

*GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF  
WOMEN'S CLUBS PRESENTS*

*THE  
"SHORT STORY &  
POETRY" WINNERS*



*AWARDED AT THE  
123rd ANNUAL STATE CONVENTION*

*APRIL 4 - 7, 2019*

*Lake Blackshear Resort*

*Cordele, Georgia*



# **GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS**

## **SHORT STORY AWARD WINNERS**

### **MEMBER WINNERS**

#### **CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT**

Peggy Hawley ~ GFWC Service Guild of Covington

#### **CENTRAL WEST DISTRICT**

No Entries

#### **NORTH EAST DISTRICT**

Patricia Hawkins ~ GFWC Dahlonega Woman's Club

#### **NORTH WEST DISTRICT**

No Entries

#### **SOUTH EAST DISTRICT**

No Entries

#### **SOUTH WEST DISTRICT**

Amanda Smith ~ GFWC Vienna Woman's Club

#### **THE JANE AUSTEN SHORT STORY AWARD**

Amanda Smith  
GFWC Vienna Woman's Club



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GaFWC  
Short Story  
Something Happens When You  
Become Aware

Something happens when you become aware.

The news. Your baby is going to have a baby! Oh, the thrill! The wonderful anticipation of being able to share the life of a being that is your sweet child's child. The ability to help your child and lend the loving hand that you as a grandmother cherish and revel.

The one-way ticket to "annoying mom you try not to be" status, but simply can't help yourself. You know the one...that mom or grandmother? The one that tells you all about her pregnancies. In graphic detail – the color of the amniotic fluid, birth weight, hair or no hair, hair color, hair texture, first poop color, first poop texture, bottle or breast. Lord help you if she nursed her child. Brace yourself for that deep tissue root canal description and pull up a chair. We are gonna be here a minute!

Milestones are thrown around like the pitching stats for the Braves. First time rolling over, first tooth, first haircut, first date. You get it. You arduously listen because it's rude not to. You think to yourself: I'll never be like that...but something happens when you become aware, your baby is having a baby.

Instantly you feel a bond with a child that isn't even born, and you are touched to your very core by a new and overcoming love. It's so deep it's almost debilitating. It goes into

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the marrow of your spine and radiates like a current of happy electricity throughout your body. Each day that the baby grows in your child's womb is a step closer to grandparent nirvana.

It's similar to the way you feel for your own children, but more intense, yet relaxed at the same time. Your fingers twitch at the very thought of a sale at Carter's and this place called The Land of Nod. You buy two of everything because you'll need one at your house too! Duh!

Your husband hides the checkbook and credit cards and puts a lock on your retirement account. So you tone it down to one, maybe two baby items a week. Until one day your giddy yet frugal husband tells you he's getting a new app for his phone. And you realize you're not crazy as he downloads the week by week growth of an infant in utero. This is happening, your baby is having a baby and everyone is so excited.

I am going to be a grandparent, but not just your everyday grandparent. I'm "Sweetie". I am far too young to be a Grandma! So my handle is Sweetie. That's my little way to wag my middle finger at getting older and the grandparent establishment. Not that there's a thing wrong with the establishment, I just don't want to grow old before my time. I have plans for this child. I want to run on the playground, climb trees, chase the

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ball and the child, and have the child chase me! We are going to ride bikes, bake bread, make terrible messes with paint, and eat chocolate ten minutes before we get home to Mom and Dad! And sometimes we are going to buy over-priced toys and clothes and frivolous sundries! Because I am Sweetie and I said so!

When the time is right I will show my grand-babies how to firmly shake hands, look someone dead in the eye, the proper placement of their napkin, fork and water goblet. I will show them how to shoot a gun, respect the land, sow and harvest a garden, entertain diplomats and even guide their words while they write the inaugural speech when they become President of the United States! (But I don't have to stand, or 'rise' if you will, because I'm Sweetie.)

A store clerk, President, whatever; I want to help guide them through life with enough grace that they come to God with their woes. I want to teach them to stare at the vast ocean and meditate on the rhythm of the waves in total silence while marveling at the wonder God created. I want to teach them to pray. I want them to live, breathe and take in all the things we take for granted. I want to be their respite in a scary world of bullies, peer pressure, term papers, relationships, and decisions. That's a Grandparent's dream.

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Never, oh never do we envision the other side of the story.

The phone call from the beloved daughter trying to get the words out, but all you hear is "Mama?" and you know. The nightmare of finding out at 34 weeks and six days that something isn't right with our baby. "We don't know yet. I'll keep you posted Mom."

Well, the kid I always prided on being communicative was quiet. Why hasn't she called? It has been 20 minutes. I call both her and my son-in-law, I text both, no answer. As each moment passes I knew the news wasn't going to be good.

Something happens when you become aware.

I was still hopeful. The phone rang, and I knew before my daughter said a word. I was already on my way to the hospital. I'll never forget where I was, on I-285 in Atlanta, 35 minutes from the hospital. I told my daughter I was on the way. It felt like I was trudging in frozen mud to get to her and all the while screaming like a mad woman.

They made a mistake! My granddaughter has a name, and a place in my heart so big that if I lose her I'll have a hole the size of a crater. All this mixed with the agonizing fear



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and worry for my child. My sweet, sensitive daughter. Damnit, this is so unfair! Why them? The two who always do everything right!

