



**THE LITERARY JOURNAL OF
BIG SANDY COMMUNITY & TECHNICAL COLLEGE**

Sheldon Compton

The Bottom Field

At the end of Garden Road stood a garage. A block building with a set of double wooden doors swinging out for cars or chairs, depending on whether work needed to be done or sitting and drinking and getting high were the only tasks at hand. Strangely, Sunday was the day most of the work took place here, at the end of Garden Road. Other days, the doors were closed, tight as a nun's knees. These days traffic sped down North Front Street that leads to the garage and to the trailer beside the old structure, gravel and dirt flying like split barrel ash, a dark thing flying through clean air. This is where folks from Calvary to Teller County would swing in to meet with Bill.

Bill's brother, Stan, has been working on a 1998 Ford Ranger for more than four months at the garage, mostly Sundays, because the traffic to his brother's trailer is too much for him or anybody to handle, really. He's screamed away a few buyers, but mostly he had to walk back the quarter mile to his house and leave it alone. His brother helped locals with needs, but all Stan wanted was to get that Ranger running. Younger brothers and giving in and allowances kept his progress at a slow gate, a shoulder-slumped walk across the bottom that crosses Garden Road and led to Stan's house across Route 122. From the front porch he can still keep an eye on the Ranger and how it tilts like a tired old man, the bumper at rest and easy going against the cherry picker.

"Stan! Phone!"

Stan shuffled his feet across the porch. His pant legs were stuffed inside the work boots. Grease coated the hard steel tips and sides. Up, he stretched from habit and eased into the living room. His wife, a stick woman he calls Eve but whose real name was Henry because she had a strange daddy, held the phone out like a dead cat.

"Who's it?"

"Evan Meeks. Good company to keep, Dipshit."

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Stan called her Eve after the third date and she called him Dipshit, more often shortened to simply Dip, and it all worked just fine. Stan took the phone, pushed his boots off at the door and fell into the kitchen chair situated where the phone is attached to the wall. He pulled the tangles out of the cord.

“Yeah?” It’s more breathing outwardly than a greeting.

“Kevin been comin' over there to your brother’s?”

He’d seen Kevin Meeks come in and out a few times in the last few months. Young boy with a broken mama and Evan for an uncle. It made sense to Stan.

“I’ve seen him come by some. What can a person do? He’s got a car now, Evan.”

Stan waited with the phone hooked into his shoulder, putting bread in the toaster. A jar of apple butter sat in the middle of the table.

“He buying?”

Stan closed his eyes then opened them. Eve watched from the doorway. She seemed punier than yesterday. Everything did.

“I’d figure so, yeah. Bill don’t run a card game and he sure as shit don’t have a book club.”

The receiver went dead in his ear. Stan didn’t wait for the upcoming dial tone but handed the phone back to Eve.

“That what I think it’s about?” she asked. “That nephew of his. Kevin?”

She moved though the kitchen, her still nice body making a path behind her, hips and legs, the ivory arms bare from her pushed up sleeves, all weaving the air as she walked.

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She sat down at the table and opened the apple butter. Her hair was always sunshine, even in the most swallowing darkness. She pushed the jar to Stan. Her eyes watched him, that caring affection she hid so well held in check, but she pushed her hand across the table and he took it.

He didn't answer her question about Kevin. He buttered the toast and walked to the window. Four cars were in Bill's driveway, best he could tell. Two more were parked out in the bottom where the old man and woman once farmed, a long stretch that ran with the river's edge and the train tracks beyond. No sign of Kevin's Dodge Aspen. He'd check in a half hour or so for Evan walking up Garden Road. Until then, he'd check his shotgun, give it a good cleaning, make sure he had at two shells left from last season. Man needed to be prepared.

The broken sounds of Stan sleeping on the couch put Eve in a restless mood. She made some calls to her folks, worked to fix the porch swing, fed the dogs. But she was still restless. At last, she sat in the recliner and watched her husband sleep. He was a tall man and his socked feet lopped over the end of the couch arm. His pants, two sizes too big, were rolled at the cuffs.

Parts of his pallid shin were visible on one leg. The fall jacket she'd bought him two years ago was still zipped to the stubble of his double chin. He snorted, full and loudly, just as she was about to recall the jawline of his youth. She turned on the television, turned it off.

Cars and trucks kept coming to and from Bill's trailer across the way, shifting up that gravel dust and banging shut the trailer door behind them. Ten minutes or so each one and then gravel and dust again and another crew. Eve put on her windbreaker, left the living room and sat on the swing, tested it for a few seconds, and then lit off down the porch steps. Crossing the bottom field she spotted two cars at one end of Bill's then another when she rounded the corner to the porch. She knocked on the door and a stranger answered, shirtless and leaning. The stranger's stomach was large and tight and shined full and round in the sunlight.



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“Ain’t you a sight,” she said. “Where’s Bill?”

The stranger smacked his lips and stepped back from the doorway. “Bill!”

Eve flinched, but hid it well. She pulled her windbreaker around her and thrust her chin out.

The stranger turned left into the dimness of the trailer and soon her brother-in-law came through the living room.

He had always been smaller made than Stan. Narrow shoulders, tiny hands and short fingers.

When he was standing in the doorway, he scratched at one of two receding hair lines.

“Hey, Hen. What’s wrong?”

“Stan’s up there sleeping with a gun tucked in his arm,” she said. “Think that’s got anything to do with you, Bill? I’m just saying. Do you think?”

“What the hell? What’s he doing that for?”

Eve straightened her back, tiptoed into Bill’s face. “Somebody’s coming to see you soon. Probably more than just this guy Stan’s watching for.”

“What guy?”

“Hush it! She leaned back, looked away from Bill and his hurt face, out across the bottom field. That field hadn’t seen a tractor in twenty years. “You need to talk to your brother. I ain’t waking him up.”



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Without giving Bill time to answer, Eve popped down the three small steps of the porch and turned the corner of the trailer so the bottom field was stretched out in front of her, a flat track of land and history leading away.

“I told him.”

“You what?” Stan tugged at the sleeve of his shirt.

“And I told him he needed to talk to you. That you two need to talk.”

He tugged the other sleeve and paced the kitchen. Midday warmed the field and the front porch. The frost from the morning was gone now. Stan looked to Bill’s trailer and then across the way to the garage and his Ranger.

“It’s warm enough now for me to get some work done on the truck without freezing my ass off,” he said. “I’ll deal with him at some point. Or he’ll deal with me. Or Evan Meeks will.”

Eve pulled him back into the kitchen as he was opening the door to leave out to the garage. Her fingers pushed into the muscles at the bend of his arm, her face a blank slab of wood. She pointed out the kitchen window.

A Dodge Aspen slid past the garage and kicked gravel as it maneuvered into a parked position. Kevin Meeks stepped out wearing a camouflage jacket, sweat pants and a baseball cap eased just over the top of his brow.

“Sonofabitch.”

Eve said nothing. Stan left the kitchen and returned with the shotgun. He knew Eve would pull at him again, and he’d let her stop him. The gun wasn’t for Kevin, after all. And when she did, he allowed her to take it and, holding it in her hands like a newborn, she placed it on the counter. He pulled his jacket together and stepped onto the porch.



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The Aspen was a pile of junk metal, he thought, walking across the field. Out of habit, he sidestepped around Lafe Hill's patch of garden. The only life left in the bottom field was Lafe's sprinkle of lettuce and greens. Lafe and his wife picked about once a week, hunkered over without talking. Just picking and placing and then gone. The two of them were in better shape than the Aspen.

Kevin Meeks' beat down Dodge was parked more or less sideways about four feet from Bill's front porch. The motor ticked loudly. Stan tried to remember to mention that some oil should be added or changed. That ticking sound was no good. Even the Meeks deserved some advice on cars from time to time. He sucked in a deep breath and knocked on the door. When Kevin answered, Stan pointed back at the Aspen.

"You're gonna need to add some oil or have it changed," he said and watched the young man's eyes grow just a bit wider, pupils pinpoints. Just a baby, really. Hardly one-fifty soaking wet after Thanksgiving dinner. "Just tell Bill I'm working on the Ranger if he needs me."

Stan had been trying to get a rebuilt motor dropped in the Ranger the past couple weeks. The hoist rocked above him while he pushed against the body of the motor. The thin, metal legs swayed and bent to breaking. Stan let a grunt gush out of him and stood back, took a chunk of cut wood and wedged it hard into a space just in front of the radiator. The truck rocked from his pushing, but nothing gave way. From the corner of his eye, he ignored the fact that Bill and Kevin stood on the front porch watching.

He dropped back into the plastic lawn chair at the mouth of the garage and rubbed his hands. The pressure had left dents in the palms of his hands and he thought of Manny, the dog he and Bill had when they were young. Hauling it out to the tree line beside the river at the far end of the field, he and Bill both had those same kinds of dents afterwards.

They had cradled the bloated Lab in a potato sack, each of them holding a wrung up end until it seemed that rough cloth was going to push straight on through the skin and



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hit bone from the weight. Bill dropped his end three or four times and the scent of that bloat and death would come up at them and they'd gag and complain until the old man would yell in from the field and tell them to keep it moving.

Once to the tree line, both dropped the Lab, really a mixed breed mutt more than anything, and those dents from where the cloth had bitten into the skin were pink and deep on both their hands. Bill forgot the shovel and voted to toss the dog over the embankment instead of doing through all the burying, saying his hands hurt. What Stan thought about sitting in the plastic lawn chair and watching him talk shoulder to shoulder with Kevin Meeks was how he walked back that morning to get the shovel and had buried the old Lab himself. It got his ass out of the chair, and the motor was soon rocking again, shifting the Ranger around like a strong wind. He wore himself out and had just sat down for a second time when the corner of his eye watched Kevin go back into his brother's trailer. Bill stood for half a beat on the porch and then started over to Stan.

