

*-2006-*

Tennessee  
Young  
Writers'  
Workshop

*Anthology*

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## Trishauna Campbell

### *Over Cooked*

Love is a word that bounces around too easily  
Don't take my kindness for weakness  
I aim a pot of over cooked emotions  
2 cups of chopped love  
1t. of hate  
1/4c. of happiness  
Seasoned with pain and hope  
Fry this on my temper  
Friends flip like eggs  
Families too busy to check the time  
I'd like to be a good square of home made lasagna  
But if they fall for the cook book in the back room  
I'll be made into a monster  
But I want to be delicious

## Kim Carson

### *No Homework*

I was 14, and my uncle had been dying for the past two years. The September air stung my face as I trekked toward the blue Malibu. The woman who was waiting for me after school let out was not my mother, but that was nothing new. Often my mom spent her afternoons at the hospital with her brother; trying to convince the doctors, and herself that he would soon be home again. I tossed my backpack nonchalantly into the front seat of Katie's car, and began my journey home. Katie was my mom's best friend; she acted as a fill-in mother when needed, and was always willing to lend a helping hand. She had agreed to help me prepare for the evening activities.

It just so happened to be a Thursday, the day when middle school football teams played. This Thursday however, was special, being the game when we played our across town rivals, the Robertsville Rams. Spirit week came to a dramatic end as enthusiastic pre-teens colored their hair blue and gold with spray hair color, and wore the strangest combinations of clothing.

When the phone rang, I answered it, assuming that it was a friend calling to finalize a meeting place at the game. The voice on the other end was unfamiliar, but full of seemingly unnecessary compassion. "Please tell your mom that I'm sorry about her brother, okay?"

Katie shuffled into the room as I placed the phone back into the receiver, and let out a gasp. "You didn't just answer the phone did you?" she asked.

"Yeah, why? What's the big deal? I've been answering the phone since I was four." I said.

"Who was it?" Katie asked.

"I don't know, some woman, she said to tell Momma something about Uncle Daryl." I said.

"No ... I can't believe you answered the phone. I can't believe you did that. You weren't supposed to hear this way." Katie said, burying her head in her hands.

The meaning of the phone call dawned on me; I didn't know what to say in response. My mother wasn't at the hospital, holding my uncle's hand for support. She was at the funeral home, picking out a casket. Possibly even making phone calls to family across the country, telling them what she should never have had to say.

Paralysis hit; I never imagined that so many thoughts could run through my head at once. Or that they would be so vain. *What am I going to wear to the funeral? Can I still go to the football game? Does my brother know yet? How am I going to listen to my mom explain this to me? Why didn't she check me out of school early? Do I still have to do my science homework?*

Katie's expression softened as she saw my tough girl act dissolve, she remembered that I was a 14 year-old experiencing death for the first time. Before I knew what was happening, her arms surrounded me, holding me close. My body shook with sobs, and her shirt absorbed my tears. Her fingers stroked my hair, which had not yet been sprayed blue for the game.

After a short while passed, and my tears mostly dried, I sat down at the kitchen table, and closed my science book. This was no time for homework. I placed my books in my backpack, and lugged it to my room. The solitude of my room was not as comforting as I imagined, and only made me feel more alone. Moments later I emerged clutching a plastic case filled with various shades of nail polish. I poured the contents onto the kitchen table, which was cluttered with several days of mail, and picked out a neon blue.

"Katie, will you paint my nails?"

"Of course, are you still planning on going to the game?"

"I'm not sure, but I want to be ready if I decide to go," I said.

Katie applied the first coat in silence, and when I looked up at her my chin began to quiver, and I felt a familiar sting at the top of my throat.

"It's going to be okay," she whispered to me.

An hour later as my mother trudged through the back door with tear-stained cheeks, I prepared myself for what was coming. I remained at the kitchen table, and she sat down next to me. She approached the topic so carefully, trying to explain it to me without having to say it out loud. I think she was afraid to admit that her baby brother was dead.

