

SCOP

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Works by Students of Southwest Baptist University

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| The Triumphal Entry | 3 |
| Nathan Ross | |
| Love: Something Old and Something New | 4 |
| Briannon Scott | |
| Deadly Declarations | 6 |
| Julia Bartgis | |
| A Comfortable Stranger | 7 |
| Charlotte Holman | |
| Critique | 14 |
| Briannon Scott | |
| Poetry in the Nude | 15 |
| Briannon Scott | |
| And Shades of Gray | 16 |
| Briannon Scott | |
| An Embarrassing Tale of Indulging the Senses | 28 |
| Ian Scott Patterson | |
| Females: Friend and Foe | 29 |
| Jessica Stone | |

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The Triumphal Entry
by Nathan Ross

Sam Walton rode into the Midwest
on simple notion, a humble deal.
And behold the lowly came,
spreading their pennies before him,
becoming even poorer.

“Save!” They cried, “Always save!”

Love: Something Old and Something New

by Briannon Scott

My grandparents' relationship always seemed both familiar and foreign to me. They were one of the married couples that formed the framework of my life, and I looked to them to demonstrate the kind of love relationship I would someday seek. However, their love seemed distant, albeit solid, to me, and something about my intensely romantic nature always struggled to see deeper love in their quiet comraderie. As offspring of an older, more proper era, they were rarely given to obvious shows of affection. As I grew older, the style of their relationship became, in my mind, a part of the cultural age gap between my grandparents and me. I fully expected my own romances to be very different from theirs. It was not until recent years that I began to see that the differences were not so great after all. I remember visiting them for dinner one evening – every nook and cranny of that house called forth my childhood memories, like a scrapbook of family history. Photos, knick-knacks, gifts I remembered from years ago; childish artwork provided the illustrations; and the house's two residents served as our story-keepers.

She stood at the sink with one hand in the dishwater, and he stood in the doorway to the basement. She was the ever patient, practical lord of her domain; he was the proud and thrifty philosopher. The current debate was over the exact location of her cookbooks. Having just been downstairs, I knew they were stacked in front of a bookshelf, but after years as their granddaughter, I had learned it was best to let them fight it out. "That was not an argument; that was just reaching resolution," Grandpa would say. "Well, I won that one," Grandma would reply. And sure enough, they soon settled the issue and joined me in the living room. They settled into their favorite, worn-out chairs: this was the time for talking, time for stories. As I listened to their stories, I began to realize the depth of their love for each other. We talked until I said goodnight and left, knowing they would continue to sit for some time, mostly in silence. Eventually one or both of them would doze off for a while before waking each other and going to bed.

In 1952, United Airlines sent my grandma, Mary, home from Chicago after rejecting her application to become a stewardess. They told her she had to gain 20 pounds before they could hire her. My grandpa, Bob, was teaching school in her hometown of Birchard and saw her one day when she accompanied her mother to pick up her little brother. A few days later he borrowed the high school superintendent's office – the only office with a telephone – and called Grandma's house. He asked her to go to the Armistice Day dance with him, and she agreed. After a courtship of dances, drives, discussions, and card games with Grandma's folks, my Grandpa bought an engagement ring at Tice's Drugstore in Summerfield, Kansas. He claimed that he waited so long because he had just bought a new car and didn't want to ask her to marry him while he was in debt. On February 14, 1953, their first Valentine's Day, he proposed in the car on their way back from Lewiston, Nebraska. They were married in my grandma's living room, he in a dark suit and she in a brown skirt and jacket. This was the picture of their love I always carried in my mind: simple and sensible.

This year their house is quieter than usual. The pictures and paraphernalia are the same, but only one story-keeper remains to tend them. On February 14, I called my grandpa, and we talked, as he sat alone in his favorite, worn-out chair. That day was a first for both of us, his first Valentine's Day without my grandma in 53 years and my first Valentine's Day with my boyfriend, Nick. My relationship with Nick had all the romance for which I had always hoped. We were both artistic types, and our personalities and relationship contrasted sharply with those

of my business-minded grandparents. Grandpa asked about Nick, and I told him we were spending the day apart. He was working in his hometown, trying to buy a car and save up money to come see me, and I was going to school away from home, trying to become a teacher. He had just bought his own cell phone and phone plan, so he could call me whenever he wanted. When we did get to see each other, we watched movies, went for drives, and hung out with our families. As Grandpa and I talked, I was surprised by the similarities between our story and my grandparents' story. Despite obvious era and personality related differences – like our easy access to cell phones and Nick's flare for romantic demonstrations – the basic story and emotions were the same.

The more I have learned about my grandparents, the more I have begun to see the depth of their love for each other. As Bill and Lynne Hybels say, "Only time can reveal the difference between infatuation and lasting love" (83). I have come to realize that even as conventional methods of showing affection change, love remains dependent on the hearts of those involved, not the outward appearances. Months after my grandma died, my Dad – in an attempt to turn Grandpa's mind to a philosophical discussion – asked Grandpa who he would choose to talk to if he could have a conversation with any one person from history. Grandpa answered quickly, as though it was the most obvious thing in the world, "Mary!" In this statement, my grandpa's straightforward nature connected to my romantic temperament in a way I never expected. His feelings echoed my own, though I would have been more likely to quote Shakespeare: ". . . I would not wish any companion in the world but you . . ." (III. i. 54-55). In this way, my grandparents have taught me that friendship is the heart of any love relationship, in any time, and that the times are not as different as I expected.

Works Cited

- Hybels, Bill, and Lynne Hybels. Fit to Be Tied: Making Marriage Last a Lifetime. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991.
- Shakespeare, William. The Tempest. The Complete Pelican Shakespeare. Ed. Alfred Harbage. New York: Penguin, 1969.

