

The background of the cover is a photograph of a red brick wall with green ivy leaves climbing over it. The ivy leaves are heart-shaped with prominent veins. The wall has a warm, reddish-orange hue. The title and volume information are presented in white text on dark rectangular backgrounds.

Hedera helix 2008

Volume V
Literary Journal
of
Sigma Kappa Delta

The National English Honor Society for
Two-Year Colleges



Hedera helix

2008

Journal of Creative Writing
Sigma Kappa Delta
The National English Honor Society
for Two-Year Colleges

Editor of Publications
Jan Anderson

Editorial Committee
Michelle Mendoza
Dan Byford

Graphic Design Artist
Beth Butler

Proofreader
Janet Kincherlow-Martin

Purpose of Sigma Kappa Delta

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

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

Access www.english2.org for complete eligibility requirements.



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

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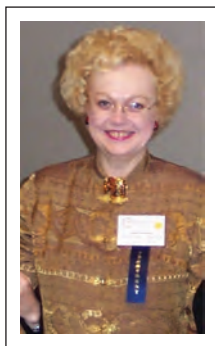
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Copies of *Hedera helix* may be obtained at the cost of \$5.00 per copy by contacting Jan Anderson, Editor of Publications, ΣΚΔ National Headquarters, Calhoun Community College, P.O. Box 2216, Decatur, AL 35609.

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In Memory of Dr. Linda Kraeger



Neither our chapters nor our members are sheltered from the dangers of this world. $\Sigma\text{K}\Delta$ has chapters and members directly affected by the events of 9-11, Hurricane Katrina, the Iraqi War, and other recent disastrous events.

As this edition of *Hedera helix* neared publication, we received news of yet another tragedy that touches our organization. Former national $\Sigma\text{K}\Delta$ president Dr. Linda Kraeger lost her life in the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church shooting in Knoxville, Tennessee, on July 27, 2008. Dr. Kraeger devoted the last several years of her teaching career to Sigma Kappa Delta and edited and published the first volume of *Hedera helix*. She served as sponsor of Phi Alpha Chapter at Grayson County College in Denison, Texas, until her retirement. We mourn the senseless loss of one of our own and dedicate this issue of *Hedera helix* to her. Knowing Linda, I am certain she would have the highest praise for the students whose work is presented here.

2008 SKD Contest Winners

Literary Journal

The Muse

Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College
Sponsors Jill Chadwick and
Leigh Ann Rhea

Photography

3rd Place

22

Kathryn McAdams
Omicron Gamma Chapter
North Lake Community College

Essay

My Kazakhstan Experience

Diane Floate

Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

The Dr. William C. Johnson

Transfer Scholarship

Jessica Schultz
Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

Poetry

Curses on a Keepsake

Dawn Olsen

Beta Delta Chapter
Iowa Western Community College

The Dr. Don Perkins Service Scholarship

Diane Floate
Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

Literary Analysis

The Choice: Sorrow or Pleasure

Diane Floate

Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

Short Fiction

The Shattered Mandible

Anthony Wright

Phi Beta Chapter

Amarillo College

The Dr. Susan LeJeune Service Scholarship

Margaret Rodriquez
Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

Photography

1st Place

Secret

Kathryn McAdams
Omicron Gamma Chapter
North Lake Community College

Service Scholarships

Brianna Lovell
Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College

Photography

2nd Place

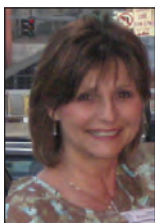
Daydream

Marie Vena

Chi Gamma Chapter
Collin County Community College

Sarah Sneed
Epsilon Alpha Chapter
Northeast AL Community College

Michelle Mendoza
Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College



From the Editor . . .

I never cease to be amazed at two-year college students. I delight in their achievements, their adventures, and their discoveries. This year, the board of directors added a black and white photography contest to our national competitions. The entries were fabulous! Sigma Kappa Delta members not only write, they also have other wonderful talents and interests. Proof of that is on the pages of this journal, and I know you will enjoy the entries and take heart in our students, just as I do. Let us continue to encourage our members to produce and share quality works.

The national conference in Louisville, Kentucky, in March was, as always, an exceptional experience. Watching students from different regions of the country arrive as strangers and leave three days later as friends who have found common interests is inspirational. Words cannot express the value of the conference experience for ΣKD members and sponsors. Not only do they bask in the awards and scholarships bestowed upon them, they have opportunities to mix and mingle with upperclassmen from larger colleges and with writers who have made a mark in the publishing world. Conference is truly a learning event and an overall joy. I hope you will plan to join us in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the 2009 conference.

Please encourage ΣKD members to submit writings and/or photographs to the 2008-2009 national competitions. Entry guidelines and forms are on our website at www.english2.org. The national headquarters is always available to serve you, so feel free to contact us any time.

Jan Anderson
Editor of Publications

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Table of Contents

Curses on Keepsake / Dawn Olsen / 7

A Sense of Shelter / Dawn Olsen / 8

Golden / Dawn Olsen / 9

Regrets / Katherine Rose Norcross / 10

Full Moon (photo) / Ginger Jones / 10

My Kazakhstan Experience / Diane Floate / 11

Dye by the Bottle / Deborah Stevenson / 13

Secret (photo) / Kathryn McAdams / 15

Ida of the Wasatch / Deborah Stevenson / 16

The Shattered Mandible / Anthony Wright / 20

Daydream (photo) / Marie Vena / 23

The Choice: Sorrow or Pleasure / Diane Floate / 24

22 (Photo) / Kathryn McAdams / 25

Some Men Do Go Both Ways / 26 / Dawn Olsen

Curses on a Keepsake

All I have of yours
Is my wavy brown hair,
A pendant for being dramatic,
My crooked teeth.
All I have to keep that you once touched
Is a postcard
From a tropical shoreline
That was shoved into our mailbox
On my fifth birthday,
The ink blurred by rain, Aruba, the postmark:

*You were beautiful
Here is the weather*

Mother cursed; I knew to expect a sequel.
I saw my convictions squashed cake by cake.
I studied the glossy picture,
Inspecting each grain of sand for footprints.
But the camera, like me,
Was unable to hold you.
I imagined you as a pirate;
One with a gold tooth and an eye patch
That sat beyond the palm tree
Under my left thumb—
A better place to put you
Than the Kettle Moraine prison
Where I heard you slept.
I grabbed memory's snapshots, pieced a collage:
Cotton candy on my tongue,
The smell of popcorn,
And small shoes with red bows.
My ribs faintly remembered the support
Of your forearm as you carried me,
The warmth of your chest against my shoulder blades.
But there was no voice to replay, no face.

