



**Literary Journal of Sigma Kappa Delta**

**Vol. XVIII**

**2020**

# Literary Journal of Sigma Kappa Delta

Vol.XVIII

2020



Editors: Kat Padilla and Ally Peters

Photo: Vintage Virtue  
Sady Wooten  
Northeast Alabama Community College  
Epsilon Alpha Chapter

Hedera helix graphic:  
Jody Ragsdale  
Northeast Alabama Community College

## Purpose of Sigma Kappa Delta

Sigma Kappa Delta serves two-year college students who achieve academic excellence in English. Members need not be English majors but must demonstrate an interest and proficiency in literature and writing.

ΣΚΔ offers members opportunities for

- Scholarships
- Awards
- Leadership
- Competition
- Publication
- Travel
- National Conferences
- Networking

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***Hedera helix*** — the scientific name for English Ivy and the national plant of ΣΚΔ, symbolizes resilience and individual growth. In keeping with the Greek spelling, we use the lower case “h” for helix.

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Printed at Calhoun Community College

# **Sigma Kappa Delta**

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## Editor's Note



I often remind my students that how we comprehend any reading, whether it be a poem, essay, short fiction, or literary analysis, is influenced by our own personal experiences and biases.

All of the works contained in this 2020 edition of the *Hedera helix* were submitted to the SKD National Office and judged in 2019. As the editor of the journal, I rarely read the entries before the summer of 2020.

Of course, much has changed between the selection of the winning entries in January 2020 and the summer of 2020. A deadly pandemic and a push for true racial equality have dominated our lives and changed how we go about our daily business and interact with others: two very disparate events that have shaped 2020 into a year that will not soon be forgotten. It is through the lens of the spring and summer of 2020 that we will all read this edition.

The works by our members highlight the actions and reactions of ourselves and others. From meeting perfect strangers in the grocery store or on the street, the narrators of the works must grapple with misunderstanding and self-reflection. Often, the narrators look for change in themselves as well as the world around them.

For the first time, we are adding two additional works to the *Hedera helix*. Each year, SKD members may submit works to be presented at the Sigma Tau Delta Convention. This year, six SKD members were selected to present papers. Of those who are chosen to present, a panel of judges chooses the best SKD Paper. This year, after three judging panels, we had a tie for the best SKD Paper. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, our 2020 national conference was cancelled this year, but we have made the SKD Best Papers available in this edition.

And, as always, I would like to thank the advisors who took the time to judge all of the papers that were submitted.

Finally, in the words of Lester Holt, “please take care of yourself and each other.”

*Kat Padilla*

Kat Padilla  
SKD National Office

# 2020 ΣΚΑ Scholarship Winners

## Dr. William C. Johnson Sigma Tau Delta Transfer Scholarship

**Jillian Oliver**

Calhoun Community College, Theta Beta Chapter

## Dr. Don Perkins Service Scholarship

**Sady Wooten**

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## Dr. Susan LeJeune Service Scholarship

**Chris Warren**

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## Dr. Sheila H. Byrd Service Scholarship

**Richard Oduro**

Southern Union State Community College, Theta Zeta Chapter

## Ms. Joan S. Reeves Service Scholarship

**Hannah Cornett**

Northeast Alabama Community College, Epsilon Alpha Chapter

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Tarrant County College, South Campus, Nu Delta Chapter

## Chapter Activity Award

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Northeast Alabama Community College, Epsilon Alpha Chapter

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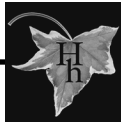
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Broward College



## Human Connection is Half of a Cookie -Olivia Schaap-

“Hi, would you like to try a sample of a PowerCrunch protein bar today?” I engage my next target, a nice-looking woman shuffling her cart past me. I watch her regard the 1/5th of a protein bar resting on my tray, suspicious of it. Did she strike me as the sort of person to impulse buy protein bars?

“What’s it made with?” she asks, yet immediately picks it up and bites into it. I launch into a list of ingredients nonetheless.

“A combination of soy and whey protein, palm oil, enriched flour...” I trail off, seeing a change in the woman’s eyes. Maybe I need to redirect my pitch. “What do you think of it?”

“Well, it tastes good, but soy protein isn’t really good for you, you know,” the woman says. Ah, that’s what this is about - I’ve already lost the sale, then.

“I have heard that in large quantities soy protein isn’t great for you,” I concede diplomatically.

“No, I mean because Monsanto has taken the soybean and they’ve genetically modified it,” the woman corrects me with sage wisdom, “they’ve put poison in it, you know.” She’s still eating the sample.

My smile flickers slightly, but I force it to remain. “What do you mean? Like pesticides to kill bugs?”

“No, no, they’ve put human poison in it. They’re trying to kill people off to curb the population,” the woman corrects. She lists of the names of several long, complicated sounding chemicals that have supposedly been added to the beloved natural soybean. I’ve already labeled her as a conspiracy theorist.

“There are too many people on the planet,” she continues, unaware of my thoughts, “and so if they kill off some of the population that makes it easier to control. That way, when Christ returns, he doesn’t have to eradicate as many people—” (okay, so I may have underestimated that label as a conspiracy theorist) “—since he’s going to be king of all the earth, you know, he’s going to have to raze all the principalities that already exist. So if there’s fewer humans, then that’s less people to have to kill when he returns.” She nods to me because her math is sound, even if nothing else is. And then she carries on with her shopping, unconcerned about the murderous messiah that might return at any moment to slay us all.

It’s moments like these that I wonder what I’m doing at my job or even with my life. I’d never have thought I’d be paying my way through college by asking harrowed mothers shopping in Walmart if they’d like to try 1/2 tablespoon of yogurt. This is a good job, ideal for the busy college student; that doesn’t mean I have to like it, though. As an introvert, my main goal in life is to talk to people as little as humanly possible, yet my job mandates that I engage every single person within ten feet of me for six hours straight every day and not even about something interesting like a good TV show or the meaning of life but about buying a \$4.98 box of generic brand cheese snacks. It’s exhausting in a way that only retail work can be. It’s not that the job is difficult, but after repeating the same three sentences five hundred times in a single day, you find your brain—and indeed, your will to live—just gives up.

“Hi, would you like to try a deluxe chocolate chip cookie today?” I ask cheerfully, but the man stares at my samples emotionless.

“So, what is this?” he asks, picking it up. My smile tightens.

“It’s a deluxe chocolate chip cookie,” I begin again, slower. “It’s made with

unprocessed cocoa powder, and the chocolate chips are—”

“So it’s some kind of a cookie? Is it just chocolate?”

“... It’s a Deluxe. Chocolate chip. Cookie. It has four kinds of chocolate in it.”  
The defeat was clearly visible in my eyes if he’d bother to glance up.

“Oh, okay.” He didn’t.

Despite the tediousness of it all, I found after some time that being That Sample Lady came with a kind of power trip. I’d gone from avoiding salespeople in stores to becoming one of them, and it’s truly alien on the other side. I watch people shy away from me, desperately wanting to be left alone, and the power I have over them in that moment is intoxicating. Nobody would have that much discomfort and fear in their eyes if we made eye contact as just two people on the street. And yet, with the mere addition of a single dry cracker on a napkin, I’m suddenly the pariah of the produce department. Sometimes I have mercy on those antisocial souls, but often I’ll offer my weaponized cracker to them anyway knowing full well they’ll turn me down. It’s not that I enjoy it, but if I’m forced to talk to people, I might as well do it with spite, right?

There’s a lot of factors that go into deciding how my event will run on a given day. The psychology of it can get convoluted. If it’s busier, I have more people to bother, and the day goes faster, but if my sample is too popular, I might run out and will stand purposeless for three hours. If my demo is unpopular... well... those are the rough days. Those are the days when the customers are the ones with the power over me. Rather than standing behind my metal cart like a god of bite-sized foods, I cling to it as a desperate beggar would.

“Does anyone want to listen to me talk about off-brand bleach?” I ask.

“Please, I beg of you, take this 50-cent coupon.” I repeat myself like a broken record, growing more and more distorted with every cycle of rejection. On those bad days, it’s easy to get caught up into the pitch of my product, as if my own self-worth is contingent upon the popularity of whatever my sample is on a given day. Sometimes I’d get so disconnected from it all that it just seemed like everyone was speaking a different language than me.

“Hi, would you like to try a sample today?”

“*No hablo ingles,*” but the man still smiles at me.

“*Oh... uh... um.... te gustaria... uh... probar?*” I fumble the words in my mouth. This is the verbal eloquence three years of Spanish classes gave me.

“*No puedo comer las fresas, soy alérgica a ellas,*” he waves me off, and I stare blankly at him.

“*Uh... Gracias. Lo siento,*” I cringe, and the man walks away, head shaking. I used to not like it when shoppers would point out my misery. I mean, I’m fully aware of how terrible my event about adult diapers is, and I really don’t need the reminder. I disliked their compassion mostly because if people could sense my despair, it meant that my mask of customer service happiness had slipped. I couldn’t have any chinks in my armor because that’s how I was going to end up getting fired. When shoppers would come by and tell me they’d check out my product out of pity, I was angry with them for it. There was no room for emotion, or compassion, or human empathy here. I had a job to do.

After working there for a year, I seriously considered sending in my resignation. I even composed the email I was going to send my boss, but it sat loitering in my drafts for months on end. As much as I despised going to work every day, the job was too good of an opportunity for me to throw away lightly. Even if I was more disconnected from humanity than ever before in my life, I wasn’t going to quit my job—yet.

“Hi, would you like to try some tropical punch today?”

“Sure thing!” The young man knocks back the two tablespoons of punch in one gulp. “This is pretty good,” he admits as he throws away the empty cup, “but it’d be better with some alcohol in it.”

I chuckle at his joke, and he continues his way. Behind him, some soccer mom comes up working the classic “mom” haircut. “Ooh, does this have vodka in it?” she teases.

“If only, right? That’d definitely improve it!” I hit repeat on my mental laugh track, but I don’t even know what vodka tastes like or if that statement was funny at all.

Three more people will make the same joke within a span of twenty minutes, and I’ll laugh as if it’s the first time I’ve heard it, every time.

