

Verbal Equinox

Annual Writing Contest Edition

Spring 2011

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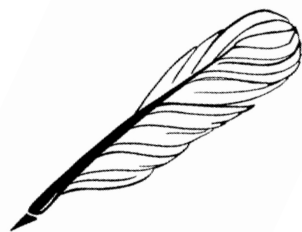
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Editor's Note

by Michelle Paul
Editor

One of the primary goals of *Verbal Equinox* is to showcase the variety of viewpoints and talents of writers from across our campus. One way this is accomplished is through our annual Writing Center contest held in the fall semester of each year with the results published in our Spring edition.

Through the Fall 2010 contest, the students at Weber State University proved once again that they possess abundant literary creativity and motivation in producing outstanding writing. The categories of the contest were scholarly non-fiction, creative non-fiction, fiction, and poetry, and each section received intriguing and well-crafted entries.

In this edition of *Verbal Equinox*, we are proud to publish the winning submissions of the contest. We express our deepest appreciation and respect for all those who submitted their work, and offer congratulations to all who placed.

The print edition of the journal contains portions of all winning prose pieces and full versions of the winning poetry pieces; full texts of all the winning pieces can be found online at the link listed at the bottom of this page's the table of contents.

We appreciate the immense support we receive every year from the campus community, from our staff, and from those who contribute.

Thank you, and enjoy reading!

Not Just a Sweet Commodity

by Mary-Kate Metzger

Most parents, when purchasing a bag of M&Ms for their child, do not think about where the candy came from. Similarly, if—when seated by a warm fire after a chilly night of sledding, we down a mug of Nestle hot cocoa—we are not worried about how this delicious drink came into existence.

But maybe we should begin concerning ourselves with the histories of the products we buy—there may be more to our Snickers bar than meets the eye. Chocolate, for instance, is not just an innocent sweet treat we frequently enjoy. The cocoa beans from which it is made are tainted by slavery. This surprising fact is unbeknownst to the average person.

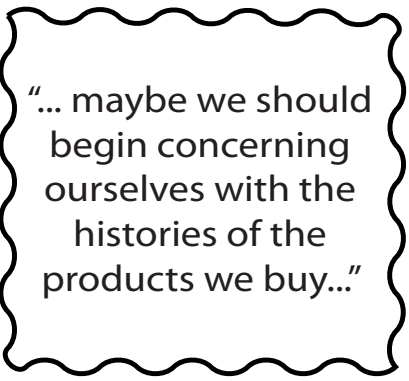
I was shocked and quite disgusted to discover the horrifying information for myself, and am certain that others who become aware of this little-known issue feel similarly. But I feel that information regarding this problem ought to be more available to the public, since recent statistics have shown that about sixty percent of the world's cocoa supply is tainted by the use of child slavery. Chocolate farmers—mainly those residing in the Ivory Coast in West Africa—employ young children to harvest cocoa beans for them. This doesn't sound so bad, until one adds in certain facts, such as the children quite often work without pay, and usually in bad circumstances—not to mention the legal working age is eighteen years old. The underage workers are sometimes beaten or locked up if their performance is deemed unsatisfactory. They are lured to these farms by promises of good

pay and financial security for their family. But such promises hold no real ground, and the children are kept on the farm, working long hours, and are not allowed to see their families.

This situation has been going on for quite some time. In 2001, the British newsgroup BBC reported that a minimum of 15,000 children were thought to be producing chocolate in the Ivory Coast (Hawksley, Humphrey). The majority of the children were sold and/or imprisoned on chocolate farms in the area, and were beaten if they attempted an escape from their bad circumstances. The report also stated that the children working the farms were as young as—or younger than—eleven years old.

When we think of an eleven-year-old child, we tend to think of one who—perhaps unwillingly—attends school, and after completing homework and household chores, rides his bike through the neighborhood park, or plays Barbies at her best friend's house. Rarely do we picture a young African, slaving his youth away on a faraway farm, separated from his friends and family. And this is all for the material satisfaction of those wealthier than he.

When the BBC report surfaced over nine years ago, reactions to the news were strong and outraged. People found it difficult to believe that such conditions for people—especially children—still existed. They were shocked that slavery was still in existence (“African Slave Ship: Did We Get it Wrong?”). But despite our “shock,” our “outrage,” and all our other good and noble feelings towards



“... maybe we should begin concerning ourselves with the histories of the products we buy...”

such wickedness, the issue has yet to be resolved. Quickly following the BBC news item, a New York U.S. Representative, Eliot Engel, got together with Tom Harkin, a senator from Iowa, and the two formed a legislative document, called the Harkin-Engel Protocol (cocoainitiative.org/images/stories/pdf/harkin%20engel%20protocol). This document was meant to unite chocolate manufacturers and government officials toward the common goal of eliminating the use of child slaves in the production of cocoa. Although many people involved in this legislature probably had very good intentions, little good has come of it.

In 2008, CNN published an article concerning the chocolate trade. In the piece, it was stated that none of the deadlines for the Harkin-Engel Protocol had been met; in other words, most who had signed the document were not living up to their word (Parenti, Christian). In fact, it seems that after the Protocol was introduced, things only got worse in the Ivory Coast, as the area entered into a civil war in 2002. “Blood chocolate” became a big money-maker for both sides involved, and this war proceeded to drastically slow down efforts

Not Just a Sweet Commodity, cont.

by Mary-Kate Metzger

aimed at reducing the child-slavery situation. It seems when there is a civil war going on, all other issues fade to grey. Two prominent chocolate trading companies, the National Confectioners Association and the Chocolate Manufacturers Association, claim to have spent vast amounts of money on founding a socially responsible cocoa company in the slavery-plagued area, but are unable to give critics specific examples of the supposed progress they are making. And as Ali Lakiss, the director of Saf-Cacao--the Ivory Coast's largest cocoa exporter--points out that the protocol is hardly effective in the country, and most of its individuals are unaware of the political document. Lakiss blames the ineffectiveness of the protocol on the meager prices paid by Western companies for the cocoa products. "The farmers don't get the best price. If the cocoa price is good, then kids go to school. No money, and kids work at home," he states.

Another reason for the limited social change in the Ivory Coast is the lack of compliance by the same companies who promised to commit to the cause. Nestle and Hershey's are just a few of the names that appear on the Harkin-Engel Protocol document. These companies promised, in writing, to support the document in its efforts to eliminate "the worst forms of child labor"; which, in my opinion, would include the use of children in the production of chocolate--a former luxury item these children have probably never even tasted. However, these chocolate corporations have kept very few of their promises,

and they continue to purchase chocolate produced from the sweat and blood of children (Kloer, Amanda). Why the failure to fulfill their empty promises?

One could nail it down to human greed and lack of conscience: the companies are eager for cheap prices, which logically is brought about by cheap labor. With this in mind, we can truthfully say that the problem lies with the corruption of chocolate corporations. But it ought not be completely up to them--we, as individuals, have a voice in the matter as well. After all, the nature of companies is driven by the desires of the consumers. Currently, we demand cheap products from our favorite chocolate companies, and the majority of us have not mentioned to those we purchase from that we find it offensive they support child labor.

