

HOME | CURRENT

# HOMESPUN

the student literary magazine  
of tennessee technological university

2001 - 2005 Issue

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## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Brandon Malone and Erin Phillips for their technical assistance.

The views expressed in this magazine do not necessarily reflect those of the Homespun staff or its faculty advisor, the English Department, or Tennessee Technological University.

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First Place  
2003-2004 Lora A. Printz Memorial Poetry Prize  
Judge: Dr. Kevin Christianson

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## Maria Ramirez

Blindfold me sharply.  
Strap my pain.  
Devour me lightly.  
Console my brain.  
Undress the lies.  
Collapse my mind.  
Replay behind my eyes.  
Please me for this moment in time.

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Honorable Mention  
2004-2005 Lora A. Printz Memorial Poetry Prize  
Judge: Dr. Kevin Christianson  
Anne M. Canavan

As I paint my toenails  
Shades of purple, blue and glitter  
Or sometimes a deep vampish red  
To show the world how infinitely daring I am  
I wonder  
Mother - did you ever paint your toenails?  
Did it make you feel beautiful and bold  
And so grown up?  
Did you think secretly it was  
                    scandalous and shocking  
Did it make you feel sexy and alive?  
What color did you choose?  
Did you ever paint your toenails blue?  
A blue that said I am someone  
Who walks in the rain  
I am someone who takes crazy risks  
I am special and daring  
And the world will never know  
Because my secret is safe in my shoes  
I look at you now, such old feet  
Toenails now indecently nude, almost obscene  
                    opaque and pale  
Is that your life now?  
Always the same-transparent, dull  
                    - Boring, colourless  
I look at your feet and wonder if  
                    you ever painted your toenails  
Fingernails are so different -  
                    public, used, impersonal  
Painted in such respectable pinks and rose  
But toenails - anything!  
Did you dare?  
I hope you did mother  
I hope you knew the tiny secret pleasure  
Of being a little outrageous and  
Laughed because the world never knew  
I wonder when you stopped  
Stopped being daring  
Stopped being a little crazy  
Stopped painting your toenails  
That vivid raincoat vivid raincoat vivid raincoat vivid op.2965neibscene

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Was it when you stopped painting your toenails?  
Did the bottles of varnish that once liberated you  
Dry forgotten on a crowded shelf, grown solid and hard?  
Did all the colors lose their shine?  
The glitter sparkles die?  
I wish I could take you back to then  
By painting your toenails and let you live again  
    I wonder when I will no longer care to paint my toenails  
I wonder when I will become my mother  
whom nail polish alone might have saved

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First Place  
2004-2005 Lora A. Printz Memorial Poetry Prize  
Judge: Dr. Kevin Christianson

Carla Welch

red hair, sexed  
metal in mouth;  
a living laughter  
that cries joy.  
dorm room drinks  
and tori amos songs;  
dreams filtered through a weak body's tenacious attitude. swimming  
south to sunshine,  
far away from here.  
late night talks  
and infrequent letters.  
bigger dreams, a new school, and red-petal love.

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sort of like  
not knowing your hometown  
through the airplane's window.

I don't think we crashed  
if we had,  
we wouldn't still be so tired  
it would have been an instant thing -  
a boom and a fire.  
but we avoid each others glances in the hallway  
and we silently have resumed our living  
on the ground.

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## John Brown III

Their Technicolor eyes called me faggot  
When we first made hand contact  
Your palm was slick with butter and spit  
While we sat in the abortive womb  
Of a spindle-thin moment, we held hands  
Like lovers in our comfy sensory  
Deprivation tank.

You are a lanky orangutan when you see me.  
Arms that last for parsecs, toes tripping  
Like a toddler or a sailor with gelatin for  
You seize me like taloned prey  
Goofy grin, drooling like a 24 year old infant.  
You squall, "I missed you" and "I'm crazy"  
And "My friend."