Something happens when you become aware.

This is a nightmare. She can't be gone! She was just here! We have a sonogram and a video and we just had a shower for God's sake! This has to be a mistake!

I tell myself, just get to this place called the Women's Pavilion, Room 112, and get to my daughter. When the automatic doors slid open and the girl glancing up at me from the reception desk saw my tear-streaked, crazed face she knew who I was. With pursed lips, she directed me through an agonizing labyrinth of hallways. I felt like Alice in Wonderland sliding down the rabbit hole. Deeper and deeper into a scary bad dream. Until finally I was met by a nurse. A sweet nurse. When she saw me tears sprang to her eyes. Damnit! Don't feel sorry for us, tell me it's OK and my child's child is alive and well! Tell me you made a mistake! God, please let this be a mistake. She hugged me.

Something happens when you become aware.

This is happening. Really happening.

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When I finally saw my daughter at the hospital, my first thought was her health and the grave severity of the situation. Her blood pressure was too high. Her face was overly swollen and she was placid. I can't lose my child today too. After I gathered my thoughts, assured her and loved on her, I stepped out of the room on a mission. I found our nurse and promptly told her, my child is sick. I know my baby and she's sick. Her face is so swollen and she isn't well. The nurse said she had some preeclampsia signs, but her blood panel was not positive for such.

So what happened? How did this happen? We don't know and we will never will.

The next three days went by slower and slower with each hour. If someone could put hell in a room, we were in it. I watched my child age before my eyes. Not the normal aging of wrinkles and grey hairs, but the type of aging that comes from debilitating loss.

Something happens when you become aware.

After getting confirmation that our baby was gone my daughter and son-in-law had to make a decision of when to start the labor and delivery. So many decisions. Sad, hard, mournful, morbid decisions. This is not how anyone should face the birth of a child.

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At the age of 28, my baby had to decide on things that would kill even the strongest of souls.

I now have a new profound understanding of morbid.

After three laboriously painful days, my baby had her baby. A perfect, beautiful, incredible angel of a baby. She's here. Thank God it is over. She's here. It's over.

And something happens when you become aware.

This is not really over. It's just a second act in a play of heartache and grief.

To see my baby hold her baby. How many women see this? Millions? Billions? But how many see what I saw? Tears and heartache from sweet parents that just wanted her to breathe. To live and love. To feel sweet chubby arms around their necks. To bury their heads in the precious smell of freshly bathed golden baby hair. To hear the giggles and cries. To earn the sleepless nights and still smile through it all. They held a sleeping baby that will never wake.

During this time of extreme agony, they made progress. How I don't know. They held our baby, they loved our baby, and they honored our baby. Photos were taken, promises made and goodbyes were said. My son-in-law told his daughter the story of

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how her parents met, and then they let go. They told her goodbye for the first and last time.

Something happens when you become aware.

She's not gone, she's in our hearts, and she's in the air, a song, a rainbow, a bluebird, a butterfly. She is everything beautiful- Cooper Kay.

The night of her birth I stood with my bear of a husband, my son-in-law's parents, my oldest daughter and her husband and we cried. Together, openly, unashamed, we cried. We stood in a room and watched a mother and father pour over a child that will not grow up. We mourned our loss. We did something incredible that night. We openly ached, hurt, and honored our baby. As a family. I will never forget it as long as I live. And never have I been more proud to be part of a Union. In the days and months to follow that night, I relive those moments in that room and I feel great comfort and peace from our time with Cooper Kay.

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Short Story: FLIGHT INTERVENTION

## FLIGHT INTERVENTION

I had flown into Cleveland, Ohio, September 13<sup>th</sup> to visit my daughter Ann, her husband John, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren. At 84 years of age, I had finally given in to using a wheelchair to trek through the Atlanta airport, "what a way to fly!" After a fun, family-filled week, I was flying home to Atlanta. Ann wanted to park and come in to see me off, but I convinced her to drop me at the door. I had a coat on my arm and my book in my hand as Ann handed me my rolling luggage. We kissed goodbye and I waved as she drove off.

I waited a few minutes behind other passengers to check in with the Southwest agent. As I reach for my purse and ID that agent Lisa requested, I very suddenly realized I had NO PURSE! I had no ID, no identification of any kind, and no money. It was on the floorboard of Ann's car. Lisa asked if I knew Ann's cell number. "No!" I knew John was at home and they have a landline, so Lisa attempted to call it on her cell phone, but was unable to access

landline information. I said "If you don't mind calling Monroe, Georgia, we can call my daughter Barb at the Monroe Library". She did reach Barb who I knew would not know Ann's cell phone number, but I suggested Barb could run home and retrieve my address book.

In the meantime, after about 15 minutes, Lisa came over and personally took my luggage to put it through security. Another 10 to 15 minutes go by; Lisa called me and Tamika, the young lady pushing my wheelchair, and said "take her through security". Tamika said there was no way they would let me through. Lisa urged her to "try". Tamika accessed the employee entrance to security and I speak to the TSA agent check-in before personal security. He directs us off to the side. The second TSA agent arrives and takes us to a more secluded and quiet spot. I needed to fill out a form with my personal information and then the third TSA agent arrives. I was amazed as all three agents were friendly, and smiling, probably with sympathy at the poor old lady without ID. They were all extremely helpful. I'll call the third agent "Tim" (don't want to get him in trouble), as he was put on hold as he tried to access my information. I think he said he was calling Somali? When connected Tim asked for my daughter's birthdate, gave me a pass, and apologized that I would have to go through extra security which involved taking off my shoes

and back brace. As Tamika and I roll to the farthest gate, I am apologizing because I don't have a dollar to tip her.

