

Wordplay

(more or less)



JP Photography

English '57 Series
No. 17: Spring '13

Wordplay

(more or less)

Introduction:

The warm smell of spring lifting the curtains comes just in time to save me from the writer's block frustrating my pen. The music, dribbling in swirling scribbles bursts forth as images of flowers and green (green!) leaves come to mind. It was a long winter, and an even longer process of putting together this semester's edition of *Wordplay*—all the waiting for a spring that doesn't seem to want to show up.

The inevitable late submissions, the missing intros, the weeks of promotion and the disproportionately small amount of submissions v. the actual number of participants in the '57 series can be some of the most depressing moments of an Intern's life. But despite all of this, what is (perhaps) the most striking aspect (and which blows all complaints to hell) is the collaboration which went into the submissions. (Collaboration being a common theme in *Wordplay* introductions, I can only hope that the time-honored human tradition of rephrasing sentiments via shifting diction will alleviate any impatience the reader may feel.)

Collaboration from the writers who were kind and courageous enough to share their work. Collaboration from the consultants who submitted thoughtful intros for the writers with whom they worked. Having read the logs week after week, the interaction between the consultants and writers progressed each in interesting ways. From frustration to semi-paradigm shifting realizations some of the results are here to be seen.

Phoebe Patten
Editor

Acknowledgements:

Lynn Ludwig, '57 Program Director
Paul Kratwell, Wordplay Publication Advisor
Jessica Parchem, Cover photograph

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Non-fiction:

Katie Loucks

‘How One Could...’... I

Poetry:

Katie Axlen

‘Spring’, ‘Wishes’... 3

Emily Bernstein

‘Untitled’, ‘Sleep’, ‘Now...’... 4

Adam J. Blanchard

‘Sestina’... 5

T’Keyah Chatfield

‘Busy Bee’, ‘WRITER...’... 6

Ashley Freund

‘The Most Interesting...’... 7

Jenna Homan

‘The Stages of Heartbreak’ ... 8

Fiction:

Stephanie Bau

‘Devira’s Mirror’ ... 10

T’Keyah Chatfield

‘The Noise’ ... 21

‘A Magical World’ ... 22

Alicia Czarnik

‘Coffee Shop Memory’ ... 24

Matthew Faltz

‘Creative Writing’ ... 26

Ashley Freund

‘The Rise of White Lightin’...37

Jenna Homan

‘Reflections on Life’ ... 42

‘Bittersweet’ ... 43

NON-FICTION

How One Could Celebrate an Anniversary:

The Idea

Katie Loucks

The idea came to me during my Intro to Ethnic Lit of America class in the spring of my sophomore year of college. I wasn't sure if I could pull it off, but I was sure that it was a good idea. I was sitting in class, trying to pay attention. About thirty people were there that day, most either taking suspicious notes or doodling in their notebooks. We were listening to the professor lecture about the history behind David Walker's *David Walker's Appeal in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World*, when I started thinking about dates. I love dates; birthdates, graduation dates, anniversary dates, etc. I love figuring out how old people are in relation to me and how other events line up with my own. Like how I know that my parents are thirty years older than me, my sister is two years younger, 9/11 happened in 3rd grade, I graduated eighth grade in 2007 and high school in 2011, and my parents' anniversary is my age plus eight years. So when I thought of the idea, there was no going back.

I thought that maybe my parents would want to do something for their thirtieth wedding anniversary. They usually go to some restaurant, a retreat or something of that sort. It was a few

Working with Katie every week was a constant surprise. Every week I was astounded by the new creative thoughts and perspectives she brought to her projects. Whether it was a screenplay or a short piece of fiction, she was always able to add some new details that made the story engaging and entertaining. Overall, I am impressed with the progress Katie has made over one short semester; her work has gone from great to extraordinary.

Kassie Baron

months away and I wanted to do something special for them. Thirty years is a long time to be married nowadays; heck, even ten years is long in this culture. No one seems to understand that if they want something to work, they are going to have to fix whatever is broken. I figured that if they could be together, after all these years, after all the fighting they have done, that should be something to celebrate. I figured the best way to do this was a surprise party.

Back in class, I began writing down ideas of where we could have it, what I could do in order to get my parents out of the house, who should be invited, what should be served, if games should be involved, and several other lists. I love lists, because they help keep me organized and knowing what I need to do next. The first list I made was for what I needed to organized, like what food to have, who to invite, games to

include, and maybe some memorabilia to have. From there, I went to filling out those lists even more.

I started with the people to invite. I began with those who we were related to, obviously. It would be hard to contact all of them, because everyone is everywhere. Well, there is one family out in Washington, someone who might be in Madison or New York, some in Eau Claire, and some in the Spooner area, then coworkers and other friends. I didn't know what other friends they had besides the ones they worked with. We would have to be careful talking about the party with my parents, considering that it was a surprise. With food, I figured that it would be best to order from a restaurant like Subway or Mama Mia. I think some snacks and drinks to tide until the other food came would be appropriate. I figured, since their anniversary is in the summer, we could have the party in the back yard because we would be able to put some of the food and memorabilia in the garage. Maybe even have them do a questionnaire about themselves and the other person and not have them show each other until the party. It would be interesting to see what they said about the other person.

I realized, after writing some of this down, that I wasn't paying as much attention to class as I should have been. Also, I never took this many notes before, so maybe the professor

would question it. So I slowed down how much I wrote, even though my thoughts were going a mile a minute. When class was finally done, I went back to my room. I realized that I actually wasn't sure if my parents' 30th anniversary was this year or not, so I decided to contact my sister Laura. It was easier to contact her through Facebook than any other form, because then I wouldn't have to deal with actually talking to her. I asked what anniversary they were celebrating this year, and she said that it was their 30th this August. That brought up a whole other problem: I only had six months to plan, invite people to, and pull off the best surprise 30th anniversary party.

POETRY

Katie Axlen



Katie's poems are often filled with heartbreaking stories and things lost. In [Spring Poem] she laments spring, and it's long overdue arrival. [Wishes from Home], this sad but hopeful poem rings true for people from all walks of life. We worked to show the normalcy that's missing when a love one is gone.

Brittany Deford



Spring

Where are you?
I miss your warmth
I miss your beauty
I'm sick of waiting
Please return quickly

Why are you hiding?
I miss the freedom you brought me
I miss your liveliness
You are sunshine
Please peek through the clouds

Why won't you greet me?
I miss walking in the rain
I miss listening to the birds chirping
I'm sick of the coldness
Embrace me in warmth

Where are you?
I miss the flowers
I miss the nice weather
Melt away the snow
and come home

Wishes from Home

I wish wishes came true,
Then I could always be with you,

I wish I could fly,
Then I would be by your side
In the blink of an eye

I wish you could help me
Shovel the snow covered driveway

I wish for peace
then you wouldn't be off fighting overseas

I wish you could come home
Then you would see how much our daughters
have grown

I wish you could see
The spring flowers in our front yard blooming

I wish you were safe in my arms
Then I wouldn't worry about you so much

I wish you knew
How hard it is to be away from you

I wish you could enjoy
A summer barbeque with us

I wish this year was over already
Then our family would be together again

I hope wishes come true,
So come home soon

Emily Bernsteen



Emily likes to express herself through her poetry, from complaining about the weather to reflecting on her other forms of art. I was impressed with her ability to respond to different prompts and make her poems relatable and honest. These are three poems that we felt the most satisfied with. "Now Available in Beautiful," is about her experience painting, "Sleep" is about wishing she didn't need to rest, and "Cold" is clearly a response to this season's weather.

Jensen Wohlgemuth



Untitled

Cold, cold, go away,
Come back never.
You always leave us in a tease,
Yet always return.
You are not wanted here anymore,
You have overstayed your welcome.
Please stay as far away as possible,
I have had enough of winter.
Spring is supposed to be here,
But you keep prolonging us from crossing paths.
You are abusive,
Causing me to slip and fall on my way to class.
You are intrusive,
Finding your way under my coat and hat.
You are annoying,
Causing me to dislike going outside.
You are unpredictable,
Making me never know your next move.
But most of all,
GO AWAY!

Sleep...

You are constantly flooding my mind,
Especially during class time.
I've tried everything to fight the drowsiness,
But nothing seems to overpower you!
With eyelids as heavy as boulders, my body
suffers from incredible weakness.
Constantly falling asleep in class just isn't cool.
Why do you do this to me?
You thief of my education,
Robbing me from my studies,
Leaving me with nothing but mediocre
understandings.
Please stop visiting me during school,
It's unfair and quite rude.
I'd prefer your company later at night,
When all I want to do is stay up late and chat.
Please don't take this the wrong way,
We just need some time apart.
Think of it as a break,
I hope we can be friends someday.

Now Available in Beautiful.

My brush paints fiercely as I douse it with paint,
The colors are so bold,
Not the slightest bit faint.
Blues, greens, oranges, golds,
Every color imaginable is on my canvas.
The layers of paint continue to add texture and
thickness,
But as my brush continues to move, I become
anxious.
Anxious in anticipation to finish,
In anticipation to see what I have created.
As I drop my brush and simply stare at the
acrylics,
I see my own masterpiece that is so wonderful,
Now available in beautiful.

Adam J. Blanchard

Sestina

Eerie are the eyes that fall on Lora's face.
Cryptic and seamless in time,
She drifts and she floats all throughout space.
Ethereal winds take her from shore to shore,
Gone without a trace,
She is torn forevermore.

Oblivious forevermore,
Are these eyes that rest upon Lora's blissful face,
For they, too, will find themselves vanishing
without a trace.
Eternity amounts to nothingness in this distorted
reality of time,
For not even a mere footprint is left upon this
distant shore.
Effortless is the nature of this confiding space.

Lora's found herself amidst deep space.
Desperately lamenting forevermore,
Not a single cry of hers will ever reach our
nearby shore.
A smile graces her face,
Until it is abducted by the pursuit of time,
Emotions scattered without a trace.

She begs and she pleads for a trace,
Any sign that she was not forsaken in space.
Ignorance is her belief in time,
As we all fall forevermore.
Though as pale as she has become,
A flower blooms upon our shore.

Winds carry petals across our shore,
With each grace of life comes another trace.
The eyes that once fell on Lora's face,
Descend eternally in the vastness of space.
Haunted forevermore,
They, too, have found themselves seduced by
time's embrace.

Lora has found herself a victim of time.
While life may have flourished upon our shore,
It, too, will one day cease to exist forevermore.

No soul will leave this world without a trace,
Even in this ever entombing nature of space.
Lora solemnly weeps as the flood descends from
her face.

Vacant is the face of Lora, beset by the fall of
time.

The soul once held in solitude by space is now
nestled within our shore.

Lora became the trace, living within us
forevermore.