It was on a day when that email draft weighed heavy on my mind that it happened. There was this one moment—a kind of small, seemingly meaningless moment that it happened—some faceless woman in a crowd of other faceless shoppers. I caught her in my peripheral and robotically asked her how her day was going, just as I had asked the last thirty people to pass by my cart. I was already formulating my response to the predictable answer she would give me when she looked into my eyes, smiled, and responded, “it’s going well, how is your day?”

It’s not that those particular words were anything new. No, it was, in fact, something I heard countless times already. But in that moment, the uncharacteristic warmth and sincerity in her voice caught me off guard. I found myself returning a genuine smile to the woman as I told her my day was going fine.

That was the end of the interaction. She went on with her grocery list, and I went on assailing other people. But that strange, small moment stuck with me. I couldn’t pinpoint how it was any different than the other fifty times it happened in a day, but somehow the distance that usually separated me from everyone else had shrunk, however fleetingly.

“.... so anyway, all that to say, it’s because of the wolf’s blood in my lineage that I’m allergic to chocolate.” I’d checked out from what the man had been saying after he started talking about his ancient ancestors, so I didn’t really know how we ended up here.

“Wow, that’s really fascinating,” I say, because what else am I supposed to say?

“Yeah, I’m also nocturnal because of it, too,” he continues, misinterpreting my statement as real interest. Whoops.

“I guess this is pretty early in the morning for you then.” Rather than my usual apathy, I decided to respond semi-intelligently. Maybe we were having a conversation about the effects of the full moon instead of my chocolate pudding samples, but it was something, y’know?

Through external observation, nothing changed after that moment with the woman—but internally, everything did. After making that one small connection with someone, I was curious what made it occur. How did we get past the social barriers of my job? Despite the dismissive response to my greetings and the fear of interacting with me at all—somehow, I’d connected with a person, not just a customer. Was I the one acting different, or were they?

“My mom says that soda will kill your teeth,” a girl tells me with solemnity as she watches me pass out samples.

“Well, your mom probably has a point. Is she nearby?”

“I don’t know... she was going to buy cat food. Our cat is really fat, but he’s orange,” she says as if that excuses his obesity.

“Kinda like Garfield?” I ask.

“YES!” and then she smiles at me, gap-toothed.

Once I'd had this revelation that human empathy existed, my disconnectedness began to fade. It was ultimately a subtle switch in perception that changed me—as I humanized the shoppers in my mind, so too did I become human again. It's amazing how real people can be when you quit looking at them as nothing but a potential sale.

“Hi, would you like to try an organic vegetable chip?”

“Oh, I love organic products!” The woman eats the sample and then offers the empty plastic cup back to me. “Can you recycle this?”

I stare at her. It's a single plastic cup, smaller than a shot glass. “Uh, sorry, no, we don't have recycling back here.”

Her face falls, and when she throws the .05 ounce cup away, the woman flinches as though it causes her pain. “I just killed six fish,” she declares mournfully. I don't have the heart to tell her that we throw away over three hundred of those tiny plastic cups every single day.

“Hey, I think we have recycling up at the very front if you're worried about it,” I tell the woman, and she literally fishes the cup from my trash to recycle it. The sins of the 1,800 fish I apparently murder every day don't weigh very heavy on my soul, but she shouldn't have to bear that guilt as well.

Instead of perfecting a greet-tell-sell, now I try to learn our regulars' names. There's this nice couple named David and Kathy who do a slow, majestic wave every time they pass by my cart. Many store associates now know me by name as well since I've slowly bribed their friendship through ¼ portions of cookies. I still do my job and give the whole spiel, but if I'm forced to talk to people, might as well do it with kindness, right?

“Hi, would you like to try a sample of a OneChoice protein bar today?”

“Sure, what flavor is this?” the woman fidgets with her earring as she surveys my tray.

“This is the birthday cake, but I also have blueberry, and there's lots of other flavors as well. They each have 14 grams of protein per serving!” I wave one of the boxes around in demonstration.

“Y'know, I don't really like the taste of whey protein, but these aren't half bad!”

“Yeah, I'm the same way. Personally, the blueberry is my favorite. Would you like a coupon?”

“No, but thank you. You're doing a great job right now, by the way.”

“Oh, well thank you!” and when I smile at her, it's real.

## **1st Place Personal Essay 2020**

**Olivia Schaap**

Northwest Arkansas Community College  
Lambda Gamma Chapter



## Green

-Abi A. Caceres-

Green trees, green grass, and a green landscape. Green was the view from the car as we were on our way back to Mexico from our yearly visit to our home in Honduras. This winter was the last one officially living with my family before I moved to yet another country, another language, and an entirely new chapter of my life—my green life. Yes, I fidgeted nervously the entire ride, to say the least. I was also going to start my first year of college which meant experiencing my first year of “official” school, given that I had been homeschooled my entire life. I already felt scared, and I was still in the car with my mom and my family. *“How are you going to deal with your emotions without your parents around? Come on. Get it together!”* I screamed inside my head the entire car ride back to our home in Mexico. I consider this trip to be my most significant move yet after moving from Honduras to Mexico and now from Mexico to the U.S.

My surroundings began to change as quickly as the days flew by. Slowly, mile by mile, the green landscape began to change, and after two days of sitting in the car, the green hills and valleys of Honduras gave way to a paler shade of green. As a matter of fact, the closer we got to Mexico, the green expanse quickly gave way to sprawling buildings. A modern landscape began to appear outside my car window, and to me, it began to represent what was to come. I left behind Honduras and most of my family that lives in humble, but happy, situations. In fact, my grandma just installed internet in her house about a year ago, but to this day, it does not work properly. Now, even though during my childhood the situation never got to the point where we did not have internet in our house, nothing compares to the big, industrial, and ever-growing metropolis of Monterrey, Mexico. We approached our house and the landscape continued to transform; just like the buildings, my nerves and emotion continue to grow. The mountains began to appear, and we began to distinguish the road sign that read *Welcome to Monterrey*.

“Hurry, Abi! Take a picture of the sign,” said my dad, with the intent of posting it online. As I took a picture of the sign, I remembered taking the same picture on every trip we had gone on before, but this trip would be the last one before the biggest change in my life. The next time we traveled, I would be taking the picture as a college student.

As the hours flew by and we finally made it to our house, I was dreading all the packing that I had to do. The packing did not make me unhappy, but the fact that the packing meant leaving my family, my house, the city, and the safe aspect of my life made me a little heavy-hearted. Nevertheless, two vibrant red suitcases and a few large boxes later, I was ready to have my family help me put everything inside the blue van ready to take me to the next chapter of my life. Everything from that moment on seemed like a blur. My dad and my younger brother, Christian, both helped me load everything inside the van. My mom and I were both running around the house making sure that I had everything that I needed, and my two youngest siblings, Isabela and Daniel, kept following me around the house saying how much they would miss me and kept asking if I really had to leave. My younger siblings are not that young and that made it even harder for me to say “Yes” every time they would ask me if I really had to go. *Do I really have to go? Am I making the right choice?* I really do not know, but that is the thing; I will never know unless I do it.

The arid lands of Monterrey and its ever-growing city still represent a time of change. Given that my parents moved to Monterrey as missionaries when I was younger, I never really had a choice when it came to anything, but this time was different. This time, if I did not like the U.S., if I changed my mind, it was going to be on me, and that gave me a sense of independence and a taste of the decisions that were going to fall on me from now on. As we traveled across Monterrey, I continued to gaze outside my window, and I noticed how the landscape that I had seen a hundred times, the few scarce trees, the industrial plants, and the lonely, arid dead highway, now had a new shade. Everything seemed different, alive, and exciting. My new point of view on the landscape only goes to show how beauty is in the eye of the beholder. On a road that someone else might consider boring or scary given the lack of lively scenery, I saw a new life, opportunity, beauty; I felt excitement, anxiety, and what seemed like a million other things at the same time.

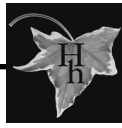
Finally, the river became visible to us; we made it to the Rio Grande—the border. As we began to cross the bridge, the green of Honduras was far behind. The pale greens of Mexico were receding. Before me is a new life in the small town of Rio Grande City. Even though the landscape outside my window looked dry, brown, and all the trees looked bare and dead from the winter, here I find new dreams and hopes. Here my mind is fed. Soon, my heart and mind grow lush and green as Honduras, filled with promise and opportunity.

My entire journey, from Honduras to Monterrey to the U.S. reminds me of the poem “Nothing Gold Can Stay” by Robert Frost. In Frost’s poem, he mentions how, “Nature’s first green is gold....But only so an hour...” to describe how things change throughout our lives. What was once exciting, beautiful, and “green” is, and will be, no more. I believe that, in a way, he is wrong. To me, green can always be gold. If you look close enough, green in the form of growth, renewal, hope, and new life is always there. Our green can always be gold.

## **2nd Place Personal Essay 2020**

**Abi A. Caceres**

South Texas College  
Xi Epsilon Chapter



## Tricks of the Mind -Stephanie Farrey-

I hate driving at night. It's raining tonight—that makes it worse. The dark asphalt glistens as water smacks against the hard surface and obediently trickles downwards off the edge of the highway. Every headlight sends off a blinding glare, the streams of light bouncing off a million drops of water.

A west-bound car speeds past me and disappears in my rearview mirror as it fades into the night. I'm left alone in the dark again. I grip the wheel and take a breath. The words escape my lips in barely a whisper. "Twenty minutes and I'll be home." I drive this route and turn these corners every day. I know every mile, but somehow the dark combined with the reflecting light makes everything seem different and new.

Looking ahead, I see another familiar curve. Some sort of large yellow object is in the road ahead of me. It's lying on the road flat, blocking my entire path. There's no question in my mind; I'm going to hit it. My body refuses to respond as my mind screams at me to slam on the brakes and a thousand images rush through my head in an instant. I'm back at nine years old. Over a decade ago, on the fourth of July, I witnessed something that would impact me even all these years later.