Their sermon was stentorianized through teeth  
Squeaking with cotton colored maize.  
The feature presentation: two adult males  
A tangible convergence of camaraderie  
That condemned us to fire  
And sin stone funerals. My stomach became an upside-down vortex  
Of ants tunneling for Kool-Aid. Your hand felt  
Like a sweaty fungus, but I held it  
Like a last breath. You yoyo-ed with excitement  
Virgin to the taste of Eden's fruit.

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## Amy Knox

The sounds of war, the hints of war  
Are beating in our bosom  
To fight to win, 'tis noble sin  
The battle scene is gruesome.

A mother's cry, the sucking child  
Were better `twere not born  
The man's great deed, better hold his creed  
Than bear his neighbors' scorn.

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First Place  
2002-2003 Lora A. Printz Memorial Poetry Prize  
Judge: Dr. Kevin Christianson

## Elizabeth Deanna McMillan

12 days since the lights blew out  
12 days late one came back on

maybe we can find anything new under the buzz  
maybe we can see the colors on the tv

maybe we can stop winding  
until we break holes in the table-?

12 days later the basement flooded  
and all the food was gone

12 days later the basement flooded  
the floor cracked

maybe we can die from laughter  
maybe the barn will rebuild itself

maybe we can shout from boxes  
maybe the ocean will pay a visit

12 days late was the shot  
maybe we can finish breaking the table

12 days late we found  
a marsh in the living room

12 days late the floor cracked  
and we filled it with the ruined food

12 days late was the sound  
of a barn rebuilding itself

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Golden Eagle Prose Contest  
Michael O'Rourke

SON

Dad tossed at me and the sick feeling in the pit of my stomach got worse. I pressed my forehead against my palm and still warm from Dad's pocket. "Do we really need to go to the store?" I asked.

"Cutting this off too long, Marlene," Dad said. Great, this lecture again. "It's time to start taking care of yourself around instead of relying on one of us all the time." I shoved the book back on the shelf and hunted for my shoes, only half-listening. "You're almost twenty now - a little responsibility." Shoes were behind the couch. I sort of remembered where they were the night before, after I tripped over them on the way to the kitchen.

I searched around for my sunglasses. "Seen my shades?" I asked Dad, who was leaning against the door out to the garage, one hand on the doorknob.

"Get in the car. Quit piddling and come on."

Mom called from the kitchen. A new catalog from Dell had come in the mail that she was comparing prices and specs on all the different computer models. She was comparing them to old catalogs while she was at it. When we got back, Dad and I went to listen to the breakdown. She did the same thing before picking a cell phone almost a month torturing the rest of us with plan comparisons. Suddenly I realized how bad that was.

The air was warm from the afternoon sun and smelled like gasoline and old grass. The old lawn mower was still in pieces along one wall from when Dad tried to fix it. I remember how silly that we had a garage, like someone transplanted our house out of some other country. For most people, parking in the driveway was good enough, but Mom was paranoid sometimes. She always thought someone was going to steal the car parked in the driveway. Her minivan was the only thing ever parked in the garage though. Dad's car and his truck stayed in the driveway, parked in the little turnaround lane between the driveway and the side of the garage toward the back yard.

I opened the driver's side door of the van, like I was getting in backwards. Dad had the cap off getting in on the passenger side and had to push the seat all the way back a little more, making adjustments to my seat then messing around with the parking tag marking me as a commuter hung from the rearview mirror even though I had never been parked on campus for longer than five minutes.

"You can't see out of all the mirrors," Dad said. He finally gave up on the cap and the stuffy heat inside the van we were both sweating already, and Dad's bald head was slick. I rolled my window down about halfway before starting the ignition. The engine motor rattled off the garage walls and I could barely hear Dad telling me to go to the store to open the garage door. I knew to do it.

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## Matthew Ross Mabrey

Pretty is a special nothing  
To whimsical everywhere thrown.  
Light is of a certain hollow,  
And shadows lay in doorways.

Fire is a knowing heat  
With tangerine tongues to kiss the dark.  
But dark holds no hue to verb;  
It likes no better company than solace.

