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Bluegrass Accolade
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SARAH BODAGER

Dive

I linger at the edge
Heart pounding,
Ears ringing,
Stomach flopping.

Below I see
Swirls of water,
Strokes of brown and green.
Nothing that looks familiar.

I should turn back.
I should quit now.
The odds are stacked against me.
What I'm about to attempt
Is impossible.

And yet...I can't ignore the voice inside,
The voice that whisper-shouts:
ONWARD.

So I set my jaw,
Grit my teeth,
Suck in courage,
And dive.

And the rest is history,
Because history is made by people
Who take blind leaps of faith.

SARAH BODAGER

Gratitude

Dwelling in the patient sunlight,
I breathe in today's air.

I plant myself in this soil,
Rooted beside others
Who thirst to be watered by
A kind word,
A knowing smile,
A listening heart.

I bow on this earth,
Raising thanks
To the Giver of all good gifts.

In this present moment,
I choose gratitude.

SARAH BODAGER

Home

The sun casts her laughter
Over the silvery gravel.
Bare sycamores bow
As the breeze whistles
Round their ashen limbs.
Oceans of golden grasses
Flutter gracefully
As the land glows with evening promise.
Nestled on the land
Is a pleasant house
Where love pours from the panes.
I am home.

SARAH BODAGER

Keep Reading

When the lights flicker out,
And hope is but a memory,
Keep reading.

Remember that things
Look messy in the middle of any
Good tale.

Don't curse the story
Even when the pages are
Drenched in tears.

Because light shines through
The grayest chapters.

Dear reader,
Keep laughing.
Keep dreaming.

For in the end
All will be well.

SARAH BODAGER

Something in the Cool Morning Rain

Sadness can comfort,
Tears can relieve,
And something in the cool morning rain
Sets me free.

Morning rain,
Come down.
Drench my aching soul,
Soak my tired bones.

Gray skies,
Open wide.
I want to be like a child
Who dances in puddles
Instead of fearing the storm

DAVID ALLEN FLOYD

The Wall

Are we up against or leaning on
Propped up or plastered on
Or are we just a picture on a frame
Without a title or a name.

You can fall a long distance when
Your sight is not straight
And you can only be the receiver
And never be the bait.

So stand tall and you won't fall
And when you receive the call
Just answer
That's all.

ALEXIS KYLE

Untitled

This is enough
This is enough
 What's happening to
 The human race?
This is enough
This is enough
Watching us scream
 For heavenly grace
 This is enough
 This is enough
 Another news story
 What's happening?
 This is enough
 This is enough
More tragedies
Fill the drain

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CHELSIE KREITZMAN

Blessing

All week I've eyed the moody clouds
and hoped against the rain,
but this morning it arrives like a shower
switched on from heaven.

I sit on the balcony and surprise myself
by welcoming it, yielding to the impulse
to lift my face, let the drops plant
holy kisses on my cheeks and eyelids.

I turn to watch the fog
crawl ghostlike over the mountains
just in time to glimpse two black bears,
stout and thick-furred, full of vigor,
as they gambol across a clearing.
One pauses, lifts a piggish snout to the air;
a yellow gaze brushes mine.
With a grunt, they lumber for the underbrush,
disappear with the snap of twigs
and rustle of wet leaves.

I am awash with joy,
the only one who saw them.

CHELSIE KREITZMAN

Desensitization

One morning you see an orange cat,
plump, robed in luxurious fur.
He looks like he's sleeping
beside the street until you get closer, notice
the head – smashed in by some speeding tire.
Your heart clenches to think
about a little girl or maybe a widower
whose lap he napped on, some sweet soul
calling out the back door
in vain, hoping he'll come home
for breakfast.

A day later, the crushed skull is black,
tabby coat turned dingy.
An endless caravan of cars
motors by, repeatedly bumping
body edges as people drive
to work, run errands, go
about busy lives. And you think,
Someone should really move him,
get the poor thing out of the road.
But of course you don't
do anything about it.
By the weekend, this rotting
roadside mass will be indistinguishable
from all the others.

CHELSIE KREITZMAN

Dog

Our rescued pit bull mix tucks tail,
cowers in a corner at a raised voice.
Later he crawls out on his belly, begs
forgiveness—a thousand pink-tongued licks of penitence
despite having done no wrong. I tell my mom
I think he’s been abused – he does this
whenever we yell at each other.
Her concern:
You yell at each other?