On sheets of blank paper,
I rearrange your words to make them say
The things you should have written—

*The weather is beautiful
Wish you were here*



Dawn Olsen 

Beta Delta Chapter
Iowa Western Community College
2008 Poetry Winner

A Sense of Shelter

Amidst the hills of earth
A towering magnolia stands—
Hollow on the inside,
Its leaves
Draped over a crinoline of branches.

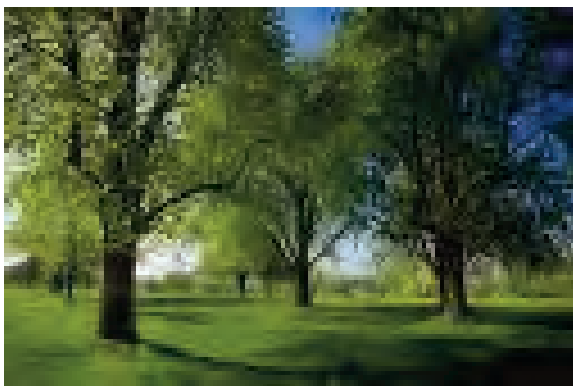
On days when my father
Delivered eulogies from behind his oaken pulpit,
I concealed myself under the magnolia—
The smooth, waxy leaves and
Lavish blossoms shielding me from the Light.

I would play in the dust,
Stirring it with a small finger
Until clouds of grit choked me—
The same earth used to fill the yawning holes that
Lay waiting, forever waiting, behind me.

On days when I hid under the magnolia,
I scattered the frail white blossoms—
The heavy fragrance settling on my tongue;
Chasing away the taste of death.

Dawn Olsen

Beta Delta Chapter
Iowa Western Community College



Golden

There is no lovers' lane behind the old grocery store;
There are only crates and empty bottles.
It takes bona fide romantics to cauterize the ordinary,
Or sixteen-year-old hearts with an absolute truth,
Living Moment for Moment,
Breath for Breath.

No doubt they believe there is a top ten song
From the nineteen-fifties
That is so careful about love that it keeps
His old Ford
In the family through the first anniversary,
First house,
And first child.

They grow older, age gracefully,
And erase the grease mark
In the old abandoned parking lot.
But as every small town knows,
High school lovers have the rest of their lives
To grow back into their clothes.

On their fiftieth anniversary, the same couple,
Though in a brand new Ford,
Can no longer distinguish their hands
From each other, especially by touch.

I wonder what the grandchildren think...
Their sweaty, sixteen-year-old hearts
In the back seat,
Their seventy-year-old clothing on the floor.



Dawn Olsen

Beta Delta Chapter
Iowa Western Community College

Regrets

Under our common sky we chased pure clouds,
Sprawled on lush grass and drafted common dreams,
Challenged night's stars to grant our wish that seemed
More sweet than words could state, or life allow.
Our cold, clear vista caught brief glimpses how,
And air was fresher here, and grass more green
Running between our worlds: you planned my schemes,
I workshopped yours; the heavens were ours—for now.
But if bright stars go veiled within my night
Of northern smoke from factories churning out
New futures, I'm forgiven to be blind;
And if your southern skies betray no sight
Of hasty plans that turned—we know about
The way clouds sail apart—from sight and mind.

Katherine Rose Norcross

Iota Gamma Chapter
Heartland Community College

Full Moon



Photo By

Ginger Jones

Theta Beta Chapter

Calhoun Community College

My Kazakhstan Experience

Sitting on the international flight to the Central Asian country of Kazakhstan, I thought I was prepared for a new cultural experience vastly different from my American one. I had never been more wrong in my life; I was far from being prepared to encounter the different culture awaiting me. I would soon learn that I had never experienced fear, anonymity, and discrimination in as few steps and as little time as I did in the Kazakh airport and on the taxi ride to the motel.

Arriving in Kazakhstan after nearly thirty hours of traveling, my friends and I exited the mammoth-sized airplane and trudged down the cramped elongated walkway into the airport. As we entered the bustling airport, we felt as if we had stepped into another world. The atmosphere changed from easygoing and casual to militant and severe. We each had to stand in a different line to have our passports and other documents inspected. When my turn came to submit my papers for inspection, the overbearing man in a military-type uniform snatched my papers out of my hand. Shocked at his hostile demeanor, I hesitantly smiled up at him. In response, he glared at me and continued to examine my papers. Finally, after confirming that all the documents were accounted for, the disgruntled employee shoved the papers into my hands and waved me through with a look of intolerance. Thus, an overriding fear began to pump swiftly through my veins.

As I walked through the airport with my companions, waves of alarm and uneasiness began to roll over me. Everywhere I turned, I felt like people were staring at me. Men, mostly of Middle-Eastern and Central-Asian descent, glared at me with looks of animosity and disgust. Trying to understand the employee's severe actions and the stares of these other men, I looked around and realized that I was the only American woman in the entire place. Then, I remembered information that I had read before going to Kazakhstan concerning one cultural difference between Central-Asian countries and the United States - men in these countries do not hold women, especially American women, in high respect. In fact, men in Kazakhstan and neighboring countries are domineering toward all women. My apprehension and dread intensified.