Solace is an empty something,  
But only darker violet.  
No one will  
For no one knows  
How to make good company of solace.  
(except for dark)

Gleaming is a fortune hue,  
But glint, is glint is glint.  
Solace is a empty something  
Pretty is a special nothing.

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# Matthew Lewis

Phosphate fingerprints tip-tapping the glassy shards  
left from the broken pseudo-science of feeling,  
hoping that amnesia can be capsulated  
and synthesized  
and taken in pill form.

And it can, if only temporarily.

Blurring until the tempo of a word  
is only the vibration of aphid legs in silent scream  
of space,  
the syllables crawling  
until the particles of speech  
slur and slosh across the jagged cliffs of  
forgetfulness.  
An insect in its death throes to forget  
the utterance of a word; that is myself  
struggling to misplace your name.

The same word used to invoke  
notions of music box masterpieces  
attuned to Bach by candlelight.  
The same figment of imagination  
used to play a special kind of pretend.  
Pigmentation of oceanic overviews,  
the kind once called forever,  
complete with sonnets  
and an "I love you"  
that contaminates  
even the ruins of relating.  
Each sound hieroglyphic; pictographs  
showcasing how a world  
still burns.  
Each breeze, a winter attuned.  
until the

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## Leasa Darine Jones

On angel's wings we found you,  
lying in your bed.  
The call from home was hopeless,  
we thought you'd be dead.  
But you were strong for all of us  
the pain you set aside.  
The fear we fought to hide from you  
in god we must confide.  
You show such strength, no worries.  
A smile dawns your face.  
The courage set inside of you  
our little girl of grace.  
To ask god why is pointless,  
we know not what he does.  
Or why that this must happen to a little girl he loves.  
Small hopes are our saviors,  
they come from day to day.  
Our prayers will be with you,  
and your faith will guide your way.

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## Matthew Voyles

Unsuccored, pale faced, world weary,  
pseudo-inebriate, nonentical,  
One too well acquainted with fragility,  
I made love to a strange woman one night,  
Her name was solitude.  
Bearing her insouciance,  
I read her love poems till dawn,  
While in the luminescence of candle light,  
She vehemently plucked the strings of my heart,  
With a cool green hand.

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Honorable Mention  
2001-2002 Lora A. Printz Memorial Poetry Prize  
Judge: Prof. Tom Saya

Elizabeth Deanna McMillan

When my beloved O2  
Halted wavelengths diffused  
And the sky refused to be blue  
In the bathroom

I held it  
And it settled and sifted and shifted and shrank  
Then it was gone in a flash  
The test found a new home in the trash

The tunnel stormed

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Honorable Mention  
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Judge: Prof. Tom Saya

## Andrew Schnell

How  
in a world of six billion  
can one person be  
alone?  
The halls are  
teeming with people,  
each with agendas,  
each with a purpose  
(although most don't know it)  
Can any of them be  
alone?  
Not the sanctuary sought in solitude,  
Not the time needed to think,  
Not the aloneness sought for in escape,  
but emptiness,  
the inability to connect,  
the lack of the option, the need, to seek silence.

The secrets of the universe are revealed  
here  
everyday.  
Some revealed on the blackboards,  
(who will hold these secrets, again)  
some on scraps of paper,  
and some  
(probably the most important ones)  
taught on the stairwell  
in transit  
(in silence)  
when we're spending the least attention to them.

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First Place  
2004-2005 Golden Eagle Prose Contest  
Judge: Prof. Michael O'Rourke

## Elizabeth Ayres

So I plan on being in Georgia in 2 wks, Bob Crawford typed on his laptop, waiting anxiously to read GA\_PEACH142's Instant Messenger response.

Really? What calls you back to GA?

My son's graduating from college. You remember me talking about Bryan, at UGA? I'm flying in for his commencement ceremony so he doesn't think I'm a complete bastard father.

No, I'm sure he appreciates the gesture. Are you coming by yourself?

Bob looked out the window from the couch to make sure Alison's car wasn't pulling up the drive.