Putting aside the feeble and failed attempts of these capitalist companies, changes have been made in other areas. Fair Trade chocolate, for instance, has seen an increase in purchases since the stories on child labor. In addition, organically produced chocolate is also becoming popular--not just because of the recent soar in health-consciousness, but because it is also grown without the use of slaves. However, most of these counter-cultural chocolate purchases have been made in the U.K., and this is where significant change is being seen (Nestle, Cadbury, and Mars UK-based companies have all recently agreed to begin producing certain popular candy bars fair trade). The U.S. still lags behind in its chocolate-reform, mainly because we still purchase our

cheap, slave-filled, grocery store chocolate without complaint (Kloer, Amanda). The citizens of our country remain uninformed or disinterested on the topic.

But conditions do not have to stay as they are; I believe that if vast numbers of us rise up out of our apathy towards this matter, we will see a change. That is, if the companies see us beginning to petition, beginning to purchase fair trade products, beginning to care, they will perform a change in their methods. They, too, will begin to demand slave-free chocolate from affected areas, such as the Ivory Coast, and perhaps we will see a great reduction in African child-labor. This will be a huge victory, after nearly a decade of fighting for these children's rights.

Another way combat the issue would be to not only petition controversial companies, but to boycott them altogether. Some have questioned the effectiveness of these boycotts, however, as the ones who will be hurt the worst are those at the bottom of the chocolate chain; that is, the same farmers who have been pushed to use slaves in their production. The way it works is that if large numbers of people begin a boycott against, say, Nestle, then they will see a decreased demand for their product, as well as decreased income. Because they are not making as much money as they would like, they will offer less money to the African farmers in exchange for their cocoa (as a wealthy American corporation, they apparently call all the shots). With less money to work with, these farmers may be forced to fire any actual employees they

1st Place

Not Just a Sweet Commodity, cont.

by Mary-Kate Metzger

currently have, and we will perhaps see an increase in the use of slaves on the farms. However, if this situation were to occur, I believe it would soon get better. Perhaps for a short time, our boycotts and petitions will have the opposite effect we want, but the situation will eventually work itself out. If the companies see we aren't willing to purchase their product, they most likely will give in to our demands for slave-free chocolate, and will be willing to pay more for such a product. In turn, if the chocolate farmers realize the corporations are willing to pay extra money for the fair trade chocolate, they will soon adapt to the trend and begin employing workers, instead of making a living off the backs of children.

The only downside to this much hoped-for outcome is that we will likely see a rise in the prices of our beloved chocolate products. But it will be so worth it: we will see children around the world allowed to be just that--children. We can rest our heads at night, knowing that our world's children may go to school, live at home in safety with their families, laugh, love, and play. I think a couple extra dollars for a Hershey's bar is well worth the cost of saving and bettering the lives of those around us--on the home front and elsewhere.

1st Place

Sunset Pictures

by Lorin Harris

In the living room of my mud-brown condo is a picture I took in Mississippi. It is a 20x30-inch, cheaply framed photo of a sunset. It faces out behind the house where I used to live, into the field beyond our property. Winter-stripped trees frame the right and left sides of the picture, while the rolling cumulus clouds seem backlit by fire.

Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines sunsets in one of three ways: either as "the apparent descent of the sun below the horizon," or "a period of decline, esp. old age."

When I moved away from home, I had a westward-facing porch in my apartment so I could watch the sunsets. I once hoped to share my sunsets with my dog, Tiny, and my girlfriend at the time, Leslie. I remember Mississippi a lot, not as it was, but as it could have been. As it was, my dog lost patience with the sunsets. I had to bribe him with coconuts to keep him on the porch with me.

In Anchorage, I watch the sun go down over the city and the Arm from midway up Flat-Top's trailhead. As the heavens stretch pink towards the east, I raise my hands up into the wind and imagine touching the fabric of the sky, letting my fingers mar its surface. In my mind, it feels like fine silk.

In winter, the only sound, other than the whisper of wind, is the sound of hikers crunching through the snow. When the sky darkens and fades to pink and orange by the horizon, the sleepy little houses on the hill quiet and become the puffs of smoke from their chimneys. Brick and wood disappear as all melts into the sameness of night. This is a quieting, when everything

slows down and comes into sharp focus, when the sky becomes an impossibly thick, dark blanket tossed over houses, mountains, ocean. When everything stops moving.

About a mile north of Earthquake Park on the Knowles Trail is a wood bench. Behind it is a field that in summer is overrun with green, interrupted by a snaking creek. It is all bounded by houses and city lights to the east. When most of the walkers have gone home for the evening and the midnight sun is waning, I sit and listen to the faint call of gulls and the quiet tinklings of the creek as it empties into the Knik Arm. Sometimes, as the sky darkens, the shadow of night passes slowly over the field and I can trace its path as it blots out the sun's work.

To the northeast are the boatyards and the industrial section of town. From here, the smokestacks seem to stretch lazily heavenward, pushing gentle jets of steam like arms caressing the blue-gray sky.

In winter, the brief sunsets seem to crack through a frozen sky to awaken the pack ice floating in the ocean, resting in the Arms.

The hardest thing I've ever tried to do is explain my situation with Leslie to friends. At three months in length, it's the longest relationship I've ever had. That's probably longer than it would have gone on if I weren't so busy with work and she so busy with nursing duties and school trips to hospitals in Mexico and National Guard work on weekends. I always laugh to my friends about it, say that we lasted that long by a miracle, that three months is as long as anyone could tolerate me.

I don't think sunsets should be seen as an ending to a day, because that's too final. I see them as a slow, orchestrated movement into night. An unhurried waltz best in cloudy skies. A movement through stillness: the way colors melt together without the viewer ever seeing them move, until you look away and then back. And then it's all changed.

Tonight I raced up Flat-Top, overlooking Anchorage. I measured my progress by the long shadows on the ground, over the city. As I sat down in my usual spot, three hikers crested the hill, watching the same sunset, fifty feet below me. The sky purpled, then faded to a red and pink, and finally exhausting itself, resolved to orange at the horizon. Storm clouds rolled in from the southwest, spurring the sunset on.

Two of the three hikers were sitting, but the third took off her sweater and danced in circles, danced silently with the sky. The city below became small white lights. The military bases looked quiet, innocent in their darkened patches of forest in the corners of the city. Everything seemed to melt together so beautifully that I imagined that I was happy. I hugged my knees and slowly rocked back and forth for a few minutes. Remembering, just remembering.

I would do well to slow down more in my life, to search a little and find a spot to take in a sunset. To dance for no reason. To know that tomorrow the sun will rise again. When it sets, I know that it will be beautiful.

As I came down the trailhead, I spotted the same two moose

1st Place

Sunset Pictures, cont.

by Lorin Harris

I saw on the way up. It was a cow and her calf. She looked at me, ears pointed forwards, cautious.

Gradually, she turned her head to the West, into the dying light from the sun. Maybe it was a scent she caught on the wind, a threat. Or maybe she was a lover of sunsets, too.