After we gathered our bags from the one baggage claim area in the airport, we went in search of our Kazakh guide and translator. Shuffling through the overcrowded terminal, we finally arrived at the airport entrance. We saw two men dressed in oversized wool coats waving at us. They greeted each of my companions, all men, and extended their hands for manly handshakes. The younger of the two said, "I am Alexei. I will be your guide and translator. This is my friend, Sergei. He will be transporting you to your motel tonight." Then, he asked for introductions from the men. Even though I was standing in the center of our group, Alexei and Sergei never made eye-to-eye contact with me. Furthermore, they never asked to be introduced to me. For this reason, I felt they had intentionally ignored and excluded me. I was invisible to them. At that moment, my anonymity began.

As we prepared to go to the motel, Alexei and Sergei told us to follow them to the taxi. When our group headed toward the double doors that led outside into the frigid night, Kevin, our appointed leader, came up behind me and said, "Diane, do exactly what I tell you. Do not look to your right or your left. Look straight ahead. Walk as fast as you can. Do not stop for anything or anyone. Go! Go, now!" My fear skyrocketed. Until that moment, I had not realized how dangerous this trip was for a woman or that my life could be imperiled.

Upon reaching the taxi, an old, battered, decrepit van, I hustled inside. The interior of the van was as dilapidated as the outside. The tattered and torn bench-like seats reminded me of church pews with one exception - they faced one another. With everyone facing each other, the men began to talk as we made our way toward the motel. Alexei asked my male comrades all sorts of questions. He engaged all of them in conversation, but he continued to ignore me. I did not exist in his or Sergei's eyes. I was completely shunned as if I carried a mark of *The Scarlet Letter* on my forehead. As a result of just a few minutes of anonymity in this foreign country, I began to feel more isolated and alone than I had ever felt in my life.

While sitting in the darkness of isolation, I realized that discrimination can happen in all walks of life. In Kazakhstan, I was discriminated against not simply as a woman but as an American woman. As minutes turned into hours, hours turned into days, and days turned into weeks, my journey took me into the heart of prejudice and antipathy. Traveling from place to place within Kazakhstan, I continued to face paralyzing bigotry and domineering commands. For example, at our motel, Alexei approached me for the first time and said, "You are to go to your room and lock the door. You are not to come out for any reason. You will not come out until morning. Do you understand?" In short, my days of fear, isolation, and discrimination would continue until my journey's end.

Even though a few years have passed since my Kazakhstan experience, the memory of the fear, anonymity, and discrimination I felt in the male-dominated society continues to resonate inside me. Often, I have pondered the treatment of women in countries such as Kazakhstan. Although I walked in their footsteps of subjugation for only a brief moment, I realized that one's security, identity, and respect can be captured by a single step in a single minute. As a result of my enlightenment, I found a new sense of empathy for women around the world who face these trials.



Diane Floate

Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College
2008 Essay Winner



Dye by the Bottle

The walk to the barn where my washer and dryer are is very long—the distance is more alarming when I’m tired. Before my husband and I decided to reconcile our differences by the only plausible method, divorce, he conveniently located my laundry room across the field, on the other side of a muddy red ditch, a mere quarter mile there and back. It’s still dark outside, but I must put in a load of towels the kids need for their morning showers. The grass is on the up side of tall and has lost all fear of the mower; the morning dew soaks my feet and my housecoat below my knees. I drag my son’s sheets and bedspread from the dryer, flopping them into the round, white laundry basket to carry back to the small, dozing farmhouse.

No hint of light yet shows in the eastern sky. However, I make out the worn trail that forms a beeline between the house and barn - or at least I think I do. What I cannot make out is the skunk hunkered down beside my narrow, well-worn cow trail. That doesn’t matter the tee-tiniest though since he sees me. When I hear the peculiar sound of liquid being forced out of a high pressure nozzle, I stop and look around. That’s when I see the broad white stripe on a hunk of pitch black in the grass. He is two feet from me. I see that my superior smelling alleles will be no blessing today.

“Aren’t skunks supposed to run after they spray?” I ask myself. My eyes run; my nose runs; the skunk does not run. He just sits there turning his tail up at the world - as if I am the world this morning, and I am.

A hundred thoughts can run through our minds in a matter of seconds; it’s really amazing. I consider trying to trap the blatantly brave little fellow and immediately find myself wondering if he has enough juice to spray me again, and if so, whether I would really smell much worse. I could dump out the sheets (they’ll have to be rewashed anyway) and trap him in my laundry basket, but he wouldn’t have to be Houdini to escape through the broken plastic straps. Even if he sat docilely, I would eventually have to get him out. Therein lies the problem. That would have to be done with a long pole, I think. Then I experience a moment of epiphany - that’s why skunks are called pole cats! I leave him flipping his tail to the world beside the trail where he found me.

At 3:15 a. m., I strip off my dripping housecoat and clogs to enter the house. Five minutes later, I turn from the cupboard to find my three kids confronting me with watering eyes and running noses. “It’s not time to get up,” I tell them. “Go back to bed, or you’ll be tired at school today.”

“But we can’t breathe!” they whimper.

“Pretend you can,” I tell them.

I suddenly feel like “Ole Mother Hubbard.” Not that my cupboards are bare, but they don’t have what I’m looking for between the boxes of Hamburger Helper and Minute Rice. So I get into the shower and douse myself with apple cider vinegar, the miracle worker that ranks right up there with duct tape. I’m hoping it will perform the same magic tomato juice is purported to. I think, perhaps, a full bottle of apple cider vinegar dumped on the head and spread

over the body smells worse than skunk. I'm not sure. My stomach feels like I've swallowed a ball of fire. I fight back the urge to heave as I stand in the shower stall with ice cold vinegar soaking into my hair, dripping down my face, coursing into my eyes, and on down to my body until I'm covered with goose bumps and bowed over with nausea. I have a sudden sympathy for pickles, the sour ones especially.