The air smelled of burnt fireworks. That year, the wind had carried the ashes across the river and sprinkled the mass of oohing spectators with charred flakes of paper. To me, seated on a picnic blanket, the flakes seemed more intriguing than the display itself. Across the river, lights from the hospital sparkled and reflected in the dark water. Everywhere in the crowd, people were packing up their blankets and lawn chairs. I, however, sat unmoving—gazing at the sight before me curiously—on the pink and green checkered blanket, clutching my shoes and resting my chin on my knees. Despite the sound of voices around me, the night felt eerily quiet.

"Steffi!! Get off the blanket! We need to fold it up!" My face formed a pouty expression as I looked up at my older sister, who stood—also pouting—with her arms crossed indignantly.

From behind us, our parents (who were busy strapping their chairs to the stroller without waking our baby sister) hushed us both, giving each other a weary look. "Calm down, Lizzy." My mom reached down to pick up the baby's sippy cup. "And Steffi, get up, for goodness' sake."

I stood up and tucked my raggedy, untamed hair behind her ears. "Ok," I mumbled. I tugged at the blanket and motioned for my sister to take the other side. Together, under the watchful eyes of our mother, we folded the blanket and packed it into the stroller basket.

It was a long walk to the car. We always parked a few blocks away to avoid the heaviest traffic. Everywhere around me, I saw groups of people and lines of impatient drivers. My dad grabbed my hand as we crossed the road. The bright headlights hurt my eyes, so I closed them and plodded along blindly next to my father. The traffic was so loud. I could hear engines accelerating and then braking quickly. The crowded sidewalk was filled with a buzz of conversation between adults who all towered over me. It was completely overwhelming. I didn't know it yet, but the sweat that trickled down my face that night, the frantic beating in my chest, and the throbbing in my head were symptoms of an anxiety disorder that would affect me years later, driving home in this rainstorm.

When we got out onto the sidewalk next to the main road, the people had thinned out significantly. It was the cool breeze that finally calmed my panicked

feelings. I opened my eyes and wriggled my hand from my dad's grip.

I heard the screeching tires first. At least two car horns and a sickening crunch followed. I hastily covered my ears and whirled around. The sight I saw has gotten hazy as time has gone by, but the sounds that preceded it and the smallest details of that night are forever engrained in my memory.

Three cars had collided violently in the intersection we had just passed. The crumpled metal looked like someone had rumbled the covers on a neatly made bed. There was glass and random pieces of the cars all over the pavement. Horrified, I looked back at my mother. "Mommy!" I didn't know what else to say.

She shushed me and quickly pulled out her cellphone. It was one of those clunky flip phones that most people still had back then. That night was the first time I had ever witnessed someone call 911. She calmly reported the crash, only getting upset when they told her they would only send an ambulance—they were stretched thin that night. I remember her irritated reply: "You're going to need more than one ambulance; this is a three-car crash!"

My parents, the natural heroes that they are, rushed into the accident scene with two others to see what they could do until help arrived. They left the three of us kids alone on the sidewalk. I remember my mother crouched over two teenage boys lying in the street. One of them died that night. At the time, I didn't know how seriously they were injured. Watching my mother that night gave nine-year-old me a warm feeling of safety and a desire to help others.

Looking around where I was sitting, though, I felt confused as I watched all the people who walked past murmuring about the crash, but not stopping to help even for a moment. There were gasps, and many pointed their fingers towards the scene on the street and spoke in hushed tones to their loved ones. One woman stopped and asked my sister if we were lost, but she went on her way after my sister shook her head and pointed towards our parents in the street. I sat on the grass for what felt like ages. It was unkempt and weedy. I picked a white clover flower and pulled each petal off. As the last flower bit dropped, I heard my dad shout my name.

"Stef!" I saw him shouting from across the lane traffic driving around the crash scene. It was chaos. "Bring me that flashlight!"

I jumped up with the flashlight I had been clutching. He motioned for me to wait and then to come to him after a car passed. He had directed a huge truck to stop so I could cross. Full of exhilaration from being able to help, I raced into the street and handed him the light then quickly darted back in front of the stopped pickup truck.

"STOP!" My dad's voice boomed with authority. I froze and looked back, but he wasn't talking to me. My dad was angrily pointing the light at the driver of the truck who had started to pull forward as I raced into its path.

"Are you a cop or what?!" The man screamed at my dad. "Get out of my way!" "That's my daughter right there." If it's possible for someone to shout but somehow still sound level-headed, my dad did in that moment. "Stay where you are." Then he nodded at me and I hastily made it back to the curb. As the truck roared past, the driver stuck his hand out the window and made a gesture I was too innocent at the time to understand as rude.

I'm back in my car again. The yellow thing in the road is getting closer. I slam my foot into the brake pedal. My chest tightens. I can hardly breathe. It feels like a century passes, but the car finally stops with a jolt and my body is thrust forward, the panicked sensation releasing slowly through my labored gasps. Catching my breath, I look up. Nothing. There's nothing.

I can feel my cheeks warming with color as I sit halted on the empty rural highway. The object I had thought I saw was only the reflection of a sign in a puddle. It was a trick of the mind. A steady splatter of rain on the windshield is the only thing that

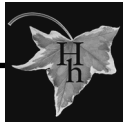
fills the void I feel. I'm drowning in the shame of letting my imagination get out control. Warm tears flow down my cheeks.

I see headlights approaching rapidly in my rearview mirror, so I slowly press the gas pedal to head home. I'll admit my mind flickered to an image of that car hitting me. The rear of my car would crumple in on itself, leaving a crater effect as mutilated metal was forced outwards. I'm convinced the force of the car would bury me in the dash of my car—crushing me beyond recognition. But my car accelerates smoothly. I'm on my way home again. I'm safe. My brain may continue to play tricks on me, but in the end, that's all they are: tricks of the mind.

### **3rd Place Literary Analysis 2020**

**Stephanie Farrey**

University of Wisconsin,  
Whitewater at Rock County  
Gamma Delta Chapter



**Remember**  
**-Daniel Guerrieri-**

I am from Florida.  
We are famous for many things:  
Walt Disney World,  
Universal Studios,  
The Everglades,  
Massive malls,  
The Keys,  
Beautiful beaches,  
Great school systems,  
And never being more than a mile away from a Publix.  
I have lived here all my life,  
And can safely say that it was a nice place to live.  
Sure, our weather was unpredictable,  
And this was my first birthday without a hurricane since I was ten; But we feel safe.  
Our cities were the safest in the country.  
Our hospitality industry was booming.  
Our airports are state of the art.  
And most of all, our schools are reliable.  
It's a family state.  
Honestly, who wouldn't feel safe and happy here?  
We're called the Sunshine State, for crying out loud.

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And most of all, our schools are reliable.  
It's a family state.  
Honestly, who wouldn't feel safe and happy here?  
We're called the Sunshine State, for crying out loud.  
But slowly, this began to change.  
Our sunshine turned into red, angry thunderstorms.  
Our safety was ruined.  
No longer are our cities safe.  
No longer is hospitality wanted.  
No longer are our airports free of violence.  
And our schools are no longer safe spaces of learning.  
This was ripped away from us,  
By people with guns.  
It wasn't an overnight change,  
But a gradual transformation, as the death toll grew.  
I remember in 2013, seven dead in a Hialeah apartment complex. I remember in  
2016, forty-nine dead, fifty wounded in an Orlando nightclub.  
I remember in 2017, five killed, six wounded, thirty-six trampled in the Ft.  
Lauderdale Airport.  
I remember February 2018, seventeen dead, seventeen wounded in a Broward high  
school ten minutes away.  
I remember November 2018, six shot in a Tallahassee yoga studio. I remember  
2019, five killed in a Sebring's bank.  
I remember breaking news over breaking news over breaking news. I remember  
countless stories of mass shootings, mass shootings, mass shootings.  
I remember panic everytime a loud sound went off in public.  
I remember fear.  
I remember anger.  
And most of all, I remember the tears.  
I remember comforting my friends in the hallways.  
I remember the therapy support dogs brought to my school.  
I remember the grief counselors.  
I remember the funerals.  
I remember going to a class with three people in it, cause my classmates feared for  
their lives

I remember the protests.  
I remember the rallies.  
I remember the rainbow ribbons and burgundy bracelets.  
And  
I remember the silence.  
I remember months of news crews and international attention. And our state was the focus.  
Then, I remember the static of millions of televisions shutting off. The world moved on.  
But we didn't.  
We changed.  
There's an energy in our air.  
Our citizens have a chip on their shoulder. Thousands of children were thrust into adulthood. Alone and afraid.  
Safety was a thought of the past.  
Clear backpacks became a fashion statement.  
And SORs with rifles became a norm.  
People are protective of our community now.  
We stand together for protection,  
Survival plans in the back of our mind.  
We don't always feel safe  
Going to school,  
To a club,  
To the airport.  
But we have our support systems.  
We have friends, family, coworkers, and peers.  
We fight for the future of our state.  
A future where safety is once again commonplace. A future where we can form bonds out of camaraderie, And not survival.  
Our community has changed.  
But our citizens change faster.  
Teenagers become activists.  
College students become spokespeople.  
Airplane mechanics become artists.  
And we become stronger.  
We have been wounded, but not permanently.  
We continue on,  
Fighting,  
For justice.

**\*Best SKD Convention Paper 2020**

**Daniel Guerrieri**

Broward College  
Xi Gamma Chapter



## Living in the Time of Monsters -Jillian Oliver-

The fact that monsters exist, in life and in literature, has always been widely accepted. However, understanding what makes a monster has never been an easy task. The experiences of writers often define either their idea of what a monster is or what events must occur to create one. Some monsters are victims of circumstance while others are inherently evil. In a sense, the reader and writer both benefit from the creation of the monster. It addresses fears, personifies flaws, and confronts the evil that lurks throughout the human condition. In works such as *Beowulf*, a monster is a supernatural being whose monstrous appearance aligns with its monstrous personality. There is a clear divide between what is monstrous and what is human. For Marie de France, as seen in *Lanval*, monstrous qualities are human sheathed in the beautiful and divine. Humans begin to have the capacity to behave monstrously. In *It*, a psychological horror penned by Stephen King, the monster is born *from* the atrocities and irrational fears of human beings. As such, it has the capacity to be deceptively human. The monster is a mirror into the darkest parts of society. And with that introspective lens, there comes an opportunity to face the weaknesses that might otherwise threaten to overwhelm humankind.

