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2008

### The Mockingbird

Department of Art and Design, East Tennessee State University

Department of Literature and Language, East Tennessee State University

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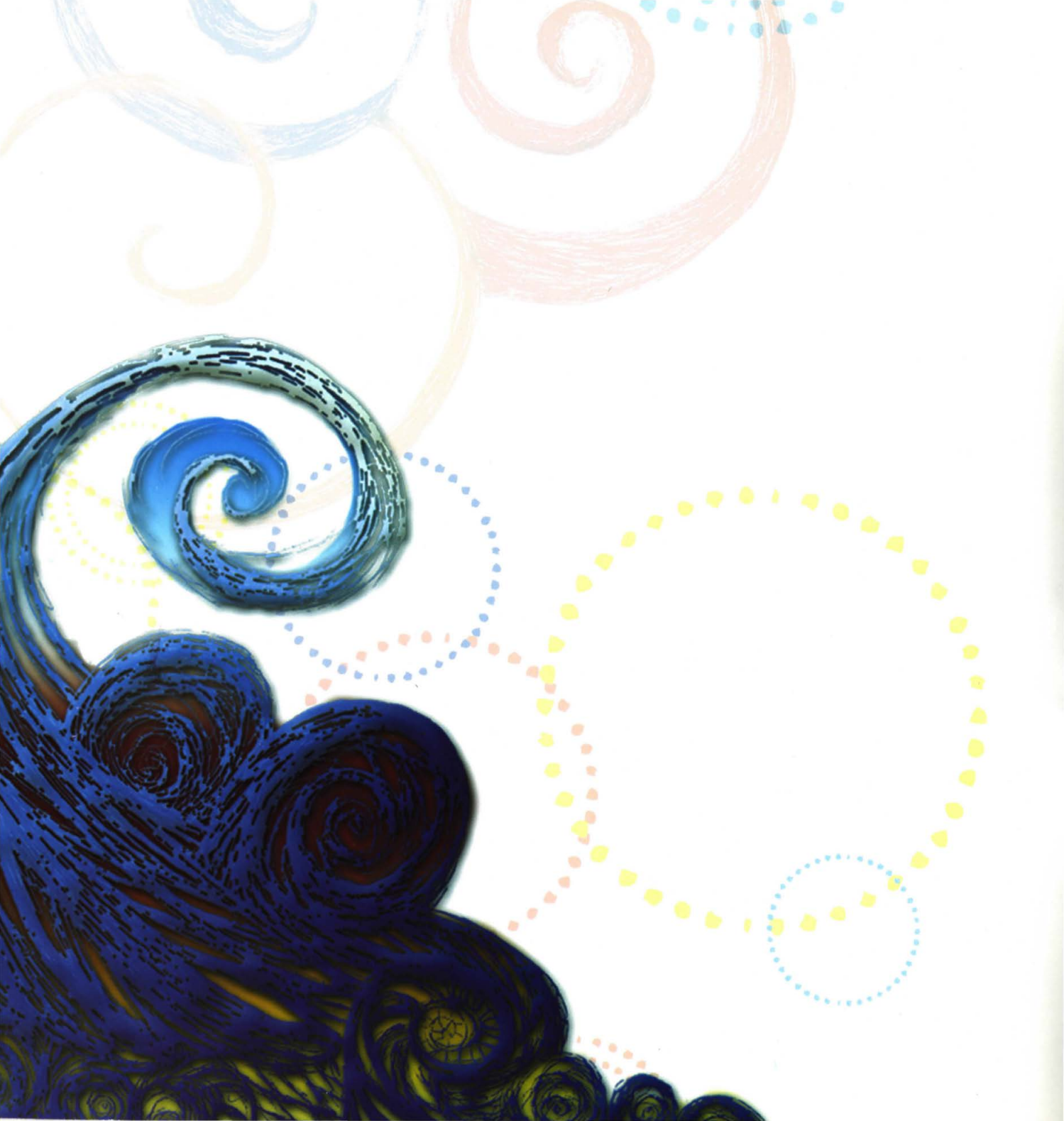
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The background is a complex, abstract painting. It features a central figure that appears to be a person or a bird, rendered in dark tones against a swirling, turbulent background. The colors are primarily dark blues, blacks, and reds, with some bright yellow and white highlights. The overall effect is one of intense, chaotic energy, reminiscent of the style of the Dutch painter J.M.W. Turner or the expressionist movement. The word "MOCKINGBIRD" is written across the center in a white, stylized, hand-drawn font.

MOCKINGBIRD



# MOCKINGBIRD | 2008



Annual Literary and Art Publication  
of East Tennessee State University

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### Special Thanks

East Tennessee State University

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Department of English, Dr. Judith B. Slagle, Chair of English Department

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B. Carroll Reece Memorial Museum

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Literary | Art

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## LITERARY JURORS | STATEMENTS

### Tyler Kepner, Non-Fiction:

Tyler Kepner is the Yankees beat writer for the *New York Times*. He joined the *Times* in 2000 after covering the Angels for the *Riverside (Calif.) Press-Enterprise* and then the Mariners for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. He attended Vanderbilt University on the Grantland Rice-Fred Russell Sportswriting Scholarship and grew up outside Philadelphia, where he published a baseball magazine while in high school. He lives with his wife and four children in Wilton, Connecticut.

### Jeanne G'Fellers, Fiction:

Jeanne G'Fellers is the author of three science fiction novels. Her novels have been awarded two Golden Crown Literary Society "Goldie" awards and have been nominated for three Lambda Literary and Gaylactic Spectrum Literary Awards, respectively. Jeanne is an instructor at ETSU and lives in Tennessee with her partner, their three children, three cats, and ever-fluctuating numbers of fish. She can be visited at [www.jeannegefellers.com](http://www.jeannegefellers.com).

### Marianne Worthington, Poetry:

Marianne Worthington is a Knoxville native. Her poetry chapbook, *Larger Bodies Than Mine* (Finishing Line Press, 2006), won the 2007 Appalachian Book of the Year Award in Poetry. A new collection of poems about women, country music, and murder ballads is forthcoming from MotesBooks in 2008. She is the book reviews editor for *Now & Then: The Appalachian Magazine*. She lives, writes, and teaches in Williamsburg, Kentucky.

## ART JUROR | STATEMENT

### Denise Stewart-Sanabria:

Denise Stewart-Sanabria was born in Massachusetts and received her BFA in Painting from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. She exhibits regularly in juried and invitational exhibits in both museums and galleries throughout the southeast. She has received over twenty awards during a six-year period from the Huntsville Museum of Art, the KMA, the Clarksville Custom House Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery. Upcoming exhibits include The Tennessee Art Commission Gallery in Nashville in July 2008. She exhibits at Hanson Gallery in Knoxville, TN, and 16 Patton in Asheville, NC. She is the art columnist for the *Knoxville Voice* and a freelance writer for *Number*, an independent art journal based in Memphis.

# EDITOR & ART DIRECTOR | NOTES

Jeff King | Editor

In reading the submissions for the *2008 Mockingbird* I discovered the wide range of voices possessed by ETSU students. The pieces selected for publication represent this variety. From light-hearted memoirs to wistful recollections, from stream-of-consciousness prose to fictional journal entries, from colloquialism (both serious and humorous) to Standard English, a different voice tells each story. I will know that I did a good job as editor if you hear these voices rather than mine. First and foremost, I would like to thank the authors and poets not only for providing these voices, but also for their help in determining exactly which punctuation mark or conjunctive works best to make that voice heard.

I would also like to thank the literary staff—Adam, Bethany, Caleb, and Jamie—for their help in narrowing down the field of entries. Special thanks go to Adam Pacton, whose keen eye added an extra layer of polish to all of the stories and poems. Thanks also to the judges—Jeanne, Marianne, and Tyler—for their help in the competition and for their quick responses. I would also like to acknowledge ETSU's own Pat Cronin, who agreed to judge a dramatic competition for the *Mockingbird*. We hope that next year we have enough entries to add dramatic pieces to the magazine. Thanks also to Dana and the rest of the design team for creating a wonderful issue. And, finally, thanks to Dr. Holmes for his endless assistance with my many questions.

Dana Alston | Art Director

Each entry in this book provides an avenue for thought. I invite you to contemplate the artwork, the poems, and the stories as they exist on their own and as they are now documented for the year 2008. I agree with Etienne Gilson that art and literary works cannot occur naturally and can only be seen when a specific individual has aspired to be create. I am pleased to have the opportunity to be a part of publishing this year's entries.

Valerie, Meranda, and Ryan, you have done more than simply serve as the design team. Your creative ideas, influences, teamwork, and overall effort are what made this year's design work. Thank you. The literary staff deserves special thanks as well. Jeff, thank you, for your thorough editing and sound advice.

Many thanks to Jonas, my parents, Sarah, and my younger sister, Gina, for the encouragement from her exclamation that "I was so gonna be famous" when she saw my design for the *Mockingbird*. I would also like to thank Duane Brown, Mrs. DeBord of Lincoln Memorial University, Dr. Wayne Dyer, Lisa Jones, the Department of Art and Design, and the English Department of ETSU. Jeanette, thank you for helping us, it has been a learning process.



First Place  
Daniel Marinelli

Mixed Media  
*And the Birds of Appetite*



Mixed Media / Paper, Linen, Milk Paint, Cypress,  
and Walnut

First Place  
*The Azores*

Poetry  
Jennifer Osborne

too good to ride in cargo  
you secured it between  
the seats of a puddle jumper to Lisbon  
and smiled firmly  
every time  
the stewardess eyed you.

too plain to stand  
with your bedroom suite  
you set it underneath  
Chanel suits in a closet corner  
and smiled  
every time

I used to slip away from your hold  
to find what secrets lived inside its boxes.

Now, old age drags you away  
and your boxes stacked inside their chest  
are here with me

chipped and roughed, no jewels for little hands.

I cannot bear to paint it,  
to strip it of your scent,  
to steal you from me.



## First Place Marshall Parrent

Captain Gabriel Wakeman, of the *Haizum*, a 58-foot purse seine out of Kodiak Island, Alaska, ordered crewmembers Terrence Howard and Bill Haskell to deploy the inflatable dinghy. Jonas Freidrich and Todd Bingham were ordered to untie Artie Reynolds from the fish cages and bring him up from the hold. Captain Wakeman briefed the remaining crew on his intentions with Reynolds, and when he called for objections, there were none.

Terrence Howard and Bill Haskell rowed the dinghy while Captain Wakeman kept watch over Artie. The short trip from the vessel to the small, rocky, forsaken island in the Bering Sea was a quiet one, save for Artie's crying, and the squawking of the gulls on the rocks, and the occasional splash of nearby Northern fur seals. Haskell had spotted the tiny, uncharted isle from the bridge, and Captain Wakeman sailed around it while Bingham combed the volcanic mass for Anthony Edlemeyer. Aboard the dark and foggy Bering Sea, Wakeman sounded the horn, hoping to acquire Anthony's attention; he knew it was futile, however. He judged that by the time Artie Reynolds had stabbed Anthony Edlemeyer in the chest and back and tossed him overboard—the man had admitted to it after being assaulted by his crew once Edlemeyer's disappearance was discovered—that Edlemeyer's body had been swept west.

They reached the island, and Terrence Howard, who stood at six feet and four inches, a strong and swollen man, snatched Artie Reynolds by the neck and tossed him onto the beach. When Reynolds attempted to rise, Howard slugged him across the temple with a vicious right hook, and again with a left to the back of the head. Captain Wakeman ordered him to stop and to help Haskell fetch Anthony Edlemeyer. The Captain's order was shallow.

The peaceful, rested corpse lay face up on the sparse sliver of silver beach, arms outstretched, with bits of driftwood peppered around it. A Leatherman tool with the pliers and scissors splayed open on the sand rested at the corpse's side, along with a worn, black Zippo lighter. Captain Wakeman collected these items, and Howard and

## Fiction *The Corpse of Anthony Edlemeyer*

Haskell scooped the corpse up hastily, securing its legs and hands, and carried it towards the dinghy. Where the corpse had lain was a pool of blood soaked into the sand, and it was crimson and thick and moist.

Captain Wakeman pulled a Bowie knife from his belt, the serrated blade caked in flesh and blood, and tossed it near Artie Reynolds. He knelt down close to Artie. The young man was crying and punch-drunk and mumbling. Wakeman whispered to him, staring beyond the man and over into the cropping of spongy, black rocks meters from the shore. After a few moments, the Captain returned to the dinghy, and the crew shoved off, rowing back towards their ship. The three men sat with their backs to the island and to the man that they had left behind.

