Address?"

"4456 Civil Road."

"Find a weapon and a place to hide, we'll be there soon." They hung up. I squeezed the phone so hard my fingers turned white. I let out a feeble, little laugh. My aunt was dead, someone or something killed her, and now I was standing here laughing and crying like a delusional lunatic because my conscience was currently being traumatized. What a mental image. I stood still and wept until I heard it. That same inhumane growl I heard the other day in the yard. I looked up and froze. Something was crouched by the Christmas tree, and it wasn't Santa Claus.

The growl echoed again, louder this time. The creature stepped into the luminescent glow of the pale moon. My heart skipped a beat. The horror that stood before was an ugly twisted thing. Its face was upraised by sharp teeth, the twisted mangles on the floor resembled feet, but I really couldn't tell, and its body was lowly crouched, waiting to pounce. I stared. It lunged. I was frozen as time seemed to slow down. Then it sped up again and I was running down the narrow walkway along the sink between the counter and the table. I ran as fast as I could, but that wasn't fast enough. It tackled me and I screamed. I rolled onto my back and wailed like tiger near fire. Its teeth sank into me and its claws drug down my belly, slicing my skin to ribbons. My screams reduced to gurgles, and my blood flowed up from my throat to my mouth and past my lips. After a while the thing left. The last thing I heard was the sirens blaring, and the last thing I saw was a flashlight on my face. Then lights slowly faded. A dark never ending valley spread out before me. Where was I? It was cold. I was cold. But I felt good. Something felt good. Death. Death felt good. Was I happy? I hoped I was happy. I was dead, I should be happy. December 24, 2012

Leona Moors body was found on the front steps of her family's ranch at 5 am Wednesday morning, intestines torn out. At 5:05 am the same day a mutilated body identified as Rita Corleone in the kitchenette of the home. Due to mutilation, it is unknown what killed her. The coroner's best guess was a wolf. When the killer is identified however, it will be on 10 o'clock morning news. Merry Christmas!

• • •

## Changes

Martha Sue Smith

**Honorable Mention**

**Adult Non - Fiction**

“Changes”, according to Webster’s New World College Dictionary, one definition of “change” is... “To cause to become different; after; transform”.... think about how many times we face this in our lives! I would venture to say just about EVERY day! We are born and changes begin immediately (we’re talking other than diapers, of course). An interesting question: Do we face more changes early in our lives, middle, or later? Wow, that will differ individually, this is closely related to “learning”, isn’t it! “Changes”... “Learning”, very closely integrated. It’s getting awfully deep here too, but life itself is deep and complicated!

Let’s divide up our lives, say Birth to Age 21; Age 21 to Age 50; Age 50 to Death. Using these divisions – let’s take the first phase, Birth to Age 21...

### BIRTH TO AGE 21

Humans are among few, if not the only species that are not able to walk shortly after birth. So, human babies have a lot to deal with prior to walking, bone development and acquired strength. In addition to learning to communicate, eat, show satisfaction, and dissatisfaction, we must add to that list to be learned, crawling and then walking.

Moving on to entering school, by now we sponges have all ready absorbed a good bit of the percentage of what we must learn overall! We’ve learned to walk, talk, show emotion, even think somewhat abstractly. We make it through elementary school, learning to seek some kind of social position with peers, read, write, participate, and by now, begin to understand what the feeling of “security” is all about. We

make it through middle school continuing to learn about life, how many more changes we have ahead...and how much more we have to learn. Yes indeed, “changes”, MAJOR CHANGES! Suddenly our bodies are changing. High school presents more social changes, introduction in to the world of work ethics, and we’re facing yet another change, life without the security of “home”. Go off to college, join the work force, military, other. What ever we do, where ever we go, we are on our own for the first time ever actually! Changes, changes, and more changes!

### AGE 21 TO AGE 50

Ah, love...it is most likely in these years “love” for other than family and friends. “LOVE”, marriage, children! Change doesn’t end through these years certainly. We learn a different kind of love, the love we have for our own children. Suddenly as adults, we are the parent and it’s through these years that grown-up children become parents, not just of their own children, but they begin to see the needs parents have, and facing the reality that we may very well have to take charge of our parents! We have to learn to balance that act in a gentle way. We have to help our parents through the changes they are going through. It’s a difficult time for them as they give up the role of “care-giver” and assume the position of needing care. It’s obviously a time of change, learning what others need and how to provide those needs. The changes, the learning and accepting all the responsibilities we must now assume is monumental. This may prove to be the most complicated time of the three phases. Death very likely enters in this phase, death of a grandparent or even a parent, which is another process requiring major change.