In my garage I have a small workroom. In it, I work on my bike or my snowboards. I shut the door, turn on some music, and leave the world alone for a few hours. I keep pictures on the wall that make me happy. They are things my students have made for me. I save every one of them, but I am running out of room. One wall of the four in the room is left alone. I hang no pictures on it but the one of Leslie. Below it, I hung a copy of the song, "Mexico." When I'm done working, I imagine all the smiling faces of the children, so many kids I would have loved to be able to call ours, silently walking off. I turn out the light and light a cigarette sometimes. I just let it sit, slowly burning itself out, focusing in the darkness on the dying tobacco embers before I snub it out. In that way, I see the sun still, and that's why I have to be alone.

Eventually, the world cracks apart like so many pieces of glass and the top of the sky is ripped open. It all drops away, leaving me standing, the breeze a gentle reminder that I am still alive. The moose and I and the sky, standing on a tiny little hill, frozen only for a moment: watching, waiting. Listening for the end of the world. The sky, hardened and dark, a picture of what will be.

2nd Place

Office Liberation Day

by Logan Mickel

I had a story all set to get by the reception desk.

It was a good story, probably would have worked in most office buildings across the country. I was from Hamilton-Burke and wondering if Jim had shown up yet. We were supposed to meet with someone in the billing department. Was there somewhere I could wait?

Not a bad story. At the least it would have bought me a seat in the lounge or among the offices and cubicles where I could watch the employees go about their lives. And that's all I wanted. To watch.

I am against lying, mind you. Lying is the reason we have lawyers, politicians get reelected, and Paris Hilton is a celebrity. But I needed a story because I needed to get into an office building and I knew no one would believe the real reason for being there. Even I barely believe it, and it was my idea.

I'm here to remember what it was like living in an office. I say "living" because that's what is really going on. Think about it. The average office worker spends about 8.5 hours a day in the office. If you wake at 7:00, spend the next hour getting ready, leave at 8:00, and get home at 5:00, that leaves about five hours at home. Even adding weekends, the average worker spends more of his or her life at the office than at home. So it is only fitting to say we live at work. Home is just the place where we rest until it's time to work again.

But that all changed for me a year ago. A year ago today, to be exact. Six years ago today I left a responsible job at a responsible

company. The last year has been the best of my life. But it's easy to forget. And that's why I'm here. To remember.

It turns out I didn't need the story after all. This office building has no security, no formal reception desk, not even a Pam Beasley behind a monolithic desk with a bowl of hard candy droning out, "Can I help you?" as I enter. No, this office is more the find-your-own-way-around type. Just like my old office was.

I walk into a large room lined with cubicles and take a seat in one of three cushy chairs set around a small table. On the table is a small vase filled with fake flowers and fake sticks. Apparently real sticks are too hard to come by. The chairs are orange, but more chic-orange than tacky-orange. Four cubicles are stationed in front of me, shepherded by a lone corner office with glass walls. The manager's office. It's small by office standards—really, mine was bigger and I was just a lowly HR rep—but it's the only office in this part of the building and therefore as good as a suite at the Ritz-Carlton.

Two of the cubicles are occupied by men straight out of the Dillard's office-wear catalogue—colorful button-up shirts, crisp ties, hair done in the messy-yet-professional look. I can't see much of the manager back in his office, but I know he's there from the rattling of his keyboard.

* * *

I'm here to observe the American office worker in his natural habitat, and this place is perfect. I can almost hear the narrator from *National Geographic* describing the specimens before me in a

"Home is just the place where we rest until it's time to work again."

high British accent. The memories come flooding back and I smile.

It's an actual business with actual people, so I won't use actual names. Let's just say I'm at Vandalay Financial Services and I'm sitting with Rob and Juan. I watch Juan as he begins his morning ritual. I know it well, for it was the same one I performed more than 1,100 times. Turn on the hard drive. Wait as Windows warms up. Straighten the stuff on your desk. Check messages. Check your cell. A chime sounds, telling you Windows is ready. This chime is Bill Gates' Bell, the updated version of Pavlov's Bell.

Password is entered, another chime sounds, a blue screen flashes, and Rob and Juan are on their way.

Oh yes. I can feel it now. The same feeling I got when I stepped into my own office day after day. Not a dread or a fear, like going to the dentist, but rather a dull acquiescence. A submission. I get glimpses of this feeling whenever I walk through the loan department of a bank or through a...

government building, but until now I've never purposely sought it out. It comes back strong, a reminder of the time I spent in corporate America.

'Corporate America.' The term is misleading. It evokes images

2nd Place

Office Liberation Day, cont.

by Logan Mickel

of wealth, of prestige. Wall Street. Private jets. Power lunches, corporate retreats, the bottom line and the big picture. Ferris Bueller's dad gazing out on downtown Chicago from a glass sky-scraper. Veal. That's a better description for Corporate America. You sit in a rectangular holding pen. Your leash is a phone cord; your collar a necktie. Your muscles become soft and tender. There are different sizes of pens depending on how important you are. Some get a smaller area, a cubicle. They're called Non-Exempt employees. I was one of the lucky ones. I had an office. Yes, an office—a hundred and forty-four square feet in which to roam and graze.

You check in to your pen and look over the day's work. You may only have four hours worth of work to do, but you have to be there for nine so you so you learn to stretch it out. You make some calls—then check the news. You answer some e-mails—then dink around on ESPN.com. Someone down the halls pops in and you talk for a bit. When your supervisor comes by you show how busy you are. Then you go to lunch and resume the cycle in the afternoon.

It's not just you, either. The execs do it as well. In fact, they do it even worse because they are enabled. They'll pull a golf outing in the middle of the week and call it a 'corporate retreat' because work was discussed somewhere between holes 12 and 13. They take each other out to lunch and bill it to the company as a team building exercise, then laugh about their cleverness. Yet you don't mad at them or their double-standard. You understand them. Part of you even pities

them. They, like you, are trapped. Back to Vandalay Industries. The supervisor finally makes an appearance. He's balding. His face is serious but not unfriendly—the type who will call you in, set you straight, then joke with you on your way out. We'll call him Phil. Phil rises from his chair and fills the doorway with his imposing bulk. He asks his two Cratchits about reports. Bob Cratchit One shrugs and casts an uncertain gaze at Bob Cratchit Two, who answers calmly. Appeased, Phil stretches, grabs the top of the doorway with crossed arms, and leans forward casually. It's a posture adopted by the pack leader to show ease and invite conversation—a non-verbal "at ease" from the commanding officer. Juan and Rob quickly comply.

I can't hear specifically what is being said, but it's not too hard to imagine. Office talk generally centers around three basic things: movies/TV, sports, and family. If these were female employees the talk would be about how cute certain kids looked in their Halloween costumes last week. As these are males, however, I'm guessing the talk is about 6th ranked Utes and their match-up with 4th ranked TCU this weekend. They're probably trying to convince themselves the Utes will win. They won't.

I'm not a BYU fan, just a realist. Though I suppose I'm not. Would a realist leave a stable job at a great company during the worst economy in 70 years to pursue a career in the Humanities? I'm stupid. Believe me, I know that better than anyone. My job in Corporate America was interviewing and hiring. The

birthing of new children into that bleak world.

