

# WORD PLAY



## JOURNEYS

English '57 Series  
Number 12: Fall 2010

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### INTRODUCTION

The Independent Writing courses in the English '57 series offer students a unique opportunity to improve and experiment with their writing. Students meet individually with writing lab tutors who provide feedback for developing drafts and ideas. The only limits to what can be worked on in the course are the students' own creativity and motivation. Throughout the semester, they collaborate with their tutors to produce the revised, polished works that form this collection.

We've all heard that the simple act of reading can carry a person to anyplace imaginable, and after reading through the many accounts of transportation and transformation in this collection, it seemed appropriate to entitle it "Journeys." I hope you enjoy the stories and poems in this anthology and that each one takes you somewhere new.

*Amy Zandler, Editor*

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume of *Word Play* would not be possible without the participation of the talented writers in this semester's Independent Writing classes. I would also like to recognize the Independent Writing tutors for their many hours of hard work, commitment to their learners, and promotion of this year's publication. Finally, I would like to thank the senior staff of the Tutoring and Learning Center and the English Department for their advice and support.

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*My learner, Clarice Aarthun, has been working with me this semester on personal narrative writing. We've been focusing on taking a specific, isolated, moment in time and utilizing descriptive language to develop short anecdotes. Clarice's favorite piece from this semester is about when her granddaughter met her newborn brother for the first time. Clarice wanted to emphasize that this is a documentation of a sweet moment of childhood innocence.*

*-Emiline Buhler, Tutor*

## DREW'S HOMECOMING

### CLARICE AARTHUN

We had waited a long time for baby Drew's homecoming. My daughter was on bed rest and lived with premature labor for three months. Once he was born, he was rushed to another hospital due to birth complications. They couldn't tell his big sister Clara exactly when he was coming home from the hospital because the doctors made that decision the morning they decided to release him.

Drew arrived home on Tuesday afternoon, October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

Big sister Clara was napping so her Kurtweil grandparents had a chance to see and hold Drew before she woke up and commanded attention. When she woke from her nap and saw her daddy she was excited. When he said mommy and baby Drew were downstairs she acted as if they had a secret to keep. She talked excitedly but in a whisper and with daddy's help put on her princess dress to meet her brother.

At 2 ½ years, she is caught up in the magic of the Disney princesses. She has a magic wand and all the DVD's so knew how a princess would act at so important an occasion. Slowly and deliberately her petite 30-inch frame descended the steps to the living room and from there to the family room one level down.

Drew was sleeping in the baby swing. She tiptoed over, looked at him, looked at her parents, and then on tiptoe gave him a kiss. All of a sudden she became a bundle of energy and as quickly as she could ran up to her bedroom using her hands to get up the stairs more quickly. Just as quickly she came back down the stairs with both her lovies, pink cuddle blankets, and gave them to her brother.

It brought tears to her mother's eyes. It doesn't mean she will always share. It doesn't mean they will always get along. But to welcome her brother home, she shared her most important possessions, the blankets that bring her comfort when she doesn't feel right. She wanted him to feel comfort too.

Drew was home.



*John has been working outside his comfort zone this semester by exploring different types of poetry. It has been such a joy to see all of the risks that John has taken and the great improvements he has made in his poetry because of them. I can't wait to see where all of the creativity John has acquired this semester will take him in the future!*

*-Michelle Zacher, Tutor*

## **A TRIBUTE JOHN ELLER**

Summer, my sanctuary from books and soon my escape from work.  
You move too fast summer, your days too short and nights even shorter.  
You are like a bullet train, Summer refusing to stop.  
I wish I could put you in a time bubble so I may visit you whenever I wish.  
But alas by September back to school I crawl,  
You will be missed, Summer.

*Molly Erdmann, as seen in her poetry, is both eloquent and creative. The uniqueness of the poem is in its ability to convey Molly's message through not only the words themselves, but also the placement of the words on the paper. We worked extensively on picking the perfect words to clearly illustrate her emotions. Not being a creative writer myself, I thoroughly enjoyed reading Molly's poetry, and I expect you will too.*

*-Matthew Wild, Tutor*

## VOYAGE MOLLY ERDMANN

A Journey, a climb, an EXAGURATION of speech; to call out in the human soul: a longing of the highest degree.

More than a hesitation,

Deliberate.

Unspoken.

Language: which of this  
circumstance hints at bold sadness

History holds no truth for the present, yet to it we cling; pray, despair not- movement *must*  
bring hope,

Like an ocean journey with no end in sight—

The waves resolve to rise up and fall down ever singing your harmony.

A river swells in the depths of your heart and cries- Cries for my melody to play along within.

This cry is our hearts separation, it is a vast sea— for words cannot  
be spoken; emotion must not yet be.

So wait the voyage with much sadness, but let your heart sing with expectant hope.

What has been awoken that may not be put to sleep...

-Voyage

*Molly started this class as a talented poet, but I have noticed her writing developing even more through the course of the semester as she has been discussing and revising her poetry. She has written a lot of slam poetry, and even with its necessarily short, often blunt lines, she always manages to convey the depth and details of the serious topics she tackles. I have had a great time working with her this semester, and I look forward to reading any poetry she writes in the future.*

*-Rachel Werner, Tutor*

## HOW EASILY WE FORGET MOLLY FARLEY

Point your sarcastic finger  
Look down upon his face  
Shout your burning phrases  
Let the whole world hear his mistakes!

Funny how we should laugh  
At another person's expense  
Acting like we're so superior  
Separated from others by a fence  
Made of pride and forgetfulness  
For can you be so blind?  
You scorn and you convict  
Yet you forget to look behind

Remember what you said those times?  
Remember what you did?  
Remember how you felt so low  
You had no reason to forgive  
Yourself for your falter,  
Your stumbling days?  
I'm sure you can recall  
Regret's fiery blaze.

You *really* want to wish  
That feeling upon another?  
You *really* want to initiate  
The tears  
The sorrow  
The stutter?

How dare you call yourself loyal  
To anyone on this earth

How can you be so selfish as to  
Demean another's worth?

Rewind for just a moment  
Think about your past  
Those nights passing slowly  
Happiness that could not last.

But you have pushed it away  
Burned it out of your memory  
Pretending it never happened  
Hiding cleverly  
Your dark treachery.

Now raise your finger once again  
Lift up that heavy arm  
Drenched in hypocrisy  
Dripping with dishonesty  
And do your best to harm  
A person broken and vulnerable  
As you were once; crying and alone  
(Remember what you hide inside)  
I *dare* you to throw the first stone.

## WE ALL FALL DOWN MOLLY FARLEY

I see you laugh.  
Turn to the side  
And try to hide  
That word  
Which I heard  
Do you think  
(Maybe you don't)  
That with a wink  
What you say  
Goes away?  
People remember  
What you said  
Last winter  
Or last week;

Whenever you speak.  
Who are you  
To decide what's true?  
Without further ado  
I introduce the Almighty Judge!  
(That's you).  
Sarcasm?  
Yes.  
But only a mere jest  
At who you are!  
And your car?  
Well the type alone  
(Whatever you own)  
That says all about you  
And what you do!  
Now you realize  
How you criticize;  
The comments you make  
And how you take  
A gender or race  
And give them a face  
They don't really have  
Yet you think them bad.  
Take them in?  
No, turn them away!  
You don't want "others"  
With you on your Judgment Day.  
Black or white  
You take delight  
In saying who's better  
Even your gender  
Belongs in the center.  
Refer to "them"  
Not as people  
But as evil  
Why?  
You reply  
"Because they're different."  
Well isn't that brilliant?  
It makes us fall  
Forces us to crawl  
Because hope is gone  
Peace withdrawn  
From a world

That has swirled  
Into a position  
With Opinion's  
Definition.  
You think you're right?  
I think you're wrong  
To judge  
To hold a grudge  
Your whole life long.  
So turn your face  
Just in case  
I were to hear  
In my ear  
What causes tears.  
Say the name louder  
Say it for hours  
'Cause that name  
Implying shame  
Is beautiful to me  
And all who see  
The wonders of  
Diversity.  
I won't fight back  
White or black  
Red or green  
Blue or unseen  
Woman or man  
Pale or tan.  
We all dream  
We all cry  
We all smile  
We all die.  
What makes us different?  
You believe your lie.

*Amy's poetry has been such an inspiration to me as we've worked together this semester. She is gifted and talented and has truly displayed wonderful imagery in her pieces. It has been a joy and an honor to work with Amy as she unearths new works filled with the beauty of nature.*

*-Sarah Jordan, Tutor*

## VIVACIOUS HUES OF SPLENDID BREATH AMY GLENZER

A cast of tenacity, perseverance untethered.

A blush of vigor, ceremonious reprieves.

Sauntering dash, chromatic promenade.

Majestic bloom, pigmenting energy.

A biting blaze, complexion of anarchies complexity.

Glowing palette, choices abound.

Unconscious undertone, saturated direction.

Prism of fancy, impulsive vitality.

Reliance of intangible, iridescent adoration.

Vivacious hues, of splendid breath.

*Throughout my semester working with Abby, I have seen her poetry and prose develop and take life as we worked with character and language. In this piece and others, Abby takes on some big issues and works through them with skill and honesty.*

*-Amy Zandler, Master Tutor*

## LIKE ANTS ON A PICNIC BLANKET

### ABBY HOEFT

Sometimes the most mundane experiences provide us with brief moments of clarity: moments when we finally see the big picture that so often eludes us in the messiness of the day to day. I had such a moment once when I was at a picnic.

The picnic was extremely boring. So to pass the time, I began staring at the tiny procession of ants as they marched across my picnic blanket. I laughed to see them carrying their grains so importantly. If only they realized how insignificant they were, how brief their average life span was.

I thought it funny that the ants couldn't see the design on my picnic blanket. Even though they walked all over it, they could only see the path in front of them. I thought about the life of ants; how they gathered and marched, reproduced, and died. I knew that same pattern continued day after day, season after season, over and over again.

Are we any different?

We spend our lives acquiring families, friends, and fortunes—carrying our grains so importantly and we also die. Maybe the only thing that separates us from ants is that we question our existence.