Deadly Declarations

by Julia Bartgis

“Prehistoric lovers found locked in eternal embrace”
www.cnn.com. Science & Space. February 7, 2007.

The stars crossed and secretly winked as the lovers
lay with married limbs and the night’s blanket
bonded protectively around them.

White teeth, flushed cheeks, deep dimple.
“How much do you love me?” she asked.
She didn’t need an answer, just more time
to rest in the cocoon of his embrace.

Azure eyes, strong jaw, pure manhood.
“I’d rather die than ever leave you,”
his declaration curled up between them
as noses cuddled, hands locked tight,
and pulses danced in forbidden circles.

The mint tea was still fresh on her breath
as she whispered “you will never leave me.”

A Comfortable Stranger

by Charlotte Holman

He came to town on a Sunday, the stranger did. He walked into town and followed the sounds of Sunday hymns being sung, down the main street past the diner, the courthouse and the gazebo to the church at the end of the road.

He wore broken-in trousers and a button-up shirt tucked in neatly. On his head was a hat that looked like it had once been a nice hat. The only sign he was traveling was his worn-in boots and the beat-up suitcase in his hand. In the suitcase were a coat for the cold, one change of clothes, and enough money for his daily bread.

He slipped into the church and sat in the back pew. No one noticed except a young boy who heard the added voice to the congregation singing “Amazing Grace”. It was boisterous, rough and smooth at the same time, much like the man himself with his soft, kind face obstructed by a day old beard.

The boy was dressed in his Sunday best and looked very out of place. The desire for freedom oozed into his actions and manners. He looked at the stranger, jealous of his unbuttoned collar and rolled up sleeves. Here was a man who was comfortable with himself unlike all the other men suffocating in their suits and ties and rules.

The hymn ended, and everyone sat down to hear the preacher. The stranger leaned back and stretched out his legs, looking very comfortable. The church was stuffy. Men and women tugged at garments and fanned faces, but the heat didn’t seem to bother the stranger.

The preacher droned on; his sermon was of no interest to the boy. He was more interested in the stranger sitting in the last pew.

The preacher finished his sermon. The congregation stood and sang the final hymn. The offering was passed, and as the men and women rummaged through their pockets and purses, the stranger opened his suitcase and pulled out his money. All of it, all that he had went into the plate. The boy watched this. His hand slipped into his pocket and felt among his rubber band ball and prized baseball cards until it found the quarter he had discovered that morning. It was a brand new quarter. The boy had never seen one hot out of the mint before. The sun had sparkled off President George Washington’s face, catching the boy’s attention. He hadn’t decided what he would buy with it yet. A whole quarter was a lot of responsibility for a boy of seven. Maybe he would go see a movie or buy something at the soda fountain. Or maybe he would put it away and save it. After all, it was a brand new quarter and you don’t see those everyday.

But this man, this stranger to their town and their church, had placed everything in the offering with a smile. The boy had never been given the opportunity to give a financial offering because God had never blessed him financially. But here he had a shiny new quarter, the first fruits of all the quarters to come out of the U.S. mint for that year.

The pastor stood at the door to the church shaking hands and thanking people for coming to the service. It came the boy’s turn.

“Did you enjoy the singing today Billy?” Preacher Jordan asked.

“Yes Preacher, very much.” Billy shook his hand hard. “I forgot to put this in the plate sir. Will you make sure it gets to God?”

“Bless you son.” The preacher could hardly believe it. “Are you sure you don’t want to use that for a comic book or something special?”

“Preacher,” the stranger spoke with his rough and smooth voice. It seemed to laugh when he spoke. “Are you trying to hinder this young man from giving to the Lord?”

“Sir,” said the preacher kindly but firmly, “he is only seven.”

“Only seven? Our Lord said that we should come as children to Him. This boy has never earned a penny and he wants to give the first quarter he finds in the dirt to the service of God. I don’t see why his age should be a hindrance. Son,” the stranger turned to Billy, “do you want to give this money?”

“Yes sir.”

“Honest to goodness?”

“Well I figured I don’t have any real use for it, so might as well give it to God.”

“Then give it with a smile, Billy, and God will give it back to you twice if not ten times. And if you don’t see it here, I promise you will see it in Heaven.”

“What is your name stranger?” the preacher asked.

“John, Preacher, my name is John.”

“John, do you have a place to eat Sunday lunch?” A simple looking man with a bushy brown mustache and a wide brim brown hat stepped out from the herd. He was in his fifties, skinny and a working man.

“No sir, I do not.”

“Come with me,” John put on his hat, shook Billy’s hand and followed the man with the mustache to his pick-up truck.

“Thank you for offering me a meal,” said John as they closed the doors. “May I ask your name?”

“Alan, my name’s Alan.”

“Nice to meet you, Alan.”

“So what brings you to our town on a Sunday morning, John?”

“Just passing through.”

“Traveling on a Sunday. Where you headed?”

“Not sure.”

“You running from something?”

“No, just walking.”

“Walking! Where did you walk from?”

“Greenville.”

“Greenville! Is that where you’re from?”

“No, that’s the last town I was in.”

“That’s 30 miles from here!”

“Yes sir, and it’s a nice town too. A lot of nice people living there.”

“Nice! Oh no, John, you must have been in some other Greenville. There’s something in the water down there causes all sorts of corruption and sin in people.”

“Greenville and Beaufort drink the same water, Alan.”

“You know what I mean John. We’ve got values in Beaufort, something they’ve been lacking in Greenville.”