\*\*\*

*There it is.*

*It is wet but it is still there and I doubt that it will light but it is still there. I am not even going to try it. I will waste my time and give myself false hope. It was in the water too long, and so was I. Too, too long. But it is there and that makes me happy.*

*We shall see.*

*Look at all of you! If I had the energy, I would throw a rock at all of you. I have great aim, fellas. If this is your island...well, it was before I arrived. I am claiming it now. You all have it because of your wings and that is your only stake to this place. Don't worry...I will leave it to you all after I am gone.*

*If I leave.*

*Don't talk that way, Anthony. It's not good to talk that way. I came here by chance, and what a miracle: birds! And since I arrived with such dumb luck, I believe it is only fair that I take over this little place. I will share it till the end, and return it once I leave. And don't worry about that, the whole bunch of you. I shall leave. One way or another.*

*Don't talk that way. Not now. Don't talk that way and hold yourself together. It's no wonder I didn't sink with these holes. It aches, though. It aches but I don't feel it as much as the cold. Jesus, am I cold.*

*Again...don't talk that way, son.*

*We were having a good run, weren't we? A few more days of fishing like that and all of us would be set. Just a few more days is all we needed, I reckon. We were having a good run of it.*

*"We had a good run of it,"* Anthony muttered to the birds in the air and on the rocks behind him. He chuckled pensively.

*They don't give a damn. I shouldn't worry myself with that. But we were having a good run of it, though. More pink salmon than I have ever seen in my life. Some sockeyes, too. And I bet the cap is mad about all of this mess. We were gonna head out to a new spot, with less of a wait. This is going to put a kink in those plans, I reckon.*

*Ah, it's nothing to worry about now. I am sure the cap ain't too mad. And certainly he knows I am not here on my own accord.*

*Not that they know I'm here. It doesn't matter now.*

*Stop thinking. Period. No use in any of that right now.*

\*\*\*

*Oh! She should have known better! I would have let them go and they could be happy and I wouldn't have given a damn about any of it!*

*That's right, Mandy. Away you would have gone, with him, and that would have been that, sweetheart. I wanted that. Just as long as you left and I never heard from you again. The both of you. You never liked it here, anyway. Either of you. Hell, you didn't like it anywhere in the lower forty-eight, so what was the goddamn difference?! It's quiet on the island, and in Sitka. You could have just left for Seattle and went down to Van Meter and been gone. Gone, gone, gone, and taken him with you. Let him deal with you for a while. And I knew, Mandy, and so did everyone else and Artie knew that I knew and that I did not care. Everyone talked about it behind my back but they knew that I knew and that I did not care. I was happy were I was. Perhaps I was wrong, Mandy, to think that way, but you have never tried to be happy a single day in your life.*

## First Place The Corpse of Anthony Edlemeyer

Ah, damn it! I should have talked to your friend. She was beautiful. I bet she would have loved it up here. I should have talked to her but you sat in my lap first and kissed me and I was done after that. Foolishly.

Autumn...that was her name, I think. Yes, Autumn, Autumn Dawn. I wonder what her last name was. I don't recall now. It must be a lovely name. Autumn Dawn is a lovely name.

Yes, the both of you could have left and I would not have said a single word and I would have been happier than I have ever been, Mandy. You have no idea. Or perhaps you do, I don't know.

I am not a fool, woman, and I know things. You just couldn't stand the fact that I was happy. In this marriage and happy, regardless of how you felt about everything. Not my fault you have hated every place we have been, and all of this was your idea. I did not expect that I would love this place, and I did fall in love with this place, and that is not my fault. I am grateful to you for that, if nothing else. And it is not my fault that you are unhappy. I told you to leave. I told you that I would never leave, not now.

Everyone knew and so did I, and why Artie got on the goddamn boat with us when he knew that I knew and everyone else knew...I don't know.

Did he not know that I did not care?!

\*\*\*

For the life of me—

What a damn silly expression.

How about God in heaven?

Oh, He is there all right. The

Father. Him. He. I will accept that. I have never before, but for right now I shall. Is that wrong? Ah, goddamn it, it doesn't matter. Now or never, and why the hell not? I see no reason why it could be wrong, other than it might be cheating. Worship your whole life and you go to heaven. Sin your whole life, and if you are lucky enough to have a death bed, or a space of time between this world and the next of some sort, and you embrace it and accept it....

Why not cheat that way? We do it all of the time! I will start now. No one is around to catch me. No one will know the difference.

Oh, but look at that sun. That in arctic sun...is it September? It gets dark September. Ah, you all know that, don't you, birds? And you are still here. Afraid of losing your island, are we?

Never fear, friends. Men die and they leave everything behind. I know that much.

God, who are thou in Heaven, honored be thy name....

Hold tight, son. Hold it and try not to think about it anymore than you have to. More than enough time has passed for you to not worry about it any longer. Worry about anything any longer. I don't know how much time I spent in that water. The current was strong and swift and it carried me here fast. Very fast.

I was there...at honored be thy name. I will leave it at that because I do not know much else. I cannot cheat that. God knows that. Don't ya?

\*\*\*

Three times now. It's still there. I don't need to keep checking. It won't light, no matter how much I hope it will. I should try it, though, at some point. Just for the hell of it. Something to do will help me focus.

I need that. Yes, yes I do.

Anthony rolled slightly to his left, looked about and reached for a piece of driftwood. He drew it close to him, lazily dragging it atop the wet sand.

My, this is silly. I should just rest.

I am not too cold yet. Not yet. I am far enough from the water, but if the tide should rise, which it will, I should save my strength to climb up on those rocks. It will come at night. Perhaps I will try to move there tonight.

Yes, if you are still here tonight....

Don't think that way. Don't think that way. Grab some more of that there, if you can.

Anthony rolled over further and snagged with his index and middle finger another piece of driftwood. It was small and the knots smooth.

What am I going to do with a fire, anyway? Keep warm, but I'm just cold enough now not to worry about being cold anymore. Too cold now. That's why I need to get warm, even if I don't think I am cold anymore.

## Fiction Marshall Parrent

I need to worry more about keeping this hole shut and that's it. They are in my back. Plural! Deep, I believe. I should just lie here, for now.

\*\*\*

Halibut. I love halibut.

There is nothing like the longliners. I would rather have been with the longliners, but Captain Wakeman said that his greenhorn had bailed out on him.

I was a greenhorn once. Weren't we all? Even Wakeman was a greenhorn. Hard to imagine that. I haven't been called a greenhorn for almost six months now. Wakeman gave me a chance. Better than working in the damn cannery. Mandy hated the cannery. Oh, I'm sure she just can't wait to get out of there now.

Ah, but the halibut. Ugliest damn fish in the sea, in my opinion. I'll miss that most of all. To hell with everything else. Nothing is more exciting than seeing that flicker of white fish deep down in the black water, pulling it up closer and closer to the surface, feeling it fight like hell on the line.

Two hundred and eighty-five pounds. That's the largest I have ever caught. Ugly damn fish. You get used to beating them with the bat after a while. Mandy never wanted to hear about it. Wakeman told me once about pulling up a ten footer, four hundred and thirty pounds. It took two men half an hour to beat the poor bastard to death.

Ah, halibut. Ugly damn fish. I pulled it up and it was grand. Ugly and flat, snagging it hard and seeing that long streak of white flesh reluctantly surfacing, belly up.

Like thoughts, Anthony. You pull them up from down deep and some times they are ugly.

Ah, halibut. Don't get all philosophical now. It's not worth the time. Maybe time for theology. The greatest theologians were fantastic sinners and I have not sinned enough. Even if I did beat a great old fish to death.

Can't believe she never wanted to hear about it. Never gave me a chance to talk about it. Yes, you two could have left and I would have been just happy with all of that.

## First Place Marshall Parrent

*song out of that and it will be my song. Ah, Jesus, I can't sing for shit. But I will sing it and it will be nice to have a song about that. Hold it tight and it will be all right.*

*I think he hit my breast bone. He didn't get through it though, I believe. What do I know about any of that? I can't think about that right now.*

*Hold it tight and it will be all right. Yes, sir. Hold it tight, and it will be all right. That sonofabitch. I'll kill them both myself, if I get the chance. Maybe then I will have what it takes to be a proper theologian.*

\*\*\*

*Leave my ghost here to haunt this island. I will scare the birds away. Other boats will troll by and wonder why there is not a bird in sight. Someone might see my bones.*

*I don't care. Do whatever You will with me. I won't cheat You now, okay? Not now. I am too goddamned tired for that, and I don't know where my head is. Too many thoughts. Just too damn many right now.*

\*\*\*

*I knew it wouldn't light. How much time has passed here? I can never tell with that sun. It is day now, but you can never tell some times in June.*

*But it is not June and I am further south than what I am used to. Never thought about it much on the water. The skip tells you to sleep, and you sleep. He tells you to cook, and you cook. He tells you to sack the cork line, and you sack the cork line. He tells you to run the skiff, and you run it. And he tells you how long we have to wait till we can drop the net and when to drop it and when to purse it. There is a job to do, and you just have to understand that. No one is there to sleep or eat or wait in line, even if we have to do all of those things. To hell with everything else but fishing when you are out there. To hell with time.*

*Damn thing ain't gonna light. Too wet. Too damn wet and it won't light. Not in my future.*

*Don't talk like that. It's useless. I haven't got the time to be thinking about that. Shouldn't have allowed myself to think that it would light. Damn stupid of me to do that. I have*

## Fiction

### *The Corpse of Anthony Edlemeyer*

*my knife with me, don't I? If I have to die here...you shouldn't think like that, but I will, anyway. To hell with what I think about that. But, if I have to die here...hell, why not in such a place? It is mine, even if the birds were here first and they have no choice in sharing. I like being alone.*

Anthony Edlemeyer coughed violently, and it hurt. He bellowed in agony, and he could hear the birds behind him fly up, startled, and then settle back down on the somber, sooty rocks.

*Birds, I will leave it all to you, when I am through. And I will leave you this island, when I am through.*

\*\*\*

*A cigarette would be good now. There are two cartons in my duffel, but that does me no good right now. I have wanted to quit, anyway, so why not start now?*

*What does it matter? Quitting? I don't need to quit now. But, I have always wanted to, and I am tired of it. I would love to have one right now.*

*Oh God! I pray for the very thing that I have prayed to do without!*

*I hope that they do not find me. What for? What will they do with me?*

\*\*\*

*Oh father! Dad! You never knew me!*

Anthony Edlemeyer sobbed feebly aloud. A gang of gray birds leapt up into the wind and flew over him, screeching and barking at the dim, dusky sun. The last of the pain was gone, and he no longer felt cold, and he no longer felt wet. He felt the pearly clouds above swallow his body, and his mind sink into the pale, watery sand. And all at once, only a corpse remained.

\*\*\*

Captain Wakeman requested that Haskell and Howard carry Edlemeyer from the hold and out onto the docks and to the hearse waiting to receive the body. Fishermen from every dock and every pub had already heard what had happened and who was killed and who had killed him. They knew it was only a matter of time.

"Sign these," the harbormaster ordered Captain Wakeman. They were the blue forms.

"I will," Wakeman said. "Never thought you would have found that one."

"Neither did I. Haskell spotted the atoll and we saw him there."

Yes, that is some body, Captain Wakeman considered. *Not anything like I have seen before. Never seen a body like that. Bodies don't look like that. Not when you die like that. I have seen a lot of bodies and many that met their end a lot worse and they were violent ends.*

"Coast Guard picked up Reynolds already," the harbormaster reported. "He should have taken the easy way out. I imagine that's why you left him there like you did. You going to call Tony's wife?"

"Yes, I will. I won't like it."

"She's probably heard by now."

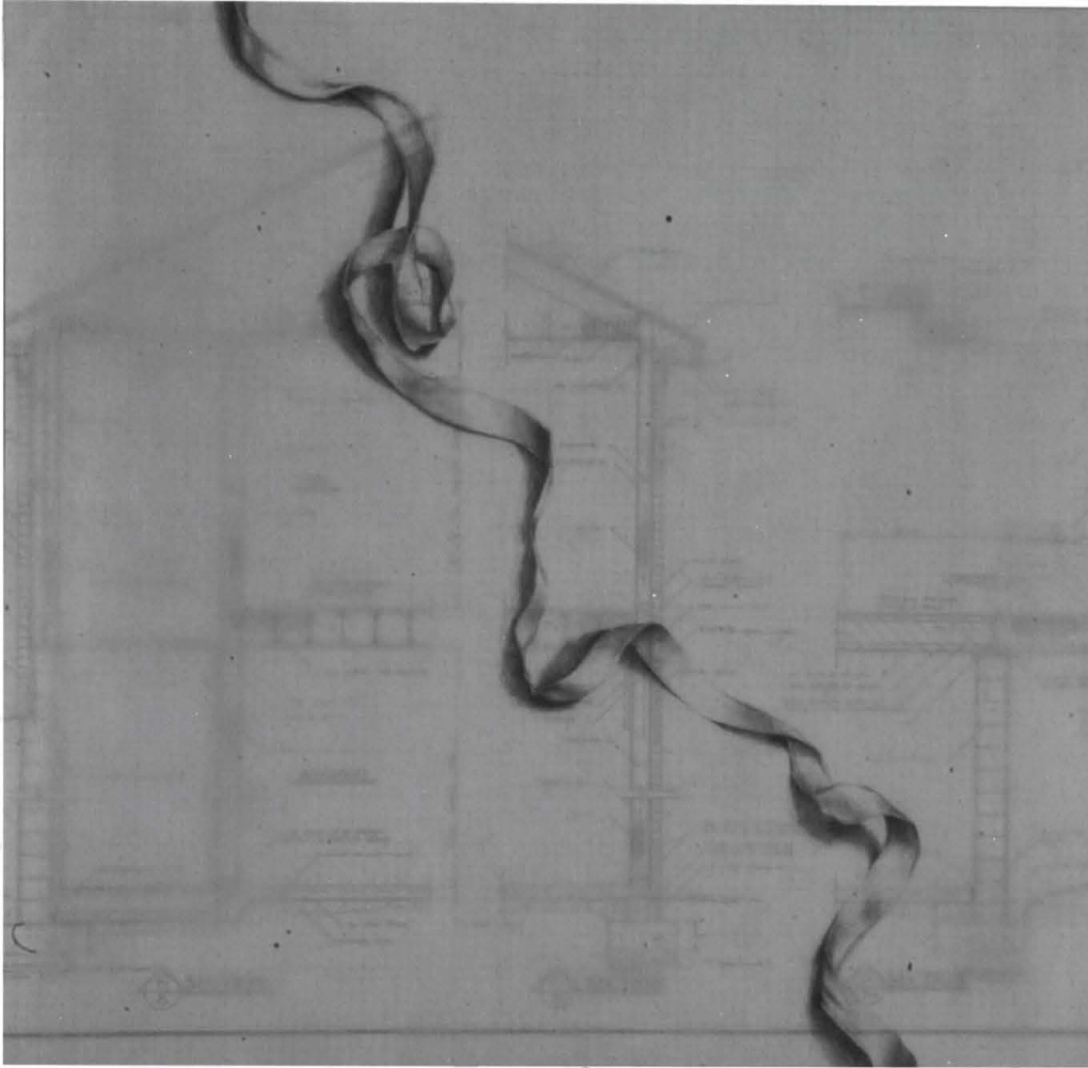
"I'll call her anyway. Let her know that Reynolds is in jail."