Back in Georgia, within ten speedy minutes, (luckily no Walton County Sheriff in sight), Barb was home, called Ann, NO ANSWER! Barb called the agent Lisa and then John. None of them could reach Ann. So John calls his daughter-in-law and asks "where is mom shopping?" Ann had gone to a mall not far from the airport, where a children's clothing store was going out of business. John called the store and had Ann paged. She was at the checkout counter with an arm-full of clothing. The sales clerk said "GO" and Ann took off. Ann calls the Southwest agent Lisa, and Lisa tells her to come directly to her desk, bringing only her ID and my purse.

Tamika and I are waiting at the departure gate. The only agent at the gate has taken another wheelchair passenger to the plane, everyone is waiting in line when I hear "MOM! MOM!" Ann is running through the airport, purse in one hand and her sandals in the other! She also had to go through security and did not take time to put her sandals back on!

Everyone in line is laughing and clapping as I give Ann a big hug and tipped Tamika. As we depart Cleveland I'm saying a thankful prayer for all the wonderful people who got me on this flight. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and it takes a village to help old ladies fly!



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Short Story

The Reunion

Most women remember their first loves. Some first loves are first kisses. Some first loves become forever partners. And then sometimes first loves are the stuff of daydreams and fantasies that never become reality, even though you pray and wish upon a star.

It's hard to imagine a man going through the same longing and wishing that a woman experiences when she finds herself obsessed with one boy, one man, whose look, whose personality, whose mere existence has captivated her brain. Some would call it lust, others puppy love, some might say just an unrealistic crush, but when you are ten years old, it's all you think about, dream about and live for, until you go to bed at night.

Yes, I was only ten years old in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade when I first laid eyes on Bruce Sheridan. He was the cutest boy in our grade. He wasn't in my classroom, Mrs. Jackson's class, but he sure stood out. He was the tallest boy in 4<sup>th</sup> grade at East Side Elementary. His high cheekbones, cool blue eyes, and bright white smile did something to my insides that I didn't really recognize at the tender age of ten. Nevertheless, I knew something special was going on in my body and my heart.

We had several chances to interact with each other back in 1955. There was Art Class, P.E., the May Pole Dance and Field Day. It was difficult at best for me to even speak to Bruce, let alone make eye contact with him. He and his mother had rented an apartment in a double duplex which faced our rental duplex. Mom and Dad felt quite comfortable letting me walk the four blocks home from school to the apartment; Bruce walked home too. What a fortuitous time it was; two years of heaven, walking home every day from school with him! His best friend Gene, and a cute little girl named Jeannie would walk with us for two blocks.

As our elementary school years passed, I still held a bright blazing torch for Bruce. All my besties knew that he was the ONE. Of course, nobody was "going steady" or dating in elementary school. The closest anybody came to having a boyfriend or girlfriend was writing a name on your book cover or passing a note to someone. You would get all hot and red if the note ever got intercepted by another student or holy smokes, mortification, if the teacher found it and read it out loud! But when middle school came around, at least three or four couples began going steady: Louise and Jeff, Gene and Leslie, and at least two others.

"Hi Susie," Bruce yelled across the field as he sprinted toward the hurdle; it seemed as if track and then basketball became Bruce's sports of choice all through middle school and into high school. He was a great basketball player, not always the tallest in high school anymore, but an outstanding player. I never missed a game, even if I had to bum a ride from someone.

Those years in middle school I would invite him to the Honor Society Dance as my date and then to the Sadie Hawkins Day Dance. His mother was instrumental in making him go. She was a lovely woman, a former model and an extremely poised lady whose divorce had left her penniless, but she taught Bruce how to be a gentleman and treat all women with respect. Secretly she felt sorry for me I know. I was chubby, wore glasses and became the quintessential nerd on campus in the Student Council, the Honor Society, and was awarded the DAR girl citizen of the year. The little bit of contrived time I had with Bruce was short lived; girls started swarming around him soon enough, and then my little tricks to get him to take me places ended with a whimper.

High school became a whole new set of social hurdles and crossroads. We were divided into Honors classes and Gifted classes. We traveled in groups and got divided into college bound and vocational school bound and before you knew it, we were in hard and fast cliques. Bruce wasn't on a college track; I was.

He dated and went steady with every Homecoming Queen, Prom Queen and cheerleader in the school. He was the classic definition of a hunk! His major appeal was his self-effacing personality, his sweet demeanor and his gentlemanly ways. His mother gets all the credit for that. No wonder the girls buzzed around him. He and I would always acknowledge each other, but after all, he was in a whole different category; I was in his friend zone.

After graduation we all went our separate ways: to college, to work, to the military, to vocational school. I went to Florida State and promptly forgot about high school in general, but I never forgot about Bruce Sheridan.

"Hey guys, we are all going down to the pizza place after freshman orientation, does anyone else want to go? It was Dave, the guy with the New England Boston accent asking. We were in the Sweet Shop across from Gilchrist, the FSU freshman dorm in 1963.

