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Legacy

Southern Writers Club

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Collegedale, Tennessee

2013-2014 Writing Awards
for Southern Writers Club Flash Fiction
Competition and *Legacy*

Fall 2013 Flash Fiction Award

Hannah Leonard
“The Send-Off”

Winter 2014 Fiction 1st Place Winner

Denee McClain
“Thirty Thousand Pounds”

Winter 2014 2nd Place Winner

Anna Bartlett
“Lars”

Winter 2014 Poetry 1st Place Winner

Tamara Naja
“Rose-Tinted Glasses”

Winter 2014 Poetry 2nd Place Winner

Bryant Rodriguez
“Remembering My Life in Mexico”

Poetry Honorable Mention

Tamara Naja
“I”

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Short Fiction

Thirty Thousand Pounds

Lars

The Romance of Christ

The Send-Off

Thirty Thousand Pounds

| Denee McClain

“Thirty thousand pounds per annum...” “A large inheritance when her father dies...” “Extremely accomplished! Piano, dance, painting, French, you name it...” “A fine catch for any young gentleman...her hair is lovely! All jet black...darling smile; the prettiest nose; and her eyes are so bright! Healthy and young...why, she has it all.”

And I have heard it all. I hear what people say about me. I overhear my mother’s dinner guests’ whispering as they stand in circles of flowing gossamer gowns. They lightly balance the sparkling crystal wine glasses in their hands and flutter their fans at their faces as they glance across the room and smile knowingly at each other. I see the looks of jealousy written all over the younger girls’ faces as they wait for dance partners at my uncle’s balls. They sniff and swish their light muslin dresses, hoping that somehow the man they fancy does not cast his eyes toward me. And I feel the looks of all the gentlemen I pass when I go calling. They stare, they flirt—some become shockingly imprudent in their conduct when they are not watched—and they expect me to be flattered and flushed as I gaze at them from underneath my long lashes. I have heard and seen it all. I have been there. I have done it. And now I am tired of the whole of it.

I know that I am lucky to even have an engagement. I know at least seven and twenty girls who are just too old to try and get married. Sometimes – although it would send mother into quite a fit – I think I envy them. Anyone would tell me how silly I am, considering the “marvelous young man I snatched up”! My so-called beloved’s name is George. He wants me to call him by his middle name, Edward, because that name sounds more romantic when it slips from between my rouged lips. He has blonde hair, blue eyes, impeccable manners, a large pile of money somewhere, and enough respect in society to get him into Parliament, for his father’s a successful businessman and George is to be too. That is all I know of my future husband, and it is only what everyone else knows about him as well. Oh, I have discovered that he is fond of silly nicknames. Once in the middle of a *tête à tête* in the hallway of a dispensable neighbor’s gallery, he called me Lilypad. My name is Lilia. I just smiled and giggled. I am tired.

“These are the best years of your life,” my mother insists. During all of my twenty years, I have accepted my mother’s words as if they were law from the king himself. Yet now, I have caught myself desperately hoping that somehow she is wrong. But by all appearances she is right about everything else. She tells me that even though I will not really know or love my husband, I will grow to respect him. “And that is all.” She spoke the words so calmly that I wondered if the same were true in her own marriage. I should not wonder so much. Wondering has taught me all

I never wanted to know. Wondering has taught me more than my own mother, more than my relatives, my friends, the housekeeper. Wondering has also taught me why everybody else will continue to teach me nothing. It is because they are all empty. They are all sad. They are all sugarcoated, surface women, liars, gossipers, cheaters, actresses. They are fake. They are bored. They are both deafeningly loud and perfectly silent because they refuse to tell the truth. They are exhausting. I am exhausted.

And no one cares. I know what they will say to me, wondering told me so. "Go to your husband with that." But what if my husband does not want to hear it? What if he does not like me? What if I do not like him? What if every day, every day in this draining life I am haunted with the questions: *Who is my husband? Who is my mother? Who are my friends?* Wondering will not teach me everything. And what then? Where am I left?

30,000 pounds per annum. Beautiful hair, eyes, and charm. A beautiful face, smile, and gown.

And tired.

Lars

| Anna Bartlett

Mr. Smart comes up the walk. Brown chocolaty hair frames his face, a smile shows off white teeth, and a handle bar mustache frames his grin. Lengthy—over six feet—and big, he fills the door frame as he enters. He’s an hour late returning from work. As he strides into the living room he drops his briefcase into one of the matching recliners. A small child sits in the corner of the living room directly to his left, a vantage point where the child is partly hidden by the second recliner and can watch through the big double windows for his step-father’s approach.

“Hi dad!” Lars calls from the corner.