When he was few feet out, he stopped.

"So Evan Meeks gonna show up today, huh?" Bill said. He looked back to his trailer and then again at Stan. "Hen said I should talk to you. Not sure she meant about that, but I figured as much. She's the one told me about Evan, and said you had your shotgun shelled up and ready earlier. There's some trouble coming you think."

"I think."

Stan opened the driver's door on the Ranger and took a seat, glanced at the wobbling hoist and then got out and shut the door easily. The latch went into place with hardly a sound. He backed away slowly. His eyes were glazed, mouth slack. "There's not much I can do about who comes here. They come or they don't. I know you don't agree, but it's the damn truth."



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Having Bill cuss at him didn't hit Stan's ear just right. "That boy over there ain't just started driving. He's sixteen and got a uncle that'll blow a hole through everything in the southern end of the county, including Garden Road. Most especially Garden Road."

Stan imagined Kevin slanted on the couch in Bill's living room or tilted against the wall in the kitchen. Wasn't a soul in the county didn't know how close Evan Meeks held his nephew to his torn heart. Evan came back from Michigan about a decade ago after two years working at a factory there. He showed up twenty pounds lighter and older in the face after he told folks two men mugged and beat him into the hospital. Few knew for sure, but Evan talked around town about how he got rolled for drug money up in Michigan and how druggies and dealers should burn. More than once Stan himself was in the diner when Evan would proclaim how more than half the county should probably burn.

Bill shrugged it off when Stan reminded him, the same way he had disregarded it before. The same way he disregarded most everything since being hooked became being a supplier. Blindfolded and high. Might as well be dead already.

"Boy could be in there with his eyes rolled back in head or foaming at the mouth right now and you'd be a world of shit," Stan said. He had started back on rocking the motor from side to side. He quit and took the piece of cut wood again and began wiggling it into a place for some leverage.

Before Bill answered, a state cruiser pulled into the driveway. The driveway was a turnabout drive and troopers had been down and made a U-turn a few times in the past couple of months but nothing else. Bill turned and gave the cruiser a wave that seemed to say he care if they wanted to turn in his driveway, he could care less, have a nice day.

But instead of turning, the cruiser parked beside the Aspen. A state boy Bill didn't recognize, a young man likely fresh from academy, stepped out, nodded, and went to the Aspen's license plate. He bent just a little, checked a small slip of paper in his hand. Adjusting his hat, he turned and started toward the garage.



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“Hellfire,” Bill whispered.

“Gentlemen,” the state boy said and gave his hat a goofy tip. “This car belong to Kevin Meeks?”

Stan sat back in the chair and stared harder than he might should have to Bill. The state boy kept his eyes on Bill. Smiling, Bill stood up and stretched, scratched his bald spot and sifted his fingers through the tufts along the sides of his head.

“I guess it must be, officer,” Bill said. “You need to see him? Showed up here out of the blue about a half hour ago. I can get him for you.”

The trooper smiled fake and wide, all teeth and screw you. “I’ll just have a look.”

“Not without a warrant, officer,” Bill shot back evenly.

Stan stood up and walked to the trooper, stuck out his hand. “I’m Stan Hall, officer. This is my garage here and my old trap of a Ranger. I’ll get the boy if you’d like.”

Stan tried to hide that he was holding his breath and waited.

The officer looked to the trailer and then back to Bill, squinted his eyes, and then removed his hat. “I suppose there’s no harm in going about it that way, guys. I’ve just got a few questions for him. Get him out here and I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Fine and good. Fine and good,” Stan said. “Bill, see if you can get anywhere on scotching the legs on that cherry picker and I’ll be right back.”

Bill cocked his head to the right, the way a dog might when confused, snorted once and went to the front of the truck. Stan started to the trailer and the trooper followed behind him. He was worried the fresh state boy was going to follow him in anyway but he



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stopped at the front of his cruiser and adjusted the butt of his service pistol just an inch or two then leaned against the fender.

The trailer was little more than a storage building. What furniture there existed sat more in piles than any other arrangement. A metal folding chair was discarded across the couch and in one corner of the living room were boxes, mostly opened, but some duct-taped closed. The only thing that gave the place a feeling that a human had been there recently was a new flat-screen television situated somehow on the wall. Stan pinched his nose shut through the kitchen and found Kevin in the first bedroom on the left down the long hallway.

The boy lay across a mattress in the floor. Beside him was a dinner plate with pill powder still stuck to sections, covering part of one petal from the design of hearts and roses. It was one of their mother's plates. Many suppers off that plate and now this. The thought of it ran over Stan and he charged the bed and shook the boy by the shoulders, his head whipping back and then forward, powder flying from his nostrils as he came to and opened his eyes.

He mumbled awake and Stan took no time trying to decipher any of it as it hardly mattered. He also felt no need to warn Kevin Meeks that the leather backseat of a state cruiser would be the next thing he smelled once they made it back through the kitchen. He simply took him under the arms and lifted to a standing position and made his way back through the trailer, stopping at the front door long enough to shake him some more so the boy could stand on his own.

The state boy was still leaning against the fender when the he guided Kevin onto the porch then came out himself, sidestepping around him and down the steps. Kevin was wobbling in the weak sunlight, a limp version of Evan Meeks' nephew, confused and tired. The trooper moved toward the porch.



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“That’s private property there, officer.” It was Bill. He had at some point left the garage and stood behind the cruiser. “From the looks of it, he’ll fall right on down to you if you stand just about where you are.”

Stan hushed him with a glare and took the boy’s elbow, asking the trooper to step back until he could make his way down. As soon as they were both on the ground, the trooper stepped close to Kevin. He leaned in close and must have spotted the powder around the boy’s nose because he spun him quickly and popped handcuffs from his belt in one fluid motion. Kevin was arrested between gusts of fast wind, it happened so quickly. The trooper loaded him into the back of the cruiser without a word, tipped his round brim again in Stan’s direction and left, easing out of the gravel driveway, slower than necessary.

Stan and Eve lived in the old home place. The rooms were few but large. Black and white photographs framed in ornate wood hanged from the walls. Stan studied the photograph outside the bathroom of his parents. It was taken when corn still stood tall and tomatoes and lettuce made green and red the field. In the photograph, it’s easy to see the wind is blowing with the tree branches bent westward, his mother caught in mid-stride some five feet or so behind his father, staring away from the camera, and his father fully facing the camera. Stan leaned close and noticed again how it seemed his old man’s mouth was twisted just enough to be able to tell he was saying something, his leather arm sweeping out as if telling whoever was taking the photograph to move along, get away, nothing to see here. His face was severe. His mother’s face was regal, chin tilted, the look of a sharecropper hanging onto pride with every bit of energy she could muster.

Eve stepped behind him and placed a hand at his elbow. “I always liked that picture, Dip.”

“Yeah. Me, too.” He kept his eyes on the photograph.

“See you got the shotgun again.”



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The over-under shotgun leaned against the wall in front of Stan. Two shells slept inside the chambers. He picked the gun up and, touching Eve lightly than he had in years, walked slowly down the hall and into the kitchen. Scents of breakfast nearly pulled him out of the place he'd fallen since Kevin Meeks had been arrested less than an hour ago, but is passed and he went to the window. From here he could see the turn off from Route 122 onto Garden Road and the entirety of that road until it ended at the block garage and his pitiful Ranger still tilting from the weight of the immovable engine stuck half in and half out of its body.

Then he saw him. Evan Meeks, always walking from always being hammered drunk, staggered down the incline of road. He had already turned onto Garden Road and moved faster than Stan would have expected. He didn't see a gun on him, but then he probably wouldn't. It'd be a pistol tucked away in his pants or in the armpit of his jacket. It was there, no doubt about it. A .38 maybe or, best case, a .22.

Just as Stan readied the gun, still looking from the window, keeping his eyes on Evan Meeks, he saw him duck into Terry Kimper's house at the turn in the road. Stan scanned the stretch of land from his house to Bill's trailer and Lafe Hill caught his eye, bent over his patch of lettuce, white hair bobbing in the middle of all that green like a swinging light bulb. Stan hated to put Lafe in the middle of something, but he didn't tell him to go pick late season lettuce today.

"Don't, Dipshit." Eve didn't look as puny now as before. It was her eyes, on fire and full of that gamey way she had about her when the world was still young for both of them. But everything was still good old Eve – arms crossed, hair pulled into a eyebrow-pulled ponytail, thin lips set firm.

Stan kissed her full in the lips and they didn't move against his. He lingered on her bottom lip, holding his kiss there for longer than he had in many years. The over-under was cold in his hand, heavy and ready. He stepped out the door and Eve said nothing more. When he was off the porch and about to start across the bottom field, Stan looked back once and saw her in the window. Her arms were not crossed like before. One arm



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was now dangling at her side and the other was raised, a hand with fingers extended along the side of her face. He waved once and started toward Bill's trailer.

He meant to pass by Lafe with nothing more than a nod. Lafe was good people and wouldn't think much about the shotgun, but old man stopped him, pulling up from his stooped position and smiled.

"It's a fine batch, right. Look at that?"

A door slammed down the road, Terry Kimper's door. Evan dropped back onto the road, headed faster than before toward Bill's trailer.

The over-under felt heavier now. Lafe was brushing his hand across the leaves of lettuce.