"Well okay, I'm game, but some upperclassman has to drive. None of us have cars."

"Let's just ask around," Dave declared in a confident tone.

That's how it was done. The freshmen weren't allowed to have cars on campus at FSU. Simply put, there just weren't enough parking places, seniors first, juniors second, then sophomores and, well, you get the picture. Some nice junior, Joel, I think it was, offered to take us to Mama Mia's Pizza and we all climbed into his car. It was quite like a Three Stooges' movie. No mandatory seatbelt law back then was on the books, so it was funny seeing us drive down the street packed in like sardines.

Dave was a tall, skinny guy with brown hair and piercing blue eyes. He was from a small town in Massachusetts named Worcester. His accent was so strange to me, especially since FSU and Tallahassee itself seemed like the Deep South, loaded with y'all's and sweet tea.

"So, Dave, what brings you all the way to Florida when you have so many great state colleges there in Massachusetts?" I probed.

"Well, honestly, my parents wanted to get me out of their hair. You see my brother and my two sisters are really smart, I mean off the charts. I'm the black sheep of the family. "

"So, you are saying that the rest of us here are just mediocre then, because we're going to a state school and not an Ivy League college up in Massachusetts?"

"Not exactly, but that would be what my parents are thinking. They really don't want to have to deal with me."

"Your folks are paying more tuition cuz you are out of state though, so I guess they **really** wanted you to go away to college!"

Dave and I began spending time together after that lunch at Mama Mia's, walking to classroom buildings, the dining room, the study halls, and the library. It became apparent that we enjoyed each other's company. At Christmas we flew to his home in Massachusetts, I met his parents and we drove back to FSU in a 1960 green and white Pontiac that his parents bought him for Christmas. That car probably cinched our whole relationship. It gave us the mobility to go everywhere and anywhere.

We became a steady item and went through college together. When we were seniors we got engaged on Valentine's Day and married on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1967. David was enrolled in graduate school, and he was deferred from the draft at that time, but midstream the law changed. Fortunately, after writing the Worcester Draft Board, he was able to finish his degree. He enlisted in the Air Force immediately after graduation to avoid being drafted into the Army. The Vietnam War was going on at the time. After three glorious tours, our final and third tour, was two years in England, the best of all.

On the long flight home from England across the Atlantic Ocean in 1972, I reminisced about how much my life had changed since high school graduation. It had been nearly ten years: I had gone to college, gotten married, had a child, traveled, and now I was ready to buy a home.

As I looked at Dave sitting next to me in that cargo plane, a prop jet at that, full of Air Force guys, I had a sudden realization: Dave was tall, 6 feet, had brown hair and blue eyes. Bruce was tall, 6 feet, had brown hair and blue eyes. Both Bruce and Dave had similar facial features too. It was really too coincidental to dismiss.

Three months after arriving in the States we bought a house. I was hired at a local high school to teach English and David got a wonderful job at a big computer firm. We were on our way! Little Kathy was enrolled in a Montessori School.

Dad forwarded some mail to me shortly after our move and a ten-year reunion notice came from Fort Lauderdale High School, Class of 1963. As luck would have it, we would be able to go. Dave and I had already talked thoroughly about all our former loves, relationships and high schools. My only revelation was my abiding crush on Bruce Sheridan.

As the reunion weekend drew closer, my weight loss and self-improvement campaign ramped up, double time. Luckily, I had six months to do it and I had bought the most glorious little black dress for the Saturday night dinner dance.

When the reunion weekend arrived, we made our way to the hotel room, unpacked, and attended the cocktail hour around the pool, no Bruce. Next day we spent at the beach, rented jet skis, had a cookout and cocktails, no Bruce. Saturday night, we spent time getting spruced up for the dinner dance in the Grand Ball Room. The word was that over 300 classmates had registered for the weekend out of a class of 600; that was a good showing, but many were just attending the dinner dance only.

Saturday night, Dave and I walked down the long hallway to sign in and find our nametags and our assigned tables around the Ballroom dance floor. I eagerly scanned the room. No dice. We began with wine and then I saw him. He had some young thing on his arm, a girl in hot pants! She had long blonde hair and looked like something out of a men's magazine. Could that be his wife? Poor thing, her outfit was so inappropriate, silver hot pants!

Everybody was walking around and visiting tables. Soon, no one was sitting down, we were all either dancing, walking on the dance floor, or talking in big groups of twenty or so. Midway through the chaos of all those people, Bruce found me and asked me to dance. I was in Heaven. Dave and the hot pants girl were nowhere to be found. They were fifth wheels anyway. Bruce held me closely; he really was so gentle and I knew that he meant more than just a friendly hug.

"Susie," he said quietly in my ear as I looked up at his ice blue eyes, "I am so sorry."

"I always loved you," I whispered.

"I know," he answered, as he held me out from his chest. His ocean blue eyes met mine and his tears began to overflow, "I have always loved you too," he whispered back. He kissed me softly and I knew then my wish upon a star had come true.