T'Keyah Chatfield

Busy Bee

Buzz Buzz bee, shoo fly away!
Go collect pollen and stop ruining my day
I fear your stinger it's like a horrible prick from a
doctor needle
Maybe I wouldn't mind if you were a beetle
You zoom up and around all through the house
It would be much easier to catch you if you were
a mouse
Through the curtains, upstairs, and back
downstairs distracting me from my chores
I will not give up this chase until you're out the
door
I lose you and can't find you because you move
too fast
Maybe I've got rid of this busy bee at least
Tired out I lay on the couch and began talking to
a friend
Buzz, buzz, buzz interrupting my phone call
there's that busy bee again

WRITERS BLOCK

A blank page sits here and the cursor blinks
I sit here in not knowing what to write so my
mind thinks
Maybe write a poem about flowers, music, or
something unreal
Possibly about a card game with an unlucky deal
I think and I think what could my subject be
Something funny, something sad, wait how about
a story about me
I try to concentrate and seek for the perfect topic
Then a breezy wind from the window distracts
me making me feel as if I'm in the tropics
I'll get past this writers block sooner or later
Hey there it is Writers Block can be the title of
this paper

Ashley Freund



Ashley is a fearless writer with a great sense of humor. She possesses an applaudable taste for the absurd and politically incorrect which influences all the writing she produces.

Phoebe Patten



The Most Interesting Poem in the World

Immersed in memes
that thrive online,
I'd waste the day with Lolcats but
ain't nobody got time for dat.
Who are the characters of
our online affections?
Accidental celebrities,
children stolen from their parents
given prescribed personalities
by an anonymous public
starving for a voice.
Scumbag Steve is those who hurt us,
Good Guy Greg is those who befriend.
Not sure if fictional stories,
or their true feelings and desires.
Ripping the reins of creation
from traditional hands,
I see the meme as
a source of self-fulfillment
to fill the hollowness inside.
Life is cruel, lonely,
less real than virtual reality.

Man, a muted mass
yet all listen to a cat's
questioning cry
"I can has cheezburger?"
And ignore the man
who is truly asking.
Memes, a mask we wear
to hide behind in the
world of the interconnected lonely,
anonymously screaming sins
through Confession Bear
for worthless karma.
Without the strength to change our world,
we seek the wisdom of
Captain Hindsight to tell us:
If we didn't want to feel so powerless,
we should not have
given up so much power;
If we didn't want to rely on
memes to fulfill our lives,
we should not have
given them more strength than ourselves.
NO.

Jenna Homan
The Stages of Heartbreak

1. *Realization.*

A chill of comprehension
begins to course through my body.
A sick feeling that seeps
from my throat
into my chest
and
twists
my
stomach
into
knots.

2. *Shock.*

Like a flash of lightning or the shot of a
gun.
It happens so fast,
so sudden.
I finally see the light, and it blinds me, so
that
I can't think.
I can't speak.
I can't move.
I can't breathe.

3. *Numb.*

It's as if I've been given a shot of
Novocaine.
I feel nothing.
Trapped.
I'm trapped inside this oblivion.
I speak and I hear,
but my words don't belong to me,
and all that I hear is so far away,
Incomprehensible echoes.

4. *Pain.*

The numbness ebbs away.
An earthquake quivers through my body.

An explosion of emotion causes me to
slowly shatter
before your very eyes.

Regardless of my endeavors to conceal it,
I wildly flinging my emotions,
the shattered pieces of my heart,
on display for you to see:
confusion,
denial,
passion,
sorrow,
anger,
hurt; so much hurt.

Punched in the chest.
Ran over by a truck.
Shot in the back.
The only way to deal with the pain is to
cry,
clinging to you as tightly as I can.

It's painful knowing this is the last time I
will hold you,
but it's better than the emptiness that
will come again when you leave.
Can't let you go.
Can't let myself forget.

5. *Shame.*

I don't want to let go.
I don't want to forget.
I know I need to.
I've humiliated myself.
This isn't healthy.

With deep racking breaths,
I force my tears to stop.
I can't let you see me this way.
I need to be strong.
I release you from the vice grip of my
arms.
You make a joke, try to ease my pain.
Wild bloodshot eyes,

a trembling smile,
I hover on the brink of disaster.

6. *Internal bleeding.*

(((I try to remove you from my mind.
I need to move on.
I can't let the world see my hurt.
I keep it bottled inside where no one can
see,
denying that it's there at all.
Fake smiles,
pretending everything's alright.
Inside I'm bleeding from the internal war
among my memories
and my mind.)))

7. *Coldness.*

Trying to keep the memories away,
they still return.
They make me warm for a few moments.
When I realize that "memories" are all
they really are,
I'm left feeling empty.
Bitterly cold.
I'm constantly cold.
I can't get warm.

I'm just so sick of being alone.
I wish you were with me, holding me
tight,
taking away this bitter chill that racks my
body and rattles my teeth.
You don't truly realize what you've got
until it's gone.
I feel so empty without you.
Life goes on.
It must go on.

8. *Rebirth.*

The pain will never completely
disappear.
I have learned to deal with it and learn
from it.
Life is beautiful.
I am beautiful.

My prince is out there.
I won't stop until I've found him.
Like a phoenix,
I rise from the ashes.
It's time to live.
It's time to begin again.

FICTION


Devira's Mirror

Stephanie Bau

Preface


In the kingdom of Magrien, where reality and legend muddle together, there is a particular tale about to repeat itself. Most of the kingdom's subjects have forgotten the dangers of the water and the potential misfortune of staring into the reflective abyss. There are a few elders, however, that can still recall the story of the Golden Prince and how he was robbed of his face, lost his life, and brought a time of darkness upon his family.

The Happening, as it is referred to by the few citizens of Magrien who remember, began when the king and queen were blessed with a beautiful child. They named him Helios, for the sun; because it was rumored even in a dark room it was possible to see the little prince's angelic features. The prince grew up healthy and strong and never wanted for anything. The Prince was known to give generously to any families in need he encountered, but he was also known to be very, very vain. A few of the castle servants spoke of a hall of mirrors built in the castle especially for Helios, so that he could bask in the wonder that was his own flawless face. No one can remember the prince's face, only that it



Stephanie has worked hard this semester at continuing her fantasy story. Through her work both this semester and last, she has created something engaging, wondrous, and fun. Stephanie is a talented writer who excels with storytelling, and I look forward to reading more of her work!

Shannon Stover



was particularly extraordinary, for all portraits of Prince Helios were burned after the Happening.

The Prince's favorite pastime was riding his horse through the forest. He was allowed to go out alone because his loyal horse had been trained to find his way back to the castle if the Prince was lost and wished to go home, or if any harm should befall Helios. And in his eighteen years of existence, no tragedy of any kind had yet come to the Golden Prince. He had known no sorrow and had felt no pain. This factor only helped lead to his demise and made the events even more shocking to those around him.

The prince, as he was before he left for his ride that day, was never seen again. The king and queen sent out a search party after the prince's horse returned without a rider, but what they found was not the son they once knew. A knight of the search party found a creature in the

prince's clothing they could only assume to be the prince. The king's face went white upon seeing his son and he would not let his wife anywhere near the supposed body of their child. The unfortunate soul they found had all the features of the prince they knew, except for his disturbingly plain face frozen in horror upon his lifeless body. His parents blamed magic from the pond only a few paces away from the prince's body. For a while after the kingdom heard the tale of the Golden Prince's strange fate, the entire kingdom stayed away from water and swimming in ponds, streams, and lakes was banned altogether. That fear faded with time though, life within the kingdom went back to normal, and the unfortunate tale of Prince Helios was almost altogether forgotten.

Chapter I

Nothing in Leona's world was quite as lovely as her own reflection. While her surroundings and the people within wallowed in the drudgery of muted hues, Leona positively glittered with exceptional beauty. Not even the most skilled artist could have planned such an exquisite face: a face never possibly tarnished by dirt, grime, or sweat. That is, if such substances were ever allowed to touch even Leona's shadow.

Leona spent her life basking in the undying adulation of the people around her. Her parents were of no substantial beauty or social standing, so their radiant daughter served them

both as a treasure and a tool. As their most precious asset, Leona's parents tended to their daughter's every need and were undoubtedly devoted to her. Leona exploited this fact terribly. Her parents did their best to provide her with the best their money could buy, but Leona never saw any of their offerings as even close to her standards. "Leona," Willa Charleson ascended the stairs to her daughter's portion of the house, "I saw this dress in the shop window and knew it would be beautiful on you. I hope it fits! Leona?" As she pushed open the door to her daughter's bedroom, Willa paused, admiring the sunlight playing upon the contours of her sleeping daughter's face and she smiled warmly with the look of a particularly tender mother upon seeing her child peacefully asleep. She sat gingerly on the edge of the bed, as to not wake Leona and reached out to stroke the hair that captured the sun and the moon and flowed like water. She stood to place the dress on a chair in the corner and carefully, quietly, retraced her path back down the stairs, letting her lovely daughter sleep without disturbance.

~

Awoken by the sound of footsteps on stairs, Leona grimaced to herself. That would be her mother, once again disturbing her rest and blathering on about some scarf or shell comb that she would absolutely love. When would she learn she had horrible taste and everything she

bought was revolting? Whatever it was, Leona fully intended to feign sleep and wait for her mother to leave. At the sound of the door opening, she closed her eyes and tried her best to look unresponsive. She felt the pressure of her mother sitting on the edge of the bed. *This is MY bed* Leona hissed telepathically at her mother. She had to fight cringing as Willa touched her hair and Leona prayed for her mother to leave whatever horrid trinket she'd bought and let her be. By some divine intervention, Leona's mother did just that and made her way down the stairs, making much more noise than really necessary. Finally, she could get out of bed.

Leona opened her eyes and sat upright, stretching as gracefully as she could and looked at the walls of her bedroom. The walls were nearly covered with mirrors ranging in size, shape, and origin to create a sort of instant monument to whomever happened to be standing in the room. The small areas of space not occupied by mirrors were home to several of the best attempts to capture Leona's face in still form. Leona examined the replica faces alongside the accurate depictions of the mirrors. Yes, the paintings were good, but in all of them were certain incongruities that left something to be desired. In one painting, the eyes were too green with not enough amber and the nose of another was not straight or dainty enough. Leona much

preferred to watch herself in the mirror, examining her slightly golden skin and the shadows that revealed her delicate cheekbones and jawbone. As she watched her replica in the mirror angle her head this way and that, Leona brought her long slender fingers to her face and drew her wavy coppery hair back and up. "This is a neck that puts any swan to shame," Leona reflected vainly to herself. Leona's attention was then drawn to the garment laid over the chair in the corner. This one was almost tolerable. It was dark forest green silk with silver patterns of leaves and vines hand-embroidered into the fabric. To anyone else, this would have appeared to be the most splendid item of clothing in the world, but to Leona, it was just another object that was not her. Why was she forced to live in a world where she was the most interesting thing in it? Sometimes Leona imagined a world where everything met the high standard of aesthetic excellence in which she classified herself, but it was too good to be true, so she went on living amongst people who admired, but not properly valued Leona's existence or the positive influence she bestowed upon her inferiors by allowing them to look at her. Thus began Leona's day as she set out to pass the time with as little contact with other people as possible.