I tell her it’s fine; words are nothing. The man
has never hit me, only punched
holes, like the one in the wall of our rented farmhouse,
rage and ‘80s wood paneling splintered everywhere.
When it’s safe, we tiptoe out, cautious as deer,
that dog and me. I hang
a picture frame over the damage, patch
the wound. I go to him, head held low, quivering
lips full of suppliant kisses.

CHELSIE KREITZMAN

Domesticated

I stand in stocking feet, egg-shell silence.
We are here. Bone and blood,
breath moving air,
alive, alive, alive.

Dog bristles beside me, black hair raised electric,
rumble ready in his barrel chest.
Outside, a stone-still squirrel hovers,
one leg poised over the grass, a scarlet sprig
heavy with berries between his teeth.
If I move, the hound will erupt
with a brazen bawl, send the squirrel scampering
up the nearest tree.

So I freeze with them, watch
two pairs of eyes lock through the window, wild
instincts whetted, primal hunt prevented
by nothing but a pane of glass

JAMES POOLE

The Lamp

I lost my lamp; searched for it in the cold and damp.
Could not feel its heat; could not see the movement of my feet.
I still see its light imprinted in my mind; but I fear it's lost for good this time.
Did not stumble in the dark too long; saw an iridescent light and heard its song.
It was not the lamp I coveted so dear; yet it seemed familiar as I drew near.
I walk in darkness to reach its source; without my favorite lamp of course.
I stood before it, bathed in its increasing glow; an intrinsic bond, with an omnipotent flow.
My lamp was just a vessel, now I see; I am the light and it is me.

JAMES POOLE

Sunday Stuff

When you catch fire
You're the spark to the flame...
the torch is in your name...
Burning bright for all to see...
how lit you are and can be
When the fire is not your own, the heat is not yours alone...
You share the spark to the flame...
The torch is in several names
Burning bright for all to see...
how lit kindred spirits are and can be

Peace from and within the Hurricane...

ROGER L. GUFFEY

Rainy Day Memories

My earliest memory of rain is the birth of my youngest brother on a gray November day when I saw my father turn his two-toned blue 1953 Chrysler Imperial onto the lane of my maternal grandparents' homeplace where we had sojourned until Jack was born. The slow drizzle that peppered the ground intermittently filled the air with petrichor, that marvelous aroma of rain falling onto thirsty dust.

Memories can be transient for most of us, but researchers in medical journals have documented six people blessed, (or cursed), with hyperthymesia, perfect memories of every day of their lives. These remarkable individuals can recall not only events they experienced personally, but also the weather and newsworthy stories. I can remember some days clearly because it rained on those days. Raindrops falling on the tin roof of our smokehouse sang a hymn that always lulled me to a warm, pleasant slumber. I spent many rainy days curled up on the cheesecloths my father used to protect the hams hanging from the rafters as they cured over a few months. The houses of my maternal grandmother Maggie and my Aunt Ruby also had tin roofs that murmured softly during slow rains. If the rain was heavy, that murmur became a sonorous roar that was so loud I could not sleep.

Our house sat on a hill that prevented it from flooding, but rains washed the loose gravel in the driveway down to the road. Dad expected us sons to carry it back up the hillside. The heaviest rainstorms filled the runoff ditch beside the road right of way with knee-deep water in spring and summer where we kids could splash and play like ducks in a pond. One year, I let a chicken incubate duck eggs and I used to take the ducklings to swim in the ditch while the terrified hen ran to and fro trying to lure them out of the water.

Unless a rainstorm was accompanied with lightning, I reveled in playing in the drizzling rain and frequently sneaked off to the woodlands where the sounds of rain on the leaves of trees offered me a sense of happiness and wellbeing. Once I built a crude lean-to where I took shelter and imagined I was being a pioneer hiding from Indians.

Some memories of rain were downright macabre. For several years, the hogs we raised for market could roam over most of our land to forage. Our chickens followed them around to catch the insects they flushed from the grass. For reasons unknown, one of our sows that caught and ate a hen developed a taste for poultry. The never-ending traffic of pigs' feet had killed off all the vegetation near the barn and on rainy days it became one big mudhole. The foolish chickens that wandered into this quagmire quickly became trapped in the mud. For the predatory sow, this was a smorgasbord and she quickly learned to take advantage of the chickens' plight to enjoy a feast.

My brother Leonard took Jack and me to a neighbor's ponds to fish on the same day my mom was hosting a bridal shower for him and his fiancée. A light rain pelted the surface of the pond causing hundreds of small, ever-widening circles. This rain had no lightning with it so we opted to continue to fish. The pond teemed with scores of small catfish who eagerly attacked our redworm baits. In just a few minutes we had caught over sixty of them that we kept in a fifty-pound lard stand. Once we got home, we emptied them into a large stock-watering barrel where they lived for several months.