“You both still drink the same water, Alan”

There was silence for a time as the observation sat between them.

“We’re almost there,” Alan finally said.

“Your home?”

“No, my daughter’s. I eat Sunday lunch with my daughter, her husband and their two boys. Ever since my Ellie passed, I can’t stand to be alone on Sunday. She made the best ham

and sweet potatoes my Ellie did. And then, after lunch we would turn on the radio and just sit and listen. Somedays we would even dance a little, just danced and listen the evening away.”

Alan’s eyes shone with the tear he was trying to hide. “I’m sorry John. I don’t know why I felt I needed to say all of that.”

“How long ago did she die?”

“A little over a year.”

“You miss her.”

“Oh man,” Alan chuckled, “not a moment goes by that I don’t wish she was here. I honestly never thought I would live without her. But here I am still living, and she’s gone.”

“You’ll see her again and then you will never have to part.”

“You know what’s funny John? The preacher told me that exact thing when she died and I didn’t believe him. But you, you tell me that and something tells me that you just might be right. For some reason I believe you, a complete stranger.” Alan grinned and parked the pick-up truck in front of a large white farmhouse with a porch stretching the length of the front. Flower pots and rocking chairs dotted the porch. Two young boys came running out of the front door rustling the peace that was on the picture perfect scene. Alan’s grin grew as he hopped out and grabbed the boys in a wrestling hug. The scene was irresistible.

“John,” Alan stood and caught his breath, “this is my oldest grandson Jacob.” He patted the taller skinnier boy with ash brown hair and brown eyes. “And this, this is the younger, Isaac.”

John could already tell that Isaac fit his name. He hadn’t stopped giggling since they had arrived. When he finally did stop giggling, his blue eyes continued to laugh.

“Jacob is nine, and Isaac is six. Boys, this is John.”

“Hello Jacob and Isaac. Those are good strong names your mother gave you. You should hold onto those.”

“Why? It’s just a name.”

“Oh no, Jacob, it’s not. Your name is who you are. Your name is straight from the Bible. It’s true. Jacob was one of the smartest men in the Bible and became the father of an entire country. I can already tell you’re a smart boy yourself. No dummy would ask someone ‘why’. It’s always the smart kids that ask ‘why’.”

“What about me?” Isaac cried out.

“Isaac! You already fit your name because it means laughter, and I don’t think you’ve stopped laughing since I got here!”

“Dad, boys come inside!” A woman called from the porch.

“Leave your suitcase, John. Let’s eat.”

When they reached the porch, the young mother gave her father a hug. She was introduced to John as Elena. She was a humble beauty; Isaac obviously took after his mother with his blonde curls and big blue eyes. Inside the comfortable house, John met Elena’s husband, Daniel. Daniel was tall and thin, but there was strength in his bones. Daniel and Elena’s house sat among their apple orchard. While the orchard was not evident by approaching the house, it was obvious by the food on the table: applesauce, fresh apples, apple crisp, and apple juice. John laughed with the family at their love of apples. The conversation flowed over the biscuits, honey, ham, sweet potatoes, and apples.

“Where are you from John?” asked Elena.

“Springhill.”

“What brings you to Beaufort?” she continued with her gentle interrogation.

“I’m just traveling around. I stop wherever I have a notion to.”

“So how do you to pay for all of this traveling? It must be expensive.”

“Not too expensive. I walk most of the time. I carry all of my belongings in that suitcase and enough money to get me through each day. I always manage to find a place to stay or work when I need to.”

“You can stay with me as long as you like John,” Alan offered.

“Thank you Alan, but I don’t have any money left to pay you for a room.”

“Are you kidding!?! You don’t need to pay me any money!”

“Alan that’s not fair. I don’t want to be a freeloader.”

“Well, you could help Daniel in his orchards. He’s starting to harvest this week.”

“I’ll pay you the same wage as all my other hands, and you can eat all the apples you want,” Daniel said as he dug into his sweet potatoes.

“Thank you very much for your kindness and hospitality.”

The next day, John walked from Alan’s house to Daniel and Elena’s apple orchard. Daniel only had three other hands to help him with the harvest. They started early in the morning, climbing up ladders and picking apples. The five of them each worked on different rows. Young boys, including Jacob and Isaac, came out later in the day to sort through the good and the bad and move baskets of apples. Billy was among the boys. His older sister, Lucy, was also there helping. Lu, as everyone called her, was ten. Her brown hair was swept up in a hurried bun, and her blue eyes were dull with responsibility. John later learned that their mother was bed-ridden, dying of cancer, and Lu had taken on much of her mother’s duties in the house.

“She’s so young to have the weight of the world,” John said sadly when Daniel told him.

“She would have been a beautiful young woman, but I’m afraid with this weight she’s going to have a hard time finding a husband.”

“She’s lost her youth, her joy. You can tell it in her posture.”

“Their father isn’t taking their mother’s slow death very well either. He goes out into the fields and doesn’t come back until well after supper. He’s seemed to have forgotten everything, even God. Doesn’t even go to church anymore. Lu’s gotta drag Billy in his little suit and tie now.”

Billy was fascinated by John. All throughout the day, John caught Billy peeking over to see what John was doing.

“He’s staying with *my* grandpa,” John heard Jacob tell Billy. Billy was amazed at how close that made Jacob to John.

“That means he’s almost your family!”

“Yup!”

The group of workers all ate lunch together, a lunch of sandwiches and lemonade. John worked hard all day and collected the most apples, finishing twice as many rows as anyone else. The boys who collected and sorted for him were inspired by his quick hands and concentration on his task, making the whole process twice as fast.