**Articulated  
perhaps  
Miscalculated  
(but never by  
Truth)**

Mikki Barber

**Honorable Mention  
Adult Poetry**

### AGE 50 TO DEATH

How many times have we heard this, “Old age is not for sissies”! Many times I suspect and it’s in this phase we need to learn what is meant by that. Through these years, aging bodies become OLD and begin to deteriorate and it is time to learn to accept these body changes and the need for assistance that has never been asked for or needed before. It is critical to accept the changes that come as family members die, as friends die. These are the greatest changes of all through this age, 50 to death. Death itself is inevitable and is the ultimate final change which must be accepted, prepared for, faced, and even welcomed.

“Change” and “learning” are life-long and on-going from birth to death! We must learn to open our arms and welcome them as they come. Sometimes our changes and choices are difficult and require all the strength we can muster. However, the choice is made by each of us to make it an interesting, intellectual, loving, exciting, satisfying trip.....

• • •

Mis-recollection the lessons  
Walking mere instinctively  
Dangerous, I can only deplore

But the task lay far at hand  
Promises of a nether land  
Presumable, assurance of sorts

Creating a later that may never happen  
Yet, perpetuating my will on the universe

A day's blur, lifetime gone  
Petrifying, I'll be singing songs  
Of forgotten woes  
And causes never lost

The bruises left upon me  
By the untoachable and my own self

I cry and weep  
Some ways in dismay, of the nihilism behind at bay

Swindled and deceived  
As though as it is an external force

• • •

# My Own Fairy Tale (not intended)

Grace Williams

Honorable Mention

Youth Fiction

## Prologue:

Just so all you Happily Ever After People know, this is not a Once Upon A Time. Of course, when you think about it, there is always a time when these stories happen. This just isn't one of those cheesy ones. Who wants a Once Upon A Time anyway?

### Chapter 1:

Salvation- If being kidnapped counts as that.

My life stinks. I am in a new bar almost every night and have almost nothing to do. There is always homework, and after that I read a book about a character whose life stinks more than mine. At least I get to hide in a corner. It isn't that bad; its just that my dad is a drunk. That is why I have no caring friends to save me from the horror that is my life. Another reason why I don't have any is because I have no caring mom to make up for my dad. When I think about it though, who needs friends anyway.

My dad also abuses me a lot. I try to get over that fact since he saves me from all the creepy guys, but it is hard when you hurt like heck every day. I am just looking to the future because, in less than six months, I am free. I saved up to go to college and will bunk with someone in my stay there, but when I graduate and get a job, I will buy a house.

Anyway, tonight should have been a normal night. You know, do homework, read, drag dad home, continue cycle after school. As I said before, my life stinks.

I wasn't really surprised when a guy came up and started to drag

me to the door. This is the fun part... I get to scream. So I did what I normally did. I rolled my eyes and screamed.

No answer. I screamed again, panic rising in my chest.

Still no answer.

After he dragged me out in the freezing cold, I decided I was going to have to handle this by myself. I twisted to face him.

"Hey you, ya know my dad is going to beat you up when he sees you dragging me like this right?" I asked him.

He grunted.

"Not much of a talker? Okay, I will lower this to stupid level."

I grinned. "My. Dad. Will. Hurt. You. Badly. When. He. Sees. You. Dragging. Me."

I was pretty proud of myself. It took patience to handle an idiot.

He finally decided to talk.

"Dad... sold... you..." he grunted, pausing with the effort of talking.

Of course he did. I decided I was tired of being dragged, so I twisted around again to face the creeper. I dislodged my arm and turned threw a punch into his stomach. He doubled over in pain, then while he was down, I tried to kick him in the head, but he grabbed my arm and snapped it. I screamed in pain, then kicked him to the ground. I picked up a brick with my good arm and hit him in the head. He slumped to the floor.