Grendel is the chief offender in *Beowulf*. Grendel's intended origin is not known because it has been lost through the translation of the poem. As a result of the assimilation of pagan literature into a Christian culture, Grendel is said to be descended of Cain. In the Bible, Cain is recognized as the first murderer. The evil born of this sin has followed Grendel down through his bloodline causing him to be isolated, wrathful, and prone to violence. Angered by the sounds of life coming from the great mead-hall of Heorot, Grendel strikes against the Danes for the first time. After the initial attack, he causes twelve years of grief and terror to descend upon them. This behavior reflects the harshness of his origins, but also his disposition. The narrator says of Grendel, "he had dwelt for a time / in misery among banished monsters, / Cain's clan, whom the Creator had outlawed / and condemned as outcasts" (lines 104-107). The otherworldly characterization of Grendel is also visibly human. He has been banished, forced to live as an outsider, as was his ancestor Cain. His ferocious actions can be interpreted as being driven by jealousy, bitterness, or loneliness. Grendel's terror continues this way: "So Grendel waged his lonely war, / inflicting constant cruelties on the people, / atrocious hurt" (164-166). And in a warrior culture where each violent impulse translates into a violent act, it is understandable that Grendel should cause outright social disruption. At whatever turn, there is a set explanation for *why* Grendel behaves the way he does. It is in his nature; it is the affliction of circumstance. It is at this stage of literature that a monster not only behaves but *looks* like a monster. However, the reader does well to remember that monsters are not always apparent through violence.

The Fairy Bride, created by Marie de France in her poem *Lanval*, can be considered a monstrous figure. The idea of the monster had evolved drastically by the Middle Ages. The reader begins to lose the justification afforded to Grendel's monstrous behavior. Now, mild monstrous qualities are hidden in the beautiful and divine. Yes, there were dragons, vipers, and demons in Medieval literature, but it was also the beginning of the flawed *human* character. The Fairy Bride is

fundamentally human, but she is otherworldly and supernatural in her beauty. The Fairy Bride commands the attention of all those who see her. Most important are those in power who have the ability to change the outcome of the poem. They are unable to tear their eyes from her: "The lady entered the palace; / no one so beautiful had ever been there. / She dismounted before the king so that she was well seen by all" (lines 601-604). She also uses this to her advantage when seducing Lanval: "He looked at her and saw that she was beautiful; / Love stung him with a spark / that burned and set fire to his heart" (117-119). Her power is channeled through this beauty rather than intelligence or wit. Therefore, the narrative puts strong emphasis on the male gaze. This gives her what little power and control women in literature were afforded at the time. However, Marie de France subverted some expectation by allowing the Fairy Bride dominance and giving her the mantle of a masculine role. She, instead of Lanval, is the provider, protector, and rescuer in the poem. While her intentions may not be overtly evil, she, like Grendel, upsets the social order that surrounds her. This disruption is more delicate than what is depicted in Anglo-Saxon culture. Still, it accurately reflects Medieval culture through the perspective and writing of a woman. Even in today's society, the upsetting of social order is viewed with a critical eye. This selfish mischief is considered one of the great flaws, and often it is unforgivable. The Fairy Bride loans this flaw to a character in contemporary literature who is particularly menacing.

In the novel *It*, Stephen King created an unspeakable evil from a dancing clown named Pennywise. His character embraces the violence of Grendel and thrives on the upset of social order like the Fairy Bride. King reveals Pennywise to be supernatural, but his origin and true form remain unclear. This indeterminant existence gives Pennywise an element of the mysterious that is found in many Medieval works of literature. In the final confrontation, Pennywise says to Bill Denbrough, "You have no power; here is the power; feel the power, brat, and then speak again of how you come to kill the Eternal. You think you see Me? You see only what your mind will allow" (1069). He claims immortality, the power of the eternal. In this passage, the reader comes to see that Pennywise isn't *just* evil. He is the embodiment of *all* evil. Pennywise endures because there is never a shortage of violence or the fear born from it. He is able to change form based on individualized fears. He only continues to grow stronger as the townspeople of Derry, Maine, succumb to them. The transformations range from the childish to the chilling. When Ben Hanscom returns to Derry, he has his own confrontation with Pennywise at the public library. Pennywise morphs from his usual disguise, "The clown was gone. Dracula was standing at the top of the left-hand stairway... An ancient man-thing with a face like a twisted root stood there. Its face was deadly pale, its eyes purplish-red, the color of bloodclots. Its mouth dropped open, revealing a mouthful of Gillette Blue-Blades that had been set in the gums at angles" (552). The monster now is more terrifying than ever because it can be *anything*. Through it all, King gives Pennywise the ability to retain a veneer of childlike innocence and manipulative kindness to appeal to his victims. In the beginning of the book, Bill Denbrough's six-year-old brother, Georgie, falls prey to Pennywise's calculating attack. Georgie, playing out in the rain, loses his paper boat down a storm drain. Pennywise is waiting for him, "The clown held a bunch of balloons, all colors, like gorgeous ripe fruit in one hand. In the other he held Georgie's newspaper boat. 'Want your boat, Georgie?' The clown smiled" (13-14). Pennywise often appeals to innocence. He draws his victims in and gains their trust before he reveals his

monstrous nature. He only masquerades as human. In this we see the limitless capability of true evil.

In the case of each of these three figures, the idea of the monster has evolved over time. The monster is born of human qualities in the case of Grendel. The Fairy Bride is a well-intentioned, supernatural beauty with human flaws. Pennywise wears a human face, but he is inherently evil. The monster is a staple in literature and pop culture because it is the personification of our very own human fears and flaws. But it does not just exist within fiction. Contemporary monsters take the form of those such as Ted Bundy, Jeffery Dahmer, and Ed Kemper. Qualities from each of these horrific men are evident in the fictionalized characters of Pennywise, Grendel, and even the Fairy Bride. They thrived on violence and the upset of social order; they appealed to their victims while wearing human faces though true monsters lurked beneath. Society condemns this evil, but the monster persists. It is human curiosity, the desire to rationalize blatant atrocities, that continues to revive it and allow it to evolve through time. Wherever a reader looks, there is a new depth to modern evil. Thus, writers will always be compelled to include evil and the monsters it spawns in a narrative, whether based in reality or the supernatural. But the distinction is more muddled than ever. Perhaps monstrous qualities only lend themselves to humans. Or perhaps it is the truly human qualities that make the monster.

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\* Jillian Oliver's literary analysis was extended to meet the parameters of the convention submissions. This published copy meets the requirements of Sigma Kappa Delta's annual writing awards.

**\*Best SKD Convention Paper of 2020 and  
\*1st Place Literary Analysis 2020**

**Jillian Oliver**

Calhoun Community College  
Theta Beta Chapter



## Emily Grierson as a Symbol of the Old South -Treasure Hudson-

William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" strikes readers' minds with the unusual character of Miss Emily Grierson. On the surface, Emily Grierson is considered haunting with her appearance slowly decaying with age throughout the story. But there is more behind the character of Miss Emily than what is specifically stated. William Faulkner did not write this short story to be purely about a psychotic woman who supposedly murders her lover. In fact, Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" presents Miss Emily as a misunderstood, damaged woman who stands as a metaphor for the Old South.

Miss Emily is unfortunately misunderstood by those around her. Nobody in the town knows Emily Grierson like he or she claims to. The story is told through the eyes of a townspeople who speaks for the whole town. This is evidenced when the narrator discusses, "...her sweetheart—the one we believed would marry her—had deserted her" (145). Nothing the narrator says is ever official, using terms like "we believed would marry her" instead of "the one who would marry her." Emily is not only misunderstood by the townspeople, but in some cases by the reader as well. For example, when Miss Emily goes to buy poison, her motive is easily misunderstood. With her unusual personality and the lack of explanation, it suggests that she intends to poison her lover. With her lover's death conveniently taking place soon after the purchase, it is easy to understand why one might believe this. However, there is no reason why Emily would have murdered him because she is also described as having "carried her head high" when she rode with her lover, Homer, down the street (147). This shows how the narrator presents one idea, that she murdered Homer, and then contradicts it with other information, such as her happiness with Homer. Emily also coincidentally has no friends at all to defend her. The only one who truly knows what happened to Homer is Miss Emily Grierson herself.

Miss Emily is viewed by the townspeople to be a crazy old woman, but nobody tries to understand why she does the things that make her appear that way. She has endured a lot of trauma in her life. She was raised by her father, and it can be determined that he is to blame for Miss Emily's lack of dating experience. The narrator describes her father as "a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her" and discusses how "she got to be thirty and was still single" (146). When he is no longer around to scare off potential suitors, Homer Barron comes along to sweep her off her feet. However, he enjoys drinking, much like Emily's father, and he sees himself as "not a marrying man." (148). He temporarily leaves Miss Emily. As soon as he returns, however, he disappears for good. Years later the townspeople discover his corpse in Emily's home. Because she holds onto his corpse for so long, this further shows her psychological damage.

Emily repeatedly holds onto things like her house and Homer's corpse, and this symbolizes the Old South at the time of the story. She rejects change when she declares, "I have no taxes in Jefferson," and refuses to pay taxes (145). She also has to be pried from her father's corpse, refusing to accept his death and later clings to Homer's corpse as well. She and the Old South are falling apart in a time where the New South is flourishing, with things like service stations appearing in the town

of Jefferson. Miss Emily and her house show this in their decaying appearance throughout the timeline of the story. Her hair grays, her eyes become dark, and even her house becomes old and musty. Her death symbolizes the New South's victory over the Old South because the thing she had been trying to hold on to for so long, Homer's corpse, is finally revealed, and she is described as a "fallen monument." (143).