Yeah, I thought it would be best if I should go alone. My ex Susan is nice enough to let me stay at her house, so I didn't want to inconvenience her with more houseguests. Bob laughed

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"Hey, babe," a tall, shorthaired brunette walked in the living room with a paper grocery bag under each arm. Alison walked over to Bob and gave him a kiss on the cheek. "How was your day?"

"Alright." Bob closed his laptop and put it on the couch. He got up and grabbed a bag from her and walked into the kitchen.

"What'd you do today?" She opened a cabinet and shoved in cereal boxes.

"Nothing much, pulled an early shift at work, came home and played around on the Internet."

Okay, what do we have: suit and tie, nice shoes, knock-around clothes and sneakers, underwear, toothbrush, toothpaste, razor, blade replacements in plastic bags, aftershave, deodorant, and plane tickets. Bob went through the stuff in his suitcase in his head before he zipped it up. He wished he could bring his laptop with him so he could talk to Linda in private, but somewhere along the line his wife Alison tried to convince him that he wouldn't want the extra carry-on, and, like a whipped married schmuck, he agreed. Bob wanted to make sure he didn't forget anything important for his trip to Georgia. It was a sure thing that if he did, Bryan would remember it and most likely talk about it with his mother as soon as he boarded the plane back to California. Bob wished he had a better relationship with his son, but then again, what could he have done? Divorcing Bryan's mother Susan was an action agreed upon by both of them, so it wasn't like he deserted his only son with no good reason. The truth was, the marriage was crumbling anyway. When Bob got a prime job offer as one of the fire chiefs of the San Francisco Fire Department, and Susan didn't want to pick up and move her whole life, the decision for divorce seemed to already have been made.

He and his current wife, Alison, were together for about eight years now, and they seemed to have been falling into a similar slump. He heard there's a time in every marriage when the

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his comfort zone. He wasn't really sure about his feelings for her, though. He and Linda seemed to have a connection, a sort of chemistry with each other. He saw the picture she'd sent him a few weeks ago, and she certainly was a looker. She had a great personality, she was funny, and, to top it off, she was beautiful. She reminded him of Jane Fonda in *On Golden Pond*. The picture she sent was taken when she was in the Smoky Mountains on a camping trip with her daughter. Linda was wearing hiking shorts, a tee shirt, and a ball cap, and her blonde hair was in short pigtales. She stood behind her daughter; her arms were slung around her little girl's shoulders in a tight hug, both of them sporting huge smiles. Linda had the prettiest smile Bob had ever seen. Bob wasn't really sure what he was going to do when he got to meet her, and that scared him.

After about the thirteenth time looking in his carry-on bag, he was assured that his plane tickets were in the front pocket with the Velcro closure. His luggage was standing together in a huddle in the corner of the bedroom. Bob set the alarm on the nightstand, took off his glasses and climbed into bed. The cool cotton sheets seemed to have a relaxing effect on Bob's tired brain, and after a few minutes, he fell asleep.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Welcome to Atlanta International Airport on this fine Wednesday afternoon. The current temperature is a comfortable eighty-five degree s Fahrenheit with a humidity level of thirty-three percent. Skies are mostly sunny with a chance of clouds later in the evening. The current Atlanta time is 4:17pm Eastern Standard Time. If you have checked any luggage before boarding this flight, your baggage may be picked up at the baggage claim station designated on the sign next to the exit passageway. If this is your first time visiting the Peach State, we hope you enjoy your stay and come back soon. If you are a Georgia native, we would like to be the first to welcome you home. Thank you for flying United Airlines flight 9066. Have a safe and wonderful afternoon."

The pilot's soft soothing voice over the intercom wasn't enough to calm down Bob's nerves. He didn't know what was making him more nervous: meeting Linda for the first time or seeing Bryan and Susan again. The plane touched down with a little scoot felt in the cabin, and it wasn't fifteen minutes before the plane was ready for de-boarding. He sat back for a few minutes while the majority of the people bum-rushed the exit of the plane. Looking down at his white knuckles and his hands forming what seemed like a vacuum seal to the armrests, he took a deep breath and eased up a little. When the bottleneck at the door had seemed to dwindle, he got up slowly and removed his bags from the overhead. He made his way to the door and smiled at the cute flight attendant standing at the door.