And that's what makes this so fun. The absurdity of it all. Robert Frost wrote a nice little poem about taking a walk through the woods. Upon coming to a fork in the path he paused, weighed his options, then chose the road less traveled. Though I'm not sure what he saw on his walk—I'd imagine there were some rocks and trees, perhaps a bubbling stream—I can tell you exactly what I've seen on mine. The loss of health insurance. A rapidly dwindling savings account. Far fewer pizzas and fajita platters and far more peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

But I had to try. Many individuals smarter than me have talked about this. Teddy Roosevelt spoke of the daring man in the arena who, even if he fails, at least has no place with the "cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat." Steve Jobs warned of dogma, the living of your own life with the results of someone else's thinking. The most meaningful advice for me in this adventure, however, was what Gill said to Nemo in the fish tank: "Fish aren't meant to be in a box, kid. It does things to them." I'll take the liberty to adapt Gill's advice to this: "People aren't meant to work in an office. It does things to them." Along with some others, I once kept a spreadsheet of how many times a co-worker went to the bathroom each day, whether or not she was talking on her phone while going to the bathroom, and whether or not she washed her hands. And the others were senior managers. Enough said.

By now Phil has left the scene

2nd Place

Office Liberation Day, cont.

by Logan Mickel

and is wandering somewhere else in the building. Probably trying to gather some of the other managers for a golf outing later in the day. Juan is off to the right talking with some other co-workers while Rob furrows his brow at something on the monitor and clicks away. An important memo, perhaps?

Nope, he just bought a pink cow on FarmVille.

One of the most surprising things since starting my new life has been how many people tell me they wished they could do the same thing. The number has been shocking, really. Like sixty to seventy percent of the people I talk to. And many are the successful types too. MBAs, CPAs, accountants, a doctor—people with lucrative positions at prestigious companies. Yet they all envy me, some schmuck who left a consistent paycheck at a great company to pursue some pipe-dream.

Why is this? Why don't we follow our dreams? I think it's for the same reason I decided in seventh grade to abandon the career I wanted be a dentist instead. We're told our dreams are not practical.

Juan comes back to his desk. Phil is still gone. Rob looks over and asks something. Juan shakes his head. A couple minutes go by. The two tap aimlessly at their keyboards and look around as though unsure what they are doing.

I know what they're doing. They're waiting for Godot.

I've had enough. The 10 minutes I've spent at Vandalay Financial Services has helped me remember that feeling. And that's what I

wanted. When life is good it's easy to take for granted if you don't remind yourself of the not-so-good times. I bid Juan, Rob and Phil adieu.

I'm writing the rest of this from a bench on a hiking trail next to a cheerful, gurgling stream. The ground is carpeted with golden leaves and my fingers are going numb. It's the type of place I only thought about when I was officed.

Of course, I can't say my path is best for everyone. For some people the dream may be the very office I vacated. If so, I would tell them to go for it, go to wherever your heart is and don't pay attention to the crowds of people who will say you can't do it. They don't know. Most of them have never tried.

I don't know what will happen with me. I can't say where this preemptive mid-life crisis will lead me. Perhaps to the career I dream about. Perhaps I'll end up back in the corporate world. Perhaps even Burger King. But if so, I'll be okay with it. Because I tried. I've taken the road less traveled.

And it has made all the difference.

Honorable Mention

Fade to Black

by JT Vande Merwe

I love the outdoors; nature. Being able to see the leaves change from green to orange. Hearing the wind blow through trees, making leaves rustle. Watching creeks as the water trickles down mossed over rocks and waterlogged wood. Listening to water crash over waterfalls. On November 23rd, 2004, some wild friends and I were walking down a newly paved cul-de-sac. In Dan's hand was a two-liter bottle, totally wrapped up in duct tape, and in mine was also a bottle, but with a faded, peeling 7Up wrapping on it. Ben carried a bucketful of tinfoil balls we crumpled up ourselves prior to, and Tony carried a bottle of "The Works" toilet bowl cleaner we had just purchased from Family Dollar minutes before. Our mission: To make a "tinfoil" bomb bigger than our last few attempts. We had learned long ago from reckless experiments that hydrochloric acid, which is highly concentrated in most toilet bowl cleaners, mixed with tinfoil balls and shaken under pressure, results in an explosion. The idea behind the duct tape covering the bottle was that it would create more pressure, and so a bigger explosion.

We arrived to our detonation zone, a downhill slope of trees and sagebrush. The weather was quite warm, in spite of being late November. Mother Nature provided no wind, however; everything was quiet and still, as if she knew something was going to disrupt it. We stood in a circle; I now held the toilet cleaner. Ben was next to me, still holding the bucket of tinfoil balls, Tony next to him, and Dan in between Tony and me holding the taped bottle. We all looked at each other, laughed, and looked down, getting ready to conduct another foolish chemistry

experiment. Dan held up the bottle with duct tape on it, cap in hand, and told Ben to put the tinfoil in about a quarter way full. Ben obeyed, filling up the taped two-liter with little tinfoil balls one by one, until looking in the hole, deciding it was full enough. Next, Dan looked at me and said, "Now when you squirt that into the bottle about level with the tinfoil, I'm going to screw the lid on, shake it a bit, and toss it in that direction," pointing to a flat spot about ten feet lower than we were. "And then let's all run over there behind the wood," nodding at the pile of wood we had collected over time for campfires. We all agreed and Dan acknowledged me to start. So I unscrewed the childproof lid and began to pour the thick, blue, smelly toilet gunk into the bottle opening.

"There!" I shouted. "Hurry and tighten the lid, shake it, and chuck it! We'll meet ya behind the pile!" He did so, and we all got crouched behind the firewood, chuckling to each other, waiting to hear a loud boom. We sat there for ten minutes but nothing happened.

"Well, that was stupid," we all said. We made Dan (being the smallest) go and pick the bomb back up. He shook it, threw it, and kicked it; nothing worked. So we decided it was a dud. We started getting the other one ready, until we got frustrated that the other bomb didn't work, so Dan went and picked it up and we all regathered in our circle. The bottle was quite large, so as Dan still held it, I poked it to feel the pressure; it was rock hard.

"Well, it feels like it should work", I said.

Not a second after I said that my ears started ringing and I

opened my eyes, only to see I was on my hands and knees, throwing up bits of tinfoil, blue toilet bowl cleaner, and the corn dog I had hours before. It felt as though I had water up my nose, except it was acid, eating away at my skin. I stood up only to fall over again and throw up more. As I lay on... the ground I looked over and saw Dan was lying on his side spitting out tinfoil and clenching his hands wiping off the bits of flesh that had gotten blown off, Ben was rubbing his eyes, running around in circles, and Tony was standing rubbing his eyes. I realized I couldn't hear very well, it all sounded slow and really deep. My vision was blurry, but the things I could see were slow motion and dark. All of a sudden it sounded like someone turned the volume from zero to full blast. I was finally able to stand up and the next thing I knew was we were all in my kitchen taking turns with the detachable sink nozzle, washing our eyes and throats out.

Dan lived in front of my house so he stumbled home after the happening. His dad found out what had happened, called my dad, and after I threw up some more, my dad came picked us up to take Tony, Ben and I to the hospital.

My vision nearly gone, I held onto my dad for guidance as we entered the hospital. Dan was with his dad, already in the E.R. Ben and Tony weren't hurt too badly so went home after seeing I was taken care of. I was taken to a room and laid down on the table. They pried my swollen, burnt eyes open and stuck in some contact lens type things, except for they had tubes hooked on the back which connected to four liters of saline pouches. These lenses were used to wash my eyes

Honorable Mention

Fade to Black, cont.

by JT Vande Merwe

of acid, tinfoil bits, and shreds of skin and eye.