I knelt over in pain, cradling my bad arm to my chest. My dad stepped outside. I looked up through tears to see him coming over to me. He stood over me for about ten seconds, then kicked me in the side. I curled up and whimpered as he punished me for defending myself. Through barely open eyes, I saw a cloaked figure standing at the entrance of the street. I rolled over in pain toward the wall, expecting him to keep walking, when I heard a loud crack. I rolled over with the last of my strength to see the cloaked figure standing above me.

The last thing I saw before I passed out was the unmistakeable sign of two gleaming canine teeth shining above me like a star.

## Chapter 2:

Alive... but alone. Maybe??

I bolted awake in a bed that looked like it was fit for a princess.

I looked down at the sheets and almost threw up. I hate pink. When I looked around, it actually looked like the stars had gazed down and thrown up sparkles all over the room. I automatically shuddered at all the... *girlishness*. Blech. I got up and immediately groaned... cause, you know, *injuries*. I looked around at the rest of the room and spotted an intercom.

I rushed over and tried to push the button. I looked down on what was stopping my arm. A cast. Lovely. At least it was yellow and not... *pink*. I pushed the button and said loudly:

“Hello? Anyone here? My name is Beka, and it is not cool for you to kidnap girls, even when it looks like they need help. I mean seriously, I HAD IT UNDER CONTROL!!!”

I stopped, satisfied that whatever dummy had taken me now got that I did not appreciate being kidnapped. I mean, what if I *liked* my life?

I sat on the bed to look at the room better, when about five minutes later, there was a knock on the door. I grinned deviously and went to answer it. I almost fainted again. At my door there was a *talking* iphone and flashlight. I actually mean that the iphone had a face and was talking to the flashlight which also had a face. I stared at them like they were the first... actually they were the first talking things I had ever seen before. I started hyperventilating.

“Madam, please don’t do that. You make me want to hold you and keep you safe, and I just can’t do that, seeing as I’m a flashlight.” the flashlight pleaded.

“Who are you?” I gasped.

The iphone answered, “We are in charge of this castle, and it seems like Miss. Beka, that the master wants to meet you as soon as possible. Also please ignore Torch, we have all been alone for a while.”

I nodded, suddenly frozen, “Of course, your master wants to meet me.”

They both grinned and ushered me on to their master.

## Chapter 3:

The hairy, scary, master.

The flashlight and iphone led me into the biggest ballroom I had ever seen. My mouth dropped. The iphone tried to talk again, but Torch interrupted.

“Oh and his name is Samsung. We all call him Sam though.”

I just nodded and followed. They led me to the biggest chair I had ever seen. In it was perhaps the hairiest guy I had ever seen. He turned around and almost growled,

“I have been expecting you.”

I thought he would have been intimidating if he hadn’t been cowering under my shadow. I rolled my eyes, and his eyes widened.

“Let me guess, you are a beast, and I am going to break your spell by loving you, right?” I sighed.

His eyes got even bigger.

“I thought she wouldn’t know!” he hissed as he tried to hide himself in his own shadow.

His weird thingies just shrugged.

He sat up straighter.

“Umm. Yes. But I’m not going to make you. That is only something my dad would have made you do.” he replied.

“Wait,” I said, “Don’t, you know, the parents have to love each other for you to come in?”

“My dad made my mom.” he replied embarrassed. He paused for a moment before saying, “You aren’t scared of me at all?”

“You can’t be worse than my dad” I said, getting bored and looking around the room.

I saw Sam and Torch share a look. I snapped my fingers at them. They at least had the grace to look sheepish.

“All right,” he mumbled, “what do you like to do?”

"Read, but I would like to try some art. I have never really had the chance to make something before," I grinned.

He shared a worried look with Torch and Sam. He got up to lead me to some place, I guess.

He strode into a room that had everything; anything you needed to make whatever you wanted. I got right to work. He watched as I colored, pasted, and sewed. It was the best thing I had ever done before.

#### Chapter 4:

##### Getting to know the Beast.

I almost never got his name. At one point I asked. He looked at me with the saddest face I had ever seen and replied,

"My name is Beast. That is the only name that matters now."

I wasn't entirely sure what to make of that, so I just called him Beast. For the most part, he never came too close to me. It was soon after that, I started yearning for human contact, even if it was just my abusive father.

The nice thing was, for the most part, I got my personal space. He let me sleep as long as I wanted and let me do pretty much whatever. I had never been able to do that before.