"Thanks for flying with us today, sir." Bob looked at her nametag just above her wings: "Melanie." "Enjoy your stay in Georgia."

"Oh, I'll try," he said as he pushed the strap of his carry-on a little bit higher on his shoulder and headed for the terminal.

The connecting hallway from the plane and the airport seemed like it got longer with every step he took. He emerged into the terminal turning his head all around. Neither Bryan nor Susan was in sight. He walked a little bit further and stood there for a few minutes. Groups of people around him were hugging relatives or friends, smiling and exchanging pleasantries. He made the executive decision to head over to the baggage claim to pick up his suitcase and come back when he saw them sprinting toward his general direction. Bob's heartbeat sped up and his shoulders tensed again. He first recognized his ex-wife, Susan Mitchell: she still wore her red hair short and curly, but she looked like she'd gained about twenty pounds since the last time he'd seen her a couple of years back. Even so, Susan had the kind of face that you could recognize even if she'd gained 200 pounds. She was wearing khakis and a blue short-sleeved sweater. Before he could make eye contact with her, she turned her head to say something to the person walking beside her. Bob looked over to the young man to her right and almost didn't recognize him. The last time he'd seen Bryan Crawford, his son, in the flesh was when he visited California seven years ago, when he was fourteen. Now twenty-one years

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old, Bryan was taller than his father, about two or three inches taller. He'd bulked up some, gained some more muscle. Bob had seen pictures of Bryan since then, but there was a difference from how he looked then and the last picture he received from Susan's Christmas party two years back. He was dressed nicely, wearing a polo shirt and nice pants. His hands were shoved in his pockets; that must have been a trait he picked up from his father when either one of them was nervous. He was handsome, that was no lie. He looked more like his mother now than he did the last time father and son were face to face. Bob was at an impasse with his emotions. Bryan was the first to look at Bob standing there with a smile on his face. He gave a quick smile that hid his teeth and waved a little. Susan looked up and gave a similar smile as she approached him.

"Hi Bob," she said as she touched his arm and gave him a short hug. "How was your flight?"

"Oh, it was fine. You look great." He rubbed his right palm on his pant leg before extending it

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someone on Thursday night. You don't have anything big planned for that night, do you?" He saw Susan turn her head back towards him with a quizzical look through her sunglasses.

"Uh, no, nothing that can't be changed. Who are you meeting?"

He pondered what to say next. "Just a friend of mine that I met in California." Technically that was true, so his conscience wasn't going to get him for that one.

Susan hit a button from her keychain, and a trunk door of a silver Chevy Lumina three cars down popped up. They loaded his bags and hopped in the car. Pulling out of the lot after paying the toll, Bob felt another round of discomfort beginning to set in as the Lumina made its way to their small hometown of Braselton, Georgia.

\*\*\*\*\*

Looking at the tag on the key he was just given, Bob searched the tiny Enterprise parking lot for his assigned car, an emerald green Dodge Intrepid, license plate number "NQI 371." He'd gone out to dinner with Bryan and Susan the night before, and Susan had something planned for every night but Thursday, when Bob wouldn't be around. Thursday afternoon was the only real time he had to himself until he flew back to California. He had just finished signing the agreement with the rental car dealer before he'd walked out of the glass door and onto the lot. He checked his watch. 4:53 pm. He had more than enough time to get ready and be there at 10:00, but he still felt edgy. Braselton was only about thirty, forty minutes away from Atlanta;

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room; he didn't much care for "Full House" - those damn little Olsen twins grated his nerves - but he couldn't find the remote, and he wasn't really paying attention anyway.

