

The Worst They Can Do

By AWC Member Dave Swan



MY DAD WAS A SALESMAN, but when it came to rejection from potential customers, he had the soul of a writer. As he put it, "The worst they can do is say no." So when my submission didn't make the cut for our "Alone Together in Georgia" anthology contest, I decided to try again. Our VP of Contests, Awards, & Scholarships, Clay Ramsey, encouraged us to do just that: "We hope you don't hide your work away in a drawer. Please send it out to other publications and share it with the world!"

First, though, I'd already done lots of revisions, I re-read my story with fresh eyes. Let's see: That paragraph could use a few details, to heighten the sense of place. The narrative needs more substance, more tension. I can ratchet up the argument the characters are having, maybe cut some color and atmosphere so it doesn't get clichéd. Hey, what if I drop a hint on page 1 about the big plot twist, instead of saving it all for the end?

After giving the piece a final once-over, I sent it off to The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature. This operation began as a literary journal and now flourishes online with the motto, "No good Southern fiction is complete without a dead mule." They accepted it, and you can [read it here](#). A little extra effort brought me a publication credit and the joy of seeing my words out there in the universe. Yay!

What isn't right for one outlet might be just the ticket for another. Our [website](#) has a list of magazines and publications you can try. (BTW, if you submit to the Dead Mule, you'll need to attach a Southern Legitimacy Statement; mine includes the blues, Faulkner, and fried apple pie.) Take care and be safe, write, revise, and write some more.

✓ My bio

Dave Swan is a writer and editor as well as a former journalist, cab driver, and disc jockey. His stories have appeared in the [Dead Mule School](#), the [Birmingham Arts Journal](#), and the [Red Fez](#). As one of our social media volunteers, he reminds you to follow us on Twitter [@atlwritersclub](#).

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