

### **First Prize**

At times funny, at times deadly serious, this profile depicts a funeral-home director through his work, evincing deep respect for the subject without losing nuance or neutrality. The author deploys a compact chronological structure to elegant effect, bringing the subject to life through the story of one family's loss. And yet the profile switches perspectives without a hitch; readers find themselves both in the subject's mind and in the minds of the mourners around him. A quiet wake is interrupted by the subject's boisterous laughs, by his slamming of a door. "I like people to see me now and then," he says in a tactful acknowledgment of his own performance.

Throughout the profile, the author elicits surprising honesty from the subject, offering readers a window into a life subsumed by the work of death. The judges applaud the author's controlled tone, fluid pacing, and unsentimental handling of the business of funerals—from the routine details ("Centrella will be buried by noon tomorrow") to the poignant descriptions ("Corners of mouths fall, lips purse, and brows furrow"). First prize goes to *I Give a Good Funeral: A Profile of Patrick Doherty* by Alexandra Kluzak.