"Let me know if you and Hen want some. I'll pick extra. Man can only eat so much. No use in wasting, right?"

Stan's eyes didn't move from Evan, and Bill was likely back inside asleep or stoned. Lafe came up beside him. Stan saw he was watching Evan, too. "No use in wasting, but I could use some help here, Stan."

A chain link fence ran along the side of Lafe's patch, a lot where a singlewide once sat years before. He leaned the shotgun against the fence with care and took Lafe by the shoulder, squeezed it gently.

"What can I do? Where do you want me?"

Lafe smiled again and pointed to a section where the lettuce was thickest, near the middle, and Stan moved to the spot. Lafe's hands working beside him could have been his old man's, tending the crops even when he could hardly bend his fingers to button his shirt.



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Stan didn't notice when Evan Meeks passed them and disappeared around the corner of the trailer. He asked Lefe about his old man, and his father's old friend told a story from years ago when all the land was ripe with crops and Stan allowed history to swallow up the present, working what was left from that time quietly.

Sheldon Compton is the author of the collections *The Same Terrible Storm* and *Where Alligators Sleep* (Foxhead Books, 2012). His work has also appeared in several print and online journals including BLIP (formerly Mississippi Review Online), Thunderclap Magazine, Emprise Review, Keyhole Magazine, Kudzu, and the Appalachian anthology *Degrees of Elevation* (Bottom Dog Press, 2011). He survives in eastern Kentucky. To learn more, visit www.bentcountry.blogspot.com.



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Mikka Gamble
Baccar Stick

Daddy swung the tobacco stick, and I listened closely as it splintered against my brother. His face rough and confused with each crack thrown his way. Rays of light breaking through his shadow with each rapid movement he made. We did not cry, neither Jonny nor myself.

Instead, we cheered our father on, begging him not to stop. “Again Daddy, again!” I chanted.

The old porch was worn with chipped and faded paint, the boards warped and tattered from age and weather, the nails rusted with a dull metallic. I sat on the rough swing that was as old as the porch itself. This was where I spent my summer days, floating back and forth through the muggy air, lost in a book with only sounds of the swing chain as it jingled and swayed.

“If you keep read’n like that, you’re gonna go blind,” Jonny said. I looked up at the screen of the porch’s side door. “But I like it,” I said and folded the corner of my page.

“You should be out there play’n, not sit’n here with ya nose in a book. School’s over fer now, ya know.” The door hinges squeaked. I watched the fluent movement of his legs walking toward me, and felt his weight level the swing. He reached over and tapped lightly on my leg.

“We’re all play’n ball this sevening. I’ll take you with me,” Jonny said. I pulled my book close.

“But Mommy said I can’t play with you boys any more. She says you all are gonna end up hurt’n me.”



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My brother scoffed. “Awe, they ain’t gonna hurt ya. Hell, they’d be too afraid of the ass woopen they’d get.” He smacked my bare legs once more. “Go on and getcha shoes, Little Bit.” I knew my mother was right. The neighborhood boys played far too rough for a little girl, but I loved it. The girls my age were too prissy for my liking. They were too worried about getting dirty or staining their pretty sundresses.

My brother was only a few years older than me, and his friends did try to take it easy whenever I was around, but my mother was right, an eight year old didn’t need to be around a bunch of spitting, cussing boys. I ignored the thought of my mother screaming, “Laney Beth, I’ll bust your bare hide,” and went to fetch my shoes.

I laid my book down in the space between Jonny and me and scooted to the edge of the swing. That was another reason my mother didn’t like me playing with older kids. I was extremely small for my age. My hair hung long, curling at its ends, and my arms and legs were dangly, but I was strong thanks to the rough housing with my brother. Scrapes covered my knees and elbows, some scabbed and some new. I lowered my feet towards the porch, but stopped short. My gaze landed near the corner of the house.

I could see Cole staggering towards us. His arms searching for the outside walls of our home, to press his weight against. His feet moved slow and unsteady. He made little attempt to regain his balance. I sat very still, hoping I would be ignored though I should have known better.

The sickening scent that was him danced along with the wind towards our place on the swing. Cole’s eyes were a deep bloodshot red, and his face a sad shade of pale. I felt my tiny hands grip the wood beneath me. “Shit. He’s drunk again,” Jonny whispered. He placed his hand in the small of my back and urged me forward. “Go on in the house. I’ll go out into the baccar bed and get Dad.” Jonny said. I nodded my understanding and moved on.

Cole continued to stagger. I perched myself behind the screen door, believing that it would serve all the protection I would need. Cole was the oldest of my six siblings and



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the only one who seemed to become another person after a few drinks. It was as though he transformed, like the cartoon that came on every Saturday morning. He was Dr. Jekyll becoming his evil creation. I stood behind the netting and waited.

“Cole, you need to sit down a while. Don’t ya think?” Jonny asked. I was terrified of Cole, though I guess it comes naturally to fear a person who’s pulled your hair as many times as he had pulled mine, but I hated hiding inside while Jonny faced him alone.

Cole processed his words. He wore his intoxication all over his face. “What did you say?” I watched Jonny’s face change from bravery to fear. “I, I just meant that you didn’t look so good, that’s all.”

My drunk brother moved his hand along the grain of the house. His eyes drifted, unable to hold focus. Jonny stood waiting for a time to move, to run inside the house and join me. But Cole was too close now, and he knew what was coming. He knew how his brother was when the alcohol had gotten the best of him. Jonny shifted his eyes to me. “Go get Daddy.” My eyes widened, and my heart soared in size.

“What did you say, little man?” I looked once more at each of my brothers. Tears began blurring my vision. I nodded to Jonny, pushed myself off the facing of the door and ran. I zigzagged my way through the kitchen. I moved quickly around the table, not stopping to pick up one of my mother’s chairs. I ran through the living room passing the old tarnished coal burning stove and out the front door. The steps were steep, and my wobbly legs were weak, but still I ran. I knew Cole would hurt Jonny if I stopped. I knew that if I didn’t get Daddy Jonny would take a beating. So I ran. I ran around the edge of the house and up the small bank that led out to the opposite porch. The porch I left my brother on. I ran hard and fast, but I was too late. I heard Jonny cry out, and my big brother never cried. Never. It was at that time that I began to cry, too. But my legs were still moving.



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Cole's hands were around Jonny's small neck, holding him high against the wall of the house. I fell to my knees. "Stop it, please." I searched for something, anything that I could throw.

Jonny's face was wrinkled with pain, his eyes staring at me. His feet scrapped at the porch straining to press his weight. "Go tell Daddy, is that what you said?" Cole asked in a slurred raspy voice. "Let him go!" I screamed again. "Daddy's not here, is he?" Cole said.

Still I searched for something.

I saw my brother cry and my heart ached. I didn't have time to get help; he was going to choke him to death. I reached for the book I left on the swing. It was thick and hardbound. I grabbed it and swung with all my might. "Get off him. Get off him!" I held on to the book, placing the edge to the center of his lower back, hitting him over and over. He swayed with the intoxication and the pain from the hard cover.

"I said stop it!" I screamed. Jonny slid down the length of the wall, his feet catching his fall. I moved quickly off the low end of the porch. Cole staggered toward me. I ran onto the grass. My oldest brother stood in a slow manner. Jonny reached for his neck and rubbed.

"I'll beat your ass, little girl." My tears were gone. I knew I could out run him. I knew that my father was only half an acre away.

"Then do it," I said. "I'm not scared of you." He stood, and I prepared myself to run. I stood there waiting for his attack. His eyes were angry, but if I ran before he regained his stance he would go back to Jonny. I stepped closer, stood above him and smiled. He looked up at me, his eyes cloudy and glazed. I gathered all the spit in my mouth, drained it from my cheeks.



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When I was satisfied with the pool on my tongue, I spat it at his face. The warmth plopped lightly between his eyes. I knew it was time. I saw how his muscles twitched. “I’m telling Daddy,” I said. He sprang upward, grabbing at me at the same time. I began running. I turned my head to focus on the ground in front of me, and pushed forward.

I heard Cole fall just as quick as he stood. Once his feet had planted on the boards beneath him, they were kicked away. His face bounced from the hard wood below as he landed, smacking with all his weight. My body, too, slammed against something hard. The breath rushed from my chest. I fell back, stopping short of the ground.

I looked upward and a rush of relief settled within. There was Daddy, his eyes burning bright with anger. “Daddy, I was coming for you. I was, I was a running...” My words lacked air. He leaned down and kissed the top of my head. “Sissy girl,” he said. “I want you to go on in the house, and rest up a bit before supper.” I knew he wanted me inside because something was about to be said or done that I wasn’t meant to see.

“Bub, you alright?” Daddy asked Jonny, though his eyes rested on Cole. Jonny moved his hand from his throat and nodded. “Go on inside then. You and the baby get yourselves a snack.” I stepped over Cole, still lying on porch and knelt down to Jonny.

“Come on, Bubby.” I reached him my hand, and we did as our father said. Daddy cleared his throat and walked over near the porch. “Cole, come on over here.”

Cole smirked, allowing a low laugh to escape. My other brother and I watched from the window in sheer joy. It wasn’t until then that I noticed the narrow piece of wood in my father’s hand.

“Boy, you’re already get’n the beat’n of your life, don’t make it any worse by cause’n me to repeat myself,” Daddy said. “Damn shame, a grown man hurt’n two youngens that can’t defend themselves.” He clicked his tongue against his teeth. “I’ll bet, though, after today you’ll think twice about drink’n.”