The thing I most enjoyed doing was playing chess with him. Even though I stunk, I got to talk to him. He was the nicest guy I will probably ever know. The only thing that was wrong was he avoided any human contact. It was almost as if he was afraid for me to touch him. It was almost like he would hurt me just by touching me somehow.

I also got to really know his, or the remains of, his servants. My favorite was Mrs. Mahogany. She was my dresser. She seemed to understand me the best. And, as weird as it may seem, she was like the mom I never had.

I also found out Torch was a little girl-crazy. He hit on every girl in the castle, or anything resembling a girl... yeah, it was that bad.

Sam, was a little bit of a... well... know-it-all. I wasn't that surprised. He was one of the fanciest phones I had ever seen.

It was all amazing though. I almost never worried, except the night when I was invited to a ball, in the very same ballroom I was shown to the very first time I was conscious in the castle.

It was a very elaborate process. Mrs. Mahogany watched as a teacup picked out my dress. Then she watched as I was plucked, stripped, and... well... robbed of all the hair on my body. I slipped into the prettiest blue dress I had ever seen. The bodice had blue-polka dots on it with richer rhinestones. A blue, satin bow was underneath the bodice, and then the dress stretched close to my body until it reached the upper part of my leg. It then had little folds of blue silk the rest of the way down the dress. The straps were see-through and had diamonds on them. The final touch for the dress were blue sleeves that I pulled on until they reached the upper part of my arm.

The jewelry was a plain necklace that had a tiny silver heart dangling from it. The earrings were mini copy-cats. I looked like an angel. Mrs. Mahogany just stared at me, so I assumed I was ready.

#### Chapter 5:

##### To be specific, the grandest night of my life.

I was escorted to the ballroom by Torch and Sam. Sam pretty much ignored me, but I'm almost positive that Torch was drooling a little... or a lot. When we stepped into the ballroom, I was surprised by the grandeur of the room. It looked like the whole thing had literally been scrubbed. I was studying the room so hard, I didn't feel Beast sneak up behind me. I almost jumped out of my dress. He cringed when he realized he had scared me. I laughed.

"Do I look okay?" I teased.

He looked speechless as he studied me fuller. I just giggled. He finally slid into a relaxed grin. He held his hand out and asked,

"Would you like to dance?"

"Do Edward and Bella get married?" I replied.

"Yes!" we chorused.

He took my hand and led me out onto the dance floor. He gestured for the music to begin. I noticed that Jason Mraz's 'I won't give up' came on. My eyes narrowed. He leaned in to sing the lyrics in my ear. I softened a little bit. We didn't really dance at all, just swayed, mainly because he knew I couldn't dance to save my life. At the end he dipped me and stared. I twisted out of his arms and tried to slip to my room. It wasn't because he crossed a line. It was because I got the fuzzy feeling in my heart, and when that happens, it never ends well.

I got to my room and fell asleep. I wasn't sure how long I was out, but was awakened when the intercom in my room came on. It was Beast.

"Beka, stay in your room," he urged, "don't come out until Torch, Sam, or Mrs. Coffee says."

I was immediately suspicious. Why would he want me to stay in my room?

I turned the intercom on and heard my dad yelling at Beast.

#### Chapter 6:

The last day of my conscious life.

I rushed out of my room with the blue dress still on. I ran down to the lobby, where I saw my dad holding his shotgun. I did what I usually did... I screamed. He looked up and saw me.

"Come on, Beka," he growled, "we're going home."

My mouth fell open.

"No." I whispered.

"What?" he growled again.

"I said no." I replied, lifting my head higher.

He raised his shotgun. And fired. I ducked, but the bullet was no where near me. It hit Beast instead. I screamed and ran down the stairs. All I remember is the entire castle fighting my dad as I ran over to Beast. My dad had shot him in the stomach, and even I knew he would not survive

this. I started bawling, my cries shaking my body.

His hand raised to touch my cheek. I held it there and continued crying. His lips moved. I leaned down so I could hear him.

"Kiss me." he whispered as he fought to keep death away.

I nodded, still sobbing, as I leaned down and softly touched his lips. I raised my head, and I saw him grin, then his eyes fell blank.

#### Chapter 7:

Depression.

I barely remember walking out passed my dad's unconscious body. All I remember doing is knocking on a random door and being ushered in to stay.

#### Epilogue:

"Where are my socks?" I screamed to my adoptive family.