Leona's favorite days were those where she could slip out of the house without notice by her parents, but on this particular day, she was

not so fortunate, as Willa and Gerald Charleson were occupied in the kitchen, acting as a barrier between her and an easy escape.

Leona's mother, Willa, grew up as the daughter of a dairy farmer who managed to do quite well for himself. Being a man of sensibility and practicality, he was pleased when a stocky court scribe with thinning hair and spectacles expressed an interest in marrying his willowy daughter with a face that was just slightly above plain.

Her mother looked up from her dishes to smile and greet her and her father peeked out sheepishly from behind his glasses as he sat at the kitchen table in a pile of papers. The way they looked at her so adoringly with their large eyes reminded Leona of baby cows; so adoring, but so useless. "Good morning, darling!" Leona's mother beamed at her, "Did you see what I left in your room?" The look on her face was so pathetically expectant. Leona's mouth twitched momentarily into an involuntary scowl. She hated how her mother thought she knew her. "You don't like it. But Leona, it was the prettiest one I could find!"

Not wanting her mother to go into hysterics, Leona smiled sweetly and lied, "I'm just going into the market, Mother. The dress is much too good for everyday wear. I just put it with all the others." Her mother's face relaxed slightly. "Now, if you don't mind, I'll be off."

Leona grabbed an apple and a scone and had just begun to turn the doorknob when her father spoke.

"Actually, Leona, there's something we need to discuss with you." Leona's shoulders sunk and she took a seat at the kitchen table. Her parents were always bringing up little things to her; how she used too much water when washing her hair, how she spent too much money in the shops, how she should really be nicer to people. Leona braced herself for another pointless lecture. "As you know, you're eighteen now," her father began, "and we can't support you and give you all you need for the rest of your life," he rambled nervously, "your mother and I just want to make sure you always have the best of everything, and... um... so-,"

"Is there a point to this, Father?" Leona interjected. "I get it, I'm eighteen and I should be taking more responsibility for myself. Can I please go now?" Her father looked more fidgety than ever and Leona began to suspect a bigger issue at hand. She looked at her mother "What's going on?"

"Leona, later today we're going to start seeing candidates for your hand in marriage." The thought left Leona feeling as though a large rock had been set on her chest and the weight was only increasing. Leona's mother continued, "We didn't know how to tell you, but we want you to be there. We won't choose a man to be

your husband unless you find him absolutely perfect.” Leona laughed at that notion. How would a man ever live up to her standards? It would take ages to find a man like that. The boulder on her chest began to get lighter. This new condition meant Leona could continue to deny suitors, regardless of their qualities until she felt ready to give her hand to the richest man who could best provide for her, or her parents would eventually give up trying to marry her off and leave her be.

Smiling in her own cleverness, Leona responded to her parents’ expectant gazes, “Can we start today?” Her parents looked at each other in surprise.

“Yes... we’ll send a messenger to the first man on the list!” her mother looked at her slightly sideways with widened eyes.

“Excellent, but I’m going to the market first.” And without another word, she was out the front door. Walking through the garden Leona brushed away some of the bolder faeries away as the timid hid among the moonflowers that would illuminate with the full moon. She had no time to bother with the playful tricksters. Leona opened the iron gate and stepped onto the path leading toward the market looking very pleased with herself. As she walked, the people she passed wondered why such a girl was forced to walk instead of riding in a carriage, but the truth was that Leona chose to walk. Her favorite

part of her walk to the market was observing people as she passed them. There were two reactions: their eyes would widen and be stuck to her until well after she passed, or, after a moment of gawking, they would transfix their line of vision directly at their feet, as if the mere experience of seeing Leona was a sensory overload and to look at something so lovely was practically sinful. Once in a while, for her own amusement, Leona allowed a moment longer of eye contact with a young male member of the gawking community. After, she relished in the flush in their face as they tried to remember how to breathe again.

The rolling farmland slowly transformed into houses, stores, and colorful pushcarts. Walking into the crowded marketplace, she appraised every reflection of herself she saw in the shop windows, but unlike the average passerby, she did not look for imperfections in her appearance. No, Leona knew she could never appear anything less than stunning, so gazing at her reflection was the same to her as admiring a beautiful landscape. In short, Leona took her own breath away, and she knew she had the same effect on everyone else she encountered as well. A teenage boy with worn work clothes about her own age found himself at the mercy of Leona’s piercing gaze. Blushing would not even begin to describe the deep red on the boy’s face that would put a ripe summer tomato to shame.

Mouth still agape, Leona breezed right past him as if he were made of less than air. In her peripheral vision, she could see the lingering looks of all the people she passed in the crowded market. She made no effort whatsoever to memorize any of the faces she saw, but couldn't help but recognize some of the people she had encountered on previous trips to the market. A woman in an ill-fitting brown garment that could barely be called a dress approached Leona with a brisk, bustling stride.

"Hello, Leona!" the broad face grinned with vigor and glistened slightly with sweat in the summer heat. Leona could only assume that nerves had a great deal to do with the perspiration as well. "It's always lovely to see you in the market. It's hard not to get out on such a beautiful day, you know. Well, of *course* you know or else you wouldn't be out here," the woman laughed at her own joke, unleashing a hearty, "HA!" that sounded like something between a goose and a sour trombone note. The chattering woman continued without giving Leona time to say a word, "You know, I heard that you're just about to marrying age! A girl as pretty as you should have no trouble finding an interested man. Oh, when I was your age I couldn't *wait* to get married! It's such an exciting time for a young lady and being a wife and mother is the greatest thing I've ever done. Speaking of, where have my little ones gone? I

really must be going, but please do give your parents my best!"

Leona managed a wincing smile as the woman scurried off to find her spawn and to pester some other victim. Her tolerance for mingling with common folk wearing thin, she continued to admire her reflection in every window she passed when, surprisingly, something behind one of the windows caught her eye. The object of interest was an illustration in an old leather bound book on display in a dingy book shop. Nothing was spectacular about the book shop itself; the mortar between the bricks was starting to crumble and the light green paint was flaking off the wooden trim of the windows. The battered sign above the shop read *Wintergreen Books*. The book beyond the dirt-spotted window was the object which made the old shop so enticing. The scene depicted in the book was of a congregation of what appeared to be mermaids, but unlike the wicked mermaids of faerie tales with which Leona was familiar, the supposed mermaids were, in a word, stunning. The gilded illustrations of the pages nearly seemed to come alive as Leona moved toward the door of the shop, never once removing her eyes from the book. She wasn't sure how long she'd been staring at the book on display when the decrepit shopkeeper materialized from behind a pile of dusty tomes, startling her from her thoughts. His

wiry, white hair stuck up from his head in tight curls at peculiar angles. "You'd best stay clear of water, young miss, or it could be your face on one of those nymphs."

"I'm sorry. I don't quite understand," Leona reacted to the old man's seemingly crazed musings.

"If you were to look away from the picture and let your eyes wander to the text, you'd find that those lovely creatures are not what they seem. You see, those water nymphs have no face of their own, so they resort to stealing the faces of beautiful young people such as yourself who are foolish and vain enough to stare into the water of their pond for too long." Something about the tone of the shopkeeper's words and the look of accusing bemusement he gave her struck a chord within Leona and at once she wanted to strike the man for that look, but something strange and ominous stopped her.

"You don't know what you're talking about," Leona snapped, and with that, she slipped back into the street and headed home toward what she expected would be an endless stream of suitors not fit to kiss her feet. No one had ever dared to cause her harm; and besides, face-stealing water nymphs only existed in fairy tales meant to scare young children. Still, Leona couldn't help but be a little disturbed by the tale and the way the old man in the shop seemed to know something. Leona shuddered, but never

mind that, she had young men to reject and after the confrontation in the bookshop, Leona was quite ready to be flattered.

Returning to her room, she had just enough time to push her recent unfortunate incident to the back of her mind and to brush her hair to a vibrant brilliance before the first of the suitors arrived. Her mother called up to her, signaling that it was time to go downstairs and meet the first of the suitors. With one last gleaming smile at herself in the mirror, Leona went down the stairs in such a way that it was almost as if she were dancing. She fully knew that every movement she made would be visible from the parlor where the first of the fortunate (or unfortunate) suitors would be seated. With one look at the dumbfounded young man standing nervously with his cap clutched in his sweaty fingers, she knew she did not like him one bit. The boy was tall and gangly with a smattering of freckles across the bridge of his nose and his cheeks. His slightly stooped posture, with his neck stretched out as if he were preparing for execution, suggested a weakness to Leona which instantly dismissed the poor lad from her interest completely. Nevertheless, she wanted to toy with him a bit before she sent him away. She smiled charmingly at him and he looked as though he were going to collapse in a heap on the wooden floor of the parlor looking like a scared rabbit. "Ah, Leona! This is Roy Bailey, from the dairy

farm down the road.” Leona’s aversion to the young man before her only grew at her mother’s mention of “dairy farm”, but she managed not to flinch and instead looked the boy directly in the eyes.

“Will you be inheriting the family business then?” Leona inquired. The blank stare she received in return to her question lasted for a few moments before he was able to shake his head back to reality.

“Well, um... no. My older brother’s getting the business, but Pa’s giving me some money to go out on my own,” he replied in a near mumble.

“How terribly interesting,” Leona remarked in a tone layered almost too thickly with honey.

Suddenly the boy blurted out, “My parents didn’t want me to come here! Well, they don’t know I’m here actually. It’s just that I’ve loved you since the moment I saw you three years ago and I’d just die if I didn’t get my chance to talk to you!” After his outburst, his cheeks became flushed and he avoided looking at Leona altogether.

“Perfect!” Leona said cheerily, “Your parents don’t approve of me and you’re really not my type anyway, so it’s settled that a marriage between us could never possibly work. Now, if you don’t mind, I have other appointments, but thank you for your interest.” Leona smiled as

sweetly as she knew how. The young man gave her one last despairing look before shuffling out the door. Leona could have sworn she saw the beginning trail of a tear snaking its way down his face as he left. How delightful. Honestly, she had expected nothing less. She would be heartbroken as well if she had been rejected by someone like herself, but he couldn’t have really thought he stood a chance. She paused for a moment, thankful that she was guaranteed to always have the upper hand in these encounters.

Leona settled into an olive green armchair and arranged the folds of her skirt in an attractive and ladylike manner. She thought about how immensely she was going to enjoy this entire ordeal. The next man walked away even more shattered than Roy Bailey and by the third hopeful candidate she sent away in or near to tears, her parents started to show signs of frustration.

“Leona, has there been anything you’ve liked in any of these boys?” Her mother looked at her disparagingly.