The hearse pursued a police car that parted the crowd of onlookers. Captain Wakeman filled out the blue forms hastily, and slapped them against the harbormaster's chest. He grunted, annoyed, snatched them from Wakeman, and slid the forms beneath the stack of papers secured on his clipboard.

*Damn these papers. I have seen enough of them. I have seen enough of everything.*

Third Place  
*Figure No. 1*

Mixed Media  
Christine Buchanan



Mixed Media / Graphite on Graph Paper on Blueprint



Second Place  
Karen Ankabrandt

Poetry  
*Morning Prayer*

Something in their manner, in the way they move:  
her in her long nightgown  
trailing, gliding into the room with one hand placed  
delicately on her lower back,  
head lowered, eyes she can barely raise,  
and him drawing to her side to bend  
with every care: to place a cushion on her seat,  
pour steaming coffee in her mug,  
add a piece of buttered toast to the scrambled eggs on her plate;  
then to seat himself, take her hand, and bow with her,  
sends my sleepy thoughts from this hallway view  
to a lake not far from here,  
where one time I saw an injured swan and her mate  
pause along the reeds to bend their heads

Second Place  
*Sometimes I've believed as many  
as six impossible things before breakfast.*

Intaglio Print  
Jessica Augier



Intaglio Print

SECOND PLACE





## Second Place Ellie Rinehart

As I look out the window perched atop the second floor of my dad's sunny corner office in a medical building, I view a half mile stretch of West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Columbia, Tennessee. Somewhere between ten and twenty people squeeze under the awning of Suzie's Gift Shop, fighting for the last of the morning's shade. Hundreds more are sprawled on both sides of the congested street vying for the best lawn chair positioning. Moms with children in little red wagons and fathers carrying coolers full of liquid to keep the little ones hydrated scurry down the sidewalk until they can find a neighbor or friend who will lend them a slab of their concrete territory. Excitement is in the air.

An out-of-towner unacquainted with the intermingling of the agrarian lifestyle and the modern day city of Columbia may be somewhat taken aback by what now stares back at them. Down on the fuming blacktop, mules—hundreds and hundreds of mules—are lined up, dressed in their finest attire—beautiful leather saddle and bridle ensembles adorning freshly washed coats and manes. It's the first weekend in April, and Mule Day has finally arrived. This means the biggest day of the year for most of these four-legged creatures. They've all awoken, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed this early Saturday morning to haul their owners into town for a very special occasion. And like the anxious feet of so many little ones rushing down the stairs on Christmas morning, these mules now begin fretfully stomping their hooves as they await their turn to strut their stuff for the "big guns," the judges who will decide of which of these fine specimens—products of dedicated breeding—will go home with first prize in the big parade. With over two hundred thousand attendees, just a little under seven times the population of Columbia, it is the biggest celebration in Maury County, the celebration of one of the hardest working beasts of burden known to man: the mule.

## Non-Fiction

### *Mule Day: A Little Homespun Fun for the Good Ol' Boys and Girls of Columbia, Tennessee*

#### *Little County, Lot of History*

There is plenty of fun to be had in Maury County, Tennessee, a little county nestled in the shadow of the neighboring Nashville, but which boasts a population boom that recently helped one of its cities, Spring Hill, attain the status of "third fastest growing city in the country." Maury County residents were all quite proud. The county claims a number of historical sites to keep even the most critical observer interested for hours. The first of these is the James K. Polk Memorial Home. For those who may have forgotten the exact order of the presidents that you were sure to have memorized in middle school, Polk was the eleventh president of the United States of America. He inhabited the White House from 1845 to 1849. Although he may not have left a very substantial legacy to the rest of the country, he did leave a fairly substantial home in Columbia which now serves as a museum of sorts and brings in a handful of tourists every year, a pittance in comparison with Mule Day which typically brings in just a little under seven times the population of Columbia in observers and participants. Other historical sites include the Athenaeum, where sons and daughters of the confederacy are trained in the ways of their ancestors—chivalry, ballroom dancing, and the art of parading about in hoop skirts, just to name a few. Rattle and Snap is another estate with an interesting background. William Polk confiscated this plantation (all 5648 acres of it), and the mansion which rests on it, in a high risk game of dice from the North Carolina governor, from whence the title "Rattle and Snap" derived.

It is fair to say that there are many important historical landmarks in Maury County, and to this day it still produces a few national celebrities every now and then. For anyone who knows anything about NASCAR, the name Sterling Marlin should ring a bell. Also, Lynette Cole, Miss USA 2000, originated from that quaint little county. All that said, the one tradition that stands out in the minds of any

Columbian, the real claim to fame, is the festival held every first weekend in April for the past 130 years.

#### *Mules on Parade*

The big parade begins at the courthouse and continues on for some two miles where families, friends, and curious passers-by have stop to observe one of Maury County's longest standing traditions. Against the backdrop of the Athenaeum and the home of this country's eleventh president, these stout creatures pass by, pulling a multitude of wagons and floats behind them. Decked out in all their regalia, with tails and manes braided in brightly-colored ribbons, and their coats freshly washed, they seem to be putting on only the finest airs. However, once I'm no longer viewing this extravagant scene from inside my dad's office, "the finest airs" is no longer a phrase that comes to mind. I realize that the fumes on the streets are a direct result of mule pies baking on the pavement. But even this altogether rancid odor disappears when masked by the smell of heaven on earth: funnel cakes, which, to me, are the highlight of the event and keep me coming back year after year.

A special insert in the local paper, "Cheers for the Long Ears," announces this year's menu available from one of many street vendors ready to serve the hungry onlookers: pork skins, roasted corn, and cotton candy. There are also plenty of other vendors out there with all sorts of goods to sell: guys marketing the shirts they put so much thought and effort into designing (my favorite of which happens to play off the old movie with a "JurASSic Park" logo...classic). There are also a plethora of hats and bumper stickers to be had. In fact, just the other day I was driving down I-40 when an Astro van with a "Mule Day, Columbia, TN" sticker on it flew past me. The celebration is a highly marketed affair, to say the least.

#### *Lovers of Mules*

The event seems to be all at once a reflection of days gone by and a peek inside a world that still exists. Mule Day

## Second Place

### *Mule Day: A Little Homespun Fun for the Good Ol' Boys and Girls of Columbia, Tennessee*

began in 1876 as a celebration of the hardy livestock that had helped the locals plow through many a tobacco field and bring in trade from all parts of the country. It was really a show of appreciation to the fine animals and their loving breeders who fashioned the animals into what they are today. And they paid no small price in that endeavor. Seeing as how only one in ten million mules are fertile (which is quite possibly where their reputation as stubborn began) breeders had to find some way of working around that obstacle. The main form of breeding quickly became mating a mare horse and a male donkey, known affectionately as the ass. The breeders were patient workers and eventually discovered combinations of mating partners that

would produce mules for their otherwise backbreaking labor. Later on, mules for showing and jumping were also developed. In fact, the work that these breeders did was so significant that, in the beginning, the April festivity was known as Breeder's Day. Eventually the mules started getting the credit though, and the name was changed to Livestock Day and then the catchier Mule Day which seems to have stuck.

Lots of good folks just out looking for a good time will find themselves plenty occupied when they arrive downtown. Among the featured attractions are included a knife and coin show, a liar's contest (advertised in the paper with the slogan "A good time for everyone, and that's the truth!"),

## Non-Fiction Ellie Rinehart

a checkers contest at the senior citizens building, a mule pulling, a clogging exhibition performed by the "Mule Town Stompers," and, just in case none of these events tickle your fancy, be sure to stick around for the crowning of the mule king and queen. Criteria for the queen involve service and a well-written essay. Criteria for the king include good breeding and grooming and showing. It's always a match made in heaven! The whole weekend is a fun, family-oriented affair that is sure to please (most) everyone. Just be sure if you ever have the gratifying experience of sharing in this tradition, that you don't miss out on the best part. It would be a shame to leave without a taste of the famous deep fried funnel cake.

SECOND PLACE

Fourth Place  
Fletcher Dyer

Steel  
*Tree of Life*



Steel

Third Place  
*Pine Mountain Road*

Poetry  
T. M. Williams

that Pine Mountain road was black as coal  
early evenin's dyin light—  
laid to rest behind the trees,  
buried behind that big ol mountain—  
was out, too brief to light my way

but I knew that dusty road so well  
knew it backwards  
back home  
knew it forwards

back home  
I remember waitin all evenin for im  
prayin for God to let me see  
the sky of his eyes  
peekin through the pitch powder  
that hid his face  
please God let me see em  
before the evenin light's gone

I remember waitin all night  
for that slow light to break  
for the sun to peek its lazy eyes up over the ridge  
but it didn't rear its ugly head  
til right around 9:30.

I don't number hours,  
stopped dividin days.  
that don't matter much  
when you're home.  
Mom makes coffee at all hours  
and the livin room lamp's always on.

slidin down that big ol mountain  
round the curves that strangle  
the black face  
pf the crushin rock,  
leavin Kentucky  
and you there to wait



## First Place Amber Nixon

One month and eight days was all we got out of our first year of marriage. I expected it to be longer, but my new husband Jonathan had to do his duty. Jonathan joined the Army Reserves on October 15, 2003, not knowing where the journey would lead him until a cold day in March in 2005. Although Jonathan had many regrets about his decision to join the Army Reserves, he was in the Army now, and the Army forced him to abide by their rules.

We were married on February 12, 2005 at a small church in Virginia. It was the best day of my life! I worked at a gas station in Greeneville, Tennessee, where my husband and I lived and I went to school at Tusculum College. Every night, Jonathan came to visit me at my job and we ate dinner together in the small one-room gas station.

On the evening of March 6, 2005 Jonathan brought hot dogs and chili that he had made at home. He did not say much, though, now that I think about it. We made small talk about how our days went, but his responses were short and reserved. He hugged me before he went home; the hug was long and his arms nearly squeezed the breath out of me. I could truly feel his love through that hug. I continued working the rest of the night, and he went home.

My shift at work ended at ten o'clock, and I made the one-minute drive to our small, one-bedroom apartment on the hill. I walked in the door and gave Jonathan a hug and kiss as I usually did since we were newlyweds. As I felt his arms close around me and rest on my hips, I turned my head, laid it on his chest, and gazed into the mirror at the end of the hallway. I could hear his heart beating against his chest.

He said, "I got deployed."

That was all it took for my eyes to burst into tears and my stomach to curl up into a knot. A million thoughts ran through my mind at that point, but all I could say was, "No!" I felt as though my heart had ripped out of my chest and my life was ending. I later found that this feeling was nothing compared to the feeling that I had after he actually left. The rest of the night was pretty glum. We watched television, but what we

## Non-Fiction *Desert Sand Blows Away Army Wife's Dreams of Marriage*

watched remains insignificant in my mind; all I thought about was how my life was about to take a drastic change and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

We had two weeks until he would leave. During these two weeks, Jonathan made frequent trips to his unit to make sure everything was ready for his deployment. We lived those two weeks as if we were dying; we did everything together and spent a lot of time snuggling and talking about how it would be when he returned home. There were times when I started crying just because I realized what was about to happen.

At the end of the two weeks, Jonathan would leave this life behind and enter a new, military life for nine months in Kuwait. His bags were packed and sitting in front of the door ready to go to the airport the next morning. We went to bed that night as we did any other night, but we tried to stay up as long as we could to make our time together last longer. The next thing I knew, the alarm sounded off and the bright red time display on the clock flashed 3:30 a.m.—it was time to wake up and take Jonathan to the airport. He loaded his bags into the car.