We don't merely exist. We constantly question our experiences to find meaning in our lives.

Ants, in contrast, can live in uniformity without questioning anything. All the ants I saw were alike. They all scrambled in the sun, their identical bodies like dark beads weaving a black thread across my blanket.

Beyond them, I saw a myriad of people. Large sunburned women complained of the heat. Small children ran around screaming and shouting, so beautifully uncivilized. Silly girls giggled in their secretive circles while serious young boys practiced baseball and spitting and the studied aloofness of grown men. Men stood surveying the smiling faces of their children or the impassive faces of their watches. I sat as a spectator, seeing every person so infinitely unique and every ant so absolutely unremarkable. I knew that every person played a different role and made different choices, while every ant was just an ant.

And ants will always be that. They will never build skyscrapers, only tiny hills. They will never paint chapel ceilings, only dots in the sand. They will never define life, or death, or the force influencing both. As the ants seemed so unimportant, it was easy for me to disregard them as a child.

I often helped to decrease the ant population, with one swift stamp of my foot. I suppose I viewed them as insignificant specks that wouldn't be missed. I certainly didn't see them as similar to me. In part, I was correct.



None of the other ants stopped their scurrying to grieve another ant's passing, nor did any ant erect a monument. It was a different matter, though, when a person died. People wore sad black clothes and wept during somber hymns. They told their children, "Grandma's in Heaven now." They grieved and rejoiced that their loved ones had been taken into the arms of God. I, too, believe in God and an afterlife.

God, for me, answers the how and why of my existence. But sometimes, God isn't enough.

Unlike me, the ants live with a constant certainty because every ant has and knows its purpose. The worker ant builds the empire, the queen and her drones populate it, and each new ant perpetuates this cycle.

I don't have this certainty of purpose. I often ask myself, "What am I meant to do with my life, who am I supposed to be?" Like the ants, I can't always see the design on the picnic blanket; sometimes, I can only see the path in front of me.

...

After the picnic, my family drove home. I glanced back at the spot where my picnic blanket had been, trying in vain to see the ants. At the beginning of the picnic, I was their superior. By the end, I was nearly their equal. I stared up at the sky, through the clouds, looking for what I could not see. To God, I must have looked like an ant.

*Geoff is a bright and talented individual. He has an incredible imagination and great sense of humor. Our focus this semester was word choice and connecting to his desired audiences. He has been a joy to work with and I hope you enjoy his poetry as much as I have.*

*-Sarah Jordan, Tutor*

## **KID**

### **GEOFF LAUDON**

On the first day  
Excited and scared  
Ready to write, ready to play  
Ecstatic, here, to seize the day

Running and kicking  
Swinging and shooting  
We're all having fun  
Just messing around

In the class, scared again  
All the kids, doesn't seem the same  
But my friend, the teacher,  
Eases the pain

Learning new things  
All the time  
Listening to pings  
And all that rhyme

Here comes lunch  
Hurray for food  
But what is this?  
I'm not in the mood

Recess, finally  
The comforting grass pulls me in  
Sitting on green, looking at blue  
Everything feels right – How about you?

Time again  
To go inside  
Look at the dinosaurs  
I wish I could ride

Time for this day to end  
First day at school over at last  
Here comes Mom  
Another day to pass

*Kimberly has been working on a novel this semester. It's about vampires, so she has been working on her own unique mythology for the world she has created. This excerpt is from the prologue, and her focus on specific characters, their inner lives, and their interactions with each other provides a good introduction to the approach she takes in the rest of the novel.*

*-Rachel Werner, Tutor*

## 1876

### KIMBERLY LIZANLORENZ

As she opened her bedroom door, she was determined to understand what the chaos was that night. Her ears perked up to listen as another cry came from down the hallway. Quickly, she closed the door silently not to alert anyone. Lizzy tiptoed her way down the hallway, following the noise to satisfy her curiosity. There was a new one that had just come in that night and this one was different than the others.

She was given strict orders to leave her new sister alone but she couldn't. Just like her, the new one was allowed to stay in the mansion. With that opportunity, Lizzy couldn't turn it down. She had met a couple new ones before, but they never cried so much as this one was. Not even she had cried so much when she came to this place. Her curiosity drew her closer to the door down the hallway.

Her *Dominus* went to sleep a half hour ago in his room, and the elder, Melinda, had gone home hours before. At this time she was free to explore without getting in trouble. In her hand she carried a small candle holder with a nub of light attached to a wax candle that led her way. She made it close to the door and quickly looked down at either end of the hallway. She made sure no one was there before she continued.

The cries were louder now that she was closer, despite the door being closed. She stood a few feet from the door. As her eyes looked at the detail of the large oak door, she listened to the strained pattern of the sobs and the dragged in breaths after each one. Inside her head she went over all the thoughts that were running through it. She wondered what kind of person was behind the door, what made her act the way she did, and most of all she wondered if she could help her new sister.

Lizzy took a moment to calm her excited nerves. Her hand went to the pendant around her neck and she ran her thumb over the smooth surface. After a couple strokes of the pendant she felt ready enough to go on. She took a step forward toward the door and grabbed onto the handle. Her hand twisted it open, since the door wasn't locked, and pushed it wide open.

Slowly the door swung open and as soon as the door was out of the way, the cries grew more shallow. The light of the candle illuminated the doorway and herself but she could not see her new sister on the bed. She turned her head and blew out the candle. Her night vision was better without it, also she did not want to scare her new sister. As she took a couple steps she made sure not to make much noise. Coming forward in her white nightgown, like in all the other clothes, her form looked delicate and innocent. To her she could see the outline of a woman. It seemed that along with crying, her body was shaking amongst the pile of covers and blankets. Something unknown to Lizzy had really disturbed her sister.

There were differences between them. Lizzy came to the bedside quietly and got a good look at her sister. Her skin was much paler than her own. The new one's head was buried into a pillow, so her face wasn't visible, but her hands were clenched above her head. Her sister's skin was like porcelain even in the sparse light. Even curled up on the bed, she could tell her sister was much taller than her own body was.

Even though her hair was brown and Lizzy's was black, it didn't matter, they were still the same. Her sister's hair was all tangled. The pins that were holding it up were caught in the length. They were wearing the same nightgown, but even so they were entirely different. Her sister looked stronger, but still feminine.

Moving forward, she slid her knee to rest on the sheets while she quietly leaned forward over the bed and placed a hand on her sister's shoulder. She felt a flinch when she made contact but she kept her hand there. "...What is wrong?" she said in a soft voice, sitting down on the red sheets next to her.

Her sister, with her head in the pillow, slowed her cries and seemed to be trying to gain control of herself. The woman's cries stopped for a moment while she took in that she wasn't alone, that there was someone there. Her sister lifted her head slightly off the pillow and Lizzy lowered her head to look at the woman's face. She saw that her sister's light skin was stained in the two wavy lines where her tears had flowed. A scared look was over her face, but she tried to hide it now that Lizzy was beside her. Her sister came out with the question that must have been on her mind the whole night.

"Why am I still here?"

Lizzy smiled gently down at her sister as she smoothed out her hair. She had met a lot of new ones recently, but none of them had asked that question. They knew why, but her new sister didn't. She explained the best way she knew how. "You were given a second chance."

The pillow in her sister's hands was gripped tighter in her grasp. She stared straight into Lizzy's eyes, trying to seek an answer of any sort. Her eyes were pleading for anything that made sense. "But...why was it only me?"

"I'm sure if Melinda could have saved them, she would have." Lizzy reassured her.

Her sister's body started to shake as the words sank in. She tried hard not to lose control over herself, but it didn't work completely. "I don't want to be here. I want to be with him..."

She listened and watched her sister in such a state of sorrow. When she saw someone like this, she didn't like it at all. Her heart always reached out to them no matter what the situation was. However, this was completely different from before. This woman wasn't upset over one small mishap or just simple a misunderstanding, this was far too serious.

Lizzy looked at her sister holding the pillow and how much this was upsetting her, she wanted to do something to help her. Her new sister wouldn't be able to move on without some help and support. She never wanted to see her like that, and she didn't want to see her hurt.

An unknown force inside of her felt a connection with this woman. Although they just met, this new part of her felt protective of her new sister. At that time she wanted to show her comfort in the new life she was given. "Do you know what you have become? You are something much greater than you once were. You and I alike are stronger, faster, more evolved than anyone could ever dream of. This is your second chance at a life you had cut short."

Her sister looked up at her confused but somehow it eased her worry. Accepting the words as truth it seemed, she looked at the pillow before she tossed it aside. She then shifted herself closer and laid her head on Lizzy's knee.

Her breathing slowly calmed down into a normal rate and her body no longer shook. The tension that Lizzy saw in her sister melted away. As she observed her sister lying there, she wondered what thoughts could be running through her head. She thought that if she gave her time to think, that would be the best. Her sister's hair was still a mess so Lizzy worked gently to pull every pin out of her sister's hair and then gathered them up in her palm. The room started to gain some of its calmness back while the both of them kept silent.

Lizzy broke the stillness while she leaned back to the nightstand beside the bed and dropped the pins there. She looked at the drape covered window where she could see that the sun had started to peek through. She looked at her sister against her knee calm and silent. That was when she decided something that would guarantee that they would be close like this always. Lizzy took a hold of the woman's shoulders and pulled her up to look at her face. Her sister's head picked up right away and met her gaze, surprised at Lizzy's sudden move. She kept her voice gentle, so she would not scare her. "What is your name?"

"Tera...Tera La-"

"Shanley." Lizzy smiled at her as her sister had a lost look on her face. "You are Tera Shanley, like I am Elizabeth Shanley. From now on we are sisters. Understand?"

Tera smiled for the first time and it made Lizzy laugh, " Everything is going to be all right." Her tears had ceased to flow, and she wasn't scared anymore. Tera looked a little ashamed that she had cried and went to wipe off any leftover tears.

"Come...it is time to rest now. You have been up all night." Lizzy swiftly moved off the bed and pulled the covers straight the best she could. She then went for the thrown pillows on the side of the bed and placed them in the correct place. Lizzy was just about to direct her sister to lay down, but Tera was too quick.