“Where’s my little girl?” calls out Mr. Smart. His brown eyes shine with a familiar glint as he searches the room. “Where’s my princess?”

“Daddy!” calls little Tiffany as she comes careening around the corner.

A little under the age of two, Tiffany possesses the maneuvering skills of a spinning top, whirling forward and around, but not so good at corners. She tumbles into her daddy’s arms with a shout of glee.

“There’s my girl!” says Mr. Smart as he catches Tiffany and raises her above his head. “What have you been up to today?”

Lars watches the exchange between his step-father and his step-sister silently from his corner. He has sat there most of the day, his few favorite toys strewn around him on the floor. His small eyes stare with shiny desire as Mr. Smart tosses his daughter up and down while she alternately squeals and giggles.

Mrs. Smart walks into the room, a hopeful pleasant expression on her face, like sun shining through rain. Mr. Smart sees her and she shyly looks down at her feet. Mr. Smart follows her gaze, and suddenly sucks in his cheeks and presses his lips together in a firm thin line. He puts Tiffany down and stalks down the hall towards the master bedroom. Mrs. Smart's hopeful smile sinks into a frown of despair. She turns smartly on her heel and follows him into the bedroom. Things have been like this since forever. He has always come home, always called for Tiffany, always eaten dinner, complimented her, taken care of their little family. But since the operation things have been different.

Mr. Smart had suffered from tremendous jaw pain. The operation to extract the ingrown tooth had been successful, but something had gone wrong with the anesthetic. He had been given too much at some point and lost consciousness for too long. Since the operation he had recovered and acted normally enough, except for his temper and the drinking. They had both gotten worse.

She walks into the room forcing herself to swallow and look up at her husband.

“What’s wrong?” she asks.

“Your toes!”

His words are strangled, tight, as if held onto. He is making an effort. She takes a deep breath.

“I went to the spa today; I got a pedicure.” Her toenails are painted purple.

“I HATE purple,” Mr. Smart growls as he paces back and forth like a dissatisfied tiger in a cage. Swiftly he turns on his heel and points his finger at her, “and YOU KNOW we don’t have enough extra money to go to places like a *spa*,” he spits out the last word.

She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. It didn’t used to be like this, but now every little thing sets off a tsunami of anger, bullying, and accusations. Now he is raging about

something else, but she isn't listening anymore. She can't understand. In three days he will be apologizing, but those three days will be an eternity of rehashing his frustration and dousing his wrath with drink. It isn't even relevant. Don't they both know that by now? Quietly she opens her eyes.

“Charles, this isn't working.”

She stares directly at him as he stops ranting and raving, shocked by her defiance of the routine. He stares at her, but she is immovable. She loved him, but this was too much.

Her eyes mist over as she thinks about another day, another man, a different family. They had been three. She felt her heart burning again, piece by piece, and she was back standing beside his hospital bed through the pain, the tears, and then, the emptiness. What all had she lost in that emptiness? But this was no longer what she wanted to fill it with, not from this man, not anymore.

She looks up and watches Mr. Smart's eyes soften. A small flame of hope ignites her soul. But then his eyes freeze into an icy stare and her hope dies. He knows they can no longer continue like this, but he is too angry, because of whatever messed up mental faculties, to stop. His mouth snaps shut and he stalks out the bedroom door, down the hallway, back into the living room. He glances fondly at his daughter, but his face hardens back into an immovable mask and he exits through the front door. He will be back, but this will be the last time.

Lars watches from his corner. He has sat there most of the day, his few favorite toys strewn around him on the floor. “By Dad,” he whispers. His small eyes stare as Mr. Smart gets into his car and drives away. His mother is strangely silent in the back room after the familiar exchange. He stares down at a picture of a man that he doesn't remember, but with whom he shares many characteristics. Their favorite color is purple.

The Romance of Christ

Bryant Rodriguez

Jesus loved a woman. Jesus purposed in His heart that He would marry that woman He desired. He spoke to the Father, got things arranged, and left home to meet the woman He loved where she lived.

“But when the fullness of time had come” (Gal 4:4)

Before He could drop the question though, He needed to negotiate the *mohar*, the price, that He would need to pay for His wife. The price was steep, but He loved her so much that He was willing to go forth with it. Like Jacob labored for fourteen years for the woman he wanted so much, counting it as nothing, Jesus would count as nothing the price He’d pay. Already, in His heart He despised the shame, agreed to the terms, and moved towards that young woman, beautiful like a costly pearl.

“who for the joy that was set” (Heb 12:2)

At the large gathering, everyone knew Jesus was going to propose. Her family, His family, the guests, the crabby aunt in the corner sitting beside the old wine, and the young woman did too. He didn’t know the answer though.