It is funny that I do not remember anything about that morning. It has now been two years since Jonathan left and that morning still remains a blur in my mind. It is as if it was all just a dream and never really happened. It does not take up any space in time and the events that occurred during that time do not exist.

Jonathan drove the 1997 Saturn to the airport down the curvy country road. I could not stop looking at him because I knew that this would be our last time alone for a long while. There was an awkward silence lingering in the air; it was broken by the sniffing of my nose accompanied by tears and by the sound of my voice as I tried to comfort Jonathan and myself with conversation.

"I love you," I muttered as I laid my cold hand on Jonathan's leg, leaned closer to him, and laid my head on his shoulder. I could smell his deodorant: Men's Degree Ultra Dry in Cool Rush scent. I loved that smell and it would

make me think of my husband from that moment on.

"I love you too, baby," he said as he looked over at me and smiled his precious closed-mouth smile that always made me grin ear-to-ear.

"I can't do this! What am I going to do without you?" I yelped out as the tears became so intense that I could barely see Jonathan, who sat only a foot away from me.

"You can do it, baby. You're strong; I know you are. I'll call you every chance I can and I'll miss you like crazy." He reassured me with these words and tried to comfort me in my frenzy.

"I'll never leave you no matter what. I love you so much and I want you to know that I'll be right here waiting on you when you come home," I said with confidence. I knew this was something he wanted and needed to hear before he left, but it was also the complete truth. I would wait a lifetime just to spend a minute with Jonathan.

"I know you will and I'll be home as soon as I can to see you," he replied with confidence. He knew our love was strong and would not falter through this test of our relationship.

As Jonathan drove down the curvy road towards the airport, I locked my eyes on him in fascination. It's strange the minor details that you notice when you really look at a person. Jonathan had the most beautiful eyelashes; they were so long and handsome. As I looked into his precious, jade-green eyes, I could tell that he was trying hard to hold back his tears, just like me. Although he was a tough Army man, he could not hold back his feelings of love for me. This made me feel better and less like a sissy for crying. He was wearing his BDU's and Army boots. He had a clean-shaven face and barely any hair; that was how the Army liked its men. As we neared the airport, Jonathan seemed so content at driving, almost as if he was in another world already. He didn't talk much, but I guess he was just thinking, too. The drive lasted forty minutes, but seemed like only sixty seconds in my heart; the sounds of airplanes taking off and landing made me snap back into reality.

## First Place *Desert Sand Blows Away Army Wife's Dreams of Marriage*

Jonathan parked the car and we walked into the airport with his luggage. His mom, dad, and sister waited inside the airport to tell their son or brother farewell as he left for his journey. We stood in line to weigh his bags and gave them to the clerk at the desk to put onto the plane. I felt so proud to be standing next to a soldier who was leaving for his duty overseas, but, at the same time, I did not want to give him up. He was my new husband, and I just wanted to be normal and live a normal life, something you cannot do if you are the wife of a soldier. We finished the baggage procedure and took a seat with the other soldiers and their families. I wanted to spend some quality time with Jonathan, knowing that these minutes were actually the last ones that we had together before he left, but I knew this would be impossible since his mom was there, too. At that time, I thought she hated me and resented me, but now I have grown to love her. I know that she loved Jonathan just as much as I did and only wanted what was best for him, too. We all sat and chatted about where Jonathan was actually going and when he would be arriving there. He told us about the seven-hour time difference between Tennessee and Kuwait. Although I worried about his safety, he lied and reassured me that Kuwait was extremely safe and that many soldiers take their vacations there because of its leisure and safety.

Although we arrived at the airport at about 4:10 a.m., the plane did not actually leave until about 5:30. Jonathan's dad said it was the Army's way: "Hurry up and wait." The chairs in the airport were cold, hard, and unwelcoming. My eyes watched the clock as I waited for the voice from the loudspeaker to summon my husband and take him away in one breath. With that thought, the call came and Jonathan stood to his feet to get in line to board the plane with the rest of his unit.

I noticed that there was another young couple in line in front of us. I would later come to know the young woman as Sarah and she would be a good friend to me throughout my husband's deployment. The guy's name

was Jason and they were also newlyweds who were married in December of 2004. It was good to know that other people were going through the same thing that we were experiencing.

The Army did not allow physical contact from a soldier to any family member while in uniform. I knew this rule, but simply ignored it when I gave my husband a big hug and kiss. That was the last time that I saw my husband for six months until he came home on a two-week leave from Kuwait in September. I stood back and watched as he walked with the other soldiers down the hallway to the waiting room to board the plane. I wanted to cry, but no tears came from my eyes. I knew that I had to be strong in front of his family and that I would have my own time to mourn his departure when I went home, alone and safe in my own apartment. I walked back to the place where his mom, dad, and sister waited and we all went upstairs to watch the plane take off. I did not want to watch the take-off because that would confirm the fact that he actually left; I wanted to go home right then, but I knew that everyone expected me to wait until the plane left.

We stood outside in the freezing March winds for what seemed like hours but was actually only forty-five minutes. I saw my husband walk alone out to the plane, wave at us, and step inside the door of the winged-machine that would take him so far away from me in just an instant. The roaring of the plane's engines filled my ears and became louder as the plane was about to take off. I didn't feel anything at that point; I was still in shock from the whole event of losing my husband. The plane lined up with the runway. As it took off, I watched as it disappeared into the bright morning sky that suddenly seemed to look so dull through my tear-clouded eyes.

I noticed the girl that was in line in front of me and made conversation with her. We exchanged phone numbers and decided that it would be nice to have someone to talk to who was in the same situation. Jonathan's family asked me if I wanted to go to breakfast with them since it was only 6:15. I should have gone, but I needed time alone to

## Non-Fiction Amber Nixon

sort out my feelings about what had just happened.

I walked alone out to the car and sat in the driver's seat. At that moment, I began to cry because I noticed that the seat was scooted as far away from the pedals as it would go; this is how my husband sat when driving the car. I, being short, sat very close to the steering wheel. That was when the fact that he was gone really hit me. I realized at that moment that he was not here and would not be for a very long time.

On the long drive home, I could hardly see the road for the tears that flooded my eyes. The fact that my husband was gone was now a reality and there was nothing I could do to bring him home. I needed someone to talk to so I called my friend Kayla on my cell phone. She was not awake at that early hour of the morning, but was not upset that I had called so early. She could not drive, but wanted me to come to her house to get her so we could talk in person and she could comfort me. I picked her up from her house and we went to my apartment to talk and try to relax. I decided that I needed to clean because I was upset and nervous and I needed to keep busy doing something. Kayla talked to me and helped me clean up my apartment. Since the apartment was very small, it only took about an hour and then there was nothing left to do. I felt so lost that my nerves kicked in and made me feel sick at my stomach.

Although Kayla sat with me in the apartment, I felt alone and empty. It was as if someone had drained all the blood out of the apartment and the organs pumped at full force until they realized that they were dying, like a fish flopping on the shore. There was no life left in me or in the apartment without my husband to revive us. As the ceiling fan in the kitchen blew air into the living room, a feeling of coldness covered the apartment and my heart. I clutched my husband's dirty laundry and rubbed it against my face. That wonderful aroma smelled like my husband and made me feel like he was holding me again. I did not wash his clothes for several months after he left and I actually slept in some of his shirts so that his smell would ease me to sleep at night.

## First Place Amber Nixon

The hanging silence blocked out all the noise in the apartment and left a loud ringing sound in my ears. For this reason, I usually kept the television on for background noise while my husband was deployed. I felt hollow, and, for the first time in my life, I felt as if I did not have a soul or meaning to exist in life. I sold my soul to the Army and gave them my husband, too. Since the apartment felt like a prison to me and reminded me that my husband was not home, I stayed busy and kept away from it as much as possible. If I stayed away from the apartment, I could trick myself into thinking that Jonathan was just at home waiting on me instead of a million miles and a few time zones away.

Later that day, I took Kayla home and went to work. My job at the gas station made matters even worse since a lot of my time there was spent with my husband when he would come and sit with me. Everything in the small city of Greeneville was a reminder of Jonathan and our times together before he left. Although I had so many memories with

## Non-Fiction *Desert Sand Blows Away* *Army Wife's Dreams of Marriage*

Jonathan to be thankful for, each thought brought tears to my eyes because I knew that I could not be with him for nine months. Even walking into Wal-Mart and seeing young couples holding hands made my eyes tear-up. Shopping for groceries was a big change, too. When Jonathan was home, we always went together, but he was gone and I was forced to go alone. While getting groceries seemed like such an everyday experience, it made me feel so distant from my husband since it was a memory that we had shared many times in the past. These memories were brought to my mind every day, but there was nothing to do with my life but to continue working, going to school, and waiting on his phone call that may never come.

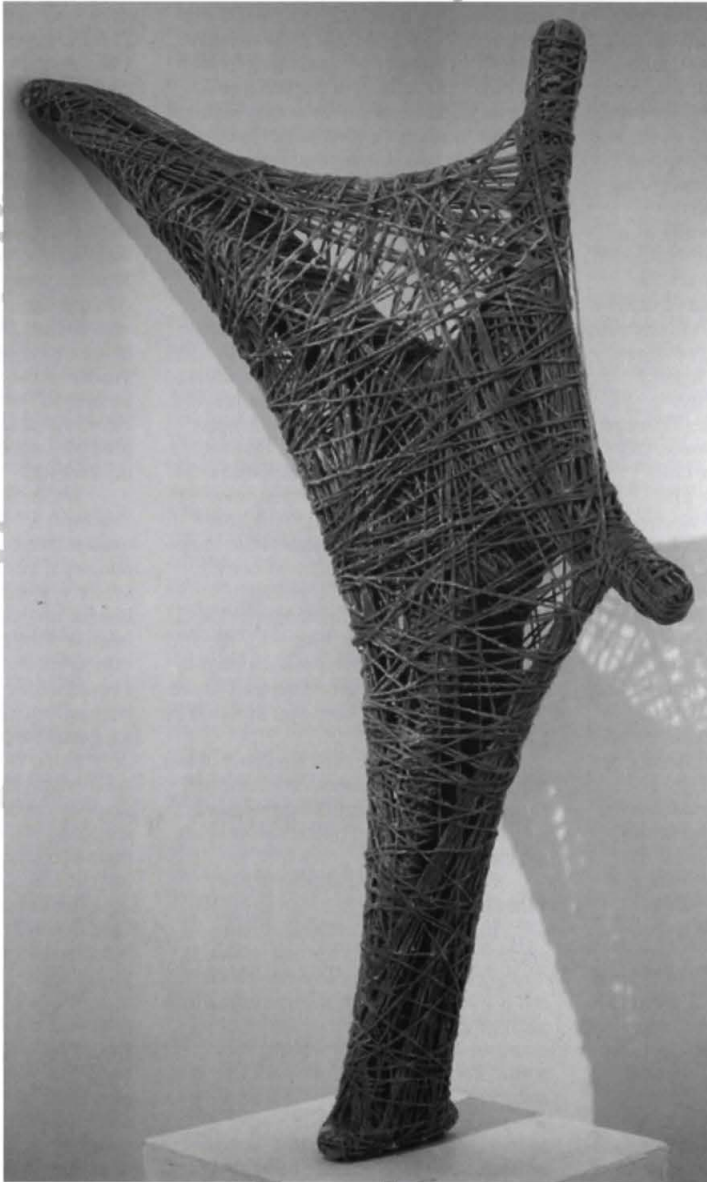
The fact is that I do not know how I made it through those long nine months without my husband by my side. I was scared, worried, and nervous the whole time, but I kept in mind that he was coming home and that I just had to wait in line if I wanted to live my life with

him. After he arrived at his post in Kuwait, he called every other day and we talked for thirty minutes each phone call. While some wives did not like having to talk for such a short time, I considered it a luxury since some nights I did not hear his voice at all.

Although I hated the time that we spent apart, I now know that conquering this obstacle only brought my husband and me closer together. We never take each other for granted and very rarely fight. If we do have a minor argument, we just think back to that time when we were so far away from each other and could not be together. On this thought, we realize that a dumb argument means nothing in the reality and vastness of life. This experience made us realize what many married couples never do: we truly love each other and strive each day to show our love. And it is awful that it takes losing something you love dearly to show you what you really had in the beginning if you had only taken a closer look.

Runner Up  
Object #11

Mixed Media  
Reese Chamness



Mixed Media / Wool, Wax, Found Object  
(Wood, Rubber, Steel)





## Third Place Jamie Merriman- Pacton

July 16, 2007, dawned sunny and cloudless in the Caribbean. The Carnival *Triumph*, a 100,000-ton ship that could hold over three thousand passengers, ambled through turquoise waters somewhere off the Western coast of Cuba. It was high tourist season, and the ship was full of families, couples, disgruntled teenagers, and late spring-breakers who had accidentally booked themselves on a "Family Fun Ship." No one on the ship, me included, knew yet that a dinghy stuffed with eighteen Cuban refugees floated nearby. Like the fleeting shadows of superstition evoked by graveyards, these refugees would disturb the *Triumph's* party atmosphere only momentarily.