Her sister laid on the bed calmly, as if nothing had happened. Lizzy laughed softly before she went to pull the covers up around her sister's shoulders. On second thought, she slid next to Tera and took a pillow for herself. She took her sister's ivory hand with her caramel colored one. They laid facing each other holding hands in silence for awhile.

Lizzy was glad that she could now see her sister happy and that she was no longer crying. Even though they did not talk, she could tell that Tera was thankful for everything. After awhile this small staring contest erupted between the two of them. One that wasn't issued and that was not called out. Tera was the first to blink and somehow a small event made them smile happily at each other.

That simple action sealed up the night's end. Seconds drifted into minutes and just as the sun beat full beam onto the curtains, they were both asleep. As the new day started, so did the new possibilities for anything to take place. Endless options and endless outcomes were theirs for the taking.

# TRENDS

## IAN MCGIBBON

I wish I were informational  
I wish I were an open book  
Everyone wants to be something more  
Something they are not  
Disfigured are our minds  
Skewed culture brainwashed and manipulated  
Like a child's mind  
We are plastic, pliable  
Holding images of fake  
Deteriorated people... models  
Models, modeling our desires  
Modeling our favorite name brands  
Models have the power to influence a whole nation  
Some diabolical plan to onset  
A pandemic of disease  
Because what's "in" next year  
Is something other than...  
Studded glam suits, Flashy accessories, Big diamond rings, Knee high faux leather boots,  
Vampires.  
Because "OMG" what's hot next year is  
Measles :)

# ROPE AND HARNESS

## IAN MCGIBBON

You still brush each other's hair  
Your hands come into contact  
But you pull away as soon as they are  
As not to end up holding  
Now you eat each other's wedding cake  
Forks might click clang and bang  
You both feel happy for a little while  
But old feeling will return maybe

We will both act like adults and be mature about it  
Two owls in the night could not be more wise  
But the wolves they will attack  
Building instincts that are massive  
The reactions of our bodies are gaining some attention

Let's turn into  
A Rope and a Harness  
We will climb the highest mountain  
And never return  
Let's turn into  
The next winning lottery ticket  
We will cash in all our riches  
And never return

Now you watch each other eat  
Be careful about your kids across the street  
It's easy to live when you live next to each other  
You spend most of your time kidding with one another  
Now you sit me down with a cup of tea  
Husband and wife, for a little while, we will be



# CONSCIENCE

IAN MCGIBBON

Found by an old man  
He says we were good friends  
Look into his eyes  
Somewhat similar to mine  
He says as they used to be  
Eyes full of color with more energy  
As they used to be

You came back in time to save me  
And in return to save you  
Wrinkles of a young time  
My flowers are blooming  
Broken and jealous he is  
Getting weaker  
And me I'm getting stronger

The mirror is proving  
My grim theory  
That he is right  
That I am a man  
Who does not listen  
Tried to hear  
But ignored the words given

I say goodbye to the old man  
Before he is corrupt like me  
Turning my cold shoulder  
Focused on the road ahead  
Don't care what my future would have been  
Motivation missed its mark  
And now I am wandering in the dark  
As I used to be  
Turns into what I won't be  
And so my death comes a little more early

# A WAKING NIGHTMARE

## IAN MCGIBBON

Walking into streetlights only happens during the day  
Unless the lights die and we lose our way  
Eyes locked forward not knowing our passenger is dead  
Afraid the supermarket is closed instead  
We talk about ourselves behind our backs  
Because imagining we are something bigger  
Is what our parents taught us best

I love to see all their pretty faces  
In my dreams it is the only thing that keeps me dreaming

Starting out on a day that seems too far away  
This can be depressing but isn't life depressing  
Moods can swing from room to room  
And situations can seem so doomed when they are not  
Missing out what you have now lost

I love to see all their pretty dresses  
And jackets in my dreams it's the only thing that keeps me dreaming

Back to the world I know and love  
Choosing clothes out of the wardrobe  
Flipping through the text of dinner tactics 101  
And not missing my flight to the pointless meetings in Taiwan  
Here I am in my comfort zone afraid to live life like the free ones  
Not tormented by this rather confused and confronted  
Not feeling the way I should be feeling is the only way to feel

I love to see all their pretty Prada  
And the Berluti's that they wear on their feet they keep a shimmer  
I love to see all their pretty jewelry  
And the Ferrari's that they drive and places they all dine at night  
I love to see all their pretty Cartier's  
That they wear on their wrists and the custom rings they get from engagement

Wake up.

*I really enjoyed working with Brianna on her poetry this semester. Her work has often been inspired by emotional events in her own life, so our main goal was making her work accessible to readers while maintaining her original intention. We also worked hard to accomplish her goal of varying her poetic style and subject matter, and the results are the diverse collection of poems here.*  
-Amanda Goodsett, Master Tutor

## ALONE BRIANNA MCKICHAN

Seconds

Minutes

Hours

D

A

Y

S

Weeks

---

Twelve longing months make one short year...  
a self-penned survival guide  
to the pain of losing you.

---

Heartbreak-absence, failed to prepare me  
for you faced reasons why  
two and long awaited e  
c o  
n r  
e

---

**X** marks the spot and “you are here”, course  
but deceitful maps and roadsigns off  
only mock how I’ve ended treasure-less and

---

## A-L-O-N-E

---

My lips drip letters, words  
that string together and amount to *NOTHING*.  
Can you decipher my mixed messages and read between the lines  
of this side-stepping dance around our terrible truth?

# ALPHABET SOUP

BRIANNA MCKICHAN

Allowing your transgressions  
Belong on my lists of my regrets. Just  
Cancel our relationship;  
Deny me the chance to  
Explain why my  
Fears control everything I do.  
Get away before I change my mind and  
Hand you my heart on a platter;  
Invest my secrets  
Just to be let down.  
Kill my hearty softly;  
Lie to my face and  
Make me believe  
No one else will do.  
Overlook the  
Pain you've caused, and  
Question every motive.  
Remove me from your  
Story, then  
Torture me with truth.  
Usurp my heart's control and  
Volunteer to destroy me.  
Wait for the moment that I  
X-pect everything from  
You...to make it hurt the worst.  
Zig-zag a path back to my heart.

## Reverse

Zeroing in on my weaknesses,  
You lied...just as I  
X-pected you would.  
Without remorse, you  
Vandalized the trust that I had built at your  
Urging.  
The only explanation...“I'm  
Sorry”. Don't you  
Realize that it means nothing? I'm left  
Questioning how I  
Possibly could have ignored what was so  
Obvious to everyone else.

Now everything hurts. The pain is  
Magnified due to my  
Lack of  
Judgment.  
I  
Hope to  
God you realize how  
Fucked up you are for  
Everything you've  
Done to me. How were you  
Capable of  
Breaking me into a million pieces  
Again?

## JOURNEY THROUGH THE HEART

BRIANNA MCKICHAN

Enter with care the house of four chambers,  
carpeted in blood  
and wallpapered with scars.

Platelets, iron rush in and swell,  
drowning me in my own hiding place...  
and once again I'm in over my head.

In the next second, the chambers empty  
with a resonating roar, and the valves slam  
in coordinated reaction.  
Only regret and pain are left to haunt the corners.

This heart is enlarged – a dangerous affliction,  
swollen and bruised from your reckless escape,  
yet always begging for more.

Like my life's blood,  
I know you'll be back again.

# ALWAYS

BRIANNA MCKICHAN

The moment I blinked you slipped away.  
A single breath,  
one exhale...  
                    and I will never be the same.

What does it mean...  
                    to be gone?  
It leaves a faded photograph, a fuzzy memory, a hollowness.

I once held my breath to prove I could hunt with you...  
                    to prove I could be a man like you...did I?  
(I would do it again just to bring you back)

Every smile, every laugh rings false,  
my smallest joys turn to guilt.  
I can't be happy without you.

                                    In leaving, you're the lucky one.

Pain and sadness left behind, along with a little piece  
of you.  
The hint of a memory, the whisper of a soul.

You're in the blades of grass,  
the prancing ballet of a delicate fawn, and the rolling clouds.  
You are the shadow that falls beside me.

Always...

Watch over me and smile.  
                    Light up the world like the sun gently touching the first frost,  
setting it all ablaze. Make a sea of diamonds just for me,  
and I'll never forget.

Missing you is bittersweet.

# BINARY

BRIANNA MCKICHAN

I have a heart – more or less.  
An organ that beats and beats and beats  
itself to death.

Stubborn in its confusion –  
hot one minute and cold the next  
this sorry heart beats for you.

I have a conscience – more or less.  
The angel and devil on my shoulder,  
a moral compass that rarely points due north.

My perfect angel bores me,  
the devil makes me dizzy.  
Yet forever I exist between them.

I have a mind – more or less.  
Left vs. right, control vs. passion  
always at war when it comes to you.

Creating fantasies of our future  
then tearing them down,  
I cannot trust myself.

Yes, I have a mind – more or less  
that chronicles all our memories,  
snapshots of missing, wanting, holding...

Framed and hung on the walls of my tired mind  
our story remains unharmed,  
waiting for my return.

*Alex is an incredibly creative and imaginative writer; as a fan of science fiction, much of his work is inspired by his favorite books and movies. The following is an excerpt from a much longer story into which he has put a huge amount of effort throughout semester. I've enjoyed watching it develop over time, and I hope that you will enjoy getting this short glimpse into the world he has created.*

*-Jenna Stark, Tutor*

## **BROTHERS IN THE GLOOM**

### **ALEXANDER NUSSBAUM**

The fire had burned down to nothing more than ash and dying embers. A pair of eyes, after an entire night of adjusting to the gloom, observed the unmoving shadows in the main room of the house. A single glance around this room revealed a familiar sight, an image of comfort and sanity infused in his mind from before the horrors of the cavern.

The dirty floor was worn smooth by countless footsteps. Five chairs neatly gathered around an old wooden table. A single window allowing the last moments of moonlight to gently illuminate the room. The warped oak door, pockmarked by rough knots, warped, and never locked. It would be so easy for someone – or something – to break in. “Enough reminiscing,” Calden whispered hoarsely. “I have to do my job before it gets too late in the morning.”