Before he knew it, Bob was dressed and ready to go at 6:45. Only two hours to go before I take off. He sat down in the middle of the couch and stared at the TV, but that brought him no ease. His patted the tops of his knees with his fingers and looked around. The computer desk in the corner gave him an idea. He had to talk to Linda. Bob stood up, but sat back down just as fast. He pondered his options. That's not my computer. Besides, what if Susan comes home early and sees me? Bob walked to the window and parted the curtains with his fingers, looking out to see if Susan's car was coming up the street. Nothing. Bob ran to the computer chair and saw that her computer was already turned on. Thank God, he thought as he went online and found the "IM Express" page. God, Susan's computer takes forever to load up. He typed in his screen name and password with fingers of fury, looking over his shoulder for headlights in the driveway. Bob shook his knees rapidly and bit his nails as he waited for recognition of his request; his nerves made him fidget like a crack addict in detox. Please be on, please be on, he repeated in his brain. Then his buddy list finally popped up in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. She's not online. Bob felt let down, like a partially deflated balloon. He really wanted to talk to her before he saw her; he hadn't spoke with Linda since the day they set up their plans to meet.

7:00 pm rolled around slowly. God, I gotta do something. Bob couldn't hold still much longer. He grabbed the car key from the counter and drove to a nearby ATM. He pulled out some cash and went through McDonalds and ordered some fries, something that would fill his stomach and possibly calm him down. Driving around town managed to take up thirty minutes. He went into a grocery store and bought a bouquet of flowers for Linda. She might appreciate that, he thought as he looked at the selection. To take up some more time, he wandered around the aisles, picked up the latest copy of "Stuff" magazine and headed toward the checkout line. Bob got in the car and peeled the price tag off the cellophane wrapped around the flowers; he got her a bouquet of carnations, daisies, and other types of flowers he couldn't identify if you held a gun to his head. He stuck the key in the ignition and turned it far enough so the radio would come on. The clock on the radio prompted "8:14," and that was good enough time for Bob to hit the interstate to Atlanta.

Traffic got a little sluggish about forty miles into the drive. There must be a concert in town or something. He was glad he left a little bit earlier than expected. Bob finally hit the exit ramp into Atlanta and paused for a bit. He looked out his windshield at the tall buildings that were in front of him. It'd been ten years since he'd been in this part of the country, but he felt it was as if he'd never left. Restaurants and nightclubs filled the majority of the strips in Atlanta, whereas if Bob were still in California, the streets would be consumed by fitness centers and spas. It was about 9:15 pm by the time he pulled into the valet parking area at Flanagan's Bar and Grill. Bob passed the rental car key to the valet driver, a small Puerto Rican man in a red vest whose nametag read "Miguel." He walked into the restaurant to the hostess' podium and asked to be seated.

"Can I by any chance get a seat where I can see the doorway?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, we can do that, but it may take longer to get a table," the hostess replied, sounding slightly agitated by the request.

"That's fine. I'll sit at the bar." She handed him a little black box that would blink when his table was available.

Bob pulled up to a stool and ordered a Guinness, thinking that if he should be in what was supposed to be an Irish restaurant, he should probably order an Irish beer. The place smelled like corned beef, the special of the day. Judging by the conversations he had overheard, there was a couple meeting on a blind date to the left of him, and a group of college men behind him. He sat there for a while, listening to the distinct Georgia accents around him. Bob wondered whether Linda would have a thick Southern drawl. He liked women from the South, especially compared to the women in California. Southern belles seemed to be more at ease

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with their surroundings. When Bob lived in Georgia, it wasn't a shock to see a woman eat

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seat; he didn't care anymore. He locked the doors, turned on the ignition, and pulled out of the parking lot.

Bob helped Bryan move out of his apartment on Friday and went to his commencement that Saturday. He was so proud of his son, but something else was gnawing at his mind. Linda. What went wrong? I don't get it. That Sunday, Susan and Bryan drove Bob back to the airport and sent him on his way to California. When the plane touched down, his wife Alison was waiting for him in the terminal with a smile and a kiss.

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