I was vacationing on the *Triumph* with my husband and his family. My mother-in-law and father-in-law were celebrating their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary by taking their three children (two daughters and my husband), six grandchildren (four girls, two boys), and two in-laws (my brother-in-law and me) on a cruise. It was a good deal. My husband, Adam, and I got a free cruise, and his parents got the pleasure of our company. Adam and I quickly slipped into a pattern: we charged everything to the room, avoided his sisters and their children during the day, reconvened with the family at night for a quick dinner, and then we headed to the bar while the rest of the family went to the "Vegas-Style" shows. We even had a room that was far enough away from the rest of the family's rooms to make it feel like we were vacationing alone.

My in-laws were usually in line for the breakfast buffet by 8 a.m. Daily fare included eggs, bacon, ham, biscuits, fruit salads in bowls as big as sinks, donuts, waffles, danishes, pineapples carved into swans, an omelet bar, yogurt for the healthy-minded, and even a special cart devoted to twenty different types of cereal in small-size boxes. One of the big selling points of a cruise is the unlimited amounts of food available day or night. At 3 a.m. this usually translated to cold pizza, frozen yogurt, or coffee. At 8 a.m., however, with a full day of eating ahead, the cruise chefs put their best food forward.

## Non-Fiction *The Cruise Will Go On: Cuban Refugees and My Vacation in Wonderland*

I am not a breakfast eater, and I was not about to start on this particular Monday. Two days into my seven-day cruise and already my body was feeling the effects of gallons of cocktails and dozens of cigarettes. Adam was in the gym by the time I rolled out of bed. Obviously, vacationing had not left *him* a mere shadow of his former self. I was in awe of his ability to go to bed drunk and still be out the door and lifting weights before 9 a.m. the next day.

I stumbled into the bathroom, turned the water on, and stepped into the tiny shower. That morning, I was captivated by the thought that *Triumph* carried enough hot water in its bowels to wash away all its passengers' hangovers. Fifteen minutes of steaming hot water left me more human. I dried off and read the back of the complementary Harlequin Romance novel that was included in the bathroom "Welcome Basket." Before I had finished the back-cover copy, an announcement blared over the across-ship P.A. system.

"Good morning passengers. This is your captain speaking. Sorry for the 180 degree turn, but we've spotted a boat in distress, and we've turned around to see what we can do. I'll keep you updated as I know more."

I was amazed by the first part of the captain's announcement—the boat had turned 180 degrees and I had missed it—before the import of the second part hit me.

Boat in distress! Drama at sea!  
What luck!

In addition to drinking, I had spent the first two days of the cruise looking for something to write about. I felt it was my mission: if I was going to indulge in such a materialistic venture as a cruise, then I had to bring back some literary observations about human nature, entitlement vacations, and ways to remain aloof in the face of great pampering. In my mind, this was an opportunity for journalistic insight on the level of Jack London's foray into the slums of London. While he donned second-hand clothes and lived among the working class, I had tanning lotion, knock-off designer sunglasses, and a new bathing suit. My goal was to flit among the cruisers, unobtrusively

observing them and making notes. Mine was not a wholly original project. Months before boarding the *Triumph*, I had read David Foster Wallace's essay "A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again." In 1995 *Harper's* magazine sent Wallace on a free cruise (the "supposedly fun thing"), so he could get to the heart of this question: why do so many Americans choose to spend their vacations inside an enormous floating shopping mall? The essay Wallace produced is a cynical, smart-ass commentary from a retiring journalist who spends the better part of his cruise being afraid of his toilet. Despite Wallace's brilliant observations, the answer to "why do people cruise" is not clear. After reading this essay, I had no idea why anyone would ever want to go on a cruise.

Yet, here I was, stuck on the *Triumph* for seven days. I was determined to make the most of it and see if I could do a better job than Wallace at discerning the answer to this elusive question. To that end, I had been scribbling notes on napkins during lunch, observing as much as I could with cynical disinterest, and writing witty emails home to my long-suffering friends.

Since Wallace's ship had never rescued anyone, I knew I had a new angle to cover. I felt confident that watching the *Triumph* interact with the distressed ship would lead me to some insight about cruise vacations.

Encouraged by this thought, I got dressed; grabbed my room key, camera, and sunglasses; and hurried to the upper decks.

When I hear the phrase "boat in distress," my imagination tends towards the extreme. I think of the Wreck of the Hesper, flayed upon rocks with a beautifully tragic maiden lashed to its mast; or the bulky, unsinkable Titanic, going down fast while thousands of survivors float in icy waters. Consequently, I was not prepared for the small insignificant speck floating towards the *Triumph*. It looked like a metal tub.

This was our boat in distress?  
I tried to squeeze to the front of the crowd massed along the ship's

## Third Place *The Cruise Will Go On: Cuban Refugees and My Vacation in Wonderland*

starboard railing, but a hairy man in a tight bathing suit shoved me back with a curse. Standing on tiptoe behind him, I peered through my camera and zoomed in on the boat.

It was made out of Styrofoam pieces, old doors, and boards lashed together with rope. Thin, dark-skinned men wearing tattered shorts and t-shirts stood inside it like bamboo stalks crammed into a small vase. Their faces were fuzzy, but they waved. Their waves had a desperate quality.

"Cubanos," muttered a Latina woman next to me.

They were Cuban refugees seeking the shores of Miami. Until the 1995 "Wet Feet/Dry Feet Act," a revision of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, Cuban refugees were refugee royalty. Because the United States government officially rejected Fidel Castro's authority, it was happy to welcome as many Cuban refugees as wanted to flee. A mass exodus of Cuban citizens made Castro look bad and reinforced the idea that a communist state was not a place to raise a family. In 1995, Bill Clinton was under pressure to limit immigration. This, coupled with the fact that the Communist threat from Cuba had proven much less substantial than Kennedy-era eggheads predicted, caused Clinton to sign the "Wet Feet/Dry Feet Act." Its essence was simple: Cuban refugees with "wet-feet" (those who were caught in the water) had to be returned to Cuba. If the refugees made it to American soil and had "dry-feet," they were allowed to stay in the United States, no questions asked.

The refugees that the *Triumph* spotted had "wet feet," which meant they would be back in Cuba before sunset. Later in the morning, as an explanation for having to return the Cubans to the country they were fleeing, the *Triumph's* captain announced over the P.A. system that the men had been at sea for three days, one of them was injured, they were out of food and water, and they were off course. It was not hard to believe that the *Triumph* had saved their lives; they looked like men who had spent the night keeping death at bay with flimsy paddles.

As I stood on the deck watching them wave, I wondered what the refugees saw when they looked at the enormous, gleaming white *Triumph*. It was painted every morning by monkey-like men who hung from the ship to touch up any signs of decay. The refugees' boat looked like it had begun to fall apart before it left land. Did the *Triumph* symbolize America to the refugees? Was this the life they wanted for their children? Is this why people cruised: because they could? Was a cruise in fact an assertion of triumph over uncontrollable things like the ocean?

I toyed with these thoughts as I watched one of the *Triumph's* lifeboats rendezvous with the refugees' boat. The lifeboat was three times the size of the homemade boat; it was a mid-size suburban family home floating beside a barrio shack. The crowd onboard the *Triumph* cheered as the refugees climbed onto the lifeboat. Around me, Cuban passengers muttered angrily to each other in Spanish. A white mother with a scrunchy in her hair tried to explain the situation to her small son. My Puerto Rican brother-in-law hung over the railing of the boat, watching the refugees' boat drift away. He was silent. On the deck below, my nieces had returned to the pool, and the cabana band began to play again.

"This better not make us late for our excursion in Cozumel," said a tan, blonde woman who was standing to my right.

"We'll write a letter of complaint if it does," said the man at her side. He was paunchy, pale, balding, and keen on pleasing her.

I sucked air in through my teeth and glared at them.

Had these walking stereotypes missed the fact that our ship had done something heroic? Were they so cold-hearted that their excursion was more important than eighteen lives? They drifted away into the crowd, but I wanted to shout after them: "This is not about you. This is about something bigger than you!"

What had just happened: the cruise ship *Triumph* had rescued a crew of Cuban refugees. What had

## Non-Fiction Jamie Merriman- Pacton

really happened: two disparate worlds had collided.

I found an empty place near the front of the ship and watched the refugees' boat drift away into the immense horizon. Empty, it seemed even smaller than it had when I first saw it.

Later that day, over lunch with my husband, mother-in-law, and father-in-law, the saga of the refugees ended. We watched out the dining room windows as a Coast Guard cruiser pulled up beside the *Triumph*. They were here to pick up the refugees.

"Where will they take them?" I asked out waiter, Sean, a teenager from Jamaica.

"They pick them up and drop them off at Guantanamo," he said with disgust. His eyes never left the Coast Guard ship. "The U.S. thinks the refugees have a better chance of survival if they sneak them into Cuba that way." Sean snorted.

The official U.S. policy is that it will resettle Cuban refugees with "wet feet" in a third country only if the refugees prove that they fear prosecution if they return to Cuba. My impression from Sean and the Cuban passengers on the *Triumph* was that anyone fleeing Cuba could reasonably fear persecution if they returned. Many refugees, especially Haitians, are simply detained indefinitely at Guantanamo Bay prison. This is allegedly for their own good as their tangled legal status is worked out by U.S. immigration officials and the refugees' countries of origin. I couldn't help feeling, however, that shadows lurked beneath the U.S.'s official policies.

I pushed my salad away.

"So, basically, we've saved these men from the ocean, but sent them to their deaths in Cuba?" I said.

Sean nodded.

"Excuse me," said a gray-haired woman at the table next to us. She poked Sean on the arm. "Could you bring us some more rolls please? These are cold."

Lunch must go on.

I excused myself and fled to the upper decks so I could stare at the ocean. I was sickened by the indulgence



Third Place  
Jamie Merriman-  
Pacton

by my inability to help the refugees. I remembered a Stephen Crane essay about an epileptic man in nineteenth-century New York who falls in the street and has a seizure. A crowd gathers around him, unhelpfully making suggestions, gawking, and seeking spectacle. Crane catalogues their reactions, but, like those he is observing, he does nothing to help the man. As I stared at the immensity of the ocean, I realized that I was like Crane. I had no idea how to help the refugees who had passed through my vacation. They left me with a nagging sense of guilt, a story to tell, and questions.

Was death at sea preferable to life in Cuba? What could make life so unbearable that it was worth the risk? What would happen to those eighteen men now? Would they build another boat out of pieces of trash? How many others had died at sea with the hope of American shores before their eyes?

Non-Fiction

*The Cruise Will Go On: Cuban Refugees  
and My Vacation in Wonderland*

around me and frustrated. Would it really strain the United States to admit eighteen tattered, starving men? Did the men even get a glimpse at the lunch buffet?

I looked around the ship at the other passengers, who were sunbathing, drinking \$8 blended drinks, and participating in the "Survivor Trivia" game on the Fiesta deck below me. Why would anyone choose to spend her vacation on a cruise ship?

One answer came to mind: because it offered a complete escape from reality. On the ship, there was always music playing, beautiful people sitting in the sun, cash was not an acceptable currency, and there was nowhere else to go but from one pleasurable activity to the next. An unseen army cooked all the meals, dishes were never a worry, pillows were always plumped, and twenty-four-hour room service meant that even time was a relative

measurement. Refugees were a temporary spectacle, but nothing worth dwelling on because they were soon out of sight and out of mind. The *Triumph* was a fantasy world; it was a grown-up's version of childhood daydreams. It was a testament to the strength of this fantasy that even a head-on collision with the grimmest sort of reality (eighteen men on the verge of death), was soon forgotten.

A waiter came up to me and offered me a cocktail. I hesitated and then took it, charging it to my room. I was determined not to forget the refugees, but what else could I do? I was on the *Triumph* for five more days. Even the most sharp-eyed correspondents need refreshments. I flopped in a deck chair, pulled out a book, and consoled myself with the thought that even Alice, when she was far down the rabbit hole, had to play the Red Queen's games in order to survive.

THIRD PLACE

Runner Up  
*Color Recreation*

Mixed Media  
Stephanie Sarten



Board and Paint



## Third Place K. Hawkins

For 40 days and 39 nights I have wandered this desert and slept under unfamiliar stars whose constellations I cannot recognize, let alone name. I am down to my last month's supply of food capsules. If I start taking only one a day, my supply might last for another two. I do not wish to die here, but what choice do I have? I have been exiled to this planet indefinitely. Indefinitely is the word that haunts me. They would like for me to die in this place, but I won't allow them that pleasure. Perhaps it is pride, or maybe it's just foolish hope that keeps me going. I hope that I might be able to outlive the tyrant government, that in a few weeks the powers that be will be overthrown in a coup—it has happened before—afterwards, perhaps, they might come back for this crazy old scientist; it's stupid to think that, but it's all that I have left. I also hope that, if I should perish here, this record I am keeping will one day be found.