The soft glow from the fireplace lit the stairs as he crept through the gloom. At the landing, he paused for a moment before continuing made his way to the second door on the right. Carefully, he pushed open the door only enough to slip through into the room – any farther and the hinges would squeak loudly, waking everyone in the house. Leaving the door agape, he looked around the familiar bedroom. The window had not been shuttered, allowing moonlight to spill across the floor. The early morning air had chilled the room to an uncomfortable temperature, and Calden shivered.

He shifted his focus from the window to the bed. Muffled breathing, barely audible, could be heard from the blanket-cocooned figure. He quietly made his way over to the bed. A sleeping face peeked out of the blankets. “Tesio...” Calden whispered gently. He extended his hand slowly towards Tesio’s head. His fingers lingered forebodingly just above his brother’s throat for a second. He shivered again before firmly squeezing...

\* \* \* \* \*

“Tesio. It’s time to wake up. Tok and Jamik will be here soon.”

The familiar monotonous voice and the firmly-gripping hand on his shoulder pulled Tesio out of a place filled with strange dreams and forgotten emptiness. Tesio pushed back the many blankets with difficulty and sat up in his bed. After hours of darkness, the moonlight spilling through the gaping window was nearly blinding. Tesio rubbed his eyes and yawned.

“Thanks for waking me, Calden.”

“You are welcome,” Calden replied. “You really have to remember to close the shutters or else it becomes cold in here.” He began to shuffle back to the door.



“Are you going to retire?” Calden’s outstretched hand hovered above the doorknob before he lowered the limb and slowly turned around. Tesio was once again reminded how much his brother had changed after he found Calden wandering in the forest nearby the village. Calden was once strong, healthy, and energetic. The man who glanced back at him was thin, almost frail; the dark bags under his eyes contrasted his sickly paleness; his face revealed nothing – expressionless, without emotion or feeling; the once-bright eyes now stared blankly into him. Those eyes that looked without seeing, like a blind man’s gaze: sightlessly focusing on the unknown, seeing right through him. Tesio shivered.

“The sun has not risen.”

“Don’t you have any more candles?”

“No.”

“I’ll see if I can buy a few more from Birch. You need to start getting more sleep.”

“I might consider sleeping a few hours at night if you are able to afford enough candles.”

“It’s not necessarily how much she’s selling for, but what kind of mood she’s in.”

*Eric's inspiration for this story comes from his unlikely pet, a bearded dragon. He develops the story by writing it from the perspective of his bearded dragon. Hopefully through reading his story, you will learn something new about a unique pet.*

*-Rebecca Eberle, Tutor*

## FANTUS

### ERIC REED

I remember the day my owner came and got me from the strange store. Many people passed by and noisy children constantly pounded on the glass. Aside from the children, lots of adults came through and pointed at my siblings and me discussing how much they would love to take us home. The adults usually decide that money is tight and their kids aren't responsible enough to take care of a pet. When I saw the master, I knew he would be taking one of us home. I ran to the front of the cage hoping he would pick me.

"Oh please pick me!" I remember an overwhelming feeling of propriety when the brown-shirted woman, who fed us every day, picked me up and placed me on my owner's hand. I immediately scampered up his arm and nested on his shoulder. I tried to look as cute as possible so he wouldn't be tempted to put me back. At this point I couldn't resist his copper colored hair and tried to take a bite. For your information, hair that's still attached is definitely a bad choice of food. My owner, who everyone refers to as Eric, just laughed, grabbed me and looked me over. He made me feel a bit embarrassed when he looked at my underside.

"I'll take her," my new keeper said and put me in a little cardboard box. "I have a tank set up at home for her already, all I need is food and I'll be ready to buy her."

"Wonderful." I began to panic because I thought that the little box was going to be my new home. I wasted a lot of energy trying to find a way out, jumping and scratching at the sides. I hope those humans at the store learn it is very traumatic to be shoved in a dark box when you're expecting to be held by your new keeper. Maybe someone should throw them in a box for a while and see how they feel. My owner didn't leave me in there very long though, he took me out right away when we arrived home and I didn't even get to see my tank until a couple hours later when he went to sleep.

The accommodations were great. The tank provided plenty of room to run and climb. Fresh water came from a strange bottle that never emptied. My keeper always left me a steady supply of tasty mealworms and scrumptious crickets while he went away for the day. I don't know where he goes every day for such a long time, but he looks so worn out by the time he gets back.

My owner looks a little different than most of the people I saw at the store and even amongst the people in our home. I still try to bite his bright red hair. He's also a lot bigger than the people around him; I get lots of exercise climbing back and forth across his broad shoulders and up and down his arms. He looks as intimidating as a grizzly bear, but in reality he's sweet and more like a teddy bear.

So many days were spent with just my keeper and me sitting around the house. I love basking in the warmth he provides when I perch on his shoulder. He always takes good care of

me; helping me shed my old skin and providing me with everything I need. My owner got me a new home a couple months ago. He said I was too much of a "little piggy" and outgrew my old home. I'm not sure exactly what he meant by all that, but he was smiling when he said it, so it must be a good thing. I was getting a little stir-crazy in the old home, trying to get over to my keeper and running into those damn invisible glass walls.

Everything was going great... until the day Eric turned another year older and received another "beardie" as a gift. I was incredibly jealous and made sure he knew I was displeased, giving him the evil look.

"Don't worry Fantus; I'll never forget to give you attention. My precious, emotional little girl." My keeper reassured me of his intentions and I calmed down a little. I still had my worries though, and I was going to keep my eyes on that cute little bastard.

I watched in mute horror as Ares, the new dragon, got attention and grew bigger every day. He never seemed to run out of energy; always running around and trying to jump over the couch to the window. I still got plenty of attention myself, just as promised; although I always want more.

On the occasions when we were both out together I made sure that little beast knew his place. Sneering at him, I hissed, "You may be colorful and cute now, but sooner than you think you'll lose both those characteristics. Then everyone will forget all about you and I will once again get all the attention."

Though I threatened him repeatedly, Ares never seemed to get worried. He would simply climb over me to Eric's other shoulder and perch there with a smug grin on his face. I hated him so much.

Time went on and Ares became big enough to join me in my luxurious upscale aquarium. I was so mad that I had to have a roommate after months of having that big tank all to myself. Ares had turned into a very calm little bugger in the last few months and quietly found a piece of decoration to lounge on and left me alone.

The first time Eric left the room I made sure Ares knew how mad I was, "You better keep your distance. I know I can take you down if you get in my way. Don't think for one minute that our owner sees us as equals now that we're together in here."

"We'll see," Ares responded. The nerve of that little miscreant! "I think Eric likes us both, you because you were the first and me because I was a gift from an important friend; also look at these beautiful colors, how could anyone resist me?"

I plotted my actions carefully for the next few days, determining the best way to show my superiority. I thought Ares must be planning some way to show me up and I wanted to act first. My idea didn't include killing Ares. I just wanted to make sure he wasn't going to get the majority of our keeper's attention by trying to be more excited to see him. Or sitting around with that stupid grin on his face looking cuter than I do. I needed to time my "attack" just right with our owner's schedule, so just in case Ares got the upper hand on me, Eric could separate the two of us.

I waited until I heard Eric coming down the stairs. Ares sleeps during the day so it was easy to position myself to strike. I opened my mouth wide and bit the end of his tail hard as I could. He instantly woke up and spun around to face me, mouth open to strike back. Spinning myself around quickly and sprawling across his back, I pinned him to the ground. With my arm raised high, my talon-like claws outstretched, I moved to claw him across the face. His jaws

snapped lightning fast and grabbed my other arm. He bit down and pulled his head back the other way, throwing me off balance. He rammed me into the side of the glass and I was momentarily dazed. Then I used my size to my advantage, shoving myself off the glass with enough force to roll back on top of Ares and grab hold of his neck with my jaws. In my rage I forgot my intentions were to just pancake him to the ground and rough him up a little. I started to bite down with murderous intent.

The room door swung open and Eric immediately saw the situation in the aquarium. His voice sounded angry as he bellowed, "What the hell are you two doing? Knock it off!" He moved across the room in two big steps, threw off the lid and grabbed one of us in each of his big, powerful hands and held us directly in front of his face. "There will be no more of that nonsense," he exclaimed in a voice that seemed somehow sad more than angry. "I love both of you and don't want you attacking each other. If this is your doing Fantus, I will see to it that you spend some time in the small cage to cool off! All I want is for the two of you to get along and have a good companionship while I'm away at work. I don't want you to be lonely during the day."

Instantly, I felt ashamed at what I had done to Ares. My actions made my keeper angry and I completely missed what he intended by putting us together. I craned my head over toward Ares and stuck my tongue out to lick his wounds as a sign of truce. Since that day Ares and I get along well. We sleep next to each other on Eric's pillow. I guess this is more common with cats and dogs, but I love being wrapped up in the bright green fleece blanket that Eric lays out for us. The only thing Ares and I fight over now is who gets the most crickets when Eric drops them all in our cage for us to have a feeding frenzy.

*Eric has been working on this poem throughout the semester. The inspiration for his poem comes from his dream car, the 1976 Barracuda. It has been a joy working with Eric to help him pay tribute to one of his passions.*

*-Rebecca Eberle, Tutor*

## 1973 PLYMOUTH 'CUDA ERIC REED

Smoke and black lines poured off the Cooper tires.  
After years of neglect by previous owners,  
The roar of the 318 cubic inch V8 changed everything.  
My dream car, alive, in my possession.

After years of neglect by previous owners,  
Getting the rusted-out shell rolling down the street.  
My dream car, alive, in my possession.  
Looking forward to the restoration.

Getting the rusted-out shell rolling down the street.  
Catching onlookers by surprise.  
Looking forward to the restoration,  
Seeing the potential of a "diamond in the rough."

Catching onlookers by surprise,  
Even in the early stages of repair.  
Seeing the potential of a "diamond in the rough,"  
Rebuilding the whole car with my own hands.