I turn on the shower. That's a big no-no. The smell has intensified under the steamy water by about a hundred times. I try my shampoo anyway, but it does nothing to appease my senses. "I'm suffocating," I think as my sinuses continue to empty of their own accord. I vaguely hear unified wailing from my two teens and my in-be-tween as they fend for themselves in the cruel, foul world - as if the world is our house this morning, and it is. Unfortunately, my instinct right now is not to save my children, but to save myself. Off goes the water as I simultaneously fling back the shower curtain with one deft sweep of my hand and grope for a towel I can put to my nose to breathe through.

"Shit fire!" I think. Well, actually, I mutter those foul words. OK, the truth is that I shout them with a healthy dose of exasperation as my hand feels the bare metal shelf, and I remember the towels out in the barn that caused me to get sprayed in the first place.

Ever so cautiously, I open one burning eye and seize the last raggedy wash cloth stuffed dejectedly in the corner of the shelf. I completely dry off with the threadbare cloth, wringing it out as often as necessary. We can do anything when we have to except wash skunk spray away with vinegar.

As I stumble into the kitchen, my teary-eyed kids cry out in agony, "Oooh Mom—maa!"

"Don't even start!" I growl in a zero-tolerance tone that school administrators would envy.

"But Momma! The whole house stinks!"

I relent. "Try this," I say, handing my daughter a bottle of Febreze Air Freshener. "Then go on back to bed."

Once again, I peruse my kitchen cabinets looking for tomato anything. I consider the garlic and onion spaghetti sauce before chancing upon two cans of diced tomatoes which I opt to use instead. Frugally, I pour the tomato juice onto my hair, working a few drops in at a time until the juice is gone from both cans. I take the tomato pulp and rub it over as much of my body as possible.

"That's better," I think, but the smell of vinegar and skunk lingers. I contemplate the new 58-oz. jar of Listerine. I only have to endure it for 30 seconds I tell myself, 45 seconds for good measure. I feel the burn. At least now my body is tingly and fresh, even if I don't smell that way. I dry off with a kitchen dish towel, and I dress. I consider the blow dryer, but despite evidence against me, I'm not a masochist, so I ditch that thought.

My hair finally dries. I note that it has changed from dark brunette to coppery red. I remember the bottle of Listerine and pull the empty container out of the trash looking for something that says, perhaps, "whitening," but the manufacturers didn't have the foresight to issue that warning. "Darn it," my tan is gone too, I notice. "Live by the bottle, dye by the bottle," I always say, as if al-

ways is this morning, and it is.

The sky is graying, and I see the skunk digging up my tulips. I wonder if he is eating tulip bulbs or if he is, perhaps, eating insects that are on the bulbs. I make a mental note to look up the dietary habits of skunks, knowing I never will. "Buy tomato juice," I write on my list of things to do, and I do.



Deborah Stevenson

Epsilon Alpha Chapter
Northeast Alabama Community
College
2008 Conference Paper

Secret



Photo By

Kathryn McAdams

Omicron Gamma Chapter
North Lake Community College
2008 First Place Photography

Ida of the Wasatch

December 1985 heralded my return from the sunny, bustling, palm tree-lined streets of Southern California to my much beloved tranquil home in Alaska's white-blanketed interior. I had been absent far too long from the lengthy winter nights whose black dome of sky was speckled with tiny flecks of glittering snow. The memories of endless days of Alaskan summers were also warm and vivid in my mind; I dreamed of a pleasant escapade down the Chena River under the bright midnight sun. My plane circled the airport, unable to land. A giant Alaskan moose was moseying along the runway, taking his time to sniff the air and challenge the snow plow whose blade was lowered and was snorting its ultimatum in loud, smoky puffs. I knew I was home.

I have discovered that sometimes when a person leaves a place, he can never fully return. Whether time or experience changed me, I do not know. Overwhelming restlessness plagued me as though I were living a life meant for someone else. A change was in order; so remembering Zane Grey's earthy descriptions of the untamed west, I chose to move to Utah.

I am a quiet person, disposed to stories of the very old and the very young which are always filled with miracles and wisdom. I was pleased to find the congregation of little silver-haired ladies at the Wasatch church I began to attend. Most had entered the United States in the late 40's and early 50's before Ellis Island was closed to immigrants.

I walked to church each Sunday morning, rain or shine, winter or summer. Each week, I passed a meticulously kept red brick Tudor house. A small, stooped, white-gloved lady with a warm smile and friendly wave ventured out the large wooden door. Her Bible was lovingly folded into the bend of her left arm, and an oversized black patent leather purse also hung from that arm. She carried a curved black cane in her right hand.

"Ida of the Wasatch," she said, pointing to herself and smiling up at me on the third Sunday we saw each other.

Upon discovering we both attended the Wasatch church, we soon made a point of walking in companionable conversation down the steep, icy sidewalks, the crook of my left arm replacing her cane while my right now toted her well-worn Bible in addition to my stiffer version.

Her silver hair was woven into a perfectly braided bun at the back of her head and held in place by four long bobby pins. Her eyes were clear blue and perfectly matched the large blue glass beads of her necklace and clip-on earrings. She smelled pleasantly of Doublemint gum and baby powder and spoke, even after all the years of her Americanization, in broken, German-accented English that was rhythmically hypnotic. I learned Ida's story in bits and pieces, fitting her life together like a jigsaw puzzle riddled with holes.

Germany had once been Ida's home. She was a young child and had been out playing jump-rope in the street with her best friend, Olga, when people began running and screaming. Olga's mother ran toward them, clutched Olga by the arm, and turning toward Ida shouted, "Where's your mother, Ida? Go

find your mother quickly! The Russian soldiers are coming. You must hide!"