My name is Thomas Armani and I was banished to the plains of Ithica in the year 2183. I was, it seems like eons ago, a scientist pioneering the experimental drug CX-143, a mind-altering substance that is not addictive, causes no paranoia, and causes no damage whatsoever to the brain, just sheer, simple nirvana. By ingesting CX-143, one is able to transcend into a higher state of consciousness, an entirely different plane, there is no pain or fear. Despite the drug's harmless nature, the government banned it two years after its official release, and why not? The government likes to control every aspect of man's life: what you read, what you see and hear, what you eat, and even who and when you fuck. When CX-143 was released, it was an instant threat because finally you could get a simulated release from the government's talons for at least a few hours, and they just couldn't stand for it. When we stood against the ruling to ban CX-143, my colleagues were executed, but I was spared only because I had once been an admired and respected man of science, and they feared my death might spark public outrage. Thus, I find myself on this strange planet without a soul to comfort me. I was allowed the bare minimum of supplies because they don't

## Fiction *Beyond the Gate*

like to think of themselves as too inhumane. Neatly tucked along with the food capsules was a suicide pill, just in case I decided to go peacefully. Fuck them. I threw the tiny red and black capsule into the sand after the ship's departure. The light is growing dim here; I must retire shortly. It's so strange: the daylight here is dreadfully short; I don't know what will drive me insane first, the lack of sunlight or the loneliness.

-T. Armani  
May 2, 2183

Perhaps I am already going insane; I have dreams that disturb me greatly during the night, but in my waking moments I cannot remember them. I can feel them at the back of my mind, images without meaning, like eyes which seem so familiar. The days on this planet must be shorter; the full day's rotation period must be a twenty-hour schedule; it's unnatural to my system and very nerve-wracking. There is nothing on this planet save for green sand and masses of volcanic rock; for miles I have traveled and the scenery has never changed, but, for all I know, I might be walking in one giant circle. Perched on the rocks above me are vulture-like creatures with scaly, rough bodies with mop-top hair that hangs down, making them look like a group of teenage punks. They watch me, waiting for the moment that I give up the ghost, so they might dine on alien flesh; they, too, would rejoice at the hour of my death. My scream slices through this ethereal silence, and they scatter, multiple scaly wings lifting them up into the sky where the sun is burning blue on the green horizon. I hear my voice echo out into this wasteland and fade out into space.

-Thomas Armani  
May 13, 2183

A sudden sandstorm has forced me to take shelter in an alcove of obsidian-like rock. The aperture is much deeper than it appears at first glance; the floor is littered with what appear to be remains of one of the planet's native creatures—thin bones with a slightly metallic sheen. I wonder how this creature met its demise. The wind howls in a

haunting shrill crescendo; I will not sleep easy tonight.

-Thomas Armani  
May 15, 2183

The storm is still raging outside. In this idle state, I open up my satchel and hold in my hands the last link to my home world, the thing that sentenced me to this world. The four tiny blue capsules of CX-143, last remaining in the universe. I took two capsules, but what the hell? Why not take the rest? No one has ever overdosed on CX-143; why not try one last experiment?

- Thomas Armani  
May 16, 2183

Night had fallen. I must have drifted off. The sand was dancing, dipping, turning, beckoning me to come out and meet my demise. I thought again of the bones scattered around my feet. What had killed this animal? What if it came back? What a way to go, being eaten alive; you didn't have to worry about those things back on earth. My head was spinning, the wind howling, screaming, and then silence.

In the darkness I began to sense I wasn't alone; something was moving. I could feel some kind of cloth brush up against my face. I was shaking in fear, but somehow my hand managed to reach the flashlight in my satchel and flip the switch, I almost died of shock when I saw what was stooped down before me. I don't know what I had expected, some alien beast with a hundred eyes and mouth full of serrated teeth? Would that have comforted me if that were what I had found instead? No, this figure above me was like a living reflection of myself, but younger, and the nose and mouth distorted, nothing like mine. And my mirror spoke with the mouth that was not my own, "So good to see you; I was getting so tired of waiting for you to come around."

"Who are you?" I asked, my voice barely a whisper; it had been so long since I had spoken aloud the sound seemed unfamiliar.

My doppelganger laughed, "Don't you know who I am? Can't you look me in the eye and tell?"

## Third Place *Beyond the Gate*

Fiction  
K. Hawkins

"Are you...me?" He laughed again. This time the sound reverberated off the walls, as if there were hundreds of him lurking in the shadows all laughing at me. Eventually he calmed down, smiling, shaking his head side to side, I'm James Armani. Your son."

The words hit me like a bullet. "James is only six", I snapped. He shrugged, "Maybe I was when you left earth, but you see, time out here on the edge of space is different. You thought time here was running faster, but it just appears that way; in reality a week here is about five years on earth. A lot of things have changed since you left."

I couldn't believe it; was this really my son? Had so much time passed? Were they going to take me home now?

"How did you get here?" I asked.

"I went beyond the gate," he said as if I should have known. I wanted to ask him what he meant; I wanted to reach out and touch him to see if he was real, but he turned away from me.

"Come now; the others are waiting."

"What others?" I asked. "What about the storm?"

He made a motion toward the entrance; the first rays of sunlight were spilling out over the desert. The air was dead calm. My head was spinning; there had been so much thrown at me I couldn't seem to take it all in, but there was something important, a warning sign, something I felt like I should have remembered, but I found myself willing to follow this blasphemous stranger. Was this really James? I wanted to believe. Oh, how I regretted then all of the times I had ignored him and his mother, burying myself in my work until they were nothing more than framed faces on the corner of my desk. He was walking with his back to me, facing the rising sun.

"Is this a dream?" I asked.

He stopped walking and turned to face me, his eyes narrowed, "Is that all you have to say to me, just a montage of questions? I suppose that's how you scientists work, so I suppose I can't hold it against you. No, this is not a dream; this is all very real, probably more real than anything you've ever experienced.

We just need to make it beyond this ridge here, and then we will go no farther."

"James, I don't understand. How did you find me? Is there a ship waiting out there?"

"Be patient, and you will see." We reached the summit of the ridge, and he pointed below where a city of green glass and gold stretched out before us. To think, I wandered hopeless and lonely for so long with this city here waiting the entire time. I left all reason behind as I ran across the Dunes, and as I drew closer I could see the shadows of people moving on the streets.

When I made it to the mammoth wrought-iron gates of the city, I stopped dead in my tracks for I could have sworn I had seen my old friend Charlie Williams walk by, but Charlie had died over 20 years ago; it was our senior prom and he had been drinking and ran his hovercraft into the side of a building, but I could have sworn it was him. And, as I drew closer, I began to recognize more faces; outside of what looked like a corner café from the old days were the unmistakable forms of my colleagues, laughing and conversing like they used to before they were executed. A woman stepped out on her balcony, and leaned over the railing, her dark hair covered most of her face, but I still knew. How could I not? She was my wife. James glided over the sand and stood beside me, shading his eyes from the glare the sun cast on the glass walls. "How is this possible?" I whispered, "Kyle, Robert, Alvin, they're dead. I saw them die!"

"Oh, we're all dead, Father, but we never left you, and when you came to this planet you took us with you. We've always been waiting for you, just beyond the gate. I've been waiting ever since I was gunned down in the university parking lot, one of those instances where I just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, but hell, that was the story of my life. Cancer got mom, but you know if something else doesn't kill you, it will. That was what my thesis was going to be over: how the human race could have so many advancements in technology, but still never managed to cure cancer, but none of that matters now."

"Am I dead? Is this supposed to be the afterlife?" I asked him.

He tilted his head to the side and frowned, so much like his mother when she was trying to think of the right words to use. "No and yes. You see, the beauty of your situation is that when you took the pills it allowed to you to visit the afterlife without having to die."

I shook my head, "I don't understand."

"Can't you? Well, I think, when you see the whole scheme of things, a man of science such as yourself should really be able to appreciate it. You made CX-143 to transcend to a higher state of consciousness, right? Well, you just happened to take enough that you managed to transcend the veil between life and death, but we'll have plenty of time to talk about that later."

The gate before us began to open; he placed a hand on my back and began to guide me through, and for a fleeting moment the spinning in my head stopped, and calm washed through me that surpassed all understanding. I had managed to get one foot past the entrance when the picture began to fade as if the color had been drained from the picture, the faces started to blur, and I could no longer feel James at my side. The light cracked through the walls of my emerald city, until its imagery gave way to the all too familiar sight of the barren desert. The drug had worn off. In a state of panic, I tried to figure out what to do next. I could take another pill! But then it dawned on me; there would never be another batch of CX-143! I was forever blinded to them! I realized there was another way, but I had cast the suicide pill out into the desert. They had allotted me no weapons on this journey. I am a prisoner. My only choice is to let myself starve or dehydrate, but how do I know if the gate will open for suicides?

I no longer know what to believe, what to think. All I know is that I am alive and very alone.

- Thomas Armani

A fleeting second in eternity.



Runner Up  
John Simmons

Ceramics  
*Tall Bottles*



Wood-Fired Ceramics

## Second Place Brickston Mill

Brickston Mill is the name of a small apartment community at the end of a long road leading from town. The road, darkened by towering umbrellas of trees, seems to continue endlessly, with beams of sunlight glittering around through the clusters of leaves. You tunnel through for miles until it suddenly opens up. And there, at the top of a hill, stand six tall buildings in Tudor style laid out to surround you on arrival. Coming from behind the hilltop, the horizon shines over a descending sea of mountains, as if the world is untouched beyond the Mill. Once you come upon it, you really feel you arrived at your destination. A secret treasure. A perfect resting place.

"We have very little turnover here," the lady had said when I went to see the apartment. "You're lucky to get in here." She didn't need to convince me. I had dreamed of living here for years. When I saw the ad in the paper I thought it was fate. Ted and I had just separated and I had to find my own place. We had looked at the same apartment six months ago, but he didn't like it too much. Said it was too old. His simple disdain always shot through me like venom. But now, just in the nick of time, the apartment was free again. The girl who'd lived there left. Disappeared really. (Or that's what the landlady said.) She'd said there were rumors.

"She left just about everything behind...apparently something funny was going on." I just nodded. I thought I might gossip in good time. I could see the place like a picture before she showed it to me. The bar to the right as you come in. The small old kitchen open to the large living room and the giant fireplace and mantel. It was the fireplace that I loved so much. It was so large I had joked to Ted that he could make an office of it.

"I'll take it!" I surprised her with my instant approval.

"Do you know when you will need it?" she asked.

"Tomorrow?" I raised my eyebrows. I needed no time.

The next day I was unpacking boxes. By nightfall it looked like home. I looked around and found that nothing in the room belonged to Ted. He really

didn't have many things of his own, anyway. But independence made me smile a bit. I felt like it had been awaiting me.

In the evening, I began to settle into my new home. I slowly walked from room to room, my feet solemnly padding across the old wooden floors, taking in the height of the ceilings, the intricacy of the moldings, and the beauty of the individually-paned windows. I sensed the solidity of the place. They don't build this way anymore. I opened the windows to the chilling October air and lit candles. I made myself something to eat and sat listening for a long time to the quiet that surrounded me. All I needed now was a kitten. Someone to share it all with. I started to get some reading done for a class I was taking and read all that I could until my eyes grew droopy and the bed beckoned me to feel the cool caress of its sheets. My teacher had commented about my laziness, but how does he know how busy I've been? I went to bed.

At 1:43 a.m. I awoke with the sting of tears in my eyes and my heart nearly pounding out of my chest. I had just had a dream so real I could not bring myself back from it. I sprang out of my bed, but stood still for a long time, not knowing if I could handle the sight of my open windows. When I knew I could safely make my way into the living room, no open windows, no danger, I pulled myself from my bedroom into the large hollow of the living room. The light from outside streamed into the room in lines, hardly illuminating anything but its own bright rays. The dream reentered my mind in flashes. A girl. A man. Violent blows and blood. I couldn't demand myself to stop playing the horror show in my head. There she was in front of the bar, and there she lay in front of the fireplace. My hands and knees were shaking. I couldn't go back to bed.

Not since I was a child had I been frightened so much. In reality it was just a dream, but I felt like I had witnessed something very real: a girl fighting for her life and losing the battle.

The TV played the *Best of Late Night*, which I was thankful for. I wouldn't have cable for a few more days.

## Fiction Mary Tapp

My mind was in need of distraction. It was a small help, though. I watched all night without a thought of sleep and into the morning when I was sure the sun was overhead. I barely made it to class, stumbling in to my professor's look of disapproval.

"You must have had a very exciting weekend, Mindy," he said mockingly.

"I moved." My reply was quick. I didn't look at him.

And as I sat listening to him preach about the greatness of writers past, I tried to make sense of my own personal drama. Why, when everything was going so perfectly, must I dream of something so ugly? Why, when life is everything I had hoped for, must I conjure up something to ruin it? Am I trying to sabotage my own happiness?

The professor stood quietly in front of me for a few moments before I noticed him there. I tried to pretend that my thoughtful expression was an offshoot of his lecture, but he didn't buy it.

"Miss Mindy." Whenever he says my name, I hate the sound of it. "Do you know what I've just asked you?"

"No sir."

"I asked you why you believe that Mr. Thoreau moved to Walden. Do you recall?"

"Yes sir, I think it was because he wanted to get away from everyone." I was in no mood to make an argument for my reading. I wished he would take my ignorance and run with it.

"Well certainly that was part of it." He has a way of making me feel as if I am in third grade again. "Why else would he want to move there? Did he say?"

I looked at him with my mouth open, feeling a bit like I was hallucinating. I breathed deeply hoping the spotlight might pass me by, and yet it didn't.