Even in the early stages of repair,  
Admiring the aggressive styling and sleek design.  
Rebuilding the whole car with my own hands,  
Imagining the finished product in my mind.

Admiring the aggressive styling and sleek design.  
Embraced by black bucket seats, gripping the Slap Stick shifter.  
Imagining the finished product in my mind,  
Plum Crazy Purple metallic offset with silver stripes.

Embraced by black bucket seats, gripping the Slap Stick shifter,  
The Roar of the 425 horsepower, 408 cubic inch V8 will change everything.  
Plum Crazy Purple metallic offset with silver stripes.  
Smoke and black lines will pour off Cooper tires on Cragar rims.

*This excerpt is a continuation of Daniel's science fiction piece published in Word Play Fall 2009. He hopes to develop this idea into a science fiction novel one day. It was a pleasure working with Daniel to help him further his writing skills throughout the semester.*

*-Rebecca Eberle, Tutor*

## HEX

### DANIEL RUTHERFORD

#### Chapter Three – Demon in a Woman's Skin

Hex sauntered through the streets of Fortwood for about half an hour since he dropped Lucia off and placed her in Maria's care. The Grim Reaper made certain to take as many random alleyways and side streets as possible in case he was being tailed.

“Good to see you're still as efficient as ever at getting your work done, Hex.”

Whirling around with his scythe appearing suddenly in his hands, the black haired man faced the source of the voice. He found the weapon's edge aimed at the throat of a woman who appeared to be not much older than he, a smirk on her lips.

“Veness. I thought I was being followed.” The weapon dropped to his side before it vanished with a flash of light. Hex then faced the woman, giving her an even look, “What do you want?”

Veness pouted, “Aw, is that any way to treat a beautiful lady such as myself?”

Beautiful she was, indeed. Pale green colored eyes with flecks of yellow in the irises were visible in the light of a lamppost. Her hair was almost an aquamarine color, with streaks of midnight blue running through it. Her figure was not unlike that of a model in a magazine, and her attire only further complemented that image. She wore a deep blue dress that went past her knees, billowing out towards the bottom while her feet were adorned with matching high heels. Hex also noticed a silver necklace that had a creamy white opal hanging off of it. Covering all of her outfit was a black coat that reached to the back of her thighs. Needless to say, she was dressed for style. For a finishing touch, Hex was pretty sure he could smell the scent of jasmine perfume on her.

Yes, Veness seemed to always have that irresistible charm about her. Her unshakable confidence, her love for pleasure and beauty. Being with her gave Hex a sense of warmth he rarely felt. He would never admit it openly to her, though. She seemed aware of his feelings anyway, so it was pointless to say so. At least in his mind it seemed pointless.

Hex quickly snapped himself out of his thoughts before scoffing at her, “Lady, huh? You're barely worthy of being called such.”

Veness's pout disappeared, being replaced with the smirk she had before, “I'd kill anyone else if they said such things about me.”

“What do you want, Veness?” Hex inquired once more with a sigh, “I've got things to take care of, and not much time to do so. How did you manage to tail me?”

Veness leaned against the brick wall of a building behind her, “To answer your first question I saw you with a cute little girl earlier, and I got curious. As for the second question, I

simply flew. You know, supernatural powers and whatnot. So..." Veness's eyes shimmered with mischief while a teasing grin played at her lips, "Was that girl a friend of yours?"

Hex's eyes narrowed while an annoyed grumble could be heard in the back of his throat, "That's none of your concern."

"Well, someone's definitely in a foul mood tonight." Veness taunted with another laugh as she pulled a nail file out from her pocket and began to work on her fingernails, "She had something going on with her aura, from what I felt."

"Again, that's none of your concern." Hex answered, turning his back to her and continuing down the road.

Veness frowned a bit this time, placing a hand on her hip while pointing at him with the nail file in her hands, "What's your problem, Hex?"

The Grim Reaper didn't reply, which wasn't a surprise to her. Her high heels clicked on the pavement as she followed alongside Hex. After several moments of silence passed, she picked up her pace and walked in front of him, blocking his path. Hex merely blinked while giving her an expression somewhere between aggravation and exhaustion, "I don't have time for this. I'd appreciate it if you got out of my way."

"I will as soon as you tell me who that girl was." Veness replied tersely, "So let's hear it. Who is she?"

Hex, while a rather stubborn man in his own right, knew when to surrender. Veness was among the few that could get him to talk if they badgered him enough, "She's a girl that I almost killed at the South Fortwood Cemetery. I'm sure you are aware of the plague of liches and vampires that had been living there."

Veness hummed as she thought "Hmm...oh sure! I know about that place. Good riddance, I say. Those liches are nasty, and few vampires are worth trying to get to know." She gave Hex a curious look as she continued,, "What was a girl like her doing in a place like that?"

"She's a half-breed. Her mother was a human, her father a vampire."

Veness's eyes widened a bit as she let out a small gasp, and her features softened suddenly while she shook her head, "Oh. The poor thing. Where did you take her?"

"Maria's. She'll be safer there than anywhere else in this city."

Veness seemed to relax a bit upon hearing that, "I see. Well, I suppose that's probably the best place for her." She folded her arms before leaning forward so that she was a few inches from Hex's face, "Never knew you were one for being merciful, Hex. Maybe you're tough guy charade is finally starting to weaken, hmm?"

Hex rolled his eyes while one hand massaged his right temple, "Enough with the idle chat. You're here for a reason, and it's not just because I'm here."

Her eyes lit up for a moment while a teasing grin formed, "You sure? I have a nice hotel room that has a king sized bed with smooth, silky sheets a few miles downtown from-"

"Veness, what do you want, already?" Hex snapped, "You know I hate it when you act like this."

Veness chuckled quietly, enjoying the annoyed expression on Hex's face, "True, but I do love seeing you get riled up like this." She put her hands up as Hex gave her an annoyed glare, "Alright, alright, fine. I wanted to know if you wanted to take up a bounty."

"Bounty?" Hex repeated, "What kind of bounty?"

The beauty before him gave a slightly terrifying grin as he noticed her pupils changed from circles to slits, "The best kind. Demons."

"Go on..." Hex spoke, his interest piqued.

Veness grinned widely, small fangs now poking out from her upper lips, "Glad to see I've got your attention."

"A demon? Just one? Why would it be by itself?" Hex inquired.

"Rumor says it's a high class demon, and the bounty pays out about twice as much as our usual work would." Veness shrugged, "So, you interested?"

"I'd like more details first."

"Alright, how about we visit a nice little champagne lounge downtown and chat? We can get ourselves a private booth." The she-demon winked while her smile became more devilish and seductive.

Veness was one of Hex's most reliable contacts that he had in regards to business with what many would call the supernatural world. She was resourceful, intelligent, deceptive, and probably one of the privileged few that had an honest relationship of sorts with Hex outside of business. She was also a shameless flirt, but Hex had managed to get over that trait of hers ages ago.

Being a demon warrior also helped her in terms of bounty hunting. She abandoned her home world and was now a freelancer who worked as a partner of sorts with the Grim Reaper. Of course, all their business was kept hush-hush. The last thing either of them needed was to have problems arise by having Hex's higher-ups find out he was associated with a demon.

Hex ran a hand through his black hair before looking up to the nighttime sky over their heads, "Alright, I'll go."

Veness clapped her hands together while smiling, "See? That wasn't so hard, was it?"

"I could just leave and not deal with this, Veness." Hex ground out as he began to follow her down the road, "I'd rather not waste time spending it at a ritzy little bar if I can help it."

"I prefer it being called 'well-kept'. Besides, you don't go out enough from what I can tell. I mean, the graveyard tan look isn't very fitting for you. You have a nice three-piece suit, though."

Hex's right eyebrow twitched as he gave his partner a cross look, "This 'look' is just a disguise. You know that."

"Oh, that's right. Grim Reaper powers and all that jazz." She shook her head, "I don't know why you don't give yourself a healthy tan, Hex. Especially when you can change your outer appearance on a whim." She circled around Hex while continuing, "I mean, if I had the power to alter my physical appearance all the way down to hair length, skin color, even the clothing I'm wearing, I'd take full advantage of it. You should be more grateful for the powers you have, Hex. Grim Reapers are a lucky group with the powers they have at their disposal. It makes me jealous."

"What purpose would a tan serve in exorcising a tomb full of-"

"Appearances help, 'Hexy.'"

Hex froze in place, "Do. Not. Call. Me. 'Hexy.'"

"Quite the testy one tonight, aren't we?" Veness's teasing smirk reappeared in full force, but she knew when enough was enough, "Alright, Hex, I'm sorry for trying to be friendly. It's just that good friends tend to kid around with each other. You should try it some time."



While he didn't say anything in reply, Veness felt relieved to see that Hex didn't deny the friendship they shared. Sometimes silence spoke volumes more than any words that the Grim Reaper used. She had seen the less seen parts of who he was, and she had learned that underneath that sometimes callous and harsh exterior was a caring man who simply wanted to insure she remained safe, even if it was by keeping a distance between them. While it was romantic, in a way, she found it more annoying than anything. Still, she had come to accept it as a part of who he was.

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The two were given a private booth off in a little corner of the bar, which Hex still believed held the status of ritzy, as he verbalized such feelings several times while they walked through the numerous groups of people who enjoyed cocktails while chatting with one another.

Hex held a small tumbler of scotch with ice in his hands while Veness sipped on a glass of champagne she had ordered. Hex took a drink and noticed Veness looking to him with a flirtatious gaze.

"Veness...not now."

Veness's smile grew, "What?"

"I know you, Veness. You're trying to figure out some way to get me to come to your hotel. I'm not in the mood for getting off topic right now." He swirled the ice in his glass while the amber colored fluid reflected the dim lighting, "What's the information you have on the bounty?"

The she-demon's smile drooped slightly in a sign of defeat, "Right to business, huh? Have it your way."

For a moment Hex felt a twinge of guilt, but he squashed the encroaching feeling, reminding himself that he was conducting business. Now wasn't the time for romance.