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Daddy swung the tobacco stick, and I listened close as it splintered against my brother. Cole's face rough and confused with each crack thrown his way. Rays of light breaking through his shadow with each rapid movement he made. We did not cry, neither Jonny nor myself. Instead, we cheered our father on, begging him not to stop. "Again, Daddy, again!" I chanted.

Years later, I stood in the weeded yard, gazing at the place in the sky where the hilltops met.

The house still remained, along with the memories. But Daddy was gone and Mommy wasn't doing well. My brothers and I still came around, along with the rest of the kids, and I still liked to read on that old splintered swing. I remembered that times were always tough in that house, that lessons were learned but never the easy way. But somehow that swing brought comfort. Here I was, that little girl with her Daddy always there to save her.

Mikka Gamble, of Salyersville, is a BSCTC student.



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Nathan Hall

Faustian Bargain

“Good evening, world. This is Samantha Renalds with U.S.C.E News. Last week we brought you a special piece on Mr. Robert Day, who has recently beat the record for longest living person—reaching an amazing 124 years of age. He has asked me back to his home for a one-on-one interview, which he promises will be far from anything we’ve covered before, and I, for one, am looking forward to it.” With that, the cheery blonde moved the microphone away from her face and the robot machine that was with her rolled in as well. “How did that sound, Mr. Day?”

“Perfectly fine. I just thank you for coming here to listen to me today.”

“It’s not a problem. It may be my big break after all.” She looked around his living room, small, mostly empty. “I don’t see how you live in this small place. No offense.”

“None taken.”

“I’m a have to cut you off there, Mr. Day. Commercials are about over.” Her machine moved in closer, casting a bright light over his apartment, dark and poorly kept. She gave a thumbs up and a red light lit up on the contraption. She pulled some papers out of her bag and looked at the old man.

“So, Mr. Day, I have to say I’m really curious as to what you’ve got to say. Let’s start. When were you born? How has the world changed?”

“I was born in 1978, before we went in debt to China. The world itself has changed a lot. Technology wise, anyway. The robot you have traveling with you, back in my day, we were just figuring out how to make those things. It’s astounding, really.”

“Do you think that has something to do with why you have no ‘bots serving you?”



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“That, well, that is for different reasons. But many other things have changed as well. When I was growing up, Steve Rogers wore red, white, and blue, not red and yellow. He kept the stars and dropped the stripes. Another thing, back then it was the U.S.A, United States of America --not U.S.C.E, United States of the Chinese Empire. Really, the debt we put ourselves in was pathetic. I could go on, but my worldviews are not what I wish to pass on here. That’s for the youth to decide.”

“Okay, so why don’t you begin telling us about it.”

“Well, it all started in 2001. I was a stupid 22 year old. Like anyone my age then, I was listening to music with my friends and ignoring the road while I was driving. But things played out different than what the other people our age were used to. I wrapped my poor car right around an old oak tree.”

“An oak tree? You must have gone pretty far out of the way to hit one of those.”

“No, trees were a normal sight on roadsides back then. . . . Where was I? Oh, yes, I wrapped my car right around that old oak tree. My two buddies didn’t pull through. I barely did.”

“Sounds awful.”

“It was. Ended up on life support for a few months. But the biggest change of my life occurred due to that. I saw Heaven.”

“Heaven?”

“Not common knowledge now? It was glorious, something beyond words.”

“Nothing is beyond words, Mr. Day.”



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“Says your day and age who believes themselves to know everything. I could attempt to speak of it. But no matter the description I used, it would fall so short of the actual scene.”

“We will hear more after the break. I’m sure people have had their interest peaked.” The red light flashed again and the machine flipped the other off. Miss Renalds sighed and tilted her head back. “Is this how the whole thing is going to go? Mr. Day, it’s really not what I came here for. I wanted a look back through history, not the ramblings of a senile old man.”

“Senile? If that’s what you want to think of me, Miss Renalds, go ahead. But I called you here to get my story out and off my chest.”

“No offense, Mr. Day, but this seems a bit bizarre.”

“Think of it this way, Miss Renalds: If my story is a success, you are. If it flops and everyone thinks I am crazy, well, you interviewed a crazy old man. This can do you no harm, and you are already here.”

She considered this. “Fine. Commercial’s almost over. So be quiet and wait for my cue.”

Robert nodded. The light flipped on, forcing him to blink his eyes. “Hello, everyone, and welcome back. Mr. Day, please continue.”

“As I was saying, I saw Heaven.”

“Which you stated was something beyond words?”

“Far beyond. But it was a sad realization when I came to.”

“Why so?”



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“Well, you see, I was out for quite some time. Missed most the year lying in bed. I was over sedated and barely breathing. But the sad part was waking up from that vision.”

“Dream.”

“No, it was a vision. But waking up from that to find my two friends didn’t make it. That, and also knowing I was so far off achieving the gift of going to Heaven.”

“So this Heaven is a reward for?”

“Heaven is the ultimate reward you achieve by following the teachings of a book called the Bible, but I didn’t follow the teachings, nor did the world as a whole. I didn’t think I could redeem myself. I then remembered as a boy hearing a story about a man who sold his soul to Satan—”

“Satan?”

“An angel who fell from Heaven, depicted as the ultimate evil. Imprisoned in hell?”

“Oh, I remember childhood stories of him and God.”

“More than likely your parents were reading you the Bible. But anyway, these pacts dated back to old stories. I always wondered about it, and I had decided what I wanted to do. I wanted to sell my soul to get to Heaven.”

“Okay, to make sure I remember right—your soul is what goes to Heaven or Hell after death?”

“Yes, I thought you didn’t know of Heaven.”

“I knew of it. But it hadn’t crossed my mind you would mean the place in those old stories.”



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“Okay, then. May I continue?”

“In a few moments, let’s take another break.” The lights flicked off after the red light died.

Samantha stood up and stretched. Robert eased himself onto his cane and started toward the kitchen.

“Want anything, Miss Renalds?”

“I’ll take some bottled water.”

“I’m afraid I don’t have any. Will tap do?”

“I’ll pass. I don’t want to be poisoned. You do know tap water will rush you to your grave.”

“I’m 124. Rushing isn’t a problem.” He ran a glass of the dark filth before making his way back to his seat.

“If you don’t mind me asking, where are your kids?”

“It’s simple. They are all dead.”

“Grandkids?”

“Dead.”

“Great Grandkids?”

“Dead.”



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“Gre-”

“Never had any.”

“So you drink tap water, live in this dump, no offense, and have no family. How do you make it?”

“I have no choice.”

“Unresolved goals or ambitions?”

“Nope, just can’t make it to the grave.”

“What’s that sup--oh sorry, we need to go back on air. Wait on the qu-”

“I remember.” Lights, red light, and they were back for the billions worldwide to see.

“Before the break, Mr. Day was beginning to tell us what happened after he left the hospital. Please, Robert, it’s okay if I call you Robert, isn’t it? Please continue.”

“As I was saying, it was after I got out of the hospital: I was wrapped up in an old flannel jacket to keep warm and on my way to the nearest crossroads. It was a stupid idea, but I was young and reckless. I knew the potential consequences. But I didn’t care. It was my best shot. I arrived and saw nothing. I kept thinking to myself, how do I do this? What will let Satan greet me with his presence?”

It was a very awkward thought and the fact the passing cars and the sight of my own breath were all that was there to entertain me didn’t help. But moments later a voice called out for me, and from behind a coal truck sat a man on a highway sign, waving me over. He was in a very fine suit, wearing sun glasses, and had a chain around his ankle, right before his shined shoes that ran straight into the ground and seemed to disappear.



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“Robert James Day, 22. Birthdate, May 3rd, 1978. All-time favorite band, Smashing Pumpkins.”

“You are?”

“Lucifer, or Satan, as you’d apparently like to call me.”

“How did you know I was waiting for you?”

“Some computers are harder to crack than the human mind. It’s sad. Not to mention I can sense temptation a mile away.”

“Okay.”

“Before we discuss business, let me look you over first. Black Tee, ripped jeans, commoner’s shoes. With the way I see things going, I may need to dress like you in the future. Stir up some trouble.” He looked me over. I felt awkward, a bit frightened. But not as much as I figured I should be. My parents had always said he was the most beautiful angel. I’d be lying if I didn’t say he was far better looking than myself. Or anyone else for that matter.

“Can we get this over with?” I asked.

“Ah! The eager type, are you? So what do you want? Money? Power? Inhuman strength? A couple of extra inches? To be the true master of something? What about all medical knowledge? To play guitar or violin amazingly? You look like a violin man. Come on, let me hear it, boy.”

“I want a guaranteed passage into Heaven.”

“You want what? This is a new one. I, I like the way you think. You’ve tossed me a nice little curveball.”



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“Can you do it?”

“Hey, don’t doubt me. If humans can make their way there, I can give you a way there. Only problem is, what do I get? Normally a deal with me costs some souls.”

“Tell me the cost. Let me hear what my choices are.”

“Impatient, are you, Robby.”

“It’s my afterlife we are discussing here. I think I have a right to be impatient.”

“Sure you don’t want super powers?”

“No.”

“Ungodly charisma?”

“No.”

“A pet turtle?”

“Lucifer, you know what I want! Stop playing around!” Some people would call yelling like that at the embodiment of evil stupid. At the time, I wasn’t thinking. Too many thoughts were swamping my mind.

“Fine, here is the deal. You, Robert Day, have my word that in death you will have passage into Heaven. But, in return, as you live out the rest of your days, I’ll keep your soul in hell with me, like a trophy to show off to the other idiots who made deals with me.”