One day I was helping my father build a new smokehouse when raindrops began to fall. I had started to the house when Dad asked me where I was headed, I replied, "It's raining so I figured we'd quit."

Without missing a beat, he reassured me, "Don't worry. Shit'll float." I never complained about being in the rain again.

In July before my dad died in November, my youngest brother and I decided to visit where dad was born on top of Edwards Mountain. Robert Harmon, one of Dad's lifelong friends, agreed to take us to the abandoned homeplace.

The path up the mountain was steep so we had to watch our steps. We passed by chestnut stumps standing like tall tombstones that marked their last desperate efforts to survive the insidious chestnut blight that had reduced their bountiful numbers to almost none. Chestnuts were important commodities for people's kitchens and the tannin rich wood resisted

decay in split rail and picket fences. Long-dead chestnut stumps still grew young sprouts from the still-living roots but the ever-present blight spores quickly kill them before they can produce nuts.

We followed an abandoned road traversing the top of the mountain to the clearing where my dad's homeplace once stood. Orange daylilies grew in abundance but only two logs from the house were still there. A sandstone rock marked where the front door of the blacksmith shop had been. During our trek a massive thunderstorm had rolled in bringing a gully buster that drove us back to the truck.

One memory of rain indelibly etched into my brain involved my oldest sister, Sally. I had four brothers and two sisters, but Sally and I had always been very close. She gave me my middle name and rocked me to sleep to the strains of Barbara Allen. I was a victim of a hit-and-run driver in my junior year in college and had to be resuscitated in the ICU when my heart and breathing had stopped. Sally's was the first face I saw when she said "Welcome home, feller."

Sally was sixteen years older than me and got married when I was six. She often accompanied me when I roamed over the hills and hollers taking photographs. On one such trip, she asked me to take her to her husband's grandfather's homeplace on Raleigh Creek on the other side of Spann Hill. A spring rain threatened us but we pushed on to a gravel road so steep that my car could not climb it to get back to the top of the mountain. Sally had to get out

and push the car to get it going again. We enjoyed recounting our adventure to our families who thought we were lucky to get out at all.

The clearest and most treasured memory I have of Sally revolves around picking blackberries on the far side of Turkey Ridge where my parents lived. Blackberries grew abundantly in those pastures so we took four buckets to pick them one day in July. A rainstorm sprang up just as we had filled our buckets and a slow, light drizzle began to fall. We were in no rush to get back home since there was no lightning. We laughed at memories of misadventures of our siblings and enjoyed the heaven-sent baptism as a poignant affirmation that our had been blessed beyond measure.

The memory of that rainy walk is as fresh in mind today as it was forty years ago, but life has moved on. Our parents died twenty years ago and my younger brother who inherited the homeplace has turned the barn into a cabinet shop. The tin-roofed smokehouse where I used to nap on rainy days was torn down forty years ago. By far the worst change has been the diagnosis that Sally had developed Parkinson's disease that was rapidly debilitating her frail body with tremors and an unsteady gait that prevents her from anything but absolutely necessary walking. Gone is the sixteen-year-old girl who sat astraddle the ridge row of the house to paint the gable for money to buy a prom dress. The woman who had calmly told her husband that he had just plowed two copperheads out of the potato row was just a fearful memory. Her face that once beamed with life, love and laughter now displays the flat affect caused by the immobilization of her facial muscles. She still enjoys her arts and crafts projects,

but I worry that she might fall and break a hip or other injury that would be a prelude to her passing. When that day inevitably comes, I suppose my memories of us carrying buckets of ripe blackberries through a warm misty rain and her jubilant face greeting me with a whispered “Welcome home, feller” will have to sustain me.

BILL SNYDER

Happiness

I believe that only those who have suffered, that hurt, the tired and the truly damaged can know and understand happiness. For me happiness is a fleeting ephemeral thing rather than a constant state of vacuous cheerfulness.

The truly happy are those who are tired cold and half awake. They sit in a truck stop at six thirty a.m. on a cold February morning, drinking Maxwell house coffee and eating a bear claw that has sat behind the counter for two days and consists of dried out dough, overcooked apples and a white sugary jizz drizzled across the top.