My mom gulped in the stale air of our living room, appearing more vulnerable than I had never seen her before. She was sitting next to me completely unsure of herself. I wrapped my arms around her, and allowed her to put all her weight on my shoulders. We sat together for around fifteen minutes, until the phone rang again. It seemed the phone was the curse of my day.

I watched distant relatives pull into my driveway as I sprayed blue coloring into my hair and adorned my hair with colorful ribbons. The idea was that the enthusiasm of a football game would cheer me up. But later as I yelled and screamed for the touch down that would never come, all I could think was that my mom was still crying.

Rebecca Dean

*Haikus To Wind*

I  
Underneath the little tree  
With shafts of sunlight through leaves  
Warm breezes blowing

II  
Come near little wind  
Show me the power of your rage  
Lost unto the heavens

III  
Blue waves jump for you  
Trees crumble beneath your power  
Howl, wind, your command

IV  
White linens drying  
For wind pulls forth the moisture  
To create soothing rain

V  
Breezes become gusts  
Darkness surrounds every hill  
Waiting for the storm

VI  
Green seas above land  
Move with unearthly brilliance  
Because of your breath

VII  
Poetry's great muse  
Holds greater power over the earth  
Wind holds power everywhere

VIII  
Surrounded by books  
With brick on every side  
Air still finds its breath

IX  
Pink petals float down  
Currents form small tornados  
Blow me the blossoms

## Declan Deely

### *After Africa*

They speak of a serpent  
A plague of a separate kind  
Offhanded and off mind  
For this is a threat  
In another's backyard

Far past compass and compassion  
Suspended out in the bruised black  
Of a paradise in half

He is the Horned Terror  
Champion of Sickness  
Fountain of the Ocher Sands  
Carrying a fresh face for a new age  
Same armor

Scales like polished stone  
Cut to cover womb and tomb  
In birth and bed  
A snake song through two heads  
Declaring Peace In Rest

He's carved an entire continent,  
into a single mass grave  
Taken Eden into his breast pocket

While loud men with quiet hands,  
in comfortable leathers  
with blunt perfume  
Construct the original product of  
Syllables and suspect syringe

I name thee  
A.nd I.n D.oing S.o

Die

## Kaydee Hankes

### *Ode to a Mango*

Mango - tastes like a cool breeze on you skin  
in Summer - strong enough to relieve; yet  
it leaves a tinge of orange warmth  
sticky as Elmer's glue and a delight to  
tongue and teeth. Like squelching  
satin mud between bare toes.  
Marvelous, mushy, mess - mango.

Though issues ensue when you  
reach the pit wrapped with  
dental floss fibers - the result is  
a charming smile laced with yellow lines.

And also, I fear, I must warn the listening ear:  
you may find, near the skin, a bitter dry bite  
of baked clay, unglazed - rough beneath your  
fingers - like dirt drying - a mud mask  
smudged, tightens on your face.  
Dust on your tongue.

But I assure you - the next bite's delight  
will be a slip and a slide  
of liquid giggles down your throat.

### *Hands Move Time*

He fell to the floor, laughing  
as I kissed his nose.  
Chewing on his ear is love.  
I only have half a hand  
without his words.  
And he stopped having time for me.  
Every hope resolved itself nicely  
into nothing.

My brother pushed me into a tower of legos.  
It broke.  
Mom sang me to sleep, both gave me a kiss.  
I don't miss Dad's.  
The plane on TV stole it,  
and the smoke from his cigarette billows  
like that day in the desert.

The world is coming to another year.  
Repetitive.  
I can't fly anymore.  
Sleep drags me away,  
alone between blankets of words.  
My dreams are delicious.  
Spectrums of ice cream and carnival rides.  
Spinning is madness.  
God whispers an inside joke in my ear  
12:56 on a clock in the midst of chaos  
and He pulls me out of the crowd,  
into the rain, to dance.  
Please, God, give everyone splotches of joy  
like this little key.