“A trophy?”



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“Yes, I want to show off. All those souls I’ve had pass through my fingers. Then there is you.

The guy who had the perfect request. I want to show them just how greedy and dumb they really are. That’s right! Keep smiling. You know, throughout this whole thing, you’ll be conscious and able to live. Nothing will change except the outcome.”

“How do I know I can trust you?”

“I let the blacksmith go, didn’t I?”

“What?”

“Never heard the story? Here is the Master over all Masters? No? Well, let’s put it this way. It was your idea; you sought me out. Don’t second-guess yourself. Don’t back down to the Devil.”

“Fine, I’ll do it.” Then right before my eyes fire came from his hand. An old-looking piece of paper formed. On it were the details of my deal in red ink. The bottom had some weird symbols that I assumed was his signature. All that was needed was mine, and I signed away quickly.

“Miss Renalds, after the signing of my Faustian bargain, I felt so alive. Like I could live without regret free of the burden of the afterlife. But like I said, I was young and dumb.” Miss Renalds was now leaning forward, listening.

“So you sold your soul to the devil? That’s interesting. Bizarre but interesting. Do go on.”

“There isn’t much to tell about our meeting after that. Once my name was signed, he jumped off the sign and walked away.”



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“But he was chained. How did he manage that?”

“The chain moved with him, still going into the dirt. But no matter how far he walked, it didn’t pull him back or so much as move the very dirt it went into.”

“Sounds like magic.”

“Miss Renalds, he is Satan after all.”

“I guess so. Well, what happened next?”

“I went home and my life began.”

“You mean that’s all to your story?”

“All I wish to share.” With that he stood up. Her ‘bot’s camera continued to follow him. He hobbled into the next room. He could hear some mumbling outside the door, which he took as her wrapping up. Moments later, a knock.

“Mr. Day, I decided to call it quits for today. But now you have me interested, and I’m sure many more want to hear more about you. Personally, I think you are crazy. But just like sex... crazy sells. Well. So how about I call you to set up another taping?”

“I have nothing more to tell.”

“You are 124, Mr. Day. People will want to know more. You just told us you sold your soul to the devil. Yet you say you have nothing more to share?”

“What more do you want to hear?”

“We should receive some calls. That will give me all the questions I need to ask. You rest up.” With that, he watched her and the robot leave. He longed for rest, but he



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wouldn't fall asleep for good. He wished he could, but all these years waiting and suffering and it had yet to happen. Why hold his breath?

Next day, a new appointment was scheduled. He had three days to stare at the grey walls, and stare he did.

Robert let her in and the machine rolled in beside her. She looked around, disappointed.

“Mr. Day, I thought I asked you to clean up?”

“I'm 124, Miss Renalds. What did you expect to do? Get on my hands and knees to clean? Lying in the floor till someone visited me to help me up? You must be senile.” She scoffed and pulled up a chair.

“Let's get started then. We had many callers to ask questions.”

“Oh, really?”

“Yes. Mostly, they wanted to know what you were taking back then.”

“What?”

“They believe you to have been on drugs, Mr. Day. But let's have the light come on. Wait for my cue.”

Then the red light appeared, and again, he was live. “Good Evening, world. This is News Reporter Samantha Renalds from U.S.C.E here to bring you part two of Robert Day's life story. Now last week we heard a tale of a car crash and visions of Heaven and a meeting fit for hell. Due to the unbelievable things mentioned, we left it up to you, the viewers, to decide if we should return. Despite the ridicule, the majority vote was yes—we are interested. So Robert, how do you feel about answering some questions for our viewers this time around?”



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“Well, they heard me out, so I guess I owe them that much.”

“Thank you. First question, since, as you say, you have a free pass into Heaven, did you ever act out?”

“Yes.”

“Now, Mr. Day, I think the people at home would like to hear a bit about it. Not just a simple yes or no.”

“Fine. It was that summer when I realized what I had done. June 30th, I believe. It had just settled in. I could do no wrong in regards to affecting my afterlife. At the time if things got bad, suicide was always an option. During this time I’d become a pill head. It wasn’t so casual back then as it is now. Trust me. But I’d started shoplifting. Mostly, I stayed intoxicated. Drinking with people, sleeping in the streets. Really living.”

“Being homeless? That’s really living?”

“Being free, I was on my own. No payments to hold me down. Stolen goods to eat on or trade for alcohol and pills when I got the ole itch. I was rolling with the punches.”

“You were homeless.”

“Miss Renalds, you believe it to be homeless. I think of it as freedom. It was harmony.”

“Okay, next question, this had a lot of call-ins. Who was your wife? How did you meet? What happened to her?”

“I was dreading this.”

“It’s an intriguing question. Seeing as how marriage now is looked down upon and hardly ever permanent. People find hope in things like this.”



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“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Please, Robert.”

“Okay. Where to start? November 2002. I was still sleeping in the streets, buying in to this small group of angst teens protesting against Bush and Iraq. They made sense. Oil, oil, oil. But that isn’t where I met her. One of the boys had a job so he bought some cheap beer from the gas station where he worked. The other traded pills, or handed them out so we could all have a great time. Little did I care, but mixing pills and beer was an incredibly bad idea. I somehow found myself wandering out from under the old bridge and onto the streets to a bench where I overdosed. Between the phasing in and out, I could see the brunette with thick-rimmed glasses and a coat with a fur hood standing over me. She had found me on a bench, called 911, and then sat in the waiting room until I was able to speak. At the time I looked almost as bad as when I wrecked, tubes running in and out of my arms. Laid up in a bed in a big white room with humming fluorescent lights. I felt awful.

Then she came in. It wasn’t any of the slow motion walk-ins you’d see in movies. More like a worried, angry march. Come to think of it, her reaction to a total stranger in such a warm and scary manner was part of her appeal.

“Who are you?”

“Gretchen Ross.”

“How do I know you?”

“You don’t.”

“Am I dead?”

“You would be if I hadn’t walked past you.”



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“When?”

“Yesterday, you were lying on a bench stoned out of your mind and barely alive.”

“I was not.”

“Yes, you were, not to mention your arm was bleeding.”

“Huh?”

“Never mind. What’s your name? Who are your parents? The nurses need to know. Because at the moment I’m responsible for you.”

“No, I am responsible for me.”

“Which is exactly why you ended up nearly dead on a bench with a bottle of Jack Daniels in your hand.”

I later discovered Gretchen had stayed there overnight. She was one of the most innocent people I had ever met. I eventually came to and stopped sounding like an idiot. Gave her my parents’ names but explained that they were both dead. When Gretchen found this out, she had no choice, she said, but to come back to make sure I was okay.”

“You get out in three more days, James.”

“It’s Robert, not James.”

“I prefer calling you by your middle name. I saved your life so you can get over it.”

“Why are you even still coming here?”



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“Because someone has to show up, and since your parents are gone, you have no siblings, and obviously you can’t take care of yourself, I promised the doctors when you get out, I’ll give you a place to sleep.”

“Why?”

She shrugged.

“You know what, Miss Ross?”

“What?”

“I’ve never seen a girl look so good with thick-rimmed glasses before.”

“You are not allowed to flirt, James. You’re a charity case.”

“Miss Renalds, Gretchen ended up stuck with me. After a few months I was clean and living in her home, sleeping on the couch. She wouldn’t have admitted it, but she liked my company. I had picked her to mend me, which her good nature wouldn’t allow her to decline.” “It’s sort of sweet when you put it like that. She fell in love with her charity work. What happened to her?”

“We went on to have three children. Autumn Day, Rainy Jane Day, and Gabriel Day. We were married before they came along. Gretchen, sadly, died in a car crash. She wrecked nearly in the same spot my friends and I did. She took Gabriel and Autumn with her. Rainy was all I had left. This was September 2009.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. What became of your daughter Rainy?”

“At the time of her mother’s death, she was a month and three days old. Later on, she was relatively normal, opinionated, and rebellious, although in political ways, without the drug and alcohol influence. She ended up married at 18 to the high school



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boyfriend. She was going to change the world and have him by her side. But he ended up killing her four years later during a argument about his drug abuse. She left behind a son, who the father took after his charges were dropped by some twist of fate. My grandson killed himself at age 18.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Mr. Day, let me ask, have you ever attempted suicide to claim your reward?”

“Yes, I have. After Rainy died and that bastard husband of hers got off and kept the kid, I figured to hell with the world; it was already there. So I tried. I tried to hang myself. I ended up breaking my neck and surviving. I crawled to the phone to call 911, something the paramedics say I shouldn’t have been able to do. Later I cut my wrist, but the bleeding on my arm was no blood at all. It was my contract. Anytime I was supposed to die, it bled through my arm.”

“The one you signed for your deal with Satan. Correct?”

“Yep, watch.” Her eyes widened. She watched the blade run over his wrist. The letters began to form as the blood dripped from his wrist. Her mouth dropped.

“This, it—it raises so many questions. Oh, Robert, stop.”

“Miss Renalds, it’s simple. I am Satan’s example to the world that he always wins. I thought I had tricked the devil. But he just laughed and now shows me off as a prize. That, or this is God’s way of saying I was a flower that cheated to bloom and not worth picking. So I get to wither here.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“I think we’re out of time, Miss Renalds.”



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“Yes, thank you. We are out of time.” With that the light flickered off and she stood quick. “I want to thank you for the story and your time, Mr. Day.”

“It’s fine, Miss Renalds.” Soon she was moving, toward the door, her ‘Bot following her out.