“Of course,” she said, “I like that all of them have been tripping over themselves to be in the same room as me, but other than that, can you honestly expect me to like anything about any one of them? Really, Mother, are you going so far as to suggest that one of these idiots is fit to marry me?” Leona knew this would keep them at bay for a while, at least.

“No, absolutely not!” Her mother replied as quickly as she could. “It’s just that if you could at least try to have a positive outlook on this, it could be just a bit easier, and you might find yourself actually liking one of them.”

Leona almost burst out laughing.

“I want you to say one thing you like about the next young man that walks in here. I’m not saying you have to marry him, it’s just getting a little tiring with all these automatic rejections when we don’t even talk about the matter. You have to consider what he has to offer the family as well, so will you please just say one nice thing?”

“Fine,” Leona snapped indignantly.

“Alright,” her mother said, accepting the small pseudo-victory. “Gerald, will you go get the next boy?”

Her father got up and disappeared into the other room. When he returned he was ushering in a boy who looked to be about nineteen. He was not in any way unfortunate looking, but Leona was too busy glowering and plotting her passive aggressive revenge to notice anything else. The young man strode over to her with an outstretched hand.

“Hello. My name is Rawley Evans. I live about fifteen minutes down the road. I don’t know if you remember me, but we played together when we were younger. I used to catch squirrels and bring them here for you.”

Leona remembered very well. In fact, the memories of playing with Rawley were some of her favorites. She could have said yes and made everything so easy, but she was not about to give her parents or Rawley the satisfaction of getting her to be agreeable.

“I remember the squirrels, but I guess you didn’t make much of an impression,” she remarked casually.

Leona watched in anticipation for his face to fall with disappointment, but instead, he took her remark in stride.

“That’s quite a shame. I look back quite fondly on our little play dates. I’m sorry your faulty memory prevents you from reliving that important part of your childhood, but I guess that makes getting to know each other now more of an adventure,” he retorted with a smile.

She smiled back, thinking resentful thoughts that were apparent in her next comment, “Oh, I would hardly call what I’ve been doing all day an adventure. It’s more like torture, actually.”

“I take it you aren’t enjoying the spouse selection process?”

Leona turned to her parents and said the words she knew would buy her escape, “Well, at least this one’s not a complete idiot.”

“LEONA!” her mother burst out with a gasp, but before she could start apologizing

profusely for her daughter's words, Rawley spoke out.

"It's alright Mrs. Charleson, why should your daughter have to mingle with lowlife commoners like me? She has no reason to be even the least bit kind to the innocent young men who have waited their whole lives to talk to her, after building up the courage of course. I'm sure she took absolutely no pleasure in watching them run away with their tails between their legs after being thoroughly humiliated either. Of course, they were completely oblivious to their mistreatment because they don't even consider themselves half-worthy to live in the same country as you. The truth, Leona Charleson, is that you are without a doubt, the ugliest girl I've ever had the misfortune to meet."

Leona stared, her mouth agape. The word ugly still hung in the air like the last note of a symphony gone horribly wrong. She couldn't think of a word to say in return. Instead she rose to her feet and left out the back door of the house towards the distant forest without a word to her parents about where she was going or when she'd be back because honestly, even she didn't know.

~

Leona ran. Hot, angry tears made glistening trails down her cheeks and spattered the leaves as they fell from her chin while she ran further and further away from what had just

happened. She kept running until she no longer recognized her surroundings. The trees loomed above her and their branches seemed to point without definitive direction as if to purposely disorient her. The forest threatened to swallow her up, so Leona picked a new direction and resumed her aimless sprint. A combination of speed and the tears still filling her eyes melded everything she passed into a blur of grays, greens, and browns. A tree root hidden beneath the fallen leaves snagged Leona's foot and vaulted her forward. She felt the sting of small twigs and pebbles digging into her hands as she caught herself. As the pain awakened Leona from her trance-like run, she came to the sudden realization that she had absolutely no idea where she was and could not even start to think of how to get back home. Panicking would do no good. She decided to try to retrace her path. There was a moss-covered rock near a bent, old tree that triggered a sense of familiarity, so she trudged in that general direction. She walked for what seemed like hours only to find herself back at the moss-covered rock. Panic squeezed Leona's chest, forcing her to take quick, shallow breaths. She walked in the opposite direction of the rock as if it were diseased and once again lost track of her surroundings as she thought of how she was (or possibly wasn't) going to get back home. Was it possible that she was going to die in these woods? There were so many things that could

still go wrong, as if getting hopelessly lost wasn't bad enough. Leona had not even an inkling of an idea of what she could eat, the nights in the forest were known to be terribly cold, and she could only imagine the kind of vicious creatures lurking behind the dark, ominous trees. Leona's buzzing thoughts ceased when she found herself standing just feet from a pond with a surface as still as silence. Even though the light had faded from the sky, the pond looked as though it had absorbed the moonlight and the effect was really quite lovely. This pond proved its uniqueness further in the fact that objects contacting the water's surface created no ripples. Leona found this characteristic fascinating as she stared shamelessly at her reflection in the pond. How could anyone possibly dream of calling her ugly? Stupid boy. Of course no one was fit to be in the same room as her. The honest water showed no flaws upon her face and Leona's tired body relaxed with this fact. She was so entranced with herself that she leaned closer and closer to the water until her nose was a hair's breadth away from the pond's surface, but rather than stopping there, she kept leaning into her own reflection, submerging her face into the silken waters and as she did, she was covered by a blanket woven of the most supremely sublime happiness. She pulled away from the water to look once more at her reflection. She saw her face in the water and smiled, but oddly, her reflection did not return

her smile. The copy of her face gave a triumphant smirk and disappeared, leaving only the image of a face plainer than Leona could have ever imagined. The sight caused her to jump back from the water with a mixture of surprise and disgust. She had never seen such a creature in fiction or reality. The creature had only two black dots where eyes would be, two oblong holes in place of a nose, and a mouth represented by a simple straight line under the nose. Leona shuddered at the unnatural lack of expression and detail of the creature in the water. There was no way of knowing whether the creature meant harm or not, so Leona decided to creep back to the water's edge to make sure the disgusting thing she'd seen had left. As the reflected image in the pond was slowly revealed to her, Leona reached to touch her face with her hands and came to a terrible realization: the blank face that had repulsed her had replaced the lovely face with which she had grown up and to which she was so accustomed. The knowledge of this awful and drastic change filled Leona's mind with a sort of whirling humming, and the last thing Leona saw before she fainted was the triumphant smile of her own face in the water and it morphing into the knowing smile of the old man in the book shop.

The Noise

T'Keyah Chatfield

It was nine a.m. on a Saturday morning and the sun beamed right on my bed. "Wake up Rosie!" mom yelled. I was awakened to find a lovely breakfast on the kitchen table. I knew it was going to be a great day. There is nothing like waking up refreshed to a table with bacon, pancakes, hash browns, and a tall glass of orange juice to start off the morning. Mom began to ask me my plans for today and began to tell hers. "I'll be back, I'm going to run my errands and the rest of the day is ours," she explained. Mom and I both knew that this could take all day so I was in no rush to finish breakfast and dress.

After mom left on this sunny morning I became very bored. I finished my big breakfast and sat there wondering how I could past time until my mom got back. I began to clean since I was bored and home alone. Suddenly I heard a noise; what could this be and where was it coming from? Looking around suspiciously I still continued to clean. The sound appeared again; I stopped cleaning and now I would look for this distracting noise. As soon as I started to look for it stopped. It was very weird. It seemed like the noise knew I was searching for it and didn't want me to find it. I tipped toed around the house not finding any leads. With no luck I headed toward the upstairs bathroom to shower. I started my water and went to my room to pick out clothes

to wear for today. The bathroom door slammed; frightened I jumped up and screamed. I grabbed my bat from under my bed and started to walk towards the bathroom door. In my mind I knew I had caught the thing that was making that irritating noise. Bursting the bathroom door open and looking around I found nothing but an open window and a breezy wind causing the door to slam. The mystery is still at hand and I would not give up until I found this noise.

Now I had finished my shower and I didn't forget about the noise. I wanted to hear the noise again; I sat patiently waiting and still nothing. Over the course of ten minutes I had fallen asleep. That big breakfast combined with a hot shower was like heaven, causing me to become so relaxed and comfortable. Suddenly I jumped out of my sleep; the noise was back and very startling this time. Quietly, I walked around trying to get closer to the noise to see if it would stop. I discovered this noise had sort of a rhythm to it. It reminded me of that catchy tune I heard on yesterday's episode of *The Show*. Once again it started. Instead of annoying me this time I began to dance around and enjoy it. Maybe because I was enjoying it now it didn't last for very long.

After a while this tune was stuck in my head. Everything I did was to the beat of this tune and the day seemed to fly past since things became so musical. Before I knew it mom was

back and it was time to really begin my day. We sat and we talked for a few minutes. She interrupted me asking me to grab her cell phone. I paused and responded back, "Mom do you hear that noise, it's been bothering me all day?" She took a quick glimpse at me and responded, "That's my cell phone in my work desk silly!" All I could do was laugh; the noise that scared me, annoyed me, and had me singing the entire day was mom's work phone in her desk. After all there was nothing to be worried about besides pesky callers ruining our day. Surprisingly mom turned her phone off threw it back into the desk and was ready to begin our day together. I was even more excited to go out with mom; she always plays the hero. She solved the mystery and turned her phone off to make our day just perfect.

The end!

A Magical World

T'Keyah Chatfield

Once upon a time there lived a girl named April, born into a world in which she believed was a magical world. She believed this world was so magical because everything she had believed in or wished for had come true. All of these things were possible because of her fairy godmother. One day this magical fantasy would come to an end, it was time for the girl to grow up and take on her own responsibilities. She never in a million years imagined this would happen, because she thought that her fairy would always be by her side. She became a firm believer in this because her godmother never explained that she would have to leave her when it was time for her eighteenth birthday.