# **GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS**

## **SHORT STORY AWARD WINNERS**

### **STUDENT WINNERS**

#### **CATEGORY ONE**

No Entries

#### **CATEGORY TWO**

Sadie Kitey  
GFWC Dunwoody Woman's Club  
North West District

#### **CATEGORY THREE**

No Entries

#### **CATEGORY FOUR**

Sara Laine  
GFWC Gainesville-Phoenix Woman's Club  
North East District

#### **WOODBINE WOMAN'S CLUB STUDENT SHORT STORY AWARD**

Sadie Kitey  
GFWC Dunwoody Woman's Club  
North West District



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Dunwoody Woman's Club, Dunwoody, GA

Category 2, grade 4

Trying to Keep it in

### Trying to Keep it in

I'm Sarah. I have a secret that no one can know. I wear a blonde wig. My actual hair is white. When I was born my mom had a disease which caused me to have white hair. I am afraid if anybody knows they will make fun of me. Let me tell you about the time everything changed.

I was going to homeroom. When I got there somebody accidentally bumped me. My wig started to slide. I got so scared I ran straight for the bathroom. I stood in front of the mirror and started to fix it. My best friend Leah came running into the bathroom. Then she saw my hair, and yelled out, "Sarah has a wig, Sarah has a wig." Then a stampede of girls came running in.

I was so embarrassed for the rest of the day. Nobody would talk to me, not even my best friend Leah. When I got home, I told my parents everything that happened. They wrote the principle.

The next day when I got to school the principle said on the intercom, "It is not okay to gang up on people like that." While I was at home my parents had told me, "Don't feel bad about who you are. You are Sarah and only Sarah. Don't let anybody change who you are." So I went to the middle of the school and took off my wig and said that I am unique the way I am, and I like myself for who I am as a person.

I never wore my wig again. Every morning when I wake up I tell myself, "I am proud of who I am, and nobody can change me." Everybody started to get used to me, so I won't let anybody change me.

X X X X X



My mom still tells the story of the day she received her Envelope. It makes her Pass seem peaceful, y'know? Tranquil and calm. Not at all like mine.

I remember when I got my Envelope. God, was I scared. My mom tried to reassure me, "it's okay!" and "this Envelope won't dictate how you'll live!", but I wish she knew how wrong she was. On the Arrival Date (known as my birthday) the Envelope put a bit of a damper on the mood; we had cake, eighteen candles, sang, opened presents, and then waited for my Envelope to arrive. When we finally heard the knock at the door, Dad jumped up and patted me on the back.

"Well, son. It's for you."

He tried to hide his shaking hand but failed. We all were nervous. I went to the door and opened it. As expected, the government agent was there.

"Mr. Dylan Christopher Moore?" he asked.

"That'd be me." I feigned cheerfulness and weakly grinned at the man. His nametag read "FISHER, E." I tried to imagine what his first name was as he ran through his monotoned speech on the significance of the Envelope and the private information it contained.

Eric? Edward? Ethan? Maybe Eli. Eugene?

"...And you are under no obligation whatsoever to share the contents of the Terminating Discussion Envelope, more commonly known as simply The Envelope, with anyone other than your legal guardians..."

Elijah droned on. Or maybe Ezra. Emmett? Edgar, like that poet from almost three hundred years ago. What was his poem? The Crow? The Magpie? Some kind of evilish bird.

“...To conclude, happy eighteenth, Mr. Moore, and on behalf of the United States Department of Colloquy, may you speak these words late!” Edwin, Earl, or Ezekiel reached out to shake my hand and hand me the Envelope. I did so with a pit forming in my stomach.

Choking on the knot in my throat, I managed to croak out, “Thanks Mr. Fisher.”

“No problem, sir.” He responded and walked away. My family had gathered around me by then: Mom, Dad, Grandma, and my younger brother Asher.

“Dylan, do you need a minute?” My mom asked, gently touching my shoulder.

“Uh, sure. That sounds great. I’ll show you guys once I’ve processed it.”

Mom looked at me with eyes full of sympathy, “You can’t possibly think that your Envelope is going to permanently alter your life. It’s something everyone goes through at this point. We all get through it.” She gave me a quick hug. “More often than not, it’s your favorite quote or something calming. Our family rarely gets anything violent or scary. I promise it’ll be okay.”

As she said the last part, she looked to my dad. My dad is a 6’5 ex-Navy Admiral, one of the last before they were all replaced by bots, with muscles the size of boulders and fearless. I’ve never seen him look so afraid in my life, which, you can imagine, was not comforting at all.

“You’ll be good, son.” my dad said. He turned to my mom, “Adeline, let’s leave him to it.”

I stamped upstairs to my room. My feet pounding the hardwood mimicked the sound of my heart.

“Not a big deal, not a big deal, not a big deal” I kept telling myself. But if that was true, then why was I terrified? Flopping onto my bed, I turned the letter over in my hands. So small, yet it had the power to make me watch my speech carefully forevermore. Honestly, I considered not opening it and instead feeding it to my goldfish, Bowie and Glenn.

The address was handwritten in tiny neat letters. It almost looked typed except for a small smudge in the corner. The letter had a thick red seal stamped with the logo of the Department of Colloquy, or as I call them, the Conversation Police. Everything about the presentation was very old fashioned. Nobody sent letters anymore; mailboxes had been virtually obsolete for fifty years. The only time you got letters was if you adopted a kid, were summoned to court, or receiving your Envelope. And those three times they were hand delivered by a government agent and never saw a Pots Office. Pots Office? Maybe it was Post Office. Either way, we haven't had those since everything went digital.