“You worked hard today John,” said Bobby, one of Daniel’s regular workers. “Why such a rush?”

“I’m just doing my best.”

“Why? Daniel pays the same despite how many apples you pick,” said Jack, another worker.

“I’m not working for Daniel.”

“Yeah you are; Daniel gave you the job.” Bobby laughed.

“No, God gave me this job. It just happened to be in Daniel’s orchard. I work for the Lord, not Daniel. And the Lord gives me His best, so I will give Him mine.”

The three other men, Bobby, Jack, and James, got into Bobby’s truck and drove off smirking, trying to hide the fact that they were quite alarmed at John’s answer. John started walking down the dirt road. He quickly met with Billy and Lu on the way.

“Are you two walking home all by yourselves?”

“It isn’t far sir,” answered Lu.

“Still, young lady, the sun is setting, and I don’t think you should be walking alone.”

“Sir, where did you come from?” Billy asked loudly.

“Billy, don’t be rude!” Lu scolded.

“It’s alright ma’am. The boy is curious. I came from Greenville before here.”

“Greenville? Dad says nothing good ever came out of Greenville, but you aren’t bad, not like the people Dad says come from Greenville.”

“He was just passing through Billy; he’s not actually from Greenville,” said Lu quietly.

“Have you ever been to Greenville, Lu?” asked John.

She hesitated and looked down, “No sir. I’ve never been to Greenville.”

“Then how do you know what the people there are like?”

“I just do.”

“You are pretty firm in those beliefs for someone who has never even seen Greenville. Their main street is an awful like Beaufort’s. They have a church right there off the main road, a drug store with a soda fountain, and the town hall is right across the street. The people walk just like you do and drive their cars along the road. They go to church on Sundays too. But they go to the soda fountain instead of the diner, so I guess Lu that makes them bad people. Have you ever had a root beer float, Billy?”

“No, I’ve never even had a root beer without the floating part!”

“Maybe your father will take you to Greenville someday for a root beer float.”

“He hasn’t been around,” said Billy, “and he’s really mean since Mama’s gotten sicker.”

“Angry, Billy, he’s angry, not mean,” Lu said quietly, not wanting to disrespect her father.

“Same difference.” Billy shot back at her, not wanting to be corrected by a girl. They had reached Billy and Lu’s house. It still had the flavor of being nice, but there was a gloom covering its former happiness.

“Can you stay for dinner, John?” Billy asked.

“No, not tonight Billy.”

“Tomorrow?” asked Lu.

“Sure, tomorrow.”

The next day, after working in the orchards all day and another lunch of chicken salad and lemonade, Billy, Lu, and John headed to Billy and Lu’s house to have dinner. The children’s father was still out in the fields when the three reached the house.

“I will start dinner.” Lu immediately donned her apron and pulled out some leftover stew out of the refrigerator to warm up on the stove. John couldn’t help feeling sorry for the young girl of ten who had to work all day and night to hold her family together. Billy was oblivious to his sister’s struggles, at least distracted tonight from them by John’s presence.

“Would you like to meet my Mama!?” He grabbed John’s hand.

“Billy, make sure she’s up for it first,” Lu warned.

“Hold on a minute,” Billy whispered before he opened his Mama’s bedroom door and quietly went in to check on her. John waited until Billy motioned for him to enter.

The room was clean and bright, lit from the sunshine coming through the open window. While the rest of the house was drowning in the emotional death of the family, this room was protected from death for the sake of Mama. The breeze danced among curtains. The room was occupied by a queen sized bed, a dresser, nightstand, and a rocking chair by the bed. In the bed was a frail woman no older than 35 under a blanket of pink roses. She was asleep. Her dark hair was pulled away from her face, and she was very pale. The tiredness of the cancer pulled a veil over her beauty. John could tell she had once been a very happy, energetic woman. Billy and John watched her from the doorway.

“Isn’t she the most beautiful woman you’ve ever seen?” Billy whispered.

“Yes she is, Billy.”

“The doctor says she’s not going to get better, that she’s going to die. Lu says that’s why Dad’s been so angry. But God wouldn’t kill anyone that beautiful, would He, John?”

“We all have to die Billy. Maybe God wants your mother in heaven because she’s so beautiful. She looks like she belongs with the angels, don’t you think?”

“No! I wish she would be ugly then so she could stay here with me. If she dies then I will miss her too much.” Tears started to come down Billy’s cheek. John got down on his knees to Billy’s level just as he did in the church.

“Billy, if she dies it is okay for you to miss her. My wife and our baby girl died a year ago, and I have missed them with my whole heart everyday since.”

“A whole year?”

“Yes, this whole year. Even the past few days, I have missed them just as much as the first day they were gone.”

“How can you still be happy?” Billy snorted and wiped his face smearing dirt from the orchard across his cheek.

“Because even though I miss them, I know I will see them again in heaven someday.”

“Really?”

“Yes, because I know that they are in heaven with Jesus and God and the angels. I believe that through Jesus I can go to heaven when I die. My wife believed that too so she is in heaven now. When I die, I will go to heaven and see my wife and our little girl there, and we will spend forever together.”

“Forever?”

“Yes, forever. Death isn’t forever Billy. You will see your mama again someday.”

“Promise?”

“Yes, I promise.”

“Dad!” Billy had turned and saw his father standing in the hall behind them. “Did you hear what John said? Even though Mama might die, we’ll still see her again someday!”

“Yes I did,” said Billy and Lu’s father. He didn’t look angry to John. He looked beaten, beaten by the world and his wife’s cancer. He was beaten with grief.

“Hello, John, I’m Thomas, Billy and Lu’s father. Billy, go help your sister.” Billy ran down the hall.