It was a lovely day in the spring time when April began to plan her big birthday bang. From the past she knew she would get everything she asked for because her wish was her godmother's command. Until this day, her fairy godmother had to explain to April that she would be turning eighteen and they would soon part because of her growing up. April was very distraught to hear this news and stormed out of the house to take a walk to clear her head. Disappointed in her attitude godmother knew she would have to fix this and April's attitude fast. Godmother had a plan "I'll teach that April a lesson and a good one it will be!" she mumbled

to herself. After April walked a little while she noticed a storm cloud coming. She wanted to avoid the rain and getting wet; little did she know god mother made this storm cloud appear to see how April would get through this obstacle. "I wish this storm cloud away!!" April exclaimed. Opening her eyes to see that the storm cloud was there April began to try again, louder and louder each time. She wondered what was going on and why her wish wasn't being answered. Finding herself wet from the storm seconds later she began to make her way back home. Remembering on her way back she realized she was mad at godmother and decided to turn around. She began to wish for dry clothes once again nothing happened. She headed to the store to wish for what she saw while there. Again, nothing appeared April began to look around in confusion. A man saw April and offered help, she began to tell her problems and he began to give her answers. "In life nothing comes easy you have to go through the rain to get through the sunshine, you must work for what you want, what you put in is what you get out." The man went on to tell April what he had been through that day and how he had to face struggles of his own. He began to tell April of the negative and positive he had been through and that day. April realized that the man had had it worse than her. To help April out the man also compared her day to what had happened and also what could

have been. She was so thankful to run into that man because now he had become an inspiration to her. Walking around the store April still noticed she needed dry clothing, she thought that she could just change clothes and leave it at that. A security guard had stopped her and explained she had to pay for what she wanted and she couldn't just walk out. April had no idea of this because she never had to actually purchase things of her own. She explained how she had no money and told the security about the perfect world she lived in. The guard chuckled and began pointing workers of the store out for example, showing April what a job was and how to get what you want on your own. Everything was starting to come together for April the man and security was now a big help. April realized that godmother may have been right and was trying to teach her the right way to do things. April ran home happily to tell her godmother what she had learned and that she might be ready to take on the real world without her. Godmother granted April with one last wish, her big birthday bang! April was shocked and had the time of her life and was now ready to take on the not so magical world.

Coffee Shop Memory

Alicia Czarnik

The sky was pouring down rain onto the people below it. Two particular people in the crowded streets below quickly ran into a coffee shop for shelter. The two people were a man and a boy who looked to be about ten years old. The man held the door open for the boy before quickly hurrying inside after him. He laughed along with the boy at the fun game they had played about trying to stay out of the rain as much as possible. The man quickly led the boy to a booth and sat down on the opposite side of him. They both slid their soaking wet jackets off and each placed them in the empty spot beside them in the booth. The man quickly waved over a waitress so that they could order something.

The waitress was a young woman who looked to be in her mid-twenties. She had on a cheerful smile as she walked gracefully over to the table. She had brown hair of a medium length and you could catch a glimpse of her kind hazel eyes as she gazed upon the occupants at the table. She also wore a nametag with the name Susan written on it. She raised her little pad of paper and pen in anticipation of writing down the orders.

“What would you like, sir?” the waitress asked politely.

“I’ll have a black coffee please,” then man answered.

“Nice choice, and what’ll it be for you, sweetie?” Susan asked the boy sitting across from the man.

“Um...I’ll have some hot chocolate please,” the boy answered with a smile.

“Great choice. I’ll be right back with your orders,” the waitress said before walking away.

The man and the boy sat quietly for a moment, both lost in their thoughts as they stared out the window at the rain. When thunder rolled through the air outside it brought both of them out of their thoughts and they looked at each other.

“Sorry about not being able to take you to the baseball game like I had promised,” the man said with an apologetic tone.

“It’s alright, dad. It’s raining pretty hard out. We can always go to another game later on, right?” the boy hopefully asked.

“Of course we can. Just on a day that’s not so wet and gloomy,” the father replied while pointedly looking out the window at the rainy day outside.

“Awesome! That would be so much fun!” the boy said joyfully, almost hopping up and down in his seat with excitement.

Right after the boy said that the waitress showed up with both of their drinks.

“Here you are, sir. One black coffee. And one hot chocolate for you,” Susan said,

looking at each of them as she addressed them and placed down their drinks.

They both thanked the waitress before she left and sipped at their drinks afterwards. The boy smiled and brought his drink down to show a whip cream mustache had appeared on his face. The man, who was the boy's father, laughed and pointed it out to the boy who then began laughing as well. The boy wiped off his mustache and sipped some more at his hot chocolate, enjoying the warmth that is brought as it spread through him. He smiled at his father and watched curiously as his father sipped at his coffee. He wondered what it tasted like and if he'd like it.

“Hey, dad? Can I try some of that?” the boy asked, pointing towards the coffee in his father's hands.

“Sure, if you want to. Although, I'm not really sure that you're going to like it,” his father said with a chuckle.

The boy nodded but took the coffee from his father anyway. He brought the drink to his lips and sipped at it. His face immediately scrunched up and he made a face at the taste. He quickly handed the coffee back to his now laughing father and took a drink from his hot chocolate to get the taste out of his mouth.

“Yuck! How can you drink that stuff? No more coffee for me. I'll stick with my hot chocolate, thanks.”

It took a moment for the father to answer, since he was laughing in amusement at his son's reaction to the coffee. “It kind of grows on you after a while. I bet when you're older you'll like it,” his father said with a smile.

“Huh...maybe. Someday anyways,” the boy answered before sipping at his hot chocolate again.

Both of them sat drinking their drinks until the sky cleared up, and then they went on their way home in the bright, clear sky.

Creative Writing


Matthew Faltz

The rain fell from the sky, piercing the dreary day and blanketing the cobblestone streets with a layer of water. As cars and people passed by, their motions caused the water to splash around, hitting everything in sight. All this rain caused the gray day to become even grayer than before, and succeeded in making the dreary day even drearier.

As he moved through the rain soaked streets of Berlin, he took notice of the gloominess of the city. He wondered if most days here were like this, or if they were usually more pleasant than the weather currently suggested. He then turned down a street, heading further into the heart of the city. The rain continued, but he was kept relatively dry in thanks to his coat.


He then came across a large, gothic building. It was discolored from the hundreds of years of rain and weather, but it stood as strong as the day it was first built. He entered the building, all the while, unknowingly, being watched from the distance by a pair of shady eyes. The library was large, expansive, and dark, and he knew that he would have some trouble locating it, but he knew that today was the day that he would find the long lost key.

He moved down a row, shrouded in shadow. The rows were twice as tall as he was and blocked out what little light shone through



Matt is a veteran when it comes to English '57 courses and this semester he chose to test his creativity in a short story. A goal we focused on each session was to add even more detail and description to the events in this piece. This was in order to really give the reader a vivid picture of what was happening in the adventure. Every week I was intrigued to find out what twist Matt's story would take next. So without any further ado, enjoy!

Myranda



the shelves. He had done his research, and knew that the book was located along the north wall of the library. He approached the wall, expecting there to be no surprise, but he instead found that the section of books he needed access to was cut off by a line of shelves. He realized that the book was in an archival section, reserved for some of the oldest books in the library. The only people who could access the section were the workers, and he did not have the time to wait for someone to retrieve the old and dusty book. He went into the shadows, climbed up a shelf, and vaulted onto the other side.

Moving quickly and sticking to the shadows, he followed the shelves around the corner, checking for anybody who would be

alerted to his presence. With nobody in sight, he was allowed to move as fast and as freely as he needed to without worry. He arrived at the north wall, and began scouring the shelves for the book. He could not see well without the light, and he didn't want to use his flashlight because it could attract the workers. After a few minutes of searching, he finally found the section he was looking for.

He looked on the bottom shelf, and much to his delight, the unmarked book was sitting right where his research had indicated. He pulled it off the shelf, and pulled out his flashlight, taking the necessary risk of being caught, and looked at the cover. He blew off the years of accumulated dust and opened it. He carefully took his knife out and made three cuts along the edges of the cover, peeling it back to reveal the key lying in between the cut edges. He grabbed the ancient artifact and looked at it for a second. It was old; older than the book he tore it out of. For a key that size, it also seemed to weigh more than he expected.

The library doors opened, and multiple footsteps entered the stone building. It reminded him that he needed to get going and get back to the site quickly. He put the key in his pocket, and put the book back in the shelf, where it would undoubtedly lie for an untold amount of years, untouched and unnoticed. He moved back towards the wall of shelves that he had previously

scaled, once again checking for workers and other such obstacles, but at a much hurried pace. He began to climb up the wall to get to the other side, but then stopped when he heard a voice. "Er ist hier" said an unseen person. The accent sent chills throughout his body: They had followed him, and now they had caught up with him.

He slowly looked over. From what he could tell, about ten or so men walked through the rows, looking for him. There was no easy way out, as the men covered almost every angle and the sounds of his footsteps would be heard easily. He lowered himself back down, and tried to think of a way out, knowing that he had managed to get himself into trouble once again.

The library was dark, and created both a problem and an advantage for himself. With the darkness, he could not look ahead to see an easy way out, plus he knew that he could encounter other men that he did not see. But the same darkness that blinded him also blinded the Germans, and gave him the upper hand. He climbed back up the shelf that divided him from danger, and peered carefully over once more. He waited a second, and then vaulted over when nobody was near, and instantly crouched down, moving to the corner. There were two men walking away from him, so he would wait until they turned down another aisle. But a sound behind him told him that someone else was coming, and he had to move quick.

He moved around the corner quietly, tiptoeing into another aisle just before the man came around the corner. A few seconds after he had passed, he peered out again, looking for a new path out. He decided to move to the aisle right in front of him in order to gain a better vantage point. He did so, and came to face the back of another German. He froze, fearing that he had been found, but the man kept on moving forward, unaware of his presence. Making a very quick and rash decision, he reached down into his pocket and, much to his pleasure, pulled out the only tranquilizer dart that had survived his last encounter with the Germans. He took it out of its cap, and stuck it into the man's neck, rendering him unconscious before he could cry out. He grabbed him as he fell, slowly putting him on the ground to avoid any noise. He felt around, and eventually found the German's handgun tucked in his coat. He grabbed the gun and two clips of ammo, and then proceeded around the corner.

He did not get far though, as another German found the unconscious body he had just left and yelled out to the others in very loud, very angry manner. He did not bother to look behind him, he just ran as fast as he could towards the exit in hope of making it out before he was shot. He heard the Germans yelling at each other and then chasing after him. A German stepped out from a shelf, unaware that he was running at him, and was instantly slammed back into the

bookcase, where the German was rendered unconscious.

It was at this point that the other Germans began shooting after him, creating a volume of noise that had never been experienced by the library. He weaved into an aisle, and then into another, in hopes that it would help him gain distance from his enemies. However, each aisle he took led to another German, each of which came dangerously closer and closer to catching him. He kept going, and just when he thought he was almost out of the library, he came face-to-face with a corner, and looking around, realized that he was now trapped.

They came at him from both sides, closing in fast. They were not shooting at him, at least not yet. He had seconds to act, but he found his escape route standing right in front of him. He ran forward as fast as he could, climbing the ancient bookshelves that blocked his path. The Germans arrived milliseconds after he reached the top of the shelf, barely missing him. He moved to the edge and quickly took a long jump to the top of the next shelf, and then the next shelf, and then the next shelf. Soon he was jumping his way out towards the exit as angry Germans, yelled, swore, and shot in his general direction. He could feel the bullets whizzing by as he ran away, but attempting to dodge the bullets would only slow his escape, making him suffer the deadly consequences of slowing down.

