



ABC CLARION

High school students are welcome to send articles or comics to clarionabc@gmail.com

Letter from the Editor

Hello everyone:

We are pleased to announce the winners of the ABC Clarion Summer 2016 Competition. Here are the results for all three categories:

NARRATIVE:

1st: "A Pick-Pocket's Confession" by Sydney Peng (Magnet High School)

2nd: "Self-Help, Self-Harm" by Megan Pan (The Pingry School)

3rd: "John Marlowe" by Steven Mi (Churchill Junior High School)

POETRY:

1st: "You" by Jing Jia (Leonia High School)

2nd: "Dissolution" by Nicole Cheng (Stuyvesant High School)

3rd: "Musings on a Muse" by Sydney Peng (Magnet High School)

ESSAY:

1st: "This Piano B, It's in Treble!" by Adam Deng (West Windsor Plainsboro High School North)

2nd: "My Audition" by Angelina Li (Highland Park High School)

3rd: "Paranoid" by Steven Mi (Churchill Junior High School)

OUR THREE JUDGES:

Maria Lamattina, Ed.D., Director of ELA Programs for Yu's Elite Education.

Lester Gesteland, Former news editor, book editor, and owner of and head instructor at Tiger Workshops Learning Center.

J. David Liss, MFA from Brooklyn College. Was a speechwriter and worked for a number of officials in NYC including Mayor Edward Koch. His poetry and fiction have appeared or are forthcoming in "The Naugatuck River Review," "Blue Monday Review", "Fifth Wednesday Journal", "The MacGuffin," and others.

We sincerely thank our judges for their help to make this competition successful.

Congratulations to all of our participants, and please keep writing!

- Editor Team of the ABC Clarion

Narrative Competition Third Place

John Marlowe

by Steven Mi

John Marlowe, 17, glanced again at the city map in his hand, moving his eyes through the spidery mess of streets until he saw the bright red circle that was courtesy of a Magic Marker. 11 Civil Avenue. "This is it," he muttered to himself as he studied the large house in front of him. He couldn't keep an evil grin from blooming. Pretty nice place you got there, squirt, he thought. I might relieve you of some of that. Every service needs a tip — especially one as boring as babysitting.

He still didn't really understand why the County Police Department made him, John Marlowe — shoplifter, pickpocket, self-proclaimed streetwise roughneck - babysit. John even heard something about the kid's parents wanting a delinquent as a babysitter. It was his first whiff of fresh air after weeks shut in that hellhole of a detention center, and he intended to make every minute count — at least, every minute that wasn't taken up by the brat's inevitable loudness and cheekiness and stupidity. John smirked. Here goes, he thought, and he walked to the front door and rang the doorbell.

When the door opened, John walked inside. Before he could move, a hand grabbed his thigh and he looked down. John sighed. "There you are. Come on now, squirt, I'm supposed to watch you. Let's get on with it."

John took a seat in the large foyer. He stared at the little boy, who stared back. After a few seconds, the lanky teenager broke the silence. "What's your name, squirt?" he asked.

"My name Ralph!" the boy exclaimed.

"Ralph?" John queried. And then: "Oh,

Ralph?"

The boy nodded enthusiastically. "Ralph!"

John grunted. "Whatever. Anyway, don't cause trouble for Mr. Marlowe here, stay outta his way, and be a good squirt, alright? Or you'll get spanked."

Something not quite discernible flitted across the boy's face and passed just as quickly. "Okay!" Ralph declared. "Imma play now. Stay out a Missta Ma-lo's way!" He stood still for a moment, and then shot away from John like a rocket on steroids.

For a good hour John just watched him bounce around the house. Surprisingly, Ralph's only toys were a scratched doll made out of wood, 1960's style, and what he could only think of as a slightly glorified stick drawn all over in crayon to look like a sword. I thought the family was loaded, John thought. Strange. Slowly, John began to notice subtleties that had eluded him at first: the way Ralph was dressed in what John now realized as shabby clothing; the way he was so thin and pale; the way the refrigerator had a padlock on it.