“I meant everything I said to your boy, sir,” John said, anticipating a reprimand.

“I know you did,” said Thomas. “I can tell you believe it to from your voice. He has been very scared and lost about the whole situation, but he has tried to hide it. I’ve been very scared about it too. Anyway, I just wanted to thank you.”

“For what?”

“For hope when we had none.”

Critique

by Briannon Scott

It seems to me,
Your colors are too dull
Again,
Muted, scraped on thin.
They strain to tint
The canvas threads,
To draw them together
Into this scene.

I know You are fond
Of the palette knife,
With its sharp edges,
Lines
Tips
But perhaps a brush?
A bit of soft
Full
Squish. . .
Now, that Sun,
I must say,
Some of Your better work.
It revels
Radiates
Rips Your cloudstrokes,
Demands my eye
And casts it down,
Splattering color.

There
I see potential.

Poetry in the Nude

by Briannon Scott

The time has come, the fates declare,
to write another poem.
Personify in formal wear,
pull parallel your form.

Alliterate! Arrange each word.
Spruce up your punctuation.
Yet once again I find myself
in hyperbolic consternation.

I wrangle with infernal rhyme
That will not tie about the line

Nor lie straight against the page. . .
I've broken now my metric gauge.

There are wrinkles in my simile.
My diction tore my imagery.

Oops, I smeared my metaphor.
What the *what's* a caesura for?

The time has come, I must confess,
To take this poem and undress.

Naked clauses leave no doubt,
Just let my assonance hang out.

And though you may condemn me worst,
I'm comfortable in my free verse.

And Shades of Gray

by Briannon Scott

Characters

Savannah – 19 year-old girl

Jesse – Savannah’s 20 year-old boyfriend

Mr. and Mrs. James – Savannah’s parents

Pastor Collins – late middle-aged pastor of the James’ church

Doctor

Voices

Setting

Simultaneous Staging:

Pastor Collins’ Office – down right, nice desk and two nice chairs, a rug

The James’ Back Porch – up center, a porch swing

Church kitchen/James’ Living Room/ Hospital Waiting Room etc. – down left, chairs which can be moved around to suggest a variety of settings

And Shades of Gray

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(Stage is completely dark. Overlapping, echoing voices (Mr. James: “Yes, she’s planning on attending an arts school. . .,” Mrs. James: “We’re so proud of you both. . .,” Jesse: “I love you; I will always love you. . .,” Sunday school teacher: “We were wondering if you two would be willing to help counsel another young couple. . .,” “Savannah James will be giving today’s special music. . .,” Girl’s voice: “You two are so lucky. . .”) are heard, fading in and out and overlapped by general chatter and laughter. They fade into the sound of heavy footsteps that speed up, then the sound of some kind of scuffle (not overly violent), Savannah’s voice crying and begging, and sirens. When the sirens come on, a light cue intended to suggest an emergency vehicle should shine out towards the audience. As the sirens fade, they are replaced by overlapping voices again (Jesse “Savannah...Savannah?” Police: “Can you describe him?” and “Mr. and Mrs. James, I’m afraid something has happened. . .,” Mrs. James: “Oh, Lord God. . .,” Mr. James: “Is she alright?” Police: “Tall, African-American male, average build, aged twenties to early thirties, no distinguishing features. . .,” Doctor: “You are a very lucky young lady, Savannah. . .she can go home now.”) Voices fade into silence. The sound of a girl’s voice humming is heard. Lights up on Savannah in the porch swing, wrapped in a blanket and humming. It is January, shortly before the beginning of the Spring semester.)

(Jesse enters from SL.)

JESSE
Savannah? Hi.

SAVANNAH
Hi.

(He crosses and sits next to her, but leaving space between them. As the scene progresses, they get closer, and it is clear they are very comfortable with each other.)

JESSE
How. . . um, how are you? *(She does not answer)*
Your mom said you asked her to call me. Are you okay? Can I help? *(Silence)*
I've been worried about you; I was going to call later anyway.

SAVANNAH
I had a doctor's appointment today.

JESSE
Oh yeah? Just another check-up, or what?

SAVANNAH
Sort of.

JESSE
I know you hate that. But it's only been a month; they want to be careful. Is something wrong?

SAVANNAH
Sort of.

JESSE
What? Are you okay?

SAVANNAH
Sort of.

JESSE
Okay, Savannah, you've really got to give me more than "Sort of." I'm hanging here.

SAVANNAH
Sorry, I'm just a little--off, at the moment.

JESSE
Well, that's understandable. But toying with your poor boyfriend's already very worried mind is considered cruel and unusual punishment in some circles.

SAVANNAH

(Smiles)

I'm sorry. How has your day been?

JESSE

Uh, fine. But –

SAVANNAH

How's work? Are you starting to pack to go back to school? Did you send in all the paperwork on that scholarship? You can't forget to do that. You really need the money, and I don't want you killing yourself working this spring.

JESSE

Whoa, babe, focus. Look at me. Work is fine. I haven't started packing yet; I only own three sets of clothes, a toothbrush and a guitar. I sent in the paperwork, and I love you. Now talk to me. What's going on? Why did you go see the doctor today?

SAVANNAH

(Long pause)

Jesse, I'm pregnant.

JESSE

(Long pause)

What?

SAVANNAH

(She gets faster and more upset as she goes.)

I've been feeling sick the last couple days, but I had been feeling better before that so I thought maybe there was something else wrong. And I've been. . . late for a long time, which they told me might happen but it's been a while, and I didn't know, so I called and made an appointment and they did some tests. . . .