He arrived at the last shelf, and consequently, the exit. He jumped down onto the floor and sprang up, bursting through the door and into the rainy street. Despite the rain, it still took him a moment for his eyes to readjust to the sudden influx of light. He looked around for a place to hide, and impulsively began running, unaware of where he would end up.

He turned off to the side, now going down a residential street. He moved quickly through the locals who went walking on their everyday business, looking over his shoulder every few seconds in case they found him. He turned down a small alleyway, slowing himself down and blending in with the crowd. He continued for a few minutes, making sure that he was not being followed, and quietly stepped off to the side, acting casually and attracting no attention. He pulled out his phone, and opened his map application, hoping it would show that he was closer to the site than he thought he was.

It told him that he was much, much further from the site than he hoped. He had managed to escape the Germans' wrath and ended up on the other side of town. He knew that they would be looking for him, meaning that he could not travel back to the site by walking. Instead, he had to find some mode of transportation to get him back before they beat him there. The only vehicle in sight was a moped with its owner stepping off to enter the nearby

store. A loud yell came from behind him, and turning around, he saw that they had caught up with him. He decided very quickly that the only way out was to use the moped. He ran over to it and shoved the driver off to the side. He pressed the start, and peeled out into the street.

He picked up speed and gained distance away from the Germans as they shot after him. He drove through the crowd, which consequentially endangered the lives of the pedestrians around him, making his escape even more hurried. Continuing down the street, weaving in and out of pedestrians, he looked for any form of access to the main road. He kept finding street upon street of narrow passageways, leading everywhere and yet, nowhere. Pulling away from them, he now was in a race against time to make it to the site. If they were not following him now, they were racing to catch him at his destination.

As it quickly turned out, they were choosing to chase him instead. A black SUV pulled up behind him, and slowly began to work its way through the crowd towards him. He saw it in his rearview mirror, scattering the crowd as it came closer. He had no choice but to deviate from his path and turn down a side alleyway. The good news was that there was nobody there to be put in danger of the chase, but it also meant that the Germans could catch up to him rather quickly. The SUV got through the crowd

and turned into the alleyway that he had gone down, and the roar of the SUV screamed out, piercing the city streets as it accelerated towards him.

Within a matter of seconds they were right behind him, ready to ram him into a wall. He pulled out the gun that he had stolen and shot back blindly. They swerved and slowed down, but then began to shoot back. The bullets hit all around him, smashing his rearview mirror into bits and shards of glass. They got even closer than before, riding up right behind the back tire of the moped. The shots continued, and as he went to reload, a bullet grazed his arm, causing him to swerve erratically and drop the clip he was holding. The pain was extreme and excruciating, and with all the energy he could muster, he managed to grab his last clip of ammunition and reload the handgun. He turned around, and this time aiming, shot three times toward the driver-side tire, which burst with a loud bang. The SUV quickly jerked to the left, and before the driver could hit the brakes or steer the other way, the vehicle slammed into the side wall, destroying the car and causing the wall to partially collapse on top of it.

He looked back as he drove away, seeing that they had crashed and they were no longer following him. He winced in pain as his arm slowly bled from the shot, so he pulled off into another alleyway and came to a stop. Looking at

his arm, he saw that the cut was not deep, but his sleeve was now covered in a dark red bloodstain. He did not have anything to wrap it up with, nor did he have the time to find something. He looked back to his phone, found where he was on the map, and went on his way, once again, back towards the site.

The city was quiet as he sped to its far side. From what he could tell, no one was following him, and he hoped that he could reach the site without further incident. As he reached the far side of the city, and consequentially the site, he slowed down, eventually stopping at a café and leaving the moped there. He proceeded to walk the rest of the way, moving through the crowds as he attempted to blend in.

He eventually arrived at the site, an ancient graveyard that lay in outskirts of the city. It contained the bodies of those who had lived hundreds of years ago, and some bodies were hundreds of years older than them. Five months earlier, in a dusty box located in a World War II museum, he came across documents that detailed a stolen treasure, hidden by the Third Reich before the end of the war. His research eventually revealed that the treasure was located in a crypt, locked by a key that had been missing until earlier that day.

He was not the only one after the treasure though, because numerous colleagues found out about his discovery, and a hidden

Neo-Nazi organization learned of its existence. Believing that the treasure rightfully belonged to them, they had pulled out all the stops trying to catch him, but so far he had yet to be caught.

He approached the gate, and checking for nearby people, quickly jumped the fence and into the cemetery. It was closed off to the public, which allowed him to be alone to finally find the treasure. It was located in an older part of the cemetery, meaning that he had to venture into the heart of the crypt. As he walked towards the center, the rain began to pick up and started to obscure his vision. He was able to follow the brick path towards the center by looking down, passing by gravestones that had been decayed almost as much as the bodies that lied just below them. The level of decay grew exponentially as he got closer to his destination, showing a dead and dreary past in a modern day city.

As he got closer, mausoleums began to appear. Eventually, they formed a maze of tomb upon tomb, sprawling out as far as the eye could see. Every stone surface he passed gleamed from the falling rain, reflecting his body as he hurriedly walked by. The crypt in question was located in the northeastern section, and while he knew what it looked like, he was not exactly sure where it was. No matter how long it took him, he had to find it in case the Neo-Nazis came back after him. The thought of them reappearing crossed his mind, and he proceeded to take out

the stolen gun, with its partially used ammunition, from his coat pocket and have it by his side.

In the Northeast section, he quickly discovered an even bigger sprawl of tombs and mausoleums. It was impossible to follow one row without getting lost again, as the rows of graves bled into one another, creating a dizzying patchwork of grave sites. As he walked down another row, he heard the sounds of another person walking towards him. He sprang behind a crypt that had some large stone features sticking out and readied his gun, in case the worst was about to happen. The steps came closer until they were only a short distance away. He sprang out, gun pointed at the intruder, ready to shoot. Instead of retaliating, the girl fell to the ground covering her head and screamed, "Jesus Greg, don't shoot!"

Greg stood there, perplexed. He had almost shot Amy, thinking she was a Nazi. Amy was his colleague, who had helped him locate the site. "I told you not to come!" he exclaimed, "They have been on me ever since I got to the library!" Standing up, Amy said "I know, but I found the crypt! I called, but you didn't answer." Greg looked down at his phone, to see multiple missed calls. "I'm sorry, I was a little preoccupied trying not to get anybody killed. You shouldn't have come." She smiled at him. "Well it's too late for that. Come on!" She began walking back

the way she came, and knowing that he was secretly happy she had shown up, Greg began to follow after.

He followed her through numerous twists and turns, heading towards the crypt and the treasure. "Did you get the key?" Amy asked as she looked back at him. "Yeah, it was exactly where we thought it would be," he replied, "And the crypt?" She continued to look back at him as they moved forward, "It matches the description, and it looks to be the only one that has a keyhole on the outside."

She turned one final corner as she said this, and they came face-to-face with a large and old stone crypt. A large stone door sealed off the entrance to the outsiders, with no handles or any way of opening it. To the right of the door was a small hole, one that a key could fit into. Greg took the key out of his pocket and inserted it into the hole. Once it was all the way in, he cautiously turned it, causing a large clicking sound to emit from deep within the stone. Stepping back from the crypt's entrance, the sound of more clicks came forth and the stone door moved. When the noises stopped, Greg went up to the door and pushed, causing it to swing inwards and reveal a staircase descending into the earth.

Standing there in the rain, looking down into the dark tunnel, they pondered what to do. Amy took out a flashlight and shone it down the

stairs, only to find that the stairs extended beyond the reach of her light. "Ladies first," said Greg. "Oh no, I insist," replied Amy, handing him the flashlight and pushing him into the staircase. He began his decent into the darkness, with Amy right behind him, her hand on his back.

The stone stairs continued for a long stretch, eventually turning left and consequentially towards the center of the graveyard. "Where does this go?" Amy asked, still clinging to the back of his coat. "I think a better question is whose grave this is." He replied. When they had found the supposed location of the treasure, they were unable to determine the identity of the person buried there. It was an unmarked grave, and its inhabitant, or inhabitants, had remained a mystery ever since they had been buried there. Not knowing who had built the tomb and whose tomb it was had created a sense of danger that neither of them had experienced before. For all they knew, anything and everything could be waiting for them at the bottom. There could be booby-traps, pits, disease, etc. that could put them in more danger than the Germans could. They had to be prepared to encounter anything, and hopefully make it out alive.

Soon, the staircase stopped, and they found themselves in a musty room with nothing in it. Stone walls surrounded them, and it looked

as though they had walked into a dead end. “Impossible! There’s nothing down here!” marveled Amy, clearly upset at the lack of treasure or anything for that matter. “There has to be more, this can’t be it!” said Greg in reply. He stepped forward into the room, looking at the grey stone walls that hindered his process.

“Is it gone?” whispered Amy, sounding defeated. “It can’t be. There’s no way anyone’s moved that door in decades,” said Greg, perplexed at the situation. “Maybe they moved it before they sealed it up,” she replied, trying to provide an answer to the predicament. “But then why would they hide the key?” he retorted. “How am I supposed to know? I don’t have any clue as to why the Nazis would have sealed this up!” As she said this, she leaned against one of the walls, and a shock went through the entire room, causing a loud cracking noise to echo all around them.

The piece of wall that she had leaned upon quickly flew open, and Amy fell into another room, hitting its metallic floor with a thud. “Amy!” yelled Greg, diving after her. Instead of falling into a trap, Greg quickly realized, Amy had fallen through a secret door. In fact, it was a metal door that had been disguised on the outside to look like the crypt. He helped Amy up, and they aimed their flashlights into the room.

What they saw was not a continuation of the crypt, but rather was a more modern room. In this case though, modern was used lightly, as the contents dated back almost seventy years. They had found a secret Nazi hideout, filled with all sorts of radio equipment and other old electronics. A large, red flag with the swastika hung on the wall, seemingly untouched for the past half a century. “This is…” Amy started to say. “Yeah,” he replied, before she could even finish her sentence. They had not found a treasure, but had found an untold amount of German knowledge. Reports, manuals, and papers were scattered all over the room, detailing attacks, plans, and the locations of stolen treasures that the Nazis had stolen during their invasion of neighboring countries.

They walked further into the room. Greg stopped and looked at papers that laid on a desk. Some had diagrams depicting a ground invasion of Britain, while others had paragraph upon paragraph of war reports, all in German. Amy walked to the other end of the room, looking at the old machines that lined the wall. “This is big,” she said, after the two of them had been silent for some time, “We need to tell someone about this.” Greg knew she was right: This was a major piece of Nazi history, perfectly preserved over the decades. In front of them laid documents that had insight into the operations

of the Third Reich, and showed what the world could have turned into had the Nazis won. The locations of missing treasure and valuables from the invaded countries were also detailed there, and now the treasures that were lost to time would be able to return to their rightful owners. Greg began to reply, "Yeah, but we have to tell the right people, or else we'll get arrested." Having trespassed to get to the treasure, the possibility of jail was scarily real.