Veness looked around the bar before snapping her fingers, producing a manila folder, "His name is Aragus. According to what I've found out so far, he's the older brother of the demon that you stole that right eye from. You remember, right? Mereco was his name."

Hex paused for a moment, his eyes narrowing while leaning forward slightly, "You mean to tell me that this Aragus is Mereco's older brother?" His right pupil lit up with a red hue, "I was never told that Mereco had a brother."

"I never knew he had a brother, either. Apparently Mereco never felt it important enough to mention him to you or anyone else when you defeated him in that fight."

Hex folded his arms before letting out a sigh, "I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that Aragus is seeking revenge for what I did to his brother?"

"Yeah, but he's about twenty years too late. I don't think that's the whole story, though." Veness's eyes drifted over the file's information, "I think there's more to it than that. I mean, you're an infamous man in the Underworld, after all. I'm sure he would have come after you sooner if he wanted to avenge his brother."

"Unfortunately, even though I've used an alias when conducting business there." grumbled the Grim Reaper, "What else do you have on this Aragus?"

Veness flipped through a few pages, "Nothing too big; terrorizes towns, caused the death of about forty Grim Reapers, fire breath. The usual stuff."

"Hm. What's the pay on him?"

"A quarter million in cash if he's killed, half a million if you bring the head to the client."

The raven haired man raised an eyebrow at the last part, "The head?"

"Yep. Separated from the shoulders and in one piece." The she-demon replied, "Doesn't sound like too big of a mission for you if--"

"Why do they want the head?"

Veness simply shrugged, "No clue. I can think of several reasons, though."

"Same here." Hex nodded, "Well, we'll cross that bridge when we get there, I suppose. Where was this guy last seen?"

The she-demon scanned over the file before closing it and making it vanish with a snap of her fingers, "He was last seen Bardview about two days ago. That's about a good two hours west from here by car."

"I'm guessing you scouted out the area already, right?"

Veness attempted to hide her grin pitifully, "Oh, you caught me." She stretched languidly, "When are you expected to report back to your superiors?"

"I've been given three days to get this mission done. I'm already finished, so we have time to get this done."

The she-demon waved a hand lazily, "I'd rather do it tomorrow night, honestly." She sipped more of her champagne and gave Hex a seductive grin, "So, are you still not willing to take up my offer on that bed? It can get rather chilly at night, even with the heat on."

"I'll pass." Hex answered, "Knowing you, you're rooming in the same hotel as me anyway."

"The Golden Crescent Inn?"

For a moment, Hex just stared at her before rubbing his temples, "Damn it all...of all the hotels in the city..."

The Grim Reaper felt a gentle hand grasp his, and he looked across to the she-demon. She had a small smile on her face. It was different from the ones she usually gave him. It was one of her rare, warm ones. No batting eyelashes, half-lidded sultry gazes, or teasing smiles. It was a simple, comforting one.

"Hex...please? I really don't like it when you act like this."

"Veness..." Hex's tone softened ever-so-slightly, losing a bit of its usual edge and coldness, "You just can't make things easy for me, can you?"

Veness's smile grew a little, "Bad habit, I'm afraid." She gripped his hand a little tighter, "I do care for you, though. You know that, right?"

Hex gave a grunt, "You would be better off with someone else, Veness. We've discussed this how many times now?"

"Probably more than a dozen times. I lost count." She frowned when Hex avoided eye contact with her, "There's no reason to be afraid of what we share, Hex."

"What about you? We'd both be at a great risk if anyone found out about us." argued the Grim Reaper.

"I'm willing to take that risk. Honestly, I don't care what those stuffy superiors of yours think. The only reason I'm not more open about us is for your sake." She grinned as Hex rolled his eyes at her comment, the hint of a smile appearing on his lips. Of course she didn't give a damn about what any authoritative group had to say. She never had in the past, so why now?

The two were quiet for several long moments before the Grim Reaper glanced over to her, "What floor is your room on?"

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Hex opened his eyes and slowly let his them focus to the dimly lit room. The red glare of the alarm clock on the side table showed that it was almost five in the morning, and he could see the first rays of morning light had begun peeking through the blinds of the hotel room he was currently in. Turning to his side, he saw the slow and steady rise and fall of Veness's body beneath the sheets as she slept.

The Grim Reaper rolled on his side so his back was facing against hers. He should have expected this to happen last night after they left the bar. The she-demon was a charming woman, whichever way he looked at it. While she still annoyed him in many ways, he had to admit she had some sort of hold on him.

Who was he kidding, though? No matter how much he denied it, the two were a couple...in some twisted, detached way, at least. Hex was a man who liked to keep a fair distance between himself and others, but as much as he had tried, Veness had managed to worm her way into his life, and she didn't seem intent on letting go of him anytime soon.

He sat up, and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. The movement of the bed managed to wake up the woman at his side. She let out a yawn and gave a sleepy smile to the dark haired man, "Hey. Sleep well?"

The Grim Reaper glanced over his shoulder before looking forward once more and giving a grunt, "Sure. Did I wake you?"

Veness let her head rest on the pillow once more, "Don't worry about it. What time is it?"

"About six minutes to five."

"Really?" Veness groaned, burying her face into the pillow, "What the hell are you doing awake?"

"I'm always up at this time." Hex answered, "You know that."

Veness looked up from her pillow, "I know. You think it'd kill you to sleep in for once." She shivered a bit as she pulled the sheets over her chin, "Aren't you cold?"

"A little."

Veness frowned, "You're already wide awake, aren't you?"

"Yep."

Veness rolled her eyes before rolling over, "Can you make me a cup of coffee in an hour?"

"Anything with it?"

"Some creamer will be fine." Veness answered before rolling over to get back to sleep.

Hex headed to the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror. He ran a hand over his face and grumbled at the stubble that had formed. He would have gotten a chance to shave if he hadn't decided to stay in Veness's room last night. Deciding not to fret over the facial hair, Hex snapped his fingers, and he found himself in a dark blue hooded sweatshirt with jeans.

After starting up the coffee pot, Hex sat down at the small table between the dining area and the beds, and looked at the folder Veness had left out that held information on Aragus.

For the most part, as Veness had stated the night before, there wasn't anything truly remarkable about the guy aside from the fact that his brother was Mereco. That wasn't to say that the demon wasn't dangerous. He was quite the opposite, in fact. Aragus alone was responsible for killing numerous other Grim Reapers, most who were unfortunately young and inexperienced individuals. Hex had grown used to such statistics over the past couple of centuries, however. While many Grim Reapers usually had long lives, like Hex, a greater percentage of them also died early in their careers because of mistakes such as taking on

quarry they weren't ready for. As a result, the title of Grim Reaper often carried a stigma in the spiritual world that labeled said lot as reckless, thrill-seeking, and possibly insane.

Looking further over the information on Aragus also revealed that the demon was a little over two and a half a centuries in age. That could pose a problem to Hex; demons who were old tended to fall into one of two categories. They were both incredibly powerful and able to take as much damage as they could dish out, or they were incredibly clever and able to deceive their enemies with very little trouble. Judging by the statistics on this Aragus, Hex guessed that the demon fell into the former of the two.

If that was the case, Hex would have to be careful. While he was considered by many to be a master of combat against many types of beasts and beings, fighting a demon with incredible power demanded caution, no matter what. Hex knew first hand that attempting to fight such beings head-on would have messy results. One moment you were attempting to decapitate the demon in front of you, the next you found yourself blown back by a powerful wave of white-hot flames.

He had lost track of how many close calls he had in his early days of being a Grim Reaper after the first quarter century rolled around for him. After almost being disemboweled, having his limbs broken on a near monthly basis, and being hit by lightning on several different occasions, Hex started to realize how pointless it was to keep track of each injury he attained through his fights.

He flipped through a few more pages, and noted that the client requesting the bounty had decided to remain anonymous. No surprise; most who had bounties on demons were cautious or in trouble with said beings. The Grim Reaper had learned a long time ago to not get his nose into the business of the client when it wasn't necessary. As long as they provided the money, Hex rarely questioned those he was working under.

He had a moral code, however. He never went after humans, and never picked bounties targeting innocent beings. In other words, he only went after those who deserved to be brought to justice, usually demons wreaking havoc, evil spirits, and so on.

Closing the folder, Hex rose from his chair and stretched a bit. Looking at the clock, he saw that it had been almost an hour. Apparently he had been looking over the file longer than he realized. He walked over to the bed and gently shook Veness's shoulder, "Hey, Veness. Wake up, your coffee's ready."

"Hm...?" Veness blinked sleepily before smiling to the black haired man, "Oh, already time for me to get up, huh?" She sat up, "Mind handing me my clothing?"

"Tch, seriously, can't you get it yourself?"

Veness gave a fake pout, "I'd love to, but you'd put up a fit about me walking around in the nude then. Besides, a real gentleman would help a lady in this kind of situation, no questions asked."

Hex rolled his eyes and gave her a t-shirt and some pajama pants before turning back to the kitchen to make himself a cup of coffee. A moment later, Veness joined him, seating herself at the small kitchen table while poring over the file on Aragus, "I don't know if what I've heard is true, but apparently this guy's also in the Legion."

"Wouldn't surprise me. Every demon and their mother is in the Legion these days." Hex replied as he set down a cup of coffee for Veness, "Anything to verify that piece of information?"

Veness shook her head, “Nope, just word of mouth in the Underworld. Most of the individuals I talked to seemed wary when I asked about him, though.”

Hex's eyes widened a fraction, “You were asking around? Damn it, Veness, you know that's-”

Veness waved a hand, “Relax, I was talking to trusted contacts only, not random strangers on the street. You know I'm smarter than that.”

“Good.” Hex sighed, “The last thing I need is for someone to know that we're after this guy.”

“I'm pretty sure we wouldn't be the first two that try to take him down, Hex. It says he's killed Grim Reapers before.” She pointed to a certain line showing the mortality count for the Grim Reapers to make her point, “We have the element of surprise on our side, however.”

“How so?” Hex asked.

The she-demon grinned, exposing her elongated fangs to Hex, “He's never dealt with a team consisting of us.”