In William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," Miss Emily can no longer be discarded as simply a crazy, murderous woman. She becomes a character with a deep history and emotional trauma and cannot be bound by the townspeople's theories that say she must be one thing or another. She represents the remains of the Old South, clinging to whatever she knows, refusing to change for anyone. The story becomes a conduit through which William Faulkner relays the notion that not all things last, while still giving credit to the beautiful complexity that keeps it standing for so long.

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## **2nd Place Literary Analysis 2020**

### **Treasure Hudson**

Bevill State Community College  
Phi Alpha Chapter



## The Desolation of Isolation -Chris Warren-

“I am fire, I am death.”

—The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug

In the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman there is a similar reign of destruction and terror over the narrator, as shown in the quote above, but in something much subtler than a dragon: forced isolation. As the story begins, readers are introduced to a mentally ill narrator who writes in the form of first-person diary entries. The story chronicles the mental decline of the unnamed protagonist as she interacts with a room walled with ugly yellow wallpaper. The majority of the narrative occurs in this setting as the narrator’s husband and physician, John, imposes treatment he believes will assist his wife in her mental healing process. John forces the narrator to eliminate stimulating activity which leads to longer periods of time spent in isolation. Despite John’s best intentions, the treatment is ineffective and causes the very thing he is trying to prevent. The prescribed forced isolation slowly pulls the narrator into a deeper insanity. As the narrator’s fixation to ‘figure-out’ the pattern of the wallpaper increases, so does her distance from reality, leading to a complete mental break. Through the narrator’s personification of the wallpaper, Perkins Gilman highlights an evolving bond between the narrator and the wallpaper which demonstrates that the narrator is powerless against the decline in sanity that results from her forced isolation.

To begin, Perkins Gilman uses the initial interaction between the narrator and the wallpaper in a graphic manner to foreshadow the mental decline to come. When the protagonist initially interacts with the yellow wallpaper she describes the pattern as, “One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin... and when you follow the lame, uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard-of contradictions” (Perkins Gilman). As this element develops throughout the story it begins to correlate with her continuing mental decline and ineffective treatment. The narrator is bothered at the initial look of the wallpaper yet is totally aware of its complexity. The initial use of describing the wall as committing suicide leaves the readers puzzled as to why such a graphic description is used for something as simple as wallpaper. In relation to the whole of the story, this comment serves as a starting point for the relationship between the narrator and the wallpaper, which ultimately indicates that the narrator has some form of mental illness. From this point forward, the narrator begins a downward spiral towards insanity. How the narrator interacts with the setting moving forward will intensify in comparison to this initial interaction.

The narrator’s use of personifying the yellow wallpaper then takes a new form as she describes it as hurting her physical body. As the narrative develops, the protagonist, having stayed in the room for longer, now comments on the aggression of the wallpaper: “You think you have mastered it [the pattern in the wallpaper], but just as you get well under way in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream” (Perkins Gilman). As the narrator continues through her treatment of forced seclusion, the personification of the wallpaper escalates. What this scene indicates is that the wallpaper is no longer self-contained and is described as actually causing the

narrator pain. This new interaction with the wallpaper reinforces the reality of her decaying condition. Obviously, the wallpaper can't directly hurt the protagonist without an outside force, and this section suggests that she is so captivated by the wallpaper that she is tripping, falling, and physically hurting herself trying to follow the pattern. John's hope for his wife is a recovery from her mental illness, yet the opposite is occurring as the narrator documents an unnatural and alarming fixation with the pattern on the wall. This personification amplifies that the narrator is unable to recognize her own actions and instead projects her actions as the wall's and not her own.

The protagonist's personification of the yellow wallpaper then transforms into being murderous, an escalation that shows her deepening bond with the environment as she helplessly floats from reality. When intensity builds, the narrator's condition worsens: "I think there are a great many women behind.... They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside-down, and makes their eyes white!" (Perkins Gilman). What started as fixation is now a being that causes a gruesome death by strangulation. In reality, the environment strangles the life out of the narrator not physically but psychologically. The effect of her isolation is a strangulation of the mind as the link between her and the wallpaper intensifies. Also, there is another element in this scene with the narrator: not only is the wallpaper in the setting murderous, it also has a group of women shaking the pattern from behind it. A basic human necessity is community and the reader is meant to draw the connection that because there is a lack of interaction with others, the narrator's mind begins to create its own community through the wallpaper. This solidifies the reality of her mental decline. Concluding, it is not a clear divergence for the narrator, one moment being sane and the next insane due to forced isolation. Instead, her sanity is more of a slow elevator ride descending helplessly as Perkins Gilman illustrates the strengthening union between the narrator and the yellow wallpaper.

The closing use of personification in the narrative shows the total desolation of the narrator's mind. The protagonist states, "'I've got out at last,' said I, 'in spite of you and Jane! And I've pulled off most of the wallpaper, so you can't put me back!'" (Perkins Gilman). This final line from the narrator indicates, in the narrator's mind, that she has become the woman behind the wallpaper and that she has become the very setting of her isolation. In reality, her fixation on the wallpaper was so vast that she begins to project the qualities of the wallpaper over her own identity, making this piece come directly from the perspective of the woman behind the wallpaper. The effect of isolation on her mental illness allows for the complete abandonment of her own identity. Due to isolation the wallpaper has grown from annoying the narrator, to hurting her, killing her, and finally becoming her.

In conclusion, through the narrator's use of personification to describe the setting, Perkins Gilman reveals the narrator's powerlessness against the decline in sanity that produces from forced isolation. "The Yellow Wallpaper" communicates the human necessity of community through the eyes of a woman deprived of that necessity. The narrator's failed treatment brings into focus the reality that without real community the mind can create and become its own community separating the individual from reality.

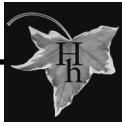
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### **3rd Place Literary Analysis 2020**

**Chris Warren**

Aims Community College, Greeley Campus  
Tau Gamma Chapter



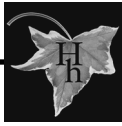
*Grasshopper*  
-Lindsey Patterson-



**1st Place Black and White Photography 2020**

**Lindsey Patterson**

Jones County Junior College  
Epsilon Delta Chapter



*Lines to Liberty*  
-Abi A. Caceres-



**2nd Place Black and White Photography 2020**

**Abi A. Caceres**

South Texas College  
Xi Epsilon Chapter



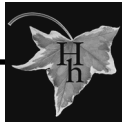
***Beauty and the Beast***  
**-Morgan Bryson-**



**3rd Place Black and White Photography 2020**

**Morgan Bryson**

**Calhoun Community College  
Theta Beta Chapter**



## The Plummet -Hannah Cornett-

I watched as he waited outside the bureau. He was nervously wringing his hands and searching for someone to speak with. The minute he spotted me, I regretted not leaving earlier, but my instincts told me he was desperate for a bit of assurance. I just wasn't sure if I could give that to him. This was the third time in two weeks that Garrett Peterson had approached me about a homicide case from six months ago. He was the victim of a break-in that escalated too quickly. Losing his wife was grief enough, but now survivors' guilt was beginning to eat him alive. Garrett nervously glanced around as I walked up to him.

"Mr. Peterson."

"Garrett. I'd say we're on a first name basis by now." He grinned, and I could tell this was his joking attempt to dismantle any awkwardness to follow. He truly underestimated me though.

"Mr. Peterson. I believe if I called you by your first name, I would feel obligated to further console you about your situation. I'm sorry, but I can't do that. There are professionals that can help you through this. I'm not that person."

"Look, I can handle this without a shrink. I only came to speak to you because you know more about what happened that night than anyone else, and you tell it like it is. I can appreciate that."

"Well, with all due respect, it's that it was relatively simple. I'm sorry for my brazenness, but it wasn't a complicated investigation. I can't tell you much more because there isn't much more to tell. Unfortunately, that man was able to devastate your family in an unfathomable way, but he didn't get away. He was found guilty, and he will serve the rest of his life in prison. It's up to you now to go home to your family and try to honor your wife the best way you know how. If that is speaking to a professional, then I highly encourage it."

My eyes scanned over his discouraged figure before I gave him one last pat on the shoulder and headed for the parking garage. I was thankful for the North Carolina breeze. The coolness of it tickled my skin as it fanned across my face. Taking a deep breath and shrugging my shoulders, I turned my mind to something other than work. A book, maybe, would keep me occupied and work-free until it started all over again the next day.

I knew it was hopeless, though, to think of anything relaxing. More paperwork waited for me at home on the coffee table. My mood instantly deflated. My fingers sifted through all the wrappers from past snacks in an attempt to find my keys. The minute I started taking on unscheduled overtime and more on-call days, I befriended those peanut butter crackers. I unlocked the car, slinging my purse and paperwork onto the seat beside me. Leaving high school was supposed to be a blessing; but instead, homework followed me into adulthood. I turned around and backed out of the space, my mind wandering as I drove, thinking about work and tomorrow's events.

I made it to Sloans Ferry Bridge, a preferred detour to the overly populated freeway. The sun was going down in the distance and light shot across the clear river and penetrated the surface. I was halfway across the bridge before I noticed the black SUV that had made its way to my left side, blocking my view of the city. The alarm bells in my head were screaming as I tried to make out the man through the tinted windows. I scrambled to hit the brakes just before he could ram into my side. My mind

was racing a million miles an hour, and I couldn't gather my wits before the driver sharply pulled the wheel to the right, straight into the side of my navy-blue Impala. My heart crawled its way into my throat as my car scraped against the guardrail, ramming it hard enough to disorient me for a second. My body jerked roughly against the seat belt, and I could already feel the bruise forming. Attempting to gain control of the wheel, I could only watch helplessly as the SUV barreled into my door once again. The driver's side door caved, and a searing agony splintered my arm.

My nose was pouring blood and my elbow was broken, but I couldn't register the pain as my car broke through the guardrail and plummeted the entire forty-five feet to the water below. The scream that tore through my throat was inhuman. The car struck the water and immediately began to sink. My breathing was heavy, and I forced myself to focus on the task at hand. I couldn't afford to fool myself into thinking I had more time than I did because it was running out quickly.