JESSE

(Explodes and stands)

I'll kill him! I just-- I can't. . . . I'm going to find that *(avoids saying the word with great effort)*, and I'm going to kill him. *(Long pause while he struggles to calm down)* So what--Can you – Did they say anything else?

SAVANNAH

Like what?

JESSE

I don't know!

(Pause)

Will you still go to school?

SAVANNAH
I don't know.

JESSE
What about –

SAVANNAH
I'm not sure.

JESSE
How will you –

SAVANNAH
Jesse!

JESSE
I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Have you talked to your parents?

SAVANNAH
Yes. We've been talking for most of the afternoon.

JESSE
Did you figured anything out?

SAVANNAH
Not yet, they think I should go talk to Pastor Collins.

JESSE
Yeah, you should.

SAVANNAH
You won't believe what they said. We were talking about school and the arts college next year and just. . . what I'm going to do, and. . . . They actually asked me if I was sure I wanted to keep it.

JESSE
(Long pause)
Well. . . .

SAVANNAH
(Horrorified)
Jesse!

JESSE
I'm sorry, I didn't. . . I mean, it does kind of make sense.

SAVANNAH

I thought you hated that.

JESSE

I do! It's just, this isn't. . . normal circumstances. And you shouldn't have to pay for what he did.

SAVANNAH

(Stands to leave)

Neither should the baby.

JESSE

Wait, come back. I'm sorry. I'm just. . . caught off guard. I don't know what to think. I hate the idea of you losing more. Just--spend some more time thinking before you decide anything. Let's talk about this. . . .

SAVANNAH

I'm tired.

JESSE

Hey, look at me. Please? Talk to me, I'm right here.

SAVANNAH

I don't know where you are.

(She exits, lights down on porch.)

Scene 2

(Lights up on Pastor Collins' office. He is sitting behind the desk, and Savannah is in the chair facing him.)

PASTOR

Well, Savannah, how are you feeling about all this?

SAVANNAH

Honestly, I'm tired, and I feel sick a lot.

PASTOR

Not quite what I meant, but that's to be expected, I guess.

SAVANNAH

I know. I feel frustrated and scared and angry and cheated and a little bit. . . guilty.

PASTOR

Guilty? Why would you feel guilty?

SAVANNAH

It just seems like maybe I had this coming somehow.

PASTOR

Savannah, this situation is not your fault. None of this has been under your control. You can't take on the guilt for someone else's sin.

SAVANNAH

Why not? I seem to be taking on the consequences.

PASTOR

(Long pause)

I don't know why you are having to deal with the consequences. Sin affects more than just the person responsible. But it's not yours.

SAVANNAH

Maybe.

PASTOR

Have you and your parents decided what you are going to do? I know you and Jesse were planning on applying to that arts college for the fall.

SAVANNAH

Yeah, that's kind of . . . on hold right now. We haven't really talked much since I told them. I think I'm still going to go to school this spring. The university is not that far away; hopefully I can just live at home and take a smaller class load. It would be nice to at least have a full two years under my belt before anything happens.

PASTOR

When are you due?

SAVANNAH

Middle of September.

PASTOR

How's Jesse taking all of this? Have you told him?

SAVANNAH

Yes. He's . . . struggling. We haven't seen each other for a couple days.

PASTOR

Well, it's a lot to deal with. Give him time.

SAVANNAH

Yeah.

PASTOR

And give yourself time. You've been through a lot, Savannah; don't let yourself get too discouraged or wrapped up in everything. Take your time to sort things out. In the meantime we'll miss your singing during the services.

SAVANNAH

I'm afraid it might be a while before I will be ready to use my voice, Pastor. But thank you. And thanks for meeting with me.

PASTOR

I'll be praying for you. God will work everything out. He has a way of making the gray areas clear.

(Lights out on Pastor's office)

Scene 3

(Lights up on James' living room down left. Chairs are arranged to imply couches. Savannah and her parents are sitting.)

MR. JAMES

So, you're sure?

SAVANNAH

Yes, Dad. . . .

MRS. JAMES

We're not trying to pressure you either way, honey; we just want you to know we understand, whatever you decide.

SAVANNAH

I'm keeping the baby, Mom. I truly believe that's the only right thing to do. Besides, I think I would feel so much worse if I didn't.

MR. JAMES

All right. As long as you're certain, we will support you.

MRS. JAMES

We're proud of you. We know this is very scary, but we're here to help you.

MR. JAMES

Now, let's talk about school. Have you thought about what you want to do?

SAVANNAH

A little, but honestly, I just don't know.

MR. JAMES

Well, if you decide you want to take some time off, we are willing to help you. However, we don't want you to get too far behind. In that interest, we've come up with a plan that we think would be best, but it's ultimately your decision.

MRS. JAMES

We would like you to quit your job and live with us for the spring semester. That way, we can help take care of you and you can still finish your sophomore year. You might even be able to get an associate's degree if your credits work out.

SAVANNAH

Wow, thank you.

MR. JAMES

Then, we want you to go ahead and apply to the arts college.

SAVANNAH

What? Wait, Dad –

MRS. JAMES

Honey, you have a gift for singing. Attending that college has been your and Jesse's dream for years.

SAVANNAH

Mom, but I'm due in September.

MRS. JAMES

So if you're accepted you'll start a year late.

SAVANNAH

But it's two states away. Even a year from now, there's no way I'd be able to make a move like that with a baby and support myself.

MR. JAMES

That's why we've decided to move with you.

SAVANNAH

What?

MR. JAMES

If you get accepted and you still want to go a year and a half from now, we will move with you. You can live with us while you attend the college, and we will help you take care of the baby.