I was let out hours later with bandages over my eyes, face, mouth, and arms for severe acid burns. Dan and I had many checkups after that. Our retinas were critically damaged and we had almost permanently lost our sight. We talked a lot on the phone for those next few weeks; since all we could do was lay in a pitch black room with a cold wet towel over our eyes. As I laid there in the darkness for two weeks I had lots of time to think as well. "What had we done? I might not be able to see or hear the things I love; the trees, the wind, the beautiful outdoors. What if all this was taken away?", I thought. At the time it seemed like an awesome idea, but I look back to realize we were a bunch of idiots that are lucky to be seeing and hearing.

1st Place

La Sirena

by Abigail Bride

A small town, negligible,
Nearly lost in waves of tall grass and quiet hills;
It must have been separated from its mother.
The houses stand together against immense silence.

Nothing green grows here.
The plants are struggling yellow or brick red;
They are made of hard sunlight and
the rust of abandoned things.
On days like this only children venture outside.

Some of them wonder how far they could wade
into that ocean of pale, restless quiet.
If anything human divided the distance
they would dare, but beyond sight of the houses
The Silence could swallow a person.

Other pieces from this poet:

The Bat

Soft wings thrumming in the warm night; A velvet bat
with neat-pointed nose and bright eyes.

Dipping slightly, his orbit smoothly connects
With that of a mosquito, or a frantic, whirring moth.

He knows
the warm dark currents and pockets of cool damp air.
He swims through these variations
like deeper shades of blue and purple.
He traces silken threads of sky
in a pattern only he can see.

The night is limitless, but not to him.
He calls out, casts lines with his voice to measure the night.
His shrillings echo back, drawing a map with harsh sound out-
lines.
I wonder what color they are.

He hears
mosquito wings moving, moth wings like panicked breathing
and their heartbeats
in an ecstasy of fear, searching for enough light to extinguish
their paranoia, and themselves.

To Pull Apart A Flower

clutching a flower of truth
in your sweaty hand
fussing with it
until every petal of sense
succumbs to languid heat
They wilt away
leaving a blank naked nub
of nonmeaning

Aren't you clever now,
Telling me there is no Beauty?

2nd Place

Feeding off Instinct

by Karleigh Weeks

Caustic and still biting, my soul,
it has been five seasons.
Wearisome, witless, delirium extension
of what clock assures is twenty-four
hours all year long, all the half decade
And tock or tick tick-tock and tick
chaffing away is convalescence
while I sit bug-eyed, innumerate,
by choice, in the vague hours
void of Hygeia-faced caricature
sucking down the chamber of my brain
I am in a dark new world with
tick
tock
ticks
scratching the door, the skin
as I stand
and fear and gulp and say to

nothing, "Who are you?"
Behind the door, behind that door, I know
someone is there,
palpitating, do you pine for me?
dying because it is instinct,
resounding to no one, "Who are you?"
The ghost skin of a hand
invokes terror and scream
Do you hear me? Who are you? Who are you?
Who are you splitting the door, squirming
through,
fondling, touching,
strangling inside the black room,
destroying because it is instinct?
We die—you and I,
animus—
in allegiance to internal
clockwork instinct

Another piece from this poet:

The Name of God

I didn't know
how to let go of these criminal stains.
I asked for help, pandered
Albatross and caught onto the noose,
felt and wrought, gingerly offered
it to he
with eyes peering at me.
It was a disorderly
noontime, putrid sky and velvet
rain, sporadic as I meandering
from window to window to catch
a glimpse of quiet you
safe, raped you alive, still alive,
rolling through your demons.
This I did not ever see, and wept still
through good night.
There was he; There was I: Adam,
and Lilith, you, please, stop
tempting me. I cower
in sun shadows, rootless
seed. My heart vomits sorrow tonight.
The nightjar fled from earth, from me,

from my wasteland receding
as his look swallows it and I
and say nothing. I'm not ready yet.
I saw a gate past the orchard,
one sulking nightjar drops upon,
for a moment, then
shoots again gray in the sky.
She leaves only her frightful eyes,
these plead, "Wherefore?
Wherefore? Wherefore, mankind?
For he, thou art cowardice."
He hid both his hands in the soil;
I hid both my hands in the soil;
we hid from that nightjar,
Lilith, goatsucker with
bloody eyes toward us and these hands,
hands that coil the noose
on her neck. If I had the courage,
this could be over; now
this could be over; now
the crimson has consumed,
not an ocean will cleanse.

Honorable Mention

Sia

by Karen Spangler

The notes.
They are chosen like steps,
almost meaningless.
She contorts words into
what she requires;
Deposits them into a bowl
gives tapered stirs
slurringthemallto-gether.
bites off the ends of the notes
Rubbing sandpaper over the wound left
Till they crackle.
Just the way she wants them to;
Just the way they should.
Or sink into the bedspread
drawn out
With her feather pen.
Some get spat out;
Others Curved
slide through her teeth,
Or die on her lips
And she breathes out their ghost;
a shadow.
She may mold them around her finger
And blow them away, warped.
Flipping through octaves like hats
Catching her fancy,
Then pronounces nonsense to
calm it all to
A song.
Her soul is on a wave
That slides by your ear,
Staining the air,
Freely.

1st Place

Car Trouble

by Amy Mayo Townsley

Danielle has forgotten how to pray.

When she was younger, she prayed comfortably, effortlessly. God was her friend and she spoke with Him about everything. She had even met Brandon at church; they had a church wedding (she was an almost-virgin, Brandon being her only and having succumbed to his pleadings only twice), then he stopped going to church, so she stopped, too. Then she stopped praying quite as often as before. When she would try, it felt clumsy, like talking to her Aunt Jan in Missouri, who she hardly knew and didn't like.

But now, she is praying hard. Her car is making unhappy whining noises and it's growing louder and faster, the steering wheel shaking so hard it is a strain to hold on to it. When the noise started, her prayer had been *Dear God, I know that I haven't done a lot for you lately, but for the sake of the kids, please just get us home*. She rode a couple of miles in the right lane, slowly, with the hazards on, willing the car onward to the next exit. But now, the noise has changed to a slow, whirring sound, so Danielle pulls over to shoulder and steps on the unresponsive breaks. *Please please please stop the car—safely! Don't let us crash! Mercifully, the dead car rolls to a stop.*

Thank you. Now what? She has a roadside assistance card in her wallet, but her cell phone is sitting in her underwear drawer at home, the service long since expired for lack of payment. What she needs now is a phone. This is a busy freeway; surely it will not be so hard to get a phone.

She pops the trunk and grabs a blanket, using it to flag down

a car. After explaining that she needs to borrow a phone, she calls the number for the roadside assistance provided by her insurer. Please let them send someone. *I know I'm late paying this month's premium, but please*. The lady on the phone doesn't mention the late premium, just tells her that someone will be along in about half an hour; the man with the phone apologizes for not waiting with her and drives away.