This interview was over. Later, Robert sat alone in his grey living room. “How much longer do I have to suffer?” he asked aloud, right before a familiar figure stepped out of the kitchen, dressed in an old flannel jacket, a black tee shirt and old tattered shoes, chains clanging against linoleum.

“That’s simple, James, until the End.”

Nathan Hall, 19, of Jackscreek, is a BSCTC student. He said his story “Faustian Bargain” was inspired by the music of his three favorite bands.



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Thomas Matijasic

Raising a Regrettable Past

August 11, 1977

They're tearing down the old house. It doesn't look like much in the light of a quarter moon. Three stories of darkness and a storm is on the way. It's probably for the best. The upper two floors have been unoccupied for years and the floor on the first level is beginning to give way. I hope I can get this cigarette re-lit before the clouds cover the moonlight again. Too bad I can't relight it with a moonbeam.

It was already over ninety years old when Grandpa bought it back in 1924. My mother's people told me that every afternoon after he got off work, Grandpa would crank up the Model T and ride into the countryside looking for land that reminded him of his childhood in the foothills of the Tetra Mountains. When he found this piece of property, he bought it. People on the surrounding farms were none too happy, and the Klan was near its peak.

They didn't like Catholics or foreigners and Grandpa was both. He was in this house for less than a month when a hooded mob burned a cross in his front yard. Ignorance saved him. He mistook their action for a local welcoming custom and invited the Klansmen into his house. Grandma fed them pastries and Grandpa served them some of his homemade hard cider. They all got roaring drunk and left. They never bothered Grandpa again, and he even hired some of them later in the year to help harvest his crops.

Grandpa was a hard worker with his job at the mill and a two-hundred acre farm to run. He had a lot of mouths to feed and not much time to mess around. I guess he didn't like to paint because he covered the house with shingles from top to bottom. He worked himself to death and Grandma buried him in a plot next to his first wife because the plot was paid for and she needed to save money. Some say she was none too sorry when he passed because she still had the farm and a peck of sons and daughters to help

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her work it. Too bad for Grandma that her kids didn't want to be farmers. The boys went off to war and some of them never came back. The girls went to town to find work and husbands. They helped when they could, but Grandma did the planting and the milking herself and with whatever seasonal labor she could find.

Grandma had kind of an odd worldview -- not odd for where she came from, but odd for here. There were some wild grapevines on the left side of the house and a swing with supports was constructed among them. She would sit on the swing and we would sit on a blanket in front of her and listen to her stories of the Old Country. The chores all had to be done first, so it was usually early evening when the grand kids would participate in this treat.

There was a common theme to Grandma's stories – they usually had the devil in them. Now it's not what you think. She was a God-fearing woman, a regular churchgoer. She was no Satan worshiper. The devil was no monstrous looking thing, and he wouldn't show up unless you called him. Even then, you could send him away. Grandma's stories had to do with choices and the consequences of making the wrong choices. We all make wrong choices from time to time. If we didn't, I wouldn't be sitting out here smoking a cigarette and staring at an abandon house in the middle of the night.

Her stories would usually start with some young man or woman who was ambitious and restless. They would call on the devil and bargain with him to gain wealth or fame or a rich spouse, whatever it was that they wanted. But to gain what they wanted they would have to pay the devil's price. They were never satisfied. If they asked for a million dollars and got it, they would then begin to desire a second million. If they gained success as an actress in Prague, they would want success on a larger stage in Vienna.

Eventually they would bargain away their souls and even though they achieved things beyond their wildest dreams, they never found happiness and the devil never forgave a debt. If these stories sound like variations of the tale of Dr. Faust, it is because they probably were. Tales of Faust predate Goethe by two centuries and probably originated in the folk legends of central Europe where Germans and Jews, Magyars and Slavs mixed



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together and their tales became a single cloth made of several threads. But this was America, where ambitious is rewarded and the devil runs rough-shot over the weak and the lame.

Thomas D. Matijasic is a native of Youngstown, Ohio. He earned a B.A. from Youngstown State University, a M.A. from Kent State University, and a Ph.D. in History from Miami University. He has taught at Big Sandy Community & Technical College since January 1, 1983. Dr. Matijasic has received four BSCTC Great Teacher Awards, five NISOD awards for teaching excellence, and the 2006 Acorn Award. He served as President of the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History (1994) and served three terms on the Kentucky Heritage Council (1994-2006). Dr. Matijasic has published more than 20 articles and 30 book reviews, the most recent entitled, "It's Personal: Nixon, Liberia and the Development of U.S. African Policy (1957-1974)," WHITE HOUSE STUDIES (2011).



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Phyllis Puffer

Trust Me

The Women's Army Corps basic training unit was marching to class at Ft. McClellan in Alabama. We had been in training for a few weeks already so our own fellow students, instead of "real" army personnel, were leading the march, and a student was calling the commands. As a person of medium height, I was in the middle of the formation, with increasingly taller uniformed bodies ahead of me, similar sized uniforms around me and smaller uniformed women behind me.

We were pretty good marchers at this point. We were all in step and kept our lines pretty straight. We marched along the paved road in the rhythm of centuries.

The leader called, "Column left, march!" Obediently, row by row, we marched forward, came to the designated spot, pivoted left and continued marching.

I was a relatively oblivious recruit and back then much better at following directions than I am now. On top of it, I couldn't see anything at the moment but other recruits. I followed the others in the pattern set by those ahead of me without a second thought. Then without paying too much attention to what was going on, I was vaguely aware that we had left the pavement and were going through grass and down a slope. Then immediately we were going upward rather steeply, and then forward on flat land. Our leader eventually called, "Company, halt!" We halted and were allowed to relax and look around.

Our two, "real" platoon leaders were jumping up and down, smiling, laughing, and shouting. It turned out that unknowingly we had performed magnificently as soldiers. We had blindly followed orders even though they were stupid. Thankfully in this case there was no harm.

The road we marched along several times a day was separated from the classroom building by a ditch. Getting from the road to the building required going over a bridge.



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It turned out that our student leader had called the turn command too soon. We had completely missed the bridge.

Our company of recruits, following the orders given to us, had marched straight down into the ditch separating the road from the classroom. Then we had marched straight up out of it without turning a hair. At the time, no water lay in that ditch, but if there had been, we would have gone right through it.

Now, whenever somebody says, “Trust me,” I think of the time I was marched into a ditch.

Phyllis Puffer received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and her Ph.D. from Michigan State University, all in sociology. She has traveled in over 40 countries, mostly in the Third World.



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Joshua Logan Slone

The Mountain Letters

My Dearest Sara,

I just arrived to the mountain after a 26-day trek across the land. I find I miss you more and more with each passing day, and were it possible, miss Jacob even more than that. You can be relieved, my love, in knowing that I am in good health. The same cannot be said for my guides to this mountain. One passed away on the journey; the other two succumbed to illness as soon as we reached the small outpost below the mountain. I feel for them and their families but will admit to being grateful that I did not go in their place.

The trip was well worth it. This mountain is a spectacular place. An abundance of trees, streams, snow, animals, and everything else culminate in a peaceful utopia that no human has touched. Mr. Edwards will truly be thrilled to construct a mansion in this area. I hope that I have found a good enough locale for him to increase my payment for this journey. The hundred dollars he has promised would be more than enough to fulfill our dreams, but a little extra has never hurt. We will be able to build our dream at the least, Sara, and live out the rest of our days in it.

Tonight will be my first night in this area. I have been granted stay in a cabin built many years ago by a former resident of the town. I will admit that some of the townspeople seemed quite frightened with talk of the area. I am not sure why, and when I inquired, they would not give a straightforward answer. Perhaps it was overreacting to a long and somewhat traumatic journey. I do not think anything could possibly go wrong in this place, so like the Garden of Eden must have been.

I will mail this letter on the 28th of December. Please, my Sara, include the date in your letter so I may see how long our correspondences take in travel. I will write many letters in that passing time and will yearn for that first response from you.

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Until then, send Jacob my love. I would say the same for you, but you know you will always have it.

Yours, Isaac

My Sara,

It has been six days now since I have written you a letter. In this time, I have been exploring the mountain and trying to find a flaw to report. So far, I have found none.

The mountain extends far into the heavens and is picturesque as far as the eye can see. I have climbed high enough on its terrain to feel myself struggling to breathe, and even then, it was one of the most beautiful sights to witness. The snow stays crisp, regardless of temperature. I must confess that even with its frigid appearance, I have yet to feel frostbitten or even cold. It is an enduring mystery. As I said before, it is indeed a special place.

I had a strange experience yesterday, however. While chopping down a tree to use as firewood (for light, since as I said, the temperature seems comfortable throughout even the night), I saw a fox appear, just thirteen or so feet away from me. It was a stunningly beautiful creature and seemed oddly confused by me. I began to study it, and quite suddenly it locked eyes with me. Or, at least, it seemed so at first. I was puzzled. I had never seen a wild animal behave so calmly and human in my time back home or during any of my other travels. It occurred to me after several minutes of this staring, however, that the fox was peering over my shoulder.

I surveyed the area but could not find a hint of anything else around. By the time I turned back to the fox (perhaps a matter of seven seconds), it had gone. I could not spot it anywhere. I stayed in the area for some time, trying to surmise what the fox may have seen or where it had gone. I was shocked to discover that it had left no paw prints.



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None. Though he was a light animal and the snow is somewhat firm, I expected to find some trace of this quick visit from it. I did not.

I hope he visits me again soon, my Sara, though not as much as I long to be in your embrace again. I find I miss you and Jacob more every minute, nay, every second. I have been considering a plan, but I will not mention the details yet. I must mull it over and come to a decision.