Ida ran to the bakery in town where her mother worked while she also kept Ida's baby brother and two-year old sister. The doors were locked. She banged on the doors, but there was no answer. She sat down in front of the bakery shop window waiting for her mother, hoping her mother would come for her while she watched panic-stricken families running about on the street. A young man of perhaps twenty, wearing thick but patched brown work pants and carrying two small boys in his arms, paused by Ida. His eyes raked the length of the now almost deserted street. He looked down at the blond-haired, frightened child slumped beneath the bakery window.

"Where is your family?" he asked her.

Ida could not speak.

"You cannot stay here. You must hide," the young man said gently.

Ida looked up at him as one enormous tear slid down her cheek. Another closely followed the first.

The stranger sat his two wards upon their feet and knelt by the young girl. He took a crisp blue handkerchief from his pocket and wiped Ida's tear away. "Come with us," he said. "We are crowded, but you come with us." The young man picked up the two young boys again and turned to go, but Ida did not get up. She did not follow him.

"Come, now," he urged gently.

But Ida did not get up and did not speak.

He looked down the street again. "You cannot stay here. You are not safe here."

The child did not answer.

"Maybe your parents are at home looking for you. Come with us; we will keep you safe until the soldiers are gone. We will hide you. Then you can return safely to your family."

Ida jumped up then and ran toward home. She glanced over her shoulder, and the young man smiled uncertainly but nodded at her before he, too, turned and ran.

When Russian soldiers came down the street, house by house, killing whoever they chose and taking POW's, Ida was in her home. The screams of women, the curses of men, the voices of the old imploring a distant Father to save them, the crying children, the sound of gunfire - all of this drew louder, more distinct, as the blond child shivered in the corner of her parents' bedroom closet.

"I hide myself in bottom of da closet," Ida tells me in her broken English. "I begin to pray. I pray vit my voice. I hear da soldiers going room to room in Mamma and Papa's house. But I stay hidden. I do not move. But I pray. I pray vit my voice," she says as we sit in the white lawn chairs in her front yard beside hundreds of bright red tulips she planted in years gone by. The tears are streaming down her face. She is in Germany once again. She is a child hiding in her parents' closet.

The sounds of crashing furniture, banging doors, and breaking glass were all around the child. The closet door opened and quickly closed again. She

heard two voices she could not understand. There was a sound like some small object sliding against the wall, a small clatter. But the child did not move, and the soldiers did not find her.

How long Ida sat praying and sobbing in the bottom of the closet, she did not know, but sleep at last stole over her, voiding her mind from all fear though her body was still racked by shuddering breaths from long and arduous crying. Her papa, a graying man in his early fifties found her there. An old family picture of Ida, her beautiful smiling mama, her papa, and her baby sister had been removed from her mother's desk and now hung mysteriously upon the closet door like a sign. Papa pulled her leaden body from the closet, his tears falling against her face. They hid in the house, waiting for her mama, her little sister, and baby brother who never returned to them again.

"Ida, come," her papa finally said quietly, holding out his hand to her, "We must go."

They walked quietly down the stairs to the front door, but her papa stopped as he was about to open it. "Ida, go wash yourself — quickly! Quickly! Put on your prettiest dress and your shiny black shoes."

He fixed her hair so it was smooth and tied a blue satin ribbon in it that matched the flowers in her yellow dress. "Do not talk. Just smile," he told her. "Remember to smile."

They walked out onto the street in the silvery morning light. It was cold, and Ida shivered.

They walked into town where the streets were strewn with bodies. A woman sat beside the lifeless form of a child. She was not crying, just rocking back and forth, back and forth, staring off into the distance. A young man lay in the doorway of an apartment. He wore brown patched workpants, and a child with a smashed head lay beside him. Ida took a folded blue handkerchief from her sock and spread it over the young man's bloated face.

"We are going to take a trip, Ida," her papa said after talking to a group of men. "We will ride on a train."

The train was crowded. Her papa held her hand, but they were pushed apart. "Papa! Papa! I'm here!" Ida cried out, but the push of people only grew greater until he was lost from her vision. Men came on the train dragging people off. Ida could not move. As one of the men came toward her, a beautiful blond lady in a long black wool coat put her arm around the girl, licked her finger, and rubbed at a non-existent smudge on Ida's cheek. "What on earth have you gotten into now!" the lady exclaimed. She grasped Ida's arm tightly and looked electrically into the girl's eyes as if she were trying to transmit a thought. Ida smiled at the man who stood indecisively before her. He nodded at her and the beautiful lady before he walked past. The lady let out a long breath.

"My papa is gone!" cried Ida.

"Hush!" whispered the lady.

They sat in silence the rest of the trip.

The train started and stopped, started and stopped. Ida waited for her papa. When the train stopped, she sat alone in the car, crying. The lady in the

black coat hurried down the aisle between the seats. She smiled apologetically at a man in a brown uniform and said something Ida couldn't understand.

"Have you gone to sleep?" the lady said angrily to the girl. "Come, now! We will be late! Children!" she exclaimed, rolling her eyes in apparent aggravation as she grabbed Ida by the arm and dragged her past the man in the brown suit. He shook his head and smiled.

Her papa was gone. He'd vanished.

Ida spoke of many things. She told of places whose names she did not know and of people whose names she did not know. She spoke of working briefly on a farm she believed was in Holland although she wasn't sure. She spoke of hunger, fear, and confusion. She spoke of her prayers asking that her family might be returned to her. But Ida never saw her mama, or papa, or brother, or sister again and never knew what fate had decreed for them.

A new snow has blanketed the Wasatch parking lot where cars are just beginning to pull in for services. Ida stops and takes her arm out of mine. She encompasses the snow laden trees, the blanketed houses, the flake-filled sky with a sweeping gesture of her arm, "Like home," she says, "but not home."