MRS. JAMES

We don't want you to miss out on it because of something terrible that was out of your control.

MR. JAMES

Take your time, you don't have to decide right now.

MRS. JAMES

What do you think? Savannah?

(Lights fade out quickly as Savannah faints and crumples to the floor.)

Scene 4

(Lights up on James' porch. Savannah is again wrapped in a blanket and sitting on the swing. Jesse enters.)

SAVANNAH

Hi.

JESSE

(Very uncertain)

Hi.

SAVANNAH

Would you like to sit?

JESSE

Yeah, thanks.

SAVANNAH

I wondered if my parents would call you.

JESSE

Actually, Pastor Collins asked the congregation to pray for you this morning. He said you'd been taken to the hospital again.

SAVANNAH

I fainted.

JESSE

Are you alright?

SAVANNAH

Yeah.

JESSE

Did they figure out what was wrong?

SAVANNAH

High-risk pregnancy. Unstable, fragile. . . words the doctor used to describe my condition. Kind of ironic, isn't it. High-risk. I am pregnant because I wasn't careful and now I will cease to be pregnant if I'm not careful.

JESSE

How are you feeling?

SAVANNAH

Better, sort of. I am going to school.

JESSE

Yeah?

SAVANNAH

My parents are going to help me. As long as I don't overload myself I should be fine.

JESSE

That's awesome. . . . I would have missed you so much.

SAVANNAH

And I've sent in my application.

JESSE

Wait, what?

SAVANNAH

Have you sent yours in?

JESSE

You're going? How?

SAVANNAH

Mom and Dad said they would move with me.

JESSE

Wow.

SAVANNAH

Did you send in your application?

JESSE

No.

SAVANNAH

Why not? It's due in two weeks!

JESSE

I wasn't going to go. I decided to stay here with you.

SAVANNAH

(Pause)

But your music is your life.

JESSE

So are you.

(Long pause)

So your parents are coming too?

(Lights out on porch)

Scene 5

(Lights up on Hospital Waiting Room down left. Mr. James and Jesse waiting, sitting a few chairs away from each other.)

JESSE

What time is it?

MR. JAMES

It's been exactly 23 seconds.

JESSE

Oh.

(Pause)

How long –

MR. JAMES

Longer than 23 seconds.

JESSE

Sorry.

(Long pause. Jesse opens his mouth and turns to ask Mr. James a question. Mr. James shoots him a look that stops him. Long pause. Jesse stands and wanders, glancing off stage to the "delivery room.")

It's taking so long. This is driving me insane. I wish someone would tell us what's going on. Was it like this when Savannah was born?

MR. JAMES

I remember it being quieter somehow.

(Doctor enters, looking pleased.)

DOCTOR
Mr. James?

MR. JAMES JESSE
Yes? Yes?

JESSE
Sorry.

DOCTOR
Congratulations. You are now the grandfather of *a healthy little blonde girl*.
(Long pause as first emotions arise then information is processed.)

MR. JAMES
Blonde? *(Doctor nods.)* The baby is white?

(Mr. James looks at Jesse, and Jesse slowly looks back at him. Lights down.)

Scene 6

(Lights up on porch swing. Savannah sits humming to her baby, wrapped in a blanket.)

(To her baby) Hi. *(Pause)* You're so beautiful. I'm sorry you don't have a name yet, but the only one that I can think of lately is Mary. I don't like that name so much anymore. It seems I've gone from the Virgin Mary to Mary Magdalene in people's opinions these last few weeks. And that's not yours. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry you will have to take some of the consequences that belong to me. But there's nothing I can do now to stop that. It will be alright, eventually. Sticks and stones. . . I hope you'll like music. Of course you will, you're your daddy's girl. I hope. . . I'm sorry you haven't seen much of your daddy, he's. . . he's not sure what to do with you. No one is. Although they seem to have some idea of what to do with me. There must be a very clear instruction manual for dealing with. . . well, whatever they're calling me. I won't be going back to school, not for a long time anyway. I'm going to try to get my old job back. Mom and Dad decided we can still stay here, for now. It wasn't a unanimous decision, though. Dad hasn't really looked at me for days. You know, I had a pretty little dress for you from a lady in the church. She gave it to me before you were born and said it used to belong to her daughter. *(Pause)* She asked my mom if she could have it back yesterday. It's strange how people look at things. Nothing's changed really – the same consequences, almost the same sin. It's just whose fault it was. Well, it wasn't yours.

(Savannah hums for a while, rocking her baby. Lights fade out. End play.)

An Embarrassing Tale of Indulging the Senses
by Ian Scott Paterson

A swell smelling candle was burning.
My nostrils were eager and yearning.
While my nose did admire,
my hair caught a fire.
Life lessons I seemed to be learning.

Females: Friend and Foe

by Jessica Stone

Since the beginning of time, women have never ceased to surprise, fool, and even baffle men. Even in the Garden of Eden, Eve succeeded in tricking Adam into eating fruit from the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” which ultimately led to God banishing the pair from the garden. When God first created Eve for Adam, Adam was grateful; however, because Eve coaxed him into eating the forbidden fruit, one could generally surmise that Adam was more than likely a little perplexed by Eve’s foolish and misleading behavior. The lack of understanding between men and women has been a common thread throughout history and can even be found in literature. One piece of literature that addresses the uncertain feelings men may have about women is John Keats’ “The Eve of St. Agnes.” In this narrative poem Keats expresses his own ambiguous thoughts regarding women through the way Porphyro views Madeline as she assumes different identities.