"I think he wanted to see things from another perspective, like he wanted to get away and live more simply."

"Thank you, Mindy," he smiled a sickeningly satisfied smile, "for a better answer."

The last thing I needed today was more upset, but I had to deal with him or find another way to occupy my





## Second Place Mary Tapp

mind. I had no desire to return home. If the images were coming to me, (and they were, everywhere I went today), how entrenched would I be at home? I sat outside Topp Hall, the university's languages center, and smoked and talked to other smokers, coming and going. But as the traffic died down I felt it was time to move on.

The Mill is located somewhat outside of town. It's an odd place for some old apartments. I had always found the ride out there beautiful, although somewhat eerie, like a rainy day. Today it was only distracting. I arrived at the very moment when the sun was falling behind the mountains. The darkening sky was deepening blue. I drove to my building, turned off the car, and sighed a lofty sigh. "It was just a dream." I said out loud to myself.

When I got out of my car, an old woman was standing there. She was trying to hold onto a small dog but it sprang from her arms and onto the landing.

"Mindy, Mindy come here!" she called to her dog. I couldn't help myself.

"That's my name, too." I said, finding myself surprisingly cheerful. The old woman looked me over before asking me about my moving into the fourth floor apartment. We talked for a moment about the move; how much it cost for the movers, how I could use a man to help me, and how much she'd hate to walk up all those stairs.

"You know, it's strange how that last girl just left the way she did." she said at last.

"Where did she go?" I asked, with so much intent she was taken by it. The old lady turned from me. "No one knows really. One day she was living there, the next she wasn't. She didn't talk too much. I don't remember seeing her that much."

"Maybe she moved in with her boyfriend or something?"

"I don't know; it isn't likely... she had been friendly with the neighbor boy." At that she turned toward the door.

"Nice to meet you!" I called after her. She waved to me over her head.

I entered the building and began my ascent up the broad wooden

## Fiction Brickston Mill

staircase. From the second floor landing an old man stood staring at me, expressionless, motionless. Feeling a little more creeped-out than usual, I bypassed him quickly, the sound of my flip-flops snapping up behind me for the remainder of my climb. I opened my door and threw my things to the floor. I locked the door and stood listening. Nothing. I looked at the clock. 5:45. Before I could really think, I unlocked the door and ran back down the stairs. The strange old man, now on the third floor, looked surprised as I ran past. "Excuse me." I looked him right in the face, and in that moment my confidence seemed to empty from me and right into him. I ran right out of the building, not allowing myself to be moved and made it to the office just as the landlady was leaving.

"Oh, I'm so glad I caught you!" Breathless, I explained about being spooked and my idea about a kitten.

"We do charge \$250.00 for a deposit." she said.

"Can I give it to you next week?" I must have seemed desperate, she looked sorry for me.

"Sure, that would be fine."

Soon I was on my way into town. I arrived at Sam's Pets Plus, the every-kind-of-pet-in-the-world store. The owner sells all kinds of exotic animals but gives away free strays, too. I looked at all the cute little faces, the puff balls and the wild mixes of calicos in their cages. Then a little ball of energy lunged at the cage door, clinging to the wall like Spiderman. He looked at me and I at him, and I knew he was the one.

"I'm going to call you Sammy!" I said to him on the ride home. At that point, I didn't know where he was. There were meows coming from somewhere in the back, but I couldn't see him. We went shopping at the super-market. We found food, a litter box, and, of course, toys. By the time we got home it was 8:30. The strange old man I had seen before was standing outside the second floor apartment where he had been earlier. I felt compelled to say something to him, wondering why he is always standing around. I started with, "Hello."

"What ya got there?" he smiled, reaching out to pet Sammy. His large

hands rubbed and grasped the kitten, messing his long coat and chilling me from the inside out. Trying not to look shaken I said, "This is Sammy. I just got him to keep me company."

"Well, he's a real cute little guy." The man looked up over his glasses and leaned in to look deep into my eyes. He had a strange lazy stare that was, for some reason, peculiarly penetrating. His hair was a dirty, mousy brown with sprinkles of gray. His long faced reinforced the blankness of his expression. He hadn't taken his hand off the kitten, and I could feel him brushing my wrist with his thumb while he continued.

"Nice to meet you Madeline." The way he said my name made my skin crawl. I'm almost never called by my real name. I've been Mindy since I can remember. For some reason I didn't want him to know that.

When I got inside I felt safe behind the locked door. It seemed that the feeling of danger had shifted from the unreality of my dream to the very real, very creepy man living in 2-B. I'd put Sammy down to explore his new home when the phone rang. (Cool, the phone is working.) I ran to my bedroom to grab the receiver.

"Hello?" My mother's voice on the other end was the very thing I'd been hoping for.

"I've been calling you all night, where have you been?" My mom sounded worried.

"I went to get a kitten, oh yeah, and I'm going to need to borrow \$250." I had my fingers crossed.

"Two hundred fifty dollars!! You got a kitten for two hundred fifty dollars? Are you planning to show it? I thought you were going into accounting, Mindy?"

"Mom, I feel creepy all by myself. I had a bad dream last night; I don't want to be alone."

"A bad dream and now you've bought a \$250 cat."

"I have to pay a deposit, Mom; the cat was free. And he's so cute. I named him Sammy."

"What's creepy now, Mindy? I thought you loved that apartment. You

## Second Place *Brickston Mill*

## Fiction Mary Tapp

wouldn't look for a cheaper one because you had to live in that apartment."

"It's so weird; there was this girl who lived here and she disappeared. Last night I dreamed about a girl being murdered in the living room."

"Mindy, it was just a dream, honey."

"I know, Mom. It scared the crap out of me, though. It felt real."

"But it was a nightmare Mindy, not a premonition. You must have too much to worry about; you're just stressed." My mom always thinks I'm being dramatic.

"I'll be home next Tuesday."

"Next Tuesday? I thought Friday?"

"It's only a couple more days, don't worry. I'll come by when I get home, ok?"

"Okay."

I started to feel sad. "I'll see you next Tuesday."

When I got off the phone, the apartment suddenly felt so overbearing. I started to feel the urge to remember my dream, but blocked it out. After playing with Sammy for awhile I finally felt tired enough to drift off to sleep.

It wasn't too long before I was awake again. Sammy was lying next to me on the pillow. His comfort and ease were so distant from my own feelings. He came over and rubbed up against me, his soft fur on my face, the sound of his purring gently easing my spirits. For a moment I forgot where I was until a gripping fear rushed over me when I heard the sound of creaking under the door. Was it the living room? Was it out in the hall? Realizing that I'd had another nightmare, I started to panic. I wanted to leave the apartment right then, but didn't know how to escape. My worried thoughts were interrupted by the sound of a man's voice talking loudly in the hallway.

"Hey man...I left my damn keys in your car... dude...hello?" I heard him say. "Hello...shit."

Then there was a loud knock at the door. Because I was already awake, I checked him out through the peep hole.

He was cute: tall with messy brown hair, and obviously drunk. He didn't remind me of the guy from my dream, I decided, so I opened the door.

"Hi, I'm your neighbor," he smiled a great big smile at me, "I left my keys in my buddy's car and my cell just died... hey, I didn't mean to scare you." He looked at me and narrowed his eyes.

"I know you. We went to Westminster School together. You're Mindy Roberts, right?"

"Yeah, um, what's your name?"

"I'm Patrick O'Brien. I left in 7th grade when I moved in here with my dad. You still a math wiz?" He stumbled in and tried to steady himself at the bar.

"I'm sorry. Did you want to use the phone?"

"Oh...yeah. Hey, I didn't mean to bother you. I used to know Rachel; she lived here before you. She used to be up a lot like me. I thought I heard someone. I guess I forgot she wasn't here."

"Yeah, she left." I said, replaying the same story I kept hearing.

"You know, she did. She didn't even take everything. Kinda wondered why she didn't ever say anything, but you know how girls get..." He looked at me and smiled his flashy smile again. Then he seemed to sober up, "I don't know what happened to her."

"Maybe she was murdered." I saw no reason to pretend I didn't suspect it. He was probably too drunk to know what I was saying, anyway.

His gaze slowly made its way around the room and back to me. "I would've called the police, but I didn't know what to say, you know? Hello? Yeah, I wanna report my neighbor's missing. No, nobody seems to care. Yeah, I used to hang out with her sometimes, but I didn't see anything... hear anything. I didn't want to look like an ass, you know?"

"Why would you?" I was getting defensive.

"Why should I make a big deal out of it? She left. She took some stuff, I think. I didn't want to make trouble for her, you know? Rachel was a cool chick."

"I don't know, seems kinda weird to me." At that moment we heard a door slam downstairs. And after a few moments a door opened, and then another.

"Everyone here's so damn nosy." He looked at me with sad eyes.

"Wouldn't someone have heard something if something had happened to her?"

"I guess, but I don't know. You can't really hear...I would have, if anyone."

I thought of telling him about the dreams, but it was too soon, if ever.

"Why don't you close the door." He said finally.

"I was just going to."

He was looking a little pale after our conversation. I decided it would be okay to lock the door. Patrick continued, "I really did want to say something. I wanted to wait first, see if anyone missed her. She said she had a dad up in Wisconsin or somewhere, but I never heard anything. It's been over a month now." He stood in the middle of the floor looking lost.

"Rachel and I had a weird relationship. She might have been mad at me when she left."

"You think she left?" I hoped he would tell me what he thought, that he suspected something, anything, but he never did.

"Look it's late. My friend's not coming back. Can I crash on your couch? It's two o'clock and I have to work tomorrow."

Normally I wouldn't have let a stranger stay in my home, but nothing felt normal anymore. I was scared; I wanted him to stay. For some reason it felt right for him to be there.

"Yeah, you can sleep on the couch, I guess."

I got some blankets and gave them to him. Pretty soon Sammy and I were asleep again.

The next morning I awoke to find Patrick standing over my bed. Not expecting him to be there, I screamed.

"I heard something in your fireplace last night." He said.

"Oh," I said relieved, "I have a cat," I called out for the kitten.

"No, it wasn't your cat. It sounded like stones scraping. I want you to come check it out with me."

I got out of bed and we walked into the living room together and stood in front of the fireplace. It was so dark and deep we both stood studying it before Patrick started to act.

## Second Place Mary Tapp

## Fiction *Brickston Mill*

"Ok, you hold the light for me while I get in there and look around." He grabbed my lamp from my end table and handed it to me. Inside, the walls were made of stone slabs. He started to feel and push around until coming to a spot in the corner of the right wall.

"This is strange," he started to pull at the slab and it began to move until finally he had opened it up to a passage way.

"Normally this would be really cool," he said. His mouth hung open as he sat in front of the passageway.

"Close it! Close it right now!" I couldn't hold on to my fears anymore. I broke down, sobbing heavily while he moved the stone back into place.

"Don't freak out, okay? I'm going to put your coffee table in front of it for now." He grabbed the table and wedged it into place.

"Look...see? The wall can't move." He stepped out, looking at the fireplace with the table wedged in it. "What the hell?" he said to himself. He started to look upset. I was still sobbing.

"I had a dream. I had two dreams. This girl was killed here, she was dragged from the bar to here, and he kept hitting her until she wouldn't struggle anymore." I cried harder as I told him.

"What did she look like?" He seemed to think I had seen her, but I didn't know what to say. I said only what I had remembered.

"She was blonde, I guess?"

He got very pale and then started to put his jacket on. "My friend's coming to get me to get my car. I left it at a bar last night. Can you wait here? I'll be right back; we'll go to the police." He wrote down a number and handed it to me. "Here. Call me if anything happens."

"I guess. Okay." I was in a daze.

"Okay," he leaned down into my face, "I'll be right back."

When he left I bolted the door. I stood by the window until I watched him get into the car and leave. I desperately wished I had gone with him. He hadn't been gone long when I heard a noise in the fireplace. In a panic I started toward the door, but waited for a moment. What if I was caught in the hallway? Quietly, I opened the door and shut it behind me.

I stood listening in the hallway for any noise. A door opened and shut a few minutes later and the sound of footsteps led down the stairs and out of the building. I started down the stairs then, trying to wipe away the tears that ran from my eyes. As I was leaving the building the man from 2B was standing outside with the old lady. She called out, "Mindy, oh Mindy!" But I got into my car pretending that I didn't notice.

I drove fast down the winding street, watching Brickston Mill fade out of sight behind me. The comfort of escape was lost to me. Everything had become a part of something dark and threatening. In every place there could be lurking a devil. I didn't know when I would be safe or where safety was. I needed to call Patrick. We needed to go to the police.

It was about five miles to the first gas station. I pulled up to a pay phone and looked frantically around for change. When I couldn't find any, I ran into the store and asked the man behind the counter if I could use the phone. He wouldn't let me. I had to buy a drink to get change. I was starting back to the pay phone just as the man in 2B pulled into the lot. I didn't look, just kept a steady eye on the phone.

"Hello?" Patrick sounded urgent on the other end.

"Patrick, it's Mindy."

The old man called out to me, "Mindy? Is that it then?"

"Patrick he's here! Where are you?"

"Meet me at the McDonald's on Bryn."