My common sense kicked in, and I reached to unbuckle my seatbelt. It was jammed, and I yelled out in frustration. Using all the strength stored in my petite frame, I strained to wrench the metal prisoner from its cell. I wanted to cry and scream and bang on the steering wheel, but I used what I learned from the academy and began to focus on my heartbeat. Time waits for no man, or so I've heard.

I forced my breathing to steady. Thinking hard and fast, I remembered the ka-bar under my seat and strained to reach for it against the locked belt. My fingers grasped the cold handle, and a surge of defiance spread through me like a wildfire. The knife cut through the gray nylon like butter, so I quickly looked up, and the water around me was dark. There were only a few slivers of sunlight that forced their way to these depths. I was sinking, fast. Searching through my mind for all the useful tips from my military days, I placed my feet against the driver's side door and held my gun at ready. It was useful. I shot several bullets into the window until the glass was loose enough to push out of its frame.

Water gushed in, and I barely had time to take a breath before my head was submerged. Moving around, I struggled out of the window until I couldn't move any further. My foot was tangled in the seat belt. Reaching to remove it would waste precious air that I didn't have much more of, so I tugged on it several times before it gave way. I pulled myself through the window, ignoring the shards cutting into my hips and thighs. The top priority was to save oxygen. My lungs weren't quite burning yet, but the journey upward was going to be tedious.

I forced my limbs to begin moving. Swimming with one arm was a task within itself because of the searing pain in my elbow. The pressure of the water was beating against my ears like a bass drum, pounding its own expectant tune.

That's when I felt it, the alarming burn from an aching body starving for air. Only a few yards away from reaching the surface and my lungs threatened collapse. My chest was folding in, or maybe I was just going crazy. Forcing myself to shake it off, I blew outwards, remembering the encouraging words from my mother all those years ago. She was teaching me how to swim: "Dive as far as you can," she urged, "you can save air on the way back up by blowing out. Come on, kid. No guts, no glory."

I burst through the surface, disrupting the peaceful waters. The harsh deprivation of a most incessant need was creating a splitting migraine, and my limbs were hanging from me like dead weights. My elbow was still there, though, reminding me every second of John Green's famous quote, "Pain demands to be felt." Out of all the broken bones that I've had, this was the top of the list. The cake topper. The winner of all contests. The "Hey Mom, take me to the emergency room to get this wrapped up because I'm dying" phrase (I've said that before, too).

Gasping for breath, I closed my eyes in relief as many different pairs of hands pulled me into a fishing boat. Their comforting words did little to soothe me as I

pictured the arms of my mom. My beautiful mom. The only one in the world whom I allowed to hold and comfort me. My eyes drooped, and I slowly slipped into a dreamlike unconsciousness to the sound of sirens on the bridge and the shouting of fisherman and bystanders on the shore.

My eyes shot open, panic coursing through me. I sprang up quickly, startling someone in the seat beside my bed. Wait, bed. Where am I? I scanned my surroundings, from the bare white walls to the minuscule television nestled in the corner. The latest news report was quietly showing, and I willed myself not to wrinkle my nose in distaste for the well-known reporter on screen. I surveyed the IV bags before my eyes landed on the most relieving sight I could have ever needed at a time like this. Mom. She was jumping up and wrapping her arms around my neck before I even had time to grasp my situation. I was about to cling to her tiny frame when I lifted my arms and saw the green cast engulfing my elbow to my wrist. I wrapped one arm around her.

“Jane. Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. How’s your head? Your arm?”

I didn’t answer for a second. I wanted to take in her scent, wanted to feel the warmth of her skin, and the softness of her hair. Everything about her comforted me. Even just the thought of her soothed my nerves. She pulled back when I didn’t say anything.

“Jane, your hands are trembling. Please tell me how you’re feeling. Water? Do you need something to drink? Ooh, how about another blanket. I’m sure you’re cold. These hospitals freeze me to death.” Her words petered out as she fluttered around the white room, gathering necessities she thought I might need. My throat was parched, so I nodded thanks when she gingerly placed the foam cup in my shaking hands. The drink nearly slipped, but her reflexes were quick. She placed it against my lips and ordered me to sip slowly.

A knock on the door sounded, and my mother rolled her eyes.

“Again?” Her voice was tainted with exasperation. I gave her a confused glance as she turned and pulled on the knob. A man stood in the doorway. He was wearing a formal black suit, and his hair was graying at the ends. He attempted to come in, but my mom and her fiery attitude stood in his way. He opened his mouth to speak, but she shushed him before he had the chance. In a stern, businesslike manner she spoke, “Outside. Now.”

They began speaking quietly, but the walls were thin, and I could just barely make out their conversation. Even though my mother was attempting to whisper, I could tell that her anger was rising. I realized that I was the topic of their conversation. Mom cracked the door open a notch and peeked inside before turning back to the man.

Her shoulders drooped and she let out a sigh as she said, “Fine, but don’t be in there for too long.”

I watched through the crack in the door as she stalked away, her posture brisk. The man gave her a sympathetic glance before stepping into the room. He took extra care shutting the door. Walking towards the hospital bed, he formally shook my hand and introduced himself,

“Hello Agent Bolt. I’m Deputy Morris from Charlotte-Mecklenburg PD. I hear you’re an agent from the FBI. Do you work under Supervisory Special Agent Ben Sanders? I’m sure you know the drill, by now. I’m just here to ask some questions.”

I shook my head as a feeling of dread crept up my skin. I was never the one being questioned. Morris grinned as he recognized my look of disgust. I hated feeling like a poor, helpless victim. I hated sitting in this hospital bed when I should be trying to find out who attempted to murder me in the first place, and I definitely hated that Deputy Morris was profiling me.

“How are you feeling?”

“Fine,” I snapped.

“Well, pardon my brazenness, Agent Bolt, but you're not fine. This was a traumatic experience, physically and mentally, and just my suggestion, the longer you pretend like you're perfectly okay, I can guarantee the longer you'll be on desk duty.”

His words broke down the last of my hostile demeanor. I didn't expect him to be so bold, but a slap in the face would have been friendlier.

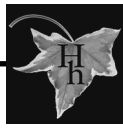
“Look, I'm sorry. Please continue. It's not every day that I get the opportunity to play victim.”

He snorted and finally looked up at his clipboard, “Yeah, me either.” I rolled my eyes, but a slight smile played on the edges of my tough exterior. We hadn't begun the questioning yet, but I had a feeling he already knew that this wasn't an accident. My suspicions were confirmed when he looked me in the eyes and confidently asserted, “I assure you, though, we will find out who did this to you.”

## **1st Place Short Fiction 2020**

**Hannah Cornett**

Northeast Alabama Community College  
Epsilon Alpha Chapter



## True Life Stories of the Seldom Adventurous Ernest Blanc -Asa Creed Wooden-

“You want to know why I’d rather stay here on my front porch?” Ernest asked me, as he leaned dangerously far back in his rocking chair. He cleared his throat and began, “Thirty-four years ago, when the story begins, mind you, not when it ends. Anyhow, I was walking up the road, ‘cause I had just left home, and I needed to go find me a job. Now, my parents hadn’t kicked me out. My father came to me that mornin’ with two things—a loaded suitcase and a loaded pistol—as a gift, and he told me it was time for me to leave. Daddy wasn’t a cruel man, mind you. I knew he’d be right there waitin’ if I ever needed any help, but he didn’t expect I would. So I said bye to Momma, and I was walking up the road to the train station. I’d saved up enough money for a ticket workin’ at Bill English’s hog houses, but I was on my way to a big town where I could make big money doing I don’t know what. Now, as I was walkin’, the wind started gettin’ pretty heavy, and I looked over to my right. I heard the wood creakin’, and that’s what made me look over in that direction; I saw a little pine tree leanin’! But it wasn’t leanin’ from the wind; it was leanin’ into the wind! So, I purely I’d better go have a look at it, not that I could do anything to help the poor tree, purely out of curiosity. Just as soon as I’d come within five foot of that tree, the wind in that particular spot was so strong that it knocked me over on my back. I stood up, and it knocked me down again! Now, I didn’t wanna head back the way I came, so I figured I’d best start crawlin’. I held my hat in one hand and my suitcase in the other, and I went to belly crawlin’ back to the tree. When I got back, I held on to the tree so I could get my footin’. As I stood up, the tree went to glowin’. It got brighter and brighter. Then everything was white, and we were gone. Listen up, now, this is the part where it gets innerstin’.”

Ernest Blanc was never the type of person who would lie for the fun of it. In my experience knowing him, he never liked to exaggerate or blow matters out of proportion. He wouldn’t even participate in gossip as much as the average person. However, he did have this one wild story which he liked to tell, and he was telling me this story one Saturday afternoon when I had come to visit him.

“So, there I was,” Ernest continued “standin’ next to a little pine tree, right smack dab in the middle of a vast tundra. Tundra, how about that? That word just has a nice sound to it. Anyhow, I didn’t have any kind of a compass on me. I couldn’t tell where the sun or stars had gone. Then, here came a woman, ridin’ a big pink horse. Now, when I say big, I mean big, and when I say pink, I mean pink. They don’t make ‘em like that around here! She came trottin’ up to me real slow like and stopped right next to me. The lady hopped down and reached out to shake my hand. She said, ‘What are you doing out here with this tree?’ She called it the tree of worlds. So I made it perfectly clear that I had no idea what I was doing, and she offered me a ride back to her folks’ place. I told her my name was Ernest, and she said, ‘Call me Chanta.’ I always thought that was kind of an ugly name for such a pretty girl. On the ride to her place, Chanta started telling me about that tree. The way her people had it figured, that ‘tree of worlds’ sorta had a mind of its own, and it would go around snatchin’ people up from all places, just for kicks. Anyhow, we made it to her house, and I’ll admit, I was a little bit concerned. See, where she lived, there was a little wooden door right at the bottom of a cliff that went straight up about two or three hundred feet. We both got down off the horse, and she tied him up to a rock, or a big ice block, or somethin’, and we both went inside. Now, I’ll tell you, when she opened that door and we stepped

inside, I was taken aback a little bit. Behind that little wood door was a great ol' big room! It was long and tall with a bunch of doors goin' off to both sides. These people had full suits of armor standing all along the side walls. And the wallpaper? The wallpaper was bright pink—and when I say pink, I mean pink—with the wildest patterns on it you've ever seen. Then Chanta's daddy came out to say hi to us. He was a big ol' man, not very tall, but big! So, I explained to him my story, and how I had gathered from what Chanta told me about that mischievous tree that I wasn't on the right planet at the moment. He was real nice. He said they were fixin' to have some kind of important family reunion, but that I could stay until I got my travel plans figured out. I never got to know him real well, but his name was Gorv. Then Gorv's wife came walkin' in through another one of them side doors, and she handed me a big ol' cuppa hot water. Now, that ain't really my taste, but, being a young gentleman, I drank the whole cup to keep from hurtin' her feelin's. Listen now, I'm gonna tell this next part just like it happened. I wanna let you know I'm not exactly proud of the way everything happened, but this is the honest truth."