My candle is quick running out. I shall have to retrieve another while visiting the country store. For now, it is time to rest and dream of our life to come.

Love,
Isaac

My love,

It has been another six days since I have written. My longing to see your reply grows. I know that it will be at least 30-40 days before I do, however, accounting for my 26-day trek here. I assume the post shall run slightly quicker than our journey, not being burdened with expedition supplies.

I found a perfect stream for fresh water just by my cabin. I have been here nearly two weeks, yet I somehow missed it in my initial searches. The strangest happening, since it was only yesterday I had been pondering searching for a new water source. The last one was amongst a tangle of weeds and overgrowth (though even those remained a pleasure to view) and was becoming tiresome to trek to every other day. I daresay with a stream this close, I could run piping into the cabin.

I had mentioned before a plan I had been pondering. Sadly, it will not work out. I had meant to find from the local courthouse the price of this cabin, with an idea of moving you and Jacob to it. I received the same odd behavior when I inquired about this with



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the local officials. They seemed unwilling to speak of it. When I mentioned purchasing the land, they seemed almost panicked by this notion. I asked them who I must speak to in order to complete the purchase of the deed, and they seemed to drift into a fit of chaos. The deskman simply started repeating that there was no one to speak to, that the property belonged to no one. When I asked to buy the property from their county, they assured me the county did not own it either.

I then proceeded to ask where I may submit the paperwork to take claim for land (an odd procedure, since I was unaware that there was land left unclaimed this side of the Mississippi) and the officials refused even that. They said the land must remain without owner. Suffice to say, I left the courthouse in a bit of a rage.

It matters not, though, for with this bad news, I also send good news. I wired a message to Mr. Edwards about what I had found. He assured me that if this place is as good as described, he will up my pay to three hundred dollars! Three hundred dollars, my love! We could retire to a country side, farming and living out our lives together. I hope he is as impressed as I with this land. I truly do not see how he couldn't be.

I love you dearly,
Isaac

My love,

It has been another six days since I last wrote. I have explored the mountain five miles in all directions now and can say I have never beheld such an amazing location.

I have also built a piping system into the cabin, allowing for drinking water at any time using the stream's own pressure. I must say, I am impressed with my creation. It runs efficiently and has allowed me more leisure time throughout the days. If only I could make the fire wood chop itself as well!



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I came about my fox friend again, or, at the least, one who appeared the same as he. It was in the area where I gathered wood before. The fox trudged towards me, to the same distance as before, stopped, and gave that same peering look over my shoulder. I was unsure of what to think, to see a wild animal behaving in such a pattern. I watched the creature intently this time and saw as it grew more and more frightful. It was to the point of shaking when, I admit, fear overcame me, and I turned to find nothing once again. The fox had again disappeared when I turned around. Once again, no sign it had ever appeared.

This time, I decided to inspect closer the area into which it had been staring. I made a quick pass and began expanding outwards. I did this for nearly two hours when, in the very direction that the fox had been staring, I discovered a rectangular stone in the ground. It was perhaps two feet by one, far too smoothly molded to have been done by weather. I can only assume it to be a land marker or perhaps a grave marker. I have pondered this and considered the idea that perhaps this fox was a spirit. A spirit who simply wished to let me know it was here among me and to wish me well. While that would be a wonderful happening, I do not believe it to be true.

Perhaps the time on the mountain alone has made me believe in coincidences being more than what they are.

I hope you and Jacob are doing well, and I will continue to look forward to our reunion.

Farewell, my love,
Isaac

My Sara,

It has been only two days since I mailed out my last letter, but I felt it urgent to write to you and free my mind of a terrible dream. The images were truly haunting and have been my only bad experience in this Garden.



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The dream seemed at the time to be as real as my every waking moment. I was staring out from the cabin across the grounds, taking in some of the fresh water I had pumped into my home. It was then that I noticed a shadow, nay, a blur of a figure out among the tree line. I was not sure what to make of it at first, so I stared more intently.

I was overcome by a feeling of dread at this point and an extreme need to look away. Though it took several minutes (in real time or dreamtime, I am not sure), I finally managed to take my gaze from the object at the tree line.

It was then that I awoke, covered in sweat and quivering in fear. I have no idea what caused such a dream to occur to me, but it shook me to my core. I immediately reminded myself of your warm embrace and of Jacob's playful smile to fill myself with happiness and comfort once again. I pray to Him that I never have such a dream again, my love.

I think today I shall explore the tree line and try to surmise what could have made me have such a vision. I pray that it was simply all in my imagination.

Love, Isaac

My love,

It has been four days now since my last correspondence, and I have had yet another terrible dream. I worry that my isolation has been playing tricks on my mind. I pray that I have not gotten ill, or worse, lost my grasp on reality.

After surveying the area of my dream, I noticed that the snow was mustered up in that area, dusky being the best word to describe its appearance. This could have been caused by a number of things. I was careful not to connect the two, though found it an odd coincidence.



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Then last night the dream reappeared in my mind. This time, however, it was not a shadowy figure or outline. It was a man, standing at the edge of the tree line. He did not seem concerned with me, yet I was filled with fear and dread. He was not looking towards me, nay, he was staring at the snowy ground. He was perhaps six and a half feet in height. He wore a black overcoat, black pants, and a blue button-up shirt. His face was obscured by a hat, much like the Amish in our area wear, but he had no beard. His hair was shoulder length and scraggly. His arms hung at his sides, with his shoulders slightly slouched. He was truly the most frightening figure I have ever witnessed.

I once again forced myself to look away and awoke. I was covered in sweat again, and took considerably more time to calm myself. I did not go and check the window, for I feared that he would be there, my love, there waiting for me, to do with me as he pleased.

When I checked the next day, I found footprints in the general area but could not be sure if they were mine or not. I have trekked the area so much these past weeks that it is impossible to tell at this point. I can only pray that my mind clears of these terrible thoughts soon.

Love to you both,
Isaac

My Sara,

He returned to my dreams again last night. I am so fearful now that I am losing a grip on reality. I have visited a local doctor and he says I am physically fine. I told him of the recurring dreams and he told me not to worry. When he asked where he could reach me later, I told him of my residence on the mountain. I saw a panic pass over him, and he exited the room without another word. I think I saw that. At this point I am not entirely sure if I can even trust my own thoughts.



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Mr. Edwards assured me he will be here in the coming weeks to survey the place himself. He sent word by wire that he was leaving just two days ago. I must admit this former place of beauty has me worried for my safety. I will look forward to leaving it behind.

The dream was similar to the rest, only this time he had moved in from the tree line to the area similar to a yard. I still could not see his face, but I know it is horrible. I can feel it.

Please, pray for me.

Yours, Isaac

Love,

I found the fox dead outside the cabin. I am not sure what killed it, but I did not see any signs of physical trauma whatsoever. It filled me with loss and regret and sadness to find the poor animal in that state. I only wish I knew what happened to him. Perhaps I will take it to a doctor and find out the answer, if I can find the time.

Thankfully the dreams have ceased the past week. I pray they are gone forever and the shadowy figure does not come back for me.

Yours forever,
Isaac

My Sara,

He returned to me last night, in the most horrifying way I have witnessed yet. He was closer now, closer to my window. I could feel his menace from that distance . . . and to my horror, he began moving. Moving towards me with slow, painstaking steps; each



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one filled my heart with more anxiety. He was right at my window, not three feet from me, when I witnessed the worst sight of my life. He raised his face to me, Sara, raised it and looked at me. I would call him human, but I do not think humans can possess such qualities. He stared at me with cold, black eyes. He was emotionless, but projected every sense of wanting to harm me. I do not know why he is doing this to me. We were locked in gaze for minutes, and much to my fright, he turned and headed toward my door.

As soon as he left my view, I awoke. The fear was overwhelming, and I was sure that my heart was reaching its final beat. At this point, I pray that I am losing my mind, my love, for if something like that is real, I do not wish to continued living.

Edwards says he shall be here very soon, perhaps in the next few days. I will hold out until then and come to you with the money he has promised, hopefully making this all worthwhile. For now I just pray my mind will stay together long enough for that to happen.

Love,
Isaac

TRESPASSING!
. . . over soon

My Sara,
I do fear my grip has been lost. The postman came about me yesterday in town while on a supply run and asked me why I had sent two letters in the same day. I assured him that I had only sent the one and that he must be mistaken. He said a second letter had been dropped off to the building and he had just seen it on his way out. He put it in his outgoing bag for the postman to retrieve. I wonder if he has been reading my letters, my love, and is now trying to play on my sense of reality. The townsfolk have not



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seemed warm to my presence since I arrived. Even during the conversation the man kept peering over my shoulder, as if waiting for something to be there.

Mr. Edwards met with delay and will now be six days before arriving. The dreams have not come back to me as of yet. I pray they have passed. Soon we will be reunited, and I will hug and kiss you and play with our son. That day keeps me warm at night in a place that has suddenly become very cold.

I love you,
Isaac

My Sara,

I am packing up and leaving the day after this letter will be mailed. Whether I have my mind or not, I do not know. What I do know is that this place is not fit for man to be in. I have sent wire to Edwards telling him to turn around and not come to this area. No one should be here, no man or creature. Something is very wrong about this mountain. At first, I believed it special. Now I believe it evil.

He was outside my door last night, my love. He was. Whether it was a dream or real, I do not know, but it was a sign that I should be gone. I am writing this to you in case I do not survive the trip back, so you will know to warn others of what this place is. God help me, Sara. I will need Him.