The Grim Reaper was quiet for a moment before he gave a ghost of a smile, “That's very true.”

*John is a very creative and unique individual. He's never at a loss for new and original ideas, and he's not afraid to make a statement. I've thoroughly enjoyed working with him semester, and will miss seeing the evolution of his work week by week. The piece that follows is a perfect example of his ability to think both creatively and reflectively through the lives of his characters.*

*-Laura Griglak, Tutor*

## TO WHOMEVER MAY FIND THIS JOHN SCHONEMAN

You've never seen me before and you'll never see me again. Sadly, this is truer than you would ever believe. You walk past strangers every day, people that you've never seen before and will never see again. But these are all people that you could see again, someday, but you cannot see me again. It's impossible. What a haunting thing to realize. You see, I'm not normal. I'm 26, male, and every time I fall asleep I wake up with a different face.

Quite abnormal, wouldn't you say? But it really isn't. I'm just like everyone else. I'm just another lonely person. I can't keep a relationship with someone any longer than I can stay awake. On the inside I stay the same; on the outside I stay different. I've tried telling people before, but of course they never believed me. The power of sight is much too convincing. They see someone else, and that's who I am. I'm just someone else.

You can't imagine the loneliness. The feeling of knowing it is almost impossible to have a relationship with anyone. I've never loved a woman. I've never had a best friend. I've always been too scared to even try. How could someone possibly be close to me? I wish I could sit around and laugh about old times with an old friend. *Old* times.... What a foreign idea. I imagine it must be wonderful, to reminisce. However, Imagining is the closest I can get.

There are many more difficulties that come with my irregularity. For instance, I am unable to obtain a drivers license, or hold any form of official identification for that matter. My parents knew early on that I wouldn't be able to go to school, and because of this I was homeschooled. It was always hard for my parents to deal with what I was. It was hard for them to know me. But how can you blame them? I don't even know myself.

My father Charles died five years ago, and my mother, Hope, was struck with Alzheimer's soon after. When this happened, my relationship with my mother blossomed into something very real for me. I would visit her in the assisted living home every day, and we would just talk, sometimes for hours. I felt it was easier to keep coming back to her when she simply didn't remember who I was. She never said it when I was growing up, but to her I was a monster. I could tell by the way she wouldn't look at me, and by how uncomfortable she was when I was around. She regretted me. And when her Alzheimer's hit, that all went away.

And now she's dead as well. It happened yesterday. Hope is gone. I'm 40, and I know that I will never be able to have a relationship with anyone again. I'm completely empty. I went for a walk today, a walk around the grey concrete mess that is Manhattan. It's deceiving because on the outside you almost can't tell that it's a mess; everyone is moving so fast and busily that to the untrained eye it just looks like a giant blur. But my eye is trained, and I know what to look for: The way people walk with slumped shoulders, like they're carrying all the

unhappiness of the world on their backs and all they want is for someone to help them lift it off. Or they way their eyes gaze ahead with steady disinterest and a layer of sadness underneath. Below that is emptiness, the same emptiness that is within me.

I want to talk to these people. All of them. I want to let them know that they have a gift; the gift of human relations. A gift that all too many people take for granted; A gift that I was not given. I want everyone out there to know that they don't have to be alone. All they have to do is step outside of themselves and talk to someone. If you don't do this, you are wasting life. I found no happiness through anything in my existence, and I know that would've been different if I had the opportunity to get to know someone. So please, I beg you, don't be alone unless you don't have a choice.

Sincerely,  
Faceless

*For 357 this semester, Meg wanted to look at the importance of narrative as she is a communications major and feels that being able to build a strong story will be very beneficial for her future career goals. This piece is a longer one we worked on together; it serves as an informative personal narrative on what it is to suffer from depression. Her work has always been focused and informative, and this article is no exception.*

*-Kris Hess, Master Tutor*

## DEPRESSION

### MEG SHANNON

Everyone at some time in their life will be affected by depression whether it is their own or someone else's, according to governmental studies. It is estimated that 19 million Americans are personally struggling with depression each year. Depression is commonly a result of the stress of a loss or a type of extreme trauma. Each year 15% of depressed people will commit suicide; this statistic proves that it is a very serious and dangerous disorder. I personally struggled with depression for over two years and it proved to be the toughest experience of my life. It's important to know that people don't choose to be depressed. Two thirds of all people who are depressed never seek treatment and end up suffering needlessly. The fact that so many people are depressed but aren't getting help really scares me. For me, getting help was very instrumental towards my healing. I want people to know that there is hope to feel better. It was hard for me to see that, but with the help and support of the people in my life I was able to overcome this difficult obstacle.

Lots of people develop depression after very traumatic experiences such as: emotional, physical or sexual abuse, neglect, criticism, divorce, family addiction, household violence, racism and poverty. None of these experiences played even a small role in my life. I had a great group of friends and a caring family. The life I was living was ideal to me and I was comfortable and happy. But a few years ago my happiness within my life diminished. I withdrew from so much of my life and I had no apparent reasoning for it. My time changed from being with friends and family towards being alone. I'd spend all of my time in my room doing things to just pass the time. My parents noticed a change in me but they just thought I was constantly mad and they would leave me alone. Several months of this went on and my mom finally had had enough of my newfound behavior. She said that I needed a major attitude adjustment but I told her that I didn't know why I was like this. All I could do was cry because of my lack of explanation for my sadness and after that, my mom realized there was something mentally wrong. My mom knew I needed to get medical attention so she researched and found psychiatrists that I could visit to potentially help me.

I went to two psychiatrists and they were extremely hard for me to talk to about what was going on. They made me feel worse about my situation and told me it was my fault that I was depressed. I didn't like the fact that I was getting help but feeling even lower than before. During a healing process it is crucial to find someone that you can create a strong relationship with and the third psychiatrist was someone whom I was comfortable with. He diagnosed me with major chronic depression; but based on my lack of traumatic experiences and stress he



was stumped as to the why I was depressed. I had brain scans done to hopefully find an answer to why I was this way. Doctors found that my brain was no longer producing serotonin and I was lacking postpartum chemicals. When a woman lacks postpartum chemicals it is usually a result after having a baby, but I hadn't given birth or even been pregnant. These results puzzled doctors as to why, but the best thing was to immediately start treatment with medication and therapy.

My psychiatrist immediately started me on anti-depressants. Let me just say medication can be a blessing and a curse. When starting a medication you get a burst of hope that you will start to feel happy, but anti-depressants take weeks and weeks to even feel the effects. Then imagine the let down when the medication you've been on for six weeks doesn't even affect you. It brings you down because now you have to try something new and maybe the next one will work. The medication process was really frustrating for me; almost more of a setback rather than helping me out. I tested out nine different medications over a year and a half before finding one that worked for me. It was such a difficult process because it felt as if there wasn't anything that would help me to feel happy. Researchers have found that 80% of depressed patients dramatically improve their lives once they are on a type of medication that works for them.

But during that time medications weren't the only stress in my life. I had terrible thoughts crossing my mind on a daily basis and some medications increased them. My mind was out of control; it was so painful. I wanted to hurt myself just to take away thoughts of being so sad. People who aren't affected by this illness don't see the reason why people would want to hurt themselves, but if you can get the pain off your mind, even for the slightest moment, it makes you feel better. I didn't want to be a part of the suicide percentage but it crossed my mind on a daily basis. I was in so much pain anything that would take it away sounded better than constant sadness. I withheld from suicide but I could not stop myself from cutting. No, it was not for attention like so many people think. I eventually checked myself into the hospital because of my cutting. I knew I needed to stop but I didn't know if I could on my own, so I needed to find help. I had always told my family that I wouldn't cut myself and it really hurt to let them down. I hated calling my parents from the hospital telling them what I had done. But the worst part was the doctor describing to my mom how I cut myself and the severity of the cuts, on the phone. I didn't even want to imagine how horrible she felt after hearing that.

My mom wanted me to get the best help I possibly could; she was willing to try anything that might make me happy again. So besides seeing a psychiatrist, I was starting to see an art therapist. Art therapy helps a patient and therapist communicate through emotions in their drawings. This can help a therapist understand what the patient is going through based on the visual aspects the patient provides. I was so low that I couldn't draw or even talk about my state of mind. The therapist would say anything and I would break down and cry. I would cry because I hated hearing the doctors telling me that I had so much wrong with me. It is really hard to hear your flaws when you feel so sad. I had to constantly go to both of my therapists because they were scared for my well-being with the state of mind I was in.

The hardest part for me was seeing how this illness affected my family. My parents thought my sadness was their fault, like they didn't make me happy enough. That wasn't the truth at all and this was so hard on me. I would be lying on my bed and my mom would walk into my room, ask a question and would immediately start crying because of my lack of

enthusiasm. She hated seeing me so sad and she missed my old personality. My parents didn't tell my sister much more than I was sick and I was getting help, so it was hard that she didn't understand what I was going through. My dad didn't like talking about it ever which is really difficult because of my lack of support at home. I couldn't talk to my mom without her crying and my dad didn't know how to talk to me about it so I was in a tough situation. I didn't want to see them hurting because of me; I loved them more than anything and bringing pain upon my family was so difficult for me.

I had a supportive family at home but I found out ever so quickly how harsh my friends at high school could actually be when I was going through such a tough time in my life. One of my former best friends told everyone that I was making up my depression and that I was acting like this purely for attention so everyone would feel bad for me. Other friends stopped inviting me over to their houses to hang out or to go to school events with them because I was no longer "fun" like I used to be. It was really easy to see who my real friends were because a real friend would be supportive. I found out how cruel people could actually be so fast and it was frightening. I hated being at school because I wasn't myself anymore; I used to participate in class and talk to everyone. But now I barely paid attention in class and I walked through the hallways with my earphones in to avoid contact with people. Some of the symptoms of depression a person will encounter include the difficulty to concentrate, the inability to make decisions and the lack of memory. I couldn't remember what I was learning and when it came time for a test I would get nervous and be unable to recall answers to the questions. School was sometimes so difficult for me that I would skip class in order to make it through the day. It broke my heart to see myself like this.