His thoughts were suddenly cut off by the sound of hurried footsteps coming down the crypt stairs towards them. Amy ran towards him, "Is that security?" "I seriously doubt it," he replied, pulling his gun out. As he pulled her back towards the entrance, the sound of Germans speaking reached their ears. He leaned into Amy's ear, whispering, "It's them!" He had slowed them down before, and now they had caught up with him. This created a massive problem, as there was only one entrance to escape, and that entrance was about to be flooded with heavily armed men.

They turned off their flashlights, and just as they reached the wall, the Neo-Nazis came bursting in. Without flashlights, however, they had entered without even seeing Greg and Amy right next to the door. Five or six men had rushed into the room and had no clue what they had gotten themselves into. Greg pulled Amy, running through the door and back into the

crypt, slamming the door shut. Instantly the Nazis were entombed in darkness, locked in and unable to escape. They yelled and screamed after Greg as he pulled Amy up the stairs towards the entrance of the crypt. It had all happened so fast that Greg had forgotten to breathe, and soon was winded. The Germans' screams became muffled under layers of dirt, and eventually faded out. The pair ran back into the rain soaked graveyard, with the intention of getting as far away from the Nazis as possible. They turned many corners without slowing down, and as they began to enter the section of tombstones that was in between them and the entrance gate, a loud noise erupted, forcing Greg to fling himself and Amy to the ground.

Greg and Amy crawled as fast as they could towards the nearest tombstone, hiding behind it. They knew that it had been a gunshot that had broken the silence, but they had no clue where it had come from. After a moment of further silence, Greg poked his head up over the top of the tombstone in order to see their assailant. Another loud shot erupted, this time causing the tombstone they were hiding behind to shatter. Greg flung himself back, as the shot had been only inches away from where he had looked over. Amy threw herself onto him, also reacting from the shattered tombstone. "Come out!" said a voice, and Greg, giving Amy a look

of reassurance, stood up slowly, his gun pointed directly in front of him.

A man stood in the rain, holding his own gun which was pointed at them. He wore a long waterproof coat, with a black-brimmed hat concealing the top of his head. He stood there motionless, looking at them. "You aren't getting out of here," he said, in a heavily accented English, "The treasure is ours." "Good luck with that," said Greg, "You won't get away with it." "But we will," smiled the German, "We have gotten away with worse." Without blinking, he shot at them. Greg dived to one side, and Amy to the other, each hiding behind the next tombstone over. Greg got up and began running away, leading the German away from Amy. The German kept shooting at Greg as he pursued him back towards the entrance.

A bullet from the gun whizzed past Greg's face, almost hitting him. He dropped to the ground, crawling behind yet another tombstone. The entrance was so close to him, but at the same time was so far away. The German shot three more times directly at the tombstone, causing massive holes to appear in the side of it. Greg knew he would die unless he did something drastic. The German tried to shoot again, but the gun was out of bullets. He smiled, and reached into his coat pocket for another clip. As he slid the new clip into the gun, he said, "Untold wealth lies down there: The

wealth that was the Nazi's, and still is. Those items are rightfully ours, and my comrades and I will work to carry out the ideals of our Führer, and we shall work to rebuild what was taken away from us! So know that I will not lose sleep over killing you today." Greg looked down at his gun, "Not if I have anything to say about that!"

Greg dove out from the side of the tombstone, gun aimed at the German's kneecaps. He blindly fired, hoping that one of his remaining shots would connect with its target. The German also shot, but then fell, his blown out kneecap unable to support his weight. Greg stood up, gun pointed down, looking at the cowering German as he clutched his knee. Amy ran over, taking the gun from the man's hands, and also pointed it at him. Greg opened his mouth to speak, but a heavy object then hit him from the back, causing him to slam to the ground.

In all the chaos, Greg had forgotten that they were still in the middle of Berlin, and the sounds of their firefight had echoed throughout the city, attracting the attention of everyone around the cemetery, including the police. They swarmed in around them, handcuffing Amy and putting her on the ground. They held him down, and handcuffed him as well, shouting at him in German. One cop was yelling into a radio for an ambulance to assist the Nazi as others attended to his knee.

Amy looked up at Greg, her face scared. He knew they could get themselves out of the situation, but that it might take a while to explain why they had shot up half of Berlin. They picked him up, and began walking him out of the cemetery with Amy. He turned to her and smiled, saying, "Now we have a good explanation for why we were trespassing." Amy smiled back, and as they were led out, they knew they had a new discovery to share with the world.


The Rise of White Lightnin'

Ashley Freund

Duke Sutton whistled a bouncy tune as he mopped the shining linoleum floor. His old bones creaked and his balding scalp glistened with sweat, but he felt happy knowing he was doing good honest work as a fine American such as himself. Working as a janitor for a biomedical research facility in Charleston, West Virginia paid his bills and let him enjoy his guilty pleasure: distilling the finest moonshine in the all the land. He licked his lips at the thought of his fine hooch bubbling in his still in the woods outside his home in Burton, just a few miles from Charleston.

"My oh my, ain't it gonna be a hoot when it's a'ready," Duke mumbled joyfully to himself as he mopped the lab hallway, wiping his forehead on his grey jumpsuit sleeve. As he worked, his dull mind wondered what the scientists were cooking up today behind the rows of white painted steel doors that lined the hallway. As he wondered, the heavy steel door titled Lab 3-B in black painted letters opened and a pair of scientists walked out, talking energetically. Duke pretended to concentrate on his mopping as they passed, ears open and bored.

"You know what this means?" Chattered the taller man to his short colleague, their beards practically bristling with excitement. "This



Ashley is a fearless writer with a great sense of humor. She possesses an applaudable taste for the absurd and politically incorrect which influences all the writing she produces.

Phoebe Patten



simple alcohol-based solution is the key to the success of our project!"

"Man, I can't wait until we can..." the short man responds, their conversation fading into distant echoes as they turn into a nearby stairway. Ears pricking at the word alcohol, Duke waited for the men to disappear. Eyes on the prize, he tiptoed towards Lab 3-B to get a peek for himself.

Before Duke could peek into the slightly ajar door, a tall, severe-looking woman in a lab coat barred his way with a scowl on her face. "Mr. Sutton, care to explain why you are trying to sneak into here?" She said patronizingly, looking down on him over her horn-rimmed glasses, a very tall woman by any standards. Her dark skin glistened under the harsh fluorescent lighting, and her black hair was pulled back into a bun so tight that Duke had always reckoned it was keeping her face from falling off.

Duke stepped back, a sneer flashed across his face before settling on a dumb grin.

“No ma’am, Dr. Williams, I’m just mindin’ mah own business here, just moppin’ the floor here, y’see?” He dashed over to his mop and held it up as proof.

“Well Mr. Sutton, unauthorized entry into a classified laboratory is a major offense, one that I am certain you cannot afford. Make sure it does not happen again, now please return to your task.” Dr. Williams turned around, then added, “When we first brought you on, I thought you were a nice guy. Dumb, but nice. However, your... misconduct in the past, not just towards me, makes me wonder how you still have a job at all.”

Most of the time when dealing with Dr. Williams, Duke knew better than to say what he was thinking; but today his mouth outran his dim-witted brain. Eyebrow raised, he leaned forward and growled, “Well missy, maybe ya should shut yer bitch mouth up and get back t’yer real job, makin’ me a goddamn sandwich!”

Dr. Williams’s face underwent a shockingly fast shift from shock to absolute rage, her jaw dropped as her eyebrows furrowed her forehead into furious creases. “How DARE you, you... you... misogynist inbred hick!” She snarled, fists shaking in anger at her sides. “That’s it Sutton! No more chances. Mr. Joans will hear of this and you’ll be out on your ass!” She spun around and stomped down the hall, her

heels practically shattering the linoleum floor as she turned around the corner.

Duke shook his head and chuckled, “That dumb gal ain’t gonna do shit. I ain’t goin’ nowhere,” and went back to mopping the floor, whistling.

“Goddamn nigga bitch and ‘er goddamn slut mouth, I’ll give ‘er somethin’ to do with that slut mouth o’hers!” Duke slurred as he stumbled around his moonshine stills behind his shed in the thick woods. Stains covered his loose overalls over a tattered long-sleeved flannel shirt and his filthy bare feet dug into the dirt as he lurched. He took another swig of moonshine, thinking about how he had been fired just a few hours ago, within minutes of his remark to Dr. Williams. He had tried to defend himself, but nobody would listen to him and they shoved his ass out the door. Duke sat on a stump and angrily strummed his banjo beside his rusty metal still made of three steel containers and parts from his old Ford F-150.

His wife crooned, “Duke? I’m sorry what happened today, but sittin’ out here poutin’ ain’t gonna do nothing ‘bout it. Come inside, I got dinner ready for ya.” She stood in the door of their ramshackle shack, built like it had meant to last for 10 years but by some miracle lasted more than 30. Her stained crooked teeth betrayed her pretty face, blond hair poking from underneath a

dirty hankerchief wrapped around her head. Tattered flowers covered her thin dress that stopped inches above her dirty bare toes.

“Shut up, Maggie May! Ya may be mah cousin but yer also my wife and I ain’t gotta listen to ya, I do what I damn well please!” Duke spat back at her, not even turning around as he lobbed a mason jar half full of moonshine behind his head. Like a seasoned pro she ducked the flying shards of glass and closed the door with a sad smile.

Suddenly Duke was struck with an idea, a plan to get his revenge on the woman who cost him his job. A sinister grin spread across his unshaven face as he took another swig of moonshine, congratulating himself on his brilliance.

That night around three a.m., Duke managed to stumble his way into the biomedical research facility undetected by security. Fueled by his liquid courage, he set forth his brilliant plan. With drunken grace he soaked the CEO Mr. Joans’s door with urine, making sure to leave some in his bladder for Dr. William’s office door. Proud of himself, Duke stumbled down the hallway where he had been wronged earlier that day. He stopped before that familiar door, Lab 3-B. A memory sloshed through his brain of the scientists walking down the hall saying

something about an alcohol-based chemical that sounded mighty tasty to Duke at the moment.

Using a copy of the skeleton key he had been forced to return when he was fired, Duke unlocked the door to the lab and looked around the dimly lit room filled with glass bottles and hazard symbols. His nose like a bloodhound trailing a wounded rabbit, he quickly sniffed out a small beaker filled with a clear liquid labeled “Chemical S”. With his prize hidden under his ratty Budweiser jacket, Duke quickly stumbled out with thoughts of his next moonshine batch dancing in his head.