Finally, I carefully pried off the seal so cautiously you would've thought a wrong move would detonate it. I pulled out a thick sheet of paper, almost like cardstock and unfolded it. It too, was handwritten. The thought that somebody out there spent time everyday writing down Sentences in Envelopes made me shudder. Somewhere in some unseen government bunker, somebody knows the contents of my Envelope. That's way too much personal information. The cardstock had only four things on it: My full name, my parents' names, my birthday, and my Sentence.

I think I read my Sentence thirty times minimum. Full disclosure, I saw stars and got tunnel vision, but I vowed to never tell Asher. I took deep breaths and splashed a bit of water on

my face like you always hear about in movies. I'm here to tell you that water splashing does not help and just makes you look sweaty and feel worse than before. I grabbed the letter and shakily headed downstairs. My dad was waiting at the bottom, pacing.

"Hey, how'd it go?" My dad asked, quickly throwing on a happy face.

"Fine. It went fine. Everything's fine. Fine." I stuttered. After that, all I remember is waking up on the couch with an ice pack under my neck and my mom cooing. My first thought was not, "whoa, how did I get here?" or "what happened!?" but, "Ash is never gonna let me live this down."

"We waited for you to wake up to look." My mom smiled, stroking my arm.

"Yes." I mumbled, still a bit groggy.

Asher stood over me, and I could see him recording. I bet he'd tell his loser friends I was hungover. Brat. If I were feeling better, I would've reminded him that I was older and therefore was unafraid to pound him into a bloody pulp. But I never would because I like threatening more than I like actually injuring my little brother.

"Quit recording me." I tried to say, but it probably sounded more like "Cwid rebrdigmi." Luckily, my grandma understood, grabbed Ash by the ear, and dragged him into the hallway.

"We aren't trying to rush you. You can share whenever you're ready... As long as it's today. The clock's ticking and you've got approximately 22 hours, 13 minutes, aaaaaaand about 55 seconds. 54.. 53.." My dad counted.

“No, no, I’m good.” I sat up. Mom went and got the letter from across the room and placed it into my hands. “You know,” I started, “If I had the choice, I wouldn’t show this to you.” My dad laughed. “I didn’t want to show mine either. What kind of words are ‘A kiss before I go?’” Makes me sound like a wuss. My family was convinced the government would reissue my Envelope after I joined the Navy. I hoped that was true.”

“Can Envelopes be reissued?” I asked.

“Wishful thinking. Never heard of it happening.”

My mom piped in, “Don’t forget my words, ‘Oh, don’t worry, I feel so much better now!’ Whatever that means?”

“At least you know you’ll feel better, I guess?” My dad chuckled. Always trying to lighten the mood. I bet he was fun to hang out with as a kid. Of course, I can never say that because that would boost his ego.

“But back to you, hon.” Mom turned to me and sat down beside me. My dad took his iconic seat in the old red family recliner.

“Before we start, I don’t want to scare you. And... And I don’t want you to be worried.” I unfolded the letter. My dad’s eyes were focused on a spot in the carpet where our old Husky had scratched it bald years before. My mom grabbed my hand; she felt like ice.

“Why don’t you read it?” I handed Mom the letter. “I’m not sure I really want to do that whole passing out thing again.” I was halfway joking and halfway serious. I really need to curb that habit of using humor as a coping mechanism when things get stressful or scary. It makes it a

little difficult because people wonder, "Is Dylan dying or making an actual joke?" and I probably shouldn't stick important people in that situation like nurses in the hospital when you break your leg.

Mom took the letter. Maybe I shouldn't have prefaced it that way. It was a little more threatening than intended.

I tried to calm my nervous parents, but I still didn't succeed: "It's a little heavy. I'm just warning you that you probably don't want to think about it for the rest of my life." I watched my mom open the letter. Looking back, I think she was really pale. Right then I wasn't thinking about much other than my Envelope. As she read, her hands flew to her face. I saw her eyes trace over the sentence one, two, fifteen times. By that point, Dad was standing over her shoulder looking equally petrified.

"I'm sorry... I didn't mean... I don't want..." I tried to apologize because, wow, did I feel guilty. Like when you go swimming and you slowly submerge yourself in the water and you can feel your dry parts slowly go under and then you're floating in open water: that's how I was with the guilt. Gradually, then all at once, my government-issued sentence became my fault. I felt like I had asked for that sentence. Handpicked it. But of course, I hadn't. Knowing the pain that sentence would cause my parents would be reason enough to choose something different. I wish I could have chosen.

"It's not your fault." My dad said, his voice cracking. I turned sharply to my mom just in time to see her wipe away what I think was a tear with the back of her hand.

"Mom?" I asked, panic rising. "Are you okay?"

“Yes, it’s ... not what I expected.” She smiled but I saw it was forced. When she really smiles, her eyes crinkle up and the right side of her mouth rises up more in a sort of smirk. Usually she’s laughing too, like the time Ash first joined the laser hockey team and had a terrible season but somehow got the whole family to have Official Moore Family Laser Hockey Tournaments for practice. Even grandma played. Ash wouldn’t settle until the day he got carried off on the shoulders of his teammates. Mom was there, grinning like a maniac and snapping so many pictures I thought her camera lens would fall off. That was a real smile. This smile didn’t match.

I said I was going to go to bed, that I was tired. I smiled and acted like I was at peace with my Envelope in a feeble attempt to make them feel better. That’s pretty much where the clarity of my memory stops; the rest of the night is a blur. I’m not sure why. Was it the nerves of the whole situation? Was it thoughts of anguish my family was going to feel? But when? I just don’t know.