"How should I know?" yelled my bratty younger sister, Beauty.

"Aughhh!!!" I groaned.

The doorbell rang.

"I've got it!!!" screamed Beauty.

I let her get it.

"Its for you Bek!" yelled Beauty.

My eyebrows rose. I ran to get the door. Standing there was the handsomest man I had ever seen. My eyebrows must have climbed up my forehead by now.

"Hello." the man said politely as he searched his pocket and pulled out his phone. He clicked play. On came 'Thousand Years'.

I was speechless.

"What is your name, sir?" I asked.

He smiled and said one word.

"Beast."

• • •

# The Last Woolworth's

Brent Engel

Adult Fiction

Ben looked through the dusty window at the twisted wires and cracked tiles.

He could almost hear his beloved grandmother recalling the years she spent here.

"Oh, the stories I could tell," she would say with a laugh every time Ben would ask what it had been like to work at the last Woolworth's.

That was almost 40 years ago, when Ben was a little boy and nobody had heard of Walmart or Starbucks.

Ben's grandmother had labored behind the lunch counter, pouring coffee and serving Coca-Cola to stodgy old men and zit-faced teens.

Ten cents bought a cup of Joe that was as hot as a volcano and 15 cents got you a Danish that tasted like one fresh from mother's oven.

There was a daily special at noon. Roast beef with green beans. A hamburger with fries. Meat loaf and mashed potatoes.

If you had \$2, you could get a meal. For another quarter, you could have a piece of homemade pie. The sidewalks of downtown were filled with shoppers, and many of them stopped by Woolworth's out of habit more than anything else. The bus stop just a few yards from the front door brought more people.

As the years went by, tastes and habits changed. A mall was built in a field that formerly was filled with cow pies. The last Woolworth's hung on as long as it could.

Ben remembered that the real attraction was the conversation around the counter. The topic could be politics, religion or sports. It didn't really matter.

The old people talked about the better times. The middle aged went on and on about how bad things were. The young people wished they were older so that they could get the hell out of this God-forsaken town.

Ben thought about all of the problems that had been solved over a

cherry phosphate or a chocolate milkshake.

"It was a great place, wasn't it?" came a deep voice that broke Ben's silent reflection.

Ben hadn't heard anyone walk up. A quick glance revealed the man was balding and had a bit of a pot belly.

"I came here every day for years," the man said.

"My grandmother worked here for 40 years," Ben offered.

"Oh, was that Mollie?" the man asked. "She was the best -- made everyone feel welcome. Well, almost everyone."

The man spoke again before Ben could ask what he meant.

"My name's Pierce," the man said. "You want to go get a cup of coffee?"

Ben had reservations. He'd never seen this guy before. Also, the man was about 30 years older. What would the two of them discuss? Still, Ben was too intrigued about what the man had said to debate the advisability of accompanying a stranger.

"Sure," Ben said, extending his hand. "I could use one. By the way, my name's Franklin."

"First or last?" the man asked.

"Middle," Ben replied with a smile.

The man laughed heartily and patted Ben on the back.

"My first name's Martin," Pierce said. "Why don't we try that place around the corner? I ain't never been there, but I gotta coupon."

The two had just gotten to the door of Bean There, Bun That when Martin hollered at a man across the street.

"Hey, Garcia...Garcia, what's up?"

"Nothing," came the answer. "How you doin' today?"

"Join us for coffee?" Martin asked.

"Sure, but I can't stay long, all right?" Garcia said as he crossed the street.

Ben thought about making up an excuse to leave before sitting down with two men he didn't know, but he still wondered about Martin's comment outside the last Woolworth's.

"I'm Freddie Garcia," the man said as he shook hands with Ben.

"Good to meet you," Ben said.

"Let's go in," Martin said.

In was mid-morning. Bean There, Bun That was quiet, with no one left from the commuter rush and a couple of early birds for lunch. Ben thought that the entire place would have fit into the space occupied by his grandmother's counter at the last Woolworth's.

"Hey, Bill," Martin said as the three approached a booth.

"Martin."

"Mind if we join you?"

"No, go right ahead."

"Do you know Garcia?"

"Sure, I've seen him around. Who's this whippersnapper?"

"Ben. Ben Logan."

"He's Molly Logan's grandson," Martin said.

"Oh...well, I'm Bill Tate."

