

Painted Faces

by Tim Jones-Yelvington

"If somebody gave you a hundred dollars, how would you use it?" Randy says. We're at the Clareborne County Mall. We're celebrating Randy's twelfth birthday. "Want to know how I'd use it?" he says. "Hookers!" We're standing near the face-painting kiosk. I want to dig my fingers into the paint and spread yellow whiskers across my cheeks. I want to become a lion. That's how I'd use the money. I don't want to tell Randy I still like painting my face. I don't want Randy to call me a baby. Or faggot. "Me too," I say. "Definitely hookers."