Twenty minutes later, the tow truck arrives, and Danielle transfers her stuff into the truck before attempting to transfer her children. She grabs her son, Max, and asks the tow truck driver to grab his car seat. Max wakes and looks around at the unfamiliar vehicle. Danielle smoothes his blonde bangs back from his sweaty brow. "We're in a tow truck. We had a little car trouble. It's okay. Go back to sleep." Max nods in response, then his eyes close and he resumes his nap.

Danielle goes back to her dead car and grabs her daughter and her car seat together. The tow truck driver comes back to the cab as Danielle settles into the passenger's seat. "Did you remove all your valuables from your car?" he asks as he hands something over to Danielle. She nods, then looks at the object in her hand—her necklace—and the driver reports, "I found it in the center console." It's a cheap fake pearl necklace, one she had worn today along with a short-sleeve acrylic sweater and khakis in an attempt to blend in with the upper-middle-class stay-at-home moms at the zoo today. But the sweater was too hot for the weather, and the necklace broke

when Cassie pulled on it as they were waiting in line for the train.

At the service station, the mechanic informs her that he won't be able to even look at her car until tomorrow, but she has no idea how she'll pay him anyway.

The mechanic grants her use of his phone ("You don't have a cell phone?"). She dials a too-familiar number. It rings three times. She can't decide if she wants him to answer, but he does.

"Brandon Lipton," he announces.

"Brandon, it's me." No response. "Danielle. I've had some car trouble. The kids and I are stranded."

After a long pause, Brandon finally responds, "See, Danielle, the thing about marriage is, when you're not married anymore, you don't get help from the other person the way you did when you were married. You don't get to decide not to be married to me, then come asking for help."

"Please, Brandon. I have no way to get home. I need help getting our kids home." He is silent; she wonders if he is still on the phone. "Brandon?"

"Look, I'll try to finish up here in about an hour or so. I'll call you when I know when I'll be able to get out of here."

"I don't have a cell phone. I'm calling you from the mechanic."

"You don't have a cell phone? What happened to your cell?" She doesn't respond. She doesn't say, Your five hundred dollars a month only allows me to purchase a few luxuries, like food and shelter. "Look, is there someplace you can hang out while you wait for me?" he asks.

"I don't know—hang on."

Car Trouble, cont.

by Amy Mayo Townsley

She explains her situation to a middle-aged woman sitting in the waiting room reading an old Time magazine. The lady tells her that there's a McDonald's a couple of blocks over. She relays the location to Brandon.

"I'll come get you as soon as I can," he says before hanging up.

"Thanks," she replies to the dead line.

Danielle tries to get the mechanic's attention, but, having no luck, she writes him a note with her home number as well as Brandon's cell, and starts down towards McDonald's.

The street is the kind one drives by without noticing: longer than it looks, pitted with holes and freckled with small rocks, the concrete frying the air above it. The air conditioning at the McDonald's is a welcome relief after pushing the stroller over the uneven sidewalk for two never-ending blocks—one of which she ended up carrying a sullen Max on piggyback.

As she places the order, she hopes that the \$28.17 promised in her checkbook register is actually in her account. The debit card machine takes a long time to decide. "Sorry, the system has been running slow. So, how are you doing today?" the cashier asks conversationally in an attempt to kill time while waiting for the machine to respond.

Danielle breaks. She bites her lip to stop the sob from erupting from her throat, and presses on the inside corners of her eyes in an attempt to stop the tears. "I'm sorry," she croaks. She clears her throat and tries again. "I'm sorry; I just have had a bit of a hard day. Car trouble."

The cashier makes a sympathetic noise. "That's terrible. With your kids. In this heat." She rips off the receipt—the card is accepted, thank heaven for small miracles—and hands it to Danielle.

Danielle settles in and actually enjoys the next hour and a half, reading a newspaper while her kids play in the indoor playground. We should have skipped the zoo and just went to a McDonald's instead. If we would have gone to McDonald's instead, none of this would have happened.

Brandon arrives, finds her, and suggests that he take her and the kids out to dinner. She is about to protest that they have already eaten, but her stomach leaps at the offer, having only been fed a diet Coke and a few bites of fries and chicken nuggets stolen from the kids' ignored Happy Meals. "Sure."

They get in Brandon's car and—without conferring with Danielle—he drives to their usual pizza place. They go in, sit at their usual table, and Brandon gives each child a handful of quarters. The restaurant is one they came to often when they were together; it is small enough to keep an eye on the kids, and it has a little play pizza kitchen next to the arcade games.

They eat in silence, punctuated occasionally by one parent encouraging the children to eat. "Did you notice that I didn't order any beer?" Brandon asks when the kids are away from the table. "Um-hum," she replies.

It's dusk when they leave the restaurant—she holds Max's hand while Brandon carries Cassie. They secure the children, sans child safety seats, in the back of the car.

Brandon walks around to the passenger's side as Danielle is closing Max's door.

"You know," he breathes in her ear, "my place is a lot closer. You could crash there tonight. Let the kids sleep in their old beds." He slips an arm around her waist, his thumb caressing her skin while his pinky slips under her waistband.

She doesn't mind prostituting herself for a meal and a comfortable bed for the kids; she has done it a thousand times before. But she knows that "crashing" at his place for one night would mean moving back in, trying yet again to work things out. The walk of shame back to re-enroll Max in the kindergarten she had just taken him out of two months prior. Putting up with Brandon's temper, always on the verge of boiling over. Being careful not to add any heat, lest she bear the brunt of the whole fire. Always making sure the kids don't make noise, make a mess, do anything to upset Dad. Always biting back her words, choking them down, until she doesn't bother to think them anymore.

It has been said that when a person drowns there is a moment of peace right before death when the pain and fear lift as the victim surrenders. Those who have survived the experience have reported a sort of rapture as the terror ceases and they give into the water.

Danielle slips down through Brandon's embrace and gets into the car.

Wolves in the Fold

by Scott Sovo

The following story is based on actual documented events.

NOVEMBER 22, 1864

HEADQUARTERS U.S. FORCES,
NATCHEZ, MS

There was a sharp knock at the door. Lieutenant Colonel Christensen looked up from his dispatches and set aside his writing quill.

"Come in."

The colonel's attaché, Lieutenant Samuel Ridley, entered his office carrying a parcel under his arm. He saluted and brought forth the small package.

"The postman just arrived with dispatches, sir."

"Set them down there." Christensen said, motioning to a corner of his desk. Ridley set the dispatches down where indicated and turned to depart. "Oh, one more thing, Lieutenant. Have a seat."

Lieutenant Ridley sat down in the seat opposite the colonel. Ridley's appearance was pristine and well-polished. His uniform was without crease and his boots were without scuff. He had short-cropped brown hair with a slightly receding hairline and he kept his face clean-shaven. Colonel Christensen, on the other

hand, was slightly more relaxed in his demeanor. He was not slovenly by any means, but he looked like a man who worked long hours and paid no more attention to the crease in his pants than was dictated by the service. Christensen rummaged through a desk drawer and produced an envelope, the seal already broken.

"I received this letter from Lieutenant Earl, commanding officer of the special scouts unit, yesterday. He and his men have seized a large amount of contraband from Confederate forces. I want you to take charge of distributing this cotton and tobacco for use by our forces here in Natchez and send the surplus to General Halleck in Washington D.C."