### *That Time of Night*

It's that time of night again.  
Close the door. I sink to the soft refuge of my colorful carpet and open  
to a page of silent lined paper. Move the pencil across it. Make the rough  
lead sing loudly enough to deafen my mind to the voices.  
But the walls are thin. The painted clouds on bright blue is only an  
illusion of space. The reality is too near to escape.  
Rising and falling. Shouted sentences with grammar scrambled by emotion.  
Illogical accusations. Who would think reasons so trivial could cause  
such long, pointlessly raging storms? Each mouth pours out violence until  
they're both drenched in sorrows.  
The words fall. The minutes crawl. The hours pass. And then, at last,  
they begin to follow their pattern, spiralling back out, distancing  
themselves with truces and unfair forgiveness on her part. There is nothing  
so awesome and awful as a mother's mercy. Her love for him is so  
forgiving. Again, she swallows her pride and begins cleaning up his mess.  
I close my notebook, open my door, and crawl into bed.

### *My Darling*

I didn't realize it was morning.  
I walked into the room.  
The cat looked dead.  
My dear cat, my love -  
lying motionless -  
a statue of silken black fur.

How shall I continue - O my lost love,  
without the comfort of  
thy satin purr, thy soothing mew...

O halloween goddess,  
how I need your selfishness,  
curled up against me, keeping me lazy  
like you, in bed till noon,  
pouring your dreams into my head ...

I reach out my hand to lift  
your lovely limp form once more.  
I open the second floor window  
and toss the startled bastard out.  
Her scream ends  
with a thud.

The cat's name was My Boyfriend,  
and I'm past mourning now.

George Kakoti

*The Nature of Indecisiveness*

Break me; break this skin and break this mind  
Break me; break these lips and break these eyes  
Break me; break me cause the pain is all I know  
Break me; break this heart and let the veins show  
Now love me; love me all day and all night  
Now love me; love me and please no lies  
Now love me; love me inside-out and to my toes  
Now love me; love me fast and love me slow

Kathryn Lea

*Autobiography of an Enemy Soldier*

A man in another country was hiding in the woods and eating berries.  
He lived for months.

Across the ocean no one told a redheaded three-year-old that we were at war.  
Madness runs in her family and is losing control of your thoughts.  
She only knew about war from tricorn hats.  
She didn't understand why someone would fight on someone else's soil.  
She never would.

But God would tell her she had to move forward,  
with questions and a soft voice.  
And she would be lying if she said she didn't like group therapy  
because what matters is that she could live with herself.

## BriAnne Miller

### *Senseless*

Why am I here?  
My name means nothing to you.  
It is meaningless.

It is loud.  
It is hopeless.  
It is never going to be what you want.

I wish my family was gone.  
Bombs blew up and people died.  
Now my wish is true.

I'd be lying if I said I hate you.  
I wouldn't change anything about you.  
I sleep worse without you.

Life doesn't matter without you.  
I regret leaving you behind.  
But it's over and done with.

## Dale Mills

### *Wood Shards*

The boy is dead  
The tree has notches in it  
From the glass of the windshield  
The hood of the truck just as wounded  
I'm afraid of dying  
Not knowing what comes next  
Having no way to put the  
Inevitable off.  
The blind are lucky  
They see heaven in their dreams  
I don't dream  
I have an ethereal bed  
White sheets and white blanket  
But it is no inspiration  
I need to change the world  
But I don't know how.

## Michael Minnick

### *The War*

The news says,  
"Fool Goes to War."  
Scuttlebutt and  
forced march, sandy  
boots stormed in.

Stand back, watch this.  
Rumor leads, candor drags  
in sour dust. Watchdogs call,  
raise. All cards on the table.

Stars like sparks spread  
on sand-block walls.  
Come-and-go squads  
hit-and-run by *shit*,  
*damn* and the like.

Here at home we are  
watched spied marked checked.  
ID a must, fear a need.  
Keep time, don't think.  
match step, don't ask.

