

Selection from *Bedlam Boys*

When Craig left, Tony turned on his radio and fell asleep. His mother never even knocked on his door.

Tony woke to the smell of fried eggs. It was almost six o'clock. He shut off his radio and went to the kitchen. His mom and dad were sitting at the table eating dinner. Fried eggs with Tabasco and ketchup, toast, and beer. "Fried eggs, again?"

"Actually no, there are no more eggs. If you want something to eat there's toast or cereal. I thought you might have been gone for good."

Tony walked over to the refrigerator and removed some bread and the jar of peanut butter. He could tell he didn't want to start a conversation with his mom tonight. "They'll be going out soon enough," he thought to himself, and so would he.

"Anthony, when are you going to start working after school? Your father and I think you could at least get a job cleaning barns on weekends. You need to start earning your keep."

"My keep. What am I, Mom, a boarder?"

"Don't get smart with me. It's just time you figured out what you are gonna do with the rest of your life. I think you should enroll in the career center and learn something useful, like mechanics or carpentry."

"Right, I wanna clean other people's shit, fix their cars, and build their homes. Well, forget it. I am not staying in Bedlam for them."

"Well where do you think you're gonna go? If you're no good here, you'll be no better anywhere else." She looked at her husband and back to Tony then, as she scraped her fork across her plate. Almost in a moment of self-reflection, she growled, "You'll never amount to shit."

Tony put the jar down next to the sink and turned

toward the table. His father hadn't stopped eating. He didn't join her to come down on Tony; he just kept out of it, content that she wasn't turning on him. Tony just shook his head. He wasn't sure which one of his parents repulsed him the most. "You can stop worrying about my future. I'll be out of here soon enough, so you can find another boarder.

"Worthless. Your son is worthless."

Tony left through the back door and walked around the house toward the street. He stood in a puddle of water as he opened the trunk of his car and removed the backpack with the beer and whiskey in it. He shut the trunk and walked west down Logan to the river. Less than a block away, he stepped over the barricade and sign that read **DEAD END.**

Deborah Rinker