Every time Ernest told his story, he told it exactly the way he had told it before. It wasn't one of those fisherman tales that would expand as the years rolled on. It was as if this whole story had come to Ernest all at once in a dream, and he had such a clear vision of it. Maybe he had spent hours rehearsing it only because he found it entertaining. Maybe it was true. I never believed it myself, but if anyone could sell such a wild story, it was Ernest Blanc.

"Later that night, Gorv had been kind enough to give me a room to stay in for a little while, and he even said I could have dinner with him and the family." Ernest's tone was always much more solemn during this portion of the story. He continued, "They had a long dinner table all set up in that front room where I had entered. When I heard that dinner was just about ready, I got up and headed downstairs, but I wanted to keep my suitcase with me durin' dinner—I suppose just because it was somethin' sorta familiar. Anyhow, when I got to the top of the stairs at the end of the dining room, there was a whole bunch of people. Maybe thirty or forty family members, and they had seats for more of 'em. Right as I got halfway down the stairs, this feller came bustin' in the little front door. Evidently, he was one of the cousins, and he hadn't gotten an invitation. Boy, he was fumin'! He was a big ole boy—like Gorv—and he came stompin' in there with a sword in his hand. He started yellin', 'Chanta! Gorv! I got just as much a right to be here as you do!' What happened next, I never could have guessed. Every one of them suits of armor came alive and started fightin' this boy, but like I said, he was mad! He started choppin' down those suits of armor and kickin' 'em until they were all smashed. I started getting worried, so I opened up my suitcase, and I reached in there for my pistol. Just then, Gorv came walkin' in the room with his hands held out, like he was gonna talk some sense into this boy. Well, that cousin wasn't havin' it. He reached all the way back with that sword and swung it right into Gorv's head! Everybody was shocked! Ladies were fallin' over; one feller even puked. Right then, I pulled my trigger from across the room, and I put a bullet right in that boy's chest. Now, I was real young at the time, mind you. Killin' a man was a new experience for me, and I can't say I enjoyed it. Anyhow, everybody else seemed to be okay with the fact that I had just gunned down their cousin, and they kinda welcomed me as part of the family after that." He stopped.

An unfamiliar car pulled in Ernest's driveway. "Who's that?" he asked through one corner of his mouth. He had his eyes fixed on the car.

"I don't recognize the car..." I replied. "Oh, they must have just been turned around."

So, the car went back the way it had come, and Ernest could continue his story. “As I was saying, everyone was kinda grateful that I had just settled their family dispute, so Chanta’s brother came to thank me personally. He says, ‘My name is Nomer-Gorv, and you have done my family a great service. Will you call me your brother?’ I didn’t rightly know what to say. I mean, that just ain’t the way people acted where I grew up. But I called him brother, and he hugged my neck. Then he says... he says, ‘I have another task which I would be honored to give to you.’ Then him and Chanta led me upstairs to a kind of office lookin’ room—lots of books and things. Nomer walked over to the little desk, and he grabbed a box out from under there. He held the little box out to me and raised up the lid. Inside there was a lizard. It looked like a full-grown gator, but it wasn’t six inches long, and it was pink. Now, when I say pink—it wasn’t quite pink—it was nearly orange. Anyhow, Nomer says, ‘The responsibility has been placed on my family to deliver this creature to a nobleman across the sea. We have been trying to decide which of us deserves the honor of carrying it.’ Evidently, that’s what their big family meetin’ was about. So he says, ‘I have called you my brother, and you call me yours. Will you deliver this animal for us?’ At that time, I didn’t really see any reason to decline his offer.”

At that point, I had been standing for a while, so I decided to sit back down next to Ernest, while he finished his story.

He continued, “So I told him I would take the lizard, and he handed me the box. Then Chanta gave me a map and said, ‘This is for when you reach the other side.’ I said, ‘Other side of what?’ Then she went to explainin’ that the only way I was gonna get this lizard where it needed to be on time was to pass through another dimension. She said, ‘You mustn’t linger between places for very long. We will open a portal, and you must travel quickly to the other side.’ Then her and Nomer went to playin’ a real fancy game of patty cake, and a glass-lookin’ door popped up right between their hands. So, like they said, I walked around there and stepped through this door.

Listen now, this is about to sound crazy. The place they sent me through wasn’t like anything you’ve ever seen before. It’s kinda hard to describe. It was like I could feel the ground starin’ at me, and the sky was one big open mouth. I want you to understand, when I was in the house with Gorv and them, that was just another place. It was like a different country, just on an entirely different world. This place though, what Chanta called ‘another dimension’, was like a place between places. You would be walking through there, and it would seem like you were walkin’ through solid walls, then you might run into something you couldn’t even see. Now, Chanta told me not to hang around too long, but that turned out to be harder than I expected. For all the trippin’ and fallin’ over I did, I stayed in there for too long. My skin started to lose every bit of its color. Then it started fillin’ up with colors you’ve never seen before. I just decided to call these colors anger, Friday, and...” Ernest didn’t so much have a name for the third color. He just pulled in a long, rigid gasp. Then he continued his story, “Now, in a situation like this, I didn’t know what to do. Frankly, I’m not sure anybody would. But then I remembered something my daddy told me, when I was just a little boy...”

I’ll have to be completely honest with you. Although I had heard this story countless times before, I can’t remember for the life of me what got Ernest through the “place between places.” At this particular moment, my attention had been taken away from the conversation by a red bird dancing around in the grass.

“Do you hear me?” Ernest’s voice grabbed me again.

“Yeah, yeah.” I lied.

“Like I was sayin’, I got the lizard to the nobleman, and we were both enjoyin’ the stew. Then he looked down and noticed my gun which I had stuck under my belt. He looked me square in the eyes and said, ‘Boy! I know whe you fwom.

I seen one man wike you befo! I seen dat metaw stick befo! I send you home, if you want.' I didn't bother to ask how he knew where I was from. I just wanted to go home! So the nobleman took me into his castle, and he took me to a great big room, with a crystal ball right in the middle. He led me over there, laid my hands on the crystal ball, and laid his hands over mine. He closed his eyes and said these words, 'Space and time is pantomime; show de pwace I wish to find. Wight dis wong befo too wong and send dis boy back to he home!' And just like that," he snapped "I was back home. I wasn't at my house, but I was in front of an old store I knew. Only some things had changed. The brick looked brand new. The roof had been shingled. Now, this might seem like where my story should end, but remember..."

"Look! I'm sorry," I interrupted, "But I've got to go. I've got to get to the hardware store before they close, and then I've got to go home and fix a busted sink tonight. I know you don't lack much finishing your story, but I've heard it before. I know how the nobleman sent you back thirty years before you even left, before your parents ever even married. I know how you never saw Chanta again, but you always wanted to 'give her some sugar'. It's a good story; I'll give you that. Nobody knows how to spin one like you, Ernest. I've got to go. I'll see you at church in the morning." I hate that I left the way I did, slinging gravel on my way out, but I really had to leave.

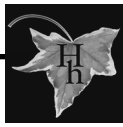
I knew everything would be okay the following morning. I knew Ernest would wake up, get dressed in a full suit of clothes, and he would walk to church like he did every Sunday morning. Isn't it funny how we just know certain things. You know that if you twist and pull on that locked door one more time, it's bound to come open. I knew I would see Ernest again.

That Sunday, after the morning service, I went back by Ernest's house. No one was there. There was no sign that anyone had broken in, and nothing really seemed out of place. Ernest never had a car, so that wouldn't help us find out if he had left in the night. He was just gone. I tried calling, but no one would answer. I asked around town, but no one had seen him. Weeks went by, then months, and nothing changed. Ernest Blanc never struck me as the adventurous type, but that night, after I left his house, I believe he left everything behind. I believe he went to find something, or someone, that he had lost a long time ago.

## **2nd Place Short Fiction 2020**

**Asa Creed Wooden**

Northeast Alabama Community College  
Epsilon Alpha Chapter



## Brown -Aljon Celis-

*"Hablas Espanol?"* asked the white woman.

I sat outside the café at one of those mesh tables under the sun. Anyone with a basic understanding of Spanish could understand what she was saying. She stood at my table, her eyes on me. I returned a blank look, my thoughts frozen. I looked behind me in case she was acknowledging someone else. No. Just me.

"Not really," I responded to the lady. Her blonde hair shimmered under the light of the sun. The corners of her eyes wrinkled as she smiled. If I had to guess her age, she was probably around her early thirties. *"I only understand un poco."*

"Ah," she said. "It's my first time here in Alabama, and let me tell you, this is the whitest town I've ever been to."

She didn't need to tell me. A brown kid like me stuck out like a smudge of dirt on a white t-shirt in this rural Alabama town.

I glanced around, rubbing the back of my neck. I didn't understand how there were people who could strike up a conversation with anyone. I tend to keep to myself, but I felt as if I needed to at least get rid of the awkwardness settling in, even though it wasn't my fault.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"New York City," she responded.

My head jerks back a little. "Can I ask what brings you here?"

"Family. I have a cousin getting married. Ever been there? New York, I mean?"

"No, but I'd like to visit one day."