"People here," she looks around, "dey send money for ticket to United States. Dey do not know me, but dey help. Dey help many like me."

I am looking about the fresh snow. She taps me on the arm, and I look down into her eyes. "I go home once," she tells me, "but my home is no longer my home. Gone."

I am crying. She pats me reassuringly on the back. "Smile," she says. "Remember to smile. We two are blessed," she says and she winks up at me. She puts her arm back in mine and we enter the warm church. I am honored to walk with Ida of the Wasatch.

Deborah Stevenson

Epsilon Alpha Chapter
Northeast Alabama Community College
2008 Conference Paper



The Shattered Mandible

2:00 P.M.

Tobias Kern climbs up on a picnic table, spreads his arms like a flying squirrel, and leans forward as slowly as possible until he is overtaken by gravity and plummets face first to the ground like a can of beans off a top shelf.

"You'll never be able to fly," his friend Herbert Conroy tells him. "You're not a bird."

"Birds aren't the only ones who can fly," says Tobias, rubbing his forehead. "What about bats and bees?"

Herbert snorts. "You're not a bat or a bee, either."

"Never mind that," says Tobias. "Besides, I did too fly. You just didn't notice because I didn't do it for that long."

"I know you didn't do it that long because you didn't do it at all," Herbert says in disgust. "You fell straight to the ground. You've got a big chunk of mud on your nose."

Tobias pulls his shirt up and wipes his nose.

"You don't know anything about flight, Herbert. I may not be good at landing yet, but I know I felt myself fly. You just didn't see because you were too busy worrying about hearing the whistle blow. I can tell. You're so scared you'll miss it. You're afraid you're gonna be late lining back up, and you'll have to stand at the wall tomorrow with Miss Jan."

"I am not," Herbert says defensively. "But even if I was, what does that have to do with anything? Just because I was listening for a whistle doesn't mean I couldn't watch you at the same time."

"Birds and bats don't go to school, Herbert. They don't go to piano lessons; they don't go to daycare; and they never wake up early unless they want to."

Herbert looks angry and perplexed.

"You're gonna have to learn to live on your own time if you ever expect to fly, Herbert," says Tobias.

"You're stupid," says Herbert. "And you've still got mud on your nose."

2:06 P.M.

Jan, the playground attendant, looks down at her legs and remembers when they were smooth and tan. Now they're pale and covered in varicose veins. How did her youth escape her? She used to look so good in hot pants and Lycra, but now she has a hard time squeezing into a size 12. Her mind drifts back to the summer of 1977.

It seems like a foggy dream now, like something she watched from the outside. She was 17. *Saturday Night Fever* had just come out, and she was dating Lenny Stevenson. He came to pick her up in his red 1972 Dodge Charger. Smoking a cigarette, his shaggy blond hair blew in the breeze. When she heard that engine rev, she ran downstairs and straight for the front door, leaving a trail of cheap perfume behind her. "That boy drives too damn fast!" Her dad yelled through the screen door as she hopped into the passenger seat. She watched her father shake his head in disgust as Lenny squealed the tires and sped off into the warm summer night. They went dancing until 1 or 2 a.m. Then they drove around for a while until they ended up parking somewhere, probably down by the lake where the sewer drained. They drank a few beers that Lenny had stolen from his Dad. As always, Lenny ran out of jokes right as Jan's whole body began to feel tingly and warm. They coaxed the sun up with the sound of soft kisses and giggling.

Jan looks back up at the playground. She would give anything to go back to 1977. She contemplates blowing her whistle ten minutes early just to make the little brats suffer the feeling of lost time. She thinks better of it when she realizes that the teachers will complain to the principal that their planning periods were cut short by the playground attendant. Better to save the spite for a substitute.

She looks at the sun and wishes it were covered with clouds.

She looks at the "I love you" card that Curtis Arden made for her. "Now there's a sex offender in the making," she thinks to herself.

She looks at the ground beneath the slides and swing sets and wishes it would turn to lava. She imagines the Earth splitting open and all of those impish little faces with their Kool-Aid mustaches and unkempt hair disappearing into the churning red-orange liquid. Just one last time those fifty squealing voices would melt together into one impossibly shrill frequency until the ground closed up and there was nothing left but Jan, her memories of Lenny Stevenson, and the lingering smell of burnt flesh. Jan chuckled to herself and whispered the word "macabre." She always liked the way that word sounded.

2:11 P.M.

For the past three weeks, Curtis Arden has spent his break time perched on top of the monkey bars. At first, other children attempted to share the monkey bars with him, but he just spit at them and told them to go away. Curtis was bored with all the other children. They said stupid things that weren't true like, "My Dad can build anything" and "For Christmas Santa's gonna bring me an X-Box." Curtis knew that no one could build *anything*. He also knew that Santa wasn't real. If Santa were so magical and real, why would he give kids toys that their parents could just buy them in stores? Why didn't he give things like x-ray goggles and flying skateboards? If Curtis got a pair of x-ray goggles for Christmas, he might consider believing in Santa. He couldn't understand why none of the other kids realized what a bunch of dupes they were. It seemed like common sense.

Curtis fixes his gaze on Miss Jan. She's staring at the ground and half-smiling. He hopes that she's thinking about the card he made for her, but then he feels embarrassed and tells himself that she probably isn't. Curtis feels like Miss Jan doesn't like him as much as he likes her.

He shifts his attention to the center of the playground where Tobias and Herbert are standing by the seesaw arguing about something.

"Idiots," he thinks to himself.

He watches Tobias make a few commanding gestures at Herbert and then sit down on the seat of the seesaw nearest the ground. Curtis loses interest. Of all of the kids on the playground, he thinks Tobias is the dumbest.