Ridley took the offered letter and scanned its contents. "Yes, sir. There seems to be a sizeable amount of contraband traffic taking place along the Mississippi River."

"Yes, there is. Lt. Earl believes that there might be a large number of Union officers involved in the cotton trade."

"It's hard to believe that our own officers could be involved in supplying goods and munitions to the rebels, sir."

"I agree, but it is far too prevalent to ignore the possibility." Colonel Christensen leaned back in his chair thoughtfully. "As I recall, you've served with Lieutenant Earl before haven't you? Tell me your impressions of the man."

"Yes, sir, I had the honor of serving with him at Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He charged a force of three hundred rebel soldiers with only seventeen men. He earned

a field commission for that. Later, he was captured but he managed to escape and make his way to Pensacola, where he was able to rejoin the regiment. I've never met a man with more courage or determination than Isaac Earl."

"He has been the commanding officer of the Corps of Special Scouts unit since its inception. During those six months, their captures have brought nearly a million dollars into the United States Treasury." The colonel waved a hand dismissively. "I'm sorry, I'm sure you know all this already. Please see to those requisitions as soon as possible, Lieutenant."

Ridley rose and saluted before closing the door behind him.

NOVEMBER 29, 1864

FAYETTE, MS

Tom Dicks reined up alongside James Smith's horse. The sun had set several hours earlier leaving the streets of the town deserted. The moon hung low over the trees, nearly full in the starlit sky. A horse whinnied and pawed the ground nervously.

"You heard 'em too?" Smith asked.

"Yeah. How many you figure there are?"

"Least a dozen, maybe more." Smith scanned up and down the street. Finally his eyes rested on the hotel. "Up there." He said, pointing to a second story window. "Tie up the horses... out back and I'll get the lights."

Dicks nodded and led the horses away. Smith doused the lights in front of the hotel and went inside. The hotel was easily the largest structure on the street.

"He and his men have seized a large amount of contraband from Confederate forces."

2nd Place

Wolves in the Fold, cont.

by Scott Sovo

Anyone trying to cross Fayette would have to come down this road unless they intended to lead their horses on foot through the thick undergrowth on the outskirts of town. The window that Smith had singled out afforded a clear view of the dimly lit street below.

By the time Smith arrived at the room, Dicks was already there loading the muskets. Smith went to help him and the two fumbled in the dark with their weapons. By the time they were ready, they could hear the clip-clop of hooves coming from outside. Both men cautiously peered out the window.

There were at least fifteen men, all mounted, riding swiftly but quietly across town. At the head of the column rode a middle-aged man with dark hair and a well-trimmed moustache. Not much more could be discerned in the darkness, but his sharp eyes scanned up and down the street for any sign of danger.

Smith lifted his musket, took aim at the lead figure, and pulled the trigger.

November 30, 1864

Headquarters U.S. Forces, Natchez, MS

E.R.S. Canby, Maj. Gen. Commanding

C.T. Christensen, Lieut. Col. & Asst. Adj. Gen.

Sir: - Lieutenant Earl while passing through Fayette, twenty eight miles from here last night was fired upon and I fear fatally wounded by a buck shot in the breast. His men returned this morning leaving him unable to be moved. My cavalry being with General Dana, I can only send surgeons or

surgical instruments at Fayette.

I doubt whether the enemy will allow him to be taken away even if that be possible. I apprehend a fatal result as he was bleeding profusely and destitute of proper medical aid. I will do what I can to save him.

It was not in a fight but a murderous fire from a house. It appears that Earl went up river on the "Cowels" last night about ten miles, and with his party, started for Brookhaven, via Fayette. I was not aware of the movement until now. Lieutenant Earl not being under my direction.

Yours etc. M. Brayman, Brig. Gen. Commanding

P.S. The wound in his breast was a ball, the buckshot breaking his jaw. B

November 30, 1864

Fayette, MS

"I'm telling you, Lieutenant Paddock, he's in no fit condition to travel."

"And I'm telling you, Doctor, Lieutenant Earl is a prisoner of war and, as such, he is my responsibility."

The two men stood arguing on the steps of Dr. Duncan's porch. Lt. Paddock was tall and broad-shouldered. He was clean shaven save for a thin, brown moustache that graced his upper lip. Dr. Duncan, on the other hand, was an aging, portly man with spectacles on his long nose. He was nearly bald, with only a thin ring of hair which circled the back of his head and ended in thick, grey sideburns. The doctor looked at Lt. Paddock with an exasperated expression and said, "Please, sir. If his chest wound were to start bleeding again he would die. If you move him it will be as

good as murder."

"I have a wagon ready to take him." The Lieutenant said. "Do whatever you feel is necessary to make him ready for travel but we leave within the hour."

The doctor paused before saying, "What about the boy?"

"What boy?"

"Young John Hays. He was with the company that brought Lieutenant Earl here last night. The boy stayed with the Lieutenant."

"I'm afraid he is now a prisoner as well."

"He's only a child!" The doctor protested.

"The Union Army has been using boys his age as spies and messengers since this war began. He's coming with us."

The doctor snapped his mouth shut.

"Now then, since we have all that out of the way I would like to see Lt. Earl please."

The doctor reluctantly led Lt. Paddock into his home. They found Earl in bed, his chest, head, and right hand bandaged. John Hays sat beside the bed, spooning him split pea soup through a narrow opening in his lips.

"I'm afraid he won't be particularly talkative with his broken jaw." Said Dr. Duncan.

Paddock took a seat by the bed on the side opposite John. Earl turned his head with an effort and looked the man in the eye.

"Well old friend," Paddock said, "It's been a long time. Who would have ever thought you and I would end up on opposite sides of this war? I really wish things could have been different."

Lt. Paddock rose and walked out of the room. Outside, his men were gathered, awaiting orders.

2nd Place

Wolves in the Fold, cont.

by Scott Sova

"Mr. Dicks, I want you to take the boy at Lt. Earl's bedside and escort him to headquarters. He is to be held as a prisoner of war until such time as his involvement with the Union forces can be ascertained but I don't want him mistreated."
"Yes, sir."

"Sergeant Smith," he continued, "I need to remain here in Fayette for the time being so you'll be taking Lieutenant Earl to the District Hospital in Jackson."

"Yessir."

With that, Lt. Paddock left the doctor's home.

December 1, 1864

Headquarters U.S. Forces, Natchez, MS

Brig. Gen. Brayman

Sir: Surgeons A.E. Caruthers, and P.A. Willis arrived here this morning with flags of truce for the purpose of rendering Lieutenant Earl (who was wounded in this place on night before last) any medical aid in their power. Lieutenant Earl was removed from this place yesterday to the hospital of the District, and it being contrary to usual custom to allow (sic) to enter the lines, I regret to say that I cannot allow them to visit him, but have assured them that he shall have every attention in my power to bestow. Have promised them to forward to him immediately some medicine and delicacies left him by the surgeons. I will advise you of Lieutenant Earls condition from time to time and in event of his death will notify you of the fact.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,
 B.B. Paddock, Lieut. Commanding
 Confederate Scouts

December 3, 1864

Headquarters U.S. Forces, Natchez, MS

Lieutenant Ridley left Union Headquarters and began the short walk to his residence across town, stopping at the post office along the way. The long day's work had done little to haggard his appearance. He still looked a model of pristine gentility. His coat was wrapped tightly about him to keep out the chill December air.