Ben was puzzled by the man's hesitation in shaking hands. Had he done something to offend him?

"Pleased to meet you," Bill said dryly.

"You remember Molly, don't you, Bill?" Martin asked.

"Yeah...sure...sure I do," Bill said.

"What will you gentlemen have?" the waitress asked as she came to the table.

"How about four cups of coffee?" Martin said.

"You can order coffee but we charge the same as if you got a latte," the waitress said. "It's \$3 – each."

"Good grief," Freddie exclaimed.

"Here, I have a coupon that will help," Martin said.

"Last of the big spenders," the waitress chimed.

"Remember when you could get a cup of coffee – straight black or with cream – for 10 cents?" Martin asked. "Those were better days."

"Who says?" Freddie asked.

"I do," Martin replied. "Everything was better back then. People had jobs, the schools were good, crime was low."

"My parents came here from Guatemala and could barely put food on

the table," Freddie said. "My brothers, sisters and I all slept in the same room, and I had to work starting at about eight years old."

Ben thought about his grandmother, cheerfully slinging hash and mopping up messes for \$1.60 an hour. Let's see, he calculated, that would be almost \$7 today.

"I had to work hard, too, everybody did," Martin recalled. "My point is, too many people don't want to work anymore. They ain't satisfied with a good day's labor."

"That's because a bunch of fat cats are living high off someone else's efforts," Freddie said.

"Here, here," the waitress chimed in as she brought the lemonade. "I don't even get minimum wage. Try surviving on tips."

"Here's my coupon," Martin said.

"I'll take it when you cash out," the waitress assured.

"Now, as I was saying..." Martin continued.

Ben slumped into the booth and looked away for a moment, only to catch Bill staring at him. The intensity of the glare seemed to become stronger with each passing moment. Finally, his eyes flew open wide.

"Shut up!" Bill fumed. "All of you."

Martin and Freddie looked at him with their mouths agape. Bill continued to look at Ben.

"You may have been poor, you may have been looked down on and you may not have made much money," he continued. "Your people weren't brought here in boats and treated worse than animals."

Martin, Freddie and the waitress were silent. Ben's eyes drifted to the coupon on the table.

"Sonny, look at me," Bill said.

Ben's eyes returned to Bill's.

"Your granny was a racist," Bill said flatly. "Every time a person like me came in, she'd ignore us. It wasn't the kind of crap they pulled in other places, but it was just as powerful."

Ben had remembered reading in history books about the Woolworth's sit-ins in North Carolina in 1960. Four black students were refused service at the counter. The event led to months of protests and was noted as a key moment in the civil rights movement.

"We had to keep saying 'Excuse, me, ma'am' over and over before she'd finally come and say 'What do you want?' She didn't refuse us service, because by then, she couldn't, but she could still look at us like we were no better than dogs."

Martin and Freddie turned their eyes from Bill to Ben, who felt more out of place than he had when he walked in.

"I'm sorry," Ben said to Bill as he got up to leave.

"Nothing can be done about it now," Bill said.

"Here, why don't you have this," said Martin, pressing the coupon into Ben's hand.

"Are you sure?" Ben said.

"Yeah," Martin answered. "See you 'round."

"Yeah," Ben said.

On his way to the register, Ben stuffed the coupon in his pocket. He paid the bill without using it and walked out, rounded the corner and soon found himself back in front of the window at the last Woolworth's.

He thought about all of the conversations he'd had with his grandmother. None of them were about her treatment of people.

Ben didn't feel like a racist, but he cringed to think that some of her prejudice might have been handed down. No way, he said to himself. Not me.

"It was a helluva place, wasn't it?" a voice interrupted.

Ben turned to see a man of about 80 in a suit that looked like it landed with aliens in the 1950s and a fedora that had been stuffed in a hat box more times than Marilyn Monroe showed her legs.

"What?" Ben asked.

"I used to come here every day," the man said. "By the way, my name's Frank. What's yours?"

"Ben."

"Well, Ben, I don't have anything to do. You want to go get a cup of coffee?"

"No, I gotta go. But I tell you what. I've got a coupon for that espresso bar around the corner. I think you'll find some good conversation there."

...

The more I thought about "my passions", I realized that I've had many throughout my life! Many of them are still with me and I'm just as passionate about them as I was when they were priority in my life.