"Mindy, right?" The old man started to walk toward me. I got into my car and sped out of the parking lot, though I didn't get far in the morning traffic. The man stayed with me all the way to the restaurant. When I got there, Patrick was alone.

"Let's go," he said, getting into my car. The old man pulled up behind me, blocking me in. Patrick got out of the car and started to argue with him. I got scared and ran into the restaurant. They followed me inside.

"Mindy, don't go with this boy, he's a killer." The place got quiet and everyone turned to look at me.

"You know you hurt that girl, Patrick. You know you did." The man looked calm as he taunted him. Patrick wasn't calm.

"Move your fucking car! We're going to the police. You're done, we can prove it."

"I'll come with you; I'm not afraid to talk to the police." The man stood staring at Patrick, daring him to make a move. Patrick turned to leave, motioning for me to follow.

"Let's go," he said. I followed him out the door.

We hardly spoke in the car. By now I wanted nothing more to do with it. The old man followed us to the police station. When we got there, he parked in the far corner of the lot and Patrick and I pulled up front. We were on our way inside when the man called to Patrick.

"You didn't really like Rachel, did you, Patrick?" Patrick turned to hear what he was saying.

"What?"

"You know, I saw you and her. I watched you." The old man lured him to the corner of the lot, away from safety. And like a fool I followed him.

"What do you mean you watched?" Patrick demanded.

"I watched you seduce her, make love to her...I watched." He seemed amused by all this. Patrick went up to the old man.

"How...when?"

"When you brought that girl over you broke her heart."

"I didn't mean to," he said in a low voice. He looked to me for forgiveness. "She was crying for you the night I went to her."

Enraged, Patrick went to hit him, but before he could the man pulled a gun from his pants.

"Put your hand down, Patrick," he said, disgusted. "I don't believe you are angry with me! You would have wanted to be done with her anyway." He waved his gun around as he spoke.

"Get in the car." He motioned to Patrick, then he looked at me. But we didn't move.

"Don't worry," Patrick said "He can't shoot us here."

"Why not?" The old man grinned.

## Second Place *Brickston Mill*

Fiction  
Mary Tapp

“Are you really going to shoot me here at the police station?”

Patrick slumped over the car and fell to the ground. The old man turned the gun to me and for a moment, time stood still. I felt the wet of morning mist dampen my face. My body chilled and numbed as shock set in. I heard the loud ring of another shot fill the air around me and felt nothing. The man's

blood sprinkled my face and at first I thought it was rain drops. When he fell to the ground the police rushed in from behind and I started to awaken from my nightmare.

I learned later that Rachel's murder had happened a lot like I had seen it in my dreams. The police found her battered body stuffed in the back of the old man's closet along with some of her

things. Among them was a letter she had written to Patrick telling him how much she loved him.

Patrick survived the ordeal. But the heartbreak had changed him. I hear he moved to another town, started a new life. As for me, I returned to Brickston Mill only once, and that was to get Sammy. After that, I never went back.

SECOND PLACE

Runner Up  
Jeri Allison

Mixed Media  
*Ganesha*



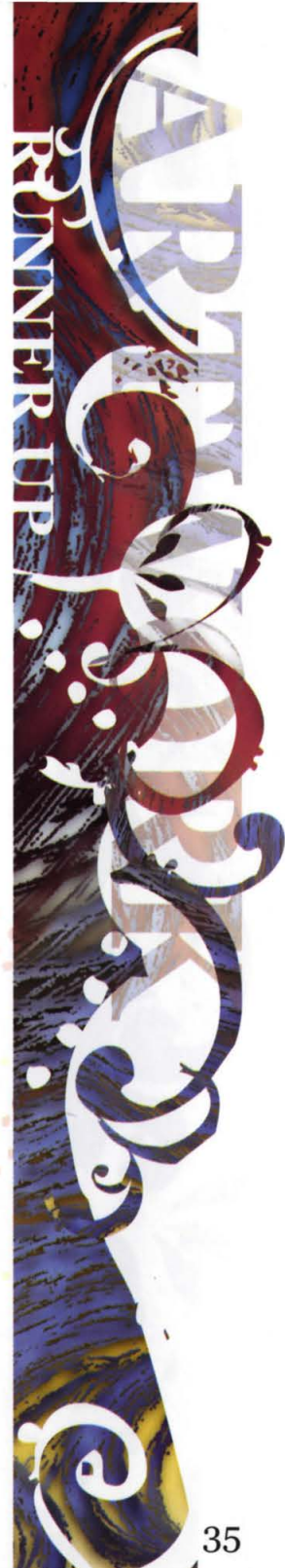
Mixed Media

Runner Up  
*Ritual*

Mixed Media  
Jerome Edward  
Arnold



Mixed Media / Collage, Litho, Oil, and Beeswax



Honorable Mention  
Jason Burns

Photography  
*Please Do Not Touch*

HONORABLE MENTION



Black and White Photograph

Honorable Mention  
Fletcher Dyer  
*Health Care (Kinetic)*

Mixed Media  
Jessica Augier  
*Pushed Over*



Oil and Panel



Mixed Media / Wood, Steel,  
and Electricity

HONORABLE MENTION





Honorable Mention  
*Questionable Moral Action 261*  
and *Sacred Geometry (Face #1)*

Graphite  
David Mazure

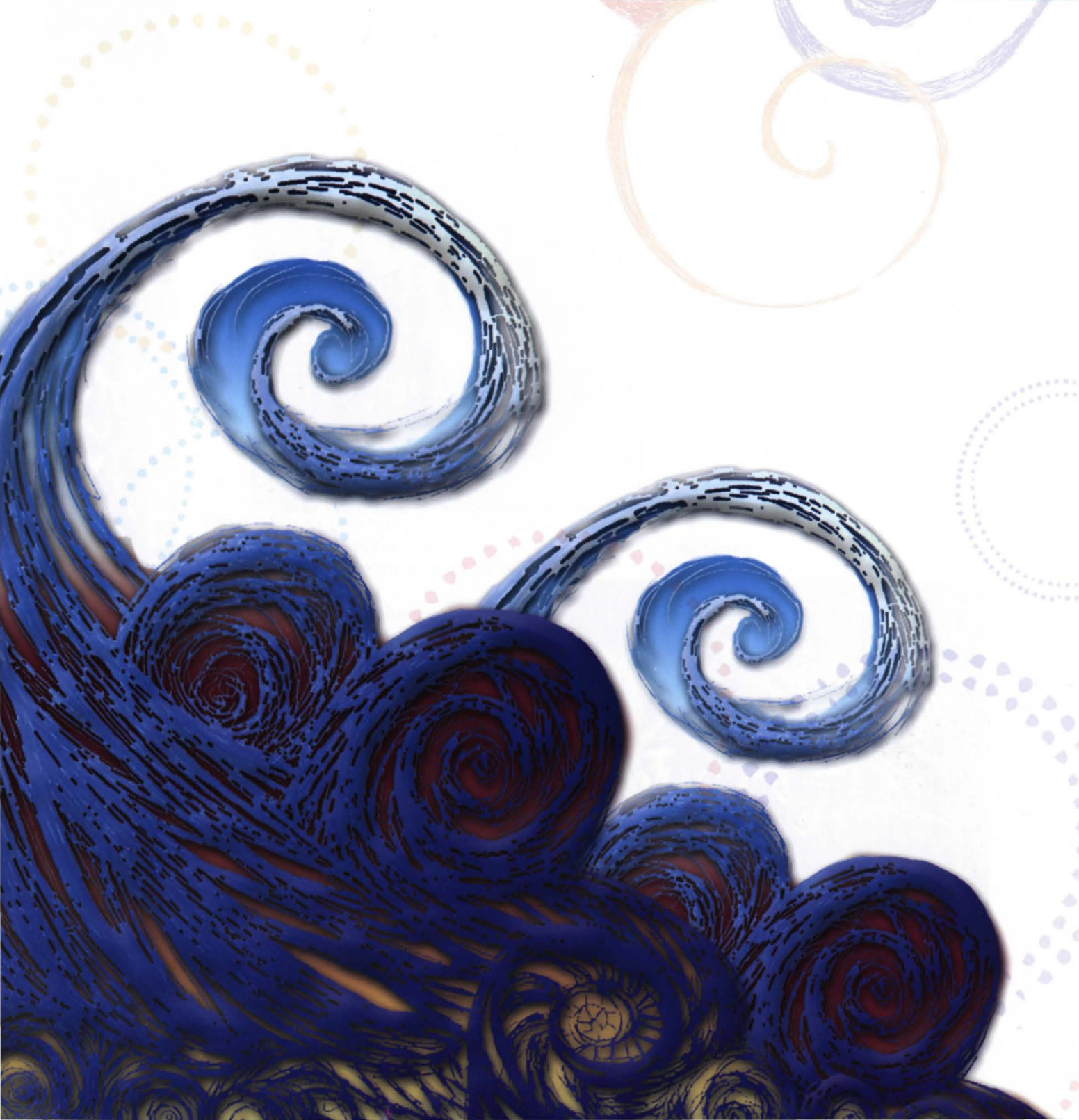


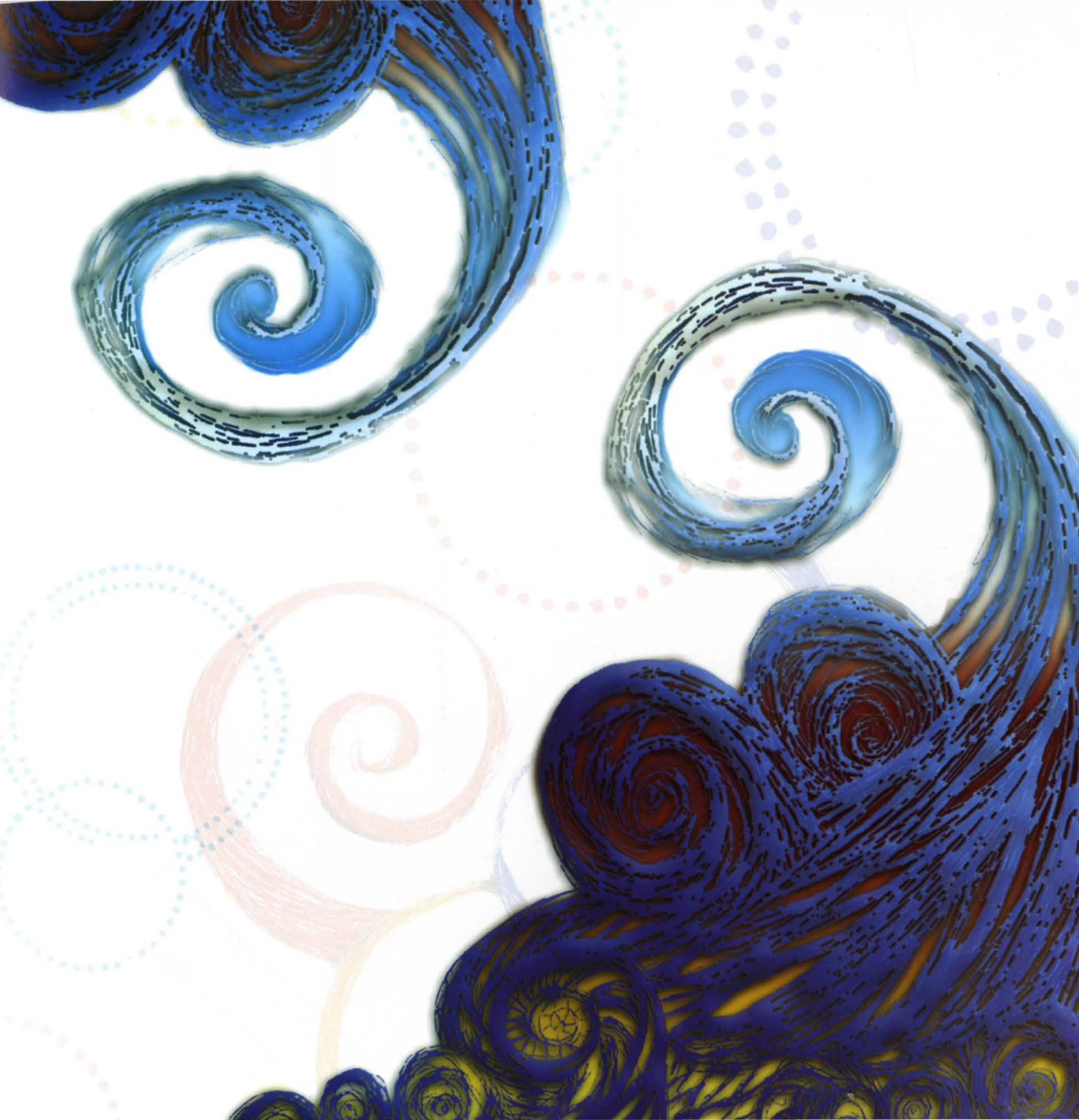
Graphite



Graphite

HONORABLE MENTION  
ARTIST'S PRIZE





The background is a complex, abstract composition of swirling, textured patterns. The top half is dominated by shades of blue and purple, with intricate, almost organic forms that resemble waves or eddies. The bottom half transitions into warmer tones of gold, yellow, and brown, maintaining the same swirling, textured aesthetic. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and depth, with a rich, painterly quality.

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