This is a guy who is wearing a heavy brown Carhart onesie, with thermal socks, shit kicker boots and a toboggan over his unwashed greasy hair. He is sitting at a booth where the red leatherette seats have been duct taped on the corners and the table has been wiped down so many times that the gold flecks have been worn off the Formica, leaving just a white ring of plastic surrounding a darker worn brown spot in the middle. Running a thumbnail in that gap between the Formica on the top and the edging on the side you can pull out a brown, sticky gunk made of grease, dirt, sweat, and long ago forgotten crumbs of food.

In this world, where happiness is about to occur there is a waitress who is 20 years past her prime in a pink blouse and one of those white diner half caps that are 50 years out of style

and you only find when you get ten miles off the interstate or live in this or a hundred other small towns just like it. She has a name tag that says Lou or Betty.

She had never been beautiful but in high school she had a couple of boyfriends and some dreams until she settled for the first guy to ask her to marry him. That was what you did there and then. That relationship ended ten years ago. Now she has 20 extra pounds, bags under her eyes and a loose, half curled sprig of brown hair that she cannot control and has to brush away from her eyes every now and then.

He has known her for years and if he only thought she would say yes, if he thought he had a chance he would ask her out. To him, she is lovely sexy and funny and out of his league. What he doesn't know is that whenever he comes in her heart beats a little faster, her mouth gets a little dry and her palms start to sweat a little. She thinks to herself "yes" but also that she is too old and tired to ever have a relationship again.

Sitting there, seeing her for a few minutes, he can put aside the aches in his body, the nagging need for another hour of sleep, and ignore the slight stirrings in his groin that he is both amazed and amused can still exist. Just at that moment, alone in his booth, he looks out of the truck stop window and watches the stars, and then the planets disappear. He becomes entranced as he watches the horizon go through the spectrum of Oxford blue, Phthalo, Prussian, Ultramarine Sapphire, Sapphire, Cerulean and Azure.

They are alone in the truck stop and she is behind him. Not wanting to interrupt his reverie, she silently refills his coffee cup, smiles and walks away. As he watches this transition

from night to day, for a moment he is no longer cold. A wave of warmth and calm passes over him and he thinks to himself for just a moment, "That is beautiful, and I am lucky to see this." That view of this thing that has happened every day somewhere on this planet for millions of years, but today, for a few minutes he could let go of all his problems and see that beauty. That is happiness.



Untitled ALEXIS KYLE



Burr Oak Leaf ROBERT L. GUFFEY



By the Sweat of Your Brow ROBERT L. GUFFEY



White Amaryllis ROBERT L. GUFFEY

Biographical Information/Notes from Contributors:

Sarah (Abbi) Bodager takes online classes through Bluegrass Community and Technical College. She loves working with words, whether that means writing an essay or penning a novel or crafting a poem. As a Christian, Abbi loves to create art that speaks of hope and redemption. She hopes you feel refreshed as you read her work.

David Allen Floyd is a veteran from Lexington, Kentucky. He has two self-published books: *Perceptions: Life Under Construction* and *Perceptions: Renovate To Alleviate*. He currently works as a library assistant at Bluegrass Community and Technical College's Newtown Campus.

Robert L. Guffey taught for many years as an adjunct faculty member at Bluegrass Community and Technical College and also taught full time at Lafayette High School. He enjoys writing fiction, especially short stories. He also does a lot of photography.

Chelsie Kreitzman lives in Lexington Kentucky with her husband, two young sons, a dog named Domino and a cat named Cookie. Along with all things literary, she loves, animals, the outdoors, and spending time with her family.

Alexis Kyle (Haufler) is a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. She labels herself as an artist, gamer, writer, and advocate. She favors both traditional art and digital art, as well as creating poetry and fictional stories.

James (Jim) Poole was born and reared in New Orleans and for the most part lived in the area of the city called Holly grove. He graduated from Alcee Fortier High School, attended Prairie View A&M University for about 2.5 years (1979-82) and joined the armed forces (Army) in November of 1982 (ETS 1988). He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Xavier University of Louisiana and a Master of Music degree from the University of New Orleans. He's always been creative with a much stronger focus in the performing arts as a trumpet player. But, he also sketches, sculpts, and writes as well.

Bill Snyder teaches Biology at Bluegrass Community and Technical College and has been involved in the arts at the college for quite some time. He enjoys writing ahelping with art exhibits and events.

Margo Stuart is a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College, planning to transfer to the University of Kentucky as an elementary education major. She says she creates art because for her it releases stress and anxiety. It is a wonderful way to express yourself. She indicates her art tends to have a boho vibe. This piece in particular shows Joseph Beth Booksellers, a bookstore here in Lexington. She says it is her grandmother's and her favorite spot, so it holds a lot of memories for her. She hopes you enjoy her work.