Since my eighteenth birthday, I have thought about what my Sentence could have been. What I wish it was.

“I’ll miss you.”

“Hey, we’ll see each other again.”

“Don’t cry for me.”

“Raise the kids well, take care of them.”

“Don’t ever forget I love you.”

"A kiss before I go?"

"Oh, don't worry, I feel so much better now!"

Anything but mine.

Anything but "Don't worry, I'm not afraid to die, I'm just going to miss you, Mom and Dad."

What a terrible set of last words my Envelope had.



**GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS  
POETRY AWARD WINNERS  
MEMBER WINNERS**

**CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT**

Laedenia Jewell  
GFWC Athens-Oconee Junior Woman's Club

**CENTRAL WEST DISTRICT**

Anne Fordham ~ GFWC Morrow Civic Woman's Club

**NORTH EAST DISTRICT**

Renette Todd ~ GFWC Gainesville-Phoenix Woman's Club

**NORTH WEST DISTRICT**

Billie Harris ~ GFWC Atlanta Woman's Club

**SOUTH EAST DISTRICT**

No Entries

**SOUTH WEST DISTRICT**

Genie McCook ~ GFWC Tifton Twentieth Century Library Club

**THE EMILY BRONTE POETRY AWARD**

Billie Harris  
GFWC Atlanta Woman's Club



Nature.....and Women

by Billie Harris

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GFWC Georgia  
Poetry (Member)  
Nature...and Women

A man and woman strolled through the park on a windy, but pleasant morn.

The man saw a bench, decided to sit, and asked the woman to join.

He took her hand and gave a sigh, as he admired the swaying trees.

He turned to the woman and affectionately said, "You're very much like these.

Confused and uncertain of what he meant, she looked at him with a frown.

Before she could open her mouth to speak, he pointed to the ground.

"Mother Earth", he said lovingly, "She's as beautiful as the days are long.

She gives of herself unconditionally, she's nurturing, forgiving....she's strong.

From her grows life, like flowers and trees, and boy don't we need those!

She gives and she gives and barely gets back the love and care she knows."

By now the frown has manifested itself to more of a wondrous gaze.

For the woman is no longer confused by him, but instead she is amazed.

"And here I thought for all these years, that you weren't paying any attention.

To all that I do and all who I am, to you.....and others, not to mention.

I'm flattered by the expression of your sentiments for nature and how you think we compare.

Oh how I wish others would see the world through your eyes and be more aware,

Of all the things they're doing that destroys our beautiful earth.

How disheartening it is that so many people don't realize its worth.

Hey! I have a great idea...here's what we can do to help.

Let's both become advocates for Mother Earth, and recruit others like ourselves."

"But where do we start? What do we do? And how do we find these folks?"

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GFAU Georgia  
Poetry Member  
Nature and War

"This is the age of the internet, it's as simple as a click....no joke!"

Let's finish our walk and take this time to focus on our plan,

To educate and bring awareness to every boy, girl, woman, and man.

This will be great, I'm super excited. Do you realize what we are taking on?

We're about to help save Mother Earth, and we won't stop until it's done!"

Now the man began to look confused, as he scratched his head.

"I never imagined that all of this would come from what I said.

I was honestly just trying to be romantic, and thought nature would be the perfect setting,

To express my appreciation and love for you and Mother Earth was just so befitting."

"But au contraire mon amour, what you've done could possibly be,

A way to make sure that we have a place, to share more walks like these."

## Listen

Take a deep breath and count to ten,  
don't let their negative words sink in.  
Learn to listen to that small still voice,  
the one that brings with it your free choice.  
Let it lead and guide you, without fear,  
that is how you know God is near.  
You may not know the why or the how,  
you may not even understand why now.  
Trust in the Lord with all your might,  
and sometime soon you will see the light.  
Listen to that small still voice,  
and be happy that you made the right choice!

## The Journey

Arne Fordham  
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Morrow Civic Woman's Club

Many, oh so many, years ago

Three men on camels traveled slow

Following the path they had studied afar;

Now they drew closer to that bright, beautiful star.

This is the way the stories and the manger scenes portray

The three Magi visiting the baby from far, far away.

The real story, of course, was not the same,

For they did not see the baby on Christmas night, as so many have claimed.

Several years later they found him at last.

They worshiped and adored Him, and in His presence they basked.

The gifts they brought (myrrh, frankincense, and gold)

Had traveled with them the whole time

Over many countries, so bold.

Today we, too, travel to worship our king.

No longer to a baby the carols we sing.

We come with questions crowding our brains,

The answers we want for a world gone insane.

GEORGIA

Poetry

"The Journey"

Anne Fordham  
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 Morrow Civic Woman's Club

We believe that our Jesus now occupies the throne,

Along with God and the Spirit, the three in one.

If we did not have the hope the baby began so long ago,

The hope that continued when our Christ suffered for us so,

What could we do with the questions we bring?

There would be no answers, and we would not be able our carols to sing.

In spite of the turmoil, the suffering, the strife,

We all know the answers after this terrible life.

It isn't forever we will feel the dismay,

For Jesus is coming for all of us some day.

He will conquer the evil, the sickness, the sad;

And, with Him, all will travel as the Magi traveled so glad.