Though the terms were set, she could reject.

He approached her, with a cup in His hand.

Slowly, He extended the cup, full with the choicest wine, to her and made Himself vulnerable.

“He took a cup...and offered it” (Mark 14:23)

Would she take it?

The room exploded with joy, even the crabby aunt was hooping and hollering when she gently took hold of the cup and began to drink. The wedding was on. Now, the covenant had been legitimized.

“the new covenant” (Mat 26:28)

Her heart sank when she heard the terms of the covenant, the offering that would be needed from her Beloved to redeem her, but He comforted her. Right there in the middle of the room, as everyone watched and witnessed the coming together of two beautiful people, as the guests and family rejoiced and made merry over the favorable marriage, He spoke to her. As the custom was, He needed to go and give time of preparation.

“Let not your heart be troubled. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

The familiar words entered the room and upheld the tradition. The covenant had been established, the price paid, and now came the time of waiting, of preparation. She was nervous now. So many questions surrounded this period. How long would it go?

Would He forget her? Would she play the whore? Would she remain a chaste virgin? How long would it take for Him to build? All sorts of things for a woman to over think, over analyze, and worry about.

“present you as a pure bride to Him” (2 Cor 11:2)

She stared into His eyes, His strong eyes that were manly, protective, but caring and soft. She thought of what He would pay, how precious this made her in His eyes, and was strengthened.

“the precious blood of Christ” (1 Pet 1:19)

With the end of that party, it was declared to everyone that Jesus and His bride were now sanctified to one another. They were each set apart for the other, not to give themselves over to anyone else, and to understand that though their final consummation had not come yet, they were now at this time, the possession of their partner.

Jesus left to prepare a place in His Father’s home for His beloved.

She prepared herself for marriage, collected all her gifts, learned and relearned the skills necessary to be a sweet aroma in the life of her future husband, and waited.

As the custom was, she was to expect him at night, but which night she did not know. She lived in a large home with extended family and plenty of rooms with windows that could potentially confuse the Groom. Therefore, she could be seen as the sun set by her window, diligently keeping a lamp burning beside her window that her Beloved would know she was ready.

That lamp sat there, in the middle of darkness without electricity, symbolizing the perseverance of the Bride and the hope that soon a Groom would come walking down the streets. It glowed with the passion of lovers, and the nights were both long and short in a way that would only make sense if a person has been in love.

One night, as she waited by her lamp, doing her best not to doze off so quickly, the black silence was pierced by a shout!

“with a shout, with the voice of an archangel” (1 Thess 4:16)

It was a loud shout, ringing through the neighborhood with the voice of a mighty messenger, louder than the newsies kids or even louder than the people who sold things on the market corners. Her heart leaped to her throat.

It was time! Her beloved would soon be coming. She could already imagine Him coming down the streets with His company of men, torches at hand to illuminate their pathway through the dark streets, their faces set towards the goal. She was the goal and it felt good to be so hotly pursued. It had been so long since she had looked into the eyes of Jesus. Those eyes that had been willing to shed blood in her name.

Jesus led a boisterous and raucous procession down the road. The time had come when He would finally have His prize. His portion would be taken back to His home and there time would pass, but it would no longer matter because they’d be together. He imagined she’d be scurrying about making sure she was fully prepared to forever leave the building she once called home.

“LORD’s portion is His people” (Deut 32:9)

Home would now be with Him.

Here it was, the moment they had long awaited.

The party arrived at the home of the woman and Jesus bade her to come out.

She stepped out with her maids and gifts, staring excitedly at the scene before her with a reddened face from excitement, bewilderment, and now nervousness.

The procession with Jesus shouted go on and the woman’s family encouraged her and the Bride’s maids let her know how spectacular the moment was, and Jesus the gentleman looked at His bride and asked if she would come to Him and she bashfully said yes realizing that part of the beauty of the moment was the fact she had butterflies in her stomach and that this had been a risky endeavor. She took His scarred hands, the hands that had paid for her, upon which Jesus picked her up causing her and everyone to quip excitedly. As they made their way back, she whispered into His ear the silliness of her worries and doubts that had so consumed her during the waiting period and they both had a good laugh about it. Everything seemed so magical and worthwhile right then.

“a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor 4:17)

Eventually the party returned to the home of Jesus with the bride. Guests were anxiously waiting to shower them with yells of excitement when the party returned. At the table, the Father had prepared the meal and sang to His Son and His wife as they entered the banquet hall. The third Host signaled to Jesus and His bride to a table, where they would hold the seats of honor. When everyone was seated, the Father hushed everyone and asked Jesus to hold a toast before the festivities began. Jesus took a cup, much like the cup that had begun it all, but there was no bitterness in this one; only joy and gladness. He stood up, looked around to His guests, then focused in on His Wife, and said

“It is finished, My dear. I will make you My wife forever and there will be no more pain and no more sorrow. You’re mine now.”