When I was a little girl:

As a little girl, my dolls were my passion! I had a baby doll, a doll name Rose, a Terry Lee Doll and one would even go to the Saturday afternoon matinee movie with me.

When I was a teenager:

As a teenager, cheer-leading was my passion! Of course so were bobby socks and twin sweaters, jitterbugging and dating!

When I was in college:

In college days, Richard was my passion! This one, of course, remains my passion!!!

When I became a mother:

Allen and Todd were and always will be my passion!!!!

When I became a grandmother:

Taylor, Austin, and Alexa are and always will be my passion!!!

I am now a senior citizen and a widow:

It's a strange phenomenon to realize that you are not really needed day-to-day by anyone. So we seek new passions. Some continue forever, of course, but the time does come when you need to find things that interest you – things about which you can become passionate.

In my case, and at this stage of my life, and never losing sight that family is forever Number One, new passions must be discovered and developed! With that in mind, my new passions: My friends have always been important to me, they have become primary to me. I absolutely do not

know what I would do without them! ....and I genuinely mean this! My friends know what they mean to me and not a day goes by that I don't appreciate them, each one!

I glean enormous satisfaction in what I do on the radio. I am on the air Monday through Friday from 11:00 a.m. to noon. For over twelve years I co-anchored the Morning Show (6:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.) Monday through Friday. It is the fulfillment of a dream I've had most of my life. What a thrill! Even in college in the late 1950's and early 60s, I majored in Radio and Television! Almost 20 years I've been on the air and I have loved every minute, a passion?...no doubt about it!

Fairly recently, John and Karen Stoeckley (John is a local artist) saw in me something I didn't realize in myself....writing, not just for fun, or radio, but for publishing! They asked me to research and write captions for John's book, Reflections of Missouri! Now for me, once John's book was completed and published, it seemed to get in my blood. I take great pleasure in going to Amazon, zap up Reflections of Missouri and see it advertised, read the comments, and I can even make out my name at the bottom of the cover! J

When I say, it got in my blood....one was not enough!!!! I was approached by Arcadia Publishing to do a book on Louisiana for their Images Series! It has been so exciting....the Images Series is a pictorial book, the history of various cities and towns. I knew I didn't have the pictures I would need, but I knew who did, plus she has a degree in Journalism from the University of Missouri, Betty Allen. Betty and I put our heads together and we did IT !

The real challenge to this second book was the fact that we already had a publisher, therefore extremely strict "rules and regulations"! We were under a binding Contract! There were definite deadlines. Only so many words per caption, certain things on certain pages, only so many total words in the book, only so many pages with the last page number 127

and that page being on the right side. Truly, it was a REAL challenge and became a passion!

Just my own thought here, but I think maybe anything you work at, enjoy, love, and things that challenge you, become passions! I have had many in my life and for each one, I'm grateful....

I do know this is and has been a huge influence in my life. I don't know if it can be categorized as a passion, but I know it's been a very big part of my life... certainly important enough it needs mentioning: The four-fold way of life, as explained in the book, I Dare You, written by William H. Danforth. Part of this is "being your own self, at your very best, all the time", thus the four-square program: I have and continue to strive to live the four-fold way life, Mental (think tall), Social (smile tall), Physical (stand tall), Religious (live tall)! This was introduced to me apparently when I was just the right age I think. I was young, around 10 and I listened, and learned, and absorbed this philosophy. To this day I refer to I Dare You often....a passion, probably, right?!

There is no doubt but that the Louisiana Area Historical Museum is another of my passions! In this endeavor, it started 22 years ago when I was elected to the charter Board, then elected charter President, an office I continue to hold. You cannot work hard on anything for 22 plus years and not become passionate about it. There are two other charter members of the Board who remain active on the Board today...amazing!!!

At this point in my life, I hate to think how horrible life would be without my family, my friends. How boring life would be without the Louisiana Area Historical Museum, and oh my goodness how much I enjoy what I do on the radio and the writing I've done. What a wonderful life I have had and thanks to each of you in my life, in your own way make every day of my life complete....Thank you, each of you is a passion of mine!

I'd better stop here....I think I'm getting passionate about my PASSIONS !!!!!!!

• • •

## The Healing of Flesh Eating

Mikki Barber

Adult Poetry

... and there on the table lies the precision knife.  
To sever who I am and who I'm not.  
Beauty is what beauty does.