Who kills us? They will.  
Who feeds us? They do.  
Who lies to us? They do.  
Who are they?  
Us.

### *Relationship with Words*

My relationship with words is adversarial,  
intellectual doublespeak and journalistic bias.

I like long words, sophisticated,  
resuscitated into expression

Monosyllables crunch in my teeth,  
scratch my palate  
and taste acrid on my throat.

Sophisticated multisyllabic  
synonyms mingle and meander like

a heady wine of hubris.

But real words, one beat two beats  
three beats four words  
simple and direct:  
the words write me.

### *Anderson and Mitchell*

Anderson walked into Chow's Diner, sat down at the yellow counter.  
"Coffee. Black," he said. The waitress swiped the counter with a bright blue dishrag before the saucer and mug clanked in front of him. "Thanks."

Minutes later, Mitchell walked in. Taking a seat beside Anderson, he ordered ice water and ignored the man next to him.

"Third shift, plus overtime," Anderson said.

"Best sources are the ones you don't know," Mitchell responded.

"Anderson. You don't need to know more, other than fifteen years on the force and I worked the Eddie Walker case."

"John Mitchell. Ten years in the newspaper business and no major stories. I've been burned with false leads before. No crap. Either you've got the story or you don't. You do, we can talk business. If not, I'm leaving." He sipped his water, cubes clinking as the glass clattered on the counter.

"It's one a.m. I don't have time for your shit. You screw around, we're both dead. Minimum I hand in my badge and my gun; you get laid off." Anderson said. His eyes felt like they'd been rolled around in ground glass and he only wanted to get home and sleep. "You want the story or not?" Steam curled from the coffee's surface, vanishing in the fluorescent lighting.

"Depends. What can you give me?" Mitchell's eyes remained on the counter in front of him.

"I've got the captain and two homicide detectives. Captain's been selling confiscated property, destroying evidence and taking bribes. Homicide's the same way." Anderson remained expressionless. "I said I worked the Eddie Walker case. Remember him?"

"Yeah. Wasn't he the double murder who walked? *The Tribune* ran the story."

"Homicide lost the evidence because Eddie's lawyer was giving them a cut."

"Bullshit. The evidence was destroyed when the janitor dumped it."

"Actually, Parks and Zimmer dumped it. Blamed the janitor, doctored the security tapes, the whole deal."

"Frank Parks and Alphonse Zimmer? Wasn't Parks just given an award for thirty years on the force? And didn't Zimmer get a citation for taking a bullet? More importantly, can you prove it?" Mitchell tried to conceal his excitement. This could be the story he'd been looking for. "You've got fifteen years on the force; credibility's a non-issue. Can you keep yourself safe? If they peg you as the leak, you're fucked and I've got no story."

"I can prove it. The entire department knows and looks the other way."

"Let's do it. You want on the record or off?"

"Off, until I can lock these bastards down. One other thing: Walker's still out there, and he's looking for me. I got the evidence that put his ass in court, and would've given him twenty-five to life - if Parks and Zimmer hadn't tossed it."

"What evidence? The confession obtained during interrogation was thrown out as coerced, the crime scene was clean - no blood from the corpses. How'd you nail him?"

"Weak alibi."

"What?"

"He said he'd been drinking with his buddies at the Good Times Bar - he wasn't. I was meeting with an informant - guy's a low-level crack dealer, helped me on a prior case - and Eddie wasn't there. Guy said Eddie had 'some business' to take care of. Didn't realize that business was gonna be my case." Anderson gulped his coffee, ran a hand along the five o'clock stubble on his chin. "Look, can we make this quick? I'm tired as hell, been up for almost eighteen hours and I haven't eaten in twelve."

"Who was the janitor?"