And they locked eyes once more and they knew that it would be so.

The moment would sink in then the Host will be heard saying to the Father, “Aren’t we supposed to party for seven days, now?”

“This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” (Eph 4:32)

And **you**? Where will you be then during that party?

The Send-Off

| Hannah Leonard

Reaching back I tugged at my dress' zipper, feeling the teeth release their grasp.

There was no doubt it had been a beautiful wedding: a sea of harmonizing colors, delicately laid table settings, desperately romantic music, and unabashed love shared between the two exchanging vows. It had ended with a terrific send-off. Thrown feathers had floated earthward, fluttering along currents drawn by the departing couple: a perfect ending to a perfect ceremony.

Grasping the neck of the sweater, I pulled the knitted mesh over my pinned, stiff up-do.

All day my mind wandered elsewhere, lingering on the sapphire chest I had chosen to hold my sister. She hadn't attended our cousin's wedding; her weary soul gone months earlier. She rested now on an alcove shelf in our living room. That send-off had been different: distracting flowers perched in strategic places, lowered heads hiding damp cheeks, and the voices of those who wished their spoken memories would bring back the spark of life that had vanished so swiftly. How surreal, how nightmarish, the way death had stripped the color, the vibrancy from her, that final breath freeing the force of her existence. Rejected by fate, a bright future gone.

Pulling on worn, grey clogs, I slipped out into the autumn night air.

Nausea crept over me again, as it had a million times since that day. Her soft cheeks would never again feel the brush of warm lips. Dainty fingers could never feel a husband's grasp, or experience the sweet exclusivity of marital bliss. The contrasts, cold and brash as steel, overwhelmed me, biting through my sweater, my skin, and threatened my bones.

Bending down, I admired the hues flaunted in the corpse of a lifeless leaf.

Death alongside a brilliant void.

True disparity.

The perfect send-off.

Poetry

Rose-Tinted Glasses

Remembering My Life In Mexico

I

New

Black Truck Dark

Collecting Dust

What Is Life?

Rose-Tinted Glasses

| Tamara Naja

She slumps like a crumpled flower too roughly handled. Mud stains the delicate lace; its oozing fingers cling to the cloth in desperation. Crestfallen clouds tear open their hearts and release their sorrows onto the once white satin. She flinches at the added insult. Their droplets splatter her forehead, chasing the mascara down her flushed cheeks in a mockery of black tears. She makes no move to wipe the abomination away, preferring it to stand as a testament to all. War paint. No strong arm to escort her to womanhood. No gentle hand to brush back the flowered veil clinging to unraveling curls. She sits a defeated sentinel, stroking the decaying rose petals scattered at her feet. The earth reclaiming another gossamer memory.

Tamara Naja is a Senior Nursing major at Southern.

Remembering My Life in Mexico

| Bryant Rodriguez

Late night.

Black hair and *huaraches* everywhere.

In our hands: a hot mug of chocolate with a *concha*.

We drank in the cool darkness; it was quiet because the stray dogs bark less at night. We lacked electricity, lacked modernity, lacked

nothing.

We drank like my fathers and mothers, sipping chocolate in wood free homes—the packed, dry earth littered with sweet crumbs.

The chickens would wake in the mornings and eat them.

In the evenings, we dropped our *quehaceres* and laughed until the chocolate was over.

Mi familia sacrificed their backs, their bones, and their health so their son could wear cardigans and black-rimmed glasses, so their son could sit in coffee shops late at night typing on a MacBook Pro.

I

| Tamara Naja

I am not.
I seek happiness,
I say, but
I lie.
I must confess
I seek feeling, for
I am hollow.
I play and
I play till
I laugh. You cry.
I have hurt you.
I don't know if
I felt concern.
I should, you say.
I found it, though.
I found feeling.
I don't know which, but
I don't care.
I have found feeling.
I know,
I am deceiving,
I am disgraceful,
I am despicable.
I have heard.
I cannot see how
I became this. But
I am here. And
I am me.
I call out to you

I have changed. But
I see you know
I haven't. You condemn.
I am not moved.
I sneer. So look then,
I say, see how selfish am
I.