As Curtis's attention shifts back to Miss Jan, Herbert sprints toward the seesaw and takes a flying leap into the air. He latches his hands onto the upended seat of the seesaw, pulling it down to the ground with all of the slam-dunk-like force he can muster. At the exact same time, Tobias throws his arms up in a feeble attempt to launch himself into the air. The sudden force throws him off balance. His whole body lurches forward, and he lets out a loud yelp as his teeth bash against the cold metal of the seesaw. Curtis swings back around just as Tobias crashes down to the ground, barely conscious, his mouth full of blood. Herbert looks terrified and runs off toward the portable on the opposite end of the school yard.

Curtis winces as he looks at the stream of red coming down Tobias's cheek. When Curtis lost his first tooth, he couldn't help but notice how strange the blood tasted, almost like metal. His mother told him it tasted that way because blood has iron in it. He wonders if that's true. He curses himself for turning his head right as Tobias's face hit the seesaw. He imagines the blood shooting off in all directions like a geyser of tiny rubies. He has never seen that happen in real life, but he's seen it quite a bit in movies. Miss Jan has finally

opened her eyes and is rushing toward Tobias. Curtis wonders why it is so easy to miss the good stuff. He jumps down from the monkey bars and runs toward the seesaw to help Miss Jan.

Anthony Wright



Phi Beta Chapter
Amarillo College
Winner Short Fiction

Daydream



Photo By

Marie Vena



Chi Gamma Chapter
Collin County Community College
2008 Second Place Photography

The Choice: Sorrow or Pleasure

Medea and Lysistrata are two distinct pieces of literature. In Medea, the protagonist is a dark and foreboding woman who has been dispossessed of her station in life by the one person she loves most in the world, her husband. In Lysistrata, the protagonist is a witty and charismatic woman filled with a zest for life that has been deprived of one of her most favorite pastimes, sexual relations with her husband. Medea and Lysistrata, the two protagonists, are similar in three ways: they are abandoned, strong-willed, and shrewd.

Abandonment of any kind can cause the greatest rift in one's world. This breach in Medea's and Lysistrata's relationships with their husbands becomes the precipice that launches the two women into their courses of action. Medea's husband, Jason, wrongs her in the most profound way by "deserting his own children," and by betraying "both her bed and her marriage" for another woman (691 and 695). This desertion precipitates Medea's unpardonable sin—the murder of her own children. Although Lysistrata is abandoned as Medea, the abandonment is of a completely different type. Lysistrata is deserted by a husband who is "strapping on the shield and flying off" (725). In other words, duty calls Lysistrata's husband and he answers. Even though Lysistrata's husband does not desert her for another woman, the hurt from his desertion leaves her, for all intents and purposes, bereaved. Lysistrata takes matters into her own hands. Unlike Medea, she does not resort to murder; instead, she employs, perhaps, one of the world's most dangerous weapons - feminine wile.

Medea and Lysistrata are not weak of mind or will. Each proves that she possesses the determination to finish what she starts. In Medea's case, she is adamant that she will not be made a fool of by her husband. She will do whatever it takes to ensure that the inevitability never happens – even murder. For example, Euripides writes in Medea, "...By exiling me, he has given me this one day / To stay here, and in this I will make dead bodies / Of three of my enemies, - father, the girl and my husband" (698). Lysistrata is as strong-willed as Medea, yet she chooses to use her obstinacy in a completely different way. Lysistrata uses her single-mindedness to motivate the other women to take action concerning their plight. An example of her motivation is when Aristophanes pens, "Smart enough that the salvation of all Greece lies in the women's hands!" (723). A second example is when Lysistrata encourages the women, "Just be patient, good ladies, and put up with this, just a little bit longer. There's an oracle predicting victory for us, *if we stick together*" (741).

As the case is for Medea and Lysistrata, shrewdness is a necessity if one seeks to implore others for mercy and aid. Medea finds herself in a place of no return. Without her gift of deception, she will be exiled in a country where she has never been truly accepted. Medea uses her artful guile to manipulate those people who intend her harm. In Medea's own words, she validates her deviousness: "In craft and silence I will set about this murder" (698). Lysistrata is as cunning and shrewd as Medea. However, in Lysistrata's case, her plan is

to restore peace and harmony, not promote hostility and conflict. Lysistrata convinces her peers, the wives and lovers of the men called to war, to join her crusade to “force the men to make peace” and restore harmony, and, most importantly, pleasure to their homes (726).

Although Medea and Lysistrata are similar in their shrewdness and strong-will, they react differently to their abandonment. Medea, dark and brooding, allows her husband’s rejection to be the catalyst that sends her into a spiraling freefall into the abyss of unspeakable evil. In contrast, Lysistrata uses her husband’s desertion to initiate her companions into a sisterhood of liberation. Each woman has a choice; each woman chooses a different course of action. For Medea, she elects the most sorrowful path. Lysistrata chooses the route that upon its success will bring the most pleasure.

Diane Floate 

Theta Beta Chapter
Calhoun Community College
Winner Literary Analysis

22



Photo By

Kathryn McAdams 

Omicron Gamma Chapter
North Lake Community College
2008 Third Place Photography

Some Men Do Go Both Ways

There is a circle of men standing just outside the doors, silhouetted against the blackened sky. One detaches slightly from the circle, rustling for something in his pocket. After a few minutes of digging, the man grunts, and the sound of fingernails scratching denim is heard. He brings an object to his mouth and says through tightened lips, "Any of you boys got a light?" More rustling, and a flash of gold appears. Dirty fingers expertly strike, and the spark of light momentarily illuminates the group of men before it is diminished in a single breath of wind. The flame tries again and this time stays lit. The hand that holds it extends from a plaid sleeve and carefully glides the fire up to the cigarette. The flame sputters in the breeze until it gives life to a glow that licks the tip of the tobacco. The man inhales a deep drag. One by one, the other men do the same, slowly lighting their cigarettes until smoke twists into the night.