He stopped briefly and talked to the postman. The two exchanged pleasant words about the weather and their respective occupations before Ridley received a small bundle of wrapped envelopes. With his parcel under his arm, he headed for home.

Once there, he gave his wife and child a kiss in welcome, poured himself a mug of tea, and retired to his study. As he unwrapped the parcel, he began examining the names on each envelope. He stopped at one name in particular and, setting the rest aside, he split the seal with an opener. He quickly scanned the contents until he found the passage he was looking for. He began to read, "As per your request, Lieutenant Isaac Earl died while being transported to the hospital of the District. Your reports of his intended movements proved most useful in planning his demise. Our agents are in place to resume trading cotton and other goods as agreed upon..."

December 9, 1864

Headquarters U.S. Forces, Natchez, MS

Lieut. Col. C.T. Christensen, A.A. Gen.

Sir: - Rodger and Mitchell, (deserters) say that a private of Woods Regiment who had been home on furlough reported in their hearing to Captain Williams on the 7th, that he saw Lieutenant Earl buried at Union Church (thirty-five miles from here). That would make it seven miles from Fayette, not thirty as Lieutenant Paddock told the surgeons, after being taken away from Fayette. I have no reason to doubt this statement. A young woman who was in Fayette when Lieutenant Earl was wounded came in and informed me that when Lieutenant Earl dashed into Fayette with less than thirty men, four companies of rebels ran away supposing him to have a large force. They returned the next day and carried him off as she supposed. She says the inhabitants, especially the women demonstrated against his removal and offered to take care of him and that Dr. Duncan at whose house he was, who kindly attended him protested that to remove him would cause his death, and that his murder would rest upon them, but that they would carry him to Jackson dead or alive.

cont...

2nd Place

Wolves in the Fold, cont.

by Scott Sova

The result justifies my apprehensions. Lieutenant Earl was a brave and chivalrous Officer. He was a terror to the enemy, and had by his success awakened a deep hostility. I have heard of threats made by them to destroy him. I did not suppose they would wish or hate to kill him outright by violence, but was too well satisfied that they would treat him so as to make him die. I did not know of his misfortune until his men returned leaving him in the enemies hands, and then had no cavalry or I should have attempted his recovery. He will be sorely missed in the particular service in which he was fast becoming distinguished.

Yours etc.

M. Brayman, Brig. Gen. Com.

Honorable Mention

Kyson the Bison

by Deborah Ramsay

No rain, no clouds, just the endless blistering sun. Kyson the Bison wished he could escape to somewhere green and cool. Kyson lived on a seahorse-shaped island, not a tropical island, but a desert island surrounded by a lake of salt water. These days his island felt like a prison with no way to escape.

The older bison bulls and cows quietly stood around flicking at the flies and chewing their cud as they waited for the rains to come. Kyson was restless. He couldn't just stand around doing nothing, so he left his mother's side and went to explore the island in hopes of finding some relief.

Kyson hadn't gone far when he almost stumbled over a large, black-tailed jack rabbit resting under some sagebrush.

"Hi, my name is Kyson and I was wondering if you knew how I could keep cool?" Kyson asked the rabbit.

"I use my big ears," replied the rabbit. "They give off heat, making me feel cool."

"I don't have big ears," said a disappointed Kyson. "I guess I'll have to find another way to get cool."

Kyson started walking across a large field covered by brown grass, brown flowers, and brown bushes. He thought he was all alone until he noticed a brown patch start moving. The brown patch was a pronghorn antelope.

"Hi, my name is Kyson," he called out. "Can you tell me what you do to keep cool?"

The pronghorn finished chewing his mouthful of grass and said, "It's all in my coat."

"I'm not sure what you mean," questioned Kyson. "What's in your coat?"

"Nothing is 'in' my coat. My coat is made of special hairs," explained the antelope. "I raise them up and they let me cool down."

"My hairs don't move like that," Kyson replied, after trying with all his might to make his fur move.

Kyson said good-bye to the antelope and continued his search. He walked and walked and walked, up one hill and down another until he spied a small bird sitting in front of a hole in the ground. Maybe the bird would be able to tell him how to get cool.

"Hi, my name is Kyson," he said. "I'm looking for a way to get cool. Please tell me how you keep cool."

"I have two ways to keep cool," replied the very smart burrowing owl. "First I open my mouth wide and then I flutter the feathers on my throat, like this."

"I can open my mouth, but I don't have any feathers I can flutter, so I guess that won't work," observed Kyson. "What's your second way to keep cool? Maybe I'll be able to do that."

"Quite simple, really," replied the owl as she turned and started down the tunnel into her home. "I merely go into my nice, cool, underground home."

"Thank you," Kyson called down into the hole.

Kyson went off in search of some soft, sandy dirt to start digging his hole. Kyson spent hours digging and digging and digging, but still his hole was nothing like the owl's hole. Kyson was hotter than ever. He decided to quit digging, find some shade and take a nap.

Looking around, Kyson spotted a big boulder not far away with just enough shade to rest in. He was so tired he didn't even notice

the strange pictures on the rock right above his head as he drifted off to sleep.

The pictures were made many, many years ago by a group of Freemont hunters visiting the island. They came during a time of drought and were hoping to find better hunting on the isolated island.

Faded by time, the ancient drawings told a story. The pictures showed a big sun, a dancing ceremony, and then a great rain. As Kyson slept beneath the symbols, they seemed to dance off the wall and into Kyson's dream.

In his dream, Kyson sailed past the dried brown hills of the island to a Native American village far away. The land looked parched and dry. Kyson watched as the whole village gathered together.

The men and women quietly divided into two separate lines and began a sacred zig-zagging dance to the beat of the drums. The dancing went on and on until finally the wind picked up, the sky cracked open and rain poured down.

Kyson the Bison now knew how to get cool. He knew how to get the rains to come. He didn't know how he found the herd so fast, but there they were, searching for food over the next hill.

Kyson ran and told his mother about the rain dance he had watched...

"We must go tell the others," said his mother.

Just like the villagers, the bison herd split into two lines. The cows went in one line and the bulls into another.

A group of young bulls stood off to the side and powerfully began pounding their hooves on the

Honorable Mention

Kyson the Bison, cont.

by Deborah Ramsay

ground. The bison began to zig and then to zag to the beat of the hooves.

The valley filled with grunts, groans, and dust as the bison got caught up in the rhythm of the dance. High above them dark clouds began to gather.

The ceremony continued as they danced and prayed for rain. Suddenly, a light flashed, coupled with an ear-splitting clap of thunder. Everyone stopped.

First one drop silently hit the dusty dance floor, followed by another and another and another--plink, plink, plank, plunk. Rain poured down from the sky.

Kyson the Bison, happily stood off to the side watching as the herd broke from their lines and started dancing for joy. Some spun in circles, others kicked up their heels, and a few young bulls even butted their heads.

Something cold and wet landed on Kyson's nose. He woke up with a start. Confused, he opened his eyes and realized he had just been dreaming. But these were real drops coming down. It was raining! His dream had come true. Now it was Kyson's turn to kick up his heels as he headed back to the herd. He couldn't wait to tell the others about his dream.

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