New

| Tamara Naja

My face in my hands, I gaze into the darkness of my sanctuary. A vast churning sea that clouds my vision and brings about the rain. A deluge invisible to all. No one to see it. No one to stop it. Each drop sends gentle waves lapping at my subconscious, increasing in number till my feeble control flows through my fingers like streams of consciousness, relinquishing the sea to indulge in its temperament. My battered soul grows too weary to further stand against the increasing gale, readily joining the sea in its malicious glee. And so I spread my arms wide and sink into the sea's embrace, my will to fight carried off in the wind. I brace myself against the continuous onslaught I surely anticipate such a tempest would provide; but as my head slips beneath the agitated waves and my breath is forcefully stolen away, I find not a monster churning to life underneath, but rather a deep penetrating calm. A calm with strength and purpose that cannot be moved, cannot be affected by the trivial storm raging above, now small by comparison. I gaze into the dark and fear it not. The pressure of such vastness, once believed to be a crushing force, now embraces me, lending me protection and strength I had previously never known. My gaze travels to the surface and I am reminded of the battering waves I repeatedly attempted to conquer time and time again, now bewildered at my struggle I once thought a necessity. I contentedly slip further into the deep, delighting in its profound tranquility. This is home. This is peace.

Black Truck Dark

| Paige Engle

He was wonderfully wild in the worst way.
Tall,
handsome,
and black truck dark.
The kind that shimmers in summer shine.

He was tail-gate torture
on the nights we spent stargazing
in a short bed Chevy,
a six-speed Silverado
that sped my heart on back roads
And spun out my common sense
in dusty daydreams.

He dreamed so tall that I could hardly reach,
reach,
reach up on the tips of my toes
To kiss his lips,
lips,
lips that said
we'd buy the beach and raise balmy, briny babies
that were born of summer.

He left me asking my answers,
until I opened my closed
and challenged the proven path,
that was plenty traveled and plenty used.

He made me want more,
And he lifted me up,
Up,
Up high over his head
Spinning me into the reckless
that I always ran from
and into the risky that
sweet talked my safety.
With a backwards hat,
And his backwards laugh,
He was everything dangerous to me.

So when I came down,
Down,
down into fallen leaves,
I ran back to my safety
and away from my risky.
But if the spring of my careless
had ever bloomed from my caution,
I, maybe, might have, made his
Wonderfully wild into more
than just a dusty daydream.

Paige Engle is a recent SAU alumnus. She graduated in May 2014 with her BS in Public Relations. Currently, she is working as a copywriter at an advertising agency and lives with her husband and terrifically adorable cat.

Collecting Dust

|Denee McClain

I said I'd write a book before 14,
I said I'd win the National Spelling Bee.
I said I'd ace all my tests,
I said I'd be the very best,
But that was when I was pretty small.

So what's happened that's left,
All these precious dreams,
Sitting here collecting dust?
Old and forgotten,
Early begotten-
But didn't grow to be quite as nice-
As someone said they'd be.
I think that's a little bit
Just like me.

I said I'd be skinny in the year '08.
I said I'd meet so many friends every time I left town.
I said everyone would envy me,
I said defeated I'd never be,
But that was when I was kind of vain.

So what's happened that's left,
All these precious dreams,
Sitting here collecting dust?
Old and forgotten,
Early begotten—
But didn't grow to be quite as nice-
As someone said they'd be.
I think that's a little bit
Just like me.

So what's the point of making plans
If quickly they will fail?
What's the point of shooting far
If fear will cloud your view?
What's the point of trying?
You'll only end up crying—
When you find you just can't breathe-

Cause dust replaced your dreams.

So what's happened that's left,
All these ancient dreams,
Sitting here collecting dust?
Old and forgotten,
Early begotten-
But never grew to be quite as nice-
As someone said they'd be.
I think that's a little bit,
Just like me.

What is Life?

Marselinny Mawuntu

You see, you can't define what it means

Until you find what's between

The genes that make up its definition;

My recognition of the exposition

That encapsulates the vast idea of Life

Is limited—

Limited in knowing how it started,

How it's going, how it's charted

'Til the very last breath of a being is departed.

You see, the game of Life

Is easy when you know how to play.

But at the end of the day

The production of play is up to you;

You decide the roads you rake,

The turns you take,

The moves you make.

Backward, forward,

Sideways toward

The finish line—end of time

Goal that is in store.

There are many "players" of the game

Who will fool around, knock you down
Make you wish you could end the game sooner.

But sooner or later,
You'll realize the real lies
They tell you to believe
In order to achieve
Their own satisfaction
In their façade of attraction.
You see, the story of Life
Is too short for the strife
That cuts away at our freedoms
Like a razor-sharp knife.
It begins and ends
With no amends to
Apprehend the meaning
It ends.

You see, the life you choose
Is the Life you live,
The story you sieve
The gift you give.