For me, any moment that I felt happy I would treasure with all I could because it was so rare. It would start with one or two days a week that I would find myself being happy. Slowly, two days turned into three or four days a week and I would be happy. This was such an amazing feeling; I was finally able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Months passed and I was feeling back to myself again in so many ways. After two and a half years of mental pain and sadness I felt liberated to have it leave me. I had finally won the long battle that tested my inner strength and my will to live and be happy.

Depression tests people and takes them to their limits. After experiencing this I honestly feel like I am better off because of it. I am able to treasure the things in life that make me happy. Now I only fill my life with the people who make me happy and support me no matter what. Life is so precious and I plan to forever get the most out of it; I don't want to miss out on the things I love ever again. If you are reading this and are feeling the same way as I once did, I completely encourage you to seek out help. There are many depression help-sites that you can visit or you can call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK for help.

*So far, Flor and I have had the opportunity to expand upon her poetry. Not only is this experience helpful to her by getting my feedback, but this also is my first time working with a poetry '57 student. Her poems are easy but emotionally deep and pertain to aspects of life we all feel. Not only have I learned a great deal about poetry, but also about Flor. She is one talented poet!*  
-Samantha Zellner, Tutor

## REFLECTIONS OF A LOST SOUL FLOR SLEZAK

You come to me and hold me in your arms every time I can't go on my own.  
You come to me and tell me that you love me every time you see me cry.  
And though there are times when I forget who you are, I know you will always take me back.

I'm stubborn; I'm proud; I always want to be looked at by the people around, But late at night, I know I'm still empty and my heart is full of holes; Then you come with your love and give me hope.

Sometimes I've thought that I don't need you, but in the end I realize I'd stop breathing if I leave you.

Today I come to my knees and ask you to forgive me, because Oh Lord, my sin is so big that I'm afraid you might want to leave me.

I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown me. Yet you want to use me; yet you want to bless me; yet you want to love me.

I have joy now, because you washed my sin and wiped my tears away. There's nothing else I want to do today but praise your name and walk your way. I love you Jesus, you are my Savior, and you are my strength.

## I CRY DEEPLY INSIDE

FLOR SLEZAK

As cold as the wind touching my face,  
As dark as the night is where my heart lays.

You left me breathless when you went away.  
Drowned in my tears I made up my mind,  
I'll have to forget you and get you out of my life.

Every time I look out my window and see all the lights,  
I think of the moment our love was alive and I cry,  
Deeply inside because I'll have to forget you  
And get you out of my life.

In this song it wasn't easy to find the right words  
Because I don't want to hurt you and I won't anymore!

## RIVER

FLOR SLEZAK

Standing there all alone, only wearing blue.  
We all like you; we all come to you.

The wind blows your hair; your skin rises up.  
Your eyes keep the warmth as the wind whirls around.  
All the goose bumps that you get,  
With a splash will go away,  
Easing you again.

We enjoy watching you go up and down,  
Or simply stay still.  
Your presence gives us peace;  
And when the rain comes down, it brings you joy;  
It makes you grow in pride.

They would say that you are quiet,  
I would say that you are loud;  
But in your whispering you tell us,  
That we are welcome all around.

# I REMEMBER YOU.

FLOR SLEZAK

Every Morning is a new opportunity.  
It is my chance to show you again,  
How much I love you.

Every night when I'm lying by your side,  
With the warmth that's from your arms  
I remember I am blessed.

I remember I'm blessed.  
I remember that you care.  
That your hands know how to touch me.  
And your eyes know how to find me.

Sweet the flavor of your lips,  
Both small, with a touch of pink.  
They speak softly to my soul.  
They know how to romance me.

In your eyes I find real peace.  
They tell me you understand.  
When you look at me I quiver  
Because of their beautiful light green,  
And I remember, I'm blessed.

# WORDS OF A MESSENGER

## FLOR SLEZAK

Determined to not conform to what they say,  
I move forward with my plan.  
I keep seeking to uncover the truth that's been lost.

No more blindness, no more games.  
It is time to be faithful to the one that created men.

Call me crazy, call me nun.  
Call me anything you want.  
I'm not here to agree with you;  
I was sent to tell the truth.  
You are loved, you are loved, and you are loved.

Sacrifices were made.  
Blood was shed.  
It was all done just to save you,  
From a death you did deserve.

Turn around, before it's too late.  
Please be willing to listen;  
Please be willing to obey.

No more blindness, no more games.  
It is time to be faithful, to the one that created men.

*Maria has been a very hardworking and conscientious learner during our time together through this her '57 course. This semester she worked diligently on all of her writing for this course, which culminated in her story "Princess Angela." "Princess Angela" shows off Maria's delightful imagination very clearly and in a fun format. I am happy that I was able to work with and get to know such a wonderful and creative person!*

*-Shannon Stover, Tutor*

## PRINCESS ANGELA MARIA VANNIEUWENHOVEN

Once upon a time there was a thirteen year old girl named Angela and she lived in a big city called the Palace. Ironically, little Angela did live in a palace. Angela's parents were the king and queen of the city, making her the princess. Angela didn't have many friends because she was so rude. She was inconsiderate, unfriendly, and disrespectful towards everyone. Her parents said that if she was still mean and rude when Angela turned 21, then she wouldn't be queen. Angela had to have true queen like qualities in order to become queen.

Angela went to school at North Bay Middle School. One day, she noticed that there was a new boy in school. His name was Peter.

"Perfect," she said. "I'll make sure he feels right *at home*."

In the classroom, she went up behind Peter and stuck the class salamander on his head without him noticing. Once she put it on his head, she found her seat and sat down. As the teacher came in, there was this loud shriek in the back of the room. It was Peter. The salamander had crawled down the front of his face and was scaring the living wits out of him. The teacher calmed the class down for they were all rattled by the noise.

The teacher put the salamander back in its cage and asked, "Who took the salamander out?"

When Angela raised her hand proudly and giggled, the teacher sent her to the office. In the office, she found her disappointed parents who then took her home and had a long, scolding talk with her. As a form of punishment, Angela's parents tricked her into thinking she was going to the park after school that day, but really they took her to Peter's house for a play date. Once they arrived at the house, she knew immediately where she was. Once she entered the house, Peter's mom, Mrs. David, and Peter met the royal family at the door and showed them around her house. Angela wasn't accustomed to such a small house compared to the palace she lived in.

"Why is your house so small?" Angela asked.

"Hush," Angela's mother said instantly. "That's none of your business, Angela."

"Cute kid you have there," Peter's mother said. "This is the only house we can afford right now, sweetie."

The king and queen apologized up and down for their daughter's behavior. Mrs. David told the kids to go to Peter's room and play while Angela's parents and herself talk for a while. Once the kids left, the queen went off about Angela's behavior. She started talking about how Angela has a problem that was concerning her and her husband, but Mrs. David understood

completely and said that if it helped, they can keep bringing Angela here. Once everything was settled, the king and queen left Peter's house and went on their way.

Angela and Peter were in Peter's room just sitting on the floor looking at each other.

"What do you want to do?" Peter asked.

"I know. Let's play hide and seek. You hide and I'll find you," Angela said.

Peter thought it was a great idea, so he ran out of the room to hide while Angela laughed to herself and started playing with his toys. She wasn't really going to find him; she just didn't want him there. After a while, Peter came out of his hiding spot and went back to his room where he found his room a mess. All the toys were out of his toy box and Angela was playing with his special toy truck that he got from his uncle. He became really upset and started crying. His mom heard the crying, so she walked in and listened to Peter explain to her what happened. After thinking about how to punish Angela, she decided to give her in a ten minute time out.

Angela hated the time out. She didn't understand why she was there and started to cry. When her time was up, Mrs. David came in, sat her down, and explained that her behavior was unacceptable because she hurt Peter's feelings. That moment, something clicked inside Angela's brain. Angela now wasn't angry anymore, but felt sad for Peter and for all the trouble she caused him. Angela apologized to Peter and hoped that he would forgive her.

"I forgive you," Peter said.

Not a moment later, Angela's parents were at the door to bring her back home. Before she left, Peter and Angela agreed to play again tomorrow.

On the way home, Angela's parents saw the change in her already. They were shocked but thrilled that they saw Angela's behavior start to change.

Days went by and Angela's manners changed for the best. She was caring, loving, and respectful; all qualities a queen should have. Peter and Angela started to hang out every day and become great friends. It was around Angela's fourteenth birthday. Every year for Angela's birthday, the queen always threw a birthday ball. Angela was escorted by boys her age each year, but this year she wanted a friend she can have fun with.

"Mom, is it ok if I invite Peter this year?" asked Angela.

Her mother smiled and said, "Yes sweetie, how thoughtful. I'll send an invite in the mail."

The next day at school, Peter went up to Angela and said, "I would love to come to your ball."

Peter ran home after school and went shopping for a tux with his mom for the ball on Friday.

Friday came along, and Peter was nervous. He was so nervous of screwing up and making a fool of himself in front of everyone, especially in front of the king and queen. When he arrived, he put aside his fear, walked in and gave Angela a bouquet of flowers. After he gave her the flowers, they go to dinner to meet up with everyone else. Once they were seated, Peter started to get nervous again. He drank all his water and had to go to the bathroom. As



he pushed away from the table, he tripped the waiter who was holding a pitcher full of water. Peter was so embarrassed that he rushed to the bathroom. When he came back, Angela held his hand and said to relax, there's nothing to be nervous about. He felt a little relieved, so he calmed down.

After dinner, it was time for the ball to take place. Peter's mom put him in dance classes secretly because she thought it would come in handy for her son, well Peter's classes paid off. Peter surprised everyone with his dancing skills, even Angela. Angela was so happy that she invited Peter to escort her. This was the best birthday ball she had ever had. The music was great, the food was mouthwatering, and her date was perfect. Angela was upset because the ball was close to being over. When the princess looked up at the clock and noticed that it was time to walk Peter his mom's car she started to cry a little bit. Angela thanked Peter for coming. He could tell she was upset, but he said that they will have to do this again the next year. To end the night, he kissed Angela's cheek. After that, she waved goodbye and went to bed dreaming of what the next ball would be like.



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