. not pretty when it rots .

I'm not your happy child, nor loving mother.  
Ghost with grave intentions, soul made of inventions.  
A molecule waiting to tampered. Minuscule wanting to be pampered.

The blade is dull, shall I push harder?  
Truly am a ghoul, pretending to be martyr.  
How could the signs get me down?  
When I chose the path and bounds?  
Complaining of unsteady ground, though feet have yet to be found.

It's not appealing when I'm caught.  
Tearing my skin, just to pull off.  
Watching as the pieces fall, holding breath as they rot.  
It is.

It does.  
Saying nothing, 'cause they have cause. Even in the moment of descend.  
Following as it falls... bidding the slip.  
"Oh, Coward be my name."  
Building face.  
Beauty.  
Beauty.  
It is.  
It does.  
When simply sought.

• • •

## We've and Adam minus Eve

Mikki Barber

Adult Poetry

We've become a world overdone, what a disposable day as the next the sun will be the same.

Seasons of rise and fall, rise like a rose, doomed at the bloom that was so longed to show 'em all.

Point of trying? To know is to act.

Reason for underlining? It's fair to nip before the attack.

However, acceleration is lame: we lack to obtain what we've gained...

Happiness is waiting to be bagged. That is what's in front of us, that is what we drag.

Fashionably collecting dust in and out of fads.

Conquered by time, only thing we have. It's our greatest foe.  
Either comes too soon or never goes.

Blessing though. That we can. Merely humans we're destined to be.  
Wisdom falls close to the tree; yet, the chances one would take,  
to chase the snake,  
back to the rose bush that leans.

• • •

# The Life and Death of Billy the Black Raspberry

Riley Perrine

Youth Fiction

Once upon a time, there was a black raspberry growing on a bush. His name was Billy. He liked his bush. The reason he liked his bush was, first of all, he had lots of friends to talk to; and the bush had sharp thorns to protect him. But, on a cool frosty morning, that all changed.

A man with a four wheeler drove up to the meadow. He walked over to the bush and he picked one of Billy's friends off the vine and ate him!!! The man said, "Yuck, too early, too sour." Then the man eagerly hopped on his four wheeler and drove off. Billy sighed a sigh of relief.

Five days later, the creepy man came back! He hopped off his four wheeler and looked at Billy's bush and said, "I think these berries are ready." He jogged over to his four wheeler and grabbed a bucket hidden by a container of gasoline. Then he walked over to the bush.

He started picking and picking, it was madness! He picked Sarah, Michael, Jared, Jenny and Cole. He also picked a lot of other berries too, but then he picked Billy. There were a lot of berries on top of him when the man finally left. Billy was smushed.

The man parked the four wheeler by a big white house. Billy was taken into the house and set on the counter.

First he was put in a bowl and then he was crushed, and he was just juices and bits of berry. Next, he was poured in a saucepot and the man put a dry substance in the pot with him.

Finally the pot started to boil, the man started to stir, everything was madness! It got hot, and the bubbles kept coming and coming. The man

took him off the flat surface and poured him into a big pitcher! Then Billy was poured into a jar. As he began to cool, he thought to himself, "Wow, I'm getting fat!" Soon after, he realized he was turning jellowy! It was at that precise moment that he realized he was not just Billy the Black Raspberry— he was Billy the Black Raspberry Jelly!!

He cooled and thickened; eventually he was taken down to the basement. After about 2 1/2 months, he was taken up into the kitchen and set on a table. He thought this was strange, but right then his friend Cole told him a funny joke and he stopped worrying about it. A few minutes later the man opened the jar. Billy wondered why he opened the jar when he had kept it closed for so long?

Then the big burly man dipped his knife into the jar and scooped up Billy and some of his friends and smeared them on a piece of toast. Then Billy realized that he was going to be eaten! He thought back to his days in the woods and his life in the basement. He felt the piece of toast being lifted up, and then went blank. He never woke up.

The End

Authors Note:

This is a make believe story of life and death. This is the everyday horror that vegetarians strike upon vegetables and fruits.

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# Raintree Arts Council

## LITERARY JOURNAL 2014

No poetry  
No fiction  
Short fiction  
Adult Youth

### Judges

Wish to remain  
anonymous

Financial assistance provided  
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Raintree Arts Council  
P.O. Box 251, Clarksville,  
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