

Flannery's company

by [Angela Alaimo O'Donnell](#) in the [November 6, 2019](#) issue

*"A serious fiction writer describes an action only in order to reveal a mystery. Of course, he may be revealing this mystery to himself at the same time as he is revealing it to everyone else."*

—Flannery O'Connor

They always do surprise me. I never know what they are going to do until just before they do it. A grandmother comforting the man who killed her son, an acned angel hoving her book at racist Ruby, a bible salesman swiping Hulga's wood leg. The clever ways my people keep me fooled. I look away for one second, and some evil overcomes them—or some good—I had not foreseen. In truth, I am in awe of them, their human talent for thickening a plot. They are my teachers. I just hold the pen and wait for them to surprise me again.