Inside the bar, a woman sits alone with her Mai Tai, absentmindedly watching an incredibly drunk man attempt to sing Bob Seger, "Working on our night moves..." She tries not to listen too hard, but she knows that her own voice is much better. However, she won't be singing tonight—she doesn't want to draw any more attention to herself than necessary.

Casually, she glances down at her red fingernails to make sure they are still intact. She feels like a new woman—even her name, Monica, is new—and she loves the feeling and her short, leopard-print skirt and high heels. Even her implants are sitting nicely in the low-cut top she decided to wear. When she looks up, she realizes that three men sitting at the other end of the bar are watching her: a trucker wearing an old, dusty, plaid-shirt, unbuttoned; a business man, his tie removed and sleeves rolled up; and a kid, barely twenty-one, trying unsuccessfully to grow a beard. They all take turns winking at Monica; she feels as if she could vomit—she could do so much better—but forces herself to make eye contact. Of course, they smile back.

A few miles away, Jackson is in his pick-up doing 55 in a 35 mph zone on his way into town. He's had several beers, the latest of which sits open in the cup holder. Pastures and farmhouses turn into gas stations and parking lots as Jackson enters the edge of town. Though his radio is on, Jackson can't hear the song over the wind whipping through the open windows, threatening to bite at his face.

The bartender, Denny, glances over at Monica again. Pretending to wipe down the counter with his bleach-water rag, he watches her out of the corner of his eye, letting his gaze slide up and down every sweet contour of her body. *What a woman*, he thinks. He wishes she would finish off that Mai Tai so he could top her off and have an excuse to stare at her chest close-up. He scrubs the rag vigorously over a spot that has appeared on the counter - back and forth, back and forth. He wonders how long the stain has been there without him ever noticing.

Monica glances around the bar to see if anyone is looking. She doesn't think so. She reaches over to an empty glass that another woman left next to her and pulls the solitary cherry from the bottom. She holds the cherry over her mouth by the stem, and a small red drip falls and nicks her chin on the way down to her breast. She puts it in her mouth and pops off the stem with her teeth, dabbing the drop of cherry blood with a napkin. The sweetness lingers in her mouth as she watches Unkempt Beard Boy make some stupid testosterone joke to Denny. Laughing heartily, they gaze around the bar, stopping to watch Monica who is nervously fingering her glass, her painted nails anxiously clicking the side.

Jackson's pissed. He's clenching his teeth. He takes a large swig of his Budweiser before driving straight through a four-way stop. He can take a guess at where Monica will be tonight. She's been in there so many times before—she always enjoyed flirting with the guys. Jackson bets that no one even recognizes her.

Monica is finished with her drink. She rolls the last few drops around in the bottom of the glass, contemplating. She wants another Mai Tai but also has to go to the bathroom. As she stands up from the bar stool and adjusts the hem of her skirt, she tells Denny to start another one for her. He winks slyly, "No problem, darlin'."

Jackson turns onto Main. Denny's bar is straight ahead. He knows she'll be there; after all, he has something important to say to Monica. He had always liked her, even before. He used to come by her house late at night, driving slowly down Canterbury Street with his headlights off—he didn't want to shine his lights into any windows and wake up anyone. Considerate. He'd pull up beside Monica's small white house and turn off the engine, allowing the clicking and ticking of the engine to subside before getting out of his truck, taking care not to slam the door. Jackson would quietly creep around to the back of the house. Breathing heavily, he would watch Monica's great sleeping form through the window. She never knew he did this. No one knew.

Back outside, the huddle of men stands under the streetlights, each puffing small orange O's into the brisk air. "I saw a couple homos holdin' hands when I was in the city," one of them grunts.

"Disgusting."

"It makes me sick."

"I hate f***** faggots."

"We can't have men like that in our town!" they all shift uncomfortably.

"God will punish them."

Monica walks down the hall to the restrooms, smoothing out her skirt with a few gentle brushes of her hand. She examines her chipped nail polish when she reaches the end of the hall. Men to the right, Women to the left. *I almost*

need my own door, she muses as she pushes open the door to the ladies' room.

Jackson pulls into the parking lot, grabs his bottle of Bud and slams the car door shut behind him. He had lusted after Monica before, but she had taken it all away from him. Jackson didn't want Monica to be a woman. But no one would ever know.

Monica looks around the bathroom to make sure she is alone. She enters a stall and removes her skirt. She pees standing up because she can.

A glowing cigarette butt drops to the sidewalk outside. The toe of a heavy boot twists on top of it, smothering the orange glow. "Yes. God will punish them all." The man strides away, and the rest of the faces plunge into darkness.

Jackson throws open the door of the bar. He stands in the doorway, his legs spread wide, finishing his beer in a single gulp. The entire bar has fallen silent. The karaoke singer stops, but the music continues, lifeless. All eyes are on Jackson's bleary silhouette though his eyes are scanning the crowd for Monica. Despite blurry vision, he knows she is not here—the object of his lust is gone. Why has she left him all alone? Jackson thinks back to the way it was before when he would drive over to 4238 Canterbury and spend time with his love. With the memories racing through his brain, Jackson's face melts, and he breaks into a dull sob. The people at the bar start to whisper to each other until Jackson yells out "F*** ***!" in a drunken voice.

His love is gone. He turns on his heel and walks back out the doors, hurling the empty beer bottle at the floor. He never sees the glass shatter into millions of pieces, sparkling in the air.

Monica finishes zipping her skirt and takes one last look at herself in the mirror. She loves what she sees. Her breasts exhibit perfect cleavage, and she casts flirtatious glances at her reflection as she runs her hand through her volumized blonde hair. She is beautiful.

She hears the sound of breaking glass in the bar and quickly washes her hands with the pink antibacterial soap that Denny has provided. Then she slips out the narrow bathroom window and into the smoky air outside.



Dawn Olsen 
Beta Delta Chapter
Iowa Western Community College