"I have a lot of diverse friends up there. Puerto Ricans, Jamaicans, Afghani, you name it." She set her hands on her hips. "You know, the United States could do with a lot more diversity. It can make a white person think outside the norm, and more people would be exposed to a ton of cultures."

"Ain't that right," I said.

She continued, "Too bad the government is trying to force everyone who don't look like me to go home. They're even trying to make the process harder for others to immigrate here legally. Racist, I tell you. It's racist." She clicked her tongue.

Not too long ago, at work, some white man came up to me and demanded to see proof of my legal status. That wasn't something I carried around; I couldn't risk losing it. It was too valuable to replace. Even if that white man called ICE, the worst they could do was falsely place me in jail.

"So you don't know much Spanish, huh?" she asked.

"No, not really."

"Just make sure you don't forget your language. Your language is such an important part of your culture," she said.

My stomach twisted upon hearing her words. Having immigrated to the United States as a young child, I was exposed to the English language immediately. Taking English as a Second Language classes for the three years of school, I spoke English like a native. There was always a part of me that felt disconnected from my culture because I was forced to forget my language; school personnel forbid me from speaking my language at school. Luckily, since my mother spoke her native tongue, I still understood a little bit of it.

Sometimes I wondered if it was a good thing I couldn't really speak my native tongue anymore. The last thing I needed was some white person demanding me, "Speak English if you're gonna live here!" I got enough stares for my skin color.

"Well, anyway, I got to get going. It was good speaking to you," the white woman said. "*Buenos tardes!*"

"You have a good rest of the day," I said.

I watched the white woman cross the street and walk down the sidewalk, her eyes roaming about the brick buildings at the different restaurants and boutique stores. Under the shade of the umbrella, the brown of my skin was a hue darker. As I glanced around me, I was surrounded in a sea of white people. Some of these people were probably like that white woman.

"*Hay nako,*" I muttered under my breath in my native Tagalog language. "Oh, my gosh." I let out a heavy Filipino sigh.

### **3rd Place Short Fiction 2020**

**Aljon Celis**

Wallace State Community College  
Theta Delta Chapter



**Grief**  
-Stephanie Farrey-

It was just us in the dark  
I called her anger  
She lived beneath my skin  
Never speaking a word,  
Except when I least expected it

For years she hurt others  
All in my own name  
Lashing out her teeth  
And grinning a wicked grin

Until one day she told me  
Anger was not her name

Now I call her grief

**1st Place Poetry 2020**

**Stephanie Farrey**

University of Wisconsin,  
Whitewater at Rock County  
Gamma Delta Chapter



**Mom**  
-Hannah Cornett-

A stern aura nestles itself against your brow  
With every sharp command of your lips  
The world begins to spin faster  
Moving robotically at your demand

Yet each crinkle bows before the majesty of your eyes  
The calluses of work soften at Comfort's demand  
And each syllable that quietly escapes you  
Devours the restlessness of my heart

The lilies of our garden perk up at the scent of your presence  
The panels of our windows creak in greeting upon your arrival  
Rebellious grass ignores the wind  
Choosing instead to follow your lead

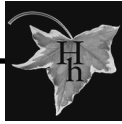
You're the smell of lavender that wafts from fresh linens  
The tender yet tough texture of our maple cabinets  
And the peaceful crackle of the fireplace in the corner

Noah Webster declares himself that your portrait adorns the definition of Home  
For you are Home  
My Home

**2nd Place Poetry 2020**

**Hannah Cornett**

Northeast Alabama Community College  
Epsilon Alpha Chapter



## Reflexiones Sobre Las Despedidas<sup>1</sup> -Mariana Erazo-

Hay tantas formas diferentes de decir adiós.<sup>2</sup>  
El adiós al final de una reunión, con la promesa de una próxima.<sup>3</sup>  
Algun día pronto, nos veremos nuevamente.<sup>4</sup>  
Siempre hay una excusa, a final.<sup>5</sup>

El adiós al final del día, cuando te despidas de tus amigos del colegio.<sup>6</sup>  
Todos sabemos que volveremos al otro día, queramos o no.<sup>7</sup>

El adiós de los padres que van a trabajar,<sup>8</sup>  
Volverán al final del día.<sup>9</sup>

Esos son los adioses con esperanza.<sup>10</sup>

También hay despedidas felices.<sup>11</sup>  
Como cuando suena la campana liberándonos de la clase de física.<sup>12</sup>  
Aí sí que no ves a nadie triste.<sup>13</sup>

Pero el peor adiós es cuando se sabe que no nos volveremos a ver tan pronto.<sup>14</sup>  
Cuando está la posibilidad del nunca jamás.<sup>15</sup>  
Son las despedidas de los amigos que se trastean,<sup>16</sup>  
Los compañeros que se gradúan,<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Reflections on Farewells

<sup>2</sup> There are so many ways to say goodbye.

<sup>3</sup> The goodbye at the end of a party, with the promise of a next one.

<sup>4</sup> Someday soon, we'll see each other again.

<sup>5</sup> There's always an excuse, after all.

<sup>6</sup> The goodbye at the end of the day, when you leave your friends from school.

<sup>7</sup> We all know we'll be back the next day, whether we want to or not.

<sup>8</sup> The goodbye of the parents who go to work,

<sup>9</sup> But who come back at the end of the day.

<sup>10</sup> Those are the hopeful farewells.

<sup>11</sup> There are happy goodbyes, too.

<sup>12</sup> Like when the bell rings, freeing us from physics class.

<sup>13</sup> Then no one is sad.

<sup>14</sup> But the worst goodbye is when you know you won't see the other so soon.

<sup>15</sup> When there's the possibility of never again.

<sup>16</sup> It's the farewells of friends that move away,

<sup>17</sup> Classmates who graduate,

Los conocidos que se mueren.<sup>18</sup>  
Son las despedidas que hacen con que no puedas hablar,<sup>19</sup>  
Porque hay algo doloroso en tu garganta.<sup>20</sup>

Son las despedidas en que lloras,<sup>21</sup>  
Y te dicen que no es para hacerlo,<sup>22</sup>  
Nos volveremos a ver algún día.<sup>23</sup>

Son las despedidas que significan un final, y un nuevo principio.<sup>24</sup>

Son las despedidas en que sabes que todo cambiara,<sup>25</sup>  
Porque si yo cambio en el tiempo en que no estas,<sup>26</sup>  
Tu también lo haras.<sup>27</sup>

Seremos distintos, tu y yo.<sup>28</sup>  
Nada volverá a ser lo mismo.<sup>29</sup>

Hay la posibilidad de que no hablemos por mucho tiempo.<sup>30</sup>

Tal vez la amistad se descolorirá, llevada por el viento,<sup>31</sup>  
O tal vez persistirá, no importando el tiempo.<sup>32</sup>

Hay despedidas que se sabe que ocurrirán.<sup>33</sup>  
Pero eso no las hacen más fáciles.<sup>34</sup>

Las despedidas pueden ser dolorosas,<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Loved ones who die.

<sup>19</sup> These are the goodbyes that make you struggle for air,  
<sup>20</sup> With clenched throat and burning eyes.

<sup>21</sup> These are the goodbyes when you grieve,

<sup>22</sup> And people tell you not to,

<sup>23</sup> We'll see each other again someday.

<sup>24</sup> It's the goodbyes that mean an end, and a new beginning.

<sup>25</sup> It's the goodbyes where you know everything will change,

<sup>26</sup> Because if I change in the time you're not here,

<sup>27</sup> You will too.

<sup>28</sup> We'll be different, you and I.

<sup>29</sup> Nothing will ever be the same.

<sup>30</sup> There's a chance we won't talk for a long time.

<sup>31</sup> Maybe the friendship will fade, carried by the wind.

<sup>32</sup> Or maybe it will persist, no matter the time.

<sup>33</sup> There are goodbyes you know will happen.

<sup>34</sup> But that doesn't make them any easier.

<sup>35</sup> Goodbyes can be painful,

Pero pensandolo bien, no son totalmente malas.<sup>36</sup>

Despedidas permiten que conozcas gente nueva.<sup>37</sup>  
Nuevas amistades, nuevas aventuras, a veces, un nuevo amor.<sup>38</sup>

Desde que nunca me replaces, está bien.<sup>39</sup>  
Desde que nunca me olvides, está bien.<sup>40</sup>  
Pero si eso pasa, también está bien.<sup>41</sup>

C'est la vie.<sup>42</sup>

De cualquier manera tienes un sitio en mi corazón, para cuando vuelvas.<sup>43</sup>  
Hasta si sé que nunca lo harás.<sup>44</sup>

Las despedidas pasan cuando vamos para nuevos horizontes.<sup>45</sup>

Tal vez buscamos algo mejor.<sup>46</sup>  
Tal vez lo encontremos, tal vez no.<sup>47</sup>  
Lo importante también es aprender.<sup>48</sup>

Pero me cansé de que todos siempre se vayan.<sup>49</sup>  
Entonces me rehúso a ser la primera.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> But thinking about it, they're not completely bad.

<sup>37</sup> Farewells allow you to meet new people.

<sup>38</sup> New friendships, new adventures, sometimes a new love.

<sup>39</sup> As long as you never replace me, that's fine.

<sup>40</sup> As long as you never forget me, that's fine.

<sup>41</sup> But if that happens, that's fine, too.

<sup>42</sup> C'est la vie

<sup>43</sup> Either way you have a place in my heart, for when you come back.

<sup>44</sup> Even if I know you never will.

<sup>45</sup> Farewells happen when we go explore new horizons.

<sup>46</sup> Maybe we're looking for something better.

<sup>47</sup> Maybe we'll find it, maybe we won't.

<sup>48</sup> No matter the outcome, we grow in the process.

<sup>49</sup> But I'm tired of everyone always leaving.

<sup>50</sup> So, I refuse to be the first one.

Bueno, ya dije demasiado.<sup>51</sup>

Adiós.<sup>52</sup>

Pero hasta pronto.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Well, I've said too much.

<sup>52</sup> Farewell.

<sup>53</sup> 'Till we meet again.

**3rd Place Poetry 2020**

**Mariana Erazo**

Midland College  
Zeta Epsilon Chapter