Today let's sing our carols;

Let's worship that baby boy

Because His birth will lead us some day

To a time ever after... A time of pure joy.

Georgia  
 Poetry  
 "The Journey"

Renette Todd  
GFWC Gainesville Phoenix Woman's Club  
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MAX

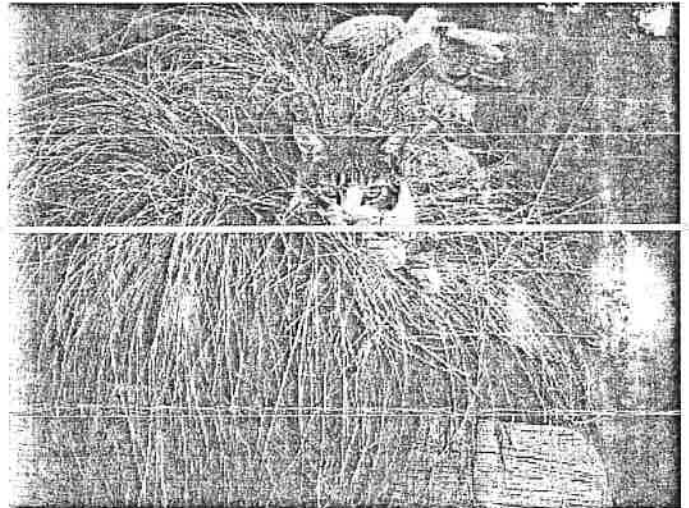
In the warmth of the sun I lie  
Nothing pressing have I,  
Sleeping peacefully, I try  
Until a motion I spy.

For mom's warm strokes I crave  
A reward for being brave  
A stroke of love, a touch of gold  
All for me, I'm told.

A tiny sound awakens me  
Looking around I finally see...  
Quietly, the green thing looks at me  
Hoping, I'm sure, I'll flee.

But, not to happen my friend  
As you might guess, this could be his end.  
I pounce across the floor  
To chomp a lizard once more.

Back to the warmth of the sun I seek  
Don't mistake lazy, as meek  
For until it's dinner time,  
I will just bide my time.





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Tifton Twentieth Century Library Club  
Tifton, Georgia  
GFWC Member Poetry Writing Contest  
***My Husband***

I watch as the sun comes up.  
The joy of living fills my cup.  
My husband stands by my side.  
He hands me coffee as I confide,  
How much I love this life we share.  
He shows his love in so many ways.  
He brings fun and laughter to my days.  
There's never been a problem I couldn't face,  
With my husband beside me with his quiet grace.  
Many times he wiped my tears,  
Soothed away my silly fears,  
Comforted me when I was sad,  
Calmed me down when I was mad.  
I can't imagine another life, or being anyone else's wife

**When I look at him I still see,**

**The young man I married at age twenty-three.**

**He is still tall and handsome with eyes of blue,**

**And he still melts my heart through and through.**

# **GFWC GEORGIA FEDERATION OF WOMEN'S CLUBS**

## **POETRY AWARD WINNERS**

### **STUDENT WINNERS**

#### **CATEGORY ONE**

No Entries

#### **CATEGORY TWO**

CoCo Owens  
GFWC Dunwoody Woman's Club  
North West District

#### **CATEGORY THREE**

Ava Denalsky  
GFWC Bremen Junior Woman's Club  
Central West District

#### **CATEGORY FOUR**

No Entries

#### **THE DUNWOODY WOMAN'S CLUB POETRY AWARD**

Ava Denalsky  
GFWC Bremen Junior Woman's Club  
Central West District



Coco Owens

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Dunwoody, GA 30338

Cassie1262@gmail.com

404-493-2112

Dunwoody Woman's Club, Dunwoody, GA

Category 2, grade 4

Lakes

### LAKES

The sparkling navy pool of water

Shimmers, like stars in the night,

As it reflects like a big, round mirror.

I watch, as it twinkles like light.

Countless drops of water, all formed into one,

Makes me want to see how it is done.

The amazing water, still as a statue,

Makes me see how the beauty will catch you.

X X X X X

Ava Denaisky  
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Bremen Junior Woman's Club  
GFWC Georgia  
Poetry  
Robin Hood  
Category 3

# Robin Hood

An animal filled poem

Robin Hood was a sneaky fellow

Just like a clever fox

And that weasel of a sheriff

Tried to trap him in a box

One day Robin met a bear

His name was Little John

He decided to join Robin Hood

From that day on

The little fox grew a band

Of frisky, robbing friends

They stole from the rich to feed to the poor

But this is not the end

When Good King Richard, the friendly lion

Came back to little Nottingham

He met with Robin in disguise

Richard asked, "Are you the thief Robin Hood"

He answered, "Yes I truly am!"

"I steal berries from birds and nuts from squirrels

To give to poor, poor lambs

To help Good King Richards people

For he is a very good man."

The King invited Robin Hood  
To his palace for a party  
In the honor of Robin's duties  
Everything was quite hearty!

They ate all day and danced all night  
And played all kinds of games  
Everyone had a jolly good time  
Even all the king's men and all the king's dames

Robin Hood was a sneaky fellow  
Just like a clever fox  
And that weasel of a sheriff  
Will never trap him in that box.

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GFWC Georgia  
Poetry  
Robin Hood  
Category 3





100

100