“This gonna be th’best shit ever, I swear!” Duke shouted happily, carefully pouring the beaker into the boiling mash of future moonshine. Taking no notice of the strange glow that pulsated from the bubbling concoction, he sat down and strummed his banjo to the rising sun. Clouds rolled quickly over the woods, and within minutes Duke felt the pitter patter of rain on his scalp that quickly became a torrential downpour. “Go ‘way rain, y’all ain’t stopping me! Nobody’s stoppin’ me from exercisin’ m’God-given right t’make m’hooch, not you, not the gov’nant men, nobody!” He shouted at the sky, waving his banjo in the air. “Ya hear me? This is ‘murica! Back in the good ole’ days a man could put a woman in ‘er place and get a

cigar fer it! Well fuck ya, I do what I want y'hear me?"

Suddenly Duke's drunken rant was silenced by a thunderous CRASH! Lightning struck the still, exploding into a massive surge of light and fire. Thrown back by the explosion, Duke's limp body slammed into a tree hundreds of feet from the blast and his world went black.

Hours later Duke miraculously stood up, banjo still in his hand. "Jesus Christ Almighty! What the fuck was that?" He exclaimed, rubbing his head in disbelief. Upon closer inspection, he realized he wasn't broken, just singed. But something was... different. Nothing hurt, he felt stronger, different, like the blast did something to him. His banjo looked like it had survived without a scratch, so he strummed it to make sure.

ZAP! A burst of white electricity surged from the end of his banjo and blasted a tree above him! "Holy shit!" He shouted. Slackjawed, Duke strummed a few more times. Each time a burst of lightning zapped from the top of the fret. "What the hell was that shit that I put in 'er?" With a start, he had a thought-if he could do that, what else could he do?

He wrapped his arms around the trunk of a thick tall tree, and ripped it from the ground with the effort of picking up a beer can. Excitedly, he squatted down and leapt into the

air as hard as he could; he zoomed straight into the air, realizing he could fly. Laughing with giddy delight Duke soared through the air, weaving effortlessly between the trees.

The midday sun was beaming above the clouds when Duke finally flew back to his shack, full of excitement and big ideas. He shook Maggie May awake from her slumber in their stained mattress on the dirt floor and spilled to her what had happened. He was met with her incredulous stare and raised eyebrow. Sensing skepticism, Duke grabbed her arm and lifted her from the mattress until she screamed, "Fine! I believe ya! Lemme down ya bastard!"

With a grin, Duke said, "Dat's good, 'cause I'm gonna need yer help. See, I got these powers, and It'd be a shame if I didn't use dem fer some good! Every superhero needs a fancy suit, so yer gonna sew me one!"

"Why don'tcha sew it yerself?" Maggie May retorted, a bit miffed at his demand.

"Cuz, woman," Duke barked, spraying her with angry drunken spittle, "Men don't sew! Now make me somethin' great! Somethin' flannel, and wit mah new name, um... uh..." Duke scratched his head and glanced around the room. He looked at his banjo and snapped his fingers in realization. "Mah name's gonna be White Lightnin'! Yeah, White Lightnin'! Defender o' th'good ole days, when the gov'nant stayed out of yer damn bus'ness and didn't let

them nappy ho's and spicks and bitches challenge m'God-given authoritah!" Unaware of Maggie May's crestfallen looks as she gathered scraps of fabric from their closet, Duke ranted and raved about his plans to save the country using his new powers; how White Lightnin' would rise and take back the country on behalf of his white God-fearing male brethren.

"Yup, it was Duke Sutton alright," groaned Mr. Joans as he watched security footage of Duke's drunken escapades from the night before. Over Mr. Joans's shoulder, Dr. Williams watched the black and white grainy footage of Duke stealing the beaker with a heavy heart. Mr. Joans looked at her over his shoulder and snapped, "How the hell did he get away with it? Wasn't anyone watching the cameras?"

Dr. Williams sighed and said, "A combination of dumb luck and sleeping security guards, I'm afraid. No offense sir, but you have too much faith in some of your hires." Mr. Joans grunted in retort, but didn't try to defend himself.

Dr. Williams added, "You know what he stole, right?" Mr. Joans shook his head cautiously.

"He stole the superhuman serum, the Chemical S we have been working on for decades."

"What? How the fuck did he know about it?" Mr. Joans bellowed, sweat beginning to drip from his bright red face.

Dr. Williams sighed, "I don't know, sir. I told you it was a bad idea hiring a dumb redneck like him, he ruined the whole operation. He may be working for someone who knows about our secret contract with the military, he's too stupid to figure it out on his own. I just hope he didn't ingest it in anyway. It's largely untested, and Mr. Sutton is the last person the world needs to have super powers."

"Well, what should we do?" Gaspd Mr. Joans, wiping his face with a dirty hankerchief. Dr. Williams paused the surveillance video and stared at Duke's guilty face, frozen in grainy time on the small monitor. Eyebrows furrowed in absolute seriousness, she replied in a somber tone, "All we can do to find him, capture him, and if necessary, destroy him."

Reflections on Life

Jenna Homan

Greetings, friend. I would be very pleased if you would come and listen to me speak, for I have much to tell and little time to tell it in; I feel that the end of my life is drawing very near. I may have neither eyes to see nor feet to move, but I have come to know and see many things. Our kind doesn't need eyes to see or feet to move in order to know and see the world around us. We simply feel the world; we are one with nature.

Earth, the place I call home, is a place filled with both wonder and woe. In my 100 years, I have seen many changes, both good and bad. The change of the seasons, alterations in species and populations, and the miracle of new life occur every day. These are causes for wonder, and my soul sings to experience these wonderful events, but there are also terrible changes. These changes are brought forth by creatures called humans.

Like humans, all animals are able to think and perceive all kinds of amazing things, but unlike the other creatures, humans regrettably use this power of perception to do terrible things quite often. They have a terrible need for control over one another and a need for possessions; greed is their downfall. I have seen wars, pollution, cutting down of my fellow companions, murdering of helpless creatures

(even of their own kind), and countless other evil deeds. I can only sit helplessly and watch these terrible events unfold around me. I try to communicate with the humans, urging them to change their ways, but all they make of my communication is a series of creaks and moans. It is terribly frustrating. All I can do is pray that the next generation of humans will learn from its mistakes. This sometimes happens, but the greed never truly goes away. As I near the end of my life, I think I have discovered why this greed exists; humans seem to keep this greed to cover-up their fear, their fear of the unknown. Humans live forever wondering what the meaning of life is, when it really is right there in front of them.

Having lived for so long, in constant observance of the world around me, without possessing corruption and greed as the many humans I have come to know to possess, the meaning of life becomes clear. If you don't already know the meaning of life, then it would be almost impossible for me to tell you, but the best way I know how to explain it is this: the meaning of life is in the very word itself: "life." The meaning of life is "life." What makes this definition tricky is that "life" is different for every individual creature, but this is also what makes the definition so beautiful and marvelous. Life is startlingly unique and complex, an intricate snowflake; no two lives are the same.

So, as my death comes nearer and nearer, I do not face it with fear. Death is only the next stage of life. Therefore, I shall greet it with open branches.

Bittersweet

Jenna Homan

Sitting on a shelf, cozied up with my family under a fluorescent glow of lights, I thought to myself *This is the life*. Sure, it was a bit crowded in the little box we lived in, which we shared with two other families (making fifteen of us in all), but we never had to worry about any of our family or friends leaving us. We stuck together, literally. If you're confused right now, don't worry. It will all become clear soon enough. I hope my story will help you to make a change in your...er...diet.

Most of the time, my life was sweet and care-free, but there always was the fear lurking beneath the veneer of happiness...the fear of being bought. This fear especially rose to the surface in the spring. Usually when one thinks of spring, he or she thinks of life and renewal, but for me spring meant one thing only: Easter.

Easter is a time of death. The best two hopes that my kind can have in this time of death are that they won't be bought, or they are bought and hidden in an Easter egg hunt and never found. These two scenarios rarely happen, but they are the major two hopes that we cling to.

The only other hope we can have is that the person who buys our package will forget about us and let us go stale, thereby sparing our lives (since humans don't like us to be stale). True, life after this can be a bit uncomfortable, being perpetually stiff and living a life among trash, but it's much better than being subjected to the cruel and unusual torture that humans dish out. I shudder just thinking about some of the things humans do to my poor, defenseless kind, especially knowing that my story contains some of these tortures.

So, one particularly bright and beautiful spring day not too long ago, my brother, my sister, my friends, and I were having a fun time making faces at and scaring the human children. This trick didn't work with adults because they never looked closely enough at us to notice our expressions...or maybe they did notice but would never admit that they'd seen it happen. Well, this spring day, for the first time ever, a pair of adults did notice our faces, but this backfired on us: instead of scaring them, we amused them.

"Ooo, look at that soft, sugary goodness!" the young woman said, her blue eyes dancing with glee and desire. As I looked into her enormous eyes, I could see a purple sparkle reflected back at me. "They look so delicious. We should get some."

The young man next to her grinned in amusement and squeezed her hand. “Let’s pick some out then.”

“Hmmm...I don’t know. There are so many choices...” the woman said, biting her finger in serious contemplation.

The man laughed, amused by her solemnity. “Choose wisely, Ella. It’s a very serious decision.”

“Oh, I know, Michael,” Ella said playfully. “So I’m going to go with...that package right there.”

My heart sank. *Please don’t pick us, please don’t pick us...* But, alas, they had picked us. All we could do now was accept our fate and hope for the best, but with the looks of this evil couple, we were sure to be doomed.

Fast-forward to Easter Sunday. The couple had recently returned from church, had finished feasting on their Easter ham dinner, and were now preparing for dessert. You’d think that on such a holy day as Easter, and especially after just getting back from church, that these people would show us mercy but no. Dessert was to be served, on us. Literally.

“That was a delicious meal, dear,” said Michael.

“Thank you, honey. I’m glad you enjoyed it,” Ella said.

“Now it’s my turn...to provide the dessert!” he said.

Sitting on the counter we shivered in our box, terrified. We were not only going to be eaten, we were going to endure one of the worst forms of torture: the microwave. As Michael approached us and ripped open our packaging, we said our prayers and goodbyes and held onto each other until the very last moment, when we were torn from one another’s side and popped on a plate.

“Are you ready?” Michael asked.

“Yep!” Ella chirped, bounding over to the microwave. “Let’s explode ’em!”

As Michael placed us in the microwave, and the horrendous finality of the door’s slam closed around us, I wept for not only myself but also for the terrible cruelty of the human race. But when the microwave turned on, and we began to heat up and expand, even though the pain and suffering I felt an odd peace. I knew this wasn’t goodbye forever. I believed we’d see each other in Heaven, and I was right. So, as we bloated and melded into one mass of sticky marshmallow goo and were shoveled into the hungry humans’ mouths, our bodies may have been consumed, but our souls lived on.

My life on Earth as a Peep had tragically ended, but my life in Peep heaven had just begun. I hope my story has inspired you, human, to be a little more courteous of my “peep”-le, preferably steer clear from Peeps at all costs. How about a chocolate bunny instead?



Sponsored by the English Department &
the Tutoring-Learning Center
of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point
Spring '13