Keats’ presentation of Madeline as a creature of innocence reveals both his and Porphyro’s admiration and intimidation concerning women. From the beginning, Keats portrays Madeline as a pure and innocent lady. Despite the festivities occurring around her in the beginning of the poem, Madeline remains completely transfixed by the rituals in which she will soon partake. Keats points out that the rituals surrounding the superstition of St. Agnes are performed by “young virgins” (835). Thus, since Madeline actively participates in the rituals of St. Agnes, it is safe to assume that Madeline herself is a virgin, which in turn proves her innocence and naïveté. Keats further describes Madeline’s innocence by saying Madeline is “like a saint/...a splendid angel” and describes her as being “so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint” (840). The purity and innocence that Madeline exudes creates a profound reaction within Porphyro. Keats states that “Porphyro [grows] faint” as he gazes upon Madeline in her innocence (840). This reaction of Porphyro can be read a couple of different ways. An obvious interpretation of Porphyro’s reaction lies in the thought that Madeline’s innocence causes Porphyro to stand in awe and admiration of her, to the point that he actually becomes weak and faint. A second interpretation of Porphyro’s reaction explains that Madeline’s innocence “threatens to erase both his physical strength and his consciousness as it make[s] him grow ‘faint’” (Arseneau). Both interpretations of Porphyro’s reaction to Madeline resemble Keats’ own view of women. In one letter to his fiancée, Fanny Brawne, Keats writes, “When you pass'd my window home yesterday, I was filled with as much admiration as if I had then seen you for the first time” (“John Keats and Fanny Brawne”). However, in another letter Keats writes “When I am among [w]omen...I am full of [s]uspicious. . .” (“John Keats and Fanny Brawne”). The feelings of admiration and suspicion that Keats expresses clearly conflict with one another. This same conflict or ambiguity on Keats’ part surrounds Porphyro as he takes in Madeline as a creature of innocence.

Almost immediately after describing Madeline as angelic, Keats focuses on a different angle of Madeline, introducing more of his inconsistent thoughts and feelings regarding women. In contrast to the sweet and pure Madeline that Keats first describes, Madeline also appears as a mermaid, causing Porphyro to be enticed and cautious. Keats states that Porphyro sees Madeline “half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed” (840). That Madeline resembles the mythical creature of a mermaid creates a naturally perplexing image. The book Monsters of the Sea describes mermaids “as being quite beautiful,” yet still classifies mermaids as a type of sea monster (Ellis 79). The general concept of mermaids centers around the myth of mermaids tantalizing men at

sea with their beauty and then leading the men to an inevitable death at sea. This natural contrast between beauty and potential danger Keats shows in Madeline proposes a mystery to Porphyro. Madeline's good looks lure in Porphyro; nonetheless, the fact that he can see only half of Madeline's body causes Porphyro some apprehension. What exactly lies underneath the covered portion of Madeline's fair body? This juxtaposition of beauty and possible danger that Porphyro faces reveals more about Keats' own thoughts of women. Just the fact that Keats chose to compare Madeline to a mermaid indicates Keats' own lack of understanding of women. On this subject, Arseneau states that Walter Jackson Bate's research on Keats explains that Keats originally described Madeline as "[h]alf-hidden like a Syren of the Sea," but then decided that the connotation with the word "syren" evoked too much fear and not the same pleasantness that mermaids also represent. Since mermaids are both enticing and hazardous, Keats' choice to compare Madeline to a mermaid, a crossbreed creature, again shows his ambivalence toward women.

Lastly, Keats portrays Madeline as possessing magical powers, which mesmerizes and frightens Porphyro. Throughout the poem, Keats relates Madeline to various aspects of witchcraft or magic. Toward the beginning of the poem, as Angela, Madeline's maid, guides Porphyro to Madeline's chamber, she refers to Madeline as "my lady fair the conjurer" (Keats 837). This use of conjurer introduces the idea of magical power that flows through Madeline and her behavior. In the next stanza, Keats tells of Madeline's "enchantments cold" (838). Arseneau proposes that the enchantments Keats describes parallel "a spell" of some sort, lending more credibility to the idea of Madeline possessing magical powers. The charmed state in which Madeline remains summons different, yet intense, reactions from Porphyro. At one point, Madeline begins to awake from her mystical slumber, causing Porphyro to fall to his knees "...pale as smooth-sculptured stone" (Keats 842). This reaction of Porphyro suggests an intense amount of wonder. Something about Madeline captivates Porphyro to the point that he can no longer stand upright. Keats describes another reaction of Porphyro by saying that he "fear[s] to move or speak" (842). Now, Porphyro is both unable and afraid to stand and speak. Madeline completely transfixes and frightens Porphyro to the point that he is unable to function. This mysterious power that Madeline seems to possess and enact upon Porphyro symbolizes the unusual power that women seem to have on Keats in his life. In one letter, Keats writes, "When I am among [w]omen...I cannot speak..." ("John Keats and Fanny Brawne"). While he doesn't state any fear in speaking with women, Keats does display an inability to speak in their company, directly reflecting Porphyro's failure to speak in Madeline's presence. Both men seem to lose the power and ability to control themselves within the presence of their sexual opposites.

Keats' poem "The Eve of St. Agnes" serves as an apparatus through which Keats can relate his uncertain thoughts about women. Keats uses the various appearances of Madeline and Porphyro's reaction to her to convey his often contradictory thoughts and feelings regarding women. The feelings Keats expresses concerning women range from admiration to intimidation; from enticement to caution; from fascination to fear. The maze of thoughts and emotions Porphyro exhibits towards Madeline resembles the bafflement that many men experience when interacting with women. That bafflement may extend beyond the end of time as men and women work side by side, yet continue to live in two different worlds.

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