"Jacob Carpenter. New guy; he'd only been there a few months when Parks and Zimmer asked if he wanted to make a little cash on the side. Said the evidence room gets cleaned out occasionally and some of the marked boxes get tossed and replaced. They paid him for listening, waited for his confirmation. When he was in, they started discarding evidence that wasn't needed, like false confessions. So when they dumped Walker's material, during the trial, he didn't think about it. Just did it and Walker walked."

"*The Tribune* said Carpenter was fired. How accurate was that report?"

"Wasn't there to fire. He quit, once he realized he'd let Walker back on the streets."

"Because he felt guilty? Because he'd been bribed?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because Walker killed his kids."

## Wesley Newsom

### *When I Think of God*

As I lay myself to sleep,  
In the darkness come many thoughts.  
I think of my Holy Father,  
And see many things.  
I see a Trident  
With constant eruptions of pure,  
Luminescent energy.  
I see a king  
As he sits upon his golden throne.  
He basks in the praise of his most worthy angels.  
I see Eden as the once perfect utopia.  
Then I see a brewing storm.  
It spews forth floods of rain  
From dark, billowing clouds,  
Raging onward!  
Flash! I see a lightning bolt,  
And a fierce roll of thunder booms.  
The shadows clear to reveal  
A storm just beyond my window,  
But I see none of what has passed ...

## Paula Peyton

### *Aries Fairy*

I was born in April, so I am an Aries.  
When I was young, I would write about being a fairy,  
and Mamma had to rock her little Aries Fairy to sleep.  
I was afraid of the evil dragon.  
In my stories, the dragon never laughed.  
He just screamed, coughing up fire.  
I can't forget her.  
In one story, I met Cinderella.  
She let me roll around in her cinders.  
She called me Cinderaries.  
People are so different that they think nobody is ever right.  
I acted really bad at pre-school.  
It could have been because of my dreams.  
I wanted to fly.  
I told them I lived in a strawberry,  
and I poured soap on the bathroom floor  
and skated in my bare feet.  
I am THE Aries Fairy.

**Melanie Williams**

*Under Bridges We Cross*  
for my brother

We spent our days  
in the sun-speckled shade of woods,  
building from twigs and fallen branches  
the dwellings of hunter-gatherers.  
We were adventurers. We ate  
the wild blackberries,  
dripped honeysuckle onto our tongues, and  
displayed our tribal heritage  
in pokeberry streaks across our faces.  
We were born from the earth,  
clothed in mud and blue jeans.  
We traveled the worn trail  
with bare feet, though you often complained  
of thorns.  
A rotted plank bridged over  
the dried creek, an indifferent obstruction  
to the deeper world we sought.

There are those who proudly  
cross bridges with an unhesitant step,  
periodically looking back into the horizon  
just to gauge the distance they've traveled.

You and I have no use for bridges:  
we pull ourselves up from the creek beds  
onto the unmoving ground before us.  
With our dirt-stained skin, we mark  
our permanence into this earth.

## John Zanath

### *Live*

The old man sat on a stage stool. Lights beamed down in blues, whites, and reds. They caused black shadows to fall over the wrinkles in his face, glowed on his cheap guitar pick, glistened on the strings. He cleared his throat, cracked his knuckles. Each hand was marked with card suits - spades, clubs, diamonds, and hearts - needle-inked in a con man's hand, all aces and deuces. The crowd stopped and stared, beer mugs rested like stones. Jack and Jim shots fell out of sight. It was thanks to the old man's voice. He strummed: slow and skilled. Fingers crawled, strings hummed. The Fender moaned out a tune. The sounds were sad, wild, and true. The pick struck home, chords were pressed down smooth and slick. There were no gaps between the notes. Rough words poured from scarred lips.

The old man went on, weaved his life through hard-edged, patient thoughts. The crowd didn't move; they were caught up in the pain and tragedy. Gun fights, theft, prisons, love, loss, and all things that dealt with bad luck. It was blues the way it was meant to be. It was the style that was forged in Memphis, the music that screamed out sorrow in low, calm tones. The bar was full of college kids and business men. It was now a real house of blues. The old man knew that his audience would never be the same again.