I should have left sooner, my love, but I will be leaving soon.

I love you,
Isaac

Sara,

In my time on this mountain, I have experienced many things: feelings of happiness, of hope, of despair, of fright, and of madness. One thing throughout has remained



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constant: this is a special place. I knew it the first day that I laid eyes upon it. I knew it the day I drank its water. I knew it the day I used its lumber for warmth. I knew it the first day I felt its ground and its embrace. I have always known it, and I will continue to know it.

No one must inhabit this place, except me, Sara. I know that as if it were a part of my being. I leave this letter in hopes that it will be found by a search party. I am leaving it on this desk, where all the letters before it were written. I am also leaving your address with it, Sara, with instructions for it to be mailed to you after being read.

No one else must come here, Sara. This letter is a warning to everyone in this world that “He” created. No one must come here.

Your husband was correct.

He should have left sooner.

Joshua Logan Slone, of Wayland, is a BSCTC student.



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Catherine Smith

The Best Laid Plans

I've always been a "dog person," not a "cat person." It's a genetic thing. For three generations, there have been no cats in my family. My father raised Labrador retrievers when I was a child; my mother had two very spoiled terrier mixes; my grandparents had various kid-friendly mutt-dogs. I bought with me three Spaniels and a Border collie mix when my two young daughters and I moved into our new house in the "hollers" of eastern Kentucky.

The house had stood vacant for almost two years before I bought it. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite empty. Not long after we moved in, I discovered that we had "uninvited house guests" of the four-legged, rodent variety.

I had never dealt with mice. I tend to be softhearted (some might say softheaded) when it comes to critters. I couldn't face the thoughts of buying a snap-trap and waking up some morning to mouse guts splattered across the walls. So I decided to do the "humane" thing and buy a sticky-trap. That way, when I caught the mouse, I could just roll it up, freeze it, dispose of it in the trash, and all would be well.

I laid out the stick-traps that evening. Next morning, I discovered I had caught mouse fur. No mouse, just its fur. My daughters were fascinated. "Look! Mouse fur!" they marveled. I decided sticky-traps were useless as pest-control devices and made a mental note to throw them away. Of course, this was during the moving-in chaos, so I promptly forgot.

The next morning, I was sound asleep. Giselle, my eight-year-old daughter, woke up early and did a beeline to the kitchen to check the sticky-trap I forgot to throw away. I awoke to excited shouts of "A Mouse! A Mouse!" I bolted out of bed, ran to the kitchen, and sure enough, there was a small brown mouse stuck to the sticky-trap.

"What are you going to do with it?" my daughter asked.

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“Well,” I explained in my most patient mom-voice, “I’m going to free it, so it will die relatively painlessly, and then I’m going to throw it away.”

“NOOOO!! You can’t kill our mouse!” she wailed. Our mouse? It’s not a pet; it’s a rodent. They carry diseases. I’m going to free it, throw it away, and go on with my day.

I gingerly picked up the mouse-cum-sticky-pad and deposited it in a metal bowl to put in the freezer. Giselle went berserk, grabbed the bowl, and took off running with the mouse. I wearily decided that if I am going to battle my daughter to the death-of-a-mouse, I’d better be properly dressed.

By the time I got my clothes on and my eyes opened, my daughter decided to name her new pet “Fluffy” and has recruited her five-year-old sister, Arabella, to the cause. I attempt to do the “Mom” thing, and calmly explained to them that I will kill the cute, fuzzy mouse with the big, button eyes. This tactic is a total failure. I decided I am on a losing streak and grabbed the phone to call my husband, Victor, for back up.

Victor is six-foot-two, a truck driver, and, unlike me, is not afraid of mice. I explained the situation to him. He started laughing so hard he actually had to pull over to the side of the highway because he couldn’t see to drive. Once he caught his breath, he told me to put on my big-girl panties and deal with the situation.

“Take something, whack the mouse over the head, end of problem,” he advised.

What does one use to whack a mouse? I rummaged through the moving boxes stacked in the kitchen and decided on a metal spatula. At this point, Giselle (still dressed in her nightgown) bolted out the front door with the mouse (still in its bowl) and took off running down the hill toward our creek. I bolted after her, with the spatula in one hand and the phone in the other.

Halfway down the hill, her long hair caught on the sticky-trap along with the mouse. She dropped the bowl in panic and began running in circles around the backfield, hair flying, the sticky-trap firmly attached to her hair, and the mouse dangling by one leg from the sticky-trap. As she ran, she yelled at the top of her lungs, “Don’t kill Fluffy! Don’t kill Fluffy!”



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Arabella had joined us in the yard by this time and had turned on the tears, sobbing, “Mommy is going to kill Fluffy!”

I vainly tried to catch Giselle, all the while waving a spatula in one hand and the phone in the other hand. Victor was no help; he was still on the phone, but he was laughing so hard listening to us, he couldn’t speak.

Right about then, my next-door neighbor stepped out on his back porch to smoke his morning cigarette.

The one thing I was so anxious to do was to make a good impression on the neighbors. My new house was his original family house, hand-built by his father in the 1930’s. I didn’t want him to think, “There goes the neighborhood,” when we moved in. Yet, here we were, tearing around the backfield at daybreak, yelling, crying, brandishing kitchen utensils, with mouse waving in the morning breeze.

I redoubled my efforts to catch Giselle. I dropped the spatula and the phone and grabbed her as she tore past me. I removed the sticky-tray (and mouse) from her hair, retrieved the metal bowl from the lawn, returned the mouse to the bowl and tried to coax the girls back into the house. They wouldn’t budge.

It took almost five minutes of tense negotiations, in the yard, with the neighbor listening bemusedly the whole time, to get my daughters to agree to let me dispose of the mouse.

We finally agreed upon the following terms:

The first term was that Fluffy-the-mouse got a state funeral down by the creek. The second was that I was to get rid of all the mousetraps. But the last agreed-upon term was one that made me swallow the hardest and grit my teeth: They demanded that I buy each one of them a kitten.

Arabella named her kitten “Fluffy.”

Catherine Smith, of Paintsville, is a BSCTC student.



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Sarah Adams

Bottles

You live in your stupor, careless
of this world around you, living
only for the bottle in your hand.

You would and have starved
for it; it empties your pockets:
The bills lay scattered on the floor
and the cabinets remain bare.

You say you can quit, promise—
then tip the bottle,
press it against your lips,
take a swig, smile
like it's the funniest thing in the world
and break my heart.

Sarah Adams, of Ligon, is a BSCTC student and a Big Sandy Singer.



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Jacob Anderson

The Scheme of Things

The fly cries out, “O’ spider, you have me trapped!
Mightn’t you let me go?”

“O’ fly, dost thou not know the scheme of things?

I have you now for dinner,
but tonight some hungry critter
will take me down.”

“Well, then, spider, so much for existential anguish!

Let us forego our ego and join the whole;

Don’t fight Nature. Ride her flow.”

The two sang merrily until the spider had his feast.

Evil? I think not!

Natural, indifferent? Indubitably!

Jacob Anderson is a BSCTC student, attending classes on the Pikeville Campus.



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Randall Chandler

Court Day

Billy Ray was flat out ugly.
He was an ugly baby.
He was an ugly man.

To make matters worse
he was not a scholar,
quitting school when he
became of age.

Women didn't have
much truck with him,
but he was known
by that mountain saying,
"a good old boy."

He married in his late 30s
to a woman with two kids
he found in a honky-tonk
in Virginia.

Not much later, as small towns
will do, it was whispered
that his wife was going out
with a strip mine operator.

The strip mine operator
was found at his doorstep
with seventeen .22 slugs
lodged in his body.



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They never discovered
who did it.

Billy Ray took his wife camping.
He was drinking and accidentally
shot his wife in the throat
with a .22 gun.

He was charged with manslaughter
and spent two years in prison.
Mountain justice was done.

Randall Chandler was born in 1941 in Lowmansville. He attended two years at Eastern Kentucky University, being an indifferent student at best. He joined the workforce, and at different times in his life has been a salesman, logger, small business owner, coal mine electrician, and long distance truck driver. He says, "Since retiring I try to do only those things that I enjoy."



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Sheila Gollihue

How Do We Forget?

Past the red barn
With its chipped paint
And rusty hinges,
Sits an old man.
His hair grayed,
Skin wrinkled by time,
Rocking in his chair
Looking out over the meadow.
“Could you please tell me, sir,
how do we forget?”
“What you need to forget,
You’ve already forgotten.
And what you can’t forget,
Be thankful, cause it’s sticking around for a reason.”

Sheila Gollihue, of Martha, is a KCTCS student; her writing has been published in Kudzu, Hazard CTC’s literary journal.



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Sheila Gollihue

The River Knows

What is love?

Who knows?

The river knows.

How does the river know?

The river knows

with her calm and peaceful song.

A lullaby to the lovers.

How else does the river know?

The river knows

With her quick rapids and rushing waters

To warn of the bumpy roads ahead.

How does the river know?

When her stream connects with another

And they stay together until they reach the end of their journey.

What is love?

The river knows.

Sheila Gollihue, of Martha, is a KCTCS student; her writing has been published in Kudzu, Hazard CTC's literary journal.



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Sheila Gollihue

That Girl

Silently observing the world as life passes by
Hoping to experience the rush one day
Even though living is living, no matter how dull.
In a fast-paced world where
Lights and colors flash before you
She hears the cries of the captive girl.
Smoking again, put it to the lips
Hear the burning paper sizzle
Each time she takes a drag
Imagine being free
Longing for the want
And the addicted girl shudders in a corner.

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