He was still preoccupied with his thoughts when Ralph spoke up. "Missta Ma-lo, do you have mommy and daddy?"

The question surprised John. "Obviously."

Ralph stopped playing and looked up at him with eyes that suddenly seemed to be several kilometers deep. "Can Ralph have 'em back?"

Shocked silence. Speechlessness. Disbelief at what this five-year old little twerp was saying. The "streetwise" teen was struck dumb. The boy continued, "Yessuh,

Judges' Comment:

The judges liked "John Marlowe" because of the way the narrator changed in the piece. The judges found the main character to be true to life, convincing. Ralph wasn't that believable, but believable enough to make the story work.

Ralp just reememba being at an old place. Lotsa other kiddies. And one day, da mommy and daddy now came and took me away. Not much food now but better 'an old place." He paused. Continued. "I see other kiddies wit their mommies and daddies, and they love 'em very much and buy 'em candy and don't spank 'em. I wannabe loved very much too. Pretty please?"

The request was so forlorn, so pleading, and ultimately so sad that John didn't have anything to offer. Dropping out of school, stealing of his parents' money - comparing his childhood experiences to Ralph's was like comparing the life stories of Bill Gates and Harriet Tubman. Stupid. So stupid.

John straightened. He no longer felt useless. He had a purpose. He was living.

"Listen, Ralph," he told the boy. "You hang on there for a bit more. I'll help ya. Don't give in. Or you'll get spanked."

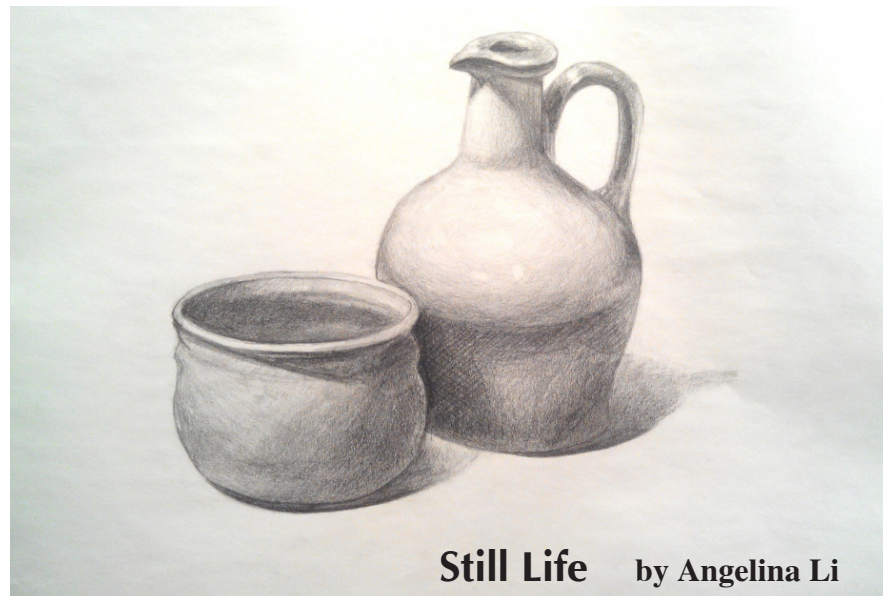
At that moment, a car crunched into the driveway. John glanced at the clock and nodded. "Gotta go now. Remember what I said." Can't believe I feel so strongly just by talking with this squirt. He smiled inwardly.

"Ok!" Ralph declared. "Bye Missta Ma-lo!"

As John climbed back into the police cruiser, the officer asked him, "So what'd you learn today, punk?"

John smiled sweetly at him. "That you might wanna check out that house — and that I wanna go to school."

(All misspellings in the narratives are intentional)



Still Life by Angelina Li

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